

## Gendered Oppression in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* and Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*

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### Abstract

Scholars have analyzed Al-Tayeb Salih's novel, *Season of Migration to the North* (1969), and Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* (1991) differently. Critics have read the first novel as a postcolonial novel, while *A Thousand Acres* has been seen to depict family relationships. Yet one major perspective escaping scrutiny in the two works has been the subjugation of women and their consequent resistance to patriarchal domination. Using the feminist theoretical lens, this essay examines these two important novels in the 20th century to uncover the varying impacts of patriarchal tyranny on female subjects against the background of two different cultures, the first set in Sudan and the other in the United States of America. With this method of analysis focusing on structures of female oppression and inequality of rights, this article concludes that patriarchy possesses an oppressive nature that causes the downfall of society and family disintegration.

### Keywords

A Thousand Acres, Double Oppression, Patriarchy, Season of Migration to the North, Tyranny-

### Introduction:

Discrimination between males and females originates since birth: males are assigned superior roles, values, and status, whereas females are assigned inferior ones. Preference for male persons is evident in food, health care, and education: male babies are given good medical care, a healthy amount of food, and are allowed to go to school. This happens mostly in Third World countries like Sudan. Such writers as Al-Tayeb Salih and Jane Smiley have captured the above-mentioned preferences.

Salih's background is reflected in his work. A Sudanese writer, Salih, was born in 1929 into a family of farmers and religious educators in a village in northern Sudan. His early education was in Quranic schools, and he later completed his schooling at Gordon College in Khartoum. Desiring to complete higher studies, Salih left Khartoum University to attend the University of London. Despite living abroad, Salih's fictional writings are concerned with village life and the complex relationships in his homeland. His novel *Season of Migration to the North*, written in 1966 and translated into English by Denys Johnson-Davies in 1969, is announced by the Damascus-based Arab Literary Academy as "the most important Arabic novel in the 20th

century". ([www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/tayeb-salih](http://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/tayeb-salih)). It was first published in 1966 by *Hiwar*, a Beirut-based literary magazine. Salih's life experiences in Sudan and his stay in London have greatly influenced his writing *Season of Migration to the North*. The novel is also considered an important turning point in developing postcolonial narratives that focus on the encounters between East and West (Hassan 19). Salih is known as the genius of the modern Arabic novel. His writing is deeply entrenched in the village where he grew up and his modern classic *Season of Migration to the North* has earned widespread critical acclaim and revitalized Arab Literature. The novel has many themes such as colonialism, corruption, and education. Still, the theme that is currently under study in this article is the theme of the subjugation of women in postcolonial Sudan. Salih portrays all such issues in his novel.

On the other hand, Jane Smiley is an American novelist whose novel *A Thousand Acres* (1991) won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1992. The novel focuses on farm life in Zebulon County, Iowa. Smiley is known for her lyrical works that center on families in pastoral settings like the one in Zebulon. She is also concerned with family life on farms during the 1990s and how women suffer under patriarchal dominance. In an interview with Lewis Burke, Smiley describes her novel *A Thousand Acres* as a "tragedy" since the novel reveals the tragic picture created within an American Midwest farming family (13).

American farm women in Iowa in the 1980s were not given their rights as men: they were allowed only to take care of farms and animals; they were not given education; and they were not allowed to choose a husband. Most importantly, American farm women at that time were not allowed to inherit property from their fathers, since he was the dominant figure in the family. Smiley portrays all such sufferings of farm women in America under masculine subjugation.

Jane Smiley reflects on all these aspects of patriarchal dominance in her novel *A Thousand Acres*. Smiley was born in Los Angeles in 1949. Her parents divorced when Jane was young, and her mother, Francis, was responsible for her upbringing. She lived with the members of her mother's family, an issue that has greatly affected her writing ever since. She writes about family life and family members. Her novel, *A Thousand Acres*, won her critical acclaim; in 1992, it won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. It is the tale of a tyrannical father, who divides his thousand-acre farm among his three daughters. Later, he slips into madness, curses his offspring, and "ventures out into a fearsome storm" ([www.Goodreads.Biography/Jane](http://www.Goodreads.Biography/Jane) Smiley).

Although the settings of the two novels are different, major factors link the two texts together. *A Thousand Acres* explores the relationship between a father and his daughters in a colonial setting, an American farm in Zebulon County, Iowa. Smiley is, therefore, concerned with the relationship between a dominant father and his oppressed daughters.

As far as the analysis of the text is concerned, the author "depicts the bitter and tragic reality of an American Midwestern family" ((Zubair and Khan 600). Smiley is not only concerned about the unpleasant situation of female characters in the novel but also, and even more importantly, she declares the growing consciousness of women in the decades following the mid-20th century. Smiley depicts the psychological and physical exploitation of women by masculine dominance and superiority.

Salih and Smiley portray two different yet related settings representing two cultures. Both writers depict uncivilized, agricultural life where women are portrayed as inferior to men. Smiley's novel portrays family life on farms during the 1990s and creates a tragic picture of women's sufferings under patriarchal dominance practiced against them during the 1980s. American Midwest farm women were not given the same rights as men then. Both men and women are expected to follow certain strict gender roles in society. Men are supposed to be rewarded when they conform to masculine standards of toughness. This is clear in the character of Larry Cook, who is highly respected in his town for being a good farmer and a strong father. On the other hand, his daughters are afraid and intimidated by him. This allows him to exert more power over them to get strict control over his daughters.

