

Defining the Enemy-A study of the plight of the Jews in Amos

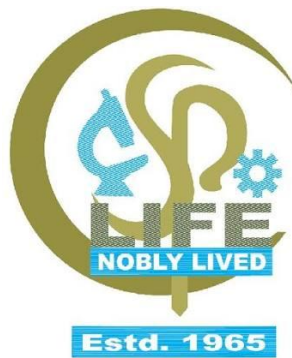
Oz's A Tale of Love and Darkness

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Declaration

I do hereby declare that the project report is the record of genuine research work done by me under the guidance of Ms. Deepa George, Assistant Professor, Department of English, St.Paul's College, Kalamassery.

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Certificate

This is to certify that the project work **Defining the Enemy -A study of the plight of the Jews in Amos Oz's *A Tale of Love and Darkness*** is a record of the original work carried out by Gabriela Galeena under the supervision and guidance of Ms. Deepa George, Assistant Professor, Department of English, St.Paul's College, Kalamassery.

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Introduction

A Tale of Love and Darkness, a non-fiction genre, is an autobiography of the famous Israeli writer Amos Oz who is a well renowned writer of his time. Amos Oz is known as a peace activist who stood against the War and wanted a peaceful coexistence between the Arabs and the Jews. His book *A Tale* was one of the largest selling books in the history of Israel. He had been a prominent advocate of the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Oz, about his book quoted that “If I were to sum up my books in one word, I would say they are all about ‘families’. If you give me two words, I would say ‘unhappy families’ ” (Sillow-Carroll). The book is a memoir of his childhood. As Grant explicates,

Oz's memoir, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, thought to be the biggest-selling literary work in Israeli history, is an exploration of why his mother killed herself, and the effect on him, a sensitive, intelligent boy growing up in Jerusalem during the last years of the British mandate and the war of independence. It is one of the funniest, most tragic and most touching books I have ever read. (Grant)

Amos wrote the memoir in Hebrew in 2002 and later was translated into English by Nicholas de Lange and published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in 2004. The title of the book signifies an era of darkness into which Oz was born and brought up and to a world his parents were transplanted that treated them as hateful beings. The love that is mentioned in the title is the love in his family which sprouted even in the hostility of war which could be read as their (his parent's) hope and desire to make their son a literary figure as their uncle Joseph Klausner. *A Tale of Love and Darkness* is the mother's life, death, and his investigation of her suicide. The

cover picture is of a boy lying on his back reading a book in a yellow environment that depicts the loneliness of the child. The yellow environment signifies the ‘enlightenment’ or the ‘upliftment’ of the soul of the child by reading. It also depicts the time after harvest when the fields are left barren with no life that is the days of hostility after the war.

The main characters in the text are Arieh Klausner; his father, Fania Musman; his mother and the young boy Amos himself. The other important characters are grandpa Alexander, grandma Shlomit; his grandparents and Uncle Joseph – the professor Klausner. The other characters also play a significant role in his life as the memoir progresses.

Amos’ father, an over qualified academician, portrays the plight of the Jews during the wave of Anti-Semitism, how his family is discriminated in the society even though they excel in academic aspects. The ill fate of the father, who aimed to be a professor but ended up being librarian, along with the problems of displacement and the ill treatment for being a Jew, shapes him as a defeated man with lost hopes. His mother had to go through the same problems of being denied higher education in a university and the problems of shifting their home (fled from the holocaust of Hitler to Jerusalem) against her will. She had to suffer more severe pain, which distorted her mental and physical health, by losing her loved ones during those days of war and attacks in both Rovno and Jerusalem. Grandpa Alexander was also a lost man suffering the loss of his homeland and his elder son David, his wife and son. The grandma Shlomit’s obsession to germs relates to Anti-Semitism.

Based on the novel, the film *A Tale of Love and Darkness* was released in 2015, written and directed by Natalie Portman. It was her debut film which was screened at the 2015 Cannes film festival and in the Special Presentation section of the 2015 Toronto International Film

Festival. Amir Tessler as Oz and Gilad Kahana and Portman as his parents starred in the movie.

This project deals with the marginalization and the life of Jews during the period of world war and the brutal murders of Jews in large numbers. It also focuses on the thought processes of the protagonist and the other main characters of the novel that had to spend most of their life with no hopes of a peaceful livelihood. This anthology is about Amos the narrator of the novel and the influences of anti- Semitic ideology of the World on his life. The text also addresses the change that it directly or indirectly brought about in his life, the mixed culture that his family had inherited, and the idea of belonging to the diaspora as the aliens to Europe and Jerusalem.

Chapter 1

Anti- Semitism in *A Tale of Love and Darkness*

The German revolutionary, Wilhelm Marr, in 1879, was the first to formulate the term anti-Semitism to address the anti-Jewish campaigns in central Europe at that time. Semites consist of the Arabs, Akkadians, Cannanites, Hebrews, Aramaean tribes, and many other tribes. Even though the Semites include a large group of people, anti-Semitism is labeled for anti-Jewish prejudices and actions against the Jews.

Anti-Semitism had its roots in the ancient Greco-Roman world where the discrimination was based on the religious differences. In the first century BC, Judaism being a monotheistic religion, had to undergo severe brutality for denying to worship emperors and acknowledging polytheistic religions which the others observed as disloyalty against the Pagans. Apart from the religious discrimination there had been segregation based on the social aspects, particularly racial injustice in the society.

