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Mohd Amin Mir
M.Phil Research Scholar,
Department of Humanities
Rabindranath Tagore
University, Bhopal,
Madhya Pradesh, India

Dr. Shabina Khan
Assistant Professor,
Department of Humanities,
Rabindranath Tagore,
University, Bhopal,
Madhya Pradesh, India

Correspondence Author:
Mohd Amin Mir
M.Phil Research Scholar,
Department of Humanities
Rabindranath Tagore
University, Bhopal,
Madhya Pradesh, India

Post-colonial representation in novel disgrace (1999)

Mohd Amin Mir and Dr. Shabina Khan

Abstract

Postcolonialism has most common melodies and thematic analysis like “cultural dominance” “racism”, “hunt for ego identity”, “women exploitation”, “racial discrimination” “injustice” “inequality”, “hybridity” along with some unique presentation styles. In pursuance to same, Presents study was intended to investigate the representation of rape and racial revenge in John Maxwell Coetzee’s most controversial Novel, Disgrace (1999). Indeed, this Novel is actual representation of racial tension in post-apartheid climate of South Africa. In its stanch vision at post-apartheid South Africa, Disgrace is a racial book, which offers a dark vision of the post-apartheid South African society as seen by one white male character. Coetzee’s Novel is the factual representation of Post-colonial literature. It predominantly emphasizes on colonial inclinations, racism, apartheid, genocides, protest, displacement, exile, identity crisis, slavery, possession of land, mass executions of the natives, and other subjects. For instance the first racial discrimination has been shown by Lurie. In the novel the racial tension can be seen in the names of several characters.

Keywords: rape representation, racial representation, disgrace (1999)

1. Introduction

The African literature in English has added a new dimension to the world literature today. It represents the colonial and post-colonial crisis within Africa. Colonialism debilitated the natives on different levels: psychological, social, physical, economic, political, sexual etc. Disgrace was published when Nelson Mandela came to power after his release from prison. Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for twenty seven years for fighting against apartheid. Nelson Mandela felt that the period of apartheid should come to an end and he wanted South Africa to be an independent country. After coming to power his National party framed many strict laws to improve the condition of the natives. Nelson Mandela’s dream was to make South Africa as a nation where both the races enjoying equality. Due to his meticulous efforts apartheid came to an end. The aftermath of apartheid made the native people to lead a peaceful life but in turn it made the white people to suffer from various troubles. J.M. Coetzee has dealt with the misery of the white people after the end of apartheid in his novel Disgrace. The white people Lurie and Lucy were made to bear the shame of disgrace by the suppressed natives as Althusser says, “*Class instinct is subjective and spontaneous. Class position is objective and rational*” (13). The native people were suppressed by the whites during apartheid. But during a course of time the whites were made to suffer humiliation in the hands of the native people. Disgrace, a novel set in South Africa, published in the year 1999, won the second Booker prize for the author J.M. Coetzee. “Disgrace is not a comforting book. It is much more: it is a disquieting novel and a landmark achievement” (Leusmann, Rev. of Disgrace 70). J.M. Coetzee in his works has depicted the trauma of the oppressed and marginalized. South African violent politics, terrible history and the theme of vicious apartheid is the background of his novels. “The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (Said 05). The representation of women and their identification has received due weightage in the writings of Coetzee. Keeping in view, Coetzee gave the voice to voiceless people, especially in the black days of post-apartheid system.

1.1 Location of research gap: Disgrace (1999) has embarked international controversy. Thus, after publication of the novel Disgrace the amplification for hot discussions has been emerged throughout the world. Besides, bulky number of the research works has been

operationalized in the domain of post-apartheid system reflected in English writing. However, most worthwhile research studies have been investigated on the writings on John Maxwell Coetzee. The notable research studies have been conducted by; Ahamd, A. (2012) ^[1], Jain, A. (2018) ^[9], Kilpatric, N. (2014) ^[13], Carine, M. (2016), Thoker, Ahamd (2010) ^[24], Van, D. (2006) ^[26], Tove, A. & Jenny, B. (2007) ^[25], Stephen, W. (1986) ^[22] and Stolarek, J. (2013) ^[23]. The results reported in these research studies are less oriented towards post-colonial segments like “cultural dominance” “racism”, “hunt for ego identity”, “women exploitation”, “racial discrimination” “injustice” “inequality”, “hybridity” along with some unique presentation styles. Very few research studies have been conducted on rape and racial representation. So the investigator consider ample gap to explore the below mentioned research problem:

1.2 Problem statement: The research problem under investigation is itemized as:
“Post-colonial representation in novel disgrace (1999)”

1.3 Aim of the study: The novel Disgrace (1999) was racial in its thematic analysis. So in pursuance to same, the presents study was intended to investigate the sexual and racial representation in context of post-colonial ethos.

