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Research Article

Reading Judie Oron's *Cry of the Giraffe*: A Critique of Empire

Bhup Raj Joshi

Asst. Prof. of English

Far Western University, Nepal

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Corresponding Author: Bhup Raj Joshi, Email: bhuprajjoshi330@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article seeks identity of a racially segregated community and characters by critically examining racial discrimination, cultural erasure, and gendered oppression experienced by the Ethiopian-Jewish community known as Beta Israel through an in-depth analysis of the novel, Cry of the Giraffe by Judie Oron. The application of postcolonial theory has been used as the strategy in the research to explore how systemic racism operates across historical, political, and cultural contexts, and linking the lived experiences of Ethiopian Jews to global legacies of colonialism. The study integrates perspectives from Frantz Fanon on psychological violence, Homi Bhabha on hybridity and mimicry, Gayatri Spivak on subaltern silence, W.E.B. Du Bois on double consciousness, Edward Said on Orientalism and Joe Feagin on systemic racism. Historically marginalized within predominantly Christian Ethiopia, the Beta Israel endured centuries of exclusion, being labeled Falasha (stranger or landless) and denied land ownership, education, and political participation. Under Ethiopia's Marxist regime, systemic persecution intensified through bans on Hebrew, closure of Jewish schools, economic sabotage, and targeted violence. The symbolic Cry of the Giraffe captures the unheard suffering of marginalized peoples, while acts such as preserving oral traditions, maintaining religious customs, and covertly resisting assimilation underscore community resilience.

Keywords: Identity, systemic racism, racial oppression, decolonize, violence

Introduction

This research paper explores the issue of racial discrimination and focuses on the cultural and identity-related challenges experienced by the Ethiopian-Jewish community. It examines how this marginalized group has endured injustice, racism, and dehumanizing treatment under both racial and religious powers, particularly within the Christian-dominated country of Ethiopia. The aim is to analyze the painful and often neglected condition of Ethiopian Black Jews through the

lens of postcolonial theory, using a descriptive and systematic approach. The study investigates how Ethiopian-Jewish individuals have been historically and culturally marginalized, highlighting their loss of identity within racist structures that prioritize domination over cultural diversity. Within these systems, Ethiopian Jews have frequently been denied the right to cultural recognition, voice, and autonomy. *Cry of the Giraffe* by Judie Oron serves as the central text, illustrating the lived experiences of violence, exploitation, and religious imperialism imposed on Ethiopian-Jewish characters.

It argues that Judie Oron's *Cry of the Giraffe* powerfully exposes the deep-rooted racism faced by Ethiopian Jews, showing how systemic racial discrimination operates through cultural erasure, economic exclusion, gendered violence, and institutional neglect. Using postcolonial theory, this research analyzes how these structures are maintained and how resistance is expressed through identity, language, and memory. The study argues that Ethiopian Jews should be treated with dignity and afforded cultural, social, and physical freedom. Furthermore, they must not be reduced to subjects of forced conversion, systemic discrimination, or cultural assimilation, especially in matters of language, tradition, and identity. By highlighting these issues, the research emphasizes the importance of intercultural understanding and justice. It aims to contribute to anti-racism discourse by amplifying the voices and struggles of the Ethiopian-Jewish community both within literature and beyond.

Oron's novel focuses on how Christian society and state authorities dominate the Black Jewish community known as Beta Israel, by controlling their culture, language, identity, and even their minds and bodies. This kind of domination is not merely local; it reflects a global pattern rooted in colonialism. As Frantz Fanon explains in *The Wretched of the Earth*: "The colonial world is a world divided into compartments... The colonized man is an envious man. And this sickness of the social atmosphere makes the colonized man become a creature in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created" (Fanon 3). This quote illustrates that colonialism does more than take land or resources. It damages the psychological well-being and self-worth of the colonized, forcing them to internalize feelings of inferiority. Oron's novel reflects this process through the experiences of her characters. Through the journey of the main character, Wuditu from the violence in her homeland to the harsh realities of life in Ethiopia. Oron addresses racial injustice, cultural erasure, social fragmentation, and the quiet resilience of a community struggling to preserve its identity. The novel functions both as a historical record and a moral appeal, urging readers to empathize with the oppressed. It helps readers understand the pain caused by systemic discrimination while also honoring the strength of those who survive it.

