

Dislocated Identity: Repatriation and Desire for Homeland

in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*

This research examines the dispersed Palestinians and their strong desire for repatriation in Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*. It also deals with the issue of diasporic identity of Amal, the protagonist in the exile. The novel captures the scenario of catastrophe in 1948 and its consequences. They are made refugees within their country. Later, the Palestinians are forcefully chased away from their homeland. They are mistreated by the host societies. Then, slowly and gradually they feel stateless and rootless. As a result, they resist and raise their voice for their homeland. As the circumstances do not let them return towards homeland, they create an imagined homeland in their mindset.

Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*, contains the scenario of identity crisis of the people particularly, living in Ein Hod and generally, the Palestinian people. The novel presents the grim picture of war between two groups of people, one for establishing a Zionist State, Israel and another for preserving their nation as Palestine. Abulhawa takes the reference of 1948 and presents how the Palestinian people become refugees in their state that ultimately leads them to be traumatized for returning towards home.

Abulheja family is seen living peacefully in the village of Ein Hod before the dispersal of Palestinians from their homeland. This can be seen in the very beginning of the novel: "IN A DISTANT TIME, before history marched over the hills and shattered present and future, before wind grabbed the land at one corner and shook it of its name and character, before Amal was born, a small village east of Haifa lived quietly on figs and olives, open frontiers and sunshine (11). These lines not only show the dispossession of Palestinians but also unfold the history that contains separation, brutality, war and its devastation.

The novel covers the ups and downs of EinHod villagers, especially the Abulheja family. The Abulhaje family used to live very simple life as the other Palestinian did before their tragic dispossession in 1948. Abulheja family and the other countrymen living there forced out of their villages and homes and ultimately made refugee in their homelands. They move their journey from one place to another for their survival. The neighboring countries help them for their settlement. This can be seen in the fourth chapter of the novel in the following lines:

Residents of those towns helped them much as they could, giving away their food, blankets, and water and fitting as many as possible into their homes I that time of crisis. Soon Jordan, Iraq, and Syria gave out a few tents, and a refugee camp sprang up in Jenin, where the villagers of EinHod could stand on the hills and look back at the homes to which they could never return. (33)

These lines show how the neighboring countries help them in the time of crisis. The last line also indicates the painful incident of Palestinian people i.e. could not return to their homeland.

The strong love and attachment to the nation in the novel signifies the love for the homeland in the novel. Abulhawa creates the diasporic spaces and immense moral scenes to transcend a particular stance of politics via transcending love in opposition to suffering and tribulation. Among the rare voice of Palestinian diaspora and rights for returning, Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* is one.

The condition of diaspora, exile and struggle for identity has existed since the time of dispersed Jews. Later, the very term 'Diaspora' characterized Jews, Americans, Palestinians, Africans, Asians and many other ethnic groups. People began to migrate from one place to another either voluntarily or forcefully what we call imposed migrations, as the Palestinians were compelled to set their journey from one country to

another. It became almost a cultural phenomenon as people have fled from famine wars and persecutions. These things not only imply rootlessness, nostalgic sadness for the lost home but also dreams of gaining their Palestinian self through returning to their homeland.

Defining the “Palestinian Diaspora” seems to be difficult. This can be interlinked with what Helena Lindholm Schulz puts forward, “Not only is ‘diaspora’ an illusive term, but defining the ‘Palestinian diaspora’ is equally problematic” (20). This view can be intermingled in what Edward Said’s states forward, ‘diaspora’ in Palestinian case ties to the homeland render associations of the term ‘diaspora’ enigmatic (20). However, the strong connection to the homeland is to many defining component of diaspora communities rather than not.

Palestinian dispersion and their struggle for Palestinian self cannot be understood unless one takes the references of the Nakba,exile. Though the politically motivated flight and migration patterns began prior tothe Nakba, the circumstances of intense violence and warfare in the period of 1947-1949 are the paramount factors behind the Palestinian experience of exile. During this period, approximately 700,000 people fled because of war and atrocities that occurred in relation to the creation of the state of Israel. (Lindholm 24)

The Palestinian diaspora has connection with the dispersal in 1948 and the second exodus of 1967. The Palestinan people suffer a lot in the late 1940s as they are chased away from their homeland. Then slowly and gradually, the great dispossession began in Palestinian people. Regarding this, Lindholm says:“Whether one has stayed, put or moved, the meaning of ‘diaspora’ to Palestinians is larger than referring to specific processes of migration and displacement. The diaspora is rather, a condition of alienation and estrangement, of shattered lives and homes” (21).Similarly, the EinHod

villagers in the novel are compelled to shift their journey from one place to another for survival, settlement and the quest for their identity in the period of late 1940s. The Abulheja family becomes uprooted and alienated from their homeland and they were confined in refugee camps. Amal and Ismael seem to be in the threshold of identity crisis, neither Palestinian nor Israeli or American. The people living in refugee camp dream to better mornings; return to their homeland. They suffer a lot when they remember their past, their homeland.

The novel contains the grim scenario of war between two parties, one for establishing Zionist state, Israel and another for preserving their nation 'Palestine' as sovereign state. Abulhawatakes the reference of 1948 and presents how the Palestinian people become refugee and traumatized for returning towards their homeland. In the novel, Jews struggling for the Zionist nation and Palestinian for their sovereign state as Palestine, in a way seems to be the politics of homeland that ultimately makes Palestinians out of their homeland to neighboring countries. The host countries do not respond them much that finally develop the diasporic self and they struggle and resist for the construction of Palestinian identity. All these things can be matched in what Lindholm says, "It was in the diaspora that the two central poles of 'suffer' and 'struggle', composing the (main) narrative of Palestinian identity" (2). This very idea of suffer and struggle is seen vividly in the novel. As the Abulheja family is compelled to inhabit in the exile. They suffer a lot when the host societies do not treat them well. The consciousness of love and belongingness to their land is developed from the very womb of suffer and struggle that finally paves the way for main narrative of the Palestinian identity.

