



Detestation on Racial Identity in Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*

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Abstract :

This article deals with the inner conscious of the characters on their racial identity, by Doris Lessing in her novel *The Grass is Singing*. The novel sets in Southern Rhodesia (present Zimbabwe) during the white colonization. Each character had a inner sociological perspective towards the natives on their racial position. The internal perspective of each white character in the novel, they feel superiority over blacks even if they themselves poor and sunk in debt. Their idea is even if they feel ignorant psychologically, they will show their domination towards the natives. This is the analysis of internalization of characters on racism. Mary Turner, the protagonist whose internal idea is, she should treat the blacks as slaves, behaving rude to them, assisting works which are not actually necessary to her, only because of her inner deep hatred towards the black people.

Keynotes : hatred , racism, colonialism

As Mary lived in the town, it didn't happened her to encounter Black people. After her marriage with the farmer Dick Turner, she had to face native house boy and farm workers. She hated to be with a black man in her house. She feels discomfort and wanted to send him off. The whites usually be careful with the native slaves as they may rob something and may murder white people because of their act. Mary blamed her houseboy that he had stolen their food and fired him. Even though the house work was new to her, she don't want any black men in her house, as she had detestation towards them. She couldn't accept them even as slaves. As it was a colonization period in Africa, the black people, in order to run their living

they have to work under the dominating whites even they hate them. When another other boy came to them, Mary annoyed him severely for he arranged the supper table badly. She dismissed him at once. She hated the way they behave and doing errands. Mary hated the houseboys even they did their works good. The black men also behave in a humble manner even being annoyed mercilessly. They felt that they don't have rights to speak against the whites. They should obey their commands at any ease. The house boys will know how the white women will blast at them and how should they remain humble again. The whites treated them as a machine.

“She never thought of natives as people who had to eat or sleep: they were either their, or they were not, and what their lives were when they were out of her sight she had never paused to think “.

Mary also felt intense disgust for black women. The way they crowd and chat one another, the way they have their babes in hand. She could not stay there longer, she disliked to see them and stopped running store. When Dick was ill, due to the compulsion of time, Mary stepped to farm. There she saw native people, their thatched hut, native women draped in dirty store-stuff. She saw the gaze of eyes at her appearance, children whispering to each other. Mary hated to be there. In the farm she behaves arrogant to the native workers. She reduced the wages of workers who were late to work and were absent. She forced them to do heavy work. She rarely gave them break. She felt bad to watch them. She feel a sense of authority over them.

“She hated their half-naked, thick-musclcd black bodies stopping in the mindless rhythm of their work. She hated their sullenness, their averted eyes when they spoke to her, their veiled insolence: and she hated more than anything, with a violent physical repulsion, the heavy smell that came from them, a hot, sour animal smell”.

Mary hates native men speaking English. She felt authority in her own language. She also forbids them to speak their own language. She thought that the language English can be own only to the whites and blacks have no rights in that language. She couldn't bare them speaking English to her and she ask them to stop. She scolds them often and gave more rules to follow. The natives also didn't spoke against her or state their justice. They feel, that is the way they should be treated and that is their fate to be hated by the whites.

“But most white people think it is ‘cheek’ if a native speaks English. said breathless with anger, ‘Don’t speak English to me,’ and then stopped. This man was shrugging and smiling and turning his eyes up to heaven as if protesting that she had forbidden him to speak his own language”.

The black workers made their mind to accept the tortures and irritation of the white women. The blacks were not accepted as slaves and not accepted even they are kind by the whites. In farm one of the worker asked Mary to allow him to drink water, he asked in somewhat a crazy manner like pointing his finger in throat, the other natives laughed at it and Mary was mad with anger. She don't want those niggers to laugh in between their work. With speechless anger, she whips one of the worker which splashed his blood to chest. Even though she had some fear of those mighty men, she didn't show her weakness but outpours her anger and authority more on those black workers. She just saw them as an animal which should not react on whatever she does.

Charlie Slatter is the only neighboring family of Turners. He too hate the natives and had a sense of authority over them. Charlie don't like Dick treating his houseboy equal and genuine without any racial discrimination. He scolds Dick, for not being harsh to the houseboy and the farm workers. In Charlie's perspective, the natives were barbarous people, who were useful only to be slave workers. He also had farm working with natives. Charlie also treats blacks as animals and had a sense of authority towards them. He used sjambok, a hard leather whip to lash the blacks on farming. He hung that in his front door, that shows the horror how he might use his workers. Charlie also advised Dick to use sjamboks, as a white men should have that to handle the black workers.

“Slatter believed in farming with sjambok. It hung over his front door, like a motto on a wall: ‘You shall not mind killing if it is necessary.’ He had once killed a native in a fit of temper. He was fined thirty pounds. Since then he had kept his temper.”

Charlie wants the blacks to speak in a humble voice even however the white shouts at them. They don't have rights to show their abrupt in their reply. They can't raise their voice if they felt unpleasant. When Charlie was dining in Dick's house, he could see the houseboy Moses replied to Mary in a tone of disrespectful ill-tempered manner repeatedly. Charlie tensed on his haughtiness, and was speechless. He was looking at Mary and Dick again and again, and was about to shout at them for been lenient to the black servant.

“Why don't you get rid of him? Why do you let him speak to you like that?”.... Shout out suddenly at the native: ‘Get away from there. Get on with your work.’.... The big native disappeared, responding at once to the command. “

Charlie don't want other white people to treat the natives mildly. He don't want his fellow whites to be lower than blacks, if it was so, the blacks might feel themselves good and genuine than the white sovereignty. Charlie don't want the natives to act superior to whites. He consider this as the law of White South Africa. He want the blacks to be slaves and ignorant forever. Charlie was not able to tolerate the white man behaving to natives, raising their tone towards whites. His racism is at longer extend.

Another character Tony Marston in this novel, who shows a heavy bitterness towards the blacks at his youth. During the colonization period, middle aged white men having dislike towards blacks are seen in this novel but the young people also had such kind of same hatred towards black. Tony was an idealistic young Englishman. When Tony saw Moses dressing up Marry, he was tuned motionless by surprise. He hate to see that action, black man in white woman's room. He felt this as an evidence of white ruling class' hypocrisy.

“At the same time his ‘progressiveness’ was deliciously flattered by this evidence of white ruling-class hypocrisy. For in a country where colored children appear plentifully among the natives wherever a lonely white man is stationed, hypocrisy...”

He thought that, Mary is easily avoiding the barrier. Even though he had read about the psychology on sexual aspect of colour bar, he felt having relation with black is having a relation with an animal. Tony was unable to accept that. Tony too has white egotism and he don't want to treat the slaves as human beings. His anger towards Moses is much horrible. He would have crushed Moses if he haven't obeyed his command. Tony was also confused that how can a slave can take such comfort place with white women. Tony disliked blacks taking to whites position.

The only white person in this novel who was friendly and kind towards natives is Dick Turner. He had vast experience with black men in farming as well as in house. Dick didn't felt any racial hatred towards black men. When Mary send off the houseboy Samson, Dick genuinely grieved that the nigger who has worked for him all these years was going now. Mary astonished on Dick that as a white man how can he show mercy on those blacks. Even Charlie and Tony had the same question. Thus the sensibility and action of white people towards blacks is frightful and piteous. They hated the natives from their heart and showed in their action. They didn't mind them as a humans who also have soul and pain. The whites can also treat the blacks good as like Dick, but due to the individuals self perspective and of the ideology of white supremacy the blacks was hated by whites.

References :

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