

The Portrayal of Men in Nawal El Saadawi's Select Fiction: A Study

**A Thesis Submitted in the University of Hyderabad
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Award of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
ENGLISH**

SUBMITTED BY

**MANOJ KANTH SIRRA
09HEPH07**

**SUPERVISOR
PROF. K. Suneetha Rani**



**हैदराबाद विश्वविद्यालय
University of Hyderabad**



**प्रतिष्ठित संस्थान
INSTITUTION OF EMINENCE
राष्ट्रीय अपेक्षाएँ, वैश्विक मानक
National Needs, Global Standards**

Department of English
School of Humanities
University of Hyderabad
(P.O.) Central University, Gachibowli,
Hyderabad – 500046
Telangana
India

DECLARATION

I, MANOJ KANTH SIRRA, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**The Portrayal of Men in Nawal El Saadawi’s Select Fiction: A Study**” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Professor K. Suneetha Rani** is a bonafide research work for the award of **Doctor of Philosophy in English** from the **University of Hyderabad**. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/ INFLIBNET.

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(Supervisor)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**The Portrayal of Men in Nawal El Saadawi’s Select Fiction: A Study**” submitted by Manoj Kanth Sirra (09HEPH07) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of **Doctor of Philosophy in English** is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

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Parts related to this thesis have been:

A. Published in the following:

1. *Kalyan Bharati* Vol.36, No. (XV) (ISBN/ISSN Number 0976-0822, Chapter 1
“Examining the Modern Feminist Narratives of Middle East through the Selected Novels of Nawal El Saadawi”

B. Presented in the following Conferences:

1. Manoj Kanth Sirra. “Deconstructing dreams in Nawal El Saadawi’s woman at point Zero and Circling Song” at the International Seminar on “Feminism in Contemporary Hindi, Kannada and English Literature” organized by the Department of Hindi at Sri Gavisiddeshwar Arts, Science and Commerce College, 19th March 2017
2. Manoj Kanth Sirra. “Examining the Modern Feminist Narratives of Middle East through the Selected Novels of Nawal El Saadawi” at National Seminar on “Recent Trends in English Literature and Language” organized by Department of English at Girraj Government College, Nizamabad, 12th February 2020

Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfillment of coursework requirement for Ph.D.:

Sl. No.	Course Code	Course Title	Credits	Pass/Fail
1	HE 801	Critical Approaches	4	PASS
2	HE 806	Research Methodology	2	PASS
3	EN 827	Arab American Women's Literature	4	PASS
4	EN 831	Author Course: Nawal El Saadawi	4	PASS

Supervisor

Head of the Department

Dean of School

Prof. K. Suneetha Rani

Date: 30 June 2022

Place: University of Hyderabad

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I am grateful to the Almighty for His abundant grace and mercy on me. Thanking Him for leading me to the University of Hyderabad, which was a dream come true, and became my second home. I take this golden opportunity to express my indebtedness and sincere sentiments of gratitude to Prof. K. Suneetha Rani, my esteem teacher and supervisor, who encouraged me immensely in the research work. Moreover, her helpful nature, scholarly guidance and valuable suggestions and comments from time to time have made it possible for me to bring it out to its present form. In fact, I am very much indebted to her in this regard, and I feel privileged to have worked with her. Heartfully I thank her for understanding my personal issues and supporting me in touch times, especially when I met with an accident and could not even attend DRC.

I would like to thank Prof. Sachidananda Mohanty, Department of English, the then Head of the Department, for receiving me fondly in the department and for creating a friendly atmosphere in the department that eased out nervousness in me.

Special thanks to Prof. Sridhar. M, Department of English, for his simplicity and friendly nature. It was immense pleasure listening his lectures on Research Methodology and Critical Approaches. His inputs in the course work helped me to carryout the research.

My unspeakable note of thanks goes to Prof. Murali Manohar, Department of English, My doctoral committee member for his constant support and valuable advises time and again. He has inspired me immensely through his kind gesture and compassionate behaviour.

I would like to thank Prof. Mujeebuddin, Department of English, for introducing Arab Women's literature in the second semester under a course work. His insights in understanding the Arab Women's literature shaped this thesis.

I would like to thank the staff at Ramesh Mohan Library for their kindness in allowing me to access

the library and use the books. That's the only place I was fortunate to find books related to Arab Women Literature back then.

My sincere thanks to Anveshi Research Centre and American Research Centre for the resources they provided for the initial readings on Arab and American Women Literature.

I would like to thank Prof. Deepa Srinivas, Centre for Women Studies for her course work on Introduction to Gender studies. This was instrumental in understanding the basics of Gender studies.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my parents and family members for their unfailing love, constant help, encouragement and blessings. Specially my mother and Akka for encouraging me to join PhD. I will never forget their moral and financial help. I must thank my better-half Sangeeta for her constant encouragement and reminders to finish my thesis work. Special thanks to my daughter Hasia Caris for being my love. She helped me to feel relieved with her cute smile. I would like to thank my Chinnanna, David Living Stone, for being my mentor and supporter. He constantly prayed for studies and encouraged.

I also would like to thank all my EU friends, Church friends and university mates for the time we spent together is priceless.

I thank the Librarian and supporting staff of Indira Gandhi Memorial Library (IGML) of University of Hyderabad for their unfailing courtesy and help during my visits and for providing me books and an easy access to the e-sources and materials for the present study.

Special thanks to C. Savita for going through the thesis and provided necessary inputs.

At last but not the least, I thank all my teachers and friends whose names I could not mention, but have constantly supported and encouraged me to complete my work.

Thank you !!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Power is manifest in different forms in different societies and contexts. Quite often, it is institutionalised and normalised so that there is no protest or resistance from the individuals and the groups who are being subjected to repression and discrimination by those who are invested with power. Rather, the repressed ones are convinced about their predicament and try to convince others of their kind to accept their predicament. However, despite all normalisation and conditioning, repression is quite often confronted by protests, rebellions, and even revolutions. One such institutionalisation of hierarchy is the gender order. Gender as a construct, performance and situation strengthens the other forms of hegemony as a tool and a weapon. The roles and labels attached to them in various capacities further deepen the conflict. As V. Geetha rightly observes, “Masculine and feminine modes of behaviour are relevant as far as they reflect social expectations. Men and women enact different roles, because society expects them to act in these ways and rewards them if they do, punishes them if they do not”. (p. 31) This thesis attempts to study a context in which genders are sculpted as an oppositional binary constantly in conflict with each other in different domains. It examines select works of the Egyptian feminist writer Nawal El Saadawi to understand the dynamics of power invested in male gender in a traditional, patriarchal and feudal society. Similar to the struggle women go through to become acceptable women, men, too, go through the struggle to become men. No doubt power vested in the male gender. But, it also creates constant pressure on men to prove themselves as truly male and masculine, which sometimes or most of the time compels them to go against their people and live in their isolated worlds.

It is crucial to understand the social, cultural and literary contexts before we move on to read Saadawi and her creation of men and their worlds in her fiction. For many a woman in the western world, making their voice heard in the public sphere and in academics became quite possible after they regained their rights. The revolutionary movements, pathbreaking ideas and particularly feminist movements led to some betterment in the status of women in the western and developed countries. World Wars, Depression, Globalisation and other factors have also contributed to the change in gender relations at home and outside. Women from various walks of life have raised their voices as individuals and groups in the form of writings and people's movements. After a long struggle for basic rights such as the right to vote, they succeeded in entering into policy-making forums. It has to be remembered here that the West is not homogeneous, and the women in the West are also not homogeneous in terms of their status and assertion. For instance, a middle-class white woman's rights in western society may not be accessible to Black women, Indigenous women, working-class women and migrant women. This heterogeneity applies to developing countries as well. In many African and Middle Eastern regions, most women remain silenced. This is due to the different and traditional norms that hold these societies together and function as standards of conduct. This has been aggravated by social, economic, political, and cultural institutions based on deeply entrenched preconceptions. Divided horizontally and vertically very similar to South Asian countries, these societies are deeply affected by patriarchal notions and traditional practices. Like women from the South Asian countries, women from these countries have been fighting relentlessly against all forms of alienation and violence, including racism. But, they are also pulled in different directions as the multiple identities that they carry as the post-colonial women of colour from the developing countries. Their struggles are positioned at various levels,

including those against their patriarchal systems. African and Middle Eastern women writers have used their writings to make their voices heard, especially those related to their male counterparts' patriarchal representations of culture. Through their works, they brought the contextual factors of women's oppression to the attention of their people. Their writings provided literary spaces for presenting, discussing, and, in some cases, answering questions about the position of women in their country.

Aisha al-Tarmouria, Malak Hifni Bassif and Mayy Zaideh are the pioneers in Arab Women's writing. Along with other women writers, they went against society and bravely defied the prevalent norms of their times, which dictated that well-bred women were not to be seen and not to be heard. Other writers like Dalya Cohen- Mor and Mona N. Mikhail presented the history of Arab Women's Literature from different angles other than the established ones. Access to education was an important factor that made such work possible. However, while the middle and upper-class women had the good fortune of receiving at least a primary education, women of lower classes could not afford any education.

Not all the prominent women writers wrote on the same themes. Between the two World Wars and the relatively marginalised economic position, the Arab bourgeoisie arose and flourished. This new elite shattered the traditional feudal economic order and led to a large number of women moving both into the labour force on the one hand and the classroom on the other. Therefore, there were contradictions when the women writers reflected on matters of cultural, spiritual and scientific freedom. Such contradictions were further widened by the clash between the old and new class order in society, apart from other relevant issues.

In fact, “Arab women writers have been actively engaged in making their voices heard since the turn of the twentieth century”. (Seen and Heard 132). Ghada al-Samaan, for example, emphasises the dilemma of the Arab intellectual. Her protagonists are torn between thought and action, reality and consciousness, and old values and new life challenges. In Arab women writers' fiction, heroines and heroes appear to be doomed to choose between an ancestral East steeped in superstitions and taboos and an unsettling West that only offers the realms of existential fear. (Seen and Heard 134).

Such diversity in Arab literature was also highlighted by Mona N. Mikhail, who quotes Afif Faraj. This highlights two aspects of Arab Literature of the 20th century. Firstly, in the Literature of Arab women, there was either reversal of traditional symbols or women were again forced to recoil into their self-imposed cocoons, unable to live fully. And somehow, during the 1950s and 1960s, these women writers never seem to repeat their initial successes and bestsellers. Secondly, the literary production of male authors came to a sudden end during the same period.

Moving further, in the 1960s, Arab women writers produced works that resonate with the after-effects of the ground-breaking social changes that have shaken their worlds. For the past half-century, Arab women have been generating substantial fiction. Women writers and poets have succeeded in producing memorable works of art through experimenting with language and setting forth new horizons for Arabic prose and poetry. The connection with the West was obvious in the choice of forms: women writers used the short story and the novel despite the fact that Arabic literary heritage has its own narrative forms. New literary styles were introduced during a cultural rebirth known as *al-Nahda* in Arabic. Before acquiring acceptability and maturity, these new forms were subjected to extensive testing. Women's literacy increased as free obligatory public education became more widely available, opening the door to new

job options. Women's participation in public life increased, and women quickly advanced from the margins to the centre of literary production in the field of literature. In fact, they have made a significant contribution to modern Arabic literature. Arab women writers have worked hard over the last half-century to develop their own distinct writing style, achieving remarkable progress in theme, form, and technique. The Palestinian Mayy Ziyada (1886-1941), the Egyptians Suhayr al-Qalamawi (1911-97) and Nawal El Saadawi (1939-2021), and the Syrian Ulfat al-Idilbi are among the notable authors (b. 1912).

Nawal El Saadawi tried to explain women's experiences and fate in patriarchal Arab societies. Her work reflects cultural contexts in which concepts such as exploiting women and celebrating female sacrifice exemplify the violence of a social structure. This social structure has made virility the norm for manhood. Writers such as Nawal El Saadawi used their works to highlight the oppression of Arab women by institutions such as family, society, and religion.

As Virginia Woolf noted in *A Room of One's Own*, for women to be able to compose literature in a developing world where illiteracy is still prevalent and the vast majority of women are engaged with the hard realities of daily life, they need sufficient funds and space to do so. In spite of the fact that there are now more brilliant female authors than ever before, very few of them are in a position to devote their entire life to their work. Writing fiction is not a viable career option in the Arab world since there is not enough demand for it. Many people believe that successful female authors are able to juggle their creative work with the demands of being spouses, mothers, and professional women. It was, and it is not simple for these female authors to publish it or to attract a readership for their work.

Women and Sex was Nawal El Saadawi's debut work of fiction, originally published in Beirut in 1972. This book focuses mostly on the taboos surrounding female sexuality, including topics like virginity, circumcision, and honour killings. She lost her job as Egypt's Director-General of Health Education as a direct result of the controversy sparked by this book's publication. As has been the case with other inciting works that she has authored, this book has been banned in several Arab countries.

Similarly, in addition to the difficulties associated with censorship, Arab female writers may also have to contend with antagonism from their own families. Both Alifa Rifaat's father and her husband tried to stop her from writing. Her husband threatened to divorce her if she didn't comply with his demands, while her father tried to stop her from writing. After he passed away, she could finally write and publish whatever she wanted. Nawal al-Saadawi divorced both of her spouses because they opposed her artistic endeavours and did not encourage them. The attitudes of a woman's family members, particularly her father and spouse, whether progressive or conservative, have a significant impact on the trajectory of her literary career in the majority of cases. This restriction is a cost on several levels, particularly in a society where the majority of people do not have an education, where conservative values are rigidly held, and where women are not valued in the first place. This makes writing practically impossible, particularly for the author when she questions herself about the people she was writing for in the first place.

She was only able to write and publish without restriction. On the other side, since the 19th century, the vast majority of male Arab authors have strongly supported the enfranchisement of women. This support can be traced back to the time period. Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, born in 1801, is generally regarded as the most responsible for this. He is recognized for having championed the cause of women's education.

While modern Arabic literature is beginning to find its legitimate place among the world's literature, Mona N. Mikhail argues in her book *Seen and Heard* that Arabic literature written by women or about women has been relatively unexplored in the West. Mikhail bases her argument on the fact that while modern Arabic literature is beginning to find its legitimate place among world literature, According to Mona, most of the writings are considered part of the modern age of Arabic literature. In addition, contrary to the common belief, the male authors played a significant role in elevating women's position to one that is equal to that of men. Many of the institutions, such as the practice of circumcising females, are the products of institutions and social factors that existed before Islam. She continues by saying

While it is an accepted fact that the rising of women is one of the Arab society at large, not enough studies are exploring the impact of their literary contribution, not the manner in which male authors have sought to explore, explain, and incorporate the image of women in their writings (*Seen and Heard* 124).

The life of a young woman growing up in a traditional Arab community is portrayed in the writings of Arab women writers. The younger years in a girl's life appear to be relatively pleasant and carefree, but puberty marks the end of her independence. When a girl reaches the age of puberty, she will begin to wear the veil for the first time. She is confined to the confines of her household and is unable to exercise her freedom of movement until she is wed. It is possible that the intense need she has to guard both her chastity and the honour of her family may lead her to give up on her education and withdraw from school. It shows how the journey from childhood to adulthood can be a whirlwind and challenging experience. The practice of a girl being given away in marriage at the first sign that she is going to start menstruating brings

attention to the problem of child labour and the subjugation of women by other women. Najiya Thanir's novel *The Slave* is one of the works written by Arab women. It narrates the narrative of a fatherless girl who is adopted by a rich lady who puts her in servitude, prevents her from living a life of her own, and ultimately breaks her spirit. The story indicates that a woman can be a more effective dictator than a man, especially when she is in a relationship with another woman who is her subordinate and with whom she exercises power over.

Many strict conventions surround female sexuality, including things like circumcision, veils, social segregation, seclusion, and even murders committed in the name of honour. And Arab female writers took a stand against these abuses. In addition, they offered a unique glimpse into the intimate connections between men and women, demonstrating that the sexual taboo is regularly breached in everyday life. Despite the vast sexual restrictions prevalent in traditional Arab society, love, passion, and physical pleasure have been celebrated in Arabic poetry for a long time. This honouring can be found in both classical and current forms of Arabic poetry. In the novel *My Mother's Friend*, Nura Amin exposes a facet of sexuality that is contentious. The story is centred on the mother of a little girl having a lesbian connection with another lady who is single and not married. It defies the stringent limits placed on the topic matter, vocabulary, and portrayal of female sexuality. Because the girl's father is frequently abroad at work, the mother looks for comfort and companionship in the embrace of another lady to fill the void left by the girl's absent father. The narrative centres on the young woman's sexual awakening and the close relationship she shares with her mother from the girl's point of view. In a culture where openly discussing sexual issues is seldom encouraged, depicting a lesbian couple in a romantic relationship is considered extremely inappropriate.

The discussion surrounding feminism revolves primarily around the issue of gender roles and dynamics. Concern over gender inequality, which often forms male dominance, oppression, and marginalization of women, is prevalent among Arab women writers. Their works of fiction are replete with female characters who are shackled to lives of servitude at the hands of their male relatives, be it their husbands, dads, brothers, or uncles. These men have authority over their lives. They condemn the way men treat women and rise against patriarchal institutions and norms that keep women in subservience. They argue against the contradictory standards in the law and society and demand freedom, justice, and equality while simultaneously expressing their rage, irritation, and sense of isolation. Consequently, masculine characters are typically portrayed as egotistic, callous, and arrogant, driven by money, lusty, and caught up in their own basic sense of honour. Having said that, there are some notable exceptions. Samiya At'ut's "Mozart's Fez" is a sensitive cameo portrait that captures the essence of male-female relationships. The piece is titled "Mozart's Fez."

Marriage in traditional Arab societies denotes the passing of a girl's father's control over her to that of her husband. This transfer of authority takes place when the couple has children. In most traditional cultures that practise arranged marriages, the woman does not get a say in who will become her husband. Instead, it is her parents that choose her future husband for her. After reaching an agreement on the bride price, the couple must sign the marriage contract before moving on to the ceremony proper. Later, the girl is moved into her husband's home, where she is supposed to be ready to fulfil her domestic, sexual, and reproductive responsibilities. Consequently, many women view marriage as a type of confinement and oppression that is significantly more severe than what they have experienced in the families in which they were raised. In Arab literature, female characters are depicted as having positive attitudes on the

institution of marriage. Others disapprove of the system on the grounds that it exposes people to risk by adhering to the institution of marriage, which always gives men the upper hand and treats women as property that can be owned as part of the marriage contract. Another group of protagonists not only disagree with the concept but also exhibit a defiant attitude toward the traditional institution of marriage. For instance, maintaining one's virginity is accorded a high level of importance in conventional Arab society. A young woman's chastity is a symbol of her own honour and the honour of her entire family.

As a consequence of this, it is imperative for a woman to maintain her virginity until the day she gets married. It is a severe felony that is punished by death to have sexual relations prior to marriage. When it is revealed that a bride has been unchaste on her wedding night, it is extremely embarrassing for the bride's family. Her husband has the power to call off the wedding, and her male relatives—her father, brother, and uncle—have an obligation to exact revenge on her by having her killed. Writings by women often address topics such as honour killings and maintaining one's virginity. Another practice that has a significant impact on the institution of marriage is polygamy, which highlights the gender disparity by allowing a man to have up to four wives at the same time while a woman is only allowed to have one spouse at any given time.

The effects of polygamy, particularly on the emotional state of women, are frequently depicted in women's writing. Having children, which has historically been regarded as a woman's primary obligation in society and the primary objective of getting married, has a huge influence on a woman's life. For one thing, having children may provide a woman with a true sense of self-satisfaction. Another consideration is that the presence of children is the cornerstone of a woman's social status, as they are

the source of respect from her family and community. In every facet of Arab society, boys are given a significant preference over girls. The birth of a boy is typically met with jubilation and celebration, whereas the arrival of a baby girl may be disregarded or even met with feelings of dissatisfaction. Because the desire for a son is so great, a woman who only has daughters is in the same position as a woman who does not have any children. If a woman cannot have children and has tried unsuccessfully, her husband has the option to divorce her or marry another woman. It is a common misconception or myth that the wife or mother is solely responsible for giving birth to a female kid.

Even though there is scientific evidence to the contrary, it is believed that women are responsible for either not having children or the gender of the children they do have. Consequently, the mother is frequently held responsible for the high number of female children and the lack of male children in the family. The psychological repercussions of a woman being put under pressure to have children were explored in women's literature, along with the development of contemporary attitudes toward childbearing that have started to surface among Arab women.

Because Arab society has become more contemporary, individuals now have significantly more opportunities for self-improvement and self-expression than in the past. Women's efforts to enter the workforce and engage in public life have been supported by the growth of free obligatory public education as well as the economic requirement for women to contribute to the household income. As a result of the new reality of women's participation in the workforce in an urban environment, there have been disagreements within and beyond the organisation. Women today are torn between the strong desires to establish a family and make headway in their professional lives on a more individual level. On a more intimate level, women frequently confront authority

figures in the family, primarily husbands, who adhere to traditions and feel that a woman's place is in the house. These husbands believe that a woman's role is in the home. Some stories centre on the impact that social norms and traditions have on the lives of women.

In Arab culture, time-honoured customs and traditions serve as sources of communal attitudes and individual and collective behaviour norms. Women are the most impacted members of society when it comes to customs and traditions, despite the fact that they connect all members of society. The practice of veils, social seclusion, social segregation, circumcision, and crimes of honour are all mandated by local custom. Tradition is the foundation for marriage, divorce, pregnancy, and patterns of childrearing and parenting. The common understanding of women's access to education and their participation in the workforce outside the house has been influenced by tradition.

The behaviour of a woman is governed by tradition from the moment she is born until the day she dies. As a direct consequence of this, conventions and traditions have evolved into the most challenging obstacles for women to overcome. The liberation process is not even close to being finished, despite the fact that there has been a major increase in the participation of Arab women in public life and a greater degree of knowledge both collectively and individually. When Arab women writers work for freedom, equality, solidarity, and support, they are occasionally greeted with hostility and rejection from other people. The breadth of their vision is reflected in the fact that they consider the liberation of their gender as being intrinsically tied to the regeneration of Arab society in general and the Arab man in particular. The writings of Arab women authors frequently address all of these topics.

The hypothesis has prompted several discussions that Arab female writers write in a manner that is distinct from that of their male contemporaries. Some literary critics are of the opinion that a work of imaginative writing contains the same essential components regardless of the author's gender. The issues they address, founded on their individual life experiences and perspectives of society, set them apart from one another. Consequently, it is fruitless to search women's works for a particular subgenre of literature characterised by a particular set of characteristics. On the other hand, women have a wide variety of interests because of the myriad of social and psychological conditions they can experience.

The first-person narration is typically delivered by a female narrator who adopts the third-person perspective. Critics and readers often assume that the first-person pronoun refers to the author rather than the character in the story when using this technique since it lends the story an eyewitness quality. This presents a unique issue for Arab women writers. Consequently, people frequently consider the fictional works produced by women to be examples of self-revelation. If the reader believes that the author and the narrator are the same person, talking about a personal experience, this might have significant repercussions on the author's social position, particularly when the story deals with delicate subjects.

Arab women authors get around the challenges of writing in the first-person perspective by using narrative voices that are ambiguous about the gender of the narrator. Their understanding and conception of the Arab lady undergo a slow but steady transformation. Since Arab women are now able to educate, work, and travel, they have significantly increased their power and influence over their lives. The stereotypical depiction of an Arab lady as a figure who is quiet, obedient, and submissive is no longer accurate. The modern Arab woman is confident in her abilities

and is quite outspoken. The Arab lady has successfully recast herself in the public eye and developed a robust sense of her own identity. Although many ancient obstacles have been removed and social boundaries have been expanded, the traditional roles and obligations that have historically been assigned to women in Arab societies are still widely practised.

Arab women's new status is diverse and varied. Some parts of their lives, such as education and job, have greatly improved, while other areas, such as the rules governing marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, have not changed. In addition, many subgroups within Arab society, such as the rural, village, and Bedouin women, have not benefited to the same extent from the development of modern civilization. Women especially educated women who have been successful in choosing their own lives, serve as role models for other women and become social change agents when they become active participants in these roles.

An extraordinary Arab thinker and feminist writer, Nawal El Saadawi is also known for being one of the most contentious authors among Islamic groups in the Middle East and left-leaning Arab intellectuals in the West. She has done it all: from practising medicine to establishing and leading an Arab women's organisation; from working for the Egyptian government to being imprisoned by it; from authoring daring articles about women, sexuality, and gender to penning novels, short tales, and plays. She was one of nine children born into a family that lived in the rural areas of Egypt. Her formal education and all her courses in the medical field were completed in their entirety in Egypt.

Daphne Grace, in her work *The Woman in the Muslin Mask: Veiling and Identity in Postcolonial Literature*, says

Despite her controversial reputation, El Saadawi remains one of the most influential and outspoken writers of both fiction and non-fiction in North Africa. Although her fictional works are arguably not 'refined' enough to rate as major works of Literature, her themes are both revolutionary and provocative. The very fact that her texts sometimes reads as 'raw' also perhaps adds to the immediacy of the subject matter. (Grace 2004; 82)

Western audiences consume El Saadawi and her Arab feminist works in an environment that is loaded with misconceptions about Arab culture and traditions that were supposed to have existed only in Arab countries. Amal Amirah is a proponent of historicizing and contextualising the writings of Arab women. She argues that this should be done by considering these writings in the context of Arab women and their intentions, as opposed to examining these literary works through the eyes of western audiences who have preconceived notions about how Arab societies function. According to the reception theory, texts need to be analysed through their production and consumption prism to be properly understood. According to this point of view, the settings in which Arab women writers spoke or wrote, the circumstances in which their words were received, and the audience that heard and read them are more significant than the words that the women spoke or wrote.

The exciting way text and situation interact in El Saadawi's writings is one of the author's many strengths. She is an Egyptian author who writes in Arabic for an Arab audience, but she is also a frequent traveller from the Third World who addresses an English-speaking audience through translations of her works, as well as lectures and interviews that have frequently appeared in English media and have also been discussed in academic circles. Her works have been translated into Arabic and discussed in academic circles.

For a decade and a half now, a constant stream of El Saadawi's work, mostly fiction, has been appearing in British and American bookstores, making her one of the most translated Arab writers, male or female. At present, fourteen of her books have been translated into English and are in print (Framing Nawal El Saadawi 216)

Her works began to be printed and distributed throughout the Arab world in the early to the middle of the 1970s, but they were not recognised in the western literary market until the 1980s. Her writings were written in Arabic. The dates of Arabic publication and its English translation can sometimes be separated by a decade or two, depending on the publishing houses that were involved and the level of popularity that the text had among the various Arab nations. At this time, El Saadawi's works are rapidly translated, with the English version appearing on the market either immediately after the Arabic version enters the market or simultaneously with the Arabic version, if not right away after the Arabic version hits the market. Because of El Saadawi's rising profile in the United States, many prominent American publishing houses have begun to publish her books. She has been recognised as a prominent Arab writer and enshrined as a superstar in the academic canon of the United States.

Her works are studied in advanced and undergraduate courses on topics such as women's writing in general, postcolonial literature from Africa and the Middle East, World literature, biography and autobiography, political theory, and feminist theory. She has earned a reputation as a writer and has been published in some anthologies, contributing to the one-of-a-kind qualities of El Saadawi. In the *Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present*, she is the only Arab woman writer to be featured (Blain, Clements, and Grundy 1990).

In an interview that aired on GRIT TV, Saadawi disclosed the origin of her motivation, stating that her grandma was the person who encouraged her to develop her extreme thinking. She was a farmer's wife who put forth a lot of effort and was known for singing songs critical of the British. Saadawi was tremendously motivated by her courageous defiance in the face of adversity. During the same conversation, she came clean about the fact that she had not read any books on feminism. However, she is often regarded as the most influential feminist in the Arab world. She said she came from a disadvantaged background and was born a female. According to her, "something is wrong with the fact that we are female, and something is wrong with the fact that we are poor" (Laura Flanders 00:12-01:30). In addition to facing gender bias, she was also subjected to class prejudice.

When she was a child, she had the impression that her existence had some inconsistencies and paradoxes. She had an older brother treated with respect and pampered by his mother and father. Simply because he was a young boy, he was awarded merit. When her brother was born, her parents were overjoyed, but they didn't even crack a grin when she was delivered. She had been subjected to prejudice based on her gender by her parents, other members of the family, and those outside the family. These encounters, together with Saadawi's position as a woman in Arab Muslim society and her background in the middle class, prompted her to seriously consider the issues. They evolved and became the focus of her writings throughout time. The purpose of bringing awareness to these problems through writing is to ensure that no other lady has to go through the same struggle. She wants to reawaken women and lead them in the right route so that one day there will be no more discrimination against women in this country.

Over the past thirty-four years, El-Saadawi has produced over twenty-seven publications, including works of fiction such as novels, short tales, articles, and plays, despite many challenges she has faced. These works, which discuss the position of Arab women in general and Egyptian women in particular, have been prohibited in Arab countries. In general, these works examine the situation of Arab women. She has made several contributions to the Egyptian magazine *Nun*, which she describes as "the only women's periodical that targets a woman's mind by tackling subjects that stray from conventionally assigned feminine topics." She believes that *Nun* is "the only women's periodical that targets a woman's mind by tackling subjects that stray from conventionally assigned feminine topics." (Paradise, Heaven, and Other Oppressive Spaces 153)

El Saadawi is a physician who has also been active in several organisations, one of which is the Arab Women Solidarity Association, which she founded in 1982. When she was held captive by Saadat, she lived in constant fear that the king would order the assassination of her and her ideas. She wished for her thoughts to endure for an infinite amount of time. She reasoned that he couldn't possibly bring down the organisation under any circumstances. To acquire authorization to establish the organisation herself, she had to overcome a lot of opposition. Under the organisation's auspices, many women get together to talk about a wide range of topics concerning the liberation of women from all over the world.

El-Saadawi has made major contributions to Arabic literature throughout her career by experimenting with language, style, concepts, and a wide variety of genres in the works that she has produced. Even though she is always trying new things, it seems that her devotion to the issues facing Arab women is unwavering. It should come as no surprise, however, that while the primary protagonists in Saadawi's work vary in

socioeconomic class, background, level of education, and upbringing, they all share one trait: they are all women who have been oppressed in some way by a patriarchal system that seeks to leave women debilitated. This is because the patriarchal system seeks to leave women in a position of inferiority to men.

Around eleven of her books have been translated into English so far. She initially composed each piece in Arabic, her mother tongue, and then had it translated into English by several different translators and publishers throughout her career. *Woman at Point Zero* (1977), *The Circling Song* (1978), *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* (1958), *Searching* (1965), *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* (1993), *Walking Through Fire* (2002), and *A Daughter of Isis* (1999) are some of the works that have been taken into consideration for this study.

In the book *Woman at Point Zero*, the main character, Firdaus, whose name is widespread in Arab nations and means paradise, is found guilty of the murder of a man and sentenced to death. The tale is relayed by a fictitious narrator who pays a visit to the protagonist when she is incarcerated and on death row awaiting her execution. The entirety of Firdaus's existence has been spent engaged in a ferocious battle against a system that has acted to subjugate her at every turn. She was born into a poor peasant family, where her father abused her, and her sexual organs were maimed when she was a toddler (an experience that did not leave her for the rest of her life). She is then married to Sheik Mahmoud, an older man whom she despises, and she is repeatedly betrayed and raped (both physically and mentally) by various characters during the narrative. Despite having earned a secondary school diploma, she is rarely allowed to put it to good use by a culture that refuses to view her as anything other than a body designed to exist solely for the enjoyment of males.

She is viewed as nothing more than a body designed to exist solely for the enjoyment of males. As a result, Firdaus eventually turns to prostitution, possibly to gain some control. However, Firdaus' efforts to achieve freedom are foiled by a pimp who attempts to take control of her life, mistreat her, and steal her money. This is in contrast to every other time in her life when she attempted to achieve independence. She kills the pimp in self-defence, but she is found guilty of murder and put to death for her actions because she tried to be free and independent.

This piece of work by Saadawi is regarded as one of the best examples of Arabic literary work, and it has gained the status of a classic. Because of the nature of the topic that she wrote about, the author of this work gained significant notoriety. In addition, it resulted in an ugly response from fundamentalist Muslims against her defiant image of Egyptian society.

Ughniyat al-atfal al-da 'iriyyah (1973; translated as *The Circling Song*, 1989) is, in El-own Saadawi's words, "one of the closest to her heart." *The Circling Song* was released in 1989. (*The Circling Song* 1). The name of the book comes from a classic children's song from Egypt that tells the story of a woman named Hamida who gave birth to a kid and then abandoned the child beside "the canal bed," where a "kite swooped down and cut off his head" (*The Circling Song* 7). El-Saadawi gives this song's main character, Hamida, a twin brother named Hamido, and names him after the song. The novel is based on this song. She emphasises the strong kinship the twins share, although they were compelled to move from their hamlet to the city. The narrative consistently highlights that Hamida and Hamido share the same characteristics, emotions, and thoughts, as well as their physical appearance. This draws attention to the fact that the twins' bond transcends gender barriers.

These parallels are developed between the twins to such an extent that the reader frequently finds themselves conflating one with the other. There are times when the two become so interchangeable that it could be simpler for the reader to think of them as a single person rather than a pair. The story in the book, much like its name, is told circularly, taking its cues from, and elaborating upon, the children's song that is also called a circular song. That song has one verse that, like the novel implies, keeps repeating itself in an endless, uninterrupted cycle. The principal female character in the book, Hamida, shares remarkable similarities with other female characters in the author's past writings. She is a representation of the subjugated and helpless women that live in a culture like that. One of the first things that occur to Hamida as a result of the ongoing victimisation she experiences is the realisation that "under her stomach wall, hatred was growing like an embryo, rolling into a dough-like ball, rising day after day, swelling with water, fermenting and giving off its particular scent." (The Circling Song 60)

Because of this hostility and rage, Hamida was forced to face the harsh reality of being a woman, particularly in a large city. She reaches a point where "her voice, restrained for so long, let loose in a long, shrill scream that lasted as long as two or three normal screams," which means that she finally loses control of her screaming. But this scream for freedom is in vain because Hamida has realised that "no one heard her voice, and her scream altered nothing" (The Circling Song 28). The story and the independence of women in general take on a dark undertone because Hamida's screams are in vain, in addition to the physical abuse she is forced to suffer. Despite this, there is a glimmer of hope when, at the end of the book, Saadawi urges us to conduct an introspective assessment of ourselves by asking, "why should a person worry when he sees himself face to face?" (The Circling Song 86). It's possible that confronting this

issue and recognising the reality that one becomes aware of one's role as a participant in a society that oppresses women is the key to addressing and changing certain societal components that impact women.

Space is another significant concept in this novel. Both Hamida and Hamido run away from their oppressive domestic environments in search of a better life or simply to get away from the pressures they face at home. They uproot themselves and go to the big city, casting aside the familiar to explore the uncharted. As a result of their lack of knowledge and ignorance regarding several aspects of city life, they are subjected to mistreatment and oppression. This narrative is the primary vehicle via which the work addresses topics pertaining to gender. When the features of Hamida and Hamido mesh together and get confused after separation, it is merely a return to the initial state of being conceived in one embryo. This occurs when Hamida and Hamido are conceived together. It is a method of recovering control over the loss of identity that they went through after birth. This process takes place over time.

Even though Hamida and Hamido may have had comparable thoughts and beliefs as children, such as the conviction that they were both capable of accomplishing great things regardless of their gender, society first started to set limitations and distinctions on them as adults. A rift develops between the twins due to their practice of gender differentiation, which results in the imposition of roles on the female twin that are unique from those imposed on the male twin. Despite this, the twins can relearn these distinctions and restore as much of their former innocence as they can, given the new experiences that have permanently tainted each of them differently.

Hamida and Hamido merge into one person. They represent a person that is genderless, or at the very least, a creature that does not assess itself based on its gender or the obligations that are traditionally associated with that gender. This notion is driven

home by the role reversal that occurs in several scenarios that first occur in Hamida's life and then occur in Hamido's life. In essence, the masculine is being feminised, and the female is being feminised in order to get rid of stereotypes and bring attention to the similar potential that exists in all people, regardless of their gender. It is also important to point out that Hamido is a victim in this narrative in the same way that Hamida is. In other words, the conflict between a lower social class and a higher social elite that seeks to exploit men and women is seen as a struggle between the lower social class and the higher social elite. This demonstrates one component of the colonizer-colonized paradigm, which is that social status and background play a significant role in the exploitation of economically disadvantaged individuals, particularly those living in rural areas, for financial gain.

The story of *Searching* has multiple layers of interpretation. On one level, the reader is taken on an exciting journey across Cairo with the protagonist, Fouada, looking for her childhood sweetheart, Farid. The reader is kept on the edge of their seat throughout this journey. The reader is taken on a more subtle level on a psychological journey through Fouada's head as she realises that her quest, which began as a search for her missing boyfriend, has evolved into a search for meaning in her existence. This journey takes place as she realises that her quest began as a search for her missing boyfriend and has evolved into a search for meaning in her existence. As the story develops, the reader learns that the apparent new information Fouada has gained "was not quite a discovery, nor was it sudden, but rather a slow, insidious, obscure feeling, which had started some time ago." (*Searching* 12) At first glance, the story's premise seems easy to understand. Fouada becomes concerned when Farid, a qualified research scientist in Cairo, fails to show up for their weekly rendezvous at their preferred restaurant as they had previously agreed upon. She begins her search for him by calling

him home and paying him a visit, only to learn that Farid has disappeared before her eyes.