The Palestinian dispersion begins with the establishment of Israel in 1948. Their identity is put under question after the formation of Jews nation, Israrel.

The issue of identity becomes more crucial on the part of Abulheja family in the novel. The way novel develops identity crisis on the part of Palestinians is similar with the idea of Edward Said as he states the bitter experience of Palestinians in *After the Last Sky*:

Identity—who we are, where we come from, what we are—difficult to maintain in exile. Most other people take their identity for granted. Not the Palestinians, who is required to show proofs of identity more or less constantly. It is not only we are regarded as terrorists, but that our existence as native Arab inhabitants of Palestine, with primordial fight there (and not elsewhere), is either denied or challenged. (16-17)

The similar kind of identity crisis is seen in the novel. When the Abulheja family is in exile, the very identity of who they are and where they come from is obvious through the lines. They do not accept their identity for granted. Rather they revolt for their Palestinian self no matter where they are. As they revolt for their identity, the anti-Palestinian factors accuse them as terrorists and their notion of free land is either denied or challenged. Hence, the fluctuation of identity is seen on the part of the EinHod villagers in general and more specifically, the Abulheja family. The sense of identity crisis in exile slowly and gradually develops belongingness to the ancestral land. Though they cannot return to their land, they create imagined homeland in their fantasy. This is how the notion of Palestinian self proceeds the diasporic feelings in the novel.

The concept of diaspora has long history as it has connection with the Greek, Jewish and American experience of displacement from their native land and the ensuing dispersal across the world. Though the concept of diaspora epistemologically derived from the dispersal experiences of those ancient Jews people, in present time it has come to merge into other discourses like postcolonialism,

nationalism, hybridity and multiculturalism. Regarding diaspora, one of the scholars, Robin Cohen states:

Forced or unforced dispersal from an original homeland; retention of a collective memory or myth about the ancestral home, which is idealized and to which the diasporic subject may wish to return; a distinct ethnic group consciousness and sense of solidarity with co-ethnic communities in other places, most often coupled with a troubled relationship to the host society. (180)

As Cohen asserts, the scar of diasporic self can be seen in the novel. The people living in the village of EinHod become homeless. They become outcast from their home forcefully after the formation of the new nation, Israel in 1948. They set their journey to the neighboring Arab countries like Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Kuwait etc. But their host countries began to treat them as the downtrodden people. Then, slowly and gradually the same troubled relationship and the bitter experiences paves the way for developing the diasporic self and the love for their imagined homeland.

The EinHod villagers in the novel suffer a lot thinking their moment of returning towards home. But their dreams remain unfulfilled. This sentiment can be seen in the novel as the narrator asserts, “They tried to go back the next day, but the guns behind them forbade a return home” (33). It indicates that the people wish to go back to their homeland but the Israeli forbade them and made them refugee in the camp. Their love to the Palestinian land develops a kind of attachment that paves the way for struggle to gain their identity.

Similarly, the novel captures the scenario of Islamic People being helped by the neighboring countries. The way neighboring Islamic States support Palestine reflects the emotional bonding among the Muslims either by giving shelter or joining anti-Jews activities. This is reflected in the novel:

Residents of those towns helped them as much as they could, giving away their

food, blankets, and water and fitting as many as possible into their home in that time of crisis. Soon Jordan, Iraq, and Syria gave out a few tents, and a refugee camp sprang up in Jenin, where the villagers of EinHod could stand on the hills and look back at the homes to which they could never return. (33)

These lines show how the Palestinian people are helped by the people having same sentiments. This idea can be seen as James Clifford identifies diaspora as “dispersed networks of people who share common historical experiences of dispossession, displacement and adaptation” (309). He further discusses diaspora discourse as the “experiences of displacement, of constructing homes away from home while remaining rooted/routed in specific, discrepant histories” (302). The scattered Palestinians in the Arab countries become connected emotionally to their remembered or imagined homeland, Palestine.

In the beginning, diaspora was concerned narrowly to the migration or exile of the people. But new concept of Diaspora contains the issue of complexity, diversity and fixity of the cultural studies. Ashcraft, etal. Opine:

Diaspora highlights the global trend of creating, constructing and reconstructing identity and not by identifying with some ancestral place, but through travelling itself. While the Diasporas subject travels so does culture. A travelling culture means a culture that changes, develops and transforms itself according to the various influences it encounters in different places. (427)

The similar kind of things can be seen in the novel. We can see the different levels of identity construction on the part of Amal and Ismael in the novel as they move from one place to another. As they shift their journey from one place to another, they get identified differently. In one hand, As Amal sets her journey from refugee camp to schools that ultimately paves the way for getting the scholarship in USA, her identity

changes so does the time and space. On the other hand, Ismael gets different identity as he is snatched by Moshe, the Israeli soldier. Moshe and his wife, Jolanta hide Ismael's originality and he is given a new identity as the Jews clan. Amal and Ismael become the part of particular time and space either willingly or forcefully. It shows how the culture changes so does the travelling self.

Mornings in Jenin accommodates the features of diasporic writing. While defining diasporic writing, Manjit Indra Singh remarks, ". . . the important thematic and ethnically- oriented residues of nostalgia, memory, imagined return to homeland, and course, the troubled idiom of the loss of native values, successively in the new generation, leading to acculturation or alienation"(105). These elements of diasporic writing can be seen being reflected in the narration and plot of the novel. The characters in the novel, especially, Amal and Ismael become nostalgic when they remember their peaceful and happy livelihood in the village of EinHod. The feeling of alienation, nostalgia and possessions of memories are dominant themes in the novel.