The IHRA, the intergovernmental organization mandated to focus solely on holocaust related issues, defines anti-Semitism “as a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed towards Jewish and non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, towards Jewish community institutions and religious facilities” (IHRA).

It was with the arrival of the Jesus of Nazareth, his crucifixion and the establishment of a new religion, Christianity, the fate of the Semites changed. The Jews were considered as the slayers of the Son of God. The Bible plays a significant role in the twist that marked the history.

The Old Testament portrays Judaism as the true religion and the Jews, the Israel, as the followers of the Almighty. They believed that they were the race of God “..... so shall you be my people, and I will be your God” (*The Holy Bible* Jer. 11.4). We can also find the same in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Leviticus. Even though Christianity is rooted in the Jewish teachings and is a monotheistic religion as Judaism, the crucifixion of Jesus made them rivals. The rapid growth in the followers of Christianity making it the largest religion was a great blow for the Jews who believed that Jesus and his disciples were scoundrels who taught people the Wrong; against the Law of Moses. This religious rivalry soon turned out to be political. The Christian church dominated the Roman Empire. History witnessed the reign of Christian emperors. The emergence of Christianity as the official religion of the empire by Emperor Theodosius I in 380 AD was a shock to the Jews. All other religions were suppressed and the people were forced to follow the king for peaceful existence. As a result, the Jews were forced to the margins of the society.

The Middle Ages can be considered to be the second stage of anti- Semitism where religious discrimination turned out to be the only cause for the economic, political and social destruction of the Jews. The early Middle Ages kick started the violence against the Jews by denying citizenship, and university education and excluded from government and military posts. Several unethical accusations on their religious practices like the ritual murder, the host desecration and the blood libel were imposed on them.

Even though they were oppressed, the Jews grew in large numbers and contributed a lot to the economic growth of Europe. They excelled in trade, banking and moneylending. They were great scholars, philosophers and intellects along with writers and poets and physicians who shared their rich culture and heritage with the Muslims and Christians. The economic indignation and religious prejudice resulted in the forced expulsion of Jews from several countries including

England, France, Germany and the Papal States. They were asked to accept Christianity to avoid the expulsion. So they took refuge in Turkey, Poland and Russia.

The event, the history marked as the beginning of the mass execution of Jews was the first Crusade in 1096, when the enemies sowed the seeds of anti- Semitism in the European countries where the Jews lived in plenty. The wave of anti- Semitic violence resulted in the massacres in Worms, Trier and Metz. The wars between Eastern Orthodox Ukrainians and Roman Catholic Poles in the middle of the seventeenth century, was one such incident where a large number of Jews were mercilessly wiped out from the Earth. This was marked as the worst massacre of Jews in the Middle Ages.

The French Revolution played a major role in the bringing back of the rights of the Jews, even though there were restrictions. Being treated as outsiders, they had few civil rights and were taxed as a community and not as individuals. The slogan prominent in those days “To the Jews as individuals everything, to the Jews as a people, nothing,” reveals the pressure imposed on the Jews to abandon their religion.

Under the leadership of Adolf Hitler in Germany, the intensity of violence against the Jews reached at its terrifying peak. He even influenced the anti-Semitism of the other countries. Cagoulards in France, Arrow Cross in Hungary, the British Union of Fascists in England and the German-American Bund and Silver Shirts in the United States of America were the leading groups that initiated anti-Semitism in the respective countries. Till then, the world looked to them as the group of people who uphold Judaism but the Nazis saw them as a dangerous tumor that would destroy the German people, and the resolution that they came across was the slaughter of all the Jews – men, women and children – and wiping the whole race from the Earth.

The Nazis believed that the eradication of the Jewish people is necessary for the purgation and even the salvation of the Germans. Every Jew irrespective of class and economic status were subjected to the eradication process. Anti-Semitism became the government policy and was given importance in school curriculum, emphasized in journals and researches. The World War II slaughtered Jews in different concentration camps through starvation or working till death.

With the end of World War II, the anti-Semitism in Europe came to an end. The Jews, who fled from their foes, took refuge in the State of Israel which they believed to be their land. The anti-Semitism in the Middle East intensified that the lives of the Jews became more vulnerable to danger. In the beginning, Islam had no grudge towards the Jews and considered them as just the non-believers. Their discrimination was political and religious rather than racial, as that of the Nazis. With time the two groups started realizing the difference between them, which they believe, that would never settle peacefully. The gap between the two groups widened. The change in the attitude of the Muslims took place in the twentieth century, when large number of Jews immigrated to Palestine and the population of the refugees doubled within a short time. This resulted in the creation of a new state. The establishment of the Zionist party that upheld the values of the Jews was another reason for the grudge. This turned out to be the outbreak of a series of Palestine-Israel conflict that is still going on in the present. The natives of Palestine, particularly the Arabs, had great support from the other countries to exclude the Jews from their land. The Palestine-Israel conflict is the major theme in the novel.

Looking into the influence of anti-Semitism in the world of literature, we can find the Jews being portrayed as negative characters who are doomed in the end. These works were highly appreciated by the readers for its excellence and were accepted in the society with no

question of prejudice that is reflected in the literary work. These negative characters or antagonists were remembered throughout the ages for their bad deeds and misfortune.

Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare have portrayed Jews as cunning in their works. The myth of the Wandering Jew is that a Jew mocked at Jesus on the way of the Cross and was cursed to remain in the earth until the Second Coming of Jesus. This mythical immortal man appeared in a few works like Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'The Wandering Jew,' Matthew Lewis's Gothic novel 'The Monk' (1796) and William Godwin's 'St. Leon' (1799). Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1837) also presents a Jewish antagonist, Fagin. Paul Vallely writes that "Fagin is seen as one of the most grotesque Jews in English literature, and the most vivid of Dickens's 989 characters" (Vallely). Dickens justifies his act by claiming that the criminals of London during the time when the story took place were Jews. A literary figure who gained fame posthumously with the publication of her diary 'The Diary of a Young Girl' – Anne Frank – is an example of the life of a person of Jewish origin during the reign of Hitler. This book is regarded as an example for the violence and sufferings of a Jew.

Anti- Semitism is unquestionably a dominant concern in the memoir *A Tale of Love and Darkness*. The young boy, Amos is well aware of the fact that the world outside was attractive and marvelous but dangerous for them. He believed that this hatred towards them was because the world considers them clever, quick witted and noisy. They want them to leave for Palestine and when they took refuge in Palestine, the Arabs wanted them to go. This is the first entry provided in the book about the status of Jews and their magnitude of vulnerability to danger. Another factor noted in the text is the age of the author at which he recognizes the life of the Jews worsening through the ages. This indicates the intensity of the issue stated above.

A threat that hung above their heads was the claim that the Jews had illegally occupied their land, which is the “property” of the Arabs. Hitler’s tanks had already reached their doorstep from two directions. There might be an outset of a war, pogroms, bloodbath and slaughter on a large scale. Even though the Nazis were defeated, there were pogroms in Poland, persecution of Hebrew speakers in Russia, and the British stuck to the anti- Semitic ideology of the world. In addition, the grand mufti discussions were about “butchering the Jews”. Thus, the whole environment was threatening and a disastrous future awaited them behind their doors. The truth was that the death of the Jews was a promise from the Gentiles but there was only a small doubt in the one who was to attack first for all the enemies had reached the border of the Land apart from the Arabs and the British who were inside.

The statement ‘Everything was shut and shuttered, the cobblestone streets were deserted, every passing shadow in those narrow streets was trailed by three or four other shadows’(Oz,25) signifies the British curfew imposed on the land of Jerusalem. The grills of the houses would be closed by 8’oclock (night) and the streets would be left colourless under the dimlight of the streetlamp. This gives a clear image of the lack of freedom and their desire for freedom. The boy compares anti- Semitism to the germs who were their nightmares. The germ was invisible or out of sight but the truth was that they do exist, waiting patiently to attack the host, the same was with the anti- Semites who had set eyes on them. His grandma Shlomt’s obsession for germs and her abnormal “customs” to keep them away was a mockery of the insecurities experienced by the Jews during those days.

The father’s account on his experience as a Jew in Vilna during his youth is obviously an evidence for the fog of anti- Semitism that blinded the people of Vilna. During the post war wave of immigration, his uncle Dr. Joseph Klausner and his wife, aunt Zippora along with her

elderly mother, the great grandmother of Amos, left for Jaffa, a city in Israel. Ariele with his father and mother along with his elder brother moved to Vilna, where anti-Semitism had reached at its peak that they set out violence against the Jewish students. The German army murdered Uncle David, his elder brother who stayed with his wife and infant son in Vilna, who refused to move to Palestine. Despite being Jewish, at a very early age, he (uncle David) got a teaching position in literature at the University in Vilna. He had no doubt of his ability to pursue the glorious career of Uncle Joseph. He found it unnecessary to leave the place where he was an immigrant in western Asia, which was completely strange to him, only to please the anti-Semites. He considered it as an “obscure relic of salvage”, the present of the yesteryears, which had no position in the New World. Oz gives an account of the death of his uncle David in the memoir: “So he stayed at his post, flying the flag of progress, culture, art, and spirit without frontiers, until the Nazis came to Vilna: culture-loving Jews, intellectuals, and cosmopolitans were not to their taste, and so they murdered David, Malka, and my little cousin Daniel, who was nicknamed Danush or Danushek”. (Oz, 113)

His mother, Fania was indeed a victim of the anti-Semitism in Poland. She along with her family had to leave Poland and took refuge in Tel Aviv. They were among the few who survived the butchering of the Bolsheviks, Germans and Stalin. Some fled to the Land and the others to America. There was also the younger brother of grandpa Alexander, the great-uncle of Amos, Bezalel and his three sisters, Sofia, Anna, and Daria, none of whom ever made it to Israel.

During the time of his father, Jewish students had to endure humiliation, blows, discrimination, and sadistic abuse. Pondering on the old photographs, Amos examines the blurred faces of the young people in the group photo and tries to discover “where the head is at” of each individual; ‘It is almost certain that virtually all the young people in these group

photographs were stripped naked and made to run, whipped and chased by dogs, starved and frozen, in the large pits in the Ponar Forest. Which of them survived, apart from my father?'.(Oz,109)

Joachim C .Fest in his book *Hitler* speaks about his hatred towards Jews and explains the reason for this hatred as a

nightmare vision of the seduction of hundreds and thousands of girls by repulsive, bandy-legged Jew bastards ... With satanic joy in his face, the black haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood ... The final Jewish goal is denationalization ... by the bastardization of other nations, lowering the racial level of the highest ... with the secret ... aim of ruining the ... white race ... If 5,000 Jews were transported to Sweden, within a short time they would occupy all the leading positions ... the universal poisoner of all races, international Jewry. (C.Fest,40).