Northern Sudan, where Salih was born, shares some important characteristics with the American Midwest region. Salih's novel portrays agricultural, pre-modern, and pre-industrial Sudanese society where men are assigned greater roles while women are neglected. Salih's novel vividly depicts post-independence Sudanese society, where the status of women under patriarchal and colonial rule has been explored. In Salih's novel, relations between men and women are characterized by violence. In his article "An Island unto Himself: Masculinity in *Season of Migration to the North*" Gibson points out that "During his time in England, the Sudanese protagonist of the novel, Mustafa Sa'eed, has several relationships with English women that end in death or murder". Also, in the village of Wad Hamid in Sudan, "tragedy strikes when Sa'eed's widow, Hosna, is forced to marry a man much older than herself" (Gibson 23-44). Thus, in its portrayal of relationships between men and women in the novel, whether in Sudan or England, the text suggests that women everywhere are frequently victims of violence and misogyny. In sum, Smiley's and Salih's works fit into an unusual comparative mold that presents to readers the intransigence of patriarchy in subjecting women, irrespective of space, whether in the First or Third World. Patriarchy's subjugation ways could be varied, but the intention is similar: restrict the Other's freedom. This is much more interesting when it is captured by the creative muse of writers geographically far apart.

Informed by their separate environments, Salih and Smiley are, therefore, concerned with family life and the relationships among members of the family as they are projected in their novels, especially as it concerns female oppression and the struggle of women to establish an identity for themselves.

### Review of Related Literature:

Previous studies claim that Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* is a postcolonial novel. Such studies are concerned with the catastrophic impacts and the perils of colonialism and imperialism on African identities and societies in general and Sudanese in particular. They analyze the novel as a postcolonial novel, where two postcolonial subjects lived in England (a colonial country) and returned to their homeland, Sudan (a colonized country), to tell their experiences there. A study by Shadi Neimneh, titled "Cultures, Identities, and Sexualities in Leslie Silko's *Ceremony* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* tackles the issue of "intersections of culture, identity, and sexuality in a Native American novel...and an African one" (Neimneh 1). It also examines the disruptive power of colonialism on Indigenous culture and identities.

A study by Peyman Baharvand, titled "Victims of Colonialism in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*" explores the relationship between colonizers and colonized, a relationship that is characterized by "a kind of cultural hegemony over colonized people to justify [colonizers'] lucrative presence in their colonies" (Baharvand 137). Another study by Rashid and Zaiyadi, titled "A Feminist Critique of *Season of Migration to the North*" examined Salih's work via a feminist lens. According to Rashid and Zaiyadi's analysis, the novel has three types of female characters: modern and sophisticated with flawed characters; elderly members of society who follow traditional ways; and strong and independent ones (263). However, even though the study differentiates between Western and Eastern women in matters of role in society and family, it does not deal with the painful dimensions of female gender-rooted oppression, including sexism and marginalization.

Other studies by Osman and Khessibi (2019) and Davidson (1989) have dealt with the novel from a critical discourse analysis lens. The study by Osman and Khessib focuses on the difference between the language used in the novel by male and female characters. Osman and Khessibi's study is concerned much with Saleh's attempt to illustrate the difference between Western and Eastern cultures rather than with sexism or marginalization (43). On the other hand, Davidson's study projects the division that colonizers left behind them between South and North, Blacks and Whites, and the problems that result from such division (385). All such studies have revealed the painful effects of colonialism on Sudanese people and culture, while neglecting an eye-catching issue, namely, the oppression of women under patriarchal dominance and women's struggle to have an outstanding identity.

On the other hand, studies on Smiley's novel have dealt with it as a work about family relationships. For example, Ulya, Mamik Tri, and Wedawatti (2020) explain that Smiley's novel "explores the life of a farmer's family, where the novel discusses various problems related to the family" (38).

They continue that the novel discusses, for the most part, the relationships among members of the Lary Cock family. Although the study deals with women's exploitation by men, it focuses on the passive roles that women have in fighting such exploitation. Others, however, have dealt with the novel as a critique of sustainable agriculture, modern farming, the environment, and the relationship between family problems and farm practices. This is made clear in Jim Bender's study, "What is so disturbing about Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*?" (1998), where the author states, "Jane Smiley's award-winning novel, *A Thousand Acres*, invites a critical appraisal of a popular assumption for proponents of sustainable agriculture: that family farming and sustainable agriculture are mutually reinforcing" (153). As stated by Bender, Smiley's novel provides considerable information about sustainable agriculture. Bender's study is, therefore, concerned more with farm structure and farming practices than with the position of women in a family farming environment, even though oppressive gender-based relations abound.

The present study explores the representation of female characters in the two works, highlights their struggles for establishing an identity while going through the mold of female inferiority erected for them by the men of their immediate societies, and compares and contrasts postcolonial literature with a colonial one to reveal points of patriarchal domination and

marginalization of women. What makes the two settings—America and Sudan—closely related is, undoubtedly, not only the patriarchal domination and subordination of women but also, even more importantly, the female characters' struggle to fight such subjugation to establish a unique identity for themselves, a stand-alone identity. The strongest reason behind comparing the colonial text with the postcolonial one is that the subjugation of women by patriarchal dominance is not a postcolonial issue but a colonial one too. It is deeply rooted in farm life communities, whether in a colonial or a postcolonial setting

### **Feminism and literature:**

Feminist criticism, which came to prominence in the 1960s, is a theoretical practice that is committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism. Bressler defines feminism as an approach to literature that rejects all assumptions based on patriarchal visions in both culture and literature (114). Postcolonial feminism, a sub-category of present-day feminism, rejects the masculine, patriarchal system established by white males and recognizes that it is engaged in a political and social struggle against male dominance (158). Feminist criticism, therefore, highlights how women are being oppressed, suppressed, and repressed. On the other hand, Fetterly points out that feminism attempts not only to "interpret the world but to change it by changing the consciousness of those who read and their relation to what they read (viii). Therefore, it disapproves of patriarchal conventions that privilege masculine modes of thinking and marginalize women. Patriarchy and gender differences are significant aims and methods in feminist criticism. Patriarchy means the rule of society and culture by men. As Bressler points out that in feminist criticism, there is a critical question that needs an answer: "Are not women and men equal in all aspects? Feminist studies, feminist theorists, and feminist critics all answered in one accord: 'No' (167). So, it is the role of feminist critics to highlight the issue of equality with men, which has been neglected for a long time.