In adopted country, when migrant characters seem alienated and exiled, they often nostalgically recollect the past and memoirs of their old homeland. In this process of recollection, more precisely, their very idea of lost homeland eventually turns into myth and history of their identity. So, coming to this point - their trauma for losing their original homeland drives them into an act of reinventing their own identity. As Satchaindandan says:

. . . it also defines one's self and reassures one about one's own distinct identity, the narrative production of home assumes many strategies according to one's relation to the place one came from, the place one came to and the place one belongs to. The idea of home is also related to time that transforms it into history and myth. (19)

These ideas can be seen imprinted in the novel as the Abulheja family has strong love and belongingness to their nation.

The bitter condition of being displaced can be seen in the novel. The Palestinian people in the novel displaced from their settlement and chased away in different neighboring countries seeking their inhabitants. The displacement from homelands means being displaced from their origin, their root and their culture. Therefore, in this diasporic state, their sense of exile, their nostalgia for homelands, their sense of humiliation over the identity crisis that they face with and sometimes even their feeling of 'in-betweenness' especially sensed by the descendants of diasporas become extremely intense and irrepresible that some diasporic writers have recreated their very diasporal sensitivities into the fabulous literary writings. An Indian critic Sudhir Kumar points out:

The diasporic consciousness, as some critics ever, presupposes the predominance of such feelings as alienation, dispersal, longing for the ancestral homeland, a double identification with the original homeland and the adopted country, identity crisis, remembering myths related to the homeland, protest against discrimination of all sorts in a new land etc., the metaphor of imaginary homelands does cum up the conditions of the diasporic communities well. (70)

Diasporic writings basically do focus on issues of migrant people. It's an outcome of their experiences; the experiences which basically tell us stories of their lives, within their immigrant background. As migrants resettle in the foreign countries, things don't seem easy to them because they have to face a lot of different problems in terms of all aspects like culture, language, food and others. No matter, how much adaptive they seem, they always have to feel marginalized from the mainstream of the society of their second home. In the eyes of native people, they are always looked as outsiders.

Therefore, the cases like cultural conflict and identity crisis seem very high on them. Similarly, these very elements are the prospects that do frequently come up in the context of diasporic writings. It captures both the problems and experiences of migrants. For instance, in the case of cultural identity loss, they seem trying to recollect their past through the help of memories, nostalgia and familial myth. These things can be seen vividly in the novel as the main character of the novel, Amal faces displacement, dislocation, alienation and loss of Palestinian identity. She seems to be recollecting her past through the help of memory that makes her nostalgic and ultimately paves the way for seeking the Palestinian self, Palestinian identity.

The term “identity” is a difficult subject to explain as Cornel West describes it as “elusive, amorphous and even vaporous one” (15). He believes that we all have multiple positions in terms of constructing our identities. So there is no such thing as having one identity or of there being one essential identity that fundamentally defines who we actually are. People in different times and under different circumstances define identity as they feel that their identities are under threat. In this way, identity is associated with race, gender, ethnicity, religion and so on. While talking about Palestinian identity, one can see connection with collective memory and historiography. Collective memory is a defining aspect of being Palestinian. For Palestinians in the diaspora they constitute the missing link to their homeland. (Hammer 49)

In fact, identity is very serious and crucial issue that human beings possess. So, while talking about identity, we have to look at the various ways in which human beings have constructed their desire for recognition, association and protection over time and in space, sometimes under circumstances not of their own choice. It is important to look at the process that creates identities. That desire for identity, a desire that Cornel West points out in his essay *A Matter of Life and Death*, is for many people,

worth dying for, as it is a matter of serious concern. So, we arrive at the association: the negotiation of identity between the alternate poles of desire and death. As West has suggested, we construct our identities from the building blocks of our basic desires, desire for association. West writes:

Identity is fundamentally about desire and death. Here you construct your identity is predicted on how you conceive of death: desire for recognition, quest for visibility, the sense of what Edward Said would call affiliation. It is the longing to belong, a deep, visceral need that most linguistically conscious animals who transact with an environment participate in. And then there is a profound desire for protection, for security, for safety. (15-16)

We long for belongingness. All these desires are expressed by symbols- ceremony, festivals, national monuments and anthems, and so on. But in a world where symbols are all we are, all we have, holding on to these symbols become a matter of death. It is for the glorification of these symbols that the bloody tale of national history is written and enacted in the campaigns of nationalists everywhere around the world.

Arab-American writers like Edward Said concern with either the loss of their homeland or the different disruption that their native world has faced. They seem to be living in between i.e. between the Arab and American sides of self and identity. Similarly, being the part of Arab, Abulhawa seems to be concerned about these issues vividly. As the matter of 'self' and 'idea' becomes more prominent as they feel nostalgic for their original cultural identity. The past paves the way to generate a will for home and the time they lived. Hence, nostalgia plays significant role shaping their consciousness about their desires and own senses of what should construct and constitute the present and future concept of 'self' and 'identity'.

Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* presents a character who suffers a lot due to the underlying sense of homesickness. As Amal goes to the United States for study, she becomes nostalgic. Amal's very first day in Philadelphia is marked by her attempts to discover the new world and begin on the new experience of forming a new identity, triggering all possible sense of nostalgia for the old home and family:

The scent of the city seeped into the car. Street vendor cheese- steak hoagies, greasy fries, diesel truck fumes, and car exhaust gave my nostrils a full bodied welcome. It smelled like the irretrievable loss of white Madonna lilies growing in the limesinks of Palestine, the bereavement of my country's camphires which would burst for each spring into fragment flames of white and yellow clusters, delicate and fiery. (170)

Amal becomes unable to adjust in the new environment. She is unable to adopt the new host country without retaining her own traditions and culture within the new society. In the beginning she becomes nostalgic to her culture and religion. Amal is burdened by the loss of her native homeland; she is no longer living in Palestine. Amal's nostalgic behavior in the first year demonstrates that she has not completely assimilated the American culture, rather she has difficulty to adjust in the new society. This can be seen as she says, "FEELINGS OF INADEQUACY MARKED my first months in America. I floundered in that open-ended world, trying to fit in. But my foreignness showed in my brown skin and accent" (135). But slowly and gradually she attempts to fit in the new environment.