Research Question

Despite the vibrant cultural presence of Beta Israel, the Ethiopian-Jewish, their past and present familiarities remain neglected in local and global discourses. Systemic racial prejudice, erasure of their culture, and violence against women were supplemented by centuries of exclusion in the dominant Christian Ethiopian state further supplemented under the Marxist state through bans on Hebrew, school closings for Jews, economic subversion, and overt violence. These experiences demand natural questioning. This paper seeks to address the what do the Beta, Israel reacts to such condition? And what are the strategies that the colonizers apply to sustain their oppression? Amid systemic oppression how subordinated groups fight back against erasure in complex social hierarchies? problem of identity formation under this context are the major concern of this research. Similarly, how might postcolonial theory explain these dynamics amidst historical and universal tendencies towards marginalization? -in the face of institutional racial discrimination, cultural erasure, and gendered oppression in *Cry of the Giraffe*.

Hypothesis

The study hypothesizes the implication of both overt and covert, declared and undeclared strategies by the Ethiopian-Jewish Beta Israel community to cope with the long-existing systemic oppression. To preserve their legacy and resist oppressors, they might embrace what is feasible. It assumes that in *Cry of the Giraffe*; in order to create their identity, these steps are represented by the community's maintenance of religious observances, oral traditions, and acts of covert resistance, which all reveal resilience to racism, gendered oppression, and cultural marginalization. Furthermore, it is assumed that the forms of oppression-ranging from institutionalized bans on language and education to economic and political marginalization-are intentional strategies used by hegemonic forces to maintain subordination. Through an analysis of such dynamics, the research posits that the novel may not only respond to systemic and historical oppression but also points to the resistance and negotiating capacity of subaltern groups in resisting erasure and negotiating identity in oppressive socio-political realities.

Literature Review

Despite their social exclusion, cultural marginalization and systemic oppression in the history, the Ethiopian-Jewish Beta Israel community has not received remarkable academic focus on their lived realities. Their history is marked with the age-long endurance of racial and religious prejudice in predominantly Christian Ethiopia, including the negation of land ownership, political participation, and educational pursuits (Ben-Dat, 2015). These social-structural unjust were promoted by the Marxist government, that implemented programs and policies like restricting Hebrew, closing Jewish academic places, fiscal irresponsibility, and targeted violence (Ashcroft, 2001). Such situations, observed by Feagin (2006) in connection to systemic racism, clarify how dominant powers use both explicit and implicit ways to approve social demarcations and suppress othered block of the people.

Discourses and narrations of ignored minorities are striking on how their communities deal with oppression. Judie Oron's *Cry of the Giraffe* exposes the Beta Israel's struggle for existence and identity through their cultural resistance and protective activities. Aligning with Fanon's (1967) concept of psychological violence, the narrative depicts the inner and outer threats faced by dominated groups. Bhabha's (1994) theories of hybridity and mimicry tell the complex identity negotiations that arise in response to existing cultural norms. Spivak's (1988) ideas on subaltern stress the repressed voices of oppressed people, pleading for the value of oral convention and micro-level resistance as method to assert presence, agency and rights. Du Bois' insights on double consciousness (1903) are mainly relevant for understanding how Beta Israel manage the dual identities that are dictated upon them by prevalent socio-political powers, maintaining societal expectations with their self-perception.

Moreover, critics such as Said (1978) and Fanon (1967) argue that the enforcement of cultural, economic, and political supremacy is an intentional effort to erase subaltern narratives and maintain hegemonic control. The existing literature indicates that marginalized groups respond with both explicit acts of resistance and subtle, everyday practices of cultural preservation, such as upholding religious traditions, safeguarding oral histories, and creating networks of collective memory (Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 1988). By considering these methods in *Cry of the Giraffe*, this study keeps the Beta Israel within wider postcolonial parameters, arguing how the work of art works not only as a reflection of historical oppression but also as a sphere in which subaltern people show determination and search their identities.

This discussion highlights the interconnection of systemic oppression and the resistance from groups, providing theoretical outlooks that explain the facing strategies of the Beta Israel community. The research intends that Oron's novel mirrors these dynamics, explaining how a historically marginalized group asserts agency, identity, and survival in the face of entrenched racial, cultural, and gender-based oppression. By integrating postcolonial theory into the discussion, the research harmonizes literary analysis with historical, socio-political, and cultural contexts, providing clearer understanding of both resistance and oppression within the Beta Israel community.