The present study uses the feminist strands known as postcolonial feminism and the post-World War II split in American colleges and universities as a guide for the analysis of the two works. Post-World War II American society witnessed great changes in economics and politics; there was a general prosperity. Several laws were passed, which made discrimination illegal. The period also witnessed the growing middle class (Patterson 775). Among the great changes that took place in post-World War II American society was the emancipation of women and their struggle for equality. Women also began to oppose all forms of discrimination actively. It was at that time the feminist movement began to develop, first in the United States and then in Europe. All these changes and developments in post-World War II America paved the way for Jane Smiley to portray the sufferings of farm women under masculine sovereignty in her novel *A Thousand Acres*. Therefore, the feminist theory of analysis will be used to unveil the subordination and suffering of farm women in a colonial setting under patriarchal dominance. This is on the one hand; on the other hand, the postcolonial lens of analysis will be used to uncover women's exploitation in a postcolonial setting.

The other lens of analysis used in this article is postcolonial feminism, which is concerned with the representation of women in a colonized country as well as in Western communities. As used by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin in their book *The Empire*, postcolonialism describes all cultures affected by the process of colonialism and imperial power from the beginning of colonization to

the present. Postcolonialism is identified with discourse. Therefore, postcolonial theory is a critical study of colonial texts, both literary and non-literary (2-11). In its earlier years of emergence, postcolonialism referred exclusively to discourses and practices produced by colonial history. Later, it has become more of an abstraction, which is applied to any redefinition of marginality. According to Sara Suleri, "This reimagining of the postcolonial has made way for the theoretical articulation and has enabled the coalition between postcolonial and feminist theories" (113). Thus, postcolonial feminists find parallels between colonialism and the subjugation of women. The basic idea that all women should be treated equally to men was the exclusive focus of Western feminists. This is the link between the lens of analysis related to Western communities and postcolonial feminism related to Third World discourses. Therefore, the present study digs deeper into the hidden reasons that lie behind the inferior positions of women and their struggle for an identified identity both in Western communities and in postcolonial ones.

Postcolonial feminists talk about "double colonization," a term that was first used by Kristen Holst in the book she edited with Anna Rutherford, titled *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Postcolonial Women's Writing* (1986). Holst and Rutherford explain the ways through which women, in a postcolonial country, experience double oppression: colonialism and patriarchy. According to Holst and Rutherford:

The colonial world was no place for a woman, let alone a lady; it was a man's world, demanding pioneering, martial, and organizational skills, and the achievements of those in the shape of conquered lands and people were celebrated in a series of male-oriented myths: mateship, the mounties, explorers, freedom fighters, bushrangers, and missionaries (4).

Double colonization, thus, refers to the status of women in the postcolonial world, where women suffer from double oppression, that of colonialism and that of patriarchy. Ashcroft and Griffiths explain that according to the term double colonialism, women are colonized in "a twofold way by imperialism and male dominance" (*The Postcolonial Studies* 67-8). A postcolonial woman has to resist colonial power as a colonized subject and as a woman as well. Although men and women are colonized, women suffer most since they suffer from their colonizers and their colonized brothers. Instead of supporting them against oppression, men become women's oppressors; they exploit them by misrepresenting them in all national aspects of life.

Inspired by postcolonial literary theory, postcolonial feminism appeared in the 1980s as a reaction to the former standard feminist theory that was primarily dedicated to Western women. It emerged when women who were not Western began to question their status just like Western women who called for equality in social rights. It also examines how women are depicted in colonial and postcolonial literature. Postcolonial feminist theory concentrates on how gender differences and the representation of women are constructed both in colonial and postcolonial discourses (Tayagi 45-6). In a colonial discourse, women suffer from patriarchal domination, whereas in postcolonial discourses, women suffer from double colonization, which is represented in patriarchy and colonization. In colonial discourses, women also suffer from patriarchal domination instead of being supported by masculine power against prejudice. In postcolonial

discourses, women suffer from double colonization. Instead of having men as their blocking wall against abuse and suffering, their male partners are their oppressors.

Although Smiley's novel *A Thousand Acres* is neither a colonial nor a postcolonial discourse, in the real sense of both terms, when we consider the era in which it was set, it focuses mainly on the representation of women in farm life that is greatly controlled by a masculine authority. The setting is an agricultural one like that in Salih's novel. Smiley focuses on farm life and families in pastoral settings like the one in Zebulun during the 1990s. The novel also portrays women's suffering under patriarchal dominance.

Smiley's novel reveals a tragic picture created within an American Midwest farming family. American farm women in Iowa in the 1980s were not given their rights as men: they were allowed only to take care of farms and animals; they were not given education; and they were not allowed to choose a husband. Most importantly, American farm women were not allowed to inherit property from their fathers since he was the dominant character in the family. Smiley portrays all such sufferings of farm women in America under masculine subjugation. Smiley's concern with farm life comes as a reaction to the growing feminist movements that called for equal rights for women like men in all aspects of life. Colonial and postcolonial discourses represented by *A Thousand Acres* and *Season of Migration to the North*, respectively, share common factors concerning gender oppression and suppression of women. On the other hand, postcolonial discourse has been represented by Salih's novel *Season of Migration to the North*.

