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TRAUMA ON MARGINALIZED IN SELECT INDIAN AND AFRICAN PLANTATION NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Plantation is the place of exploitation and ingrains into capitalism and feudalism. It is the heart of paradise and the device of the plantation economy, the house in the middle of a tamed landscape. The plantation is a decadent, a sealed place that cannot evolve because it is built on slavery. The blending of poverty and slavery figurine decorum highlights the plight of plantation regime. They are eroticized and their scars are paraded as epitomes of white's supremacy, and inscribed in the world history alike. Even the whole plantation is intertwined with the beautiful backdrop, there is no more a romance, love or beauty, it only includes bitterness, violence and exploitation and injustice to the poor coolies. The aim of this paper is to project the trauma on bonded laborers in select Indian and African plantations novels.

KEYWORDS:

Plantation, Indian, African, Bonded labourers, Exploitation

INTRODUCTION

"Literature is the expressions of thoughts of society. Books are specimens of the conversation of an age, preserved in the spirit of taste and of genius".

Professor Huxley

Literature is the mirror of society which has major impact on the development of society. Literature and society are not mutually elite but rather a replication of one another. in par with its flexible nature. Therefore, the concept of green literature and its core relation with ecological development today remains crucial and has moved from its peripheral position to the center of academic discourse, determined by the current study of literature in relation to environment and ecology.

Green literature has today given birth to some exponents who are using literature to celebrate

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the environment known as eco critics. Eco criticism which came up in early 40s is the study of relationship between literature and the environment, which in some way is connected with human relationship to the natural world. Plantations played a significant role in the area of green literature. As a result for very observable reasons, colonialism and neo- colonialism had an unprecedented impact on plantation.

A plantation is a large land mass or estate which cultivates one type of crop. Crops grown on plantations include sugar cane, rubber, coffee, tea and tobacco. These plantations served as a symbol for a contested cultural and popular historiography in which they mourned and are being largely ignored in the context of Indian English literature. The struggle for independence was such a significant event, that it is bound to influence the ideology of every socially conscious writer. Especially the Gandhian Era which made the common man plunge into the freedom struggle to fight against the social evils such as caste system, untouchability, poverty and exploitation. India being a large agricultural country, most of the peasants are living in poverty and are at the mercy of their landlords and the money lenders.

The laws of the land are in favour of the landlords and money lenders. The conditions of the landless people in the village is miserable .Many of the poor migrate to cities to work as coolies, domestic servants, and factory workers and are exploited wherever they go. The plight of the coolies on tea estates and coffee plantation are even worse as the plantation farms resembled jails. Indian struggle for political freedom running parallel to the struggle for social freedom inspired the Indian writers to reflect this social and political upsurge. They focused on the underprivileged, the economically exploited, and the socially oppressed and politically subjugated classes.

This paper draws attention to the impact of plantation life, the exploitation, and suppression of the downtrodden in Indian and African plantations. Both the Indian and the African novels reflected the existing society as it is. Indian writers examine minutely the sensibility and foibles of the way of life of the poor workers who are humiliated and exploited by the landlords and aristocratic people. In the same way the African novels explore the relationship between plantation labourers and exploitation in the African society.

The Indian plantation novel taken for discussion is Mulk Raj Anand's "*Two Leaves and a Bud*". This novel summarizes social realism in light of their contribution to alerting the elite Indian society to the sufferings of the marginalized masses caused by inhuman but ingrained religious, social institutes in our tradition bound country. Indian novelists in English, undoubtedly, as writers had a strong commitment to expose the social evils of inequality and exploitation of the marginalized communities. Anand's "*Two Leaves and a Bud*" reflects the poverty and misery of the Indian downtrodden that affects their entire family. Anand depicts the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the exploiters and the subjugated, the rulers and the ruled. Commenting more explicitly on the sufferings imposed upon the Indian labourer by their British masters in their novels.