Going back to the days of the arrival of Klausners in Jerusalem, we understand that they had to spend their early years in a two and a half apartment. This indicates the unavailability of housing, which can either be due to the increased Jewish population in Jerusalem or the refusal due to the hatred of the native Arabs; both, the result of anti-Semitic ideology that prevailed among the Gentiles. The “refugees” who took refuge in Jerusalem were the Jews from Poland, Russia and the outcasts according to Hitler. Of these, the silent majority were the scholars and lecturers from universities because the Jewish scholars believed that the only asset that others cannot grab is education with which they could live wherever they find acceptance. They had to work hard to create a good impression on them. An isolated situation like that of a child with dirty nails and hair that spread lice could result in destroying the image of the entire Jewish race

on earth. Anti-Semitism of Hitler, Stalin, the Christian priests and all over the world were a constant nightmare of the Jews.

The victims of anti-Semitic cruelty in 1941, as listed in the novel included Fania's school teachers and classmates along with their family and acquaintances. The massacre contributed to the death of 23,000 Jews in Rovno. She also lost her boyfriend, Tarlo in the holocaust. According to Jeffrey Burds, "more than 2.8 million soviet Jews were killed in the world war..... Soviet Jews were not as a rule killed in camps, but rather they were shot execution-style, usually in mass police action normally perpetrated by local recruits"(Burds,19). Later, in 1948, during the Arab attack on Jerusalem, her friends Piroshka, Zippora Yonai, were killed by a direct hit from a shell, while fetching bucket and floor cloth to the backyard. In the same year, an Arabian sniper shot Greta Gat, their neighbor. Yonathan Abramski, the twelve year old boy, son of Mr. and Mrs. Abramski was shot down while playing in his backyard and Mr. Miudovnik was smashed by a shell. The tortoise, which he (Amos) called Mimi, was sliced into half by a piece of shrapnel on the same day of the death of Aunt Greta and Aunt Piri. Several rumours started spreading among the Jews about the withdrawal of the British from the Land and about the onset of attacks from the Arabs supported by the British resulting in the massacre of the Jews. The atmosphere was so tense that the rumours were being transformed to real incidents and the people were alarmed. Several Jews, who had good connections with the British, left Jerusalem and fled to America and Tel Aviv. People said that the Muslims along with the Arabs and the British armed themselves for a second holocaust. Therefore, they waited for the war, which was to break out at any moment; they stocked up essential materials to survive the disaster.

The decline in the population of the Jews is an important evidence for the cruelties of Arabs over the Jews. “By the end of World War II, in 1945, the Jewish population of Europe had shrunk to 3.8 million, or 35% of the world’s 11 million Jews. About 6 million European Jews were killed during the Holocaust” (Lipka). This tremendous decrease is an effect of anti-Semitism.

It was when the British announced the end of colonial rule over Palestine and the UN decided to consider the parting of the state into two, one for the Arabs and the other for the Jews, the Arabs declared that if the partition come into effect, the Jews will drown in their own blood. This was an open threat to the Jews. Within six hours of the declaration of the partition, the Arabs fired the city of Jerusalem killing a number of inhabitants of the Land. The Britishers who were ruling supported the Arabs and got secretly involved in the war. The situation was getting worse due to the unavailability of essential commodities and the threat of the spread of epidemic.

The refugees who took shelter in their apartment (Amos’s house) were Uncle Joseph (professor Klausner) and his sister in law Haya Elitsedek, Mr. Miudovnik (the author of one of Amos’s arithmetic texts) with his wife, grandpa Alexander and grandma Shlomit along with his widowed elder brother and a half-crazy old man and two elderly women. They had no enough food or water for consumption. They protected themselves by covering windows with sand bags. Those days were marked as the days of darkness. His family was one among the ones, which survived the disaster.

The days after the war were as horrible as before due to lack of food and other items of immediate consumption. The goldsmiths, the accountants and the traders, all had employment in government schemes of rock clearing and reforestation in the hills of Jerusalem. Most of them had no habitat and had to rebuild their lives from the beginning with “an incomplete family”.

Chapter 2

Trauma in Amos's *A Tale of Love and Darkness*

Jews had been the major victims to conspiracies from the time of establishment of Christianity (the crucifixion of Jesus Christ). Speculations on the “dark deeds” of the Jews were that they were the mastermind behind the death of the Palestinian children and the spread of HIV infection among the Palestinians. The twelfth century Europe set out rumours against the Jews which led to the persecution of the Jews. “Unfounded accusations of ritual murder and of host desecration and the blood libel appeared in the twelfth century” (Berenbaum). They were accused of a dark superstition, Blood libel, in which the Jews sacrificed the Christian children at the Passover to obtain blood for unleavened bread. It was in 1144, an English boy, William of Norwich, was found brutally murdered with strange wounds in his body. His uncle, a Priest, blamed the Jews of the neighbourhood and thus this rumor came into existence. In 1255, another boy was discovered dead in the same way and the investigation resulted in the execution of 19 English Jews.