### **Patriarchy and the Cultural-Historical Construction**

Analysis of the two texts begins with highlighting the different aspects of oppression, taking them one after the other as they guide the analysis. Aspects of oppression include such layers as sexism and marginalization, tyranny of patriarchy, and double colonization. These will be examined in detail in each text. However, double colonization is not a study point in *A Thousand Acres* since the text is neither colonial nor postcolonial. The analysis doesn't need to include all aspects of oppression. In other words, sexism, marginalization, and tyranny of patriarchy can be pursued in both texts, whereas double colonization will be uncovered in *Season of Migration to the North*. The representation of female oppression and exploitation that women experience in *Season of Migration to the North* and *A Thousand Acres* is, undoubtedly, a critical issue that has been dealt with by Salih and Smiley, however, both writers did not write directly about this issue.

Whereas Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* and Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* are written in two different cultural settings, the events of the two novels are related in such a way that makes it possible for readers to reveal the subjugation of women and their consequent resistance against patriarchal dominance. Salih's text is concerned with the cruel impacts of colonialism on Sudanese society and the complex relationship between men and women in a postcolonial country. Smiley's novel, on the other hand, focuses attention on gender differences and power relations in a Western country as well as the bad impacts of the tyranny of patriarchy on female characters.

Patriarchal and colonial aspects are significant in understanding and analyzing the two texts. Therefore, it is important to identify the specific effects that double colonization has on female characters in Salih's novel and the perils of patriarchy and tyranny on women in Smiley's novel.

Moreover, showing whether the patriarchal or colonial aspect is more pressing and requires intensive study is another important goal of the present study. Here emerges the significance of double colonization and tyranny, which lead to the female characters' struggle in the two novels to establish their freedom in male-oriented societies.

The cultural and social construction that determines the status of women in postcolonial Sudanese tribal society and on an American farm is, somehow, different but related in *Season of Migration to the North* and *A Thousand Acres*. Salih represents female characters in a way that makes it clear to readers that some factors determine the status of women and their fate in a postcolonial setting. It is not only patriarchal dominance that determines women's fate; colonial predicament and tribal traditions are among such factors. On the other hand, Smiley's representation of female characters is a bit different: women's status and fate are determined by masculine power only. Several tribal factors have shaped the cultural-historical setting of Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*. The historical period Salih explores in his novel is Sudan under British colonialism and the social circumstances that characterized the postcolonial period in postcolonial Sudan. At that time, Sudanese society was an agricultural, non-industrial society that was governed by a set of strict tribal rules. In such a society, men are given greater roles in managing life, whereas women are given lesser ones.

The male-dominated culture that was established by colonial rule made matters worse for African women, in general, and Sudanese women, in particular. They experienced abuse, exploitation, and neglect, which made them feel alienated. They were only supposed to cook, entertain men, and take care of the family; they were not permitted to pursue education or take part in any discussions involving males. According to Rose Ure Mezu's argument in her piece "Women in Achebe's World," patriarchy predominated during the postcolonial era when males held power and women were seen as merely "part of men's acquisitions." Mezu claimed that women were "traditionally subordinated to sexist cultural mores" at that time ([www "Women in Achebe's World"](#)). In African civilization, women are typically described as voiceless or muted. Patriarchy is defined by Rich in "Of Woman Born" as "the power of the fathers: a familial, social, ideological, and political system in which men determine what parts women shall not play, and the female is everywhere subsumed by the male, either directly or through tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and division of labor" (57-8).

In *Season of Migration to the North*, Wad Rayyes personifies a guy who views women as objects and believes that assaulting them is his right, in parallel to these situations. Sudanese women were obviously without a distinct identity. Their survival relied on the civilization they lived in, particularly the community of men. In Sudan, women used henna to dye their hair and cook to define their identities. Henna Dying preserved their artistic potential while showcasing their ideal physical attributes. Women in Sudan kept themselves occupied with cooking and other home tasks to preserve their identity. Sudanese women think cooking food and maintaining a nice appearance will win their male partners' favor. Circumcision is a significant custom in the construction of a Sudanese woman's identity. Sudanese women were circumcised when they were children. A girl who undergoes circumcision gains womanhood, social standing, and the chance to win the most eligible male in the neighborhood. She rises to a position of dignity and respect. Conversely, a woman who has not had circumcision faces discrimination and is deemed

unsuitable for matrimony. In the narrative, Bint Majzoub mockingly tells the narrator, "We were afraid, you'd bring back with you an uncircumcised infidel for a wife," after arriving back from Europe (Salih 3).

Therefore, the relationship between them and men in Sudan was fundamentally characterized by violence and misogyny. In that relationship, both men and women suffer, but it is women who bear the brunt of violence. This has manifested in the tragic ends that Mustafa Saeed's mistresses meet in England and Hosna's violation by her husband Wadd Rayyes in the small village of Wad Hamid. Whether in England or Sudan, *Season of Migration to the North* suggests that patriarchal dominance and misogyny afflict women in such painful ways that lead to their death or destruction. Women are the targets of patriarchal violence, and the result is consistent suffering and psychological destruction.

The cultural setting of Smiley's novel *A Thousand Acres* is, somehow, different: the events of the story take place in a European country where a 21st-century family lives on a farm. The crucial factor in the events of the story is the relationship between the father, the owner of the farm, and his daughters. The relationship between father and daughter is corrupted for different reasons. Father, Larry Cook, is an unsentimental man and shows no affection toward his daughters. The relationship between them is based on obedience, respect, and service on the part of the daughters in return for nothing. He expects them to satisfy all his needs, including sexual ones after his wife dies. The result of such a relationship is catastrophic.