In the light of these basics, the investigation points to unfold how writing can contribute to both a reflection of racialized abuse and a medium for voicing subaltern encounters, subsequently extending broader talks on systemic prejudice, social conservation, and decolonization.

Justification of the Study

Amid their epoch-long cultural prevalence and practices, the continuous exclusion of Jewish Beta Israel community from society and academic institutions justifies this study. Historical and calculative oppression-depriving the community of education, possession, language and physical violence-shows how strong powers knowingly wanted to omit their identity and subjugate them within both religious and political regimes. Therefore, this article interrogates two connected dynamics: the policies of oppression used by hegemonic power and the modes of direct and indirect resistance, through which the Beta Israel have sustained their culture and negotiated identity. By reading Judie Oron's *Cry of the Giraffe* from postcolonial perspective, this paper aims to fulfil two ends by foregrounding unheard subaltern voices and locates the Beta Israel's lived realities within global structure of marginalization and resilience. The novel appears as both an evidence and defiance, exposing how religious customs, oral traditions, and celebrations become agents of survival against systemic racism, gendered oppression, and erasure. Thus, the research is justified as need to the context of postcolonial literature, subaltern studies, and identity politics, critically examining how marginalized population reacts to oppression and earns agency within oppressive social structure.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative textual analysis approach, focusing on *Cry of the Giraffe* (2010) as the primary text. The analysis is framed by postcolonial theory, particularly the works of Frantz Fanon's concept of psychological violence, Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity, Gayatri Spivak's rhetoric of subaltern's voice and other critics. The method involves close reading of key passages where colonial attitudes, racial representation, and cultural hierarchies are most evident-particularly in the case of the character Wuditu, the main character in the novel. The analysis also considers narrative voice, language, and authorial commentary as tools through which colonial ideology is embedded.

To critique the primary text, the insights of the theorists like Said's Orientalism, for understanding the representation of cultural difference and the projection of European superiority has been used. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, for concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence in colonial discourse, Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", for the silencing of indigenous voices in colonial narratives and Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back*, for broader discussions on colonial discourse and language have been drawn into context. Interpretation of narrative episodes in *Cry of the Giraffe* to discuss the extend the argument have been analyzed. It has Synthesized theoretical and textual insights to draw conclusions

about the novel's participation in imperial discourse and its role in shaping cultural perceptions. The interpretive lens assumes that literary texts are not neutral but actively produce cultural meaning, reinforcing or challenging dominant ideologies. This study therefore treats *Cry of the Giraffe* as both a literary artifact and a historical document, analyzing how narrative strategies, characterization, and cultural assumptions collaborate to reflect and reproduce imperial attitudes. By integrating textual, theoretical, and historical analysis, the study aims to provide a comprehensive postcolonial reading of the novel.

Critical Analysis

The novel *Cry of the Giraffe* mainly focuses on racism and its root. It presents historical information about the racism of Beta Israel (Jews). History says, around two thousand years ago, a group of Jews arrived in the Southern part of Egypt, when foreign army defeated their ancestors and destroyed their temple in Jerusalem. Then three hundred years later, their ancestors left their motherland Israel and moved to Ethiopia through the Nile river's edge, when their safety came again in danger. After arrival in Ethiopia, the Beta Israel lived there practicing their own form of Judaism. But they were never truly accepted by the Ethiopian government or native Christians. They faced constant discrimination and injustice simply because they were Jewish in a predominantly Christian country and their black skin tone, hair texture, nationality and ethnicity. They were often called "Falasha", a hurtful word meaning stranger and landless ones, which underlined how they were seen as outsiders in their own homeland. This racism made their lives incredibly hard, limiting their opportunities and making them targets. over weaker ones, often enforced through exploitation, violence, and cultural suppression. As Bill Ashcroft explains, colonialism is not just about land and economy but also the imposition of values and systems. He states: "It is the system by which dominant groups in society constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledge, disciplines, and values upon dominant groups" (Ashcroft 42). This system means that powerful groups in society decide what is considered true, important or valuable. They control education, media, and rules, and they teach people to accept their version of knowledge and values.

