



Neo-Colonialism in *The Grass is Singing*



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ABSTRACT

Novel 'The Grass is Singing' is savage and stark indictment of South Africa's apartheid system. It depicts white culture in which racist and prejudiced attitudes are deeply rooted. Mary Turner is extreme in her racism. Under the pressure of society and its harsh criticism on her loneliness she decides to marry a farmer. But she is not happy with Dick. She could not get proper satisfaction by her husband. Her hatred for blacks increases. Mentally she is completely frustrated. More she resist black servant more she persists. In her effort to control over Moses she loses her control on her

feelings. The Grass is Singing' takes place Southern Rhodesia in southern Africa during the 1940s and deals with racial politics between whites and black in that country. The novel created sensation when it was first published and became an instant success in Europe and the United States. Novel is about oppressed and oppressors. It is delicate and sensitive subject. Mary Turner though independent she desire to get married but jumps from frying pan into fire. Her frustration of married life is transformed into increasing feeling of insecurity and extreme racism.

RESEARCH PAPER

Introduction

Neocolonialism is the geopolitical practice of using capitalism, business, globalization and culturalism, imperialism to influence a country, in lieu of either direct military control or indirect political control i.e. imperialism and hegemony. The term neocolonialism was coined by Ghanaian president Krumah to describe the socio-economic and political control that can be exercised economically, linguistically and culturally whereby promotion of the culture of the neocolonist country facilitates the cultural assimilation of the colonized people and thus opens national economy to the multinational corporations of the neocolonial country. The result of neocolonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for development of the less developed parts of the world. Investment under neocolonialism, increases, rather than decreases, the gap between the rich and poor countries of the world. The struggle against neocolonialism is not aimed at excluding the capital of the developed world from operating in less developed countries. It aimed at preventing the financial power of the developed countries being used in such a way as to impoverish the less developed.

Colonialism

In ‘Colonialism and Neocolonialism’ Sartre’s way of showing the French that their practices in their colonies were far from the French belief of ‘liberty’, ‘equality’, ‘fraternity’, given by Rousseau. Kwame Nkrumah in 1965 said that neo-colonialism is the most dangerous stage. This new form of colonialism traps African countries economically, culturally. For western thinkers human rights are much important for welfare of whole world. But western action is not signs of their good thought. Wherever they spread colonies they exploited that land for their factories and their welfare. Colonialism is generally conquering of one race by another, conquering of the black races by white races. The colonizers use different strategies to sustain their regime. The white races try to justify their imperial regime. They try to show that their race is superiors and race of others is inferior.

Doris Lessing’s first novel ‘The Grass is Singing’ shows impact of colonialism on black and their psychology. It was published in 1950. Lessing speaks about colonialism in her introduction to her African Stories:

‘When the white man arrived [in south Africa], they saw themselves as civilizers. They knew nothing about the people they conquered....what they knew was to put to their own uses. For instance, the men recruiting black labour for the mines took a look at the old custom that a girl would not marry a young man who had not proved himself in war in hunt: and then substituted for it the idea that a young man who had not worked in the mines was a ‘mompara’, a fool- he had not proved himself a man- [something very useful to the mine-owners].

Fascist Paradise

Doris Lessing is one of the most powerful and significant novelist. She has written about the clash of cultures, the gross injustices of racial inequality, the struggle among opposing elements within an individual's own personality and the conflict between the individual's conscience and collective good. Her novels picture impact of colonialism on life and psychology of natives. Her novels show her total perception, keen observation, knowledge about human predicament and problem of survival. Lessing calls Africa as 'fascist paradise'. She harshly criticizes on politics and hypocrisy of colonialism and colonizers respectively. She says 'Africa gives you the knowledge that man is small creature, among other creatures in a large landscape. This knowledge teaches horrible realities about colonizers who inflicted humiliations on black.