Mulk Raj Anand's "*Two Leaves and a Bud*" portrays the oppressed coolies of the Assam tea estates which were managed by the British. The novel revealed the truth about how British masters exploited the native bonded labourers. The novel starts with the journey of Gangu, a middle aged peasant who falls into the hands of money lenders and loses his land. Gangu lured by Buta, a labour agent leaves his home and comes to work in the plantation. The promise of good wages and piece of fertile land are temptations which are too strong to resist for Gangu. But soon arriving at the Tea estate

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Gangu realised that he had been cheated by the vile Buta. A coolie, Narain, discloses that once a coolie comes there, he would neither be able to go back on his own free will nor be allowed to escape. The coolies are allotted small thatched huts which are dirty where hookworms breed and thrive in abundance.

Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager of estate tortured the male labourers and gave long hours of continuous work under rigorous supervision of the British planters and the Indian sardars. Male coolies are very frequently abused and brutally whipped without mercy. Low wages and cruelty of money lenders are all that their life processed of continuous and complete dedication to their job of plucking "two leaves and a bud" makes the refrain get into the very souls of the labourers. The planters adopt the attitude of nonchalance and frequent punishments are the reward to the coolies. For them the labourers are subhuman creatures who will live even if their simplest needs are not fulfilled. Gangu's wife Sajani gets infected with malaria and dies without proper treatment. Gangu's sorrow is augmented by the worry that he has no money to buy a red cloth and to make a bamboo hearse for her funeral. He begs each and every supervisors and managers to give money to do his wife final cremation but no one helped him. At last Gangu borrows money from the money lender Baniya and cremates his wife.

In the world of Tea plantations women and children too have to trail for long hours for a pittance a major part of which is very frequently deducted on the pretext of bad plucking. The women are perilously exposed to any sexual assault by some lustful British people, particularly Reggie Hunt. He tries to seduce Gangu's daughter Leila in the tea garden. She shouts and runs back to the hut as she is afraid of the white manhunt follows her and calls her out. Gangu rushes to the spot to save Leila from his revals but he is indiscreetly fired and shot death at the point of Reggie's gun. Leila's escape in her hut has resulted in the death of Gangu. In the end Gangu dies at the hands of the exploiter without any fault of his own. However he does not die the death of a hero. He on the contrary dies like one of the millions of coolies who die of poverty, hungry and exploitation.

This novel highlights the social evils in myriad manifestations and has unveiled many different layers of human experience. The stories contrast the silent tragedy in the lives of the poor coolies with tawdry self-complacency of the British tea plantation owners, as well as the greedy grasping of the Indian merchant and money lenders. Reggie Hunt, the Assistant Manager of Tea Estate, treats all coolies as inferior human beings and whips them. He is always drunk and symbolizes cruelty, untamed animalist and unmitigated evil. Reggie whips those coolies who mess-up forward beneath a load of undergrowth on his way with an accusation.

The African novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe's initial purpose of writing Uncle Tom's Cabin is to contribute to debate about slavery. It is not a novel with the purpose to claim anything like everybody's equal rights, but through sentimental and religious ways preaching that slavery was wrong. One has to bear in mind that the concerned of coolies or the slaves play a highly important role in the society. By presenting to the audience a slave character, such as Tom, one could say that Stowe wants to show the readers that slaves could be as human as any white.

Uncle Tom's cabin opens as Mr. Shelby and slave trader, Mr. Haley, discuss how many slaves Mr. Shelby will need to sell in order to clear his dept. Despite his misgivings, Mr. Shelby decides to sell Tom, a faithful and honest man and Harry, the son of Eliza. As Eliza overhears that her son has been sold and makes a decision to take him and away to Canada that very night. Because of slavery's investment of slave 'body as a means of production, the long exploited slaves are impelled to regard their own bodies