The Jews were accused of being the brain behind the Chechen School Attack in Beslan in 2004 and responsible for kidnappings of children in their land. Apart from the allegations of the Muslim neighbours of Israel, America also played a great role in the conspiracy against the Jews. They claimed that the terror attack of September 11, 2001 was executed by Israeli agents and others claim that the thousands of Israelis who were the employees of the World Trade Center stayed home on the day of the attack. Several other conspiracies aroused against the Jews on the issue of the terrorist attack. “Within extremist circles, hatred of the Jews remains a unifying power between otherwise opposing groups, from white supremacists to Muslim and Christian fundamentalists to anti-globalization militants and far-right extremists”.(Sion).

An example for the influence of the pseudo facts created by the anti-Semites is the legend of 'The Wandering Jew'. This belief is still persistent in the modern world and is considered as the symbol of the fate of every man who turns against the Lord. The most eloquent and persuasive Christian Theologians attacked the Jews by describing them as the Race of Vipers.

These notions developed by religious communities, individuals and political entities to describe the negative events, find scapegoats or fulfil paranoid fears and fantasies which is clearly evident in the motive of the Anti-semitics, particularly the Nazis under the guidance of Hitler, in eradicating the Jews for no plausible cause. This certainly could be a criteria for evaluating the influence of the external world in the evolution of the Jew in the modern world, particularly the negative influences in a kid like Amos.

This chapter deals with the thought processes of the child, Amos, who considered himself as a Jew of the Diaspora, who had to witness the cruelties of the world against his race. As a survivor of the disasters, his feelings for the world and his fellow survivors and the dead is the major topic of concern in this chapter. Some examples are mentioned below regarding the subject:

The young Amos dreamt of the Jews other than the Diasporas who were the pioneers living in the hills.

Somewhere, over the hills and far away, a new breed of heroic Jews was springing up, a tanned, tough, silent, practical breed of men, totally unlike the Jews of the Diaspora, totally unlike the residents of Kerem Avraham. Courageous, rugged pioneers, who had succeeded in making friends with the

darkness of night, and had overstepped every limit, too, as regards relations between a boy and a girl and vice versa (Oz,8).

He used to visit the Tnuva delivery yard where he watched them and went up to them to inhale the smell of hay and the “intoxicating” odor of the faraway places.

There is a comparison of the people of Tel Aviv and of Kerem Avraham which highlighted the difference in their attitudes. For him the Jerusalem people walked rather like mourners in the funeral whereas in Tel Aviv nothing was constant, everything changed as the mornings broke after every dusk. For him Tel Aviv was a different continent of festivals and change. In addition, another aspect of the Jerusalemites is that they are not interested in listening. The only person in his childhood who listened to him is Miss Zelda, his teacher in the Children’s Realm School. She used to listen to his lectures silently and attentively. She also shared her opinions whenever there was a discussion. If she felt bored, she asked him to change the topic or cease the talks.

Amos being the only child of the Klausners, was lonely and spent most of the time reading books and daydreaming. He was intelligent enough to figure out the dangers awaiting them outside their Land. He was well aware about the risks of lack of communication resources and the problems they will have to face in the future. He figured out the life of his parents through the old photos and the memories shared by his aunt. He took in their love for the west even though he had not been to Europe and had known only through the stories. Europe for him was a paradise where there were meadows, woods, and “goose girls”, whom he had never met.

Amos’s father, who was a scholar, had the qualifications of a lecturer but ended up being a librarian. His mother had to leave behind her loved ones and flee to Jerusalem, who according to reports, were murdered by the Germans. He investigated the past of his parents from the

photos. He found out that his father had to face difficulties in the name of his race. They wanted the unfulfilled dream of theirs to be fulfilled by their son, Amos. They wanted Amos to be a scholar as their uncle Joseph.

The situation of Jerusalem was just the opposite of what he wished to be in. He wanted to be in a place where men and women gathered to have coffee on lit streets in the evenings and where anyone could roam about in the dark without any restrictions and where there were love affairs and broken hearts and great artists. However, in Jerusalem, the curfew passed by the British restricted the natives to get out after dusk. As a result, the lights in the streets would be off by 8'o clock at night abandoning the streets in the dark shadows of night.

Young Amos wanted to be a book so that the enemies do not destroy it. At least one of the copies might be left from damage and thus it could survive. He argues,

I developed a fantasy of growing up and becoming a book; not a novelist but a book. I knew how easy is to kill people, I knew it was very easy to kill all of us, I know it is easy to burn books. The books are stubborn, some godforsaken copies may survive in a faraway library, somewhere in Iceland or in Prague or in Australia (Oz)

The thought processes of a young boy reveals the influence of the hatred for his race have on him and his desire to survive; to live is reflected in the above lines. These thoughts arouse sympathy in the readers. At a very young age, he used to read books to escape from loneliness and newspaper was inevitable in his routine.