Fouada, on the other hand, is forced to concentrate on the aspects of her own life that she had been searching for but had never discovered, such as her goals, her ideals, and her place in society, as a result of Farid's continued absence. Fouada is surrounded by a majority of male individuals who are interested in exerting their influence over her or exploiting her in some way. When she is looking for a place to set up her chemistry lab, she runs into Saati, a landlord who offers to rent her an apartment for a low price but demands other forms of payment from her. Saati is willing to rent her an apartment, but she must pay him in other ways. Because she is a woman, he is just one of many characters in this story who do not believe she possesses the necessary qualifications to work as a scientist. Like the other important female characters in El Saadawi's novels, Fouada is a woman who is under the impression that she must make concessions and prostitute herself to continue existing. Throughout the book, El Saadawi uses Fouada's search to make a powerful feminist statement about the many Egyptian women who, despite being well-educated and self-sufficient, still find themselves in a position where they must battle their society for respect and basic rights. Because of this, she brings to mind the character Firdaus from the movie *Woman at Point Zero*, who is always looking for work despite only having a high school diploma.

El Saadawi lays out the major themes of medicine and the physician in her work *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, which are themes that will run throughout the rest of her fictional works as well. Even though its title and first-person narration give the impression of an autobiographical account (particularly to those who are aware that the author is a female physician), the text never clearly states that it is intended to be read as such. Those essential generic characteristics that Philippe Lejeune identified as

necessary for forming an "autobiographical pact" (Lejeune 25) are not present. Although there are some parallels, the author's life is not described in detail. The memoir's main character, who graduated at the top of her class in secondary school, decides against following in her family's footsteps and pursues a degree in medicine instead. She was always interested in the scientific world, but after moving to a rural area, she found that her attention was drawn more to the natural world. Because of the partial resolution it brings, the protagonist can make peace with the other people in her life. The fact that the novel follows the young woman as she interacts with various men demonstrates that something is still missing. The first one, with an engineer, ends in disaster because he tries to dissuade her from achieving her goals. The second attempt, which includes a doctor's participation, is similarly fruitless. It wasn't until she was in her third relationship with a musician/artist that she was finally able to reconcile her feelings about her work, her sexuality, and the men in her life.

Memoirs of a Woman Doctor is a narrative of struggle and eventual victory. The vocabulary of the first-person narration is deceptively straightforward, consisting of short, choppy words that are liberally interspersed with ellipses. There is a deeper meaning to the ellipses; they reveal the narrator's hesitation and uncertainty as they move through self-discovery. The main character is able to triumph over the challenges posed by society and has a successful career that brings them personal fulfilment. To achieve this goal, societal barriers must be eliminated, particularly those associated with the human body. We find out that the precocious narrator does not plan to study biology in the future. The narrator is able to evade the social and professional responsibilities of their physical reality through the use of medicine.

Love in the Kingdom of Oil begins with: ““That day in September the news appeared in the newspapers.’, ‘Half a line of poor-quality newsprint run off by the

printers:' 'Woman goes on leave and does not return.' (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 5)

The woman is an archaeologist. She has interests and works outside the home, an oddity in an unnamed authoritarian and repressive kingdom. She is "an ordinary woman who wouldn't arouse in anybody a desire to rape her." (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 7) She is also labelled as narcissistic because she examines herself in mirrors.

When the woman who had been reported missing turns up, the narrative takes on an ominous, almost dreamlike quality. It appears she had gone underground with her chisel searching for a deity or two. She was covered in oil when she arrived at an unknown community surrounded by it. Even the clouds are covered in a thick layer of oil. She was able to get away from her abusive husband, but now she is being held captive by another man on a prehistoric oil island. There, the women are forced to wear urns on their heads as they perform the pointless and never-ending duty of preventing the oil from drowning them all. Our archaeologist is always thinking of ways to get out of sticky situations. The imagery is rich and detailed, with recurrent occurrences of both words and events. The surrealism, the heavy, dense atmosphere, and the sensation of being lost in this oblique environment become too much to handle at this point. After all, oil can be found just about anywhere. The men are interchangeable, but the women are not given any information about themselves.

In her writings, El-Saadawi encountered a great deal of difficulty in translating certain phrases. According to Amireh, "the book itself underwent major alterations in both content and form as it made its way from Egypt to Europe and then to the United States." (Amireh 32). The book formerly known as *The Hidden Face of Eve* is now known as *Al-Wajh al-arilil-mar'a al-'arabiyyah* (literally, the naked face of Arab women). It should be noted that the English translation omits a few chapters from the original Arabic edition. El Saadawi's work was missing chapters titled "Woman's Work

at Home" and "Arab Woman and Socialism." In these chapters, El Saadawi criticised women abuse within the capitalist system and advocated for a socialist economic and political system. In light of the fact that El Saadawi's project centred on an argument against capitalism and in favour of socialism, these are significant omissions to make.

The writings of Saadawi are supported by three pillars: gender roles, religious patriarchy, and traditional gender roles. The three are connected to one another, and each one is dependent on the other two. Although she addresses a variety of topics in her writings, the woman remains the consistent central focus throughout. All her most important characters and narrators are female, and their perspectives serve as the focal point of her writing. She never chastised the male characters, and she never spoke in the male characters' voices. The narrator or the female characters were responsible for describing the actions and motivations of the male characters in the story. Her main focus and preoccupation are on women's liberation and the advancement of women's rights. She talks a lot about the emancipation of women in all aspects; the conclusion chapter will cover her feminist ideology and contribution to the Arab world. She speaks a lot about the emancipation of women. In her writings, Saadawi presents herself as a feminist author. This is our perception of her. Her focus is always on women and the challenges they face in their everyday lives.

She focused a lot of her attention on problems that affect females. Being male or female is not the only definition of what it means to be a certain gender. Culture and tradition are the means by which differences between males and females are articulated and put into practice. Saadawi never had a negative word to say about any of the men in the society. Since both the society as a whole and the religion were controlled by patriarchies that practised gender discrimination, she pointed the finger at both. She said that patriarchal systems discriminated against women. She addressed the issue of

gender bias in several interviews and essays that she published. We will never find a devoutly religious woman in any of her works, and we will only ever see men participating in religious activities. It appears that only the father of Firdaus goes to the mosque for religious services, while the other father, the parent of a female physician, is not particularly interested in religious matters. And yet, even though religion plays a significant part in maintaining the dominance of men over women, none of the male characters in her works use it as a weapon against female characters. "Such a punishment was allowed by the teachings of various religions. It was considered improper for a good woman to air her grievances about her partner. Her obligation was unwavering submission." (*Woman at Point Zero* 44)

The unnamed male protagonist in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* uses the terms "God" and "Faith" in an argument with the female archaeologist to maintain his authority over her and prevent her from suing him for the unpaid wages she is owed. Although Saadawi did not spend much time discussing religion, a knowledge of it is essential to comprehend the actions and motivations of the characters in her writings, including those of both men and women. Religion is an integral component of social life and an established norm in the way people choose to live their lives. Even the institution of marriage is predicated on religious doctrine and is presided over by religious authorities. "Every husband strikes his wife from time to time. All men who were knowledgeable about their faith were more likely to beat their wives. (*Woman at Point Zero* 44)

Marriage customs and laws that originate from patriarchal, class-based societies are antithetical to the concept of honour. They have turned women into merchandise that can be purchased in exchange for dowries and then resold at a price comparable to that of expensive goods. It is a relationship built on the woman's utilisation by the man,

on her exploitation by him in a more inhuman manner, in the same way, that the exploitation of a landowner's labour or a master's slave is built on the foundation of this relationship. When Firdaus returned home, she said, "Once back, I do not know how I put up with life in my uncle's house, and I also do not remember how I became Sheikh Mahmoud's wife." (Woman at Point Zero 42) Regarding the marriage, a woman was not permitted to have any fantasies; she was not free to make the decisions as she saw fit, and she was expected to consent to the union if the groom expressed an interest in doing so. There is no part for the woman to play in the wedding ceremony. The decisions are made by either her parents or her guardian, whichever is applicable. The bride's and groom's family enter into a legal agreement through the marriage, which is similar to a business contract. Her obedience is represented by the fact that she did not sign the marriage contract. Chastity can be defined as her unwavering submission to authority.

These fictional works by Saadawi deal with a wide variety of topics, one of which is genital mutilation, an issue that Saadawi, who is from the Arab world, was concerned about. She used her position as a medical professional to speak out against the practice of female genital mutilation, which was widespread in her country and was carried out in filthy environments, resulting in severe blood loss and, in some cases, the death of young women. She also attempted to educate the citizens of her country about the dangers of the procedure. The primary reason for the persistence of the widespread practice of female circumcision in certain regions of Africa and Middle Eastern countries is the significance that patriarchal societies place on the concept of virginity as well as the hymen. The conviction that this procedure will make her less lustful lies at the root of her decision to have it done. The same event occurred in the life of Firdaus, as it did in *A Daughter of Isis* with Saadawi, as well as with other female characters

who are not mentioned. This practice in the life of Firdaus is not simply intended to deprive the woman of the pleasures of sexual activity; rather, it is intended to gain control over the sexual life of the woman. "First, she beat me, then she brought a woman who was carrying a small knife or maybe a razor blade. They cut off a piece of flesh from between my thighs." (*Woman at Point Zero* 13) It leaves an indelible mental and physical mark on the woman who experiences it. It is difficult to forget the traumatic event that caused her to lose her childhood for good, and that continues to haunt her throughout her youth, causing her to have a psychological imbalance.

In *The Circling Song*, she deals with honour killing in different parts of the world today. It is considered the responsibility of the man of the house to safeguard his women, including his wife and children. Anything that spoils his reputation in society by the acts of his women is intolerable: it results in killing the woman responsible for defaming his reputation and his family's honour.

In her writings, Saadawi addressed various topics, all of which pertained to women in some way. Only the main characters could be considered victims; all of the other female characters, both major and minor, played a role in this massive act of gender discrimination committed by society on various levels. Women in the works of her fiction selected all have advanced degrees. These women include doctors, receptionists, archaeologists, research scientists, and the daughter of a university professor, amongst many others. Despite this, each of them endured pain at the hands of the men in their lives, albeit to varying degrees. In the course of an interview, Saadawi discusses the emancipation of women, and she suggests that education on its own is all that is required to restore the position of women in society.

Education on its own would not have been enough to assist the women in bettering their living conditions. Even though they had access to education, they were not permitted to take responsibility for their own lives and were instead compelled to depend on society for their livelihood. Even though Firdaus completed her secondary schooling and received a certificate, she was not permitted to use it. When she tried to make a living with her desired certificate, the higher officials in her organisation looked down on her, and she ended up getting duped by Ibrahim. Although Fouada successfully got a job as a research scientist in the department of biochemistry, she was not permitted to do any research there. She could not satisfy her deepest desires in the department because she did not have any work to do and did not receive any recognition for her research. Even though the protagonist of *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* is an archaeologist, she was not allowed to conduct any independent research.

According to the opinions of her male officials, including the women who worked alongside her in this capacity, all of her excavations were transformed into something else. *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* is about a woman doctor who is determined to prove her worth to her family after treating her less favourably than her brother because of their gender bias. She was successful in achieving her goal of becoming a doctor. When she first began her career as a medical practitioner in a more rural area, she was met with hostility due to the fact that she was a female doctor. In contrast to Fouada and the other female archaeologist, the female doctor actually put her education to use in her work. There was no dominance held by the males. She pursued a career in medicine and eventually settled in that field. The woman who is married to Firdaus's uncle comes from a wealthy family and is the academic daughter of a professor. She most likely had a higher level of education than some of the other leading women characters in the story. Her uncle showed her respect because he knew

she came from a better/higher social class than he did, but despite this, her husband would frequently beat her in the same manner as other husbands do.

In her writings, Saadawi presented a large cast of female characters, many of whom were helpless victims of the society in which they lived, while others fought against the pre-existing social order in a variety of different ways. Saadawi was able to give a voice to the most unnoticed categories of women who were suffering during her time period. Everyone has their own unique experience to share, whether they are mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, grandmothers, teachers, servants, workers, or midwives. Overall, the woman plays a significant role as the focal point in the works of Nawal El Saadawi.

She has been influencing her readers with the radical thought that she elevates in her writings. Her themes and intentions were always for the emancipation of women for a better way of life. Apart from her concepts and thoughts, she uses specific narrative techniques that are very distinct and unique.

In the forward to *Searching* novel, Anastasia Valassopoulor says,

As a writer (Saadawi) primarily interested in social circumstances and social consequences, Saadawi has never spent unnecessary time on scene-setting and introductory commentary in relation to her storylines or character- her narration cuts to the quick, to the heart of the matter, and maintain this searching towards clarity of sorts (Searching X)

Memory is an essential technique that needs to be discussed in the writings of Saadawi—recollecting something from the past or recalling the memory. Suddenly or going back to the past based on the circumstances is found in all her writings. Recalling

the memory of the protagonist's responses to the present or their half-consciousness or unconsciousness forces them to recall it. On most occasions, memory recall happens in the dream. Her writings widely use dreams, memory, duality or multiple perceptions because of unconsciousness. "Slowly, distant, half-forgotten images started to emerge from the past." (*Woman at Point Zero* 26)

When the present offers nothing to live in and the past is unforgettable, people recollect things or images from the past because that is all they had. Though these images are distant and half-forgotten, they appear fresh and vivid. These images are clear enough to dominate the present. "Memory is never complete. There are always parts of it that time has amputated. Writing is a way of retrieving them, of bringing the missing parts back to it, of making more holistic" (*A Daughter of Isis* 10). Saadawi says so in her autobiography. She strongly believes in sudden recollection of memory. This very personal conviction of Saadawi deliberately or unknowingly became part of her writings.

Saadawi is from Egypt, and her characters are also strongly rooted in the Egyptian context. Also, some of her experiences are reflected in her characters' experiences. "Her concern over the influence of imperialism leads her to the view that imitation of Western behaviour and lifestyles- even those associated with 'liberation' in the West, especially sexual freedoms- is not the way to liberation for Middle Eastern women. She believes women should look for their identity within their own culture." (Newson-Horst 314). Hence her conviction becomes a common phenomenon for her characters. Memory often emerges in comparison with the present. Memory emerges and evolves as articulation when something in the present resembles that in the past or is lacking compared to the present. Certain memories take us back to the past without connecting them to the present.

The narrator seems to recall them personally with a sudden shift from the present to the past. The unnamed woman in this novel sees the newspaper advertisement, “Researchers wanted in the archaeology department.” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 22). Immediately this takes her back to the past when she saw the same kind of advertisement for the first time and applied for the post. “She typed out the request in the typewriter. She filled in the boxes for name, age, and religion. In the box marked sex, she typed female. The head of the department looked at her wide-eyed; this department only accepts males. The work we do, I mean doffing up the ground is not suitable” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 22)

The time span and place between the two immediate lines are very distant. Here the memory comes out as an independent passage. In another incident, the narrator in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* recollects her past. The narrator meets her cousin after many years. As they meet, they start conversing about their childhood days. They used to play together in childhood. One wins at races, and the other wins at marbles. Their conversation does not end there. This little conversation makes the narrator feel that she is recapturing something denied to her in her regimented childhood. Though she dwells in the memory, she does not share it. The unarticulated and unshared memory makes her experiences more personal and isolated. This also points to the fact that the collective experience can lead to personalised memories; experience is collective, but the response to the experience and the memory of the experience is very personal, particularly when the experience is traumatic and humiliating.

This memory is often concise, and in some places, it runs through several pages. In some places, the past merges with the present so closely that it becomes difficult to distinguish them. “*Get the dinner ready,*” said he in the tone of someone who had hired a woman to cook for him. There was no space for that in the form she had typed on the

typewriter. In the column marked work- she had already written ‘Researcher into goddesses. *‘I’m hungry!’* he cried again in a loud voice.” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 24). The italics in the passage are of the man, and the rest of the course is of the woman. He continues to order her the food.

On the other hand, she also continues to stay in her memory. The man’s voice is in the present, and the memory from the woman’s past is related to her filling up the application for the department of Archaeology are inseparable. Living in the past is common for Saadawi’s characters, but in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, the unnamed woman appears like living in the past. More than that, she appears like she is in some trance or unconsciousness, unconcerned about the present, unable to listen to his voice or understand anything going on for some time. This trance or unconsciousness often creates a kind of confusion in the story. This merging of past and present into one could result from either unconsciousness or a deliberate technique employed by the author. The multiple temporalities in one spatial existence draw our attention to the complexity of locations. The man passing the orders and the woman living in the past are parallel to each other.

Dream and memory are inseparable in Saadawi’s writings. Like the memory in the awakening stage, dreams also relate to the past. Some dreams reveal the mental agony of the character, and others describe the past in the dreams. After speaking with Wafeya about love, Firdaus slowly goes to sleep. Her conversation on love somehow makes her think of her relationship with Mohammadain. In the dream, she reveals her memory. Slowly, distant, half-forgotten images begin to emerge from the night. Her images in the dream are vivacious and vivid. This memory is in the form of a dream. In sleep, the subconscious, without her permission, floats in distant images. She weeps in her sleep. That is the impact of the dream that she had. Firdaus maintains a good

relationship with her hostel superintendent. Both of them share their emotional lives. This emotional bondage with Miss Iqbal emerges in the dream. "I called out, 'Miss Iqbal', but all I managed was a mere whisper that failed even to reach my ears. I could hear nothing, and my fear increased." (*Woman at Point Zero* 34) This dream of Firdaus has nothing to do with the past. Her affection for Miss Iqbal is reflected in the dream. In another dream, the woman in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* closes her eyes and gains control over her breathing. In the dream, she tries to remember her mother's face before she gave birth to her. Dreams are used to convey the characters' internal conversations, disjointed perceptions, and incomplete communications. Saadawi constructs a narrative through dreams that powerfully perform searching of sorts, searching for a voice beyond contextual specificity. Searching for something in the past that the character had failed to understand or identify earlier happens in dreams. Memory, trance and dreams are interconnected, merging with one another. Often her narrative makes it difficult to understand the difference. Her characters are always immersed in one of these. Saadawi, along with the characters, takes the readers into a psychological journey. The reader moves with them into the present and the past through dreams or memory. When living becomes a difficult task and the future offers nothing and creates a sense of fear, thoughts become vague. Uncertainty in living in the present drags one to the past. Saadawi says, "Things appear clear and beautiful in dreams; reality is a curse. It's hard to live in reality". When she could not fight with everything in her life, the narrator creates her imaginary world in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*. Reality might be a curse, but is the dream a blessing? Even the dreams are full of anguish, agony, uncertainty and suffocation.

Searching for something does not happen only in dreams but continues into dreams. In Saadawi's writings, we see the story on one side and the psychological

journey of the characters on the other side. In works like *Searching*, *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, and *The Circling Song*, this inner or character's psychological journey dominates the plot. Their search for the missing link occupies their mind fully and keeps them away from living at present. The storyline in *The Circling Song* is straightforward; Hamida, a teenage girl, runs away from her family and reaches Cairo city. Hamido runs after her to kill her and wash the shame as ordered by his father. Yet we see uncertainty in Hamida's mind in running away from the family and finding a place to hide from her brother and people trying to molest her. Her search for her mother among the people on the streets of Cairo. She longs for a single loaf of bread, eats from the garbage, and lives a painful life. Her longing and adventure for liberation end in a more torturous life in the city, considered an ideal destination for people searching for liberty and transformation. Hamido also goes through similar experiences. Caught between his confusion with his mother's face with someone who wore *tarha* in Cairo city, tough times in the army and searching for his only sister whom he loved so much, his state of mind holds a mirror of the sacrifices that the imposed masculinity demands for.

Similarly, the narrator in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* goes through inner conflict, proclaiming that she hated her femininity right from her childhood. Everything in her life makes an impact on her thinking and attitude. Her hatred towards her femininity, family, and mother for showing bias towards her brother was not permanent. At the end of the novel, she says, "I'd begun to need a hand to support me. For the first time in my life, I felt I needed someone else, something I hadn't felt even about my mother." (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 100) The one who hated every relationship, society, science, and everything needs some supporting hand. "Twenty-five years of my life had passed without my feeling what it was to be a woman." (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 48) After going through many phases in her life, the narrator comes to

this conclusion regarding her femininity. We see a kind of frustration in the narrator, something in her life making her angry and unsatisfied—a psychological trauma for her life.

In *Searching*, Fouada dreams of a chemical laboratory on her own. She wants to achieve something noteworthy in her life and prove her calibre to the world. She has been in a love relationship with Farid for years. The sudden disappearance of Farid from her life proves to be a big blow for her. We see Fouada constantly searching for him. Her life is fully occupied with her searching for Farid and her goal. Nothing seems to be happening in the novel except these two things. But we see a lot of things that are going on in the mind of Fouada. Her conscious observation of the surroundings and unconscious actions present a dichotomy of the conscious and the unconscious in the novel, very similar to many situations that Saadawi depicts in her novels. She holds the receiver in one hand and dials the familiar five numbers without realising what she is doing. She steps out into the streets and reaches her office when she does not feel like going there. She goes somewhere and comes back home without any planning. Her emotional world becomes the landscape of happenings for the reader as her thoughts and memories are spread in detailed descriptions. Her journey from her home to the office takes a full two-page description, describing everything she sees and perceives. Saadawi describes every thought of her narrator in detail, taking the reader into confidence. Thus, like there is a connection and merging between the past and the present, the worlds of the narrator, the novelist and the reader get closely connected though they are simultaneously wandering in their multiple worlds- real and imaginary, past and present, physical and emotional.

Saadawi did a project work on '*Woman and Neurosis*', her first-ever publication. It was based on the fieldwork she did on around 200 Egyptian women for

the project. As a doctor, she witnessed many cases related to women. They were suffering not just from physical ailments. Many of them were caught in psychological violence. She personally and professionally understood the mental agony that all women are made to go through. This very understanding of the psyche and sensibility would have influenced Saadawi to construct her writings just like the psychological condition of a neurosis patient. It is reflected in her narrative style as well. *The Circling Song* and *Searching* are written in disjointed fragments. In the introduction to *The Circling Song*, Saadawi confesses that the external forces created disturbances in her life. She lost her job in the ministry of Health, faced publication-related issues, and the militants added her name to the hit list. All these have created a kind of imbalance in her mind. In the same condition, she wrote the novel by carrying it onto the structure of the book. "I felt that this world and I were utterly incompatible, and the novel was simply an attempt to give that incompatibility a concrete form." (*The Circling Song* 3) Life in *The Circling Song* emerges from death as life moves from living to dead. Past emerges from the present. Time and place are not in uniformity. The sudden shift in time and place happens quite often in the novel. Similar to the circling song, the structure of the book is also moving in circles in constant repetition.

Memoirs of a Woman Doctor and *Memoirs from a Women's Prison* are Saadawi's autobiographical writings where she unveiled the movements and the struggles in her life. Memoirs differ from traditional autobiographies in that they focus on developing the writer's personality rather than covering their full life span. The context of the work determines the chronological scope of a memoir. As a result, it is more concentrated and adaptable than an autobiography's usual arc from birth to old age. A memoir is supposed to be autobiographical in style in dealing with selected

issues in his/her life. But Saadawi, in the Author's Note to *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, says,

Some people believe that *Memoirs* is autobiographical, but although many of the heroine's characteristics fit those of an Egyptian woman such as myself, active in the medical field in those years, the work is still fiction. It is one thing to write a novel, and another to write one's autobiography. (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 8).

Both the memoirs are in fictional style. How she deals with the same issues in her memoirs and autobiography, *A Daughter of Isis*, is different. The first-person narrative in her memoirs is very direct to the issues she wants to deal with. While dealing with her femininity and the gender discrimination, she says, "the conflict between me and my femininity began very early on before my female characteristics had become pronounced and before I knew anything about myself, my sex and my origins...." (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 9) Her memoirs are written in a straightforward narrative style, unlike her novels. Her memoirs are her personal tools through which she analyses her biography. Her autobiography presents the incidents as they have happened, but memoirs explain the incidents that took place.

The process by which people learn attitudes, motivations, and behaviours that are commonly considered appropriate to their social positions is referred to as socialisation. The development of an awareness of the society's defined, ideal role performance and a more sophisticated understanding of the range of the social group into which one is being socialised are both components of the process of learning social roles. According to Chris Haywood, . "Through socialization, sex role theorists argue, males and females are conditioned into appropriate roles of behaviour. Polarized

norms and expectations between genders are central to the definition of masculinity.” (*Men and Masculinities* 7). The individual can more effectively have values and norms imposed on them through the process of socialisation. Because each person is responsible for regulating and monitoring his or her own behaviour, this form of social control is among the most efficient of its kind.

The formation of one's own gender identity and the acquisition of knowledge of appropriate gender roles are two products that can be distinguished from one another in an analytical sense. These include aspects that have been idealised and the typical role enactments or behaviours associated with that identity. According to the author of *The Kaleidoscope of Gender*, Joan Z. Spade:

although people in many contemporary cultures perceive at least some differences between women and men, and assign different tasks and responsibilities to people based on gender categories, these differences vary both from culture to culture and within cultures. There is no unified ideal or definition of masculinity or femininity across cultures (*The Kaleidoscope of Gender* 99)

Most civilisations are organised, and such societies have better access to and control over valuable resources such as wealth, authority, and prestige in general. Extremely patriarchal societies exist in which men control women in a variety of circumstances and interactions. Inequality between men and women does not exist everywhere. Gender inequality, patriarchy, and male supremacy are not investable states of human relations. Furthermore, patriarchy is not a unified system. Patriarchy has many forms, and it does not imply that women have no power or influence in their societies.

Critics and researchers extensively examine Saadawi's writings. But, most of them have focused on the women characters and their predicament. The male characters in Saadawi's writings are not studied to that extent. I came across only one work on the writings of Saadawi that included men in the examination of other popular concepts. Fedwa Malti-Douglas wrote a book titled *Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics*, which examines men and women in the patriarchal society governed by religion and where men are treated as representatives of God. Though she added Men to the title, her examination pertained mostly to the women characters. She spoke on the generalised idea of men's superiority over their women and how the women characters were victimised in the organised and operated supervision of men. Most of the existing research work on Saadawi's writings either deals with the feminist presentation of her writings or focuses mainly on *Woman at Point Zero* by leaving all other writings of her aside or overshadowed under that masterpiece. One of the research works by an Ibadan research scholar, Solomon Awuzie, is on *Woman at Point Zero* with the title *Realism in Nawal El Saadawi's Woman at Point Zero*. She examined the life of Firdaus, comparing the world of Firdaus in the text with the real world that Saadawi referred to in the text. And through her research, she concluded that the fate of Firdaus is self-made than forced to accept something that is designed by men in the society and confined her to prostitution. Firdaus was presented as the victim of self: she led her life into the clutches of prostitution from where she could not come out permanently as if she threw away all the amenities she possessed to lead a life worthy of respect and free from victimisation.

Apart from Saadawi and her works being discussed in several theses and dissertations for various degree programs, her works and her ideas were discussed widely in numerous research works. Some of the prominent and critically examined

research papers are- Barbara Harlow, in her essay “From the Women’s Prison: ‘Third World Women’s Narratives of Prison’”, examines the narrative style of Saadawi in her memoirs, especially dealing with *Memoirs of the Woman’s Prison* comparing with the memoirs of other women writers who are from the third world and wrote from the prison. Katwiwa Mule, in her article titled, “Blurred genres and blurred memories: Engendering Dissidence in Nawal El Saadawi’s *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* and Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*” discusses the narrative style of Saadawi in her two Memoirs. Her study was to distinguish between fictionalised autobiography and autobiographical fiction. Both the Memoirs by Saadawi got a peculiar narrative style that creates a curiosity in the readers about the genre of these works. Mule’s focus was on the narrative style of Memoirs than the subject discussed by Saadawi in them. In another essay, “Tyrannical Femininity in Nawal Saadawi’s *Memoirs of Woman Doctor*” by Khadidiatou Guèye, women's emancipatory actions are closely connected to patriarchal oppression, as seen by the interconnectedness between resistance and oppression. The primary problem in feminist rhetoric is the categorising of men and women as oppressors and oppressed and the consequent re-inscription of previously established and socially sanctioned sexual binaries. For the feminist writer, reshaping male-female interactions in a new light of partnership rather than in antagonism is more powerful to solve the difficulties they face jointly.

This thesis attempting to examine the men characters in the selected fiction of Saadawi consists of four chapters apart from the introduction. The introduction is taken as chapter 1 dealing with Literature by Arab women writers and then a brief introduction to Egyptian Literature. Most of the available research works on the literary works of Nawal El Saadawi and on her ideas have discussed several aspects, especially patriarchy, male dominance, and religious discrimination as tools that dominated the

lives of women characters. In this thesis, I would like to examine the male characters portrayed through the personal experiences of the women protagonists. Sometimes this portrayal is done through straight narratives, and sometimes this portrayal is the unforgettable memory of the women characters. The straight narrative portrays the physical presence of the male characters, and portrayal through memory reveals how these male characters colonised the mind of the women protagonists. After thoroughly going through research works and dissertations did on Nawal El Saadawi, I found most of the works focused on *Woman at Point Zero*. It is considered a classical text, but very few could think about other works of Saadawi. To the best of my knowledge, none have taken multiple works of Saadawi together for a study.

Saadawi's idea of women's emancipation is not confined to freedom from patriarchal and religious dominance over women. She believed that the emancipation of women happens only when there is an overall change in the status and identity of the woman. Her views are against the kinds of liberal feminism that focus only on individual freedom. She was against all forms of discrimination such as class, race, religion, region and others. She condemns the idea of calling the regions with the Middle East, Eastern, and Western countries as the names denote geographical or political discrimination. Her works questioned the patriarchal, religious, social, political, ethical, capitalist, imperialist, cultural, neo-colonial, and several other forms of ideological standards that promoted or presented the essence of discrimination and looked down on the other as inferior. She called for the separation of the state from the religious institutions. Oppression of women is reciprocal to the power of religious fundamentalism. This is not just confined to a particular religion or region.

The oppression of women, the exploitation, and the social pressures to which they are exposed, are not characteristics of Arab or Middle Eastern societies, or

countries of the “Third World” alone. They constitute an integral part of the political, economic, and cultural system, preponderant in most of the world (*The Hidden Face of Eve* i) She spoke against Islamic feminism, which supported the religious ideology and veiling and demanded freedom within the religious framework. She condemns the practice of circumcision performed on both boys and girls, stating this practice is equally painful for both boys and girls. She is against identity politics, naming her as Arab woman feminist or feminist from the Middle East. As Fedwa Malti-Douglas said in her work, *Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics*, “No Arab woman’s pen has violated as many sacred enclosures as that of Nawal El Saadawi” (Fedwa Malti- Douglas 1), I being a male research scholar located miles away from her locale and distanced in terms of religion, culture, ethnicity and ideologies she carried and fought for, cannot fix Nawal El Saadawi’s writings into a single frame in my research work. The vast subjects she spoke on and the critical works she attempted invoke several similar contexts, particularly the Indian social and cultural milieu. I attempt to focus on some of the things she discussed with reference to the available translated works of Nawal El Saadawi and the available secondary sources to understand the context in which her works were being written and read. My understanding of her works chosen for the research work is based on the available translated work. I cannot read or understand Arabic, the primary language in which most of her works were written. And most of her works were translated primarily into English and into other languages as per her readers' interests outside Egypt. In the translated works, there might have been alterations from the original work. My views are based on what is available in English translation and from an Indian male point of view.

As Michel Foucault observes in his article “The Subject and Power”, the analysis of power relations demand that a certain number of points be established concretely such as the system of differentiations, the types of objectives, the means of bringing power relations into being, forms of institutionalisation, the degree of rationalisation. This applies to the study of genders and gender hierarchy as well. The origins of gender inequality, like any other form of inequality, are hidden in the power relations. Hence, it becomes relevant and important to understand the gender dynamics in Saadawi’s writings by examining the making and functioning of masculinities in different domains, be it home and family, or the public and the work domain. No identity can be studied in isolation but has to inevitably be studied in relation to other identities in a certain context. This thesis studies men in different gender roles, influenced by various patronising and conditioning institutions, struggling to stand up to the image of the ideal man and in the process subjecting women to oppression, exploitation, authority and violence.

The introduction, that is Chapter 1, introduces Arab women writing with reference to some of the prominent writers and their works. It then introduces the Egyptian women’s writing with reference to the prominent Egyptian women writers and their works. It also contextualises Nawal El Saadawi, her writings, and the context in which her works and ideas were articulated. The introduction briefly discusses the existing research on Saadawi’s writings and the recurring themes and narrative techniques in her novels. It outlines the rest of the chapters in the thesis.

Chapter 2, titled The Home and the Hegemony deals with Men as Fathers and Brothers in the Lives of Women Characters. All the women protagonists in the writings of Saadawi, looking at the domestic sphere in a wider context, are closely associated with men characters around them. Men play a crucial part in shaping the lives of women

dependent on them or related to them. The Chapter examines fathers' relationship with their daughters in the first part of Chapter 2 and brothers' relationship with their sisters in the second part of the same chapter. Father of Firdaus, father of Hamida, and father of the protagonist in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* are the important father characters taken for the study. They are significant in shaping the childhood of their daughters as well. They had a considerable impact on the lives of their daughters for the rest of their lives. Daughters are made to maintain distance physically and emotionally from their fathers when compared to their mothers. Firdaus, Hamida and the woman doctor were taught to show the utmost obedience to their fathers and are warned to guard their chastity in keeping the 'honour' of the father intact. Fathers of Firdaus and Hamida are hostile towards their daughters, whereas the woman doctor's father was a little liberal with his daughter. Home is the most hegemonised and hierarchical place and marriage unconditionally supports in maintaining male supremacy. This leads to a hiatus between people of different genders in the family though they are closely related as members of a family. This Chapter attempts to read how men declare their rights and ownership over the family by inflicting the social, cultural and religious dictums on the women. While some men in the process enjoy the power that they hold, some men are subjected to the conflict before they evolve into hardcore hegemonic masculinities.

Looking at brothers, Hamido, the twin brother of Hamida and the unnamed brother of the woman doctor in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* and the cousin of the same woman doctor were taken for the study. Hamido shares plenty of things with his twin sister Hamida in common. Both are from the single embryo that turned into twins, Hamida and Hamido. Though he loves his sister and seeks her companionship in several things, he was compelled by his father to kill his only sister in the name of 'Honour'. In his search for his sister, he goes through several hardships and eventually kills his

father instead. Woman doctor was taught to be different from her brother. Her brother served as a constant checking point for her to behave and do things differently based on their gender difference. She was made to hate her femininity before she could understand anything about her femininity by constantly treating her brother differently from her.

Chapter 2 is titled “Marriage, Masculinity and Violence”. The extended home the woman is made to dream of from her childhood and told that she belongs there goes further in subjugating women in the roles of wives, daughters-in-law and mothers. Men are made to assume more power and exercise more domination and authority on women as partners. Sons follow the line of their fathers in demeaning and dismissing mothers. This Chapter will analyse the violence becomes the undercurrent in man-woman relationships particularly in marital and love relationships and how masculinities are shaped in their relationships with women.

This chapter will look at the male characters that influence the lives of women characters as companions before and after the marriage. After the impact of fathers and brothers on the lives of women characters, another major impact is of the companionship of men outside the blood relationship. Right from Mohammadain in the childhood life of Firdaus to her old husband, in her journey of life, she met several men who came into her life as male companions.

This chapter is also divided into two parts: the first part deals with the male companions as lovers or in relationship with women characters before their marriage and the second part deals with men as husbands in the lives of some prominent women characters. In the first part: Mohammadain, Bayoumi, and Ibrahim are the men characters who are part of a relationship with Firdaus through love. Farid is different

from others of all the men characters who exploited the women characters in the name of love. He has no intention to exploit Fouada or deceive her in the name of love. He respects her, and keeps away from her dependence on him, and he leaves her without informing her due to his commitment to the cause of the nation. The man in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* is neither a male companion in a love relationship with the woman archaeologist nor her husband. Yet, he takes control of her life into his hands as if he is in some relationship with her. He acts as her husband in the absence of her legal husband. Sheik Mohammed, the old husband of Firdaus, two husbands in the life of a woman doctor from *Memoirs of A Woman Doctor*, legal husband of woman archaeologist in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, and other wife and husband relations which are not so prominent, yet they are important in understanding the role of men as a husband are added in this section. Firdaus's father is presented in Chapter 2 under Father and Daughter section, and his role as a husband is also important. A couple that approaches Fouada for a fertility check-up is also presented here. Not all husbands are the same towards their women counterparts; the second husband of a woman doctor in *Memoirs of A Woman Doctor* is a different character when compared to other husband characters, in his approach towards his wife and their relationship, which began and progressed with mutual understanding and respect.

Chapter 4, titled "Power and Public Domain". This chapter includes all other men who came into the lives of leading women characters in these selected works and their role in influencing them apart from fathers, brothers, lovers, and husbands. There are several police officials who troubled women. Police officers in the life of Firdaus, Hamida and Hamido were the troublemakers instead of law protectors. The officials in the life of Firdaus, Fouada and woman archaeologists were also troublemakers in not allowing the women employees to achieve their passions and looked down on them.