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as the properties of slaves-owners. Consequently no sense of selfhood is formed and developed in them. At the first plantation Tom is treated rather well, but even in life threatening situations, the narrator shows that he will not give up his spirituality. After Tom has been sold to Simon Legree and what will become his last plantation. The fact is that Tom here chooses acceptance before rebellion for religious reasons. At the first plantation, Mr. Shelby treats him with as much respect as is possible for a slave owner, and so does the second plantation owner, St. Clare, who promises Tom his freedom but, before he finishes making out the papers, he is killed in a barroom brawl. Tom is sold at auction; along with many of the other St. Clare slave. Tom's new master Simon Legree, an evil and violent man works as slaves until they die, then buys new ones cheaply in a never-ending cycle. At Simon Legree's, the slaves have to stand the worst kind of treatment, and it is hard to assume that people would accept that if there was a chance out. One can easily presume that the slaves, affected by the enslavement, do not dare to see a way out. Thus it is plain to see that Stowe recognized the problems with slavery and saw a colonization of Liberia as a solution to these.

To represent evil, Beecher Stowe chooses the character of Simon Legree, who is the most atheistic and villainous character. He is the owner of many slaves, even the owner of Tom at the end of the novel. His slaves suffer sexual abuse and even murder; for this reason, he shows the worst aspect of slavery, even though slavery is bad from any point of view. Legree is an example of a character who does not feel any kind of compassion for the slaves; he is considered the antagonist while Tom is the hero. Tom endures physical pain in Simon Legree's hands because he refuses to punish another slave and became an overseer. Similarly when Tom encourages two female slaves to escape, Legree beats Tom to death. It takes a few days for him to die, however, and in the meantime, his old master son' George Shelby, arrives to free Tom- too late. Instead 'master" George buries Tom and leaves. African society has been under attack of race and colour. The African novel has almost succeeded in presenting the shame and the violent emotions of racially harassed, debased and disgraced plantation masters.

Indian and African plantation novels responded to the social demands of their time creatively by writing fiction highlighting the unequal treatment and the injustices done to the racially inferior, economically poor people of their respective societies. In the societies of different countries also had widened conflicts depend on race and color, Thus in the African society the blacks are kept at a distance and they are denied freedom and equality.

Seen against this context, the role of Indian writers and African writers assume great significance. Mulk Raj Anand has almost succeeded in presenting the inner feelings of under-privileged plantation workers. Very movingly they bring out the agonizing and trauma life of the marginalized people. They have succeeded in making these 'invisible' people visible to the society. Thus these Indian plantation novels speak of various types of atrocities on mankind especially the poor and weak people focusing darker side of Indian society more humanely. The presentation of social exploitation in various segments of the society underlines the necessity of achieving equality and freedom and making the society a meaningful entity.

In the same way, Harriet Beecher Stowe's focuses on the human qualities of plantation slave labourers in a starkly realistic manner, they depict the cruelty, the violence and the purposeless drifting in the black lives.

Comparatively speaking, African literature has no solid literary traditions. Most of their early literatures are imitations of the British and American literature. The African novel, in its complexity of

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expression and elusiveness of meaning, is in par with the modern fiction. But in opposing the establishment, and in portraying the protagonists as underdogs, it differs entirely from the mainstream American novel. It presents forcefully the plight of the blacks suffering from colour prejudice and racial hatred.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, Indian literature settled with an ancient and rich inherited tradition. Indian plantation novels portray the degrading effect of the marginalized, illiterate, poverty-stricken people. It was directed towards poor people who are tormented by poverty and exploitation. In both Indian and African plantation, the society is held responsible for the sufferings of the poor and downtrodden. While in Indian plantation the British ruling society is held for victimizing the poor, in African, it is seen in the rigid and destructive plantation owners. As humanist, writers like Mulk Raj Anand and Harriet Beecher Stowe, share and expose the agonies of the oppressed and poverty stricken plantation workers. the novelist do not create valiant heroes and virtuous heroines but only highlight the sufferings of the weak, depict the struggle they wage for their survival and portrayal of their aspirations, exploitation, failures and sufferings. And in one way or another they strive for love and freedom and in their endeavor they radiate humanism; Indian and African novels make us recognize the plight and victimization of the poor and downtrodden whose struggle to live is in the hands of the merciless rulers and landowners.

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