Things got much worse in the 1970s and 80s under a harsh Marxist government called the Derg. This regime actively persecuted religious minorities, and the Beta Israel suffered terribly. Unlike views that see racism as just personal prejudice, Feagin explains that racism is built into the core of major social institutions. He shows that racism is not just about a few bad people, but about whole systems that are shaped to benefit white people and harm people of color. He shows that racism is not just about individual actions, but about organized systems that continue unfair treatment and racial inequality over time. He said that: "The central frame of systemic racism includes recurring discriminatory practices, unjustly gained privileges by whites and the deep racial framing of many aspects of social life. Together these elements form an organized well-institutionalized system of racial oppression" (Feagin 2). These systems, he argues, are not accidental but central to how power, resources, and opportunities are organized in societies like the United States. This context closely relates to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence, where dominant groups impose their language, culture, and values to maintain control and marginalize minorities. Bourdieu explains:

The school system is one of the most effective tools of symbolic violence. It imposes from the earliest age a recognition of the dominant culture and the legitimacy of its language and worldview. This process naturalizes inequality and hides the arbitrary nature of the dominant group's power, making submission appear as consent. (Bourdieu 50)

This quote reveals that the ban on Hebrew was not just a cultural decision, but a deliberate political tool used by the Ethiopian regime to silence and disempower the Beta Israel community. marginalization.

Further postcolonial writer Michael Omi and Howard Winant's racial formation theory offers a useful way to understand racism as a social and political process. According to them, "race is a fluid social construct shaped through political struggle" (Howard & Winant 55). They argue that race is not a fixed biological fact but a flexible social construct that changes over time through political struggle. Oron's *Cry of the Giraffe* and Jewish community's horrific experiences in Ethiopia, where Jews community faced racism based on psychological concepts.

It is painful how Beta Israel faced racism in their own home. It means they were not safe from racism at home too. The immoral moment when Dawid is called a hyena for simply being an Ethiopian Jewish child. It is not just an act of unkindness; rather it reveals the deeper truth about how racism works. Fanon, who studied the psychology of racism, helps us understand this moment he writes, "The black man is not a man, there is a zone of non-being where they, oppressed, lose their human identity" (Fanon 10). What happens to Dawid is not just this woman's opinion. It reflects a larger societal and national mindset that categorizes some as "real man" and others as less than human. When Dawid is called a kayala (hyena), he is pushed into this "Zone of non-being," a psychological space Fanon described, where people are treated as less than human.

This inhuman behavior is clearly reflected in the act of the Christian woman. In the novel, Wuditu the narrator explains her father's awkward situation when Mengistu gave orders for all Ethiopian farmers to learn to read. Her father politely bowed and replied: "Sir, officer, we are grateful to Mengistu for this wonderful opportunity, but we have too much work to do in the field" (Oron 13). This line shows the power of the government and systemic racism, where one group in power tries to erase another group's culture and control over the community.

The Ethiopian government did the same thing. They used education to influence farmers and control their thinking. This clearly shows how governments can wear a mask to present a good image while hiding their true intentions. Foucault discusses how power operates not by force but by creating systems of truth:

Power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. Power produces knowledge... power and knowledge directly imply one another... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge. (Foucault 194)

This means that power does not only punish or restrict, it creates what we believe to be true or real. By controlling knowledge and shaping what is accepted as truth, power becomes deeply rooted in people's minds. To collect money for their escape, Wuditu's family secretly sold their belongings, but they never got the real value for their goods and animals. This unfair pricing led to financial loss. Mohammed Girma highlights the cruel irony behind this struggle with economic racism. According to him, "Families had to destroy their economic base to survive entering exile, already impoverished by the very act of fleeing" (Mohammed 156). This quote presents economic racism by showing how Wuditu's family, and others like them were forced to sacrifice everything just to escape persecution, yet even in this process, they were exploited financially. Wuditu's self-punishment and feelings of shame after her assault reflect this internalized violence. The systemic racism and patriarchal power that assaulted her body also shaped her mind, leading her

to accept guilt that rightfully belongs to the oppressor. In this context Fanon said: “Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it” (Fanon 210). This quote reflects how colonial violence invades the inner world of the oppressed, distorting identity, poisoning memory, and damaging emotional and spiritual life. Wuditu’s raped body is not only a personal tragedy, but a political act of control.