Amal's submissiveness to the dominant American culture leads to imposing a new identity on her. She tries to adjust in the new environment and establish herself as a part of it. This can be seen in the novel as the lines contain, "I deliberately avoided political discussions, didn't write to the people who loved me and let myself be known

as Amy” (178). Amal complies with such prescribed instructions in order to remap and reconstruct an identity which can give her status within American society.

Memory plays significant role to construct the identity. While talking about the role of memory constructing the Palestinian identity, one of the scholars, Abunimah asserts, “Palestine exists because Palestinians have chosen to remember it”(4). This shows how memory matters a lot forming Palestinian identity in the global arena. Similar kind of essence can be found as Meir Litvak puts forward, “No group identity exists without memory as its core meaning; the sense of continuity over time and space is sustained by remembering, and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity. Every group develops the memory of its own past and so highlights its unique identity via other groups” (1). Through these lines what Litvak argues is that memory matters a lot for identity formation. Similar kind of scenes can be seen in *Mornings in Jenin*. The EinHod villagers in the novel memorizing their bygone days paves the way for their strong will for the construction of their identity. In the same way, Amal’s memory in the novel keeps inscribing a very nostalgic sense of her gone past: “But like the scar beneath my hand, the past was still with me” (171). It helps to unfold the past peaceful and harmonious living in EinHod where the original identity of being a part of Palestine remains. It also shows how the past remains within her. The role of memory becomes clearer when Amal becomes an active member of the American culture and grows an interest in learning about and practicing the different aspects of it:

I drank alcohol and dated several men- acts that would have earned me repudiation in Jenin. I spun in cultural vicissitude, wandering in and out of the American ethos until I lost my way. I fell in love with Americans and even felt that love reciprocated. I lived in the present keeping the past hidden away. I didn’t write to Huda, nor to Muna or the Columbian sisters. Nor to Ammo

Darweesh, Lamya, KhaltoBhaiya, or Haj Salem. But sometimes the blink of my eye was a twitch of contribution that brought me face to face with the past.

(138)

These lines clearly represent how Amal becomes nostalgic longing for her past which encompasses her family and friends. It can be said that Amal's eye blinking or recollection of the past is created unconsciously or consciously in order to repatriate herself into the typical Palestinian-self caused by her overwhelming feelings of uneasiness and disloyalty in the foreign land. Amal is characterized by her identity ambivalence: she has the desire to belong to the American culture and atmosphere, but in the same breath, she renders herself as traitor to her homeland and family as she feels, "A sense of shame that I [Amal] betrayed my family – or worse, myself" (174). This shows how Amal creates an identity space in the foreign land.

Amal fails to become an ethnic Arab American in the United States because she doesn't measure the essence of getting her two conflicting cultures properly balanced. She seems to be selective either to adopt Arabic values or American one. Ultimately her originality clicks her mind and soul and paves the way for adopting Palestinian values and assumptions. Despite her long years of stay in the United States, she describes herself as "Amal without the hope" (178). Amal represents a failure of assimilation in America without any tangible success in her homeland, Palestine. She is neither positive nor negative about the new life in the United States. However, she consciously and unconsciously tilts more towards the past, nostalgia. Receiving a call from her brother, Ismael, Amal's oppressed nostalgia bursts out restlessly compelling her to go back to her old family and world:

Another year passed. Whatever you feel...I kept it all in until one day when the telephone rang at five A.M. Half-sleeping I picked the receiver. "Hello".

“Aloo”, answered an accented voice. “Amal?” “Away”, I said, suspecting his identity and fully awake now. He chuckled, a sound I could recognize anywhere, it was the muffled laughter the first escaped from the right side of Yousef’s mouth, then stretched a smile across his handsome face...”Finally, little sister! We’ve been trying for months to find you”. Someone took the phone. “Amal! Habibti, darling! We found you”. It was Fatima – Amal. I cried at the sound of my Arabic name. (179-80)

Her hidden and oppressed nostalgia awakens in spite of her deliberate efforts to bury it in America so that she would be transformed into a woman of one-sided identity, the identity of the dominant society that would embrace and grant her some privileges that are denied to Palestinian people. However, developing a one-sided identity on the rubble of the original and deeply rooted one makes life deconstructive for her, just as it would be for someone who exaggerates his/her national, religious, and cultural identity to such an extent that its detrimental to himself/herself and others as well.

The Palestinian people in the novel suffer a lot while travelling from one place to another. The stories about the treatment at borders and airports, the anxiety of traveling, and the denial of visas and travel permits are uncountable and are an indistinguishable feature of Palestinian existence. In the introduction to *Palestinian Identity*, Rashid Khalidi writes:

The quintessential Palestinian experience, which illustrates some of the most basic issues raised by Palestinian identity, takes place at a border, an airport, a checkpoint: in short, at any of those many modern barriers where identities are checked and verified. What happens to Palestinians at these crossing points brings home to them how much they share in common as a people. For it is at these borders and barriers that the six million Palestinians are singled out for

“special treatment,” and are forcefully reminded of their identity: of who they are, and of why they are different from others. (1)

As Khalidi mentions about the pitiable condition of the Palestinian People, Abulhawa shows very pathetic condition of the EinHod villagers in the novel. In *Mornings in Jenin*, checkpoints are described as humiliating routine since refugees have to stand in long queues while they are often beaten or refused to pass according to the whims of the Israeli soldiers. The scenario of David and Yousef encountering at a checkpoint shows how Israeli treats Palestinians. David doubts on Yousef's identity and beats Yousef brutally.