We come across two Arabs, his friends whom he had met just once but remembered lifelong. He goes to his childhood memories of an Arab, who might be the shopkeeper, who rescued him from the dark room where he was stuck in the shop. He describes him as a brown

skinned man with kind eyes which are weary and tired due to lack of sleep and the kind words which may be translated as ‘Don't be frightened, child, don't be frightened anymore now’(Oz,239). Another character is Aisha, the girl he met in the party of the Silwani's. He met her in the orchard with her young brother, whom he wounded accidentally. She shared with him her love for the Hebrew language and her desire to be a poet. This attracted him towards her because he himself had written poems and was well aware of the poets of Hebrew. When the Arabs warned the Jews before the partition and during the war he thought about the Arab shopkeeper and Aisha who he consider as the friends of the Jews. The description of the Arabs signifies that not all Arabs have hatred for them and that not all Arabs are foes

. When he was nine years old, that is, when the UN declared the decision of partition of Palestine, the Arabs came out roaring ‘butcher the Jews’, he thought that if he had a chance to speak to the Arabs he would convince them that they (Jews) were not dangerous guys and that the slogans that they shout were uncivilized. He dressed himself as a peace lover, ‘honey-tongued nationalist’ and a Zionist propagandist. He considered his race as lambs, the innocent victims, butchered by the wolves and the blood thirst race (British and Arabs). His nationalism grew largely. He wrote historical novels and poems on nationalism in his fourth and fifth grade. He imagined his heroic death on the battlefield and his parent's pride and sorrow and the funeral orations by Ben- Gurion, Begin and Uri Zvi (his heroes).With the declaration of the Jewish state, like all the other Jews, he rejoiced and joined the crowd that was celebrating the freedom. It was after six hours the war broke out and they had to hide themselves in the apartment.

During the war of independence that broke out in 1947, they had to undergo severe mental stress and discomfort. Several Jews were killed and wounded. There was scarcity for food and other resources. The availability of water was reduced to a bucket for every person every two

or three days. There was deep darkness and the air was hard to breathe for the windows of the apartment were completely covered with sandbags to prevent the entry of bullets. There were almost twenty five refugees in their apartment. He slept with his parents on the mattress. The room was stinking due to the accumulated waste from the toilets. He survived such horrible situations at the age of nine, which is remarkable. Again war broke out in 1948, after the establishment of the Jewish state. On one side his mother lost her friend Piri, who was murdered in the war and on the other side he lamented the death of his tortoise, Mimi, killed by a piece of artillery shell on the same day.

At school, he had to face humiliation for being the only child and thus the weakest among the students. He was beaten, and tormented. He saved himself from them by behaving abnormally- biting his arm, beating and scratching himself hysterically like his mother when she was overwhelmed. This act of mother's, which he used, helped him escape from the gang of attackers. Later he himself found a more acceptable way to get rid of the attacks – telling stories in which he included the films he had watched and the stories that he read.

Amos never wanted to be a writer, a poet, or a scholar because he claimed that he had no feelings. He wanted to be a farmer in the kibbutz or a dog poisoner. The pioneers whom he dreamt of were farmers who smelt of hay. The dog poisoner is a symbol of gentiles represented as dogs and the Jews as cats. The cats are considered cunning and cruel than dogs which are more loyal and respectable creatures than cats.

They used to visit the town and meet eminent personalities, other than their daily acquaintances, and got involved in serious talks. Young Amos was left alone and he was always asked to answer bravely the questions he is asked and to not interfere in the conversations. He

observed the people who were present in the café and attempted to study their expressions and analyze the situations of the people. Thus, he played with his imagination in exploring the life of the people.

It was then after the war their life got into more troubles when his mother fell ill. Days after, an absentmindedness crept into her. A queer slowness was felt in her movements. Sometimes she bent and buried herself in the book at other times she gazed into the deadly streets. She was found lying on the bed fully dressed staring at the ceiling. Two years before her death she was diagnosed with migraine and confined herself into the chair that lay near the window. The housework was divided between him and father. She was caught with insomnia which no pills was able to cure. She lay there with her eyes open staring at something, which she wasn't aware of. She even stopped eating.

It was during this time, Amos skipped Mr. Avisar's classes and spotted his father with a young woman in a café. He, out of shame, hated his father and after a couple of days, he hated his mother and her illness, her helplessness that forced father to look for signs for life. Then he hated himself for skipping his classes. During the spring, she recovered from her illness and they continued their regular life which was broken when she fell ill. However, this did not last long. The rain began and she returned to her previous position in the chair with her open book lying on her lap upside down. However, this time she used to tell stories to him and they would play games while his father was out in the night. They pretended to be asleep when he entered the room. After a couple of days she shifted to her previous state in the chair whole day and night. This strengthened the father- son relationship. Once he complemented him saying that he completely trusted him, which made him proud of him. He felt sorry for his father because he seemed sad and tired during those days. But mother was his duty and demand. So he felt no

sympathy for her or the migraine that haunted her. They never discussed her condition nor revealed the exact matter to the neighbors or acquaintances who inquired about her.

His mother's death made Amos lonelier than before. This solitude was becoming unbearable for him. Later, two and half years after his mother's death, he decided to leave for Kibbutz Huldai at the age of fifteen. It was during the time when the relationship between the father and son worsened. His schoolwork went downhill and there was even a threat of expulsion from the school. This was the reason behind the unpleasantness between them

Amos concluded that the reason behind his mother's illness and death was the war and its aftermaths and the death of her beloved ones in Rovno and Jerusalem. For him, the only pleasant memory he had of his family was in the spring when his mother sat on her back leaning the tree and father and he lay on her lap chewing the grass blade. It was when she recovered from her illness. This memory was very close to him that he always remembered it.

Amos ran away from everything.

The suffocation of life in that basement, between my father and mother and between the two of them and all those books, the ambitions, the repressed, denied nostalgia for Rovno and Vilna, for a Europe that was embodied by a black tea cart and gleaming white napkins, the burden of his failure in life, the wound of hers, failures that I was tacitly charged with the responsibility of converting into victories in the fullness of time, all this oppressed me so much that I wanted to run away from it. (Oz,448)

It might be due to this fact that he survived every hardship in life. He was not an ordinary child. He had his own views on life.