Although the settings of the two novels are different, there is something that ties them together: women's suffering at the hands of men. Women in the two novels, whether they work on farms or in their own houses, pay a heavy price. Although the backbreaking work they do is crucial to the success or failure of a farm or a home, men in their lives make decisions and tell them what to do.

### **Female Subjugation in *Season of Migration to the North***

Al-Tayeb Salih, born July 12th, 1920, died February 8th, 2009, is a Sudanese writer, who is best known for his novel *Season of Migration to the North* (1969). The novel's main concern is the impact of British colonialism on African societies in general and Sudanese identity, in particular. The novel also captures the tensions seen in contemporary Africa: education versus tradition, males versus women, rural versus urban, and the particular versus the general.

Moreover, the novel highlights the brutal history of British colonialism on the Sudanese identity in general and on the identity of female characters, who suffer double colonization, in particular. *Season of Migration to the North* narrates everyday issues in Sudan during a postcolonial period. The narrative is told by an unnamed narrator who believes strongly in the customs and traditions of Sudanese society. Mustafa Said, the main character in the novel, is introduced by Salih as a man who wants to liberate women sexually. The conception of gender is an ideological structure that divides people in society into two conflicting classes, men and women, based on a hierarchical relation of the domination of men and the subordination of women. In an elaborative quotation, Salih depicts such a division:

My mother brought tea. My father, having finished his prayers and recitations from the Quran, came along. Then my sister and brothers came, and we all sat down and drank tea and talked, as we have done ever since my eyes opened to life. Yes, life is good and the world is as unchanged as ever (2).

One can classify the submission of women in Salih's novel into positive submission and negative submission. Positive submission is a sort of submission where a woman shows loyalty to her husband without being affected negatively. Negative submission, on the other hand, affects a woman in a violent way where she becomes subject to physical and moral violence. Mustapha Said's mother has no role in his life, though she is responsible for his upbringing after the death of his father. Said tells us: "When the headmaster informed me that everything had been arranged for my departure to Cairo, I went to talk to my mother" (23). The conversation between Said and his mother is suggestive: women are dominated by men and are not allowed to give a say when the matter concerns their sons. The only one who can give a say is a man, while women are seen in a lower position than men. This is a sort of positive submission where women are not subjected to physical violence. They only show loyalty without rejecting men's actions. Mustapha Said's mother does not show any revolting actions against her son's words, though she is the only person responsible for her son's education after the death of his father.

Another example of positive submission can be seen in the character of Hosna bint Mahmoud. Hosna is submissive and loyal to her husband. She evinces patriarchal subjugation. She is loyal to her husband. She loyally says, "He was a generous husband and a generous father" (71). Although Hosna's former husband was generous and was like a father to her, she couldn't live alone without a man under whose protection she lived. This protection is a positive submission since women cannot live without a patron. After the death of her husband, Hosna sought another marriage to find protection under the auspices of a husband—a man.

Negative submission can also be seen in the other side of Hosna's two marriages: the two marriages were against her desire. Reflecting on the hierarchical system, Hassan states in his article "Gender (and) Imperialism" that "Salih portrayed a traditional society beset by colonial history, where stifling patriarchy subjects women not only to discursive but also to systematic physical violence" (320). It is in such a way that negative submission impacts greatly on women. Hosna figures the oppressed women in the Sudanese society; her two marriages are explicit examples of such oppression. The first marriage was to Mustapha Said, and the second was to an old man. The two marriages were against her desire; her father forced her to marry the two men. Her second husband considers women nothing but men's belongings: "Women belong to men, and a man is a man even if he's decrepit" (Hassan, *Tayeb Salih: Ideology and the Craft of Fiction* 99). Although Salih refers to great changes in Sudanese society like iron plows, sending daughters to school, radios, cars, etc., women are still controlled by men and will be dominated by the rules of a patriarchal society.

Physical violence against women in Sudanese society is another feature of patriarchal dominance. Hosna's father forces her to marry Wadd-Rayyes, her second husband, and when she expresses a desire to refuse such marriage, her father "swore at her and beat her, and told her she'd marry him whether she liked it or not" (Salih 122). When married against her will, Hosna reacts violently: "If they force me to marry [Wadd-Rayyes], I will kill him and kill myself" (76). According to Hassan, this act of violence "bears witness to the destructiveness of phallogocentric

masculinity ("Gender and Imperialism" 321). Women are dominated by men even when given the chance to choose a life for themselves.

In *Season of Migration to the North*, women's struggle against masculine oppression and domination is a struggle of anger. Anger can be seen in various ways through which female characters in the novel plan to establish their own identity. In Saleh's novel, the struggle is in the public sphere, where an entire postcolonial society is the main concern. Therefore, the struggle against masculine domination and oppression takes the form of condemnation and violent acts.

When Hosna, the main female character in the novel, is forced by her father to marry twice, she acts violently since her two marriages are against her will. She threatens her father and family: "If they [father in particular] force me to marry [Wadd-Rayyes], I will kill him and kill myself" (Salih 76). As the quotation makes it clear, Hosna directs her violent words to her father, who is responsible for her marriage, not her.

Also, the verb "kill" indicates a hidden passion that cannot be expressed in simple words. In other words, Hosna does not have the right to accept or refuse the marriage. Therefore, when married against her will and desire, she acts violently. According to Salih, women in a postcolonial society like Sudan should not be treated as mere sex objects. When they are treated as mere sex objects, female characters become victims of a patriarchal society. In most cases, they are forced to act violently against themselves and society.

Women in a postcolonial discourse are double colonized. They suffer from patriarchy and colonization. They are dominated by oppressive men who are supposed to be their backing assistance; they become their oppressors. Salih's novel is a cry against the patriarchal culture that dominated Sudanese society at that time. The novel portrayed women as inferior to men, as men's property, and as powerless and voiceless. Women have been portrayed in such a passive way that they seem like powerless characters who are dominated by men or as mere sex objects.

