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**NAJIB AL-KILANI AS A POSTCOLONIAL WRITER**

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**Abstract:**

The increasing studies on colonial readings in the past years focus particularly one of the most controversial literary theories and criticism, that is postcolonial theory, which carries various meanings from politics to economy and to all other aspects of life, and this critical approach aims to dismantle the colonial discourse and trying to review the history of colonized countries, their literature, by different methodologies, in the views of the colonized. There is a bit odd coincidence on the timing: academic attention in colonialism ascended when great powers had already missed their worldwide validity and trust. Previously when colonialism was a purpose of mobilization, researchers and the elite were most fascinated by the freedom activities and the likelihood of modernization and advancement of the societies, but nowadays they are not so optimistic about that, which is seen in the novels and writings of some important authors.

Najib Al-Kilani as an effective Arab-African writer, in respect of presenting the subject of colonialism in the studies depending on literary art, but not based on the Western world, was one of the pioneers in Arab African literature medium, and he could reveal the great effects for western colonialism movement in the societies that have been colonized. This study sheds light on his contributions in the pathways of contemporary Arabic literature, focusing on two of his famous novels *Turkistan Nights* and *Napoleon in Al-Azhar* which represent his prominent writing style and reflect post-colonial literature in the Arab world.

**Key Words:**

*Post-colonialism, Colonialism, Orientalism, Najib Al-Kilani, Oppression.*

## **1. Introduction**

Post-colonialism carries cultural, social, and political issues in a world with real problems. Politically, economically, and culturally, it tries to analyse the discourse of colonisation, thus reviewing East and West under military, cultural and scientific conflicts. Also, this literary theory works on the exploration of points like differences between east and west, and determine thinking patterns by authors and intellectuals. It deals with colonised peoples especially African and Asian people during occupation period and afterwards. This means that Postcolonial theory brings ahead a range of knotty processing, dismantling and, as argumentative ego and others, and binary east and west, and transfiguration of colonial discourse. Orientalism tries to find the role of the colonised by western centralization in the field of force that excelled, or in development, pointing to the intellectual and cultural development after all struggles in the wake of conflicts (Fanon, 1965, p. 45). That does not necessarily mean the fight against all the aspects of the colonial products and its positive things and pros, but it means awareness of the other cultures found in the colonies, of the identities, attitudes, history, and documents that are at risk, and also of celebrating various creations and writings of the sons of the colonies or others, as writings reply to the position/foreign occupier's speech, and to entrench the identity of cultures that have suffered from exile and marginalization. Here the issue is to restore the role of the margin, within the dominant colonial central discourse. Colonialism is a broad concept that refers to the project of European political domination from the sixteenth to the twentieth century that ended with the national liberation movements of the 1960s. Post-colonialism will be used to describe the political and theoretical struggles of societies that experienced the transition from political dependence to sovereignty. (Mohammed Bin Ahmed, 2016: 5).

The post-colonial discourse is based on new cultural theory, with extensions and branches related to psychology, sociology, language, literary criticism, ethnic studies, politics and economics. This discourse will be understood only in the light of integrated cultural analysis, and not to be dragged into mono orientation and ideology or focus on a particular area. There is no doubt that it joins the post-modernist movement in its essence, and postmodernity is based on the reviews by philosophers, new historians and cultural criticism of the western central discourse which has been viewed with contempt for the cultures of other peoples and has been treated with superiority. How the colonial experience influenced those who colonized in a hand and those who have colonization, on the other hand? How colonial powers managed to control in this wide space of the non-western world? What are western

colonial education, science, and technology remains? Also, how influenced the colonial communities after colonialism, and how colonial education and language have impacted on colonies culture and identity? How western science and technology, and western medicine led to dominate knowledge systems that were going on? And what forms of identity appeared after the departure of Colonials? Should you constantly take anti-colonialism action through returning to the avenue of the past form of the pre-colonial period? These questions need a lot of studies and researches to reach some answers. To explain more on the theory in practice and how the writers expressed that in literature, we bring ahead an Arab African example and two of his well-known novels, who is Najib Al-Kilani and his novels *Turkistan Nights* and *Napoleon in Al-Azhar*.