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Marriage is destiny

The novel begins with a cutting from newspaper article about the death of Mary Turner. It says that Mary Turner, a white woman, was killed by her black servant Moses for money. The author of article is unknown. The news actually acts like an omen for other white people living in that African setting. After looking at the article, people started gossiping as it was expected for them. The plot of novel shifts to a flashback of Mary Turner's past life up to her murder at the hand of Moses. Mary has happy and satisfied life as a single white Rhodesian woman. She has a fine job, numerous friends and she enjoyed her free life. At the party she eavesdrop derogatory remark about her spinsterhood, she resolves to marry. Simone De Beauvoir, French intellectual, existentialist philosopher a pioneer of modern feminism observes that 'marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to woman by society

Racism

She marries Dick Turner who is white farmer struggling to be rich. Lack of intimacy in their relationship brought dryness in their life Mary could not enjoy due to poverty but there is commitment. Because of their poverty Dick refuses to give Mary a child. They do not attend social events, mix in any district dances. Mary feels an intimate connection with the nature around her though being in general rather unexplorable in nature. Mary is overtly racist, believing that ethics should be masters over the native blacks. Dick and Mary both often complain about the lack of work ethic among the natives that work in their farm. Mary is quite cruel to workers. She treats herself as their master and superior. She shows contempt for natives and finds disgusting and animals like. She makes them to work harder, reduces their break time and arbitrarily takes money from their pay. At one side she had to keep dignity and prestige of

white race but at other side she had to fight with her inner deep desires. It was like chaos of conflict she was nourishing and fighting with. Her childhood memories reinforced her fears and beliefs.

Charlie Slatter is their nearest neighbor. He was grocer's assistant in London. He knows Turners quite well. He is spokesman of white civilization. He exploits the labour of the blacks on his farm for profit making for more than twenty years. There is only master-servant relationship. His relationship with black is characterized by the feeling of contempt and domination. His only goal is to make money. He is a cruel, brutal ruthless. He farmed as if he is turning the handle of a machine which would produce pound notes at the other end. He was hard with his wife, children, farm labours. Though Charlie was young Englishman he had a rooted contempt for soft-faced, soft-voiced Englishmen, combined with a fascination for their manner and breeding.

Colonial Consciousness

Black policemen were not permitted to touch white men even for their duties. Dominant colonizers were very much conscious about their position. This novel is indictment on their hypocrisy. Colonialism is generally conquering of one race by another, conquering of the black races by the white races. The colonizers use different strategies to sustain their regime. The white races try to justify their imperial regime. They try to educate and create colonial consciousness in the mind of colonized people. They try to show their race is superior and race of others is inferior.

Mary Turner is protagonist of this novel 'The Grass is Singing'. her father is alcohol addict. Since her childhood she had witnessed poverty stricken family circumstances. She observes conservative mentality of their white family. It created profound impact on her personality. She becomes successful in getting job of a typist and becomes independent. She was made aware of her loneliness by gossips of society. It hurts her deeply. She tries to adjust herself according to expectations of society.

Mary Turner decides to marry only due to pressure of society. Every woman has to enter into married life to stop taunting by society. Society harasses her with taunts and insulting words. it is supposed that she will get stability after marriage. But it has adverse impact on her life. Mary chooses to leave the town and settle in the country with Dick who is a farm owner. Dick however, views marriage as a romantic voyage that is socially acknowledged and approved. Dick is submissive in nature. She becomes dominant but disappointed due to lack of bravery in Dick. Dick could not fulfill her expectations of exciting and romantic life. Gradually she felt frustration and sense of insecurity. She had bitter memories of her parents of her childhood. She could not develop hearty physical relationship with Dick.

Color Bar

She becomes arrogant and treats black workers in her farm cruelly. In her unhappy life there is entry of black servant. Moses was her servant who was strong and cunning. There was fear in her mind she may lose control over her own feelings and control over servant. He will take hold of her in his hand. Two forces were at war in her psychology. There was big turmoil. And she surrendered herself to Moses. He gradually became well familiar with her daily routine, her needs and problems. She developed more affection for him. When there is need of physique ‘color bar’ is broken and crossed all borders to become intimate with black. Moses took revenge on her and murdered her. Novel begins with news of murder. It is defeat of dominant race. Deeply disturbed and wounded black took revenge for justice and for catharsis of suppressed voice,

Mary is victim of white hypocrisy and patriarchal society. Her self was repressed. Psychologically she was restless and unsatisfied. Being a white woman she could not get proper outlet to her repressed feelings. To maintain dignity and prestige of white race her behaviour became very much artificial and arrogant. Farm labourer tolerated her cruelty. But Moses became successful in taking revenge on her. Lessing depicts a world in which truths are not the immediately presented facts but rather the dark secrets that characters are unwilling to see around them or within themselves. Racial discrimination, subjection domination is central theme of this novel. She exposes hypocrisy of one race and gives voice to downtrodden race. Harsh, bitter satirical criticism is forte of Lessing. European colonizers were greedy for wealth and power. For their ambition, they followed brutal way of colonialism. Mind imprisoned in cruelty and vices could not observe humanity, kindness.

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