As a result, women become victims of a patriarchal culture and are, therefore, forced, in most cases, to kill themselves. Female characters in Salih's novel suffer from double colonization: they are oppressed by men of their skin and by colonizers.

Although Salih condemns the male subjugation of women in rural Sudan, his critique is also launched against European women. Like Third-World women, European women are also subject to societal rules: though educated, they cannot get jobs like men. Salih's portrayal of the violence and oppression of women in Sudan and Europe is a critique of male domination and is, therefore, a call to put an end to such a patriarchal system that enslaves women.

### **Entailment and Deprivation in *A Thousand Acres*:**

Jane Smiley, born September 26th, 1949, is an American novelist who won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1992 for her novel *A Thousand Acres*. The setting of the novel is on a thousand-acre farm in Iowa, which is owned by a father and his three daughters. Ginny, the oldest daughter, is the narrator of the events. Larry Cook, an elderly father, chooses to incorporate his farm and give his three daughters, Ginny, Rose, and Caroline, full and joint ownership. When the youngest,

Caroline, objects, her father removes her from the agreement. Caroline's removal from the agreement marks a chain of events that brings hidden and dark truths into light, such as male domination of women, sexual abuse of Ginny and Rose, and, finally, Ginny's complex relationship with her family and with her husband. *A Thousand Acres* is a novel that tells the story of a corrupt and corrupting patriarchal society. All in all, the novel focuses on female oppression, exploitation of women, and their struggle to free themselves from the fetters of men.

Characters in the novel constantly attempt to manipulate one another based on gender; they possess secrets, and then they subsequently reveal them. Ginny, the eldest daughter, is portrayed in the novel as an acceptable and loved woman only, and only, when she remains "oblivious" (Wirda and Mamik 121). When she has the chance to disagree with men, this disagreement is conditioned: she disagrees without fighting with men and without expressing her point of view. As Smiley explains, Ginny "is allowed to disagree with men, contingent upon her doing so without fighting" (Smiley 104). Nobody pays the least attention to her opinion, which remains irrelevant. Ginny remarks, "Of course, it was silly to talk about my point of view. ' When my father asserted his point of view, mine vanished" (176). Also, when she makes the "mistake" of crossing her father, she is referred to as a "bitch," "whore," and "slut" (181, 185).

As long as women remain submissive, they are described by men as "good"; when they resist, disagree, or question anything that is related to masculine authority, they are "bad" (90). Rose complains about this standard of judgment: "When we are good girls and accept our circumstances, we're glad about it. When we are bad girls, it drives us crazy" (99). Women in the novel have been taught to accept such a set of beliefs uncritically. Smiley describes, in a suggestive way, the marginalization of women by men in the novel as well as in society. This is strong evidence that there are gender differences between men and women. Gender differences can be easily seen in *A Thousand Acres* when Larry Cook divides his farm through the manner of entitlements in the novel. Patriarchy can be seen in the novel through the system of entailment. Only two of Larry Cook's three daughters are interested in farming; therefore, he wants to give his property to them. The strengths and faults of the key characters become clear as the story progresses.

Smiley supports the opposition to this patriarchal control over women. According to her, women who are emotionally and financially dependent on males deteriorate. On the other hand, people who struggle against the psychological and material restraints of patriarchal culture can grow into liberated women and autonomous individuals. In *A Thousand Acres*, neglect and abuse practiced against female characters cannot be ignored. Much neglect and abuse are characteristic features of the many relationships in the novel.

As children, Ginny and Rose are depicted as victims of both sexual and physical abuse that has been practiced by their father for a long time. On the other hand, Caroline is neglected by her father because she objected to her father's offer to be willed part of his farm. Rose also neglects her children, thinking that they should leave Zebulon County, where they live. As a result, both her daughters suffer from the lack of having a kind mother. Also, Rose betrays her faithful husband Pete with Jesse Clark. The whole family suffers from abuse and neglect. They used to share such family defects. Rose summarizes the situation:

Daddy thinks history starts fresh every day, every minute; that time itself begins with the feelings he's having right now. That's how he keeps betraying us, why he roars at us with such conviction. We have to stand up to that and say, at least to ourselves, that what's done before is still with us, right here in this room, until there's true remorse. (216).

This quotation by Caroline is a cry against the neglect and abuse that women in the novel, in particular, and women in the whole world, in general, suffer from. Caroline, and, consequently, other women, have the right to fight against such neglect and abuse to free themselves from the fetters of masculine dominance. Women should stand together against any cruel and violent treatment, whether in the past or the future. This is not only the voice of Caroline; it is also the voice of Jane Smiley herself. She calls on female readers to have enough courage to talk about any neglect and abuse that they had in the past so that they can stop it from happening in the future.

Jane Smiley never uses the word feminism in her novel *A Thousand Acres*, yet the indictment of how farm women are treated is clear in her portrayal of three farm female characters: Ginny, Rose, and Caroline. Caroline seems the strongest of the three sisters since she rejects farm work and becomes a lawyer. Rose is resentful, behaves vehemently, and is vocal about the neglect and abuse women suffer from. She is only blaming men and farm life for being responsible for their suffering. She rejects farm work that is assigned to women, like cooking, cleaning, and raising young children (241). The depiction of female characters in a predominantly patriarchal culture is a feminist assumption, where women are badly treated and are, therefore, put in a lower position than men.