Even the colleagues also mistreated their women colleagues. The house owner in the life of Fouada wanted to exploit her in the name of taking care of her. He almost ruined her life several times. Pimp, Marzouk in the life of Firdaus, wanted to take her into his mighty control. He tried to survive on her body. In escaping from him and protesting herself from his attack, she had to kill him, for which she was taken into custody and received death punishment. All the working women had to face the men from the outside world in different encounters, and the women who did not work also had to face men from the external world for various reasons they could not avoid. The shopkeeper and the master in the life of Hamida in *The Circling Song* sexually abuse her. This chapter examines all the men characters in the selected fiction of Nawal El Saadawi in presenting their masculine-oriented characterisation towards the women characters. This chapter will also look at some of the ‘words’ and ‘phrases’ that Saadawi employed in her writings to describe her male characters' nature and their intentions through certain expressions and descriptive words. The voice, fingers, hands, dress, and other details of men reveal their positions, locations and intentions.

Chapter 5, Conclusion attempts to connect the rest of the chapters with Saadawi's two autobiographies that deal with her early life and her later years to examine her views on writing, activism, and movements, and to explore how her self is reflected in her writings.

Chapter 2

The Home and the Hegemony

Fathers and brothers are the immediate relationships that define and distinguish the gender role for the women protagonists presented as daughters and sisters in Nawal El Saadawi's writings. Their characters project themselves and their masculinity as different from women and femininity. The earliest social environment where the child interacts with her surrounding people teaches gender differences and gender performance. The Cognitive-development model by Kohlberg Lawrence says, children learn their gender in much the same way that they understand the identity of physical objects and recognise that these physical objects retain identity over time. Approval or acceptance from the parents and nearby people for his/her dressing, behaviour and role performance teaches their gender. (Lindsey 15)

Judith Butler, a French post-structuralist feminist philosopher, extensively discusses the concept of gender performativity. Gender is attributed, and its performance is expected by the society in which the family is the most instrumental unit. Along with the gender identity descend the gender roles that individuals have to perform in the family, community and society. One may or may not take up this performativity and roles willingly. But one has to carry them out if one wants to get societal acceptability based on its notions of normativity. The gender binaries compel the individuals to drag performance. The drag does not remain a mere external appearance but seeps deep into one's psyche, which will facilitate the colonisation of the mind. (Judith Butler 34). Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity is very relevant to Saadawi's fiction. She is trying to focus on creating gender binaries that are moulded as oppositional binaries and present the contrast for the self to mould it unlike the other and against the other.

Although, Saadawi has expressed her disagreement with the western feminists for their interpretation of women and feminism, Butler's performativity is very helpful in examining Saadawi's women characters. The Lacanian concept of the mirror stage (Lacan 36) brilliantly explains how a child forms the self-image by looking into the mirror and going through various stages. It takes time for the child to understand that her image is reflected in the mirror. Proceeding from an understanding of one's own image as an 'other', one learns to compare oneself against others, strengthening the binary of the self and the other. Saadawi's fiction proves that the mirror is also not "neutral" but is given by the society, which is eager and anxious to shape the individuals. Such a mirror provides ideas about gender, class, religion and other identities apart from the image of an individual.

Kohlberg Lawrence observes that, while boys and girls establish their gender identity at about the same age, boys have trouble defining their gender role since significant male models are less available to them than significant female models. On the other hand, daughters probably share with their mothers' specific models that lead women in associating themselves best with home. Daughters get instructions from their mothers about what to know and do and what not to know and do. In comparison, sons learn much from the outside world. Son is gradually distanced from the mother to follow the model of the father and become a man. In Kohlberg's cognitive development model, children actively search for coherent explanations of how their social world operates. This search quickly extends to the family as the child spends time outside the home, especially in school. The world outside the family expands the fundamental differences that arise very early in childhood within the family. From the beginning of life, parents and other family members treat girls and boys differently; this is referred

to as "differential socialisation." (Kohlberg, L 1966) Certain behaviours are thought to be rewarded, while others are considered to be punished. The fathers who were socialised to become patriarchs later in life play a crucial role in training sons to become real men. Gender socialisation begins at home, extends to public spaces such as playgrounds, community gatherings, markets, and entertainment centres, and finally gets consolidated in educational institutions. As V. Geetha rightly says,

Children accept and abide by these roles for two major reasons: they are scolded, reprimanded or punished if they do not. Girl children, especially, learn at a very early age that they will be laughed at, teased, if, for example, they do not wear clothes which they are expected to wear. Often they are teased by their own peers. Boys are likewise mocked at for being 'sissies' should they wish to play with girls. (p. 32)

It is this sense of shame and mockery that conditions men about honour, both of men and family, while the sense of guilt and fear of punishment haunt women at every point of their life.

Saadawi's writings depict men more in their given roles than as individuals. Their actions, thoughts and personalities as individuals are hardly probed into. They come to us as grandfathers, fathers, uncles, siblings, sons, and so on. Human beings are products of their surroundings and circumstances. In the case of Saadawi's writings, the circumstances are decided by age-old and rigid institutions such as patriarchy, tradition, religion, class and feudal ideologies. Men are considered to be the heads of the families with all rights invested in them, no matter how much women in the family slog and strive for the survival and well-being of the family. Father is the authority figure in most societies and he is the one who gives authenticity and legitimacy to the

family. Most of the father characters in Saadawi's writings are very much detached from their daughters, and they are the troublemakers for their daughters. Fathers are stubborn and inexpressive in their emotions. In a patriarchal society, the father takes the central place in the family and the life of his children. Children have to carry the name of their father along with them. Both son and daughter get their identity in society through their father, but not through their mother. Father holds the grip and control over the house, and he tries all his life to maintain the dignity and honour of the family and expects respect and obedience from the house. For instance, Fouada's father, though his name is used nowhere in the entire novel, *Searching*, the protagonist carries her father's name as part of her name: Fouada Khalil Salim. He dies when she is in school. He is just a memory for her and nothing much in her life. Yet, the name board she dreams of having outside her research office is supposed to carry her father's name along with her name. The child must bear the name of her father. Although he is particularly, in her opinion, nothing to her, he is her true existence. She has to carry her father's name and represent who she is by his name as long as she lives. It is crucial from the societal perspective to recognise her as a legitimate child. She needs the identity of her father, if not his presence. Father is an authority figure who is supposed to give legitimacy to children by owning them as his own. Nivedita Menon rightly observes that "the family, as an institution, is based on inequality; its function is to perpetuate particular forms of private property ownership and lineage—that is, patrilineal forms of property and descent, where property and the family 'name' flow from father to sons". (6)

Legitimacy and honour are connected closely in patriarchal societies. Hence, the importance is given to the father as the one who provides for and preserves the family's reputation. At the same time, the woman is always suspected and treated as a

threat to the family reputation. She cannot provide legitimacy, and on the other hand, there is a danger of her giving birth to illegitimate children. In *Woman at Point Zero* Firdaus, the protagonist finds it difficult to identify her father among the men returning from the Friday prayers. They are all different as individuals, but they have certain common aspects; rather, they are all convinced to retain commonalities. They are all men belonging to a particular community, practising certain traditions, and following certain prescribed values. They are identical as fathers, brothers, sons, and as the system prescribes their gender roles. "Sometimes I could not distinguish which one of them was my father. He resembled them so closely that it was difficult to tell." (*Woman at Point Zero* 13)

Similarly, Firdaus finds it difficult to identify her mother among the women wearing the purdah. All the women clad in the same clothes and with similar body language looked alike, including herself. She feels very strongly about her identity, but she too looks exactly like her mother wearing the same long garments and covering her face except for the eyes. Firdaus's identification with her mother is through her eyes which sometimes comfort her and sometimes confront her. "My father told me she was my mother. She looked exactly like my mother; the same long garments, the same face, and the same way of moving. But when I used to look into her eyes, I could feel she was not my mother." (*Woman at Point Zero* 18)

Thus, Saadawi conveys an essentialisation of individuals in the name of institutions such as class, gender, religion and roles. People try to fit into these roles and motivate others to live up to the given roles. In Saadawi's fiction, fathers are heterogeneous as individuals going by their qualities, qualifications, professions, and habits. But they are all the same as fathers who assume a role of control and surveillance, especially on the women of the house. Fouada is Khalil Salim's only

daughter. On the day she is born, her mother hands the baby girl over to him. He looks at her and does not take her into his hands. Fouada shares the hatred of her mother for not accepting the girl child when she was born. She confesses that she was happy when her father was dead, but for no reason. It was her way of sharing the happiness of her mother. When he was alive, she could see him only on Friday morning. Rest of the days, he would come home after Fouada had gone to sleep and left the house before she woke up. There was no interaction between the father and daughter. Fouada and her mother live on the pension of her father. Probably her studies are also supported by her father's pension. Father is not present in the house. But his shadow of authority rules their lives. He spends the minimum time at home and hardly interacts with his children. Yet, he is the most crucial figure in their ups and downs. Decisions are taken, and actions happen even in his absence, with him being the focal point. In fact, his absence makes the little time he spends at home more precious and attributes importance to his presence. His absence reiterates how important his contribution to the family is as his hard-earned money supports it.

In the novel *The Circling Song*, a group of children are seen playing the circling song game by singing a small stanza:

“Hamida had a baby

She named him Abd el Samad

She left him by the canal bed...” (*Women at Point Zero* and *The Circling Song* 117)

This children's game serves very well as an instruction about women's chastity and the father's importance. A girl child is not welcome, anyway. Even if it is a male

child, he must be abandoned if the legitimising father is not with him. A woman is someone who gets an identity and respect because of the presence of the man. He can make her a respectable wife and an adorable mother or can push her into destitution and prostitution. The above song introduces the storyline of the novel as well. Hamida, a young girl, belonging to a traditional family, conceives. No one knows who is responsible for the pregnancy. The story does not reveal whether Hamida knows about it or not, but Hamida remains silent. The song refers to a certain Hamida who gave birth to a son and named him Abd el Samad but left him by the canal bed. Saadawi discusses the plight of such children who are called 'second-rate citizens' by society in one of her interviews. "children who only carry the name of the mother are marked for life as illegitimate, they are second-rate citizens." (*The Essential Nawal El Saadawi* 321)

Father is considered to be the sole provider for the family. He has the right to celebrate or condemn or remain cold on the birth of a child in the family. He can decide how to look after them and how much to provide for them. He can keep a constant vigil on the family members and their expenditure as the head of the family. His superior status, assumed by him and attributed by society, marginalises the members of the family, particularly the women members in the family. The mother occupies a position exactly opposite to the father in terms of her status, rights, and responsibilities.

Fathers in Saadawi's fiction have peculiar characteristics. Khalil Salim is an untidy man. The house would be quiet and clean every day when Fouada woke up in the morning except on Fridays. That's the only day she could see her father. The bathroom would be flooded when he took a bath, and he soiled the living room when he came out from the bathroom, threw his dirty clothes everywhere, raised his gruff voice, coughed and spat a lot, and blew his nose loudly. He made his presence felt by his sounds and actions. Since he is the man of the house, all his untidy acts are

acceptable and unquestionable. All the sounds emanated from his mouth and nose represented his domination over the entire house and his free spirit.

Father is a nightmarish memory for Fouada. She remembers his voice commanding her not to go to school. She never felt the need to remember him or miss him. However, his memory haunts her always as the voice of control. The loudness associated with his presence conveyed his fearlessness beyond surveillance and control, his need to make his presence felt as conspicuously as possible and his rights over the household. Fouada does not need her father's support to proceed with her career because he never encouraged her education. In the absence of his presence, Fouada searches for a direction. Her searching is for something that gives meaning and satisfaction to her life. She is determined to leave her mark in the field of Chemistry that makes her life worthy and will become a significant contribution to the scientific world.

She can dream and work to fulfil her dreams. Her mother's presence and her father's absence make this possible. Her father's pension materially contributes to the setting up of her research centre, and her mother's encouragement and love for the daughter emotionally and socially contribute to her achievement. As said earlier, Fouada, as an unwanted girl child of her father, shares her mother's hatred for her father. Apart from being unwanted, she has other memories of her father, which also emphasise the physicality of her father's presence. With all his apprehensions about daughters, he was seriously concerned about Fouada's marriage. He refuses to share the happiness and excitement of her daughter on her good grades; instead, he notices her growing body. He could see the girl becoming a woman and thus was reminded of the need to get her married. That she remained a mere body for him always remained a painful memory for her.

He always proudly shared her achievements with his friends. Her father's act always made her feel elated, and she thought that since her father had acknowledged her intelligence, he would extricate her from the "depressing world of women, reeking of onions and marriage." (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 15) To her surprise, he brought a suitor for her. Her feminine body and female gender dominated her grades in studies and made her father search for alliances. Fouada also faces a similar situation when she opened her eyes one morning and could not find her school pinafore hanging where she had left it the previous night. Then she heard her father's voice, "you're not going to school." (*Searching* 16) She comes to know from her mother that marriage is the reason for not allowing her to go to school. This disappointment turns into hatred for her father, and it continues until he is dead. Her father's name is a part of her name, and her hatred for him is a part of her memory. She carries it with her all along. It is much later that she feels his absence and develops a soft corner for him. Because, had he been alive, he would not have accepted Fouada's love relationship with Farid. Thus, his absence creates a sense of missing and concern for her father in Fouada.

Fathers in Saadawi's fiction present different attributes towards their daughters, but all of them are steeped in patriarchal notions and beliefs. Hamida's father is very keen on safeguarding the honour of his family than thinking about his daughter. He does not hesitate to eliminate her to clear the blemish on their family's reputation. One of the protagonists lost her father when she was still in her mother's womb. He is not even a memory for her. She has neither happy, nor bitter memories of her father. Whatever she knows of her father, she knows through her mother. In her case, her father is her mother's memory. His absence creates societal and financial problems for her. But, her mother's support enables her to become a researcher in the Dept. of Archaeology.

On the other hand, for Fouada, her father's memory is combined with her mother's shattered dreams. Her mother, too, had dreams before she was married to Khalil Salim. After the marriage, she realised that they were mere dreams, and could achieve none of them. If she tried to pursue them, they could turn into nightmares. She invests all her dreams in her daughter and determines not to let her down. Fouada, inspired by her mother, ventures to realise her mother's dreams which were her dreams as well.

Friday is a significant memory for some of Saadawi's women protagonists. That was the only day that they got to see their father. Like Fouada, Firdaus also saw her father only on Fridays at home and while he was coming out of the mosque. Going to the mosque was a means of social interaction for him and he had to be part of men's gatherings. And, he was a different person at home, in the workplace and in social gatherings. However, his fundamental identity lies in being a male, and gender performance is always at the centre of his life. For Firdaus, the father is an unwanted memory. But, she cannot help narrating about him.

Again, Firdaus remembers his loud and compelling presence at home. In her memory, he is a poor peasant farmer, and he could neither read nor write and knew very few things in life. He competed with his neighbours in stealing from the fields once the crop was ripe. He knew how to sell a buffalo poisoned by his enemy before it died. He knew how to pretend before the village and headman. His struggle for survival could not earn a living for his family. They were in utter poverty, struggling to have at least one meal a day. Yet, he never went to bed without supper, no matter what happened. Sometimes, when there was no food at home, his wife and kids would go to bed on an empty stomach. But, he would never fail to have his meal. Her mother used to hide food for him and serve him when he came home. He would sit eating while all the kids

watched him. Like Fouada describes her father's gruff voice and untidy habits, Firdaus also describes her father's eating etiquette. His mouth is like that of a camel, with a big opening and wide jaws. His upper jaw kept clapping down on his lower jaw with a loud grinding noise. He chewed through each morsel so thoroughly that his kids could hear his teeth striking against each other. His tongue kept rolling round and round in his mouth as though it was also chewing, stretched out now and then to lick off some particle of food that had stuck to his lips or dropped on his chin. Such description and comparison with a camel hint at the family's investment in him, as he is the family's sole bread earner. He is also well aware of his privileged position as a provider, whether he provides or not. Everyone else and everyone else's needs in the family become unimportant. Fouada says,

He drank it, then belched loudly, expelling the air from the mouth or belly with a prolonged noise. After that he smocked his water pipe, filling the room around him with thick clouds of smoke, once over with his pipe he lay down, and a moment later the hut would resonate with his loud snoring. (*Woman at Point Zero* 19)

He is represented through his sounds and voice. The way he eats and the numerous sounds he makes are also part of his attitude and personality. A fascinating element in the writings of Saadawi is, she represented masculinity through certain words and expressions. Words like 'belched loudly', 'expelling', 'grinding noise', and 'prolonged noise' represent the father's authority in the house. He is not under anyone's control or surveillance. He expresses his freedom in his home amid hungry children by eating noisily. He does not seem to be bothered about his inability to provide food for his family. He is very particular about his food and amenities, and nothing could keep him away from his routine life.

Even the death of his children could not hold him down. His routine is not disturbed even when one of the female children dies. He had his supper as usual. His wife washed his legs, and he went to sleep, just as he did every night. But when a male child died, he beat up his wife, then had his supper and slept. If it is a male child, there was a slight change in his routine, but there was no complete change. He provides shelter for the family but fills the room with thick clouds of smoke, and his snoring resonates with his authority in the house. He “kindly” allows others to share his space. His noisy presence glaringly reminds one of the absence of any loving and caring interaction between him and the other family members.

There is a constant battle between Firdaus and her father, that is the struggle of survival. The author purposefully ignores other children; though she mentions them, they don’t have a presence or a voice to speak. They are presented as dying chicks or sleeping as a heap of flesh on the floor. The novel is about Firdaus confronting her father and mother in her childhood and taking care of her siblings. She intently observes her father’s eating at the table. Her gaze recorded every minute and everything thing about her father in her memory. She kept gazing at her father’s mouth and the movement of his hand in expectation of something to eat from him. He is the only one earning in the family and reserved every right in the house. “One evening I dared to stretch out my hand to his plate, but he struck me a sharp blow over the back of my fingers.” (*Woman at Point Zero* 19) In summer, when she grew a little older, he kept the mug in her hand and taught her how to wash his legs with water. She slowly replaced her mother. She did the things that her mother used to do for him. And in winter, he would occupy the bed near the oven to get the warmth, leaving his wife and kids in the corner of the house exposed to severe cold.

A ten-pound note given by a prince after a sexual encounter reminds her of the very first piastre she held in her hand in her childhood. Her father never gave her any money. She worked in the fields and the house. Poverty made the father's dominant position in the family more conspicuous and tyrannical. The father always grabbed limited resources available as a right, and often, they were shared with the male children but never with the woman in the house. Firdaus's father used to hold the money with him. He never gave it to his wife or to his children. When she asked him for a piastre, he beat her on her hand and said he did not have money. Little later, he assured her, "I'll give a piastre if Allah is bountiful to us and we manage to sell the buffalo before she dies." (*Woman at Point Zero* 64) He prayed to exhort Allah to delay the hour of her death. But the buffalo died before anyone could do anything. So, he did not give the piastre to her, and he stopped praying to Allah. Sometime later, when she asked her father for piastre again, he said, "Go and clean under the animals and load the ass and take her to the field. At the end of the day, I shall give you a piastre." (*Woman at Point Zero* 64) This time he kept his promise by giving a piastre when she returned home from the fields in the evening. It was the first piastre he ever gave her. She could always see her father's tightly closed fist as if holding something inside. His control over money was part of his role as the breadwinner for the family. Money is in his control, and thereby, his family is also in his control. His closed fist served as a tool to keep his family in his control and maintain his authority in the house. Firdaus gets a blow from her father when she stretches her hand for food and money. Father's physicality is emphasised here again. It is his way of disciplining the daughter.

But at the end of the novel, Firdaus expresses her love for her father. She felt and concluded that her father was a good man. Her reason for such a conclusion is, she compared her father with the people around her. She met people like Bayoumi, Ibrahim,

her husband and many other men. They all gazed at her as she ate. Her husband is very particular about how she eats and the quantity she consumes. Compared with all these men she met after her father passed away, she finally felt that her father was much better than them. “After he had eaten his meal, and beaten my mother and calmed down, he would ask me, ‘Are you hungry?’” (*Woman at Point Zero* 46) Among all the people she met, her father is the only one to have asked her, ‘Are you hungry’. Her husband fed her, expecting her obedience and her body for his sexual desires. Bayoumi was the owner of a coffee house in the city, he was unmarried and living alone in a two-room house. He met Firdaus when she was sitting alone in his coffee shop with bruises all over body. He also had expectations from her. Her father, she thinks, was the only one who provided her without expecting anything from her.

Like Fouada, Firdaus also expressed her love towards her father, “I answered, ‘No, he’s dead’ and for the first time wept for the thought that he had died.” (*Woman at Point Zero* 46) This incident happens when Firdaus runs away from her husband’s house, unable to bear the ill-treatment. She has no other place to go, and she is literally on the road. In such a helpless condition, her father comes to her mind as a source of shelter and food. Saadawi is trying to show how a woman is made to depend on a man, whether it is her father, or husband or son. Since all the doors in her life are closed, she eventually falls into the hands of Bayoumi, who directs her into prostitution later.

The close interactions between mothers and daughters, and fathers and sons are filled with instructions to carry out their roles effectively. This interaction reduces the interaction between fathers and daughters, and mothers and sons to the minimum. Only the protagonist in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* could associate herself with her father to some extent. “I was used to meeting most of my father’s friends and bringing coffee. Sometimes I sat with them and heard my father telling them how I was doing at school.”

(*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 15) Probably she got some inspiration from her father. Firdaus's father instructed her to work under the cattle for a piastre. While Hamida's father instructs Hamido to kill her, her mother helps her escape from the village to Cairo city. In the *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, we come across a father who declares his authority over his daughter in public. A frail young girl of 14-15 years with no income and support meets the protagonist. The doctor comes to know about her story and tries to protect her from her father. But she fails to stop her father from dragging her out of the hospital. The young girl is already married to someone. And the doctor comes to know the following day that the girl's dead body is found in the nearby well. Saadawi raises very important questions against honour killing when the protagonist says,

How could I leave her neck under her father's knife when I know that her father, mother, brother and uncle had all done wrong? How could I punish her alone when I knew that the whole of society had participated in the act....how could I not protect her when she was the victim and society protected the real offender...? (*Memoirs of A Woman Doctor* 80)

Honour is the most important thing for the father than anything else, even more than his wife and daughter; his responsibility lies in disciplining the women apart from providing them for their needs. He is more worried about his reputation in society than the future or life of his women.

In another incident, Hamida's father comes to know that his daughter is missing. And cannot find her at the end of the day. He does not ask his wife about the missing daughter. He waits till dawn and sends his son Hamido in search of her. His father does not give prolonged lectures on washing away the shame. His instruction that blood washes away the shame and that he should follow her convey everything to his son

about his job. He gives him a knife, representing power and control. He is not worried about the life of his only daughter as much as he is concerned about his honour. He wants to restore his honour and respect by putting his only daughter to death. In a way, he is inflicting double punishment on his young daughter. She does not understand why she has to run away from her house, friends, family, and the place where she belongs. Referring to one such example from *Hidden Face of Eve*, after being convicted of assaulting his own sister, her brother was released without charge by the court. He was let go on the grounds that his doubts were justified. He murdered his unmarried sister because he assumed she was pregnant. Though she was not pregnant, because of her swollen belly she looked like a pregnant woman. As a doctor, Saadawi was aware of menstrual issues and the common assumption that a large tummy indicates pregnancy. His intentions in preserving his family's honour were considered good and appreciated. He killed her in a fit of rage sparked by the honour, not out of personal anger. "...it is clear from this that the woman carried the burden of family honour: it is her body that has been soiled, whatever the circumstances and regardless of whether the sexual activity was consensual or forced" (Dailmy 19). The rite of defloration testifies to the virginity of the bride and the masculinity of the groom.

And most importantly, it confirms the honour of the family through the confirmation of the bride's virginity. Virginity is the basis of family honour. Father has to safeguard the chastity of his women, and it is his responsibility and honour. The blood on the white sheet collected by the husband and exhibited by the father is a mandatory ritual to prove that the girl is chaste and the family is honourable. As pointed out above, no one is sure about the pregnancy of Hamida. She is worried that, "...he would recognise her swollen belly..." (*The Circling Song* 176) Her mother saw her daughter wearing the pinafore with difficulty squeezing the dress down from her

stomach. Saadawi, through her characters, reflects how the honour of the father is equated with the honour of the state. Both father and the military used the exact words and concepts. They strongly believed that killing the daughter restores the honour of the father (his family) and killing the enemy's army brings back the honour of the nation.

Father and daughter relationships in Saadawi writings are very sensitive and sharp-edged. The fathers' eyes are not comforting, and instead, they create a sense of terror, especially for the daughters. Firdaus is not comfortable in the presence of her father. Throughout the novel, she constantly refers to a pair of eyes and is often threatened by them and often comforted by them. She said, "They were eyes that watched me. Even if I disappeared from their view, they could see me, and follow me wherever I went, so that if I faltered while learning to walk, they would hold me up." (*Woman at Point Zero* 17) She refers to her mother's eyes under the gaze of which she is comfortable, believes in them and clings to them with all her might. The only two eyes that alone seemed to hold her up.

There are instances when other men of the family step in when fathers failed to provide in Saadawi's fiction. Firdaus suffers like her siblings due to her father's negligence and self-centeredness. But, her uncle, much older than her and attending classes in Cairo, steps in to help her read and write the alphabet. He compensates for what her father is not. Her father seldom talks to her while her uncle talks to her when he visits them during the vacation. After her father's death, he takes the responsibility of educating her. He sends her to the elementary school. He takes her along with him to Cairo when her mother also passes away. He plans to send her for higher education after her secondary education. Her father could not have afforded her studies, nor was he interested in spending money on her education. Firdaus's education plays a crucial

role in her life in shaping her character. Her independent attitude emerges from her education, especially her secondary schooling,, which gives her the confidence to survive in the world without her parents and anyone to support her. Her uncle is concerned about her future and well-being. He could have escaped from the responsibility if he wanted to. But, he chooses to take her responsibility. On one side, he is without a doubt a caring relative, did all that he could do for Firdaus, offered her shelter, food, moral support, and even provided her with an education. He did the best that he could do for Firdaus. He did all this when she lost her parents, and there was no one to take care of her, no one to question him on his responsibility if he chose to shun his duty as an uncle.

However, there is another angle to this as well. While the father's gaze subjected her to constant surveillance, her uncle's gaze was motivated by desire. He takes advantage of her intimacy and her desperate situation to sexually abuse her. His advances toward her started when Firdaus's parents were alive. But, they intensified when she became dependent on him. His intense gaze extends into physical advances toward her. Firdaus cooks for him, looks after his house and spends very intimate moments with him in Cairo. She confesses that she enjoyed his touch and proximity with him compared to her early girlhood, sensual experiences. Saadawi points out the sexual abuse that girls are subjected to within the family, generally considered the safest place, especially for women. Firdaus's non-protest cannot be considered her will because she trusted her uncle as her family and could not imagine that he could exploit her.

Specific words in the writings of Saadawi need special attention. The use of the term 'brutal insistence' signifies the strength of her uncle in holding her to his body. It conveys how her uncle kept Firdaus in his control and how she could not release herself

from his grip. His behaviour suddenly changes after watching a movie with her in which very intimate scenes between a man and a woman are shown. The change in his behaviour could be traced to his inappropriate actions associated with the intimacy between a man and a woman seen in the movie. The film brought a change in Firdaus also, probably as she realised what was going on between her and her uncle. Simultaneously, she waits for him and also is scared of him and his advances. He became a different man after the movie. Saadawi did not deal with the exact reasons for such a sudden change in him. It could also be due to his relationship with his Professor's daughter, whom he marries later. He becomes a different man after marriage altogether. His role as a husband to his wife dominates his role and responsibility as an uncle to his niece. He wants to keep her in his house until she finds a job, but he fails to convince his wife. Before his marriage, he was everything to Firdaus, and he took great care of her in the absence of her parents in all aspects of her life. But, after marriage, he has to convince his wife of his decisions, including keeping Firdaus with them. Since his wife came from the upper class and was his Professor's daughter at the university, he could not say anything in disagreement. Later, he agrees to marry Firdaus off to a rich old man. He could not continue his concern towards her for long.

When Sheik Mahmoud, husband of Firdaus, beat her severely, since she has no one else for shelter, she goes back to her uncle's house to take refuge. Although he understands her condition, he also remembers his limitations, and he cannot take her back as his responsibility. He makes an interesting statement that "...all husbands beat their wives..." (*Woman at Point Zero* 44) He generalises that all husbands beat their wives, suggesting Firdaus to surrender herself to the domestic violence silently. Further, he adds, "The precepts of religion permitted such punishment" (*Woman at Point Zero* 44) The wife is supposed to show her perfect obedience even after being punished by

her husband. A victimised but forbearing wife is respected much more than the independent woman staying without her husband in her father's house or on her own. Her uncle does not want to face criticism from society. Her father would also have done the same thing. Once married, the daughter is not allowed to leave her husband's house without his approval. As a religious man, her uncle emphasises the image of an obedient wife, but his wife presents the image of an independent woman.

Firdaus's uncle's character holds a mirror up to the sexual abuse that young girls are subjected to within their families in the name of care and concern. The relationship is unsuspected by others and the young girls have no power to question and neither family members nor outsiders will trust them even if the girls complain about sexual abuse by members of the family. The concept of gaze by the haunting eyes is very crucial in Saadawi's writings moving from home to the public domain to the workplace and all other places and spaces. This gaze or a pair of eyes can be seen in most of her writings as a major presence. A woman is constantly under the scanner of this gaze be it that of individuals or groups, family members or others. This gaze could be of power, control, surveillance, punishment, desire or abuse. Women are silenced, threatened and labelled if they try to talk about this normalised domestic sexual abuse. So, they silently and reluctantly hide it in the secret corners of their heart and condemn themselves to a haunting feeling of eternal guilt and self-hatred.

The other major male presence in the parental family in Saadawi's fiction is siblings. The oppositional gender binaries come into force much more vehemently in the case of siblings. From the parents and the community's reception of childbirth to bringing up patterns, everything varies between male and female children. Their gender image also becomes stronger by positing themselves against each other. This gender gap gets widened with every move and every act. Gender conscience develops as the

child starts learning first from her parents and then from her surroundings. As Lindsey rightly observes, “Parents are models of male and female role performance for their children’s imitation.” (Lindsey 20) Boys are instructed to imitate their father or any other male they encounter, and the girls are instructed to imitate their mother or any other ‘acceptable’ woman. Both boys and girls have masculinity and femininity within their personalities, and the gender teaching makes them dominate the other. In *Gender in Personal Life*, R Connell describes how colour is associated with gender and gender roles. Blue babies for boys and Pink babies for girls based on the colour’s association with the gender. And Connell describes how this association of gender with colour develops with the toys they play with, reflecting their femininity and masculinity as they grow.

Babies were, from the start, identified as either female or male and put in pink and blue baby clothes, respectively. Blue babies were expected to behave differently from pink babies- rougher and tougher, more demanding and vigorous. In time they were given toy guns, footballs and construction sets. The pink babies, by contrast, were expected to be more passive and compliant, also prettier. As they grew older, they were dressed in frilly clothes, given dolls and make-up kits, and told to take care of their appearance and be polite and agreeable. (Connell 94)

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir says, “one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one” (Simone 32). This ‘becoming’ does not happen automatically. One has to go through several stages to learn, adapt and transform to become an acceptable gender and play the normative roles. Those who protest against such becoming are subjected to rigorous disciplining by the hegemonic institutions. Such institutions defend practices and beliefs that violently reiterate the gender identity. One

such practice is circumcision. Abdessamad Dialmy in *Sexuality in Contemporary Arab Society* says,

Since the masculine identity is prized and glorified, the circumcision of the boy is an opportunity to celebrate and take pride, in contrast with the circumcision of girls, which takes place silently and in secret. The circumcision of the boy is the subject of pride precisely because it rids the boy of the membrane of femininity. The foreskin-according to the patriarchal perspective, and it is, therefore, a break between the boy and femininity. Circumcision is a symbolic and practical transmission for the boy from the world of women to the world of men; in it, there is an achievement for the boy of a measure of control and the beginning of supremacy over all the women of the family. (Abdessamad Dialmy 18)

For boys, they get circumcised when they reach the age of seven. A specialist removes the foreskin, and then the boy sits on a chair greeting guests. The family hosts a feast. For Muslims, this is a ritual meant for social acceptance. If they're not circumcised, they are not allowed to enter the mosque. Religious practices that are prescribed for boys and girls are seen differently in society. Based on their gender differences, circumcision is a matter of pride for the individual and the family, more so for the father. Female circumcision is one of the major concerns expressed by Saadawi when she writes on the condition of women in Egypt. For the girl, circumcision is done in a closed room in a violating manner. It is a matter of life and death for the girl. It happens as a secret mission carried out by the women of the house. Saadawi heavily comes down on genital mutilation in her work *Hidden Face of Eve*. Circumcision can also be understood as the declaration of the sex of the child. It rules out the possibility of intersexuality and confirms the child as male and female. This could also function as the cultural means to create gender consciousness among children. Isolation of boys

and girls initially begins from there and intensifies after the girl attains puberty. The differences between male and female circumcision in terms of the method, celebration, isolation, and violation could lead to mutual suspicion for their bodies in boys and girls.

Saadawi emphatically says in her interviews that she is concerned about circumcision in general, both male and female, which she considers as sheer violence. She says that women across all religions are oppressed, and so she is writing not only about Muslim women but for all women suppressed under any religion.

As a medical doctor, I have known the physical, mental and social problems of both Male Genital Mutation and Female Genital Mutation. It is common sense that a child (male or female) should not be cut into by a knife under any religious or cultural, or identity slogans. Never in my life did I perform this operation on a female or male child. I have felt it is a crime against children (The Essential Nawal El Saadawi 141)

However, all her characters are Muslim women, and we come across only women characters subjected to circumcision in her fiction. According to Saadawi, female circumcision is very painful, but it is inflicted on girls to control their sexuality. Firdaus describes her painful experience at length and states that it remained a painful and traumatic memory for her throughout her life.

The protagonist in the *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* goes through a gender crisis since her childhood. Every change in her body raises new questions about her identity in her mind. These changes led to the establishment of her gender identity and her family's instruction to her about the importance of the investable marriage in her life. It is not Sigmund Freud's notion of "lack" or the innate guilt that leads the protagonist towards isolation. Still, it is the expectations of society from a woman like her that pushes her towards disillusionment. She resents associating herself with the society that looks upon her as a mere body and creates an imaginary world for herself. She is the

goddess of that world while men are stupid and helpless creatures waiting at her beck and call.

She hated herself for being a woman, not because of what she is but because of the chains that tie her down to the societal norms. Her resistance to gender compulsions begins at home. Her brother appears like an exact opposite binary of her status in the family and outside. Not that absence of a male sibling would have made her status in the family better. She would have learnt about the gendered upbringing from outside the home. However, growing up with a brother made her gender experience first-hand, immediate and in-depth.

Two major instances of sibling dynamics in Saadawi's fiction can be seen in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* and *The Circling Song*. Similarly, Hamida in *The Circling Song* also learns about herself by looking at her brother Hamido. She sees the contrast double in him. Hamida is not allowed to sleep as her brother does and not allowed to play in the streets as her brother does after a brief childhood. She was taught to do the household work. Her mother repeatedly compares herself with her daughter to say that she was much more responsible though younger than Hamida when she was married. Her comments include those on her daughter's body and the need to control it. Marriage comes up constantly to remind the young girls about their future, preparing themselves with all the skills and chores related to the kitchen and the household expected of them to meet the needs of her bridegroom and her family. The issue of marriage in Saadawi's fiction will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Going back to the protagonist in the *Memoirs of A Woman Doctor*, her brother is allowed to cut his hair short or leave it free and uncombed. Her hair is allowed to grow longer, and her mother combs it twice a day and twists it into plaits. He can wake up in the morning and leave his bed just the way it is. But she has to make her bed and his as well. He does not need permission to

go out and play in the street. She has to take permission every time she goes out to play. He takes a piece of meat bigger than hers, gobbles it up and drinks his soup noisily. But her mother does not say a word. Being a girl, she has to be watchful every moment, hide her longing for food, eat slowly and drink her soup without making noise. She speaks about all sorts of discrimination a girl would go through based on gender hierarchy, from her parents to the people in and around her immediate surroundings. She is more brilliant in studies than her brother. She wants to show her mother that she is more intelligent than her brother. But her studies were never a matter of concern for the family. For her father, her studies were not as important as getting her married to someone as early as possible. The narrator challenges the discrimination in the family as it proves that she is much better than her brother in many aspects, especially in her studies. She is unsure why her mother always tries to project men as superhuman and makes a tremendous distinction between her and her brother. She clings to science to disprove what society has already established about gendered roles. Her profession as a doctor proves her conviction with a bang.

In addressing gender discrimination between brother and sister, Saadawi brings in another world, i.e., mother's womb: a world without any discrimination based on their yet-to-be-formed sex/gender. Hamida and Hamido, being twins, shared the same world without any gender discrimination, which was his mother's womb. None could distinguish between the two. Even their parents could not identify who was who, as such is their resemblance to each other. Saadawi's point is that everything in the cell design made all the difference between Hamida as a girl and Hamido as a boy. Apart from that, there are no essential differences. But for the real world, or to the world outside the womb, these minute differences are crucial in differentiating between boys and girls.