As Wuditu searches for work to return to Israel, she encounters modern slavery in the form of domestic servitude and near sexual exploitation. In Amba Giorgis, Almaz, the beer house owner, tells her: “All those stupid girls who come to town thinking they’ll have a good life soon learn that it’s better to work as a servant than to sleep in the street” (Orono 93). This reflects what Kevin Bales explains in *Disposable People*: “New slavery is not about owning people but about controlling them completely” (Bales 6). Almaz’s coercive manipulation proves that Wuditu’s freedom is merely an illusion. Bales further states:

What we see is a new form of slavery that is embedded in economic and social systems that thrive on inequality. These systems target the most vulnerable, especially women and children, and use violence or the threat of it to create a sense of entrapment that is as powerful as any legal ownership ever was. (Bales 60)

This detailed description from Bales explains how Wuditu’s identity as a poor, Black, Jewish girl places her directly within the category of those most vulnerable to modern slavery. Her reality is shaped by fear, manipulation, and total control. Literary critic Gillian Engberg supports this by emphasizing how Oron portrays the inner world of enslaved children. She writes:

Through Wuditu’s eyes, Oron allows readers to experience the deep emotional scars left by slavery. The child’s quiet resilience, her suppressed fear, and her longing for safety expose a world where cruelty is normalized and compassion is rare. This forces the reader to confront the ongoing crisis of human trafficking not as history, but as lived reality. (Engberg 60)

Engberg’s words show how Oron humanizes the statistics, drawing readers into Wuditu’s personal trauma and urging them to recognize child slavery as a present-day humanitarian emergency. Ben-Dat highlights how Ethiopian Jewish refugees endured both physical and cultural violence in Sudanese camps. The inedible foreign food symbolizes their erasure from history as much as their bodily suffering. For Ben-Dat, such details reveal systemic indifference. The refugees’ disgust at the “strange taste” mirrors their exclusion not just from Sudan’s camps but from global Jewish and humanitarian narratives. The spoiled rations become a metaphor for how their trauma was treated as expendable. As she explains:

The suffering of Ethiopian Jews was not limited to hunger or exposure, but to the sense that no one cared if they lived or died. The food was foreign, the care impersonal, and the silence around their pain overwhelming. They were treated as shadows, not survivors-as if they were never meant to be remembered. (Dat 50)

In the refugee camp, even Ethiopian Jews faced abandonment and rejection by soldiers. They were forcibly taken from the camp, stripped of their dignity, and thrown into the desert without explanation.

It is clearly related to racial discrimination because the girls like Wuditu are not just female; they are Black, Jewish, and Ethiopian. Their race makes them “invisible” to institutional protection,

and their female bodies are perceived as sexually available and less valuable. A similar pattern of racial and gendered neglect is seen globally, including in post-apartheid South Africa, as Human Rights Watch observes:

Throughout apartheid and into the transition era, Black women in South Africa frequently encountered dismissive or hostile treatment when reporting rape or domestic abuse. Police often ignored their complaints or treated them as liars; courts discounted survivors' testimony; and legal redress was generally inaccessible, especially in rural areas where Black women worked under harsh conditions." (Human Rights Watch 9-10)

This statement reinforces the structural nature of the discrimination faced by Wuditu. Like the South African women described here, Wuditu lives in a world where systems meant to protect instead neglect or endanger her.

The assumption that Wuditu should be grateful for the soldier's attention highlights the commodification of her body. It reflects what Colette Guillaumin terms as the social appropriation of women's bodies. She explains:

Physical appropriation consists in the material fact of keeping the body of the dominated being for the use and convenience of the dominant; it is the practice of having at one's disposal the time, the labor, the sex, the reproductive power, the mobility the body of others. That is, their person is appropriated as a material instrument of labor and pleasure. (Guillaumin 179)

Guillaumin's theory helps clarify how Wuditu's identity is systematically reduced to her usefulness for others, whether for physical labor or sexual services.

The soldier's behavior is not an expression of affection, it is an act of dominance that dehumanizes Wuditu. Her story is deeply connected to Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, which reveals how overlapping identities such as race, gender, and refugee status shapes unique and often overlooked experiences of violence. Crenshaw writes:

The failure to acknowledge the significance of these interlocking relationships.... creates a distorted analysis. It marginalizes the experiences of women of color by denying how race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of their lives. This marginalization leaves them unprotected by both feminist theory and antiracist policy. (Crenshaw 141)

This quote clarifies that women like Wuditu a Black, Jewish, young, and displaced, fall through the gaps of legal, social, and political protections. Her trauma is not only inflicted by individuals but maintained by systems that ignore her intersecting vulnerabilities.