Women's decision-making role ends on farms. Men, not women, own the farm and make decisions concerning farm work. Wives and daughters are among the possessions that men have. Painfully, Rose reveals her father's sexual abuse to her sister Ginny when she states, "You were as much his as I was. There was no reason for him to assert his possession of me more than his possession of you. We were just his, to do with as he pleased, like the pond or the houses or the hogs or the crops." (191). Larry Cook has complete control over the lives of his daughters Rose and Ginny. It is not a matter of sexual abuse only; it is a sort of asserting a perverted form of power. Women are like objects of property.

Although Jane Smiley makes Rose outspoken about her anger towards men in her life, she continues to be under the patronage of her husband, Pete, for years. Similarly, Caroline is not the ideal feminist character that readers expect her to be. She leaves the farm and finds a profession of her own as a lawyer. However, she does not keep her maiden name after marrying her husband, Frank Rasmussen. After breaking up with Frank, Caroline ends up keeping her father's name and taking care of him.

The oldest sister, Ginny, is the most emphatic voice of the rejection of the subordinate role farm women in the novel take. At the very beginning of the story, she is passive and content with farm life. In the end, however, she ends up as a celibate divorced woman. Ginny takes the chance of the deaths of both her father and husband to free her sister Rose; she also plans for her liberation.

She is ready to pay the price of her liberation: she gives up her share in the farm and leaves her husband away. She has made her own choice and is content with it.

In Smiley's novel, the struggle against masculine dominance is in the domestic sphere, where colonial female characters express their struggle against and resistance to male oppression through anger. In the narrative, the struggle for freedom takes one of two ways: show anger and anxiety to reject exploitation, and escape from a humiliating situation where a female character experiences exploitation until the chance comes to express her rejection in an actual way. Smiley makes her female characters show anger to emphasize the point that female characters never give up their struggle for freedom, though they just show a sense of anger. This is made clear in the character of Rose, who is the only female character who dares to speak out about her father's exploitation. Rose, however, is dissatisfied with Ginny's patience when she deals with her father's eccentric behavior. Rose wants Ginny to oppose Cook's weird actions, speaking out clearly: "Jizz, Ginny, don't you get tired of seeing his side? Don't you just long to stand back and tell the truth about him for once? He's dangerous! He's impulsive and angry, and he doesn't give other people the same benefit of the doubt that they give him" (150).

Although Rose wants her sister Ginny to show anxiety and anger towards their father's immoral actions, she immediately realizes that being hostile will not put an end to the problem. Rather, taking hostile action makes things worse. Rose wants to solve the problem without losing her temper. Screaming, anger, and anxiety might get her in trouble. Realizing all these facts in her treatment of the problem, Rose continues to show anger towards her father's actions in a way that wouldn't make her lose her struggle for freedom. Such has been one of the forms of female struggle towards their freedom.

The other way in the struggle for freedom is to run away from situations that cause women oppression and depression. Ginny is an example of the other way of the struggle since she is frustrated by her father's immoral actions during her teenage years. Ginny has also been disappointed by her husband Ty when they had a dispute over dinner. Ginny runs away from the humiliating situation after she has been divorced. She asks her husband for a thousand dollars. She leaves for St. Paul, where she lives the rest of her life: "I need a thousand dollars... In St. Paul, I found a room at the YWCA. They didn't ask any questions when I didn't write down a home address on the registration slip" (330).

For their struggle against masculine domination, both in the postcolonial and colonial settings, to achieve its fruitful aims, women, in general, should admit that they are in oppressed situations, whether they live as part of a community, as is the case in Salih's novel, or as part of their own families, as is clear in Smiley's novel.

### ***A Thousand Acres and Season of Migration to the North: A Comparison***

Inequality of rights causes women's exploitation and oppression. Women in *A Thousand Acres* and *Season of Migration to the North* suffer from oppression and exploitation. However, the oppression and exploitation in Salih's text are different from the oppression and exploitation in Smiley's text. Oppression and exploitation in Salih's novel are caused by two factors: patriarchal dominance and colonial power. Women in Salih's novel are oppressed in a double way, whereas

in Smiley's novel, women are exploited and abused by masculine power, which is projected in the father's harsh treatment of his daughters. Moreover, women's struggle for liberation in Salih's novel is a struggle in the public sphere, whereas it is in the domestic sphere in Smiley's novel.

Salih and Smiley depict the sufferings of female characters in several different yet related ways. For example, in matters of education, both Saleh and Smiley portray their characters as portraits of oppressed women, whose primary concern is their families and communities. There is no time for education, no time for physical training; time is preserved for only men and children. Consequently, women are deprived of their rights and they suffer because of their gender.

The only exception to this degradation and subordination is Caroline in *A Thousand Acres*, who tries to get a job for herself as a lawyer, and Hosna in *Season of Migration to the North*, who is different from other women in the Wad-Hamid community. She is different, though not educated too, in the sense that she seems smarter and more independent than other women. She is aware of her status as an independent woman, unlike other women in her village. She takes decisions away from her father and family. She is strong and independent enough to refuse Wad-Rayyes's proposal to marry her, despite her father's approval. Hosna challenges patriarchal domination and strict traditions and can determine her fate (Salih 92). Salih and Smiley portray Hosna and Caroline as independent women who can make decisions and challenge patriarchal dominance in their struggle to gain equality with men.

Concerning marriage matters, Salih and Smiley depict the theme of marriage in a way that readers can easily infer the degradation and violence that women experience in their lives. In the two novels, men are portrayed as strong and dominating, whereas women are depicted as weak and dependent on men. Ginny, the eldest daughter in the Cook family, is a pathetic figure who has been frustrated because of her depressed desires and lack of affection. She experiences pressure from her father and her husband. She has no right to say a view on family matters; she is, thus, put in a lower position. Women are considered irrational and emotional rather than being rational and reasonable. As a result, women cannot lead; they are led. Women are in a lower position than men. Rose, Ginny's sister, experiences torture and violence from her husband. Ginny and Rose also experienced sexual abuse by their father when they were young. This adds to their suffering and encourages them to fight for their rights to get equal positions like men.