Saadawi confesses that she thought that the child's face that she had followed was that of a boy, but a closer look at the face revealed that it was a girl's face. She says, "...for children's faces-like those of old people-are sexless. It is that phase between childhood and old age that gender must declare itself more openly." (*The Circling Song* 120) The central point of the entire novel is the applied gender differences that separated twin brother and sister to the extent that Hamido takes up the responsibility of punishing Hamida to uphold the honour of the family. Their childhood had no personal differences between them, except the parent's deferential attitude in nurturing them right from their birth. They grow up together, enjoying the togetherness. In the *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, the narrator says that her brief childhood had gone without her realising to be a girl and living through childhood. This applies to Hamida, but she grows up playing and learning along with Hamido until a certain age. The moment they boarded the train to Cairo city, their childhood came to an end, and their miserable life began right then. Both ran away from their parents, their house, their friends, and their comfort zone. Things changed rapidly for both. A school-going girl had to struggle to rescue herself from her own brother. The mirror image theory comes alive when we examine the learning process of the twins Hamida and Hamido. Not only are their names identical, but also did they look alike. It was difficult for their parents to differentiate between them. They played similar games together, went to school together, and expressed similar interests. As they were growing up, spaces and activities started to vary. The games were defined differently for them, and the spaces restricted Hamida while they got extended for Hamido. The differential treatment of their parents also started to increase as the children grew up.

Initially, they failed to understand the difference between the two. But gradually, they started to examine themselves to find out what the differences were. As

it was said earlier in the chapter that the mirror is also conditioned and moulded by various agencies, they think that it is sex that makes all the difference. They grow up in a heteronormative society that differentiates between male and female sex and builds male and female genders. There is nothing between these sexes and genders. Physicality becomes a crucial issue here like it was in the case of the presence of the father. To understand the religions and cultural differences between genders, Hamida and Hamido start to examine their bodies, to be specific, their gender organs.

Hamida sometimes thought she was Hamido, and Hamido sometimes thought he was Hamida. Such mix up between the self and the other, a binary, goes on to become an oppositional binary. Circumcision, in a way, clarified their doubts about the difference between the two. The physical violation and the cultural reaction confirmed the difference between the two as the primary sex/gender and the secondary sex/gender. However, Saadawi says that Hamido knew he was something other than Hamida. This “something other than” could be his understanding of society, about his gender privilege. It is this idea of difference on which Hamido’s gender consciousness is based. He does not seem to be referring to the “lack” in Hamida’s body but is contemplating the gender instruction that he gets from the elders and his peers. This understanding turns into his imitation of his father. He knew that he had to be like his father. He was a son and a brother, but he was also a father in the making.

Hamido tries to speak like his father in a coarse voice. He holds a stick and chased Hamida, imitating her father. The stick symbolises the authority to punish, especially women of the family. This could be his attempt to reiterate the hegemonic difference between him and Hamida though they grew up together. Interestingly, both Hamida and Hamido remember the voice of their father and the stick that he carried. But they mean differently to them. For Hamido, his father’s voice became a model to

become the male head of the family, and the stick completed that process. For Hamida, the voice othered her, and the stick punished her. Both try to imitate the father, but Hamido's imitation is welcome, and Hamida's imitation is criticised. Just like her brother, she too imitated her father, his rough voice, the way he coughed, stood at the large entrance of the house, threw her head back conceitedly, inflated her jaws and kept her right hand firmly on her hip as her father did. She is trying to imitate the posture of her father, and even the author confirmed that if anyone caught a glimpse of her at that moment, one would mistake her for Hamido. "She used to believe she was Hamido, and she would stride over the ground firmly, hitch up her *galabeyya* over her thin hard legs, and run towards the boys, shouting 'I'm Hamido.'" (*The Circling Song* 161)

Hamido's moving toward his father distanced him from his mother. It was required of him to prove himself as a man and the future head of the family. He is still a child, like Hamida. He finds comfort in his mother's presence. His mother's body is still a soothing and assuring place for him, whether he is awake or asleep, thus connecting him with the memory of his mother feeding him her milk. The coarse hand of his father wakes him up as he is happily sleeping next to his mother on a reed mat and orders him to go searching for his missing sister to eliminate her. It is almost like a dream for Hamido. The dream symbolically suggests how he is pulled away from his mother to become a man and preserve the honour of the family for his father and like his father.

Saadawi has used the dream-like narrative technique in many of her works to hint at the blending line between reality and imagination. *The Circling Song* too uses this technique for most of the novel. It is as if the entire story happens in Hamido's dream. Thus, he becomes the central character in the novel through whom we know how gender is formulated and enacted in a society like Egypt. "Washing the Shame"

on the family subjects him to trauma and hardships like Hamida is subjected to. The only difference is that he suffers due to his onus to carry out his responsibility, while she suffers as the blemish on the family who deserves to be punished.

Hamido's character conveys the suffocation that the growing-up years are subjected to. Similar to women's repressed psyche, we come across a conditioned and moulded Hamido who is forced to prioritise his family's reputation over his emotions and relationships. Although he rushes after his sister to carry out his father's order, he is not very sure why he has to kill his sister. He fails to come to terms with his drastically transformed identity from a playful and loving sibling to a vengeful, hounding brother. He cannot even share or express his emotions to anyone. His bottled-up emotions turn him into a vulnerable man with a fragile ego. Hamida and Hamido could both remember their mother's face hidden in a black Tarha. Hamida fails to recognise her father among the men coming out from the mosque on Friday. Hamido also fails to recognise his mother among women wearing Tarha. When he goes to Cairo searching for Hamida, he finds all the women dressed up like her mother. When he comes across Hamida, he thinks it is his mother because she is wearing Tarha. Actually, the Tarha is given to her by society, and it is the same Tarha that saves her from her brother's attempt to kill her in the name of honour. Hamido searches for her at home and in the play sites as her playmate but fails to find her. There, she is a look-alike of other women. There is no difference between his mother, sister and other women. They are all homogenous, protected femininities. Tarha is a prohibited place for Hamido while the mosque is a prohibited place for Hamida, based on their genders. As a girl and a boy, they are outsiders to men's world and women's world respectively. The religious, community public domain like a mosque has no place for women which is very similar to a private, personal, confidential world of tarha has no place for women

even if it is one's father or son or sibling. This similarity based on contradiction is a very powerful clue to understanding the functioning of a hierarchical society.

The hide and seek game that Hamida and Hamido played together every day in the streets stands for the things to come between them. In the game, Hamido is the seeker, and Hamida has to hide. He is in search of his sister, both in the game as well as in real life. He is after his sister to catch hold of her. The seeker, whoever it is, would grab at the strip of the knickers and try to pull the knickers down. But the girls knew how to aim a practical kick in defending themselves from the gripping hands of boys. One fights to dominate, and the other tries to escape. Hamida and Hamido were not very different from other children in following the rules of the game. Such an act seems mischievous or playful, but it speaks about their attitude in dominating girls by stripping.

Along with other reasons, stripping is a way to dominate girls, for them, the dress is more important than winning the game. The strategy is to distract the girls from the game by making them feel conscious of their dress and body. Thus, the games that boys and girls played together also contributed to the re-assertion of gender hierarchy and gender-based regulations. On the one hand, his sister Hamida's presence made him comfortable and desirable, but on the other hand, her presence created confusion in him regarding his gender.

Instruction is part of moulding the children according to society's accepted norms and standards, and this is done by the parents and by the outside world. We discussed earlier in this chapter that Hamida and Hamido were asked to follow the instructions of their parents and society. Hamida's mother gave her the instructions to become an ideal woman, and she also instructed her to run away from the village to escape from the haunting death. The Cairo city instructed Hamida to show no resistance

to the act of the policeman who later dragged her to his shabby room where he molested her. It instructed her to work in the master's house without thinking of running away from work, and yielding to her master's advances.

On the whole, she got instructions right from her childhood until her death, from her parents, twin brother, and people outside the family both at her village and in Cairo city. She just lived on the instructions of her family and then by society. It all began with the shopkeeper who molests her. Being chased in the Cairo city by her own brother, a couple of times raped by policemen, molested by her master while she worked as a housemaid, she comes across different men in the society in a short span of life after running away from her people and her house. All of them instruct her and expect perfect obedience and submission from her. The instructions moulded the life of Hamido too. His father instructed him to follow his father's path on the way to the railway station. "...his father's coarse voice that now sounded like a hiss: 'follow me.'" (*The Circling Song* 136) He offered Hamido a long object, rigid and sharp which gleamed in the darkness like a knife and said/instructed him to wash out the shame caused by his sister. The rigidity and sharpness of the knife represent the nature of his father, who wants his son to carry out the punishment on Hamida. He followed his father without question and obeyed his command in following his sister. It is an inescapable command for Hamido. This instruction seeps into his mind and is imbibed in his conscience throughout the novel. Ironically, due to the same instruction, he kills his father. "He stared at the pair of eyes: recognising their particular shine, he shouted. 'Hamida' he pulled the rigid implement upward to his thigh and aimed it exactly at the fixed point, halfway between the two eyes. He heard his father's rough voice. 'Fire'. He fired." (*The Circling Song* 162) His father gave him a weapon with the instruction to kill Hamida, and the military gave him a rifle with the instruction to fight for the

nation. It happened in a dream-like experience for Hamido that his father's command/instruction could not be erased from his mind until he aimed his weapon (rifle) pointed out to shoot Hamida. He dutifully followed his father's voice lingering in his ears without a second thought. But, instead of killing his sister, he killed his father. His father instructed him to kill his sister, and the military instructed him to kill the enemies in the war. In the process, he killed his own father. Hamido became a hero for slaying his father/ sister. Referring to her times, commenting on the preference of her people, Saadawi said, "In those days, people scorned the slain and respected the slayer." (*The Circling Song* 163) Hamido is not the killer, and it is he who determined the point halfway between the two eyes and sighted, pulled the trigger, and killed. But he slew without becoming the slayer. Although he killed people, he remained a hero. Hero for his brave act, an act of cleansing the shame and bringing honour. Going with the story, three of them are dead. Father wanted his honour, but he died even before the death of Hamida, the one who is particular about the honour is no more. Hamido became a hero for slaying his father. But, in the end, he is also dead. Ultimately, he lost everything, including his own life.

Even before Hamido could carry out the duty assigned to him by his father, the military grabbed him into their service. For all military and police uniforms, Saadawi used a unique description. They are represented by the metallic sounds of brass and iron. The shining of metals on their dress and the metallic sounds of their shoes represented the characters working in the military or police department. In all the selected fiction of Saadawi, there are only two major characters associated with the army. Policemen as major characters in the writings of Saadawi will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Indeed, the military is a powerful institute that can dominate both the civilians and the state. It is only in recent years that women are also accommodated

in military services. Militaries have been categorised as masculine inferences not only because they are filled by men, but also because they are a major subject for the creation of masculine identities and play a significant role in defining societal perceptions of masculinity. Hamido, in *The Circling Song*, successfully proves himself as a masculine nationalist by fighting for the nation and fighting against his own sister on behalf of his father. Honour is the common factor for both battles. He confesses that things happened in his life without his knowledge.

Hamido stretched out his leg; it collided with another leg. He extended his arm, it bumped against another. He was drowning in a sea of dead bodies. He began to swim with both arms and legs, through the vast ocean. He stopped for a moment to catch his breath and turned around to find out where he was or who had brought him here. (*The Circling Song* 191-192)

He remembers nothing except that he was a child, and the strong fist of his father pushed him and hurled him into the sea. He remembers only the episode where his father pushed him into the moving train, on his way to Cairo city. Going further, when he tries to remember what he looked like as a child, he cannot recall anything. Precisely, there was no childhood to remember, no smile, no laughter. This is not just the story of Hamida and Hamido. The author states that this is the story of millions. "He was not one child, but rather thousands or millions of children, whose bodies had tumbled onto the asphalt. Every child's face was marked by a long thread of blood that ran from eyes to nose to mouth..." (*The Circling Song* 191) Although everything between Hamida and Hamido in Cairo city happens in a dream kind of experience, their dead bodies colliding with each other in the mortuary express their final union as two siblings but not as man and woman. They started their journey together in the mother's womb and

ended it together in the mortuary. Like their birth, their death also becomes a binary in terms of gender.

Masculinity in Saadawi's writings is represented with weapons, photographs on the wall and coarse and uncontrolled noises. All these also stand for their surveilling and punishing qualities. This chapter has discussed how the home becomes a place where a woman is instructed and constructed to surrender to the sexist practices and how men such as fathers and brothers become instrumental in carrying out this agenda. The next chapter examines men in their roles as husbands and companions to women protagonists. Majorly it concentrates on the home where the husband is considered to be the master. But, it also discusses men who are in love relationships with women and who are not or are not yet part of the domestic sphere of these women.

Chapter 3

Marriage, Masculinity and Violence

Nawal El Saadawi's fiction focuses on the journey as a backdrop as well as a theme. This journey could be literal, metaphorical, imaginative, or intellectual. There is always a search combined with the journey for a destination. This chapter can also be considered a journey from the analysis of men in Saadawi's writings as fathers, siblings, uncles to men as husbands and companions. We come across women in Saadawi's fiction who are always searching for something better, be it home, work, relationships, or achievements. Traditions also condition them to be prepared psychologically for a shift from the parental house or in-law's/husband's house. Whether it is her choice or the traditional norm- a woman's journey is decided and dictated by men as individuals or as representatives of institutions. For instance, the father decides to marry his daughter off and thus transfer his authority over his daughter to the man who marries her.

This transfer of power over her from her father to her husband dislocates her and re-locates her only to be silenced and surveilled more. This chapter discusses how men as companions, as husbands and lovers, are portrayed by Saadawi. This chapter can be broadly be described as an exploration of spatial companionship, which is also considered togetherness by traditions and emotional companionship. The domestic space occupies a very significant place for women in a patriarchal society because home is considered to be the world for a woman, and she has and is supposed to have no other place. How this domestic space is negotiated by men as portrayed by Saadawi will be examined in this Chapter. Questions such as what kind of companionship do they offer to women, how do society and the traditions mould them to play the roles as

companions, and how do they impose norms and regulations on women will be discussed.

Love in the Kingdom of Oil depicts a woman's expedition to unearth the mother goddess. When she finds the idol, it is broken and incomplete, symbolising the lost autonomy. The woman shares space and time in a constricted location with the man/men whose identity is unknown. This brilliantly symbolises the domesticity of a woman who lives within the four walls with a man who can be any man and every man as an essentialised husband. Although Saadawi generally uses reverie-like ambience and narration in all her fiction, this confusion and uncertainty in the novel *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* is a more pertinent comment on women in relationships. It conveys that the woman is searching for herself in the depths of her psyche, which almost became dry as a desert, covering the so-called home. She is taken back into the four walls again and again by the man. The land is also sticky, constricting her movement, which again stands for the restrictions of the traditional institutions.

This Chapter will majorly focus on the novels *Woman at Point Zero*, *Searching*, *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, and *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* for its analysis. Major characters of husbands in these novels are Sheik Mahmoud, husband of Firdaus, husband of the unnamed woman from *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* and the two husbands of women doctor from *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*. All the husband characters, except the second husband of the narrator in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, have very strong masculine and patriarchal notions. They dominate their wives, illtreat, bash, and violate them in all aspects. Fathers dominate their daughters in different ways but men as lovers and companions exploit them to a certain extent. Fathers' violation is limited to a period of time, and there is a chance for the women to come out of it at any point in time or get rescued or escape with someone's help. Firdaus or Hamida could come out

of their father's domination. Suffering under their fathers is not a permanent thing. But it is difficult to escape from the hands of the husband once they are legally married. As Nivedita Menon says, "Family' is an institution with a legal identity, and the State recognizes as a family, only a specific set of people related in a specific way. It is not only the law that defines 'family'—extra-legally too, you are forced into being part of a family which strictly defined in this narrow way." (5)

The law, religion and tradition will not tolerate if a woman runs away or stays away from her husband. According to the contract, the moment she is married, she has to be with her husband forever under all circumstances. For instance, Sheik Mahmoud, Firdaus' husband, hits her all over her body with his shoe out of rage. Her body and face become swollen and bruised. She leaves the house and goes to her uncle's house to guard herself against her husband and get some comfort. But, instead of giving her protection or at least comforting her with some soothing words, her uncle sends her back to her husband's house. In his view, her husband's house should be her permanent place once she is married, and she is not supposed to leave it for any reason. Her uncle does not even try to look into the problem. Sheik Mahmoud is an above sixty years old man living on his pension for about a year. He has children of almost Firdaus's age. He lost his wife the previous year and was all alone in his house. He agreed to marry Firdaus for a moderate amount of dowry. According to Firdaus's aunt, he is a virtuous man who can argue for hours over five millimes and kill himself over a piastre. His qualification to get married is his pension. His age is not a problem at all. His fitness for marriage is unquestioned. Since the law permitted polygamy, and he recently lost his wife, he accepted to marry Firdaus. Polygamy allows a man to marry up to four women, depending on his financial ability to look after his wives and children's needs. If Firdaus's father was alive, probably he would not have allowed giving his young

daughter to a sixty-year-old man in marriage. At the same time, considering his attitude, considering the dowry he would get from Sheik Mahmoud, there is a probability that he would have offered his daughter in exchange for a dowry to Mahmoud. His greed dominates his responsibility as a father in bringing the best suitor for his daughter. His presence may not make any significant difference in the life of Firdaus concerning her marriage. But he would not have allowed his daughter to become a prostitute. His mere presence would have kept Firdaus away from prostitution. On the other hand, his house would have probably become an alternative shelter for her. Like Fouada's father, who valued his honour more than the life of his daughter, he would have killed his daughter for running away from her husband's house.

As it was said earlier, authority is passed on from father to husband, and its most important component is surveillance. We see Firdaus being haunted by her father's gaze, especially when she is eating. That gaze on her plate was meant to warn her, make her feel conscious about her "greed" and his generosity, and that he has the right and responsibility to oversee the household. Her husband, retired from his job, has no work outside the home and no friends, stays at home throughout without having to do any work. His only pastime is to monitor Firdaus, his wife. His gaze follows her wherever she is or whatever she is doing— cleaning the house, washing clothes or cooking in the kitchen. An extra pinch of soap powder or a few grains spilt by mistake on the floor would make him furious. He is judgemental of her work, suspicious about her honesty and contemptuous about her needs.

If I dropped the packet of soap powder and spilt a few grains on the floor, he would jump up from his chair and complain at me for being careless. And if I pressed a little more firmly than usual on the spoon as I took ghee out of the tin for cooking, he would scream out in anger and draw my attention to the fact that its contents were

diminishing much more rapidly than they should. When the dustman came to empty the refuse from the bin, he would go through it carefully before putting it out on the landing. One day he discovered some leftover scraps of food and started yelling at me so loudly.... after this incident, he got into the habit of beating me whether he had a reason for it or not. (*Woman at Point Zero* 44)

His physical violence in the form of beating started when he noticed that she was wasting food. This is anger and punishment that his authority is entitled to reprimand and discipline his wife, who is not more than a servant for him, as she depends completely on him by tradition, relation, and financial dependence. This can also be understood as an extension of his authority or lack of authority at the workplace. His lost position makes him concentrate more on home and exhibit all his powers on his wife. His lost place/ position at the workplace might be a reminder more about the status of the wife at home, who, according to the traditions, is a servant of the man.

His insecurity about her “loyalty” increases with his increasing age and decreasing abilities. He lost the capacity to eat much and eating a little more led to his stomach upset, his frustration about his inability to eat and digest also added jealousy to the existing scorn for his wife. He probably felt as if she was eating what he could have eaten and was not able to eat. He repeatedly rebukes Firdaus saying that she is completely dependent on him and has no other place to go. In fact, it is he who needs a wife to serve him and take care of him. This dependence probably leads to his insecurity about her leaving him. He constantly reminds her about his great favour on her and her having no alternative to escaping from him. “Now you will realise I’m the only person who can put up with you...Why do you keep at a distance whenever I come near to you?” (*Woman at Point Zero* 45) His expectation of loyalty from her is a result of his

condescension as an earning man and his insecurity as an older man physically dependent on a young woman.

His irritation about her not unknowingly coming close to her leads to his forcible access to her body. He assumes he has all powers over her body like he has all authority over his house. He does not even think about her willingness and desire in accepting him. It is almost like he bought her from her parents to serve his domestic and physical needs. Much later, when Firdaus escapes from him to land in sex work, Saadawi suggests that a sex worker has more independence than a housewife. A sex worker can earn, accept, or deny the customers while Firdaus is subjected to a patronisingly reminding and surveilling gaze of the husband, which curtails all movements and thoughts of a wife.

Two details that Saadawi describes are suggestive of his personality and condition are his sleeping posture at night and discharge from swelling on his chin. He sleeps next to Firdaus with his hands and legs entwined around her. It could stand for his insecurity or his authority; whichever it is, it restricts her movements and establishes his control over her. Similarly, the swelling with a hole on his chin suggests several things. The hole, sometimes dry and sometimes oozing blood and puss, stands for the man's psyche and denotes the status of his hygiene, health and age. The unhealing stinking wound could also represent the sick and despicable carbuncle of patriarchy.

The colonisation of a woman's mind, body, and life is expected from man, especially from the husband. If he fails to do so, his masculinity is challenged, and he is not accepted as a real man. Successful performance of the roles is one of the means to establish one's gender. So, like any husband, Sheik Mahmoud, Firdaus' husband, also performs his role by subjecting her to psychological, physical, and sexual

monitoring and violence. His insecurities as a retired, old man with an unhealing wound on his face add to the intensity of his control over his wife. This, in fact, provides us with an interesting clue to understanding the societal support and strategy to help men confront insecurities through women's bodies and lives. It appears, in this context, as if the institution of marriage itself is preserved to make the man's life comfortable and save him from problems related to his existence and insecurities of his maleness.

It is this dynamics that compel Firdaus to run away from home. The first time when she desperately reaches her uncle's house for refuge, she is sermonised by her uncle about the place of a woman in her husband's house and the need to bear with all the hardships as part of wifehood. This is another instance where the male support system defends men and convinces women about the gender hierarchy, especially within the family. They don't have to know one another. It is sufficient to know that the other person is a man performing a male role for him to get all support on earth. Saadawi, undoubtedly, is drawing our attention to the man's dependence on the woman. She is also drawing our attention to the fact that society allows or facilitates the man to turn his dependence on a woman into her dependence on him and establish his control and authority over her.

The second time Firdaus faces such violence from her husband is when he hits her with his heavy stick until blood flows down from her nose and ears. This time Firdaus knows that she has no place where she can take shelter. Fed up with her "home", she escapes to the larger world. It is not that Firdaus had hope in the outside world and not that she considered men outside to be better when compared to her husband. It was her last attempt to save herself. Interestingly, the home continues as usual. Her husband can manage to get another girl to marry and oblige her to serve him. It is Firdaus who is displaced for the third time, this time with no place to go. She has no rights in her

house, where she has slogged day and night. She moves from one place to another, and she does not belong anywhere.

Firdaus could have shown the only resistance to disconnecting her emotions from the husband and surrendering her body and services to him mechanically, which she does before running away from there. However, her resistance might give her some satisfaction but has no impact on the husband, who is unconcerned about her emotions, though he demands her complete devoted supplication. This passive submission and emotional detachment can be seen in Firdaus when she enters sex work. Probably this is the only agency that she has. But it was completely lost in men who were never interested in her emotions.

It could be interesting to bring Firdaus' uncle for discussion here. As discussed in the previous chapter, the sudden change in him after his marriage could be interpreted as the assumption of a husband's role. He starts obliging his wife's advice and immediately agrees to marry off Firdaus to an older man in order to send her out of his house. On the one hand, he lectures Firdaus in her difficult times, about a wife's responsibilities and on the other hand, he follows his wife to the core of her will and wish. Firdaus's uncle and aunt form only the backdrop of the novel. We do not understand the reasons and the later developments in the uncle's changed behaviour/attitude. Despite this, we cannot interpret his decision regarding Firdaus as his wife's decision alone. It appears as if he wanted to throw the blame of shifting the responsibility of Firdaus to his wife so that he can retain the image of a good mentor, and his wife can be blamed for all the mishaps.

Love in the Kingdom of Oil also presents an unnamed husband who strongly defends polygamy. He states that God's will permits men to have four wives. This link

between having four wives and proving one's masculinity also hints at how the patriarchal society defines masculinity. The financial, physical, and sexual capacity to have more than one wife is considered masculine, and men strive to live up to this expectation. Associated with the notion of masculinity is fertility. He has four wives. All of them have reached menopause. But they have no children. Such a picture clearly explains that the reason for not having children lies with him. But as a man, he is beyond any scrutiny, while the woman is held responsible even for things that are not under her control. This gives him the right to marry more women. The protagonist of the novel is one of these four wives. We do not know her number among the wives. She is an archaeologist working with the archaeology department. There is a major difference between Firdaus and the protagonist of this novel. She is not financially dependent on her husband. She has an alternative space, at least for a limited time during the day, that is her office. However, she is made to depend on him culturally and socially. He not only dictates her domestic space but also probes her workspace.

He does not subject her to physical violence like Sheik Mahmoud, Firdaus' husband, does. But he monitors her every minute and controls her in every way possible. The double standards followed by the patriarchal society become evident when the husband expresses hostility towards men in his wife's workplace. It is not contempt for those men but suspicion of his wife's conduct with other men. She can and is supposed to share domestic space with his other wives and not question it because the husband takes the "divine" reference of polygamy being the will of God. Thus, religion also becomes a weapon for the man to establish and preserve his superiority.

On the other hand, she has to work under the control and surveillance of her boss in the office. Two men share the power over her in their different capacities. Her officer's power may not extend to her house, but her husband's authority will extend to

her office. She has to get her husband's permission to step out of the house and step out of the country. Her husband's permission needs to be attested by her office for her to travel out of her country without her husband's company. This shows how her movement is curtailed with the help of the rights that the two men hold, as a husband and as an officer. However, she has no right, either as a woman, wife, or employee. She cannot ask why she requires their permission and why her husband does not require her permission. The employer/ officer can dismiss her from service when he is not happy with her services, and the husband can also cut off the marital relationship with her if he is not happy with her. The legal contract of marriage is validated by religion. It allocates rights to the man and duties to the woman and leaves the discretion of continuing or breaking the marriage with the man.

Unlike Firdaus' husband, who suffers from the insecurity of losing his wife, this husband is very confident of her holding on to him. His primary weapon in this regard is the marriage which is a wage less service offered by the woman. It is a violation if she leaves the workplace, both waged and the wage less, without the permission of her master. Therefore, her absence is termed as absconding. It is beyond one's imagination that a woman can leave home without the permission of her husband. Here, the protagonist does not take permission or inform neither her husband nor her boss. Her husband refuses to admit that she has gone. He can only think that she is missing, as she cannot go like that without his permission.

He shares his opinions and views with the police officer when he is taken to the police station for investigation/ interrogation regarding his missing wife. The officer also believes that women have started asking for wages, resulting in an insane price rise. Interestingly, during the conversation, it is revealed that one of his other wives had also gone on leave but never returned. This could mean that based on his experience of

the wife who went on leave with his permission not returning, he might have refused to give leave to his archaeologist wife. Therefore, she might have gone without taking his permission. Why do women go missing? What happens to them that they never return? The increasing number of missing women across the world raise many pertinent questions about the missing phenomenon.

Like the identity of the men that the archaeologist protagonist meets is unclear, the husband also fails to identify his wife's photograph in the police station. While his wife's experience shows how men play their masculine roles irrespective of their identities, the husband's uncertainty over his wife's photograph reveals his lack of attachment; a wife is a wife, any wife, she is not identified as an individual. This also reminds us of the dilemma of Hamida and Hamido, who fail to recognise their mother among women. In Hamido's experience, "Suddenly, a moving searchlight exposed the darkened corner, and he saw his mother's face beneath the black *tarha*." (*Woman at Point Zero* and *The Circling Song* 144) In Cairo city, when he was searching for his sister, he could see women's faces behind black *tarha*, and thought he was watching his mother. Similar things happen with Hamida. "Now she lay stretched out on her back, her wide black eyes open in terror, searching in the eyes around her for mother's eyes. Not far away, her mother stood motionless, eyes calm and steady. Lashes unmoving, the black *tarha* quiescent over her head, shoulders and chest." (*Woman at Point Zero* and *The Circling Song* 157) They all looked alike, performed their roles in a similar manner, and got established with their gender identity. The veil became the identity of the women, and religious customs became the identity of men.

Similar to the father who is absent in the family and whose absence also reminds him of his presence as the head of the family, the husband in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* is present at home, but his contribution to home is almost nil except for showing his

authority over the woman protagonist. Saadawi says that husbands did nothing at home except hide their faces behind newspapers and clouds of smoke. “There was nothing in the houses apart from husbands hiding their faces behind newspapers. They wrapped their heads in clouds of smoke.” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 69) This conveys how the entire world is home for the man while the home is the world for the woman. Simultaneously he is trying to convert himself to a man of the world as well as monitor the home. His desire to see his photograph behind his majesty also reveals his longing to be a man of the world. The need and the desire of the man to expand his horizons is an expectation from society. The woman is only a facilitator for his success outside the house. Any woman can perform that role, and any other woman can replace her if the previous wife does not perform her task well.

The woman in this novel proves that even a machine can replace a woman, which works out more economical for a man. He buys a new machine, which he thinks can be a solution for the indiscriminate price rise.

Yes, the dream was quite legitimate. The machine did not have a mouth like a woman to eat, nor a tongue to talk with. Moreover, it wrote in a clear hand. And if it was not writing, it stayed in its place without moving. If it became decrepit with time, it could be exchanged, and it would be possible for him to do without the woman entirely. (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 96)

The machine does not require food, and cannot talk like his wives, but it can do the work done by four wives. Its ability to think is also confined to doing work according to the needs of its master. It can even write in a clear hand. But does not talk back like an educated wife. When it is not doing any work, it simply remains in one place without any movement. It has buttons for everything- for writing, reading,

cleaning, cooking and lovemaking. It can do everything that a woman can and requires only oil that is abundantly available in the country.

Saadawi's sarcastic tone adds intensity to every point that she is making through her characters. In one place, she says that the husband and wife had such intense love between them that they quarrelled every night. Similarly, in the above context, she sarcastically comments that he is an ideal husband working according to the orders of heaven. He is only following the law and the religion of the land. The replacement of women with machines does not convey that men do not require women and that they can be happier with machines, but it means that men turn women into mere machines, and that they deserve machines but not women.

Set in the context of the Gulf war, the novel civilises the then degradation of values and the crisis created by greedy people. The husband, who is also an active participant in the rush for wealth and who himself created a power war between genders at home, says that oil, the most powerful transformer of their lives in those times, is a liquid without any solidarity. We get a sense that he is attributing the fluidity of the oil to women, thus reiterating the objectification of women. He expresses his distrust for their integrity and emphasises that the face veil cannot change women's natural wickedness. "No, but when the gushing increases, you yourself become like the oil, and so anxiety concerning death is dispersed....I think that there is in her, as there is in other women, something resembling oil." (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 71)

Religion becomes a major weapon in protecting the patterns of hierarchy. The husband in this novel brilliantly adopts the rationale from the religion to argue that God is above the man and the man is above the woman. Like the man submits himself to God, the woman has to surrender herself to the man. The man has another master as

well, that is his majesty, who needs to be pleased by the man. He expects the supplication that he has offered to others outside from his wife inside the house. On Man and Religion, Saadawi expresses her views in *The Hidden Face of Eve* and her interviews. “God glorifies the mind of man in his sacred books and makes of him the symbol of thought and intelligence, whereas woman personifies the body, a body without a head, a body whose head is the man”. (*The Hidden Face of Eve* 103) In an interview with Lieven De Cauter, Saadawi says, “Religions are servants of the political system and not the opposite; the economic and political system is reflected in religions.” (*The Essential Nawal El Saadawi* 328) When the wife returns home, he demands her to prostrate before him and offer an apology. He does this in the name of God, but it can be clearly understood that he is doing this to boost his self-image as a man. He refuses to admit, even to himself, that he was also responsible for his wife running away from home. He accuses her and abuses her and expects her to kneel before him or burst into tears in repentance and remorse. He attacks her, when it does not happen, by saying that a woman like her who exceeds all bounds with her sin can overturn the established order with a blink of an eye. A woman like her, in his opinion, could be an educated woman, or a questioning woman or a “wayward” woman. His final weapon against her is used against her conduct. He makes a desperate last attempt to call her names as a woman of ill repute. He thinks this will bring her definitely to his feet.

However, the wife remains unmoved and well-composed. She feels as if her husband is kneeling before her, pleading with her to apologise. He is almost in tears, desperately begging her for an apology. His pleading has no impact on her. As a last resort, he calls out to heaven to act against his wife and punish her on his behalf by drowning in oil until she is dead. Interestingly, he hears the voice of heaven whispering into his ears, “Beat them! She cannot expect a better future unless she accepts a beating

with pride.” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 126) It is a matter of pride for the man to punish the woman and bring her onto the right path. He starts beating her ruthlessly when he fails to get an apology from her. He calls her a twisted rib that can only be repaired by breaking. This twisted rib reminds one of the origins of the first woman created by God from a rib of the man as his companion.

Interestingly, even before his wife stretches out her hand, he stretches his long, stick-like hand and grabs her hand. Similarly, her days are divided, and her nights are dictated by him. Whenever she tries to run away from him and home, she thinks about his ability to laugh. She probably thinks that he still retains some human qualities that he is able to laugh, and this belief makes her stay back. Her running away from him does not affect him except for his honour as a man. He takes the help of all possible means to make her repent about her fleeing home and to inspire her to worship her husband unconditionally.

The fathers in *Woman at Point Zero* and *The Circling Song* prove to be authoritarian fathers and tyrannical husbands. Their wives have no say in the house, whether it is about the birth of the daughter or the death of the daughter. Although Firdaus’ father cannot support the family, his wife has to place him on the highest altar and worship him and, on the other hand, suffer along with her children. *The Circling Song* also presents the anxiety of a father to protect the honour of the family who assigns the duty of punishing his daughter to his son. In this death game, the mother has no say and no role—similarly, the protagonist in *The Searching* shares her emotions with her mother. The protagonist’s mother develops a hatred for her husband for discriminating against the daughter. It is this hatred that the protagonist shares with her mother, and it grows as her father continues to discriminate against her.

Memoirs of Woman Doctor has a man who typically plays the roles of son, lover and husband. He reveals diverse colours while playing their roles. He is a devoted and loving son who attends to his mother wholeheartedly. He bursts out into tears at her death. It is a major shock for him as he was closely associated with her since childhood and depended on her completely. He breaks the mould of a son due to his close association with his mother and breaks down into tears which is considered unmanly or womanly. The same man admires the woman doctor for boldly announcing that his mother was dying. He goes back to the hospital to thank the doctor for taking care of his mother. This engineer confesses to the doctor that she was the first woman doctor who does not fit into his doctor's image. He imagined her as "an ugly, bold woman with thick glasses" and a bent back due to reading a lot and doing hard work. He condemns the male opinions and expectations about women. He makes a strong statement that generally men look for only beauty in women and cannot consider women as equals or partners except as subordinates. However, he emphasises, "I'm not one of those men. I want a woman who's my partner, not my servant. I'm proud of your mind...desperate for your opinion and expertise" (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 56)

He expresses his admiration for the protagonist, especially for her knowledge. He says that it is an insult to her and the whole world if she is confined to the kitchen. He convinces her to marry him. After marriage, he comes out in his true colours by restricting all her movements and telling her that her primary service should be to be her husband but not to her career. She could see the weakness and desperation in his eyes when she was about to tear the marriage contract in their marriage. He convinces her not to tear it but sign on it since it is only a formality.

The insecurity and dependence seen in Sheik Mahmoud, Firdaus' husband, and the husband in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* can be clearly seen in this novel. He loves his mother because she became a world for him to depend on. She provided him with everything and took care of all his needs. When he proposes to the protagonist, it is with the hope that she can replace his mother in taking care of him. A dutiful wife can fill the void created by his mother's death.

This husband stands for the interesting transformation from a son to a lover to a husband. She was an inspiration to him before marriage, but her independent nature became an eyesore for him. He announces, "I'm the man...I'm in charge of this house and all that's in it, including you." (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 63) The profession that he considered noble before marriage became a problem for him as the Protagonist has to treat human bodies. Like the husbands in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* and *Woman at Point Zero*, he suffers from an inferiority complex and resolves to overcome it by dominating her and snubbing her. Although he lived dependent on his mother, he believes that women need to be protected from men, and only a husband can do that. He gives two options to the protagonist in his attempt to control her. She should get free from her husband and house or should close her medical practice. He was desperate to marry her, but that desperation seems to be his need to snub and control an intelligent and successful woman doctor to satisfy his fragile ego. The look of weakness and desperation is gone from his eyes, and it is replaced by a hard, overbearing expression. He defines the gender roles by asserting that he is the man, so he wants to go out and work. He is allowed to do that. He does not want his wife to go out into the outside world and work. He believes in the very basic gender dynamics- being a man, he wants to earn for his family, and as a wife, she has to look after the house and serve the man of the house. Putting himself ahead of her, she wants to act as the head of the house.

“Women in the colonised world, formerly full participants in local non-capitalist economies, have been increasingly pressed into the ‘housewife’ pattern of social isolation and dependence on a male breadwinner.” (Connell 80) Maria Mies coined the word ‘housewifisation’. (Connell 80) It is not important for the woman to earn money and support the family; the man of the house can see through it. His words are not suggestions, but rather they are orders to her about how she should behave. The narrator could not continue to stay with him in such a hostile relationship. Although it is not clear who proposed ending the marriage relationship with divorce, they put an end to their legal relationship with a divorce.