Wuditu is denied the right to belong, even in places where she has as much right to exist as anyone else. This mirrors the experience of Lawrence Hill in the *Book of Negroes*, a character who also endures repeated exile, rejection, and the loss of home. Hill's reflection powerfully echoes Wuditu's sense of being out of place: "I ended up being sold not once but three times in my life, and each time I tried to pick up the pieces. I have been a British loyalist, a French slave, a black woman in a white world. I belonged to no one and to nowhere" (Hill 348). Hill's words highlight how racism and colonialism strip individuals of their identity, making them feel invisible or unwanted.

Conclusion

This research contributes to literary scholarship by highlighting how literature exposes racial discrimination and challenges dominant narratives. It shows that *Cry of the Giraffe* is not

only a story about one girl's suffering but also a critique of global racism, colonial legacy, and institutional silence. It calls attention to the fact that Black Jewish identities are often excluded from both African and Jewish historical records. Furthermore, the thesis illustrates how literary texts can serve as tools for justice. By telling stories that are usually hidden or ignored, literature can make invisible suffering visible.

The novel shows how racism is deeply rooted in institutions, language, education, and economic systems. It affects individuals not only physically but also mentally and spiritually using critical theories and textual analysis. This research has highlighted the intersectional and systemic nature of the discrimination portrayed in the novel. The significance of this study lies in its ability to bridge literature and lived experience. By focusing on a specific text and a specific community, the research sheds light on broader patterns of discrimination that continue to exist today. It encourages further study of under presented groups in literature and calls for more attention to how race, gender and identity intersect in postcolonial contexts.

Through Wudit's story, the novel gives voice to those who have long been silenced and forgotten. This thesis has shown that racial discrimination is not only a theme in the novel but also a lived reality that continues to shape the lives of millions around the world. By recognizing and analyzing these patterns, we take a small but meaningful step towards justice. Literature, in this context, is not just storytelling. It is truth-telling, resistance and hope.

Further Contribution

More than its one-to-one connection between *Cry of the Giraffe* and the Beta Israel community, this paper may facilitate general discourses on minority issues and postcolonialities by proving how literature can serve the societies inclusively. By bringing the repressed voices into context, the study unfolds the ways further to analyze the similar issues of ugliness through aesthetics. Its findings open the floor for continuing the conversation on identity formation, resilience, and resistance. It may contribute to the prospective researcher to analyze a literary text with interdisciplinary approach across history, sociology, and politics.

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Research Article

Traumatic Impact of Female Genital Mutilation on Individual Well-being in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*

Bimala Sharma, PhD

Associate Professor of English
Nepal Sanskrit University, Nepal
Doi: 10.3126/mjecs.v4i1.89975

Corresponding Author: Bimala Sharma, Email: bimalasharma74@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper discusses the psychological trauma faced by people due to the practice of Female Genital Mutilation in Possessing the Secret of Joy. Specifically, the project explores the life of some female characters who were victimized by the ritualistic practice of infibulation in Africa. This research uses the concept of psychological trauma given by Cathy Caruth as the theoretical tool. The research examines the life of Tashi also known as Evelyn, the protagonist of this novel, who undergoes through different psychological phases. She is depressed, terrorized and often had fearful repeated dreams. Later on she is able to recognize the cause of her trauma and the trauma faced by her whole community. The significance of this study is to bring to light the effect of trauma, which could be harmful for the well-being of individuals and for the whole community. It can lead the individual to be violent and even a murderer. In this novel, Tashi feels anxiety and depression in her family life. In the novel, the life of other female characters like Dura, Amy Maxwell and Ayisha is also shown to be affected by the practice of female genital mutilation. This paper concludes that ritual of genital mutilation has devastating effect on life of people by showing several negative impacts of traumatic experience on health, family and social life.

Keywords: Acting out, female genital mutilation, flashback, nightmares, trauma

Introduction

This study analyzes the novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* from the perspective of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a concept in trauma theory. The novel was written by Afro-American writer Alice Walker. She is a writer, poet, and activist known for her insightful portrayal of African American life and culture. She generally has written literature on themes like activism, feminism, relationships, race relations, nature and heritage, such as *Color purple*, *Meridian*, *The Temple of My Familiar*, *Finding the Green Stone*, *To Hell With Dying*. She is the first Afro-American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for her novel *Color Purple*. The novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* shows the traumatic life of Afro-American woman Tashi also known as Evelyn as she has to go through practice of female genital mutilation, which is indispensable part of native