In the same vein, Salih depicts women as dependent upon men in marriage matters. They are destined to experience violence and assault by men in the course of their lives. Women in Wadd-Hamid village are not allowed to express their views on marriage proposals. They also don't have the freedom to choose their husbands. Women in Wad-Hamid's village are for satisfying the sexual desires of men. There is no place for affection and emotional aspects. Women suffer from violence when they are subjected to some traditional customs, such as female circumcision, which is done primarily to satisfy the sexual desires of men. In a village conversation, the narrator's grandfather and his friends discuss female circumcision and its consequences for women. Whereas Wad-Rayyess objects to female circumcision because of its bad effect on the sexual desire of women, Bint Majzoub agrees to the practice on the ground that it makes it possible for women to work harder to please their husbands (81). Salih uses the

character of Wad-Rayyess to prove that women in Sudan are oppressed concerning marriage matters: they are used by men to ensure their sexual pleasure. There is no respect for their rights as human beings. They are treated disrespectfully as if they were instruments in the marital relationship.

Similarly, but not typically, Smiley uses the character of Larry Cook to demonstrate that women suffer from sexual abuse and violence because of their gender. Women are exploited and oppressed through sexual abuse from fathers to daughters and through violence by husbands. Because women are seen as inferior to men, they are considered property that men can use as they like and when they like. However, women can still fight for their freedom without any encouragement from men. Women can freely express their views without being affected by men's views. Although they differ in their struggle for freedom, women are united in their goal, which is to free themselves from patriarchal dominance.

Patriarchy never respects female characters and values. In both novels, patriarchy possesses an oppressive nature that has caused tragic and bitter consequences in the domestic realm and society. Larry Cook's patriarchal vices have caused family disintegration by making Ginny, the principal character, antagonistic to her father. The father, dominant and irresponsible, neglected his daughters and their feelings, while the daughters always took care of his daily business. He always frightened the daughters because of his ferocious behavior. He deals with his daughters just like objects to maintain his socio-economic status as a good farmer. The oppressive nature of patriarchy causes not only the downfall of a family but also of a whole society.

Using the feminist principle, Smiley's novel succeeds in giving voice to the traditionally oppressed female characters. It also subverts the oppressive patriarchy that dominated the scene for a long time. Smiley's use of the feminist purpose in the novel has succeeded in sidelining the masculine authority and bringing the marginalized back to the center. At the end of the novel, female characters live a satisfying, independent life with no man there.

### Conclusion

Having analyzed the two texts, this article contends that patriarchy never respects female characters and values. In both novels, patriarchy possesses an oppressive nature that has caused tragic and bitter consequences in the domestic realm and society at large. The ugly and corrupt nature of patriarchy has caused family disintegration in the domestic sphere and has led to societal hostility in the public sphere. The oppressive nature of patriarchy causes tragic and bitter consequences both in the life of a farm family and among members of a whole society. Patriarchal authority possesses some vicious vices such as dominance of female characters, exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Such vices not only cause harm to female characters but also make male characters irresponsible and lead to the downfall of the whole society. Larry Cook dies with madness, and all males' lives come to an end. Hosna kills her husband and kills herself. Biological differences between men and women should not determine the relationship between the two sexes. Since they are biologically weak, women should not be put in an inferior position than men. Men, on the other hand, should not exploit women because they are biologically weak. Although the two texts represent two different but related settings, female characters are portrayed as victims of masculine power. Salih and Smiley are concerned that women should not be exploited and abused by men in the course of their lives. Both Salih and Smiley foreground

female oppression either through sexual abuse or harsh treatment, as is the case in *A Thousand Acres*, or through troubled marriages and male dominance, as in the case of *Season of Migration to the North*. In Salih's novel, women are portrayed as subordinate victims of physical violence, whereas in Smiley's novel, they are represented as victims of sexual abuse.

In Western and postcolonial settings, women are portrayed as irrational, weak, and emotional. They are not allowed to choose a partner and have no right to education. Third-world and farm women are reserved for taking care either of men and children or farm work and animals. Being portrayed as inferior to men, women's position in society has been underestimated. Men violently treat women and take advantage of disadvantaged women. Nevertheless, Salih and Smiley want to convey a message through leading female characters in the two novels. The message is women's struggle for equality and liberation. This has been explained through the theoretical lens of postcolonial feminism. As a result, Salih and Smiley portray their female characters as strong, trustworthy, and invincible. Smiley makes Rose outspoken about her anger towards men in her life. Ginny is also the most emphatic voice in the rejection of the subordinate role farm women play in the novel. Though portrayed at the beginning of the story as a passive character who is content with farm work, she gives up her share in the farm for the price of her liberation. Salih makes Hosna a trustworthy character who can make decisions and act as the situation requires her to do. When forced to marry against her will, Hosna, armed with self-confidence and trustworthiness, acts violently and threatens to kill her husband and herself.

To gain equality with men, women struggle against the dominating masculine role that men lead in all aspects of life. Although they differ in their struggle against patriarchal domination, women are united in achieving their goal, which is to free themselves from patriarchal fetters and bondage. Women should be free from all sorts of oppression: they have the right to have a say in family matters; they have the right to object to what they see unsuitable to them concerning labor; they, also, have the right to choose their husbands. Women have full rights to choose the kind of work they like without being subject to any directions or encouragement from men. They are also able to express themselves in all aspects of life. Men and women are treated equally and have similar responsibilities without discrimination based on any factor.

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