Not all husbands are the same, there are some exceptions in Saadawi’s fiction. The second husband of the narrator in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* is different from husbands in other novels. He is not an aggressive man with a hoarse voice or an attitude to colonise the space of his wife. He is a known music composer, looking very “ordinary”, “An ordinary man wearing ordinary clothes and standing ordinarily.” (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 88) He meets the protagonist at a party, and very soon, they realise their compatibility. He respects the protagonist’s profession like her first husband and even defends it when she argues against it.

For her, the medical field is all about pain and sickness, getting exposed to the sad side of life. He disagrees with her, saying that the sorrows involved are immense, but the happiness must be even greater. “I can imagine how happy you must feel when you save someone’s life.” (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 90) In their conversation, he confesses many things to the narrator: he never met a woman like the narrator in his life. He comments on women with make-up: women always hide their feelings and wear masks on their faces. It is not clear whether he is referring to the veil or a literal make-up mask. He intends that people cannot understand women’s true feelings and

emotions because of this voluntary or forced mask upon their faces. He admires the narrator for her make-up-free face. He likes an honest woman who is frank. He shows another side of being a husband. While being masculine and aggressive were considered the traits of man, being gentle and emotional were considered feminine. The Women's liberation movement attacked masculinity which was aggressive and dominating over women. Not only the feminists but even the men also started questioning the hegemonic notions of masculinity.

It is not only feminists who have attacked masculinity since the 1960'. In the 1970' some men themselves began to call it into question. Particularly within the so-called men's movement in North America, with their call for male liberation. Traditional masculinity began to be regarded as a 'neuro-muscular armour' that forced them to suppress tenderness, emotion and any signs of vulnerability (*Masculinities and Culture* 15)

The narrator's previous husband strongly believed in aggressive and dominating masculinity, and he carried this sort of masculinity over his wife. But this man believes that masculinity or being manly is understanding the life partner rather than being aggressive. He respects her rights, and she respects his rights. He gives her the space that she deserves and never tries to interfere in her life. He proves to be a real companion for the protagonist with his egalitarian worldview and relationships. He stands by her in all crises and breaks the hierarchy on which the domestic space and the institution of marriage are based. Farid and the protagonist, in their companionship, realise how they are interdependent and complementary.

The narrator speaks about the reason for women wearing make-up. "openness in a woman spoils her femininity. They like her to wear disguises, to be evasive, to join

with them in the game of chasing and being chased.” (*Memoirs of A Woman Doctor* 94)

“They” here could be men, society, religion or any other hegemonic institution that benefits from confining a woman to a mere object for the male gaze and male pleasure. Saadawi speaks about the commodification and trafficking of women in the name of Westernization. She discusses how poor women in her country were neglected the basic needs of women like education, food, and health. They were seen as sex commodities. “Women are looked upon as bodies to be exploited and used to produce more profit.” (*The Essential Nawal El Saadawi* 86) On the one hand, they were veiled as if it was to protect them from other men; on the other hand, these women were seen as bodies even under the veil for centuries. “They must be veiled, covered physically according to the religious fundamentalists, but should be undressed according to the postmodern capitalists, or made to buy make-up and body conditioners.” (*The Essential Nawal El Saadawi* 86) Saadawi considers make-up as a different kind of veil which the western world has accepted as progressive and modern and as the standard of beauty. She criticises the global media for creating such beauty consciousness to boost a huge market through beauty products. She concludes that both the veils were almost the same since they both hide the real face of the woman.

The legal marriage contract that Saadawi discusses in her fiction used religion as a weapon to marginalise women, snatch all rights from women and legally compel them to surrender their lives to men. Another dimension of this issue is the relationships not “validated” by legal marriage contracts and the questions related to gender roles. In *The Hidden Face of Eve*, Saadawi discusses marriage and its validity under the religious patriarchy. She uses the term ‘not utilisable as a wife’, which labels the wife unfit for the married life. “It is a relationship built on the utilisation of the woman by the man, or her exploitation by him.” (*The Hidden Face of Eve* 51) When the husband feels his

wife is “not useful”, he can legally cancel the marriage contract by the religious freedom entitled to him.

This section of the Chapter will focus on the emotional space that a relationship exists in, which could be an extension of or an escape from the domestic space. Starting from her childhood playmate Mohammadain, Firdaus in *Woman at Point Zero* meets many men. Her memories of Mohammadain’s companionship remain with her fondly forever. Although Saadawi describes their interaction in very sensual terms and Firdaus’ memory is also constructed in very physical terms, Mohammadain’s character and his companionship with Firdaus can be interpreted as the pre-gender hegemony stage of one’s life. Unlike other men in Firdaus’ life, her childhood friend never tries to play like a man with sanctioned authority over her. For him, she is not a role but a being with a body, whereas, for all others, she is a body playing a gender role. The intimacy between Firdaus and Mohammadain thus remains a nostalgic memory for Firdaus also because his eyes did not gaze at her with authority and surveillance.

They stop interacting after their circumcision. As discussed earlier in the Chapter, circumcision is a ritual also meant to make and declare gender identities. Such gender making is bound to separate Firdaus and Mohammadain after becoming a woman and a man. This almost reminds one of Hamida and Hamido’s relationship in *The Circling Song*. They are together in the mother’s womb and become oppositional binaries of a man and a woman after circumcision. Firdaus moves from her parents’ house through her uncle’s house to her husband’s house and realises that she has no name of her own. However, she does not lose trust in men or companionship.

After running away from her husband’s house unable to take his beatings, Firdaus desperately searches for a supporting hand and a shelter. The support comes to

her in the form of Bayoumi, who runs a coffee house. He is work-minded and generous. It appears as if he has no other world except his house and the coffee shop. He offers food and shelter to Firdaus.

Interestingly, he reminds her of her father with his low voice with slight hoarseness. He had a similar nose too. But Firdaus thinks that he is different as he is neither monitoring her nor being violent towards her. Her first impression is that “his eyes were resigned and calm...His hands looked obedient, almost submissive...They did not impress me as the hands of someone who could be violent or cruel.” (*Woman at Point Zero* 47) He is the only man in her life who asked her for her preferences— oranges or tangerines.

All this is subverted when Firdaus expresses her desire to go out and work, as she has a secondary certificate. The man who looked incapable of being violent hits her so hard that she faints. The man who looked uninterested in surveillance starts to control her every minute. When he took her home initially, he volunteered to sleep on the floor and offered her the bed. Gradually he took her to the bed. After expressing Firdaus’ desire to work, the situation is reversed; that is, Firdaus is made to sleep on the floor. He says, “How dare you raise your voice when you’re speaking to me, you streetwalker, you low woman?” (*Woman at Point Zero* 49) As long as she was submissive and willing to stay under his command, he had no issues with her. When she expressed her desire to work outside the house and look for an opportunity to be independent and depend no longer on Bayoumi, he could not pretend to be a nice and calm caretaker. Till then, he never raised his hand to strike her and never looked at her plate while she was eating. After this incident, everything changes for her. He starts to beat her violently. He makes her sleep once again on the floor in another room. The man who asked her preferences for the first time in the life of Firdaus ends up exploiting her sexually and taking her

completely into his control. She had only a short span of peaceful life, away from surveillance and the physical brutality of men.

Things change so drastically that she feels the streets were the only safest place. “For the street had become the only safe place in which I could seek refuge, and into which I could escape with my whole being.” (*Woman at Point Zero* 51) His words speak of his opinion about her. She is a streetwalker whom he tried to rescue and reform. But, the “low” woman wants to be in the streets, not between the walls. To control her, he locks her up in the flat. He goes to her in the middle of the night, beats her up and forces himself on her. His control, when Firdaus revolts, turns into violence. Although he does not allow her to go out to work, he brings his friends home to sexually abuse her.

Bayoumi also plays the role of a husband, he provides for her and expects services and loyalty from her. But, unlike Firdaus’s husband, he sells her to other men when she refuses to confine to his restrictions. He did not require any legal contract to bind her to his control. He strongly believes that he owns the woman since he provides her food, shelter and other necessities. Like a thing, either he can own her, control her, play with her, or sell her/her body. Here, it is not so much the question of “chastity” like in other novels of Saadawi, but the question of loyalty and gratitude to the man who is her provider and protector..

The man in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* stands for masculine authority. But, on the other hand, he is also subjected to the authority of the state. Law and religion provide him with the tools to use his authority over the woman in his life and the workers in his workplace. He keeps mumbling even in his sleep. When he is awake, he is seen ordering the woman to prepare food for him or filling the jars with oil mud ordering the

protagonist and the village women to carry them on their heads to the company. This ordering around probably gets into his sleep that he is seen to be talking in his sleep. This is his subconscious self-replicating his conscious self. His half-naked appearance when he is idle also reveals the removal of the masks he is wearing as a servant of the state. "There was something inhuman in his naked body." (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 37)

The way Bayoumi took control of Firdaus by confining her to the four walls in his house, the unnamed man in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, who is neither a relative nor a friend, starts to control the protagonist. He, too, provides shelter to her when she has no other place to go. He, too, has a rattling, coarse voice like many other men in Saadawi's novels. They convey masculinity through their voice and create a sense of control on women. Like Bayoumi, this man also tries to exploit the situation. She is a runaway woman, and the majesty issues a decree against her that none should give her a shelter. There is a royal dictum that "She is wanted dead or alive." (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 66) No woman deserves intellectual activity for they can rebel against the system and demolish the carefully constructed patriarchal society. So, "Any woman detained with pen and paper in her possession should be prosecuted." (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 46)

The woman archaeologist cannot continue to work in the archaeology department without doing anything which she is capable of and interested in. She runs away from her country to escape from the futile work in the Department of Archaeology. The nameless man understands her condition and starts to exploit her situation. She is like a slave to him. Within the house, he never stops ordering, and outside the house, he makes her carry the oil jars on her head. Like Bayoumi, for him also the woman is just a body. His hands frequently landed across her face violently,

sometimes without any reason. He exercises the fullest control over her by keeping the water with him. He has control over the oil, which is abundantly available in the country. But water is a luxury for people as it is scarce. He takes control of the precious water and leaves her in thirst. He takes four drops of the water when he is thirsty and gives just two drops sparingly to her. He intelligently uses the law, that is, the woman gets only two drops of water irrespective of her need and thirst. He is very sarcastic in his comments about the status and rights of the woman. He does not pay for the labour that the protagonist does for him; added to that, he gets furious if she ever talks about her moving out from his place.

‘I don’t understand why you don’t set me free’

‘Set you free?’

‘Yes. I am a human being, like you I have rights?’

‘What?’

‘Woman’s rights! Don’t you know about them?’

‘We have never heard of anything like that. We have the rights of men only.’

(Love in the Kingdom of Oil 39)

She is treated as a bonded labourer without any rights. According to him, all that she is expected to carry is the jars on her head. He quickly senses the idea of rebellion in her and takes her into his control.

‘Don’t cry out’

‘Are you hitting me?’

‘All you have to do is to carry the jar.’ *(Love in the Kingdom of Oil 72)*

Only women are forced to strain their heads with heavyweights. Instead of paying her the wages, he teaches her the “greater goal”. In his words, it’s not right for a woman to work for money and to work for men and society is the greater goal for

women. The man also works for the society (greater goal), but to establish his place in the society. The life that is acceptable to society is the greater goal for both men and women. But it is equally important for women to be acceptable to men. “The words seemed logical. There was another goal to her life. For the sake of the greater goal, she could submit herself to a smaller goal. She felt at rest with this thought.” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 41) He succeeded in alluring her to believe the theory. For the man, this greater goal is the tool to control the woman to work for him, compel her to submit to patriarchy, and renounce her rights. Finally, such reasoning brings her to live for the family, society, and religion but never for herself. He connects that greater goal to God in another conversation.

‘Where’s the money’

‘What are you saying?’

‘I work and I deserve a wage’

‘I’d like to ask you a little question, simply to satisfy my curiosity’

‘Yes’

‘Don’t I provide you with everything, even love? Are you lacking anything?’

Come on, speak and don’t deny it!’

‘...your wage is due from God’

‘God? What are you saying, man?’

‘Don’t you believe that God exists, woman? (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 80)

God can settle things well for the man when things are out of hand or to threaten women for other reasons. He brings in the concept of God to silence her. Finally, there is nothing for the woman to request or speak. Her right to earn wages for her work is eliminated in the name of God. Her belief in God and her right to wages are not

connected directly, yet the man could connect them so well that she stops asking for wages.

Furthermore, he threatens her with hell and punishment. If she believes in God, she should work for the greater goal, not for wages. Otherwise, hell will be waiting for her with dreadful punishments. He questions if his protection is not sufficient for her in return for her services. Bayoumi and Mahmoud controlled Firdaus by controlling her body, for Firdaus streets appeared more secure than the foul walls under the protection of men.

Similarly, the protagonist in this novel is also guarded in the name of shelter. Her boss at work and her husband at home did not give her the scope to live as she wanted to. They not only occupied her world but also controlled it. She escaped from that dominating world only to be dominated by another man in the name of protection. Law did not allow her to stay free, and the man in the name of protecting her from the law suppressed all her rights. On one occasion, his feet suddenly slip, and he falls on his face. She helps him to get up, and brushes the dust off him. But he pushes her away and shows his anger on her. "If you hadn't been standing like this, I wouldn't have fallen over." (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 36) In fact, she is far away from him. Whatever has happened, she is not the cause for his fall. However, he is unable to point out any other reason for his fall. He believes in the following principle: "If misfortune struck him, it was because of a woman. If good comes on his way, it was because of himself." (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 36) He blames her for no mistake of hers. Not only that he accuses her for his fall, but he also compels her to admit it as her mistake, apologise for stepping out and ask for his forgiveness. He reminds one of Firdaus' father in his greed and self-centeredness. But he comments that women are greedy, and men are contented with what they have. Throughout the novel, he does not contend ever and,

his appetite for food and for other needs are always in action. His demands are never-ending, yet when the woman asks for more than she wants or could get, he blames her for being greedy. He takes more water drops than her, and he leaves her half-thirsty. Probably, as the woman suspects, he might be taking the wages from the boss on behalf of the woman but did not pay her. She even suspects that he used to hide in the back room. The protagonist, along with other women from the village, was compelled to work. They were obliged to carry the heavy jars of oil on their heads. According to the Order by the Majesty, everyone gets their share of oil to quench their thirst. He is always conscious of the oil. When she asks for her wages for her work, he attacks her with reference to God and faith. She wants to buy the return ticket with the wages due to her. He wants to keep her under his control and hence does not allow her to leave his house. He made her dependent on him for basic and financial needs. He takes her portion of water, and then hides the bottle in a place that she does not know about. Yet, before she could point out any of these things, he comments and blames her. He knows only about a love in which he need not pay anything to the woman for taking control of her body in the name of lovemaking. He takes the role of her husband. He addresses her in an imperative tone as addressing his wife.

He is very particular about a letter that she swallows to keep it away from him. She does not want him to read that letter. He is curious to know the sort of letter it is and who wrote it to her. He suspects it to be either a love letter or a written document. The majesty does not accept women carrying a piece of paper and/ or a pen. She has already revealed that she is already married to a man and waiting for him. Yet, he questions her marital status. He can not bear the presence of another man in her life. “He would no sooner see her opening a book than he would shout as if the book was another man who was taking her from him.” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 28) He is very

possessive about her and keeps her under complete surveillance. Every move and every emotion of hers is watched over carefully. He wants her to forget everything about her mother, aunt, Hathur and Sakhmet and all women. All her passions and desires should be forgotten, and she should not speak about them in his presence. She wakes up in the middle of the night for water. He compels her to obey his conditions to have water to quench her thirst. She is in search of the goddesses in the depths of the earth. She is constantly reminded of the life she spent with her mother and aunt. They shared with her the stories of the Virgin Mary and the plots of Satan. For some reason, he wants her to stay away from memories of those people and to stay away from her passion, searching for the goddesses. She has to sacrifice all her memories and relationships in exchange for water. He dominates her by controlling her thirst. For him, love is less dangerous than marriage, for love is not binding. He is dangerous than the police officer who molests and sexually abuses Hamida. Also he is completely unpredictable. At times he is very liberal with the woman, shares his cigarette and wine with her. Some times he is very violent and abusive. He violates her basic human rights, confronts her always with his half-naked body, and attacks her physically. Sometimes when she is expecting to experience love, she sees him grinding his teeth with intense hatred. He falls on her shoulder and takes a deep bite out of it. When she starts emitting sounds resembling the barking of a dog, the doctor gives her an anti-rabies injection. They sign a contract to keep both of them together or protect each other from external forces like the army for the man and the majesty for the woman. "We have only one goal, to protect ourselves from death." (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 90) Her only aim in staying with him is for the protection behind a wall from the people searching for her. They live in a system governed by various agencies of power. The love relationship between Firdaus and Ibrahim is very different from the above. Ibrahim is not rude and violent like

Bayoumi or the man in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*. He is a man of values with communist ideology, fighting on behalf of the workers. By the time Firdaus meets him, he is already established as a man of revolutionary thoughts and values. He is surprised to see a woman like Firdaus, who is known as the best employee sitting alone on the office lawns after office hours. Best employees are supposed to go home directly after office hours. He tries to comfort her by sitting with her on the lawns. Despite the darkness, his eyes can see her. He gets really worried when he sees Firdaus crying. He, too, cries along with Firdaus without knowing the reason for her sadness. He leaves an impression on Firdaus. Here is a man who does not hesitate to express his feelings and is not scared of being identified as non-masculine/feminine. He offers his shoulder for Firdaus to cry on and sheds tears in empathy for her. On the other hand, he speaks on justice and the abolition of privileges enjoyed by management compared to the workers in a meeting. The company sets up a revolutionary committee with Ibrahim as the chairman. He does not immediately try to take advantage of his familiarity with Firdaus. He showers praise for her capabilities and conviction. Exactly like Bayoumi, he too uses the tool of sweet words to impress her. He gives her the impression that he wants to share everything about himself and his life with her. Firdaus is impressed with his frankness. Her disillusionment with her husband, frustration with Bayoumi and loneliness with the outside world automatically compel her to consciously and unconsciously search for a man who can be her companion. Ibrahim cleverly uses her situation to take this familiarity toward a physical relationship. Firdaus confesses, “in love I gave all: my capabilities, my efforts, my feelings, my deepest emotions. Like a saint, I gave everything I had without ever counting the cost. I wanted nothing, nothing at all, except perhaps one thing. To be saved through love from it all.” (*Woman at Point Zero* 86) She gets love and someone who can stay in her life in support of her, but they

come with the deceit that she fails to recognise. After that night, Ibrahim is engaged to the Chairman's daughter. His colleagues admire him for his hard work and his good fortune. Probably Firdaus is the only one who sees the other side of Ibrahim. He plans to grab the attention of people around him and fulfil his dreams by becoming the relative of the owner of the company. When they happen to meet several years later, he insists that Firdaus should allow him to her flat. By then, Firdaus is an established sex worker. He does not show any sign of paying her before leaving. He takes a ten-pound note out of his wallet with trembling fingers and gives it to her when she asks. She realises that he is not really in love with her, but he goes to her every night only because he does not have to pay. Although he is a revolutionary man with principles, he is not different from the rest. He used his cleverness to get in return for principles what other men buy with their money. According to Saadawi, Firdaus is selling her body to survive, and Ibrahim is selling or using his principles to gain or get something in life. Like Bayoumi or the man from *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, Ibrahim never beats a woman, nor disrespects her, and never takes control of a woman's life into his hands.

Bayoumi, Ibrahim or the man from *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* are different from Farid. He is truly in a love relationship with Fouada. Fouada and Farid's relationship is one exceptional love relationship in Saadawi's writings. Farid and Fouada have been in a relationship for six years. They are colleagues in the college of science. Farid says that he saw something in her eyes, something he did not see in other women, which distinguishes Fouada from other women, and he thinks that she will be someone great like Madam Curie. Something in his eyes made him different from others for Fouada, something that shone from his brown eyes, distinct and animated like something alive. His appreciation of Fouada reminds one of the flatters about the protagonist in *Woman at Point Zero* and *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*. However, Farid

does not intend to exploit or deceive Fouada. His feelings and expressions are genuine. He is a man of ideas and ideologies. Like the man in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, he too hides certain things from her. He hides papers in his desk drawer, and sometimes, he closes the door when speaking to her on the phone. He is always busy, spending hours on his books and papers, either writing or reading things, which he puts away carefully in the drawer of his desk and locks up. Saadawi creates Farid's character through others' words, thoughts and memories, majorly those of Fouada. He is not present in the novel, but his ideology is. Only at the end, Fouada receives a letter from him. His absence becomes his glaring presence. He never reveals his identity to her. They have such trust in each other that they do not bother to know about each other in detail. She knows only him; she does not know any of his relatives or his friends. "She knew nothing like that but did know him in flesh and blood- the shape of his eyes and the unique thing that appeared in them, something with a life of its own." (*Searching* 42) He never tells her anything about his job or his parents. Farid becomes the centre of her life, and the entire world changes for her. Farid openly tells Fouada that he can never get married. Yet, Fouada agrees to continue with him in a relationship. Farid absorbs her pain and her dreams. Fouada willingly forgets her past and future and lives in her present in Farid's companionship. Farid respects her and her individuality. He never expects anything from her. Only once did he borrow hundred pounds from her. As it is urgent for him, somehow Fouada manages to take the money from her mother and gives it to Farid. That is the happiest moment in life for Fouada, to be able to do something for Farid, to be able to do something for someone, something useful. He takes the money, thanking her, and rushes out of the house alone.

Farid and Fouada meet every Tuesday at a restaurant and spend a lot of time together. They never lie to each other and never miss each other. Suddenly, without any

information, Farid fails to meet Fouada. Fouad's life remains the same, but Farid's absence creates a vacuum for her. Everything becomes so unbearable for Fouada that her life becomes monotonous and mechanical. Constantly searching for Farid, her fingers unconsciously dial Farid's phone number, walking on the streets not knowing where she is heading to or where she is. Farid is a man of ideology. He thinks more about society than about himself and his people. He is in eternal search for the well-being of people. Unlike the man in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, he does not hesitate to question the authority of the state. He does not believe in charity but believes in egalitarianism. Farid insightfully defines madness, "He used to say that the madness of one individual means incarceration or death, whereas the madness of millions...Knowledge and hunger." (*Searching* 109) Customers at the restaurant Fouada and Farid visited every week give a piastre to the servant boy in sympathy. But Farid thinks seriously about the reasons for such exploitation and inequality.

Farid does not fit into the roles given to him by any institution of authority, and he even questions all of them. He refuses to play the role of a dominant, successful male. His destination is not home, but the world and his goal are not to subjugate but to fight for the marginalised people in the world. His sudden absence could mean his going away from the visible world into the hidden corners to achieve a social change. It could also mean the state is reaching out to him to hush him up and eliminate him like other men in Saadawi's fiction. Farid is also absent, he goes missing, but his presence is felt every minute of the narration. However, with other men characters controlling the women characters even in their absence, Farid is constructed through the memory and emotions of Fouada, thus subverting the making and the made dynamics.

Farid's character is a good example to prove that Saadawi aims to deconstruct the gender roles and the hierarchy involved but not men or women as individuals. The Next Chapter will extend the argument to examine the men who represent hegemonic institutions and interfere in women's lives as authorities and outsiders.

Chapter 4

Power and the Public Domain

Michel Foucault, in his article “The Subject and Power” extensively discusses the interconnectedness between society and power. He reiterates that power relations are deeply rooted in the social nexus. Repression and resistance are juxtaposed next to each other but in different forms. As Foucault opines, the relationship between power and freedom’s refusal to submit cannot be separated. As has been discussed in the first chapter, power is manifested in different forms through different institutions. Not just societies but some institutions are also patriarchal to the core. They insist on masculinising power and empowering masculinities. Masculinities are also identified as dominant, subjugated, contested, toxic and others based on the intersecting identities that every individual shoulders. Not just home but workplace, and not just family but governmental and cultural institutions can also be patriarchal in nature.

Shilpa Phadke, in her pathbreaking work, *Why Loiter?* poses fundamental questions about the public domain, gendered spaces and biased notions about the heterogeneous public spaces. She points out that the public domain is considered a male domain and when a woman tries to enter the domain, she has to struggle to prove herself, give a justification and feel guilty if necessary. She is also judged constantly. While this refers to a work place, the other public, common spaces, for instance, roads also become a male domain for a woman is not allowed and expected to come out. Her in-depth reading of safety and public places compels us to think about safety for women from a different perspective, that is, not just to say that public spaces are not safe women but to read carefully as to why places, spaces and homes have become unsafe for women and how the public spaces speak to or accommodate or hound out men and women of diverse identities.

The above discussions become very relevant when we are studying men characters in Saadawi's writings. One, Saadawi's writings unveil how both domestic public spaces are hostile and unsafe to women as they are male in nature. Two, all spaces are not equally safe for all men and equally unsafe for all women. Three, governmental and cultural institutions also enact the social hierarchies, particularly in the case of women. Nivedita Menon also asks a sharp question with regard to safety of women, that is, are only those women who are considered to be good women according to the societal yardsticks deserve to be protected?

This discussion directly takes us to the women on the streets and in work places in Saadawi's writings. While the notions of safety and security become a conditioning burden on women, liberty and liberation also cost them their lives and self-respect. In every such context, there are men in different capacities who subject women to oppression and violence. All of them represent some agency or the other such as family, religion, state, profession adding more power to the male identity that is already invested with power. We get to see officers, doctors, colleagues, police, middle men, activists populating the public places and the work places hegemonising and patronising the women around them. It is true that women become the mouthpieces of patriarchy against other women but they speak from their powerless locations while men act as agents of feudal patriarchy with all their masculine hegemony.

When looking at society as a whole, in addition to the men counterparts from within the family, such as fathers and brothers, and lovers and husbands, there are other men who are equally threatening and dangerous as closely associated men for the women protagonists in the writings of Saadawi. These men are depicted in the author's works. Men from the police department, men as bosses and higher officials, men as house owners and landlords, men dependent on the body of women for their livelihoods

like the pimp from *Woman at Point Zero*, and men as social order where kings and Majesty do take the domination over women in all aspects of their lives are all examples of men.

Even while the other characters in the book, such as the priest and the landlord, her mother, and her absent lover, are not often shown in great detail, their presence in the book undoubtedly demonstrates how ideology operates in a compelling manner. All of the characters are products of the many ideological systems that have produced them and that they, in turn, feed and develop. This applies to both the characters and the systems that produced them. Nothing can be determined with certainty because everyone is both a victim and a benefactor of the particular social structure.

All of the male characters are a part of the broader social system, and they are all adhering to the social living pattern that has been prescribed for them by that system. In addition, they are all subject to the authority of that bigger social system, which rules over all of them. However, only men are on the receiving end of the benefits, even if both men and women are affected. Hamido was both the sufferer and the perpetrator of his suffering as a result of his father's social structure and philosophy, which led to Hamido's death at the hands of his father. The same mentality both helped and hurt his father, who was a victim of it. Saati, the landlord who made a concerted effort to take advantage of Fouada, had his own aspirations as well, although he was unsuccessful in achieving any of them. The mother of Fouada had a desire that she never managed to realise throughout her entire life. In contrast to Fouada's romantic relationship, Farid's initial love was politics, but the greater societal system punished him for pursuing his ambitions in this area. The dreams that Fouada had were unique and incompatible with those of everyone else. She looked for such compatibility in order to fit in with society while also pursuing her goals of making a name for herself in the scientific community.

Neither Farid nor her dreams were able to materialise for her. People are subject to a variety of limitations, including those based on their gender, sexuality, economic status or social class, and the political system. In the foreword to *Searching*, Anastasia Valassopoulos writes, “Saadawi seeks to uncover the system of power that forestall or even prohibits the imagining of another social world- the one that Fouada seeks that is bolstered by a strong sense of social justice.” (*Searching* 14)

In the book *Woman at Point Zero*, the main character, Firdaus, does not envision herself working as a prostitute, nor did she ever believe that this would be the path her life would take. She gets beautiful dreams that are vivid and full of colour concerning her life. Due to her family's lack of resources, she was unable to pursue any educational or occupational opportunities. Nevertheless, she was able to complete her secondary education with the assistance of her uncle. If her aunt hadn't interfered with the plan to get Firdaus married off in order to reduce the amount of financial strain on them, her uncle would have sent her to school all the way up through higher levels of education. Though she is in prison, Firdaus confesses, “If I had something to say, therefore, it could only concern the future. For the future was still mine to paint in the colours I desired. Still mine to decide about freely, and change as I saw fit.” (*Woman at the point of Zero* 32) Her status as a prostitute was established by both the law and religion. Her condition is not more essential in the eyes of the court than the crime she did, which was to kill the pimp who had threatened her in order to seize control over both her body and her mind.

The police officer, the pimp, the higher official, the husband, Bayoumi, Ibrahim, and Dia are all examples of men who played a role in her becoming a prostitute by robbing her of her dreams and giving her no opportunity to realise them. The society that surrounded her grabbed hold of her life and made it its own. In the midst of all the

disorder and difficulties, it is nearly impossible for her to continue living. She went from being an ambitious woman to being nothing more than a collection of bones living under the skin, serving the needs of men while denying herself the joy that comes from the work that she is destined to accomplish. In the book *Woman at Point Zero*, there is a recurrent motif with the phrase "two eyes." To some extent, those are reassuring eyes, and it's possible that they belong to her mother. She is unsure of the identity of the owner of this pair of eyes; all she is aware of is the fact that she felt at ease whenever she was in their presence, and she yearned for them to continue to look at her. On the other side, there is another set of eyes that caused her to feel terrified. The way that she is being seen by another set of eyes gives the impression that she is being closely watched by someone. She couldn't help but look at her father as he consumed his food whenever she was around. Later on, her husband and the other men in her life kept a watchful eye on everything that she did, including the food that she ate and the activities that she participated in. As a result of her having eavesdropped on a conversation between her uncle and his wife and being concerned about the future of Firdaus, she comes to the conclusion that it would be best for her to leave the house without alerting them of her decision. She does not have any other options and does not know anyone who would be willing to provide her with refuge. She found herself all alone herself in the streets, so she sought refuge in the bus shed. After what seemed like an eternity, she suddenly caught sight of a pair of eyeballs moving toward her. In the total darkness, she could only make out the eyes of the person who was tormenting her. The eyes made her body tremble uncontrollably. She was unable to escape the terrifying pair of eyes, which was just the reverse of what she understood a pair of eyes to represent to her. They had been soothing to her in the past, but today those pair of eyes is giving her chills. Firdaus does not have a predetermined goal for her life; rather, it has been shaped

by the circumstances and the people in her environment. She has no idea how she made it back to her uncle's house after such a terrifying ordeal on the streets, and she has no idea how she ended up being Sheik Mahmoud's wife. She says,

All I know is that anything I would have to face in the world had become less frightened than the vision of those two eyes, which sent a cold shiver running through my spine whenever I remembered them...but whenever I walked in the street, carefully as though I expected the two eyes to rise up suddenly...
(*Woman at Point Zero* 32)

Man in patriarchy, as the controller of religion and law, is very particular in not allowing his women to have sexual pleasure. Hence, he imposed genital mutilation in disguise as a purification procedure for young girls. It deprived her of desire and pleasure. Apart from imposing such practices to see a woman having no pleasure in the sexual act, if the wife happens to respond in the act of intercourse, she is considered not respectable. “‘She moves, she is divorced’. The meaning of the proverb is that if the wife were to move during intercourse, she would be divorced because her movement would indicate the presence of desire and pleasure, something that does not become a respectable wife.” (*Sexuality in Contemporary Arab Society* 19-20)

Firdaus admits, “Day and night I lay on the bed, crucified, and every hour a man would come in. There were so many of them. I did not understand where they could have come from. For they were all married, all educated, all carrying swollen leather bags, and swollen leather wallets in their inner pockets.” (*Woman at Point Zero* 16) Even though the guys who came to Firdaus come from a variety of backgrounds and have a variety of affiliations, they all share a similar perspective on how men should treat women. Even Sharifa arrives at the same conclusion when she states, any one of

them, it does not make any difference, they're all the same, all sons of dogs, running around under various names." (*Woman at Point Zero* 16) All of the people Sharifa mentioned had already made a negative impact on Firdaus's life, and the others had entered her world at a later time when it was too late. Fawzy is the only person who should inquire about the possible pain that she is experiencing. However, he has additional motives in mind when he poses the question to her. In the past, he stole Camellia from Sharifa under the pretence that he did it out of love. He intended to use the same ruse this time in order to get Firdaus to come along with him. After he stole Camellia from Sharifa, there is no information available about her whereabouts.

All the policemen in the writings of Saadawi look similar in their behaviour. This might reveal how institutions of power homogenise individuals to exercise their superiority over others. All of them behave alike towards the protagonists and other woman characters. They claim they are the government, and they try to display their authority as officers. They are very dangerous for women characters because of their lustful attitude. Firdaus, Hamida, and the woman in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* suffered under the control and callousness of men representing institutions. Saadawi employs detailed descriptions of these men's bodies and demeanours in order to bring out their regressive and aggressive personalities.

Firdaus made the decision to sneak out of Sharifa's house one evening, and she is now living on the street. There is no longer any danger in the streets for Firdaus. She views them as completely ordinary. Firdaus has been through so much anguish in her life that she is unafraid of anything. Nothing can shake her confidence. Her line of work instilled in her the mental fortitude to overcome any challenge. She argued with Marzok, the pimp, about her right to privacy; but, she was unable to fight off the police officer. In the middle of the night, when she is walking down the street by herself, he

walks up to her, grabs her by the arm, and asks, "Where are you going, will you come with me to my house? I'll pay you." I am different from the other policeman. According to him, people like Firdaus who work in the prostitution industry are destroying society. She poses a danger to families who have earned respect. He asserts that it is his responsibility to apprehend people like Firdaus who are engaged in the practise of prostitution. The detention of such women, in his view, is a patriotic act that benefits his nation. Laws are passed to limit prostitution and ensure that prostitutes remain under the jurisdiction of the state. This is preferable to controlling the institutions that are directly responsible for the upkeep of the prostitution industry. For Firdaus, prostitution is not just a means of making a living but also of maintaining her dignity and independence in a society that has stripped her of her humanity and reduced her to nothing more than a pile of flesh created to fulfil the desires of men.

In the same way that we have seen males instructing women and parents instructing their children, the police officer in this case has been directed by his superiors to rid the society of women like Firdaus. It is not in his orders to look out for the welfare of such defenceless women when they are in trouble. He is concerned about the welfare of society, but in his mind, society does not include women as equal members of the citizenry. When she was arrested by Bayoumi house, when her husband severely beat her, when she was all alone in the streets scared of the darkest night, and when Ibrahim cheated her in the name of love, no police officer came to rescue her. Bayoumi house arrested her, her husband severely beat her, and she was all alone in the streets scared of the darkest night. When these events occurred in her life, she was alone herself the entire time. People with Firdaus's circumstances are the ones who are in desperate need of protection. It is likely that he has been taught neither to safeguard ladies nor to assault them. He used his power and authority to molest women like

Firdaus, and he chose to do so. He assures her that she would be compensated for her work, but in the end, he used Firdaus without paying her. He started out his test by inquiring as to whether or not she would agree to accompany him, but in the end, he went back to his regular method of operation. She used her best effort to wriggle free of him, but he clung to her arm and dragged her away from the spot where they were standing. He led her down several dark and winding alleys before entering a room behind a door made of wood.

The cases in which Firdaus and Hamida are victims of sexual assault are very comparable to one another. It's possible that this is due to the fact that both exist in the public sphere and have nowhere to call home. Women who live outside the family are subjected to persistent scrutiny and evaluation. In a same manner, women who have absconded from their homes are pursued and tormented. Hamida shares the same predicament as Firdaus in that she is abandoned in the bustling city of Cairo, without nobody to care for or assist her. Saadawi did not just write about how these powerful individuals, which included officers as well as plain guys, abused women; she also wrote about the violence that was done on women's bodies. All of the main characters in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* are compelled to spend their lives hidden away behind locked doors and in confined spaces, including Hamida, Firdaus, and Fouada. Bayoumi had Firdaus locked up behind the door for a number of days, and she hid in the walls and slept on the bed in order to satisfy the guys working for Sharifa. Either Fouada locked herself in her laboratory in an effort to get away from Saati, or Saati closed the door in an effort to sue Fouada with his words. Saati closed the door in his attempt to suit Fouada with his words.

The woman was prevented from leaving the compound by the man who ruled *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*. It is strictly forbidden for her to leave the house without

first informing him of her plans. Keeping women isolated from the rest of the world and increasing their level of control over them by reducing or eliminating all interaction with the outside world is accomplished by isolating them in rooms with doors that cannot be opened from the outside. It is also a means for him to maintain the respect and dignity he has earned in society by concealing the shadowy aspects of his personality from other people. In *The Circling Song*, the shopkeeper or someone else, maybe from inside or outside the family, arrived in the middle of the night to take advantage of Hamida. She is locked in a claustrophobic chamber where she cannot see anything because the environment is completely dark. This individual asserts that "I am the government." Either he is acting on behalf of the government (which would mean that he is representing the authority of the state) or he is using the government as a means to satisfy his own desires. In any scenario, Hamida is the one who will be on the receiving end. Rules can be adopted in order to restrict women, and the law can be amended in order to convict women, all in the name of government and majesty. His concluding comments were, "Go where girl? You're already condemned" (*The Circling Song* 142). Her father blamed her for the fact that she fell victim to someone in the village, despite the fact that she had done nothing wrong. And now, for no fault of her own, the police officer holds her accountable for something she did not do. During the earlier event, Hamida was sexually assaulted in her home by either the shopkeeper or another person.