The story of *Turkistan Nights* and *Napoleon in Al-Azhar* are two of the best novels of the great novelist, Najib Al-Kilani, where he expressed the concerns of the people of the forgotten East Turkistan and the Egyptian people. First of all, it is worth mentioning that this study came to contribute in the field of literary criticism and at the same time to introduce Al-Kilani and his literature and to present a study on a writer that you hardly can find a book or an article in English language speaking on him, although there have been many previous studies in other languages in Arabic especially which discussed different aspects, dimensions, goals, and trends in the novels of Kilani. In other words, this paper tries to expose the subject from angles that have not been addressed in the English language, by previous studies. As it seems to the researcher after a wide search.

Najib Al-Kilani is most known in the Arab world as a great writer that clearly put a deep impact on literary criticism and was talented in focusing on the issues of the people under the oppression of colonization or under the dictator regimes of their own countries in his writings. Actually, he represents the best writers of the post-colonial era that could bring about all the aspects of the life of that time and criticized it in a very rhetorical style that a few writers could do in the modern world.

Najib Al-Kilani has written more than seventy books, novels, short stories, poetry, criticism, thought and medicine, and in all his writings he has been a talented writer who is fluent in his artistic tools, calling for goodness, virtue, tolerance and other human and Islamic values. When we look at the production of this great writer, all are away from obscurity, nudity, and complexity and cares about the problems of the colonized peoples around the world. The life

of Najib Al-Kilani is full of literary presentations, that most reflected the struggle of the people against the colonials and their oppressions in many parts of the world.

This study is a humble attempt to present a set of answers to the questions that have been mentioned above. Noticing that I have translated most of the references and the quotations of the books, journals and internet sites and their titles from the Arabic language to English, because there were very few references in the English language, especially about the writer Najib Al-Kilani.

## **2. Najib Al-Kilani as an Arab-African Writer**

Najib al-Kilani is an Egyptian writer and doctor, was born in 1 June 1931, in the village of Sharshabah, in the governorate of Al Gharbia in Egypt. He entered the village's mosque like other children. He was a little genius, and soon he moved to the city of Tanta, and received the secondary certificate with high degrees, which allowed him to enrol in the Faculty of Medicine Palace in Cairo in 1951. He worked as a doctor in the city of Giza. He was arrested again and jailed for two years, then moved to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, from which he travelled to Kuwait in 1968 and then to the United Arab Emirates, where he spent more than a quarter of a century. (Al-Din, 2018: 2) His health continued to decline until the last breath on sixth March 1995. He passed away leaving behind a history after him. He won several prestigious prizes for his distinctive works in various fields of literature. Najib Kilani is one of those who realized their purpose and his talent in the art of narratives, formulated with the nature of realistic understanding, he was a distinguished writer and ambassador of humanity approach by his pen in the most countries of the colonized world. Najib al-Kilani noted that literature and the arts have had the most impact on the formation of thought and conscience in the Arab and Islamic world, more than any other means.

The religious tendency in his literature, as he puts it, is: “a methodology in thought and behaviour, and a combination of theory and practice. Islam is the mercy of the worlds; because God wants the happiness of slaves in this world and the Hereafter, and wants a method that achieves balance for the individual and society, and takes into account the evolution and stability, and make it a moral guarantee of the affirmation of good, justice, love and unselfishness” (Al-Kilani, 1981, p.7). And if this religious orientation includes the economy, politics and community affairs, it is first to include thought and literature. In the eyes of Al-Kilani, the arts and literature in Islamic civilization derived their origins from two sources: the Quran and the conduct of the Prophet first, and then the Islamic civilization

experience which witnessed great prosperity, the arts of poetry, writing, in various cultural and scientific fields secondly. This heritage also distinguishes itself from idolatry and ideological deviation, and served as a servant to its society, in proportion to its aspirations and desires (Al-Kilani, 1981, p.11)

From the view that literature as an expression of life, women had a distinct presence in his novels in general. Najib al-Kilani presents several issues related to women as well as common issues concerning them as well as men's issues, such as poverty, political persecution, economic exploitation, ignorance, and so on. Women's issues seek their fundamental rights, such as their right to education, family and community attitudes, and often not in their priorities. And shows us how, as a result of deprivation of education the problem of ignorance arises, whether about the requirements of modern life or matters of religion and concepts, and there is the issue of women's liberation, which Najib Al-Kilani discusses directly or through the roles and attitudes that assign to his characters, as well as their right to express their opinion and interact with national events. And the right to choose the husband and how the social tradition has stolen this right, in relation to this issue there is the issue of honour -from the point of view of customs not religion- where women alone are fully responsible without men, and the society rejects them even if they are not wrong, but always a sacrifice. Najib Al-Kilani also discusses the issue of family relations: their nature, factors of success and the reasons for their failure. Last but not least, the writer presents in his novels the issue of women's work outside the home and its economic role, both in her family and in her community. (Ahmed, 1994, p.12)