Susan Abulhawa takes the reference of 1948 and the scenarios of war and its devastation after the formation of Israel. The novel represents how the Palestinian people become refugees in their homeland and forced to shift their journey from one part of the country to another corner of the world. Many scholars put pen to paper on the issue of 1948. Benny Morris in the book, *The Birth of Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* asserts:

In the course of 1948 and the first half of 1949, a number of processes definitively changed the physical and demographic face of Palestine. Taken collectively, they steadily rendered the possibility of a mass refugee return more and more remote until, by mid-1949, it became virtually inconceivable. The processes were the gradual destruction of the abandoned Arab villages, the cultivation or destruction of Arab fields and the share-out of the Arab lands to Jewish settlements, the establishment of new settlements, on abandoned lands and sites and the settlement of Jewish immigrants in empty Arab housing in the countryside and in urban neighborhoods. Taken together, they assured that the refugees would have nowhere, and nothing, to return to.(5)

The Palestinian People face different problems. The categorization of Palestinian-ness seems to be tagged with their race, religion and the place of origin. They exist in a paradoxical condition: they are not allowed the essential documents like citizenship and passports. They need Israeli authorization to move towards another place. Due to such condition of uncertain existence and dependency, they are compelled to struggle for gaining their identity as sovereign Palestine. The status of exiles strengthened Palestinians' awareness of their national identity by creating a bond among refugees and a fierce opposition to Israelis. In this way, Arab identity was grounded in those features that represented Palestinian-ness but that were also in contrast to Zionism. Therefore, one of the most recurrent trope is the emotional bonding of the Palestinian people with the land.

The reference of olive trees can be seen significant as it has connection with the Palestinian history. It shows how they have deep inclination towards their land. The same essence can be found as Helena Lindholm states:

A particular place is held by the olive tree. In Palestinian nationalist discourse, the olive tree is particularly meaningful, symbolizing both 'roots' and identity and serving core functions of production...olive trees may become very old...further giving meaning to the discourse of a Palestinian ancient connection to the land.(102)

The above mentioned lines show the importance of olive trees embedded with the "Palestinian-self". Olive trees have connection with the history of Palestine and Palestinian discourse. This very reference of olive trees also can be seen in the novel. The love for the land is shown in the novel. The incident of Yeha forbidding Hasan to go Jerusalem for study with Ari shows how he is blindly interconnected with the land. Though the negligence towards education shows illiterate mind set of Yeha, the

incident proves that he can't imagine his livelihood without land. This can be seen in the novel as Yeha says to Hasan, "Books will do nothing but come between you and the land" (16). He says so because he thinks that further education would take his son away from the land he is destined to inherit and farm.

The connection with land becomes particularly acute in diaspora politics of nationalism and identity. Remembering home and place serves as a means of maintaining community in exile. Homeland in this way remains one of the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced people. (Gupta and Ferguson 11) Similarly, the belongingness to the land is seen in the novel. The Palestinian people have deep desire to return to their homeland. This can be seen in the novel as Amal, the protagonist says:

I belong to this land. It possesses me, no matters who conquerors it, because its soil is the keeper of my roots, of the bones of my ancestors. Because it knows the private lust that flamed the beds of all my foremothers. Because I am the natural seed of its passionate, tempestuous past. I am a daughter of the land.(116)

These lines project how Amal has deep desire to her homeland. When Amal departs her homeland and proceeds to USA, she presents her emotional bond to the ancestral land.

In the same way, Yeha's decision to go back to his village during the olive harvest is to be intended as a re-appropriation of his identity, honour. Indeed, the concept of honor is crucial in the creation of Palestinian social status. Yeha performs a sort of ritual before trespassing. He has his own clothes cleaned, he shaves his beard, plays a new tune, "a call to the Earth. To Allah. To the country within him"(42). He plans to move his journey to the forbidden land after the formation of the new nation

Israel in 1948. The love for the land is seen as Yeha mentions, “That terrain is in my blood!...I know every tree and every bird. The soldiers do not”(40). This shows strong feeling of belongingness to the nation that forms identity as such. The novel further contains the description of Yeha’s returning to his homeland as:

For days he had roamed his fields, greeting his carob and fig trees with the excitement of a man reuniting with his family. He had slept contentedly in their shade, as he had done at afternoon siesta all his life. The old well where the soldier had shot Darweesh and Fatooma was still there, and Yehya had devised a makeshift bucket tied to vines of honeysuckle areej to fetch water. He had visited his wife’s grave, where the white streaked red roses had come back despite the destruction. He had read the Fatiha for Basima’s soul and-he swore-had spoken to her apparition. (41)

These lines make clear that Yehya’s returning to his forbidden homeland and memorizing the bygone days in relation to the land and trees connote that he is seeking his identity of being the part of Palestine. This becomes clearer when he goes to visit his land second time and loses his life over there as Israeli soldiers shot him dead. It proves how he shows emotional bond to the land, his nation.

Trees and land hold a lot of things in the Palestinian history. In Palestine some of the oldest trees are emblematic of Palestinian resilience to advertise while their old age is the representation of history as they are “the guardians of time”. Moreover, as olive trees also a symbol of peace and life. The destruction of olive trees emphasizes the brutality of Israeli occupation since it was part of Israeli propaganda to claim:

Palestine was a land without a people for a people without a land, trees are the witnesses of Palestinian existence. Trees and natural elements fill the narratives as living beings in the role of both protectors and witnesses of Palestinian-ness.