During the day, she went to the store to purchase tobacco for either her father or her brother or her uncle. When she opened her arm to look for the penny she had taken from the shop, she discovered that she did not have it. It was necessary for her safety that she get away from the shopkeeper. On the other hand, as she is sleeping on the reed mat inside her house, her fingers are closed over a penny or perhaps a

halfpenny. She is still asleep, but as often occurs in dreams, an overwhelming sense of heaviness creeps up on her all of a sudden. “She screamed, but no voice came out. A large, flat hand clapped down over her mouth and nose, stifling her.” (*The Circling Song* 124) It didn't take long for her to realise that the weight she was feeling was not a dream. It is possible that Saadawi masked his identity on purpose or that Hamida was unable to recognise him due to the low light. She was able to identify and make the connection between those features and those of either her father or brother, or one of her uncles or cousins, or any other male, or any man at all. The reasons for Saadawi's decision to reveal this man's identity are crystal evident. It is not required that you reveal the identity of that specific person. It doesn't matter who the offender is because his actions will have the same effect on the victim.

Sharifa continues to say, “I know them all. Which one of them started it? Your father, your brother..., one of your uncles?” (*Woman at Point Zero* 52) Firdaus's life was completely derailed by Mahmoud, Fawzy, Ibrahim, and Bayoumi. But before the guys from the outside world could make a difference in her life, her father ruled her life, and then her uncle tried to abuse her growing body. Neither of these men were able to make a difference. Firdaus's life was wrecked and controlled by men on both sides of her family — those she was related to and those she was not. The only thing that differentiates males from each other is the level of authority and dominance they exert on women. For Hamida, another man or any man raped her, her twin brother is after her, her master tried to rape her, a police officer raped her, and she did not feel comfortable playing hide and seek with her brother. Her father wanted to restore his honour through her bloodshed. Her master tried to rape her. Her father wanted to restore his honour through her bloodshed. The presence of men in Hamida's life was the source of her restlessness. They are all pursuing her in order to fulfil their goals or to ensure

that she is killed. Even though the woman in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* was aware that she had fled her abusive husband for a new life in a foreign country, she frequently confuses the man who worked in the oil company with her husband because he was the one who gave her shelter and she often thinks of him as her husband. She is paying very close attention to the interrogation, so she is uncertain as to whether or not the person making comments on her life is her husband or her supervisor. It's possible that this is for the same reason as the last one, which is that none of them are unique. No one treats her any differently when they discriminate against her, not even her husband or the person she works for. All of the people who have interrogated her, including the officers themselves, her co-workers, her husband, her employer, and the man who posed as her husband share the same attitude toward her. In most cases, women face discrimination first from the male members of their own families, and secondly from males who are not related to them. The only thing that differs is the level of prejudice that is directed toward women based on their social standing and their financial situation.

As has been discussed earlier in the chapter, men form a strong bond, both visible and invisible, to preserve the male supremacy in society and culture. The support systems are all in place whether men need help or not. Women too become part of the patriarchal design in boosting men and condemning women. Saadawi's women characters also reveal empathy for other women in suffering. They may not form an active support group, because society does not allow such solidarity and also, the suffering women hardly get to express their suffering. Women's suffering is either normalised or invisibilised. Then, where is the question of unveiling it and confronting it as an active support group! Firdaus walks out of sex work and starts working in a company as a receptionist. She is moved by the hardships that the women workers in the company have to face. She thinks, "I felt sorry for the other girls who were guileless

enough to offer their bodies and their physical efforts every night in return for a meal, or a good yearly report, or just to ensure that they would not be treated unfairly, or discriminated against, or transferred.” (*Woman at Point Zero* 75)

When it comes to being subjected to discrimination, Fouada's life and the lives of the female archaeologists are, on average, in a better position than Hamida and Firdaus'. In contrast to Firdaus and Hamida, both Fouada and the lady archaeologist have completed their education and have lives that are largely independent of one another. The protagonist of *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* has been subjected to discrimination on multiple occasions, both from members of her own family and from people in the wider world. However, in contrast to previous female heroines, she possesses a robust mind, and she possesses the bravery necessary to deal with the various forms of discrimination that are directed toward her. She did not give in to the pressures of society and instead led a life that was worthy of her aspirations. Firdaus and Hamida are increasingly exposed to society, which has resulted in them going through challenging encounters with a variety of persons and institutions that were created by man. Firdaus is coerced or compelled to surrender herself over to the control of males. Some men exploited her, some other men bought her, some more men emotionally exploited her in the name of love, and there were also men who moved close to her deceitfully.

She was forced into prostitution, and as a result, she was unable to remember who she was until she was ultimately executed by hanging. Throughout the entirety of the narrative of *Woman at Point Zero*, she was pursued by male parties on multiple fronts: her uncle, her colleagues, and the law enforcement officers. And every single man she came into contact with in her line of work was interested in her. She never went up to any man and introduced herself. Even the prince was vying for her attention.

Bayoumi is the first one who gives her the opportunity to choose what it is that she desires by asking her for her preference. Because of her occupation and reputation as a prostitute, she was able to pick and choose the clients she would allow to sexually exploit her. It was only via prostitution that she was given the opportunity to exercise her free will and make a decision for herself. . “On the walls I had hung some good paintings, and right in the middle was my secondary school certificate surrounded by an expensive frame.” (*Woman at Point Zero* 69) She poured her heart and everything into earning the secondary school credential. She had loftier goals and aspirations for her future that involved obtaining an education. She is self-assured that she will be able to use her credential for something worthwhile. Nevertheless, in the end, her certificate was the one that was displayed on the wall between two pricey paintings that she had purchased with the money that she earned, not with her certificate, but rather with her prostitution. Her education (and the diploma she earned) turned into little more than a showpiece. Even if she is committed to doing a profession that is worthy of respect, the only position she could find in a company that treats its female employees poorly was that of a receptionist. She blended in with the group once again despite the fact that the male employees of the company were watching her. Bayoumi was following her at the coffee shop where they were both. Within the organisation, Ibrahim was pursuing her, while within the field, the mediator was interested in her. Firdaus was unable to follow her passion because of the males in her family as well as the men in the outside world. They were pursuing her with the intent of obtaining sexual favours from her. Saadawi brings up the fact that female workers were coerced into submitting themselves to the authority of higher-ranking officials under such deplorable circumstances. They are stuck with the choice of either allowing those males to sexually exploit them or quitting their jobs altogether. That was beyond Firdaus's capabilities. She did not and could not

submit herself to power and authority, but she did submit herself to Ibrahim's manipulative love. Over the course of more than six years, Fouada was employed in the Department of Biochemistry.

She, like Firdaus, was enthusiastic about learning, and she had inherited the aspirations of both her mother and the instructor who taught her in elementary school that she would be a unique lady who stood out from other women. Because of the men in her life, she was never able to realise her dream of making her own unique contribution to the progression of scientific knowledge through the conduct of study.

Obscurely, she felt that these discoveries had no greater talent for discovery than she, only that they were men. Yes, a man could do things a woman could not simply because she was a man. He was not more able, but he was male, and masculinity in itself was one of the preconditions for discovery (*Searching* 26)

Madam Curie was the only name of a female scientist that she had ever heard before, and that was for the very first time. And it was because of her that she felt motivated to accomplish something through her research. Men did not allow their female coworkers to receive credit for the work that they had accomplished. In the Biochemistry department, Fouada's only responsibility was to sign her name in the department's register and to remain in the office until the closing bell rang, which was the extent of her duties there. She was not allowed to work in the department, nor was she permitted to make any kind of contribution there on her own. For Fouada, making his way to the department was merely a matter of habit. It was forbidden for her to ponder or do any work. And in the extremely unlikely event that she did something on her own, she was never given credit for it. The males in the department took credit for both her input and the work that she did. For the female archaeologist character in *Love*

in the Kingdom of Oil, it was virtually exactly the same. She, too, was a driven and enthusiastic woman who was intent on accomplishing something worthwhile with the help of her studies. Neither her spouse nor the male co-workers supported her to pursue her aspirations in the same way that they did. Her argument was without merit in the eyes of the manager at the workplace. Her husband did not feel at ease during any conversations pertaining to archaeology or anything to do with her employer.

She had a deep commitment to the work that she did. She was adamant about excavating the earth's depths in the hopes of finding the Goddess who had been buried there. Thankfully, all of her efforts paid off and lead her to the discovery of a goddess with one breast. However, her boss was unable to acknowledge that she was in fact the Goddess“He believed that a male god could have a breast or two, but he did not believe in the existence of goddess, and if there happened to be, she would be the wife of a god and not a goddess in her own right.” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 14) Her supervisor possessed the authority and power to change her discoveries into something that conformed to the beliefs held by her supervisor. He discussed the transformation of the lady sphinx into the sphinx. According to him, after the sphinx ascended to the throne, he gave the order to remove the breast from the statue of the sphinx and to give it a beard instead. The image of the lady sphinx has been manufactured or altered to depict the sphinx. The goddess that she discovered had been transformed into a god that he worshipped.

The evidence for the presence of the Goddess might have been able to assist the woman in gaining a higher position and more legal protections. Even if not all of the people in her archaeological department, that could have helped her obtain recognition and importance there. If her finding had been recognised, it might have given her a sense of pleasure about her work. Because of the manipulation of her discovery into

something that conformed to the patriarchal order and the destruction of evidence for the existence of Goddess, she was forced to leave her country and go in search of the goddess statue so that she could prove that Goddess had existed in the past and prove her point. There was complete consensus among both the male and female employees in the division regarding his position. Simply put, he disproved the possibility that there had ever been any goddesses in the course of human history. In addition to this, he placed the Goddess in a position of subservience to God, assuming that the Goddess existed at all. Because of her employer and the other employees in the department, she fell from respectability in the workplace. She was determined to unearth something that would validate her presence and demonstrate the existence of goddesses in the ancient world using the evidence that she had uncovered.

She fights hard to regain her status, the status of women in general, and the status of the Goddess. Her findings were completely reinterpreted in accordance with her manager's preconceived notions. It made him uneasy for her to talk about her husband in front of him, just as it did for her husband. It appeared as though both of the men were green with envy toward one another. The mere mention of her husband's name was too much for her boss to bear. She believed that other goddess statues were buried beneath the surface of the earth at great depths, and she desired to travel a great distance away from her department in order to find these statues. She did make the request to her manager for time off. She tried her best to convince her husband to let her go on vacation, but he refused. In addition, her manager did not give her the green light to take a vacation for a variety of other reasons. Even though she asked for time off, it was only to search for the statues of the goddesses that were located very far away from her territory and very far away from the manipulation of her boss and her coworkers. She was dead set on establishing her point of view regarding the existence

of goddess statues by any means necessary. She even identifies them by name. Her manager, on the other hand, likens her innate instincts and dogged determination to the pride of an animal. Her boss compiles a list of grievances against her, including the following: She was not a woman who belonged in the bedroom or the kitchen. She was not able to commit the songs that are sung in the public baths by the women to memory. She had no idea that her husband fell in love with her when he watched her work in the kitchen because she was so focused on what she was doing. She had no interest in taking care of the house or engaging in activities for herself, as she was preoccupied with seducing her husband. The fact that she did not bat her eyelashes when either her boss or his Majesty looked at her was the primary concern of her boss. This was more important than any of the other factors mentioned.

Her bold and fearless attitude was the real objection for him. She was different from every other woman in every way. It wasn't just the cooking or her husband that she was worried about; other things were on her mind as well. She had no interest in luring her husband or any other man into bed, let alone seducing them. Her employer was the one who had the most problems or complaints with her, more so than her husband. Her refusal to submit or the manner in which she carried herself with a sense of self-confidence was a bitter pill that he was unable to swallow. Strangely enough, the reason he hated her so much was not the fact that she behaved badly, but rather the fact that she was not submissive by nature. Her self-assurance shone through in the way that her neck was rigid and she carried herself with her head held high and unshaken. Even though she had an education and was able to support herself financially, her boss and other people wanted women to be seen as subordinate to men. The submissive nature of women is expected in all aspects of their lives, including their personal lives and their public lives. Not only the manager was involved in the conversation about the

female archaeologist, but there were also other male participants. They were all talking about her attitude, trying to figure out why she might have fled in the first place. They were delving very deeply into the matter by investigating both her husband and the person she reported to as her boss at work.

The investigation into the missing person was mandated by the higher authorities to be carried out by the police. “The police began actively to search for her. They put out leaflets and adverts in the newspapers seeking to find her, alive or dead, and announced a generous reward from His Majesty the King.” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 37) The involvement of His Majesty has elevated this missing person investigation to the level of a national concern. Even though there were plenty of other issues that carried more weight than this missing woman case, there were only two important issues in the newspapers: the leading news was about the upcoming birthday celebrations of His Majesty, along with other headlines, and the second most important news was about this missing woman case. The mistreatment of women at the hands of men in society was the subject of a number of the other headlines. A woman was killed after being seen walking in the street with her face covered and being targeted by gunfire. Because she did not cover her face, she was murdered. She was obligated to hide her appearance in accordance with the tenets of the faith she adhered to. She did not abide by the law, and as a result, she had to deal with the repercussions of her actions. Another story that made headlines focused on a young girl and alleged that eight men had sexually assaulted her at her school. They murdered a woman because she did not cover her face with a veil, and they raped a young girl who had her body covered. There is no correlation between wearing veils or not wearing veils and the victimisation of women. Another story that made headlines involved a mother who was accused of murdering her children on Mother's Day before taking her own life. The

headlines did not reveal the reasons for why she killed her children and then herself, so it is unknown why she did either. There could be financial or family-related reasons. On various levels, society could have forced this mother to do so.

The following one related to an archaeologist and said, “She is wanted dead or alive. It is forbidden to give her shelter or protection.” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 66) She was a target regardless of whether she was alive or dead, and it was strictly forbidden to offer her any kind of protection or sanctuary. It was also published in headlines about her enthusiasm for her work and the hunt for gods buried deep within the earth. According to recent information provided by the police regarding this woman who has gone missing, “She was passionate about searching for mummies as a form of recreation.” [She] It is demeaning and dismissive of a woman's work and aspiration that her enthusiasm for research in her area of expertise is interpreted as recreation. It was a deliberate action taken to cut her off from society wherever she went by making it illegal for anyone to provide her with protection or shelter. By issuing the decree, the officials had the intention of preventing her from receiving any assistance from the people who were around her. Because she had such a strong drive for investigation, she was kept completely apart from the rest of society and denied any assistance of any kind. During the course of the investigation, the law enforcement personnel were curious about the kind of woman she was. Because of her unusual interest in doing research, she was labelled as being abnormal. Their exact words were, In their words, “Yes. Usually a woman involved in matters outside the home is abnormal”, “A young woman throwing herself into a pointless job like collecting statues. Isn’t that an indication of illness or even perversion?” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 9) A group of men, including her husband, her boss, and investigation officers, came to the conclusion that she was either sick with some condition or an entire pervert. This perversion was

towards some unusual work that no other woman chose to pursue in her life. Her job was considered a pointless job to compensate for her deep desires that were buried in her heart, and everyone thought it was pointless. "In order to compensate for the unsatisfied desires, the woman takes enjoyment in burying the chisel in the ground as if it is a man's penis." (*Love in the kingdom of Oil* 9) The psychiatrist that was part of that group of men participated in the investigation and offered some observations on her mental condition based on the penis envy.

In his book *New Introductory Lecture on Psychoanalysis*, Sigmund Freud discussed the effects of gender difference on a woman's psyche. The book was published in 1915. His observations on men and women can be summed up as follows: "masculine" is typically understood to mean active, whereas "feminine" is typically understood to mean passive. The difference between men and women can be seen in their sexual behaviour, which can either be active or passive. Because the male seeks sexual union with the female, he pursues and captures the female in order to exercise dominance over her. It was thought that being aggressive, active, and having the ability to dominate were characteristics associated with a masculine nature, whereas being submissive, passive, and having the ability to be dominated were thought to be characteristics associated with a feminine nature. In *The Circling Song*, Hamida makes an effort to imitate her brother "Hamido," and "Hamido" makes an effort to imitate his father. The action of the woman doctor in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* gazing back at men was a way to act against the stereotypical assumption that masculinity is superior to femininity and women. This was done in order to challenge the notion that men are more powerful than women. She was resolute in her pursuit of success and her intent to break barriers imposed on women. Her effort was not a satisfactory substitute for what she desired. Her goal was to demonstrate that women, in general, are deserving of

respect. Her personal experience inspired her to use science as a weapon against discrimination. Her ideas contradicted both established religious beliefs and gender roles that are considered to be socially acceptable. Her goal was not to achieve parity with men; rather, she envisioned herself as being in a realm in which she was superior to all men. She made an effort to demonstrate that in her day-to-day life. But at first she had the impression that God had favoured boys over girls in every aspect of life.

She was only able to see the powerlessness of her femininity or the powerlessness that others had imposed on her body in comparison to her brother because everyone in the house differentiated her from her brother and did so through their discrimination. "I began to search constantly for weak spots in males to console me for the powerlessness imposed on me by the fact of being female." (*Memoirs of A Woman Doctor* 10) She was not fond of either being referred to as a "girl" or her own femininity. It wasn't because she resented men's superiority or envied their masculinity that she was constantly on the lookout for men's vulnerabilities; rather, it was because of the preconceived notion of helplessness that was attached to her feminine body. She couldn't have been any older than nine when she was made to believe that her femininity, in all of its aspects, was something to be ashamed of. Her maturing body was a source of ongoing consternation and amusement for her. Her mother would give her a frightening that would be immobilising her senses if she sat down and allowed her skirt to ride as much as a centimetre up her thighs. On the other hand, her brother was permitted to play outside the house and was allowed to jump around and turn somersaults. She would cover up the parts of her body that were visible. "The first real tears I shed in my life weren't because I'd done badly at school or broken something valuable but because I was a girl. I wept over my femininity even before I knew what it was." (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 10)

The narrator experienced feelings of inferiority regarding both her femininity and her body because of the definitions of femininity and masculinity, as well as the manner in which each was treated and valued by men and women both inside and outside the house. Even before she could open her eyes to the world around her, there was already a state of hostility present between her and her natural environment. The patriarchal order in society, which valued masculinity and deformed anything feminine and of a woman's body, was to blame for her hatred of her femininity and body. This order placed a high value on masculinity and deformed anything feminine and of a woman's body. In a later stage of her own life, she was able to gain this perspective for herself. After reaching a consensus on marriage with her future husband, who is an engineer, she wed him. He was determined to tie the knot with this doctor's wife. He accepted her no matter what she did for a living or how much she cared about the people she served. His personality completely changed after he got married, and it was very surprising. He desired to fully assume the role of "man of the house" and exert his authority over both the home and his wife. "His feeling of weakness in front of me had been translated inside him into a desire to control me." (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 63) Her attitude and character are much more robust than those of her husband. He was unable to come to terms with the fact that he was powerless over his wife. He began to dominate her as a means of making up for the fact that he was weak in her presence.

The female archaeologist had a dream in which she saw herself riding a chisel as if it were a horse. In her dream, she was riding it like it was a horse. Alongside her, it galloped over the city of which she was unaware. Even though she did not have wings, her chisel was able to travel through the air with her. She waved her feet in the air and pretended to be swinging on the apparatus as it floated above the rooftops. A large number of women were observing her as she flew. They were showing their support for her while simultaneously harbouring feelings of envy toward her. After that, those hands made an attempt to pull her down. She came to the

conclusion that she was no longer riding either the chisel or the horse. She was mimicking the other children of the village by playing while perched on a palm frond. The female doctor wanted to make it clear that she was superior to all of the men, while the female archaeologist wanted to make it clear that she was superior to all of the females in her immediate environment. She did not harbour any feelings of envy toward either men or women. She followed her whims and dug the goddesses up from the depths of the earth in order to fulfil her desires. Both Fouada in *Searching* and Firdaus in *Woman at Point Zero* were driven by an intense desire to accomplish something significant with their lives. They preferred the idea of living on their own to that of being dependent on another person. They exerted a lot of effort in order to make their lives respectable and worthy in the eyes of society. They desired, in particular Fouada, to make their own individual contribution to the body of scientific knowledge. In addition, the female archaeologist from *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* never gave any indication that she was planning to kill herself or that she desired to pass away. There was neither a reason nor any evidence that she possessed such a tendency. The desire and enthusiasm that women have for achieving their goals is considered to be perverted. Her desire was a psychological issue that led to a strong attraction towards death and suicide, as well as an urgent need to vanish. All of these perceptions held by this group of men who are being investigated reveal intolerable notions toward working women. They weren't the only ones looking for the missing woman; the entire country was also doing so. The day after that, a royal decree was issued that forbade women to go on leave, and if a woman did go on leave, it was against the law to give her shelter or conceal her in any way. This rule came into effect the next day.

Every single man who played a significant role in the lives of these women's protagonists was a powerful and commanding figure. Men from the outside world, with their power and authority, have also dominated the remaining space in both their private and public

life. This is in addition to the men who were associated with the family and who were present within the family. The woman's husband and the person in charge of the business decided whether or not to give the woman permission to take a vacation. Despite this, the woman took a leave of absence, and the government and the authority that governs it changed the law in order to exert more control over women in similar situations. According to the norms that had been established in the society, women such as Firdaus, Fouada, the Woman Doctor, and the Woman Archaeologist were regarded as abnormal. Yes, usually a woman involved in matters outside the home is abnormal.” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 9) These kinds of women were regarded as rebellious women because they fought against the gender inequality that was ingrained in a society that had been constructed by men for the benefit of men. It is natural for a man to attempt to exert dominance over the women in his life and the environment in which he lives, and society expects him to behave in this manner. When a woman acts or thinks in a way that is contrary to the pre-existing social order, she is regarded and labelled as being defiant and potentially harmful to society. The male archaeologist who had offered her shelter was having a conversation with the female archaeologist. During the course of the conversation, she came to the conclusion that there was only one other woman in the entire village who could have attained a BA. Not one of them did that. The entire family had a history of stealing. “They said that she was possessed by a demon, for demons follow poverty, and thieves follow poverty.” (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 45) She was the only educated woman in the village, and for some reason that nobody knew, she tried to flee from her hometown. She was the only person in the village who could read and write. But her attempt to flee was unsuccessful. After her photographs were published in the local newspapers, the local authorities tracked her down and brought her back to the community. They were able to stop her before she could cross any predetermined boundaries associated with religion. Because of her defiant stance against the pre-existing social order and the fact that it was supported by her education, she became known

as a woman possessed by a demon. *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* featured a female archaeologist who, like the male protagonist, harboured rebellious thoughts. The careers of the women protagonists had been destroyed, either directly or indirectly, by the men who served as their colleagues or superior officers or by men from the outside world who were unrelated to the women.

Women are under constant surveillance in this society. In Saadawi's writings, the female protagonists are subjected to persistent and stringent vigilance. "Somewhere in the vicinity. There is always an eye that takes notice of whatever is going on. Observing things, staring with uninhibited intrusiveness into the lives or deaths- of others, it gives the living no space to enjoy life, nor the dead respite in which to enjoy death." (*The Circling Song* 146) As was covered in the preceding chapters, the pair of eyes provided Firdaus with both solace and anxiety at the same time. Saadawi has successfully combined aspects of the past and the present in both Hamida and Hamido's lives. Sometimes Hamida or Hamido appear to be alive, and other times they appear to be dead. The people in their immediate environment, society as a whole, the government, and the institutions were all keeping a close eye on both the living and the deceased.

The voice, hands and fingers, body, the dress that men characters, particularly policemen wore, eyes, and the words that describe their deeds all have their own distinct languages. The writings of Saadawi provide insight into each individual's character. They provide greater insight into the motivations and characteristics of the male and female characters. Words like coarse, brutal, and heavy were used to describe male characters, while words like soft and gentle were used to describe female characters. Her words, which were used to describe certain actions of men and women characters, were essential in establishing the impact that male characters and their deeds had on women. Her words were used to describe certain actions of men and women characters. Her words had the potential to set the context

and provide the essential background for the contemporary figures that were depicted in her works. At various points in history, male digits have been referred to as having "harsh fingers and a large and flat hand." It was thought that the roughness of the fingers reflected the strength and ferocity of men. Hamida was subjected to vicious acts of violence at their hands.

Even the narrator of *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* was a young girl when the events described in the book took place, and during those events, she was sitting on a wooden bench watching her brother play in the dirt when she was startled by the touch of some old man's coarse fingers. This event was certainly to blame for instilling a sense of dread within the mind of the young lady, and it did so successfully. She stopped going outside and instead sat on the wooden bench all day. She avoided or ran away from strange creatures with harsh voices and moustaches, not just from that one man but from others as well. The voice, the rough touch, and the mental image of a moustache all caused her discomfort. This resulted in her developing her own made-up world to escape into. Her imagination served as the instrument through which she was able to exact revenge on all of the men who had bothered her in the real world. Both the outside world and the world that existed within the house prevented her from living in the here and now. Because of all the prejudice and sexual perversion she had experienced at the hands of men from the outside world, she had developed a strong aversion to living a typical life. She exhibited some defiance in the face of such concepts. Even the idea of getting married and preparing for it by doing housework related to the kitchen was unacceptable to her. Both the kitchen and the word "husband" were things that she despised. Her mother used the word "marriage" in conversation with her daughter on a daily basis. Even more so than you, she detested it. When she heard the word "marriage," an image of a man with a large, see-through belly that contained a table of food appeared in her mind. She was unable to shake this image. In her head, the aroma of the kitchen was inextricably linked to that of her husband.

Even though they were relatively infrequent, particular phrases and utterances had a significant influence on her life. Firdaus's line of work brought her into contact with a lot of men who had dirty, dark-colored nails. They were neither trimmed nor cleaned before being sold. These rough fingers, with their filthy black nails, were the source of many of the wounds found on her body. These rough fingers were often seen grabbing the hands of women or gently rubbing or caressing the skin of young girls. On other occasions, they were seen doing both. When they were younger, the woman doctor, Firdaus when she was both a child and an adult, and Hamida when she was either inside the house or in the city of Cairo had all been through the experience of having a large hand with coarse fingers caress them. The man in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* had no scruples and was feared only by the military because of his position. The odour of oil and the dark colour of his nails are both telltale signs that he works in the oil industry. In addition to that, the fact that he works in the oil industry and has blackened fingernails as a result speaks volumes about the composition of oil. The price of oil was extremely high, and nations were competing with one another to acquire it. It is a very dominant quality that it possesses. The oil was meant to symbolise society in its entirety, including both men and women. It is necessary to submit oneself to the authority of society. Anyone who challenges such an established order will face very severe repercussions for their actions. He said, "Oil can be friendly towards us if we surrender to it, but you never stop resisting it" (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 90). Since oil is a metaphor for society, it is virtually impossible to completely separate oneself from society. Everyone, including men and women, is subject to constant surveillance by society. There is no one who can hide from the scrutiny of society. Although hazardous, oil is preferable to other more dangerous creatures. The only thing that this society requires of its members is simple submission to its authority. Those who bow down to society's authority are rewarded by society with support, while those who defy society's authority are brought to their knees.

On the other hand, the female fingers are portrayed as being swollen and cracked. Either the strenuous domestic labour or the large hands of men had an adverse effect on their appearance. The roughness and coarseness of men's fingers are a reflection of their harshness and brutality, whereas the swollen and cracked nature of women's fingers are a reflection of the suffering and pain they endure at the hands of men with such large hands. Even the voices of women are weak and cracked. For example, Hamida, who was speaking under the protection of a police officer in Cairo city, had a weak and cracked voice. She was paralysed by fear, and as a result, she was unable to scream or speak out in a loud voice for assistance. His grip on Hamida's hand was firm and exerted a lot of pressure, which gave the impression that he was stronger than she was. He was powerful enough to maintain control over Hamida and keep her in his custody. Whatever was going to take place, one thing was certain: Hamida could not break free of this stranglehold on her own.

In addition to the fingers and the large hands, the voice is also an important carrier of the intentions of certain male characters in regards to dominating the women who are in the vicinity of them. The majority of the men all had harsh and raucous voices. The mere sound of their voice was enough to strike fear into the hearts of female characters. The man in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* had a harsh, piercing voice that added an element of brutality to the story. He used to be able to command her with just the sound of his voice. His voice ordered the woman to carry out a variety of tasks in order to better serve him. His comments were very succinct and to the point. However, they had an authoritative and harsh manner of speaking. His voice would jolt her out of her dream-like state on occasion, in addition to issuing commands. It was his voice that finally broke through to her and brought her out of her trance and into the real world. Quite frequently, his voice would brush up against the periphery of her consciousness. Either it brought her back to the present or it caused her to lose her train of thought for a moment. His voice would always try to wake her up, and if she wasn't sleeping,

it would wake her up no matter what she was doing. If she wasn't sleeping, it would wake her up no matter what she was doing. The sound of his voice prevented her from remaining in her own world. In reference to this voice, Saadawi says, "The man's voice pierced her ears. An imperative tone, completely natural when a man addresses his wife." (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 49) They were not married to each other; he was not her husband and she was not his wife. Despite this, he spoke in such a commanding manner as if he were talking to his wife. His voice is a weapon that he uses to keep her under his control, and in this case, it is being used on her. His voice frightened her; it had the power to pierce her ears and got the power to disturb all of her dreams and imagination in a way that no one else could touch. His voice had the ability to pierce her ears.

In the book *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, the author's second husband was a musician, but for some reason, he was never mentioned by name anywhere in the book. His fingers, voice, and overall nature were distinct from those of the other male characters in Saadawi's writings. He also had a unique personality. During their conversation, he gazed intently into the eyes of the female doctor. He addressed the narrator in his soothing tone, which the narrator described as neither harsh nor harsh. In contrast to other men, who typically have large hands with flat fingers and dirty, discoloured nails, his fingers were long and spotless. His friendly tone and immaculate fingers provide insight into his perspective of the narrator. He was worried and concerned about the narrator in this story. When it came to matters pertaining to the narrator's career as well as her personal life, he was kind and cooperative. The tone of his voice and the gentle touch of his fingers shed light on his demeanour and character. The narrator's first husband held a professional degree in engineering. He wanted to wed the narrator more than anything in the world. He was successful in his pursuit to win the narrator's hand in marriage to himself. In all of Saadawi's writings, he is the

only other male character to cry or show emotion of any kind. . “He stared at me in horror and amazement and...tears welled up in his eyes again” (*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* 52)

There are a variety of words that can be used to describe the state that female characters find themselves in as a direct result of the actions that male characters intend to take. One of the words that can be used to describe the weight, both literally and figuratively, that is placed on the shoulders of women in Saadawi's writings is "heaviness." In the book *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, the female archaeologist was coerced into carrying the heavy jars on her head. She was not the only one; in fact, she was among many other women who were compelled to carry the jars of oil to the business without receiving payment for their labour. When she was unwilling to carry the jars and considered putting up a fight, she thought of this phrase. The man struck her in the face repeatedly with his fists. He struck the woman while demanding that she submit completely to his authority. Because men were physically superior to women, they were able to sexually assault them or coerce them into showing complete submission to their will. They did a variety of acts that demonstrated their superior power over women to keep women under their control, and they did this by utilising the masculine power that they possessed. This dominance and superiority of men was also communicated through particular words that were not connected to any action that was intended to be carried out by men on women. On the other hand, they discuss the gender-based differences that exist between men and women.

She was still a child when she wrote the *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, and at that time, she was unaware of the differences between the sexes. Her entire family used to refer to her as "Girl" when she was younger. It was something that her mother would repeat to her repeatedly throughout the day. It was made abundantly clear to her by

everyone in the family that she was a girl, and all this meant to her was that she wasn't a boy and that she wasn't like her brother. The fact that she was referred to as a girl made a significant impact on her life when weighed against the identity she shared with her brother. Being referred to as a "Girl" taught her much more about what she was not than it did about who she was; consequently, she had a better understanding of who she was. In the novel *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, the female archaeologist found herself disoriented in an unfamiliar land. It was impossible for her to go back to her home nation at this point. The man who took care of her and provided shelter for her used to address her as "you, Woman." (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 18) The word "woman" delivered in his tone of voice cut through her ears like a thin sliver of glass. The way he addressed the woman with the word was more of an insult to her than an attempt to address her. "His voice never stopped repeating that ugly word." (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 18) Woman was the title given to the female archaeologist, similar to how "Girl" was used to refer to the female doctor. Both of these words were meant to serve as a gentle reminder that they did not yet qualify as boys or men. As they made their way to show the female archaeologist some shelter, he tried to establish his superiority over her by making condescending comments along the way. Not only he, but also the person who protected her did not refer to her by her name or profession when speaking to her. "a rattling voice emerged from a throat, 'come in, woman', 'His voice rose slightly, 'Come in, woman.'" (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 21) Earlier on, she had issues with the word "woman," and she regarded it as a derogatory term. On the other hand, by the time she met the second man in that village, she had become accustomed to the situation. She was no longer distressed by the word. Over the course of time, it evolved into a general term for addressing her in all contexts.

When it comes to men, the second husband in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* takes great pride in his masculinity. Since he was unable to take control of her life or the situation in the house, he uses the phrase "I'm the man" as a means to assert his dominance over the female doctor. This was the first word he said after they had a heated argument that ultimately led to the two of them divorcing each other. As her husband, he desired to have the upper hand in terms of respect at his home as well as dominance over her life. This one word that identified him perfectly articulated all of the sentiments that he wished to convey to his wife, who was a physician. When he said it, he meant that he was in charge of the house they were living in and everything that was in it, including his wife. He claimed this by saying, "I'm the man." In addition to the list of words that have been used as weapons against women, anything that is connected to the concepts of "God" and "Religion" has also been used. These straightforward phrases are extremely powerful and ultimately effective in carrying out the same mission in support of men. It was almost as if they were institutions that were working against the entire race of women.

When the man in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* was unable to win the woman archaeologist's complete submission to him and rip all of her defiant thoughts, he turned to 'God' for help. This was after he had tried other tactics, such as threatening her with death if she did not submit to him. "You are an exemplary man, that's true. But I work all day and part of the night. Who pays my wage?', 'your wage is due from God', 'God? What are you saying, man?', 'Don't you believe that God exists, woman?'" (*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 80) The tone of his voice had changed, and it had become angry and menacing. He demanded that she have faith in God, and she demanded that she be paid what she was owed. He then proceeded to accuse the woman of being an atheist and having no belief in God. "The heart of a woman like you isn't filled with faith. You

deserve nothing apart from fire and burning. Come on, speak out and defend yourself.”

(*Love in the Kingdom of Oil* 81)

As was just mentioned, many men were interested in Firdaus, but she was never interested in the men. Firdaus was only concerned about receiving the customers and giving them the satisfaction they desired from her, as the profession had been taken care of by the older lady, Sharifa Sarah El Dine. Even after she left the house of Sharifa, men, one of whom was a prince, pursued her. However, every man that she talked to was critical of her life and condition in some way. Some of them offered her some words of wisdom, while others endeavoured to save her from a life of prostitution. Firdaus did not seek their counsel regarding her chosen line of work and did not permit any of them to have an advantage over her in terms of better living conditions. Neither of these things was important to Firdaus. Her continued involvement in the adult entertainment industry was a conscious decision on her part. She considered it nothing more than a job. The only issue that Firdaus had to deal with was people feeling sorry for her so that they could feel morally superior to her through that sympathy. She was adamant that this would not take place. “The men I hated most of all were those who tried to give me advice or told me that they wanted to rescue me from this life I was leading. I used to hate them more than the others because they thought they were better than I was and would help me change my life.” (*Woman at Point Zero* 88) She made the right choice when she decided not to give the men the opportunity to advance their position in her life by rescuing her from the life that she was leading at the time. Men were to blame for her life as a prostitute; they were the ones who destroyed her life as well as all of her dreams that she had built up through her education. She aspired to live the same kind of life as all of the other young women in her age group and in her village. Nobody wants to live a life as miserable as that of a prostitute, especially not a young

woman. As Sharifa put it, it doesn't matter which one you choose; there is no difference. They are all the same, and they are all the sons of dogs that are running around under different names. Someone in her life initiated the practise of physically exploiting her, and either members of her own family or people from her extended family continued it. Before she turned to prostitution, she was sexually exploited by a number of men, beginning with Mohammadain and continuing with Bayoumi's friend. Firdaus was the object of desire for every respectable man in the society who worked in her profession. They were all married and had enormous amounts of money in their pockets. It was supposed to be a source of embarrassment for them to pursue prostitutes while leaving their wives at home or breaking their marriage vows in order to do so. The men in the society judge the women unfairly because of the sexual pleasures they pursue, and then they mistreat those women because they have been judged by the men. There was no difference: "All women are victims of deception. " (*Woman at Point Zero* 86)

Home extends into the public domain as men in the public domain control and condition women like the men in the family. Whether it is the private sphere or the public sphere, a woman is supposed to be under surveillance. Men own both the private and the public domains. They have two lives merging with each other. They have women at home and outside. But, in both the spaces, men are empowered and compelled to establish their authority and suppress women as much as possible. Like women are made to feel guilty and insecure, men are made to feel anxious about their domination over women lest they question the male authority and the patriarchal structures. Women employ silence, subservience and invisibility to escape from guilt and insecurity instilled in them, while men use aggression, violence and arbitrariness to answer their anxiety. Similarly, women struggle to achieve their aspirations while men strive to destroy women's yearnings. Patriarchy empowers and encourages men to

suppress and silence women not only with the firm belief that women as inferiors have to be treated like that but also with a deep apprehension of assertion and protest from women. Saadawi depicts how men, as individuals and as agents of powerful institutions, constantly try to snub women in family and outside. They feel challenged when women are visible and audible. Questioning, transgressing women infuriate them much more. Men in such circumstances use their power to prove their superiority attributed to them by the hierarchical institutions. The best example for this is that men in workplaces focusing more on subduing their women colleagues rather than focusing on their work, as portrayed by Saadawi.