Chapter 3

Overshadowing Multiculturalism and the impact of being a Diaspora Jew

in Amos's *A Tale of Love and Darkness*

Multiculturalism, according to Merriam Webster dictionary, is “cultural pluralism or diversity.” The entries about the author’s ancestors who lived in Eastern Europe rather than Jerusalem, which they claim to be the land of their ancestors, in the text, *A Tale of Love and Darkness* are an ample testimony of multiculturalism.

Diaspora, according to the Merriam Webster dictionary, is “the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside ancient Palestine...” In *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, the author and his family belong to the “diaspora Jews”, who were forced to get back to their land – Palestine as a result of the anti- Semitic principles that echoed in every corner of the earth. The common belief of the community on the multicultural and diaspora characters, are the following.

The scattered structures of diaspora and the disparate influences exerted on their various communities may indeed generate divergent perceptions of the common identity, and blur lines of authority. Diasporas become ‘different’ from what they were originally, and become factors of the socio cultural heterogenization of their diasporas.... This reality brings with it hardships as well as consolations (Tasmin 25).

However, this statement is proved wrong with ample evidences and explanations in the text on the negative aspects of mixed culture and diaspora. In order to examine the aspects of diversity the cultures of the lands where the protagonist’s family members were born and

brought up and the problems they had to face in their own land, a thorough scrutiny of the text is of help.

Amos Oz, the narrator, is a young boy who was born to a librarian in the National Library on Mount Scopus, Arieh Klausner and Fania Weissmann. They lived in a minor apartment in Kerem Avraham, a street in the city of Jerusalem. His parents were born and brought up in the exterior of Palestine and their family took shelter in the land of their ancestors during the wave of anti- Semitism.

The young boy Amos, who is the narrator himself, views Europe as “a forbidden promised land.” He dreamt of the ‘cottage’ and ‘meadows’ which when whispered to himself ‘could hear the lowing of cows with little bells tied around their necks, and the burbling of brooks’ (6). He considers his land, Jerusalem as ‘the urban wasteland of scrap iron and thistles’ (6), which signifies his contempt towards the present scenario. The anti- Semitic principles followed by the World left the so-called “Jews of the Diaspora” with no road to survival, so they had to leave their dreamland behind and push towards the land of their ancestors.

Amos’ parents look forward to a land ‘where broad-minded Britons dined with cultured Jews or educated Arabs, where there were recitals, balls, literary evenings, *thés dansants*, and exquisite, artistic conversations’(Oz,7). However, this only existed in the dreams of the educated middle class who lived in the Kerem Avraham street.

The neighbors of the narrator were not only the Europeans but also the Russian Jews who fled from their land to save themselves from the perils of anti- Semitism. Like the other Zionists from the Eastern Europe, they also dreamt of a land where they could live without the fear of death and flourish, pure and free. Amos hoped for joining the Heroic Jews who were, unlike the

Diaspora Jews, courageous, rugged pioneers, warm hearted, serious and self- disciplined, who succeeded in making friendship with the darkness of light. He yearned to be a part of them because they experienced more freedom than that of his fellow Jews.

His father secured double degrees during his youth but failed to obtain a teaching position in the Hebrew university because there were plenty of lecturers who graduated from the famous German universities unlike his father's Polish- Jerusalemite qualifications. Therefore, he had to settle for a post of the Librarian in the National Library on Mount Scopus. The impact of being a Jew of the diaspora is spotted in his uncertainty in greeting a proletarian, 'in Jerusalem, everything was ambiguous'(Oz,19); the unchangeable traits incorporated from the "Foreigners".

The Grandma Shlomit, the mother of Arie, migrated to Jerusalem from Vilna with her younger son and husband during the times of hardship that Jews faced in Poland. She was very much obsessed with the "Germs" around her, which could be read as a symbol of unfamiliarity in the new environment, which was not pleasing to her. Her motto for life in Jerusalem was 'Levant is full of Germs' (Oz,36). Her fear for germs was so high that she used to perform all kinds of freakish acts that made anyone feel excruciated. Her inclination towards the land of Europe might be the reason behind their futile attempt to secure immigration papers for France, America, and other European countries.

Grandpa Alexander, a poet, wrote love poems about the beauty and faithfulness of Hebrew language in Russian. The narrator indicates the influence of Odessa in his life by citing the incident when he inquires about the language of the poems that he wrote, 'You've been living in Jerusalem... about the real Jerusalem' (Oz,94). He claims that he did sums, dreamt and cursed himself in Russian and he states that the Odessa he dreams of is no more.

Arieh and David, the two brothers, spoke a number of languages including the Russian, German, Latin, English, Yiddish, Hebrew, French and Polish. In their apartment in the Kerem Avraham street Arieh and Fania switch on to Russian when the matter is uninvented for child Amos. The same happens when Amos is amidst a discussion or meeting of the elders that included his grandparents or the neighbours. They longed to get out of the place and settle in a more cultured area like Talpiot. Amos who had no siblings or friends lived in the stories of his mother, in “the farthest north”, in the edge of the forests, the meadows and the steppes.