1.4 Justification of the study: Being the first book Disgrace authentically paints the situation prevailed in post-apartheid South Africa. It brings out the suffering of white minority in South African society. The author has captured their trauma of seeing themselves as oppressed and marginalized. J.M. Coetzee brings out the problems of the marginalized and the dispossessed people. The plot of the novel is set in the late 1990's. In South Africa Post-apartheid Constitution was adopted in May 1996 which declared that every race was considered equal and power was transferred from whites to natives. The entire social set up was reversed. The story happens after apartheid where white people suffer under the hands of native people. History gradually took a twist and in South Africa after apartheid it is the whites who are oppressed and victimized. “The wounds of the past are inflicted on the now weaker, marginalized section of the society represented by the whites”. The central protagonist of the novel namely professor Lurie practices these disgraceful events in his specialized life. His romantic desire based ideology and prestigious profession gave him jolts of disgrace. Disgrace is the story of grown up in teaching environment. David Lurie is professor by his profession in Cape Technical University. In the novel “Disgrace” Lurie an familiar, somewhat ill-fated white, professor two times divorced and is living alienated days of life with one grown-up daughter namely Lucy. In the initial stage the Novel “Disgrace” interprets the sexual engagement of David Lurie with a Muslim student called Soraya whom she has been going to week by week for over a year. In the Noval David has been shown as a professor by his profession with the age of fifty two. The opening sentence of the novel knocks the door of disgrace, like: “*For a man of his age, fifty-two, separated, he has, to his mind, tackled the issue of sex rather well!*” (Coetzee: Disgrace, 1999, P-1). After getting two times divorce, Professor David Lurie at sexual exploitation of her

student contemplates it is legal to enjoy women's beauty and consider it legal to having sex with them. He called women as a “*Natural Bounty in the shall of man's life*” and according to him sharing her beauty is duty of women and subsequently harassed sexually to his student (Melanie Isaac). The Melanie Isaac was sexually harassed on the basis of “*racial discrimination*”, which indicate the tile of the present research study is justified. David Lurie ideology was backed by racism existing in South Africa. In regard to some, Jihan, M. & Zakarriya, M. (2014) ^[11] explored that “*Melanie Isaacs in Disgrace was sexually exploited because of their racial backgrounds*”. Thus, it is inferred that sex of female bodies was used as a tool for taking pleasure thorough racial revenge. In the meantime, Lurie is supporting the illegal justification on exploiting the Malanie by arguing that she accepted politely my sexual sharing and never resist her approach. “*She does not resist. All she does is averting herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes*” (Coetzee: Disgrace, 1999, Pp.25). The connection misshapen because of Lurie's thrilling keenness and devil-may-care attitude once again indicate that female bodies were used s sexual tools in post-apartheid system. The plot of the novel is full with the representation of rape on racial grounds. Ahamd, A. (2012) ^[1] argued that Disagree is actually the black and white representation reflected by Coetzee in post-apartheid system. In consonance to same Tove, A. (2009) remarked;

“Disgrace takes place in post-Apartheid South Africa where there is a great mixture of the people from entire world. It is the place where black and white tension was deep rooted”. (Tove, A. In Control or in Despair, 2009 Pp.6-9)

In the novel, the second rape victim was Professor David Lurie's daughter Lucy. The white clour Lucy was gang raped by the conspiracy of black clour Petrus. It has been observed that sometimes justification and reasons emerge blind infront of source of conflict. So integration and emotional bonding cannot be shaped on the basis of these polluted reasons and justifications. In Disgrace, Petrus overuses his reason on his relationship with Lucy. As a matter of fact he has paid a trio of goons to rape Lucy and vandalise her items. The situation is described as follows:

“...the three are there, waiting for them. The two men stand at remove while the boys besides, the cage, kiss at the dog and make sudden threatening gestures. The dogs in a rage, bark and snap. Petrus calls Lucy. Get away from the dogs; she shouts “Hamba!” the boy saunters off and re-join his companions”.
(.....Disgrace 1999).

Petrus is in fact Lucy's best collaborator. He often handles the dogs of Lucy in Lucy's garden. But as one can never imagine that such a faithful human can play barbaric role in the life of Lucy, Lucy starts getting afraid when she calls Petrus and realizes that nobody reacts. It is the first time when Lucy realises that she is among strangers. The terrible episode of theses goons has been narrated as under:

“He has a flat, expressionless face and piggish eyes; he wears a flowered shirt baggy trouser, a little yellow sun hat. His companions are both in overalls. The taller of them is handsome, strikingly handsome, with a high

forehead, sculpted cheekbones, wide flaring nostrils". (Coetzee: *Disgrace*, 1999, P-97).