Any manifestation of power has to inevitably face protest at some point of time in one way or another. Women in Saadawi's writings are not passive receivers of violence and domination. They focus all their energies on emancipation and change. They are not scared of the consequences. They are bold enough to confront individuals, systems, loved ones and outsiders in order to prove their self-respect and autonomy. Saadawi's writings are not only about women's sorrows, hardships and silent sobs that reiterate the pathetic condition of women. But, they are more about women who break all the chains to transgress their boundaries and move towards new worlds based on equality and justice. They leave the suffocating home in search of new horizons. The next chapter, Conclusion, will discuss the Saadawi's autobiographies by way of conclusion to the thesis in order to understand the inspiration that Saadawi has drawn from her life to create her fictional worlds.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Nawal El Saadawi is the author of two autobiographies: the first, titled *A Daughter of Isis*, is about Saadawi's youth, and the second, titled *Walking Through Fire*, is about her adulthood. Both books focus on the author's experiences. The events and interactions that took place in her life are the sole topic of discussion in both of her writings. " Memory is never complete. There are always parts of it that time has amputated. Writing is a way of retrieving them, of bringing the missing parts back to it, of making it more holistic " (*A Daughter of Isis* 9) In her remark on writing, she says that she enjoys writing more than anything else, and that writing is as necessary to her as breathing is, without which she cannot survive. She never stopped writing, not even when she was forced into exile or faced with a threat to her life. Writing autobiographies is a technique for her to retrieve the bits of her memories that she had previously forgotten about. There were other instances in which writing took precedence above everything else. She treats each piece of work as if it were a child, and she derives great satisfaction from writing them and giving them a good form.

The autobiography is an attempt to unearth what is buried deep down within her, to reveal what is hidden because of fear of God, her father, her spouses, her professors, male or female friends of hers, and dread of nation that was established at a young age and injected by people around her. She has the goal of drawing an accurate

portrait of herself and revealing it to the world in the hopes of restoring the image that has been covered by another picture. Her courageous writing about issues affecting women, particularly in opposition to fundamentalist doctrine, led to her being forced out of the country and into exile. "After leaving Egypt, I started to write the threat of death seemed to give my life new importance, made it worth writing about. I felt that the closer I moved towards death, the greater became the value of my life." (*Walking Through Fire* 3) Her writing has always been the one and only safe haven she has ever known. Nothing can take her place as a writer or compensate for it. For her, writing has always represented the antithesis of death; nonetheless, the very act of writing was the impetus for putting her name on the death list in 1992. This is a paradox. Writing is a way of life for Nawal El Saadawi, both because it is her passion and because it is necessary for her in the outside world. Along with her personal life, both of her autobiographies focus on the transition she made in her life from an innocent child who believed in everything she was told to a distinguished author and an eloquent speaker on a variety of social issues. This transition is covered in both of her autobiographies.

There are several structural and thematic parallels between *Woman at Point Zero* and *A Daughter of Isis*. Firdaus, the protagonist of *Woman at Point Zero*, serves as the novel's narrator. She recounts the events of her infancy from the perspective of an adult. Adult Saadawi takes a retrospective look at her life in the book *A Daughter of Isis*, and she narrates the events of her past from the perspective of an adult. She makes the point that when things were happening to her, she did not know the reasons why, but after a lot of years, she was able to understand them in their true sense and define what they mean to her now. She also mentions that when things were happening to her, she did not know the reasons why. "Memory, like wine, grows mellow with time. The impurities settle into deep forgetfulness. Body becomes mind transparent, and I can see

things to which I was blind.” (*A Daughter of Isis* 2) She now perceives things that she was previously insensitive to by seeing them and writing about them. In Saadawi's mind, the decades of the 1940s, during which she spent her childhood, appear to be much more recent than the 1980s. She was able to recall her upbringing with a great deal of specificity and clarity.

A Daughter of Isis is about the author's personal journey of coming of age as a daughter in the face of gender prejudice, with support and encouragement from both her mother and father, as well as motivational tales from both her maternal and paternal grandparents. This first section is about the development of a little girl into a self-reliant lady who possesses the bravery and guts to battle against the nation as well as the gender inequality that tried to provoke her to rebel. Because of the nature of the information contained within *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, there is a point of contention regarding whether or not it should be considered her other autobiography. *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* and *A Daughter of Isis* share a lot of the same themes and topics, yet their writing styles are very different. *Memoirs* is succinct and to the point. The fervour with which she narrates her *Memoirs* does not belong in an autobiography. The issue with *Memoirs* is that it does not appear to be accurate with the details and reliability of the life she represented in it. This is a concern because it was written by her. In both its storytelling and its content, it is more akin to fiction than to biography.

Her professional life is discussed more extensively in *Walking Through Fire* than her personal life. It is closely intertwined with the history of Egypt because she has a strong interest in the historical events that took place in her nation. She followed all of those stages meticulously, and she used the developments that occurred during that time in this second autobiography. *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* is told using an original narrative style that she utilised in many of her other fictional works. But *A*

Daughter of Isis isn't particularly complex, and it doesn't have Saadawi's signature narrative voice at all, which is a shame because it might have been so good. This chapter recommends reading these two autobiographies in order to gain a better understanding of the changes that took place in Saadawi's life and the people who were responsible for those changes. Her life tales are significant because they document the evolution of Egyptian society from the views of individuals, ideologies, and genders. This makes them noteworthy. Saadawi comes from a wealthy family, thus she has always had a large support system surrounding her. It is a blessing for her that she has such encouraging and influential people in her life as her grandmothers, great grandmother, father, brother, aunts, uncles, and even servant girls. These people have all played important roles in her life. The people in her life and the experiences she's had helped shape her into the person she is today. Both her religious upbringing and her relationship with her father were key influences in her development of a caring attitude toward women.

She never stops bringing up the subject of her mother. She believes that her mother had less of an impact on her life overall, but acknowledges that she is more influenced by her father. But after her mother passed away, Saadawi realised how much her mother meant to her and how much of an impact her mother had on the person she became. "My relationship with my mother decided the course of my life." (*A Daughter of Isis* 3) From the moment she was born, Saadawi's relationship with her mother was one of extreme intimacy and closeness. She learned from other people that if she had been born at that historical period, she might have been one of the infants who were buried alive. At the time of her birth, not a single member of the family, either her father's or her mother's, attempted to save her life. It's likely that every single one of them was disheartened to witness a girl kid being cared for by the midwife. Her mother

was the only one who was responsible for taking care of the child in any way. Things started off the same way but eventually evolved. When referring to her mother, Saadawi shared that her mother's father had forced her to leave school with a stick since she refused to get married when he proposed. Her future husband was sixteen years her senior when they were married. When she glanced between the slats of the window shutters, all she could see of him was the back of his head. She was completely unaware of the prospective husband-to-be. She, like all the other young women, harboured ambitions of advancing her education and establishing herself successfully in the future. However, her father was more anxious with her getting married than he was about her academic performance and her abilities. Things transpired outside of her knowledge and without her consent.

In her narrative, Saadawi summarises the life of her mother between the time of her marriage and the time when she gave birth to her ten children. She says that her mother gave birth to her first child “without taking off her clothes or opening her eyes, so that she could give birth to that child nine months later, followed by another impregnation before she had time to wean the first...so year after year, in the dark of the night, my mother became pregnant ten times, gave birth to nine children....” (*A Daughter of Isis* 22) As a result of her mother's recurrent labour and delivery, her mother's body had degenerated into a mere child pouch and had become a site of exploitation, abuse, and violence. Because she was constantly under intense pressure to produce male children and was kept in fear that she might lose the child if she gives birth to a female child, her emotional state of mind was not any different. She was kept in fear that she might lose the child if she gives birth to a female child. Even though it had been thirty years after Saadawi's mother had passed away, it felt to Saadawi as though she had passed away only a short while ago when she sat down to write her first

autobiography. She feels bad that she doesn't have her mother's last name, and the fact that she feels this way reveals how much she loves her mother. The elimination of her mother's name has, in effect, put an end to her mother's existence as a person in her daughter's life. Her identity was obliterated from record keeping as soon as her body was laid to rest. She used to inspire and motivate Saadawi by having unwavering faith in her daughter's abilities, much like the mother in the movie *Searching*. Saadawi's mother provided unwavering support for her daughter throughout her life, despite the fact that Saadawi's father was a pivotal figure in her upbringing.

Because there was no secondary education available for girls in Menout, her father made the decision to keep Saadawi at home so that she could assist her mother with domestic tasks. Her mother was opposed to the plan and tried to persuade Sayed to send her to the home of a relative so that she might finish her education there. It is impossible to overstate how much of an impact her mother had on Saadawi's development as a person. Saadawi stresses the fact that her mother was treated as a reproductive machine by their society. At least nine of her offspring came into the world through her womb. She was only a young woman when she passed away while holding Saadawi's hand. Saadawi was forced to revisit the past as the visions of her mother while she was on her mother's death bed kept her awake for many years. *A Daughter of Isis* has a close bond with her mother, and she expresses her love for her in many ways. She made sure that her mother was well taken care of, just as Saadawi's mother had done for her when Saadawi was a youngster. Saadawi jumps around in time and space as she discusses her mother, beginning with Doctor Nawal at Duke University, moving on to her mother's hospital bed as she nears the end of her life, and finally returning to the place where she was born as a child and discussing her relationship with her cherished mother. She did not decide to write an autobiography of her life until after

both of her parents had passed away, and her goal was to retrieve all of the memories she had with them.

The majority of Saadawi's life and profession are very similar to those of her father. First, he wanted to free his nation from the colonial domination, and then he wanted to free himself from the bonds of his government employment so that he might pursue a career as a poet and a writer. Unfortunately, he did not accomplish one of those things, and he was unable to write anything before he passed away. His love for his family and an inner pride in the struggle or fight for the liberation of the nation were the only things that kept him going while he lived a life of semi-exile in a remote part of his own country. He had nothing else to keep him there. During the course of his fight for freedom, he was once recognised and honoured for his efforts; however, once independence was achieved, the government arrested him and put him through years of persecution. He was a member of the generation that witnessed the revolution of 1919. He never stopped trying to clean up the corrupt practises of the government administration. On multiple occasions, representatives of political parties attempted to convince him to join their parties or assist one or more leaders in the elections in exchange for a promotion. However, he refused to do either of these things. However, he never accepted any kind of bribe under any circumstances. Even though he was living in exile, having been banished by his own country and being forced to live in a remote part of the country, his character and the beliefs he upheld made him a leader. He was able to garner the support of those who were around him. He envisioned and fought for an independent Egypt that was not ruled by foreigners, a just system that would defend the rights of poor people, improved education in the colleges and schools, and religious sheikhs who would think and believe in the equality of all people as well as a just approach towards the people and society. He also fought for all of these things.

Saadawi owes her decision to become a writer in large part to the support and encouragement of both of her parents. It is highly likely that Saadawi's father inspired and motivated her to pursue a career in writing. When she was a little child, he instructed her in the fundamentals of a certain faith. Her father explained the Supreme Being to her, even though she had no prior knowledge of God or religion. This was something he had believed in throughout his entire life. He led her to believe that God is to blame for everything and that there is someone in heaven who guides both men and women in their lives. Her father instructed her in the manner of praying in the name of Allah when she was seven years old. She started to learn about the prophets Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Lady Mary, Jesus, and Muhammad through the stories that were told to her. In the beginning, her mother was the one who taught her how to read and write. She instructed her in the proper way to write her name and insisted that her mother's name be added after her own. However, her father gave her his own name, Sayed, and changed her mother's name so that it would never be known again. In contrast to the fictional fathers in her works of literature, her real-life father is a devoted husband and father. He was the first person in his village to graduate from Dar Al-Oloum and he was quite proud of this accomplishment. He is fair and charitable. He followed the Prophet in all parts of life except for marriage; his wife Zaynab is the only wife, and he never yelled at her. He followed the Prophet in every other facet of life. Even though he worked all day, when he got home he would assist his wife with setting the table, making the salad, and cleaning the pots and pans. This was despite the fact that he had worked all day. He was of the opinion that a man should never betray his wife, but at the same time, he should maintain his regal bearing when interacting with people from other cultures. He was successful in carrying out the things he felt to be proper. According to Saadawi, "I was the daughter of this patriot, this courageous man

who feared no one, neither the headmaster, nor the king, nor the government, no the English, nor the village headman back in Kafr Tahla.” (The Daughter of Isis 81)

His fearless attitude and his freedom fight against the colonial forces and the King resulted in adverse consequences. When Saadawi was seven years old, her father told her that she did not need to be afraid of anyone in the entire world. She would never be able to forget his remarks since his voice had ingrained itself so deeply into her memory. From that point on, as the years passed, she also discovered that she did not need to be afraid of anyone other than the God that was already a part of her, her conscience, and her own voice. Her bold attitude throughout her life was undoubtedly influenced by the example set by her father. She was forced to go through some of the most difficult times of her life, yet she was unshaken and back to her customary resistance each time she was forced to go through something difficult. He was a firm believer in education and the power of learning to both emancipate and pave the way for future progress. Education was very important to him, and he believed that this should be the case for both boys and girls. He was not of the opinion that girls should be prevented from receiving an education. He did not prevent his daughter from attending school. But as was mentioned previously, when there were no higher education opportunities in his hometown, and taking into account the fact that his wife need assistance with the chores around the house, he wished to prevent Saadawi from attending school. He had a strong interest in Arabic literature and was an avid reader. At home, he read poems by Aboul All Al-Ma'ari and other poets, as well as Arabic literature to Saadawi and her brother. He was the one who first introduced them to the language. She was more interested in the English language than she was in Arabic literature at that time. Saadawi was a medical doctor by training, but she went on to become a well-known writer and activist. It is likely that her father was a source of

motivation for her, and that her early exposure to Arabic literature played a role in shaping her career. Even though he had a very strict interpretation of the Qur'an, he didn't see any problem with reading from the Gospel. He had an open mind when it came to questions of religion but was highly loyal.

Because she had achieved such a high level of success in her studies, he was extremely proud of his daughter. When he was out with his friends at a coffee shop, he would often describe his daughter to them as an exceptionally bright young lady and talk about her desire to pursue a career in medicine. During her elementary school years, she collaborated with her brother to write a story and put on a play in the family home. While her brother was the musical talent, she handled all of the other responsibilities. Her mother and her father expressed their gratitude to her for all of her efforts after hearing the performance that she and her brother had given. When she thinks back to that time, she recalls, "then he turned to me and shook my hand, which was also something he had never done before, and said 'your stories show imagination'. —after that, I began to have confidence in my imagination and in my talent as a storyteller." (*A Daughter of Isis* 115) Her father's support opened doors for her and instilled in her the self-assurance she needed to pursue writing, which eventually superseded her interest in pursuing a career in medicine as her major occupation. Undoubtedly, she had a distinctive approach to the telling of stories.

She portrays her own father as the model of a good father. In other parts of her literature, she refers to someone as a "model husband" because that person exemplifies the behaviours that are expected of husbands. The man was presented in a mockingly caustic manner for his inability to comprehend his wife and for behaving in accordance with the standards of society. He was the epitome of a good husband according to the standards of society. However, when she referred to her father as a model father, she

was not being sarcastic. He was not working on improving the standards that society upholds. He loved his family with all his heart and always put them first. Even though the man's society sanctioned particular behaviours as legitimate and acceptable for him, he did not adhere to these norms. He never drank alcohol, never remained out till a late hour, and never had sexual intercourse with a woman who was not his wife. He shouldered the sole responsibility of providing for his family while also assisting his wife with the housework and errands around the home. He rarely spanked his children but did play games with them and encouraged them to talk and debate topics relating to religion, especially when it came to things unrelated to religion. He shared with them his understanding of the religious doctrine, but he never coerced them into adhering to his teachings or making them a part of their lives. However, Saadawi's own father did not hesitate to express his feelings for his daughter, in contrast to the parent figures in Saadawi's literature, in which the fathers never exhibited their emotions. On the day when he dispatched Saadawi to another location so that she might pursue her further education there, he strolled by Saadawi and waited on the platform for the train to begin moving before joining her there. His eyes appeared to be full of worry as well as something more, almost like tears that had been held back and which had now surfaced to form a film. Because she was so shaken up by her father's feelings, she really wanted to give him a bear hug but she couldn't move an inch. She was unable to forget the profound emotional connection she shared with her father.

In a separate event, she took part in a political demonstration, and by complete accident, she was selected to act as the group's representative. As soon as the headmistress of the school found out about this, she immediately contacted Saadawi's parent. In front of the headmistress, he gave a testimonial on his daughter's admirable qualities. "“Nawal is my daughter, and I know her, She would never incite the girls to

do anything bad” (*A Daughter of Isis* 282). He is the kind of father who stands by his daughter and defends the position she takes. Because he was a part of the ministry and knew senior authorities, he was able to safeguard his daughter without any action being taken against her after the headmistress received orders from the ministry to deal with the issue of pupils from the school taking part in political agitation. He also revealed his relationship with Fahmy Bey, which caused the headmistress's expression to soften and her tone to become more soothing when she heard his name. All of the higher-ranking officials in the ministry were in favour of the demonstration. Saadawi was spared the punishment as a result of his assistance, but he also made it possible for her to take part in protests in support of important causes. In later years of her life, she took a position of opposition on a variety of political and social concerns. She was also described as the mother of the revolution that occurred in 2012 that took place against King Mubarak. The impact that her father had on her professional path was so profound that she was able to carry on her father's aspirations. She fantasised about defending her nation with a gun and protecting it from its foes. Never in her wildest imagination did she picture herself walking down the aisle wearing a veil and a lengthy gown. Her fantasies did not include a husband, and she was adamant that no guy would ever be able to coerce her into taking his name or exercising control over her body. Even though she changed her name three times through marriage, everyone has always known her as "Nawal El Saadawi." Her name has never been changed. Her father never gave her the impression that he expected her to obey him in order to provide for her fundamental requirements and fulfil her monetary requirements.

Throughout his entire life, he instilled in her a sense of respect, taught her how to debate and debate with him, and encouraged her to voice her perspectives and ideas on topics such as God and religion. He allowed her to have complete independence.

She can remember her father telling the family, “If the price we pay for freedom is high, we pay a much higher price if we accept to be slaves.” (*Walking Through Fire* 229) In this passage, It is likely that this influence was the driving force behind the accomplishments of the brave Saadawi. She treasured the freedom to think whatever she wanted and the freedom to live her life however she wanted, and she lived her life in accordance with those values. When she was nine years old, she overheard her father telling his sister Rokaya that divorce was preferable than staying with an unsatisfactory marriage. Her father's exact words were “divorce is much better than continuing with an unhappy marriage.” (*Walking Through Fire* 229) In this passage, If a woman gives back the dowry that her husband gave her when they got married, Islamic jurisprudence states that she has the right to divorce her husband and start a new life without him. He was an advocate for the liberty to have a quiet life. In his sister's life, he showed the same level of support, and he was there for Saadawi when she decided to end her marriage to her first husband. And it was he who spoke with the authorities to declare her position on divorcing her husband and her willingness to pay back the dowry that she had received at the time of her marriage. In a later conversation, Saadawi admits that the only reason she learned about the law that allows a woman to legally divorce her husband by giving back the dowry is because of her father. It is commonly believed that only the husband has the right to file for divorce, and that the wife has no chance of divorcing her spouse on her own other than to submit to the fact that her fate lies in the hands of her husband.

She wanted to hear the stories that her father used to tell her at bedtime; aside from the stories on God, Saad Zaghloul and the revolution of 1919 in which her father had participated were of great interest to Saadawi. Saadawi wanted to listen to the stories that her father used to tell her at bedtime. Her father and other members of the

family told her stories of her father's grandmother and the bravery of her ancestors. She had a very tall stature and walked with her body held in an upright position at all times. Every morning at the crack of dawn, she would leave her hut carrying a hoe on her shoulder, and she would return as the sun was setting. She would spend the better part of each day toiling away on the plot of land that she had inherited from her mother. Because of her courageous behaviour, which served as an example for others, everyone appreciated and respected her. In point of fact, she had an impact on Saadawi as well. "I felt I resembled my father, I had inherited his dreams, and to this day I hear his voice calling out to me..." (*A Daughter of Isis* 128) Saadawi continues her father's fight for the liberation and emancipation of women in all facets of their lives, just as he did. She drew a parallel between her own father and her own uncle's personalities. In comparison to her uncle, her father was not a particularly devout religious person; yet, he was a decent person in many other respects. Outside of religion and the philosophy of religion, he was a morally upstanding person. Her uncle was a depraved individual despite the fact that he was a devoted religious follower who never deviated from the letter of the law when it came to performing his religious responsibilities.

Saadawi's father was the one who introduced his daughter to God and the stories he told about him when she was a child. After that, she came to the conclusion that religion was reserved only for men and that she had nothing to do with God or religion. Saadwawi and her brother would listen to their father recite biblical tales to them each night before going to sleep. She was quite curious about hearing such tales, but her desire to do so was stopped by the responsibilities of running the family. Later on, she comes to the conclusion that religion was not responsible for converting her father into a nice human being. In fact, people like her uncle became radicals as a result of their religious philosophy and faith. He referred to her with a slang term that meaning 'you,

girl,' which is an abbreviated form of the word bint. It brings to mind the scene in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* where the male protagonist refers to the female archaeologist as "woman." It sometimes comes out as an insulting word; he was opposed to the idea of women attending universities or socialising with boys and men. He held strong religious beliefs and dressed the part as well. He would usually have a very long and thick beard around his face, and when he said the ninety-nine names of Allah, he would pass the prayer beads between his fingers with a deliberate period of silence in between each name. In addition to this, he was of the opinion that God sanctioned physical or verbal abuse of women by their husbands, regardless of the motivation. The old man in her short story "She is not Virgin" was based on his actual personality, which served as inspiration for the character.

She was subjected to the agonising practise of female genital cutting when she was only six years old, just like all the other young girls in her community. She had no idea that this was about to take place, but all of a sudden the midwife, Daya, was before her with a razor in her hands. This custom was understood to be the will of God, and all they were doing was carrying out the desire of God. Nawal is vocal in her opposition to this inhumane practise. She went into great detail about this approach in both her novels and her articles that she published. According to Sadaawi, injustice, and particularly prejudice based on gender, is connected to God and religion. Within the framework of religious law, Nawal was able to discriminate between males and females based on God's words. In Saadawi's youth, everything that disturbed her about the differences between herself and her brother were explained in the name of God and believe in Him. These explanations made Saadawi feel better about her life. Because of this encounter with God, Saadawi was left with the sense that God and religion were the primary factors that contributed to the gender discrimination that she had to endure.

According to her, “when I was a child, I thought that the Lord they talked about belonged to my father and my brother and that I had nothing to do with him.” (*A Daughter of Isis* 68) Her brother, either directly or through their relationship with Saadawi, was another important source of education for her when it came to comprehending the gender inequality that exists.

She had a habit of frequently contrasting her experiences with those of her brother. Throughout her childhood, she kept a close eye on her brother and participated in all of the activities he did. In the first, she was perplexed by these disparities, and subsequently, she began to wonder why they existed and why they were practised. At one point in her life, Saadawi says, “I had been born a female in a world that wanted only males.” (*A Daughter of Isis* 61) In patriarchal countries, gender bias and prejudice were ingrained in everyday life. Saadawi's family members discriminated against her brother in many different ways, and Saadawi was subjected to this treatment herself. Saadawi's mother was already a mother when she gave birth to her first child, which was Saadawi's brother. However, Saadawi's grandmother told her that on the day that her son Sayed's mother gave birth to him, she was praying to God by raising her hands and pleading with God to bless her son with a son. Because a boy would one day make his father's name famous in this world and the next, and because he would be given the name of the Prophet Muhammad, she prayed that Allah's prayers and peace would be with him. Everyone in the family had been hoping for a boy, and they were all relieved when she actually did give birth to a boy. However, when Saadawi was born, everyone who was around her reacted in a different way than they had before. Even her father refrained from touching the newborn girl in the beginning. The same grandmother beams with happiness whenever she talks about her son Sayed. She did not have enough money to provide for all of the requirements that were necessary for the family. Despite

this, she intended to give her sole child, Sayed, all of the money in her possession so that he may pursue higher education. She had the firm conviction that advancement in society could be achieved via the pursuit of knowledge, and for this cause, she gave up everything she owned. She intended to fulfil all of his requirements. However, when it came time to send her granddaughter Saadawi off to further education, she was not willing to do so. She is quoted as having said, “Girls are a blight. A boy, the Prophet bless him, lifts his father’s head in the world, and the next, carries his father’s name, and hands it down. With a boy, the family household is kept running, but girls get married and go off, leaving the father’s house, and their children carry the names of the men they marry.” (*A Daughter of Isis* 50) Saadawi drew a lot of her motivation from her grandmother, Sittil Hajja. Despite the fact that she was concerned about gender disparities and preferred sons to girls, Saadawi found her to be a source of great inspiration. She had no fear in the world, just like her son Sayed, and she was a very brave woman. She was a member of the lower social class of peasants. She toiled at on her plot of land for a gruelling twenty years, but she invested every penny she made in her one and only child. She was illiterate and a peasant lady like many others, but she possessed a strength that appeared to be innate. She worked for no one and did the job on her land by herself. After the death of her husband, she decided to take on the role of sole provider for her family. She laboured on the property by herself, beginning before daybreak and continuing after sunset, while her husband was away. Her labour pains, which she endured while labouring in the field, were a visual representation of her dogged determination and dedication. She would finally sever the ties that bound her to her child and go back to focusing on her work in the field. Even when she need assistance from another person, she did not depend on other people and did not wait for them.

Mabrouka, Saadawi's great-grandmother, was another significant female figure in her life who had a significant impact on her journey through this world. She possessed a lot of bravery and inner fortitude in equal measure. She was the daughter of the respectable woman from Gaza, and she herself lived up to the reputation that her mother had earned. Because of her bravery, people remarked things like, "A woman worth twenty men..." (*A Daughter of Isis* 55) She lashed out violently at the commander of the security team for unknown reasons. People praised her for being so gutsy and acting on it. The remainder of the story, however, was a tragedy in her life. One night, following her assault on the leader of the village headman's personal bodyguards, he dispatched an assassin in her direction to carry out her death. Everyone in the hamlet came down to her house first thing in the morning to find that she had passed away. Mabrouka was resting on the filthy floor inside the home while her eyes were wide open and she was staring up at the heavens. Her dog was lying dead by the front door. Saadawi did not provide a great deal of information regarding this courageous woman who was worth twenty men. Undoubtedly, she was a source of influence for Saadawi due to the fact that she was descended from a courageous woman to whom other people had shown their admiration. However, she ended up being a victim of the authority that men hold. The chief of the community felt sorry for her and ordered some of the villagers to kill her.

Her friendship with her brother was one of the most important parts of her life. Quite frequently, he was the one who served as the reference for the gender dynamics that existed within the household. On the other hand, the two of them share an exceptionally close bond with one another. She sobbed over the unfairness of it all. She was now taller than her older brother, and when they played with the children in their neighbourhood, she outran him in both speed and agility. She was more successful

academically at school than her brother was in his academics. Her parents were more concerned about her brother's lack of interest in going to school than they were about Saadawi's determination to make sure she never missed a day of class. Her brother never paid attention to his schoolwork, instead spending his time playing, and he continued to perform poorly on tests. Saadawi, on the other hand, toiled away at both school and home, skipped no vacations, and achieved outstanding results in her academic pursuits. Her parents were the ones who first taught her about the distinctions between the sexes. When she was younger, her father would give her dolls and other toys, such as an aeroplane that could be cranked up to fly away, a boat with a sail, and a pistol that sent out sparks. He also gave her brother same toys. She acquired only dead dolls that were unable to move even a millimetre on their own. Sometimes he'd remark something like, 'Nice girls play with dolls. Pistols are for boys.' (*A Daughter of Isis* 50)

The difference between boys and girls can be seen in a variety of aspects, including playthings, clothes, and other aspects that have been covered in prior chapters. In point of fact, they amplify the gender distinctions between themselves. No one ever fully comprehends the significance of the items they use and the things they play with when they are children. A pistol, an aeroplane, a boat, and so on are all examples of active tools that symbolise the world outside and the work that men do. They project an image of sturdiness and abrasiveness, and they convey the impression that one possesses something valuable that necessitates an uncompromising demeanour. The delicate temperament of the girls is reflected in their choice of playthings. In the form of dolls, both Saadawi and her sister were confined to play the role of a mother to those plastic baby dolls. When Saadawi was younger, she would tell stories to herself while playing with her dolls by setting up the dolls in roles such as the

bride and groom. They would act out the gender role they were supposed to be playing by playing with dolls. They play the role of moms and care for the dolls as if they were their own children. They would sit by the doll's side and sing to her until she fell asleep, after which they would take the doll close to them in their arms, put her to bed and cover her with a blanket, and then try to make her go asleep like a real mother. Both of them hacked up the boy doll when they were playing with dolls so that they could examine the secret compartment that was buried under his garment. They used a knife to cut it, but they couldn't see anything inside but the cotton and stuffed cloth that was used to make the doll pop up. They had reached an age when they could comprehend that there must have been a cause for him to hit his wife.

Although her father was the main inspiration for her life and profession, he is the kind of father who made sure to teach both his son and daughter the fundamentals of how men and women are different from one another. According to the genders of the children, he purchased appropriate playthings for them. Instead of thanking her for her enthusiasm in getting ready more quickly than her brother, he was anxious about his son not exhibiting interest in getting ready for school when they were on their way to school. He would only ever read passages from the Qur'an aloud to his son, never to his daughter. He would often talk to his son about God. She believed, when she was a youngster, that her father and her brother owned the God that they talked about and that she had nothing to do with God. She believed that her father and her brother owned God. Her father presented them with a gendered conception of God. Even in her sleep, Saadawi would reach out to touch her father, but her father's arms were never long enough to reach her. Saadawi's dreams were filled with disappointment. He never approached her and instead kept his distance at all times. During the entirety of their lives together, he never so much as gave her a kiss or a caress. When he looked at the

picture that was hung on the wall, he noticed that he was sitting a great distance away from her daughter but much too close to his son. Such unequal treatment did not dissuade Saadawi from pursuing the career path she had envisioned for herself.

She was known throughout the school as an exceptionally bright young lady. However, due to the fact that she was a female, her intelligence was not regarded as a positive quality, and her achievements were never recognised. In point of fact, she was instructed to get work and educate herself on proper kitchen procedures. She had the ambition to pursue a higher education, which at the time was reserved exclusively for young men and was not open to female students. She desired to get away from the stares of men by becoming something powerful and taking revenge, taking revenge by staring back at them, disparaging the bodies of men, and considering them to be on par with the bodies of women. No one on Saadawi's mother's family or her father's side was happy for her when she received a distinguished score on the primary certificate examinations. The disappointment they felt over her brother's lack of success overtook the happiness they felt for her own achievements. When Saadawi tried to share her happiness with her family, she was met with a startling shock that shocked her to her core. Her grandma, Sittil Hajja, couldn't stop staring at her breasts as she stood and muttered something to her mother. Her breasts stood out over her chest. "The girl has grown, Sitti Zaynab. And I'm afraid the day will come when she will be barren. May God send your daughter Nawal a bridegroom so that you can rejoice and be able to marry all your daughters while I'm still here on earth." (*A Daughter of Isis* 155) The most notable aspect of this discussion is the fact that no one is concerned about her level of accomplishment; rather, they are concerned about her age and the likelihood that she will marry soon. According to Saadawi, "They feel much more happy when I scrub the floor than when I do well at school." (*A Daughter of Isis* 155)

The name Shatra was bestowed upon Nawal by both of her grandma and mother. This was not for recognising Saadawi's achievements in her education, her independent attitude, or her writing talents. Nor was it for her writing skills. It was awarded for your skill in performing tasks around the house. The word "Shatra" can also mean "Skillful." This title was given to young women who had exceptional skills in the domestic sphere, such as being able to wash clothing, scrub floors, and ignite the stove without breaking the needle. Saadawi became accustomed to the fact that they referred to her as "Nawal Shatra." It brought Nawal feelings of happiness as well as sadness. She gradually developed an interest in, or focus on, activities related to the kitchen rather than her studies, and as a result, she lost her ability to question things. The use of the name Shatra was a strategy for attracting the attention of girls and helping them feel as though they belonged. Saadawi had zero interest in helping out around the house in any kind. The name Shatra prompted her to reflect, and eventually she came to terms with the fact that she and her abilities belonged in the kitchen. People were happier as a result of Nawal Shatra rather than Saadawi's academic success. But when her brother's school report arrived with a red circle on it, which was the sign indicating that he had failed the exams, a profound silence descended upon the house as if somebody had recently passed away. This was because the red circle was the sign that indicated that her brother had failed the exams. Her brother's misfortune overwhelmed whatever happiness she may have had at her own accomplishments. More than all of these things combined, what hurt her the most were the words that her father spoke to his wife in the evenings. Her academic performance, in contrast to that of her brother, was interpreted by him as a sign of Allah's wrath, rather than as a reflection of her intelligence and dedication to her studies. "I wish she had been born the boy and he the girl; this must be a sign of God's wrath descending upon us, Zaynab." (*A Daughter of Isis* 185)

It was believed that the anger of Allah had been brought down upon her parents as a result of her intelligence and successes, and that this was Allah's punishment. They worried about it as if it were a crime or something that needed to be hidden. Later on, however, things changed, and her brother Tala'at was unsuccessful in the examinations on multiple occasions. Her father was no longer upset with the outcome of his endeavour. He was their greatest hope, but due to his poor academic performance, they had redirected their attention to Saadawi as their new source of optimism. After a number of years, her perseverance had at long last borne fruit. Her brother, on the other hand, was not really interested in academics; he was more into other things. Even though he was only a year older than Saadawi, it seemed as though he knew everything, and she considered him to be her most important relationship. He enjoyed writing poems and playing the lute, singing, and acting in his spare time. She had the impression that he would have developed his artistic talent more fully if his pals hadn't punched him in the face, leaving a scar on his cheek. In addition to that, one of his goals was to become an accomplished musician, but he was unable to realise this ambition. Every time he looked at himself in the mirror, he couldn't help but cry because of the scar on his face. However, he was not permitted to act in that manner. At the age of ten, due to the fact that he was a boy, he was not permitted to show emotion by crying. "...For a man can receive blow but he must not cry. Crying is for girls..." (*A Daughter of Isis* 218-219)

Other matters about Saadawi and her brother were already discussed in the second chapter of *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* titled "Brother and Sister." This chapter was referenced during the course of their fight with one another. Aside from these things, the two of them had a very deep and personal relationship with one another. When Saadawi was a child, he remembers that their relationship was sometimes

difficult and marked by moments of conflict. But as time went on, they became closer to one another and their connection became more intimate. “The secret we had now exchanged had created a bond between us, and our friendship grew.” (*A Daughter of Isis* 134) The invitation for Saadawi and her brother to participate in a creative workshop was accepted. Both of them worked on a script, and then they presented it to their respective parents. Her mother and father thought highly of her as a writer and valued their daughter's efforts. And this was the first time that her father had ever gone over to her brother in order to cordially shake hands with him. This deed of theirs had a significant influence on the course of their lives. Her grandfather had faith in her older brother. Even though he was not successful in his academic pursuits, he was still quite good at other things that he could use to make a living. As was said previously, Saadawi's praise from her father served as sufficient incentive for her to pursue a profession in writing. This was also the case for Saadawi. After that, she started to put more stock in her imagination. Saadawi sobbed because she felt like she was being treated differently than her brother because of their different genders. She suffered from severe psychological issues, yet their relationship was so strong that her brother was able to provide the motivation and encouragement she needed to pursue a career as a writer.

To continue talking about her brother, he did not have an interest in academics but did have an interest in other areas. Saadawi was aware of his enthusiasm and ambition in the fields of music and photography. According to her, her father was blind to the fact that he was a talented man. Even though Talaat indicated his interest in music and photography, his father was unable to support him in these endeavours. He does not place any value on them, yet he believes that certifications and diplomas are necessary. This is because he can only perceive what the society values. One cannot be

considered an intellectual if they were unable to attend college. He continues by saying, "If you were not a university graduate, you could not qualify to become a bridegroom." (*A daughter of Isis* 219) In the early stages of Saadawi's existence, he insisted that she adhere to the religious doctrine that he had chosen for her. Nevertheless, she continued to draw a significant amount of motivation from it. On Tala'at, he used the career to push his ideas on others. Instead of pursuing what was in his heart, he hoped that his kid would opt for something that would be valued by society. Things have definitely changed in that parents no longer force their own goals and aspirations onto their children, instead encouraging their children to pursue the goals and ambitions that they themselves did not achieve or desired to achieve. It was not only his own fault; his father was also to blame for the failure. People looked up to him because of his position as a teacher in the community. "People will say the inspector of education does not know how to educate." (*A Daughter of Isis* 159) He was more concerned about maintaining his reputation than he was about satisfying the wants and needs of his son. In her memoirs, Saadawi does not provide any other information regarding her brother's life or work after this point.