According to Amos the diaspora Jews are compared to cats capable of manoeuvres and dishonesty whereas a non- Jew is compared to a dog whose intension could be detected easily. This depicts the strategy of the anti- Semitic atmosphere of the author. He also states that he would prefer choosing a dog rather than a cat, which portrays his dissatisfaction as a Jew. The disease struck saplings planted near the pomegranate tree is compared to the ‘persecuted Diaspora Jews’ (Oz,251), with their drooped leaves and withered shoots, which cannot be brought back to life with any kind of elixir. Another peculiar characteristic of the diaspora Jews, Fania and Arieh, was that they both offend the holy places and the religious people.

Arieh suspected everyone who earned a living from religion as possessing some kind of “sugared charlatanism”. He favoured art and the revival of art. He was astounded by the Silwani villa, where he went with his uncle Staszek Rudnicki and aunt Mala to attend a party, where they were invited. Because it was the first time ever he had seen such a big mansion with lights and artifacts. Other than his small apartment, Uncle Joseph’s house was the spacious house he had ever seen. This signifies the contrast in the idea of livelihood that was available to the Jews of diaspora and the native wealthy Arabs of the Land. The Silwani’s, according to uncle Staz, were highly educated Europeanized family whose menfolk were sent to excellent schools and could

speak Western languages, whereas the European Jews, the Jews of the diaspora, gave importance to the cultural and moral values rather than the external appearances. This was indeed the reason behind the humiliation of the Jews, particularly of the diaspora, that the anti-Semites portrayed them as “rowdy rabble of rough paupers”.

Another instance that portrays the dilemma of Jews is in the selection of cheese from the grocery store. The sense of nationalism and the need for cheap materials produce a confusion among the Jewish customers. They claim that the cheese made by the pioneers is to be given more importance than the Arab cheese even though it costs a few mills less than the former. One buys only one kind of cheese simply because of a difference in religion, nationality and race. The author considers this narrow-mindedness as shameful and disgraceful for an educated race.

The issue of gifting is another problem that causes great confusion among the people of the Diaspora. Gifting flowers is a modest method to please someone, and sending Gladioli is cultural and aristocratic apart from the half-wild Asiatic weeds. But these flowers are so expensive that a “Diaspora Jew” cannot afford it. Even if he manages to get them, another issue he will have to face is in the number of flowers in a bunch. An increase in the number of flowers will increase the expense. Should these flowers be surrounded by ferns so that the number can be minimized? Or is this whole thing outdated? Another question is whether the people of Tel Aviv still follow this fashion. Here, we can find a conflict between the different cultures experienced by the diaspora. Later we find that the author comes to a conclusion that it would be better to gift something that would be useful to the benefactor like a set of glass holders or serviettes. The author cites several examples like the appearance of the great Tolstoy in his peasant’s attire and Lenin in his leather jacket and worker’s cap to prove his point.

Conclusion

The wave of anti-Semitism had its root in the Greco-Roman period and it continued to the present. The Jews were ill-treated on the standards of religion and later as a race which will bring evil to the mankind. The emergence of Christianity worsened the situation of the Jews. They were exposed to a lot more accusations including the murderers of the Son of God. They were labelled as the race of the darkness. Along with the denial of the basic rights the government began to plot against the Jews to exclude them from the country. They succeeded in their attempt. The religious discrimination gradually transformed into racial discrimination. The notions of the Nazis supported by the anti-Semites of the rest of the world forced the Jews to leave their land and move towards a safer zone. The Jews who were expelled from the European countries took refuge in their native land, Palestine.

The novel, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, by Amos Oz, is the life of a Jewish family who took refuge in the state of Israel. This text is an autobiography of the author, where we could find a young boy who had to live through severe hardships in life for being born as a Jew. The text also portrays the life of his grandparents and his parents, who were the survivors of anti-Semitism in Europe. The major topic dealt in the novel is the life of a Diaspora Jew-which includes Grandpa Alexander, Grandma Shlomit, his parents- Fania Mussman and Arieh Klausner, Uncle Joseph Klausner and the author himself.

The novel beautifully portrays the life of the author in Palestine. He emphasizes multiculturalism in their life as being a European who migrated to his native land which was far away from their lifestyle. He also shows light to the early life of his parents and grandparents outside Palestine. Their life is an evidence for the violence that took place against the Jews in

Europe. He even remembers some of his relatives and neighbours who lost their lives in the conflict.

The death of Amos's mother is another concern of the novel. Throughout the story, the author worries the changes that took place in his mother, in her childhood and youth. This helped him to arrive at a conclusion about the reason behind her illness and death. She was caught with depression for she had to undergo severe trauma during the Palestine-Israel conflict which followed the declaration of partition of Palestine and the emergence of a new state of Israel. She lost her friend during the war which was again another reason for her illness. During the conflict, there was scarcity of water and food. There were a lot of people who hid in their houses. Many people were killed and a lot more were injured. Many lost their houses and other valuables. The author himself lost his pet, the tortoise, which was killed by a shattered piece of shell.

These incidents influenced the young Amos. His love for a peaceful living is the outcome of the hostility in his childhood. He, being a fragile boy, was the victim of the villainy of the other boys in the school. He lacked friends, for he spent most of his time reading books. This led to his enlightenment. He wanted to join the Kibbutz Hulda and live as a farmer, the rest of his life.

The theories of anti-Semitism and the influence of multiculturalism go hand-in-hand in the novel. Oz had attempted to bring forth the miseries of the Jewish tribe and their helplessness and he succeeds in this attempt.

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