### **3. Turkistan Nights**

*Turkistan Nights* speaks on the details of the Chinese occupation of East Turkistan state, currently Xinjiang region, during the first half of twentieth-century and their direct violation not only on lives but on the principles of the residents' religion. The first thing is to force the parents to marry their daughters to the occupiers despite the difference in faith, and any fathers rejecting that is tortured and their daughters are taken forcibly.

People find themselves between the two ends of the pliers and the deception of neighbouring countries and policy tricks. They believe in resistance and struggle as the only way to salvation. Rebels in the mountain have suffered harsh months, preparing for the big attack. Khoja Niaz orders some of them to spread across the country to get the news and to examine

the enemy's condition. One of the men is Mustafa who goes to the city of Kashgar and Urumqi until he arrives in the city of Komol. There, he is met by his friend Mansur Dargah. They have a dialogue about war and jihad and also about his beloved, Najmatu-Allayl. Mansur tells him that she has been married by a Chinese officer, which shocks Mustafa (AlKilani, 2015, p. 67).

In the last chapter, the Chinese war with Osman Patur and his men is narrated. Patur forces withdraw to the region of Chinghai, but enemies surround them and they try to fight off. The battle is intensified; it is the last battle, and all their sense of power, faith, and everything is over. General Osman Patur falls into the hands of enemies. On 29th April 1951, the general is executed. Then Mustafa narrates his escape from Turkistan with the rebel group, and how they go to Kashmir. When they arrive in the Kashmir capital city of Srinagar, Mustafa receives his wife and his son. The story ends with Mustafa's transition with his family to Mecca.

#### **4. Napoleon Al-Azhar**

This story takes place in the city of Cairo during the years 1797, under the calm rule of Turkish Mamelukes. While the city is in a quiet atmosphere, the voices of street vendors filling roads, sidewalks, and some carts, drawn by horses carry one of the Mamelukes until the news of the arrival of the French army to the shores of the city led by Napoleon Bonaparte as part of a military campaign to turn things upside down and mingle things on the population between rejecting this campaign and supporting it as well as between escaping to Sham and resisting. Some people of the city hold meetings with some characters as Haj Mustafa Al-Bishtelli, a senior merchant, the blind Sheikh Ali al-Janjihi, the reciter of Qur'an, the scholar And Sheikh Ibrahim Salaam along with the Ahmed Madbouly. Their meetings focus on the discussion of the current situation of the country, the situation that came after the entry of Napoleon's armies and the escape of a large number of Mamelukes and senior Turks. Among the escapees are Ibrahim Agha, lover of Hilda the beautiful girl who all the young people of the neighbourhood are fond of her for her breath-taking beauty, the daughter of Fart-Ahriman. The French army on the outskirts of the city is finding some popular resistance by the Mamelukes and groups of people trying to prevent the French army from reaching the centre of the city. It's an unequal war with the people's stale weapon, and the traditional old hand-gunpowder, without training, a random blows under the supervision of the Mamelukes with some corroded cannons that was damaged by rust, while the French army has enough

ammunition and organized armies and a well-plan, in addition to the sophisticated modern weapon with the help of some traitors like Bertalmin.

Bishtelli is arrested to enter the castle prison and taste the ugliest methods of torture by the men of Bertalmin who does not know how to keep his daughter's honour, after engaging with French senior officers and sipping a drink at parties. Diboye leaves her to one of his officers, called Malus, in order to cover the sin of his master for the sake of not losing the loyalty of Bertalmin, who revenged for his daughter's honour, and kills master officer Diboye. Hassan sells everything in their possession to pay Bertalmin to release his father, who returns to the battlefield and the result is settled but he never gives up fighting the French colonisation despite the unevenness of the power of the two sides. In the end, Bishtelli dies because he walks into the processions of freemen, and Madbouly remains alive between his families and the beloved. (Suasha, 2015, p. 10) The real struggle and all that has come out is the struggle for a better life, both in the individual standard and at the collective level, struggle for freedom and national independence.