Traditional Palestinian literature abounds with the images of trees, whether they are figs, orange, pomegranate or olive trees. Other than being so persistent in narratives, they are hyper saturated cultural symbols in the construction of both Palestinian and Israeli collective memory. (Bradenstein 148)

According to him, these symbols stand for something that is lacking in both communities though the reasons behind are opposite. Trees for Palestinians are the representation of the lost homeland. Trees embody stability, legitimacy and the history. Together with aspects of collective memory, trees also have socio-economic implications. It is seen in the history that Palestinian economy and survival are largely based on agricultural products. Thus, it is not surprising that trees condense multiple expressions of Palestinian-ness to the extent that they can become “beckoning grandparents” for Amal.

As far as the Israelis are concerned, Bradenstein highlights that the policy of uprooting and replanting the trees mirrors the deterritorialization of Palestine geography, but also a symbolic role of trees which functions as an act of legitimate rooting within Palestinian territory connected to the return to the Holy Land promised by God. While for Palestinians, trees are “site of Palestinian collective memory at different points of dislocation and disruption of the Palestinian bond between the land and people”, for Israelis, they are “the restoration of a long-absent immediate bond between land and people” (157). Thus, Palestinian literature works as a re-appropriation of the images of trees in the attempt to vindicate the territory and keep alive a nationalist struggle fought on the same symbols by Palestinian and Israelis.

In the novel, trees embody a concrete sense of belonging, but also the idyllic past which is no longer available to Amal. Moreover, the process of identification with the land and recognition of Palestinian identity is troubled by the diasporic dimension

of her life. The reference of personalizing tree as “Old Lady” in the novel represents the destructions brought by Israelis and the nostalgic feelings it generates. When Sara and Amal come back to Jerusalem, Sara perceives the ancient walls of Jerusalem as the emblem of history whereas Amal corrects her saying the walls are easily erasable whereas trees are the real essence of Palestinian-ness in their rootedness and sense of belonging. Nonetheless, Amal comes to this final resolution after a long and troubled process of negotiation of identities.

Drawing from postcolonial theories, identity should be considered as a process rather than a state of being; it is the subject to diverse and continuous changes.

According to Stuart Hall:

It is possible to look at cultural identity through two different positions: first cultural identity which is defined by the history and ancestry of one, provides solid cornerstones that can endure the changing of history in the construction of the self; secondly, cultural identity undergoes the changes of history and therefore it should be considered as a process in the making where identities represent the different positions from where one can look back at the past. (135)

On the one hand, Amal has lived abroad trying to erase her past and live a different rootless identity in America and on the other hand, her notion of Palestinian-ness is complicated in itself even in an existence without exile. Indeed, it can be argued that her identity is not only concerned with loss, but also especially with existence. As she was born after 1948, she grew up in a context where her home was not really hers, the notion of home for her family was EinHod but since she never lived there, she lacks something she does not know. As for all the other Palestinians who were born in exile or refugee camps, returning home represents the fulfillment of what was amiss in their identity. Her identity comes from secondary sources, from the stories that Yousef and

Hasan told her. She experiences Jenin refugee camp, not being Palestinian.

The Palestinian identity seems to be coming out of the conflict between the attempts of forgetting the past and the collective memory of the people. In Amal's case, the collective memories carry the burden of the narrators of those memories who had either died or disappeared. Although she tries to remove those narrations, they intrude into her soul as well as into the narrative, shifting the timeline in flashback and forward. During the years in the United States, characterized by economic stability and job opportunities, Amal will miss the period spent in the past gone days it is so because it creates a sense of belongingness. This can be seen in the novel as she says:

We were friends who doubled as mothers, sisters, teachers, providers, and sometimes as blankets . . . The bond we forged was molded from an unspoken commitment to our collective survival. It reached through history, straddled continents, spanned ward, and held out collective and individual tragedies and triumphs. It was girlhood letters or a pot of stuffed grape leaves. Our bond was Palestine. It was a language we dismantled to construct a home. (164-165)

These lines represent Amal's girlhood in the orphanage where she moves to Philadelphia after gaining a scholarship. It is the condition of homelessness, nostalgic for the motherland that produces alienation and solitude.

The nostalgic feeling is not only relegated to a general longing for the homeland but it also brings the desire for native dances, music, and the communal voice. Throughout the novel, the Palestinians in general and specifically, Amal's feeling of being a part of Palestine, is persistent. She cries when she hears her Arabic name aloud after ten years of calling herself Amy and the moment she lands in Beirut, although it is not Palestine, she feels her body responding to the Arab language:

But the guttural silk of tones of Arabic rippled through me as I heard the

melodic calls and responses of my language. It's a dance, really. A man at a desk was offered teas as I walked through the metal detectors. He said, "Bless your hands" to the one making the offer, who responded, "And your hands, may Allah keep you always in Grace". Calls and responses that dance in the air.

(185)

The Arabic language plays a significant role in rooting the identity in the novel. When she returns to US for the second time, replying "thank you" she would repeat the Arabic blessings in her mind in a sort of compromise between the American and Palestinian culture. Similarly, to what Amal expresses about the physicality of the language, Leila Ahmed describes her relationship with the Arabic language as carnal encounter, where words acquire the vitality of a living body when they are spoken. Thus, language can be listed as one of the other physical losses that accompany Amal in her exile in the United States.