She has learned about gender differences from other guys, and some of those men have also served as a source of motivation for her job and life in general. At the age of ten, Fathy, the singer, was the object of her affection. She remembered him frequently during the years. While she was on the ground floor, she heard his voice coming from the second floor. This was the first time she had heard his voice. She couldn't get his voice out of her head. He attended school for the arts in Cairo, and the only time he visited Menout was for the holidays throughout the summer or for Eid. During those vacations, Saadawi would make it a point to listen to his voice on a daily basis. Because she had only recently learned about him and had been hearing his voice

for a considerable amount of time, but she was unable to see him directly, she felt as though he had emerged from her dreams. She was taken aback when she actually saw him, and that's when she realised that she hadn't been dreaming about him. It was one of her highest priorities to be with him. Because she was so taken with him, hearing simply a single letter of his name was enough to cause her heart to skip a beat, to unsettle, and to turn the entire universe on its head. She was completely transfixed by him. He was her first love when she was ten years old, and at that time, she was well aware that love was a prohibited, sacrilegious, and wicked activity. This was the first secret she ever kept in her life, and no one is aware that it concerns her first love. When she was away from her parents and staying at one of her aunt's houses in a distant town, she yearned to see her mother and father as well as Fathy, her singing man. She also missed her singing man. She couldn't wait to hear him play the flute in the middle of the night in the peace and quiet. She even had dreams about him; in one of those visions, she hushed, "I love you," and he stared at her with a surprised expression on his face. But the truth is that whenever she looked at him, her lips stayed securely locked, and she did not speak a single word. When her father was relocated to another city for political reasons, it put a stop to all of her fantasies and brought her reality crashing down around her.

She discussed her first husband in her memoirs about a woman who became a doctor. When he was younger, he lacked confidence, and he admired the author/narrator for her courageous demeanour. Later on, stemming from his feelings of inferiority, he made an attempt to exert control over her life. She ended their marriage and went on to wed another man. In the same piece of writing, Saadawi discussed her second husband; specifically, she discussed their interactions with one another as well as the events and circumstances that led to their decision to wed each other. She revealed nothing about

her third spouse or the suitor she had met before either of her first two weddings. She also said nothing about the suitor she had met before her third marriage. In her memoirs, she did not spend much time discussing her first husband, but she did talk about the men who expressed interest in her, as well as her third husband and their marriage. Sherif was the name of her third husband and final spouse. He was not all that unlike to Saadawi, and her father was taking part in the protests or agitations that were directed against the British and the King. There were parallel occurrences in the life of Saadawi's father to those that took place in Saadawi's life. Because Sherif took part in a protest directed against the British and the King, the administration decided to place him in a state of semi-isolation and move him away from Alexandria. Because he was so determined to challenge the authority of the government, he was forced to serve fourteen years of his valuable life behind bars.

He did not show any signs of change at all during the fourteen years that he was held captive in Egyptian jails. His lack of fear and his determination were both unaltered throughout the entire process. Because there was so little food available to him in the prisons, the man who always kept to himself became even more reclusive over the years. Honors were bestowed upon him as he received his medical degree. He was the descendant of a feudal family that took advantage of the peasants who worked their land. The following morning, the police transported him to the correctional facility, where they later brought him out to meet the judicial investigator who was responsible for his case. She has labelled everyone who was present along with him as spies working for Moscow. They made the decision to execute him while he was in custody. He broke out of the prison just in time to avoid any harm at their hands. In those days, the only people who could break out of prison were hardened criminals who had already committed murder. Therefore, in the news articles, he was described as some sort of

myth or fantasy. In the spring of 1964, Saadawi first encountered him while working at the Ministry of Health. "Marriage contract which sounded like the lease for a rented shop." (*Walking through Fire* 6) She adhered to the same belief in real life as she did in her works, and her writings and real life communicated the same sentiment. She desired to continue living with Sherif in the same house even after they had decided not to be married. She did not believe that a marriage licence, which is required by the law governing marriages, was necessary. And she wanted to do it without any kind of licence, so that they might stay together indefinitely or part ways without any kind of legal obligation. He was able to persuade her by explaining the challenges that come with cohabitating as an unmarried couple and dealing with the various issues that arise in day-to-day life. Living together without getting married was already challenging, but the fact that they were both famous celebrities made it considerably more so. If they do end up having children, those children will be regarded as illegitimate, which will make it difficult to enrol them in school. After much deliberation, she decided to say yes to his marriage proposal.

He was not a man who was worried by his masculinity, despite the fact that they had their fair share of arguments and misunderstandings with each other. He never made an attempt to demonstrate his sexual superiority to Saadawi. They have slept in the same room ever since they got married, but they have always liked to sleep in different beds since it gives them more freedom of movement, regardless of whether they are awake or asleep. In conclusion, she says, "Freedom, justice and love –brought us together more than thirty years ago." (*Walking through Fire* 8) They were the first couple ever to jointly teach the same course at Duke University, which was titled "Dissidence and Creativity." This was also the first time that a wife and husband taught the same subject.

She was inspired not just by her parents and the people around her, but also by the idea of 'God,' which had an equal amount of weight in her development. As was said earlier in this chapter, her father was the one who initially presented the idea of God to his daughter. This event marked the beginning of her spiritual journey. Aside from what her father had told her, she was completely ignorant when it came to matters pertaining to God. He retold the stories from the *Bible* as well as those from the *Qur'an* to her. The members of her family believed that God was involved in everything and anything. *A Daughter of Isis* possesses a wide variety of blessings, accidental words, and oaths to God. She made the connection between God, misfortune, and marriage at the age of six, thanks to the people around her, even if she did not comprehend what any of those things were. The impact on the mind was immense and adverse. "I was a child of six and had no way of finding out what was the power of God. My eyes would steal glances at the spot where I thought His power might manifest itself." (*A Daughter of Isis* 49)

Because genital mutilation was a traumatic experience for Saadawi, she discussed it at length after going through with the procedure. In the name of God, genital mutilation and/or circumcision are performed on both males and females. Aunt Rokaya is Nawal's father's side of the family, and she told Nawal that "...the prophet had ordained that the bazar of girls be cut off." (*A Daughter of Isis* 74) The young Saadawi was unable to comprehend the reason behind the Prophet of God's interest in removing the young girls from the bazaar. The genitals were the defining characteristic between males and females. The very first mention of God in the Bible is when a woman is giving birth to her first child. It is a blessing from God if the baby turns out to be a boy. It's a curse from God if it turns out to be a female. As the child develops, his mother comes to regard him as the pride of the womb, while his father takes pride

in the fact that he is paving the way for the next generation. Concerns about the girl's age are being voiced more frequently as she gets older. She is put through her paces at home in order to master various housework tasks, which are considered necessary for marriage.

Sittil Hajja would always reassure Nawal by assuring her that "God will send the husband for Nawal" and that "marriage is your destiny, just like it is for other females." It is the will of God, O daughter of my son'." (Chapter 56 of *A Daughter of Isis*) Saadawi dreamt that God transformed her into a beautiful bride. She could see him inching closer to her all the time. Occasionally, she would run so far that the ocean would be directly in front of her. She dove headfirst into it and swam like a fish, then he would follow her into the water, but the God drowned since he did not know how to swim, and his entire body sank into the sea. Her dream was quite weird, yet she understood God better as a result of it. She was unable to comprehend how God, her spouse, or marriage were connected to one another.

"Four weeks might pass without seeing the sacrilegious stain. My heart would be light, happiness would invade me. It seemed to me that God had heard my...more than usual." (*A Daughter of Isis* 161) Her description accurately conveys the true feelings and difficulties that are associated with menstruation for a woman. It was a curse, and there was no freedom even to sneeze, cough, or feel more sad or glad than usual because of it. She is confused by the negative connotations that are associated to something that is very natural for women. Saadawi's family and friends instilled in her the belief that the menstrual blood was impure and filthy. She was unable to comprehend how the blood that flowed through her body could become impure or contaminated in any way. And the women who surrounded her taught her that when a girl had her period, she was forbidden from touching anything sacred, such as the book

of God. She was also forbidden from praying, fasting, or reading from the *Qur'an*, as if her words, hands, and mind were equally polluted along with her blood because of the menstruation process.

As we have already covered in earlier chapters of *Memoirs of Woman Doctor*, Saadawi was unable to face the world, and she discovered that she was unsuitable to exist in the world. This is something that we have already explored. She shut herself up in the constricted space of her chamber. She went to her room, where she closed the door, laid down on her bed, and sobbed with her face buried in a pillow. Her relationship with God was strained because she believed that all instances of gender bias could be traced back to God's decision. Her thoughts continued to be preoccupied by the topic of the justice of God, and the more she thought about God, the more guilty she felt.

On the one hand, she was led to believe that God is just because of what other people said to her and the evidence they presented. On the other hand, it felt that God was unfair in the way that he discriminated against women. To summarise the impact that God had on Saadawi, when she was younger, she did not have the capacity to correctly realise who He was. Nawal had a hard time making sense of God at any point. She eventually found that she had no choice but to accept the idea of God as well as the personification of God. But this did not last for very long; she soon began to question the validity of religious institutions as well as the reality of God. She wrote extensively on God using a mocking tone throughout her work. She was unable to have faith in a God who treated men and women differently in his dealings with humanity since it was impossible for her to reconcile the two.

Saadawi contrasts her own father with her uncle and the brother of her father, Shoukry Bey, and asserts that her own father did not drink alcohol, did not go out at

night, and did not have sexual relations with any other women save her mother. The law and Allah's dominion bestowed upon him the unrestricted permission to divorce and to wed four different women. However, he never exercised this privilege, served as a devoted husband, assisted her mother with the chores of running the household, and took all responsibility for providing for the family. He served as an inspiration for her in a lot of ways. She claims that "he was a model father, rarely beat his children as other fathers did, played games with them, and gave them space to discuss and argue even in religious matters." (*A Daughter of Isis* 186) Nawal was undoubtedly motivated by both her father and the way he carried himself.

Her aunt Fatima presented her with an offer, he said, "what will she do with all her reading and writing. Her reading is not something I can eat, and her writing is not something I can drink." (*A Daughter of Isis* 155) Reading and writing, on the other hand, were what protected Saadawi from other men, from other potential husbands who arrived at a later time holding their higher degrees from Cairo University or Oxford University. Because she did not keep the writing and reading away from her and because she allowed others, most of whom were males, to occupy her solitude and her independent life, she ended up getting married three times and divorcing twice. She was unable to give up her love of reading and writing in order to please her spouse.

For Saadawi, going to school did not only entail departing from their home and venturing into an unfamiliar environment. It was significant to her in more ways than one. It was a liberation from the things that had been shackling her. It was independence; it created space between Saadawi and the ground, elevating him above it all the way to the heavens. "I arrived at the door of the school, for this door was the only salvation. It was the only opening in the closed walls of my life, the only opening through which I could escape to another life. A life other than the one I led in the

gloomy room in my uncle's home in which I lived as though buried in a tomb." (*A Daughter of Isis* 204) This is Saadawi's perspective on the value of receiving an education. She was under the impression that her education was the only path that might provide her with the opportunity for a self-respecting and independent existence, in addition to the long-awaited recognition for women in general. Throughout her whole life, she stressed the importance of education as a means to liberate women from a life of oppression and misery. The kinds of books that Saadawi read while she was in school were partly responsible for her development into a thinker about ongoing gender issues. These books included Thoughtful Readings, which were part of a curriculum designed to teach children about the masculine and the feminine. Saadawi's development into a thinker about these issues was also facilitated by her education. It's possible that this helped Saadawi realise how gender roles are constructed in our society. In other words, by the time I'm talking to her, she has already witnessed and experienced gender-related discrimination in her own home. The same was developed further in the educational setting.

In the home of Saadawi's Aunt Nimat, a young girl named Shalabeya worked as a servant. She became pregnant as a result of being raped by another person. Nimat repeatedly struck Shalabeya with the cane and struck her face with blows. He also struck any other area of her body that was within his reach. Nimat was administering the punishment to the sufferer. This poor girl has no idea what has been done to her, and she is currently serving a double sentence for something. She was living by herself in Cairo due to a number of circumstances that required her to be away from her parents in upper Egypt. Now she was living with a bastard (a child who does not have a biological father is referred to as a bastard in legal parlance). No mother in the history of the world ever wants to give her children such a status. A child that acts in such a

way should, without a shadow of a doubt, be subjected to reprimand. The law provided a punishment for the defenceless girl but remained silent regarding the perpetrator of the crime.

After Saadawi's father passed away, Tante Nimatwas, Saadawi's aunt, was never granted a portion of the pension that her father had earned. The law denied divorced women their right to this portion. She was given some money upon the conclusion of her divorce, but it was only enough to support her for a single year. After that, she was left without any means of generating an income for herself. Also, she made it a routine to visit the homes of her family during mealtimes and make herself at home there.

Nawal counted Fatma as a buddy. She had a beautiful voice that could make people laugh till they cried or make them cry because it was so moving. She had a fantasy of one day rising to the status of Um Koulsum, the star of the east. She attended the school of fine arts immediately following the completion of her secondary education. While she was there, she tied the knot with a professor who was twenty years her senior. Saadawi has lost communication with Fatma, who may have travelled to Saudi Arabia or Kuwait. Saadawi was able to reconnect with her after over a quarter of a century had passed. While Fatma was at home, her husband was off working in some oil-rich country in the Gulf. In light of the fact that Fatma was battling a third-degree malignant malignancy, he wed another woman from Kuwait. Fatma lived to the age of forty-five before passing away. She had accomplished nothing in her life other than spending hours at a time reminiscing about her past fantasies while waiting in her extravagant home. This life that Fatma leads is very different from the lives that Shalabeya and Nimat led. She did not have any legal or financial problems, and in the eyes of the law, she did not deserve to be punished. However, she was ignored and had not experienced anything significant or accomplished anything noteworthy in her life.

Another one of Saadawi's close friends, Fikreya, was also worried about what the future held for her. She aspired to be successful in life and had hopes of accomplishing great things. She had the ambition of becoming a well-known painter. However, she was only able to accomplish the first part of her dream. After completing her secondary education and receiving her diploma, she applied to and was accepted into the school of fine arts. Saadawi finally caught up with her after a long absence of fifteen years when they were both at a beach. She explained, "you see, I married, my husband is a well-known artist, and he paints for both of us." (*A Daughter of Isis* 270) Both Fatma and Fikreya had the potential to motivate Saadawi or to stun her with a revelation about the impossibility of women realising their objectives. However, Saadawi chose to believe that it is impossible for women to realise their ambitions. At the same time, these illustrations may have helped Saadawi get one step further along the path to achieving her goals than other people.

Saadawi found Mabrouka, a daughter of the woman from Gaza, to be another woman who served as a source of inspiration. She assaulted the village's chief of guards for an unknown cause, and word quickly spread around the community about the incident. In hushed tones, the males and females discussed her as follows: She was evaluated as a lady who was worth the equivalent of twenty men by her mother, who was also a gutsy woman. It had never happened in the history of the community for a woman to smack the chief of the village guards in the face. Saadawi says, "She became a figure that inspired awe, and everyone sought her assistance." (*A Daughter of Isis* 86)

One of the significant events in her life brings to light two aspects that are of the utmost importance: the first of these is, as is customary, her father's support for her. Second, she possesses qualities of leadership. During the time when she was a student, she was an active participant in the student activism that was taking place in support of

the national-level independence struggle. The group of people who were in charge of leading the protest were looking for someone to represent them as a delegate or representative. Someone called out Saadawi's name, and as a result, she ended up becoming the spokesperson for the ladies during that uprising. It was forbidden for students to take part in such demonstrations at schools. As was mentioned previously, the headmistress of her school contacted her father to lodge a complaint about Saadawi. Rather than asking questions, As was said previously, Saadawi's father backed her up and expressed his confidence that she would neither instigate a riot or pressure other girls to take part in it. He also stated that he had faith in Saadawi's ability to keep other girls from joining in. This incident marked the beginning of Saadawi's participation in public square agitations, riots, and other activities supporting women and gender sensitization. Saadawi has since been involved in these and other activities. She says this about the freedom that she received from her father: , “ throughout his life, he taught me self-respect, taught me to argue with him, tell him what I thought, discuss my feelings even about the existence of the God in whom he believed.” (*Walking Through Fire* 76) This is in reference to the fact that her father instilled these values in her throughout his entire life.

Mabrouka, Saadawi's mother's daughter, was another woman who served as a source of motivation for her. For some unknown reason, she hit the village's chief of guards, and word quickly spread across the community about the incident. Everyone, both men and women, discussed her in low voices: A lady with guts whose mother was also a woman with guts evaluated her as a woman who was worth twenty men. Never in the history of the village had a woman ever slapped the face of the man who was in charge of the village guards. According to Saadawi, “She became a figure that inspired awe, and everyone sought her assistance.” (*A Daughter of Isis* 86)

One of the significant events in her life reveals two important truths. The first truth is that her father will continue to be there for her and support her in whatever she does. Second, the traits of leadership that she possesses. During the time that she was in school, she was an active participant in the agitation that was taking place on campus in support of the freedom movement at the national level. The group of individuals who were in charge of leading the protest was on the lookout for a delegate or representative. Someone called out Saadawi's name, and as a result, she emerged as the leader of the ladies who were participating in that uprising. Participation in such protests by educational institutions was strictly forbidden. As was said before, the headmistress at her school communicated her concerns about Saadawi to her daughter's father. Instead of asking questions, On the subject at hand, as was just mentioned, her father backed her up and expressed his confidence in Saadawi, saying that he had faith that she would not instigate riots and insist that other girls join. This episode marked the beginning of Saadawi's involvement in agitations, riots, and other activities supporting women and gender sensitization in public squares. She says this about the freedom that she received from her father: "throughout his life, he taught me self-respect, taught me to argue with him, tell him what I thought, discuss my feelings even about the existence of the God in whom he believed." (*Walking Through Fire* 76)

According to Saadawi, the concept of obedience had an unpleasant ring to it. To her ears, it sounds derogatory, like something that slaves might say to one another. When people kept saying that obedience was a virtue, it seemed to Saadawi that obedience was the exact reverse of what they were saying. "... For it required that I abolish my reasoning and my will, do what people told me to do." (*Walking Through Fire* 75) She describes her first divorce as a one-of-a-kind experience when asked about it. It was compared to a slave being unchained from his shackles, a bird being let free

from its cage, or a prisoner being unchained after having been held behind bars. The divorce papers that she held in her hand felt like a lifeboat that she was clinging to after being rescued from drowning. She claims that “it was a glimmering, shining moment in my life, like that moment when I hold my graduation certificate pressed under my arm, or when I held the first salary envelope in my hand, that moment too was one of freedom.” (*Walking Through Fire* 76) She needed freedom more than anything else, specifically the kind of freedom that would let her focus on her writing. However, her first spouse did not encourage her to continue writing or reading books. She placed a higher priority on her reading and writing than the connection she had with her husband. The committee was against the idea of Saadawi, a woman, performing community service in a remote location after she completed her medical training and became a doctor. They warned me about the dangers of working in remote places for the purpose of having sexual encounters. Saadawi responds to these questions by bringing up the experiences of working women in rural settings. These hard-working ladies in rural areas get up far before dawn to travel to their jobs in the fields. They toil whether it is in the freezing cold of the early morning or the searing heat of the summer sun. They wait to eat until everyone else in the house has finished their meals before returning home at the end of the day to prepare dinner, do the dishes, and make bread. They go barefoot across the hard road and pathway, wear nothing but a gallabeya throughout the year, and put forth significantly more effort than the males do. Saadawi questions the committee, “are not these women members of what you call the fair sex.” (*Walking through Fire* 93) Because of this, the committee gave a favourable response. Aside from their reaction, her remark reveals her resolve and passion for the plights and triumphs of women, regardless of where they live, be it in the country or the city.

Om Ibrahim had been wed for twenty-five long years and had been living with her spouse throughout that time. She was a mother of four children. Simply as a matter of routine, her husband would routinely beat her with the donkey stick every night. According to the Law, a man is required to beat his wife beginning on their wedding night so that they do not forget that God is supreme in heaven and that their husband is supreme on earth. This is to ensure that the woman does not forget that her husband is supreme here on earth. It is a premeditated move on his part to beat his wife so that she will not dare disobey him in any element of her life for the rest of her life and so that her husband's honour will be preserved. Despite the fact that she was still a kid, her parents made the decision to marry her off to Abou Ibrahim. She fled away and hid in the fields, but her parents eventually found her and brought her back. After returning her to her family's home, village Daya, together with her mother and her aunts, kidnapped her and carried her to Abou Ibrahim against her will.

Saadawi had been profoundly affected by the story of Masouda. Her parents compelled her to wed the relative of the person who ran the village when she was only twenty years old and had a bright academic future ahead of her. He was an elderly individual, even more senior than the revered individual who was her father's father. Everyone in the village lived in constant terror of him. It was common knowledge that he had murdered his wife. He had an adult son and daughter living in Cairo, both of whom were married and had children of their own. Masouda's nights spent with him were filled with terror because he would wake her up in the middle of the night by calling her. This caused her to flee the house and hide in the nearby fields. On the other hand, he may go after her and track her down. He orders her to pay attention to his instructions and then to beat her. She clamped her lips together with both of his hands to prevent anyone from hearing her scream for help. Saadawi heard this story several

times from Masouda. The family and other people thought she was either insane or schizophrenic, and they treated her as though she were. People did everything else they could think of to try to keep her quiet and normal, but they were unaware of the pain and turmoil that was going on in her heart. Masouda was under Saadawi's care, and she was looked after by keeping her in the health unit. However, this is not the final chapter in her story. During the course of Saadawi's investigation into Masouda, she discovered that he sexually assaulted and violently beat her on a nightly basis. This went on for a period of five years. This horrified Masouda, and she tried to stifle her anxiety by acting rudely. However, other people mistook her unpleasant behaviour for evidence that she was possessed. Her father and her husband came to the health centre while the treatment was being administered so that they could take Masouda home with them.

Saadawi did all in her power to persuade them and save Masouda, but they responded that “she is the man’s wife according to the Law of Allah and His Prophet, and she does not go back to him of her own free will. He can take her back by force. He is a man, knows what is right, and follows what God tells him to do.” (*Walking Through Fire* 136) Saadawi was speechless and unable to respond to their questions. Because the law is more powerful than medicine, she was powerless to stop them from hauling Masouda out of the hospital. Combining law and religion creates a much more perilous situation. The most heartbreaking part is that later on, Masouda actually spent one week living in the home of her husband. At the beginning of the second week, she failed to show up for work, and her body was later discovered floating in the Nile river. Saadawi was branded as a rebel against the divine Law of Islam and God as a result of his pleading with the authorities to spare Masouda's life. This claim was made by a large number of people, and anything that she wrote or said to support the rights of women was considered to be in violation of the law and religion.

The slave girl, Shalabeya, was a victim of an illegal violation; she was accused of being raped and giving birth to a kid who did not have a father. Shalabeya's child did not have a father. In addition to being a victim of a legal violation, Masouda was legally wedded, legally sexually molested, legally violated, and legally deemed to be possessed. Her passing was likewise legitimised, and no one was held accountable for her passing away.

Saadawi admits that when she was younger, she had the misconception that her father's heart was larger than that of her mother. She believed that her father's heart was able to contain both his love for God and his love for his nation within its confines. She couldn't recall ever hearing her mother talk about religion or the nation they were from. It appeared to Saadawi that being a father was more important than being a mother. But after giving birth to a child, she realised that a mother's heart is larger than that of a father, and that nothing in the entire world is bigger than a mother's heart. This is because a mother does not demand submission in exchange for her love of her kid.

Men in Saadawi's writing performing various gender roles as the members and representatives of social agencies seem to have walked out of her to become her characters. Hence, a detailed reading of her autobiographies becomes an appropriate conclusion to a thesis on the portrayal of men Saadawi's writings. Selective memory is both conscious and subconscious. A writer's choice in representing certain characters with some profiles in particular contexts is deliberate and becomes political when we are reading the articulation of experiences of individuals and groups who have been suppressed, marginalised, silenced and exploited. Saadawi's writings prove this in choosing the experiences of people around her to be represented in her writings. She understands and unveils that men and women are not oppositional binaries but are compelled to act like that due to the social and cultural pressure on individuals to fit

into their gender roles and become agents of hierarchical orders. She understands and unveils that individuals, be it men or women, combine positive and negative qualities particularly in playing gender roles and that transgression and acceptance also have some boundaries and limitations. Saadawi's father is a good example for this. However, like we see her characters through her eyes and lens, we see her father also from her eyes and lens. It is her selective memory that remembers certain traits and decisions of her father. Similarly, it is her choice to represent a certain profile of her father as an individual, as a man, as a husband and as a father.

Saadawi's novels are filled with characters that she has drawn from her life and experiences. Men, caught in their own male ego perpetrated by the patriarchal institutions, torture women in their different roles and with different powers associated with those roles. However, like there are aggressive men and suffering women in her novels and autobiographies, there are also understanding men and resisting women in her writings. Saadawi herself is a rebel in her life, society and politics. She was influenced and inspired by people around her, and she chose her models after a lot of thinking. But, she wanted to retain her individuality and devote her life to the emancipation of women. She wants to go a few steps forward when compared to others given the limitations they had. Like her women characters, Saadawi also expresses her desire to lead an independent life according to her wish and choice, "I would not be like other girls.... or other women in my family, nor did I want to be like my grandmother, or my father, or my uncle or the other men in the family" (*A Daughter of Isis* 2)

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Kalyan Bharati

Journal on Indian History & Culture

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This is to certify that the article entitled

“EXAMINING THE MODERN FEMINIST NARRATIVE STYLES OF MIDDLE EAST THROUGH THE SELECTED NOVELS OF NAWAL EL SAADAWI”

Authored By

Manoj Kanth Sirra

Research Scholar, Central University of Hyderabad

UGC

University Grants Commission

Published in Vol. 36, No.(XV) : 2021
Kalyan Bharati with ISSN : 0976-0822

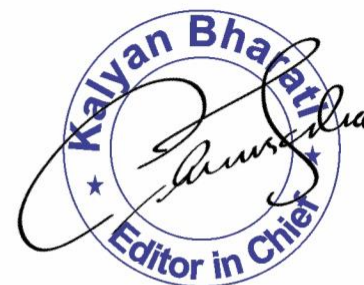
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Impact Factor 5.90



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**“EXAMINING THE MODERN FEMINIST NARRATIVE STYLES OF
MIDDLE EAST THROUGH THE SELECTED NOVELS OF NAWAL
EL SAADAWI”****Manoj Kanth Sirra**

Research Scholar, Central University of Hyderabad

Nawal El Saadawi, an outstanding Arab intellectual and a feminist warrior. Saadawi is a most controversial writer among both Islamic groups in the Middle East and leftist Arab intellectuals in the West. Her activities range from practising medicine to founding and chairing an Arab women's association, from being an employee of the Egyptian government to being its prisoner, and from writing blatant essays on women, sexuality and gender to writing novels, short stories and plays.

Through the years, el-Saadawi has experimented with language, style, ideas, and different genres in writing her novels, thus contributing much to Arabic literature as a whole. Yet, in spite of this experimentation, one constant in her work seems to be her unwavering dedication to women's causes in the Arab world. It is therefore no surprise to note that although the central characters in el-Saadawi's novels may differ in their social class, background, level of education, and upbringing, they have one element in common: they are all women who have been oppressed in some way or the other by a patriarchal society that attempts to render women powerless.

Over the years in the English literature has witnessed several forms of narrative techniques. James Joyce or Virginia Woolf, made experiment with stream of consciousness as a narrative style and were very successful as writers. Writers have used linear and non-linear narrations, first person and author become the one self, and several such unique styles were explored on the global literary stage. Nawal El Saadawi, her writing is very much unique and very experimental in the presenting her characters and thoughts. She primarily wrote in Arabic- a language in itself is attached to the male dominated religion and not free for any violations of the norms in using certain expressions and phrases. Yet, she went along with her thoughts in expressing herself through her words. She hardly spends time in elaborated background description or established the characters in the settings. She engages the reader with her gripping narration. In her novels, time and space are not constant. The scenes moves fro one place to another without being hinted about anything, the time frames moves from present to the past and from past to the present. The reader has to follow the flow of the narration to understand these based on the characters inner thoughts.

She used dream and memory in her narration. Memory is an essential technique that needs to be discussed in the writings of Saadawi. Recollecting something from the past or recalling the memory is part of her narrative technique. Sudden shift or going back to past based on the circumstances is there in all her writings. Recalling the memory happens to the

protagonists as a response to the present happenings or their half-consciousness or unconsciousness force them to recall the past. In most of the occasions memory recalling happens in dream. Dream, memory, duality or multi-perceptions because of unconsciousness are widely used in her writings. “Slowly, distant, half-forgotten images started to emerge from the past” (26, *Woman at Point Zero*).

When the present offers nothing to live in and the past is unforgettable, people for sure recollect things or images from the past, because that is what all that they had. Though these images are very distant and half-forgotten, they appear very fresh and vivid. These images are clear enough to dominate the present.

“Memory is never complete. There are always parts of it that time has amputated. Writing is a way of retrieving them, of bringing the missing parts back to it, of making more holistic”(10, *Daughter of Isis*). Saadawi says so in her autobiography. She strongly believes in sudden recollection of memory. This very personal conviction of Saadawi is deliberately or unknowingly became part of her writings. All her characters do it. Saadawi being hailed from the Egyptian background and since all her characters represent the mere Woman of Egypt or Middle East both share the same experiences. Hence her personal conviction became a common phenomenon for her characters. Memory often emerges in comparison with the present. When something in the present resembles that is there in the past or something that is lacking in comparison with the present, the memory pops out.

Certain memories, takes us back to the past without connecting them to the present. Narrator seems recalling them personally, A sudden shift from present to the past. “Researchers wanted in the archaeology department” (22, *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*). The unnamed woman in this novel sees the newspaper advertisement. Immediately this takes her back to the past where for the first time she saw same kind of advertisement and applied for the post.

This memory is often very short and in some places it runs through number of pages. Present and the past appear separate without merging together with one another. In some places the past merges with present so closely that it becomes very difficult to distinguish them. “*Get the dinner ready*” said he in the tone of someone who had hired a woman to cook for him. There was no space for that in the form she had typed on the typewriter. In the space marked work, she had already written ‘Researcher into goddesses’. ‘*I’m hungry!*’ he cried again in a loud voice.”(24, *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*). The italics in the passage are of the man and the rest of the passage is of the woman. He continues to order her for the food. On the other hand she also continues to stay in her memory. The voice of the man is in the present and the memory from the past of the woman is related to her filling up the application for the department of Archaeology are inseparable.

This merging of past and present into one could be the result of either unconsciousness or a deliberate techniques employed by the author. A kind of cinematic technique, two or more scenes happen in parallel. The man who is passing the orders and the woman living in past

happen in parallel to each other. Archaeology advertisement on the news paper and the woman filling up the application are parallel scenes. The best example is, “on the same page she saw the picture of the interrogator. He was sitting swivelling his chair, his back come to the wall and his face was towards her husband.’ ‘Is this your wife’s photo?’ ‘Yes’”(58, *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*). The narrator says the woman saw the interrogator’s picture on the news paper. From the newspaper the narrator takes the description to the interrogation room, where the interrogator is questioning her husband. Still the woman is there in the unknown place. The flow of blood on the soil from between her thighs, takes the story from Hamida, who is there in Cairo to the bloodshed that happens in the house of Hamida on the feast day for which she was the witness. The scene moves from blood on the ground to blood on the floor.

Dream and memory are inseparable in Saadawi writings. Like the memory in the awaken stage, dreams also have relation with the past. Some dreams reveal the mental agony of the character, and others describe the past in the dreams. After speaking with Wafeya on love, Firdaus slowly goes into sleep. Her conversation on love somehow makes her think of her relationship with Mohammadain. In the dream she reveals her past memory. Slowly, distant, half-forgotten images started to emerge from the night. Her images in the dream are very lively and vivid. This memory is in the form of a dream. In the sleep the sub-conscious without her permission floats with distant images. She even had wept in her sleep. That is the impact of the dream that she had, in the dream her sub-conscious working on her body. Firdaus maintains a good relationship with her hostel superintendent. Both of them share their emotional lives. This emotional bondage with Miss Iqbal emerges in the dream. “I called out, ‘Miss Iqbal’, but all i managed was a mere whisper that failed even to reach my ears. I could hear nothing and my fear increased.” This dream of Firdaus has nothing to do with the past. Her affection on Miss Iqbal is reflected in the dream. In another dream, the woman in *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* closes her eyes and gains control of her breathing. In the dream she tries to remember the face of her mother before she gave birth to her. “She followed the path that she walked along everyday from the house to the school. There was a tree and a long river. She saw her usual place on the bridge where she used to sit at sunset, waiting for the lights to appear” (64, *love in the Kingdom of Oil*). This is a dream that came to the woman in the novel. It’s just a pure recollection of the memory in the dream. Nothing in the present resembles to the dream. Nothing in the ongoing story makes her to think about her childhood days. Yet the dream speaks of the attachment that the woman has towards her aunt, her mother and the time she use to spent at the bridge every day evening.

Dreams are used to convey the internal dialogues, disjointed perceptions and incomplete communications of the characters. Saadawi constructs a narrative through dreams that powerfully perform a searching of sorts, the search for a voice beyond contextual specificity. Searching for something in the past that that character had failed to understand or identify the earlier happens in the dreams. Saadawi makes memory, trans and dream appear three of them are interconnected, one merges with another. Often her narrative makes it difficult to understand the difference. Her characters are always with one of these. Through these

techniques Saadawi along with the characters takes the readers into the psychological journey. Reader moves along with them into the present, into the past through dreams or memory. When living becomes a difficult task and future offers nothing and creates a sense of fear, thoughts become vague. Uncertainty in living at present drags one to the past. Saadawi says, "Things appear clear and beautiful in dreams, reality is a curse. It's hard to live in reality". When she could not fight with everything in her life, the narrator in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* creates her own imaginary world. Reality is a difficult task.

Searching for something doesn't only happen in dreams. This search continues in real life as well as in dreams. In Saadawi writings we see the story on one side and the psychological journey of the characters on the other side. In works like *Searching*, *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*, *Circling song* this inner or characters psychological journey dominates the plot. Their search for the missing link occupies their mind fully and keeps them away from living at present. The story line in *Circling Song* is very simple; Hamida is running away from her family and comes to the Cairo city. Her brother, Hamido runs after her to kill her and wash the shame as ordered by his father. Yet we see uncertainty in Hamida's mind in running away from the family and finding a place to hide herself from her brother as well as from people who are trying to molest her. She is being a teenage girl, her search for her mother among the people on the streets of Cairo. Suffering even for a single loaf of bread, eating from the garbage, the pains she experiences makes the reader understand her state of mind. Hamido also goes through similar experiences. His confusion with his mother's face with someone who wore tarha in Cairo city, tough times in army, searching for his only sister whom he loves so much were spoken out through their internal struggles. The narrator in *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* goes through inner conflict. A psychological journey of a woman doctor: she proclaims that she hates her femininity right from her childhood. Everything in her life makes an impact on her thinking and attitude. Her hatred towards her femininity, towards her family, particularly her mother for bringing her brother and her in gender discrimination was not permanent. At the end of the novel she says, "I'd begun to need a hand to support me. For the first time in my life I felt I needed someone else, something I hadn't felt even about my mother"(100, *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*). The one who hated every relationship, society, science and everything is in need of some supporting hand. "Twenty-five years of my life had passed without my feeling what it was to be a woman" (48, *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*). After going through many phases in her life the narrator comes to this conclusion regarding her femininity. We see a kind of frustration in the narrator, something in her life making her angry and unsatisfied. A psychological trauma for no satisfaction for the life she had. In *Searching* Fouada is an aspirant of a chemical laboratory on her own. Wants to achieve something note worthy in her life and prove her calibre to the world. She is in love relationship with Farid for years. The sudden disappearance of farid from her life leaves a huge impact on her life. We see Fouada constantly searching for him. Her life is fully occupied with her searching for Farid and her goal. Nothing seems happening in the novel except these two things. But we see lot of things that are going on in the mind of Fouada. Her observation of the surroundings, her unconscious deeds, things she do without her knowledge occupies the plot. She hold the

receiver in one hand and dials the familiar five numbers without realizing what she is doing. Steps out into the streets and reaches her office when she does not feel like going there. She goes somewhere and comes back home without any planning. Everything the narrator describes is of Fouada's psychological point of view. Everything that is there in her mind comes in full detailed description. Her journey from her home to the office takes a full length of two pages description in describing everything she see and perceive them.

Saadawi pours out the thought that were there in her protagonist's minds. Every minute thought and observations were part of the story, comes into full description. Nothing is hidden in their inner psyche.

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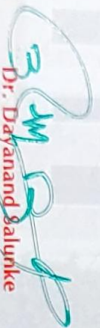
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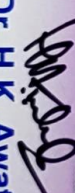
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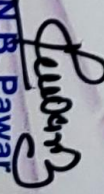
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