## **5. Conclusion**

The postcolonial theory is, in fact, a reading of Western thought in its dealings with the East, through a critical approach to its cultural, political and historical dimensions. In other words, this theory analyses colonial discourse in all its mental, methodological, and conceptual components in order to explore the institutionalized cultural patterns that govern this central discourse. Postcolonial theory in the cultural field in general and literary criticism, in particular, is based on a set of intellectual and methodological bases and can be limited to such components and elements as understanding East and West by monitoring the interactive relations that exist between them, whether these relations are positive that is based on tolerance, understanding, and coexistence or based on aggression, conflict and civilizational clash. East is clearly manifested in the texts and speeches of Orientalism. Thus, this orientalism is transformed from an objective epistemological discourse into a colonial and self-political colonialist discourse. Thus, the intellectuals of postcolonial theory armed the mechanisms of dismantling and undermining to dispel the central statements on which Western civilisation was based.

Another point is countering Westernization; the theory of post-colonialism was aimed at combating the Westernization policy and the arrogance of the West in dealing with the East.

The intellectuals of the postcolonial theory then spread their sleeves to expose Western hegemony, to erode their political and ideological bases, to show their near and distant colonial intentions, and to emphasize their material greed to drain the goods of the others. Therefore, Western cultural discourse is characterized by a tendency to concentrate, and to emphasize the characteristics of excellence, civilization, and urbanization, as opposed to a monastic discourse characterized by primitive, sorcery, sensuality, and liturgical magic.

Najib Kilani is one of the prominent figures in Arabic literature known through his theoretical works and creative writings in the field of Arabic literature. He can be identified through his novels like *Turkistan Nights*, *The Processions of Freeman*, *Virgin of Jakarta*, and more others which clarify the problem of colonialism in the life of colonised people. *Turkistan Nights* and *Napoleon in Al-Azhar* are living examples of postcolonial literature and the continuing tragedy of occupation, which opens the way to discuss the occupation of several geographical regions in our contemporary world, especially in Africa. Al-Kilani shows the effects of colonisation on culture and society both during the occupation and afterwards (Al-Qau'd, 1994, p. 125)

Najib Al-Kilani has succeeded in highlighting the post-colonial discourse in accordance with the axis made by the critics. The epicentre of *Turkistan Nights* and *Napoleon in Al-Azhar* novels is mostly a religious approach against the Chinese occupation of Turkistan and the French colonial power. The discourse of post colonialism is the most amazing social discovery in the course of human history, at least in the last fifty years. There is not a single social space on the face of the earth that is free from the influence of this ideology. Without postcolonialism, the lane of human history will be totally different. Najib Al-Kilani as an Egyptian novelist etched the discourse of postcolonialism in his two novels, namely *Turkistan Nights* and *Napoleon in Al-Azhar*, he ensured the role of religious nationalism in these novels. The writer has placed importance on the political novel; therefore, most of his novels reflect his political views. The historical content has gained a wide ground in his novels. He has emphasized in his novels that a political system, which is capable of safeguarding human rights and freedom, cannot be established under occupation or in autocratic rule in which expression of opinion is a grave crime.

Al-Kilani is much concerned with portraying of women in his novels as well. We find an increasing focus on the issues of women in colonised societies. This is what we have seen through the reading of his novels. These are issues that attract the sympathy of the West to



show Western readers that the status of women is linked to the prevailing culture and public awareness in society as well as to the political situation, and the spread of the values of freedoms and human rights systems, and only at that time men, women, children, and the elderly rights will be achieved. He has turned his novels into a means of indirect orientation. The novelist has exploited the modern techniques in the novel such as monologue, diary-notes, flashbacks, prediction and documents.

As a result, Al-Kilani has attained the sublime status among his counterparts due to the mastering of his artistic tools and his ability to convey his views. Thus the external and inner conflicts experienced by the characters in *Turkistan Nights* and *Napoleon in Al-Azhar* provide a valuable lesson for the reader, because characters experience all the threats and suffering during the occupation of the countries, and they still try to get through it and do not give up.

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