Virtually speaking, violence in J.M. Coetzee's intellectual work is all-pervasive without having the delimitations. While men swift hunt for their power in terms of male domination, sexuality, rape, molestation and desire, women tried to comprehend their roles in life in relation to their self-esteem and rights as human beings. As observed in the novel, Melanie submitted a formal complaint against David while Lucy refused to submit the same complaint and insists her father on staying in her farm. With this view point Coetzee shows men are locked within the past and are enslaved by what Said, E. (1978) [20] calls "the imperial ideology".

The allegory of the black rapist is ventured with the reality of the white rapist. Edward Said elucidates that imperialist ideology obtains a kind of steadiness, a set of experiences that endure elsewhere the official end of the imperial regime:

"The meaning of the imperial past is not totally contained within it, but has entered the reality of hundreds of millions of people, where its existence as shared memory and as a highly conflict texture of culture, ideology, and policy still exercises tremendous force". (Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Pp. 12, 44-45).

Politically speaking, the disgraceful events of the novel have historical significance. On Allergy basis Coetzee has used South Africa It highlights the so-called governing system of apartheid in which race was used to discriminate people. Lastly, apartheid is being documented as an unjust method of social structuring where Lurie and Lucy's (Father and daughter) status is reduced to a dog. Lucy says to her father,

Lucy: "indeed it is embarrassing ... Perhaps it is what I have to accept. With ... no honor, no property, no rights, no dignity.

Lurie replies: like a dog.

Lucy responds: yes, like a dog". (John Maxwell Coetzee *Disgrace* Pp. 205).

Lucy realizes that the socio-political situation in South Africa has been completely reversed and the natives hold the reign of power. And her father David Lurie was not able to help and save her from the danger. "...This is not a despairing book. It is just honest about the fear of Afrikaners in a country they once ruled with brutality, and about the fear of a man growing old alone" It is not safe for a woman to live alone in the farm. Especially white women live in constant fear of being attacked by the native people. From the beginning till the end David Lurie suffers from devastating humiliation. Keeping in view, Carine, M. (2016) in his article "Rape and violence representation in John Maxwell Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*". "Argued that by establishing parallel between two rape episodes, Coetzee highlighted how the critical attention paid to black on white sexual violence in the so-called liberal governance of South Africa, subsequently the investigator justified the title. Coetzee in *Disgrace* presents a somewhat dark world of post-apartheid South Africa but a ray of hope suddenly flashes across this dismal world when he narrates Lurie's journey from disgrace to grace" (Gayle, R. (1984) [8]. Lurie

faced all the adverse situations and he was forced to undergo the punishment for violating his professional values. David Lurie was reduced from a genuine human being to an ordinary man who was punished for his sexual weakness. The novel ends with David Lurie bringing a dog to kill. Lurie gives up his ideological stand and by dedicating himself in the service to the society.

2. Conclusion

Thus, to conclude the investigator can argue that *Disgrace* explores the post-apartheid climate of South Africa. Thus to conclude, J.M Coetzee's novels "*Disgrace*" shows struggle of brutality and exploitation through "racial chain" of command which was changed in contemporary South Africa. A peaceful side note to this is its investigation of man's dishonourable treatment of creatures. '*Disgrace*' is a heart wrenching and unbiased tale about the state of the human involvement with the finish of the twentieth century; while not out and out without trust, the book and its title are a judgment of the essential condition of current humankind. To close, this practical representation of an ethically degraded teacher's is yielding the fruits of his ethical degradation through the rape of his innocent daughter Lucy. However, managing the results of his sexual hostility records the dull and brutal side of post-politically sanctioned racial segregation life in South Africa. J. M. Coetzee's main intention in *Disgrace* was to portray the inequality among races prevalent in South Africa in the year 1999. Political system was corrupt and safety of the people was not ensured. Even though apartheid was on the edge of decline the native people were assaulted. Certain white people like Lucy and Lurie also became victims of racial violence. Attacks on whites became common in post-apartheid South Africa. So the white people surrendered their land to the natives and fled the country. Few people like Lucy stayed with determination and faced the problems. J. M. Coetzee has authentically described the state of the white minority in a post-apartheid country in this novel.

3. Conflict of interest: During the entire research process, the investigator has not declared any conflict of interest.

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