Amal's encounter with the American culture brings together numerous experiences of other Palestinians and Arabs. Al Maleh emphasizes that Arab immigrants were not distinguished according to their nationality and their ethnicity was a consequence of their socio economic status rather than of their cultural descendants. Moreover, she adds that before 9/11 the Arab-Americans could easily vanquish in the multicultural American society (170). Amal feels at ease with the other minorities that live in Philadelphia and she is not afraid when she finds a zone in the poor area of West Philly where the place was with the majority of the blacks. Among them she does not feel a foreigner, her accent is not "a call for mistrust" (178), and more importantly she learns that blacks' "enslaved culture had given birth to rock and roll, a kidnapped race that came to define the entire culture with its music" (176). The similarities with Palestinians do not escape Amal and when a black teenager points a gun at her, she is

not scared rather she reflects that the young man is nothing compared to Israeli soldiers with assault rifle. The scene evokes the prelude where Amal, with a gun pointed at her head is calm, detached and identifies with the young Israeli soldier. This can be seen in Prelude, very beginning of the novel:

AMAL WANTED A CLOSER LOOK into the soldier's eyes, but the muzzle of his automatic rifle, pressed against her forehead, would not allow it... A lone bead of sweat traveled from the soldier's brow down the side of his face. He blinked hard. Her stare made him uneasy. He had killed before, but never while looking his victim in the eyes. Amal saw that, and she felt his troubled soul amid the carnage around them. (9)

The way Amal treats with the soldier shows the boldness living within her mind and soul. It also depicts how Palestinian people come up with the shattering past and have the sense of resistance and struggle for their existence.

Similarly, in Philadelphia she hands more money to the black robber and adds a packet of cigarettes despite his remark that he does not smoke. What is remarkable about Amal is that as she grows, she learns to negotiate with her identities by creating moments where she bridges the gap with the other/enemy. Initially, she only wants to embrace the disavowal of cultural tensions in order to become "an American niche with no past"(173). Her adopted identity as Palestinian-American transforms Amal into a more indifferent "Amy". It seems to be the westernized version of Amal. But "Amal" has its deep meaning. It can be seen as simple thing transforming Amal into Amy but when it is analyzed critically, one can see the abandonment of what her name implies when her father says, "We named you Amal with a long vowel because the short vowel means just one hope, one wish . . . You're so much more than that. We put all our hopes into you. Amal, with the long vowel, means hopes, dreams, lots of them"(72).

Amal lives the life of desperate nostalgia. She recognizes that the past cannot be removed from her life since it is interconnected with her identity. Throughout the novel, Amal experiences what Bhabha defines as the “uncanny”, a psychological experience in the colonized subject caused by the repression of an unbearable identity which inevitably reappears as something excessive. Amal’s past experiences represent her traumatic childhood that she tries to remove in order to live without the memories of war and death indeed. Amal’s move to the USA represents a need for psychological unity rather than political refuge. This can be seen in the novel as Amal says, “Dalia, Um Yousef, had bequeathed to me the constitution that could not breathe while holding hands with the past. She could isolate each present moment while existing in an eternal past but I needed physical distance to remove myself”(174). Drawing from Hall’s understanding of identity as changing process coming from the future, it is clear that national identity is related to space as well as to time. In the specific case of Palestinians, they are often inseparable: “When place is lost, time is lost. This conflation emerges in the way Palestinians might answer ‘I am from 1948’ to the question ‘Where are you from?’, the part of Palestine that became Israel in 1948 is simply called ‘1948’, so ‘1967’ means West Bank and Gaza”.(Lindholm Schultz & Hammer 110). Thus, in the novel the place outside the boundaries of the refugee camp is perceived as “outside the limits of that eternal 1948” (43). Amal’s uncanniness becomes more persistent as past memories emerge unexpectedly blurring the time and space:

Palestine would just rise up from my bones into the center of my new life, unannounced. In class, at a bar, strolling through the city. Without warning, the weeping willows of Rittenhouse Square would turn into Jenin’s fig trees reaching down to offer me their fruit. It was a persistent pull, living the cells of

my body, calling me to myself. Then it would slouch back into latency. (175)

Similarly, as Amal receives her green card and officially becomes an American citizen, she suddenly fears rootless and needs to re-establish her connection with Palestine:

“My Arabness and Palestine’s primal cries were my anchors to the world. And I found myself searching books of history for accounts that matched the stories Haj Salem had told” (179). As she unfolds the memory of her childhood, Amal cannot balance her double consciousness of American and Palestinian.

The forced migrants want to be away from the traumatic past. Similarly, for Amal, “American-ness” is the condition for removing traumas while at the same time she benefits from her experiences over there, but they also feel as a betrayal towards her family. Although her relatives want her to study abroad because in her father’s view “the land and everything on it can be taken away, but no one can take away your knowledge or the degrees you earn” (60), Amal feels that she has turned her back on her Arab-ness by moving to US. She seems to be adopting new identity during her college days in Philadelphia. She drinks alcohol over there. Her behavior reflects what Bhabha calls hybridity, a condition of in-betweenness.

Hybrid identities are inevitable in the context of diaspora but Palestinians often avoid acknowledge it because it would mean to give away the essentialist claims of rootedness. In the novel, Amal breathes into the essentialised construction of reality as she inhabits both spaces of American-ness and Palestinian-ness. She tries to intermittently embrace and break up with her selves “wandering in and out of the American ethos until [she] lost [her] way” (173). Amal’s feelings reflect Said’s views on identity as “clash of currents”. Amal not only adheres to the American lifestyle but also feels ashamed by it at the same time. It means that she has deep connection to her past, the Palestinian ethos. Another event, when Amal swims for the first time in the

ocean, it triggers the emergence of Palestinian memories as her best friend Huda's desire was "just to sit by the ocean" because she could not swim. All these things generate complicated desire to her to go back to EinHod.

Amal remains connected to the Palestine forever spiritually and emotionally. When she obtains the green card and becomes officially the citizen of US, she misses Palestine more than ever:

Amy. Amal of the steadfast refugees and tragic beginnings was now Amy in the land of privilege and Plentitude. But no matter what façade I bought, I forever belonged to that Palestinian nation of the banished to no place, no man, no honor. My Arabness and Palestine's primal cries were my anchors to the world.
(179)

Amal cannot bridge the physical distance to her homeland. Though she officially becomes a part of America, she feels denial to accept easily rather she misses her by gone days and seeks her identity connected with her homeland, EinHod. Not only this but also she finds herself as one who is marginalized not getting proper respect and honor.

The references to Arabic poetry, music and culture in the novel symbolize the strong desire to conserve Palestinian norms and values that institutionalize the Palestinian-ness. Abulhawa brings the reference of poetry in the novel vividly. The incident of Hasan reciting the poetry of Khalil Gibran, Mahmoud Darweesh and other Islamic poets to Amal shows the great faith in Allah and the Palestinian land. Whatever the poetic reference Abulhawa brings in the novel, almost all reflects the pains and suffering of Palestinian people after the formation of Israel in 1948. Significantly, Darweesh's poetry is included in the novel:

The Earth is closing on us,

Pushing us through the last passages,

And, we tear off our limbs to pass throughs...

Where should we go after the last frontiers?

Where should the birds fly after the last sky? (168)

The above mentioned poem reflects the pains and sufferings of Palestinian people. It also hints the fatigue attitude of the Palestinians moving from one place to another for their survival. The same sentiment can be seen in Said's *After the Last Sky* as he states, "I am a Palestinian, a peasant. Look at my hands. I was kicked out in 1948 and went to Lebanon. Then I was driven out, and went to Africa. Then to Europe. Then to here" (143). This shows how the Palestinians are chased away from their homeland and compelled to live in the exile.

Palestinian people experiences different levels of home. Given the diasporic dimension of Palestinian-ness, homelessness is defined as plurality of homes: Palestine, the refugee camp, Lebanon, a dream land. The condition of being in home is to be placed in relation to a sense of belonging to a community rather than to the physical boundaries of the nation. As Amal suffered greatly from the loss of her parents, she is willing to be loved and rooted in her family lineage than actually coming back to her actual homeland. This is similar with James Clifford arguments as he says that a homeland lost must not necessarily serve a crucial role in identity formation in the Diaspora. Rather, "Decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return. And a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin"(306).It is thus not necessarily territory, but the lack of it, which defines diasporic communities. The relationship between territory, displacement and resistance are complicated. It is in the process of displacement that identity is shaped,

reshaped, but that process requires a sense of a place left behind. Hence, territory and land may be more metaphorical and symbolic than real in the diaspora.

Amal feels something missing being born in a refugee camp and not in the free Palestine. Although her hyphenated identity still requires negotiations as her American half cannot be suppressed. Amal's love for Majid seems to dismantle the ambivalent state of American-ness and Palestinian-ness to uproot her in a new compromised self: "At last, fate had surprised her with a dream of her own. A dream of love, family, children. Not of country, justice or education. Amal would have gone anywhere, as long as Majid was by her side. He became her roots, her country" (209). Amal's double consciousness can be seen. Though she is well established in the US, her willingness and love for the homeland makes her to set the journey towards original homeland. She not only moves to her homeland but also she gets marriage to the Arab man. It shows how the Palestinian-ness or Arab-ness inhabits within her.

Most of the characters in the novel sacrifice their life for martyrdom. The cause behind is not the religion but it has deep implication towards the feelings of Palestinian-ness. Hence, one can see Palestinian identity being stood on the very ground of struggle and resistance. This idea is similar with what Helena Lindholm puts forward:

Despite their vulnerability, Palestininas describe themselves as those who resist and fight, those who will never give up. In the notion of 'struggle', there is a great deal of pride and self-acclaimed strength. Struggle is the one component capable of challenging the Israelis as well as the general degrading situation of being refugee. (117)

The Abulheja family encounters a lot of disastrous incidents. They became outcast from their homeland and forcefully chased to one after another place by the Israeli soldiers. However, they never surrender to the Israeli government rather they fight for

the sovereign Palestine. For them, struggle becomes a weapon to defend their pride, their nation as Palestine as such.

The processes of becoming a refugee and living as a refugee have had direct impacts on the formation of Palestinian identity. Palestinian refugee- identity is strongly influenced by a collective sense of victimization and nationalism. This collective identity is passed onto subsequent generations living in exile. However, refugee status is but one factor in the formation of identity - with other factors being gender, religion, place of exile, and place of origin. With Israel's victory, the Palestinian Diaspora began. These displaced persons were scattered throughout the Arab controlled territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and into the neighboring countries of Jordan, Lebanon, and the Syrian Arab Republic.

The feeling of nationalism comes thorough the character of Amal and Ismael, the younger generation of the Abulheja family deliberately in the novel. They seem to be assuming their new existence, hyphenated identity. It does not mean that they have not deep inclination towards their homeland. They are in the position of inbetweenness which does not let them to accept their originality or the adopted identity. They are not fully dissolved in the new socio-cultural sphere. As Lindholm states:

For younger generations growing up in exile, too, even in the USA or Sweden, Palestine is important as a source of meaning and belonging. But, at the same time, young Palestinians have adopted new lifestyle, new cultural and social mores and traditions. Some even explicitly refer to their identity as 'hybrid' or 'hyphenated'. (226)

This shows how the younger generation of Palestine spread all over the world has belongingness to their nation through transnationalism. Amal and Sara seem to be adopting new identity in the foreign land having new lifestyle of new cultural and

social mores and traditions. In a way, they represent their identity as “hybrid/hyphenated” identity.

To conclude, Susan Abulhawa’s *Mornings in Jenin* projects the historical issue of Palestinian people being dispersed from their homeland, often traumatically to two or more foreign regions. She captures the issue of refugee and forced migration. The way novel represents characters living in imagined homeland, people willing to set back their journey towards parental home, Yeyha’s martyrdom and sacrifice to the nation, their emotional attachment to the ancestral land, characters like Amal, Ismael and Sarah wishing back to their ancestral land, and their almost all the incidents of struggling to form Palestinian-ness, all collaborate to state that Abulhawa’s *Mornings in Jenin* encapsulates the issue of Palestinian repatriation and struggle for constructing Palestinian self.

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