

**Tribhuvan University**

**2011**

**- Rajan Pokharel**

**Human Dignity in Undignified World in Coetzee's *Life*  
& *Times of Michael K***

**Human Dignity in Undignified World in Coetzee's *Life* & *Times of Michael K***

**This Thesis Submitted to the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities &  
Social Sciences, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, Tribhuvan University,  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in English**

**Submitted by**

**Rajan Pokharel**

**Roll No.: 74**

**July 2011**

**Tribhuvan University**

**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

This thesis, submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, Kathmandu by Rajan Pokharel, entitled “**Human Dignity in Undignified World**” in J. M. Coetzee’s *Life & Times of Michael K* has been approved by the undersigned members of the thesis committee.

---

Associate Professor Rudra Paudel  
(Supervisor)

---

(External Examiner)

---

Associate Professor Rudra Paudel  
Head of Department of English,  
Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus,  
Kathmandu

Date:

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Such a difficult task would not have been prepared if there had not been continuous guidance, meticulous supervision and co-operative suggestions of different people. For this, I am very much indebted to and would like to extol Mr. Rudra Poudel, Head of Department of English, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, my thesis supervisor for his continuous assistance, inspiration, encouragement, co-operation, enthusiasm and constructive suggestions. He showed great patience and co-operation while guiding and supervising the thesis. Without his co-operation and assistance, it would certainly have been difficult to accomplish the thesis.

I express thanks to my friends, especially, Samundra Barakoti, Rusan Lama, Rozin Tamang and Juli Paryar who helped me to type the thesis. I even express my thanks to Creative Cyber and Ilameli Communication of Kirtipur which helped to format and type the thesis.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate his dissertation to my beloved parents whose affectionate and deeply-felt blessings give strength and inspiration to move forward. They will ever be in my memory whenever the matter of success comes up.

Rajan Pokharel

July 2011

## Abstract

*Life & Times of Michael K* exposes the loss of human dignity in undignified world through the lead characters Michael K and his mother Anna K. They represent the black people of the South Africa where they are segregated not only due to their skin but also due to their economy and gender. The novel sees the South African black people through the lance of humanism, and shows their deteriorated condition because of race, economy and gender. Moreover, it even shows segregation politically. The novel shows the condition of black People and loss of human dignity from the beginning. As Michael K goes to meet his mother, he is beaten and looted on the way by a gang. He and his mother face various Problems due to the government which is implementing apartheid, and as a result, they are enclosed within the vicious circle. Finally Michael K realizes his identity when he faces a series of troubles and loses his mother.

Moreover, J. M. Coetzee shows how colonizer seizes the fundamental rights of black people, like right to equality, right to freedom, right to property, right against the exploitation and right to privacy. In the novel, the camp stands for the place where white people implement their hegemony. Coetzee shows black people suffering from this hegemony. He even shows compulsion of black people to accept the hegemony of white people because of their economical and racial problems. For Coetzee, it is not the black people who are problem for white people; rather it is white people who are problem for black people because black people get trouble in the novel at the hands of white people. Thus, the novel shows the loss of human dignity of black people in South Africa through the main characters' enclosure within the vicious circle.

## Contents

	Page No.
Letter of Approval	i
Acknowledgement	ii
Abstract	iii
Contents	iv
<b>Chapter-One</b>	1-9
I. Introduction	1
Coetzee and his Literary Features	1
Coetzee as a Post-Colonial Writer	6
<b>Chapter-Two</b>	10-31
II. The World and Human Being	10
Human Dignity from Prehistoric to Modern Society	10
Loss of Human Dignity due to Caste System, Race and Gender	19
Science and Technology	23
Rise of Colonialism and Division of Human Being	25
<b>Chapter-Three</b>	32-52
III. Human Dignity in Undignified World in <i>Life &amp; Times Of Michael K</i>	32
Protagonist's Painful Experience in White Society	32
Effects of Apartheid and Colonialism on the Life of Black People	35
Loss of Human Dignity in <i>Life &amp; Times of Michael K</i>	36

## **Chapter-Four**

IV. Conclusion 53-56

Human in Vicious Circle 53

**V. Works Cited** 57

## Chapter one: Introduction

### Coetzee and his Literary Features

John Maxwell Coetzee (born 1940) is an author and academician of South Africa. He is now an Australian citizen and lives in Adelaide, South Australia. A novelist and literary critic as well as a translator, Coetzee has won the Booker Prize twice and was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 2003.

Coetzee spent most of his early life in Cape Town and in Worcester in Cape Province. The family moved to Worcester when Coetzee was eight after his father lost his government job due to disagreements over the state's apartheid policy. Coetzee attended St. Joseph's College, a Catholic school in the Cape Town suburb of Rondebosch, and later studied mathematics and English at the University of Cape Town, receiving his Bachelor of Arts with Honours in English in 1960 and his Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Mathematics in 1961. Coetzee went to the University of Texas at Austin on the Fulbright Program in 1965. He received Ph D in linguistics there in 1969. In 1968, he began teaching English literature at the State University of New York at Buffalo where he stayed until 1971. It was at Buffalo that he started his first novel, *Dusklands*.

In 1971, Coetzee sought permanent residence in the United States, but it was denied due to his involvement in anti-Vietnam War protests. In March 1970, Coetzee had been one of the 45 faculty members who occupied the university's Hayes Hall and were subsequently arrested for criminal trespass. He then returned to South Africa to teach English literature at the University of Cape Town. He was promoted to Professor of General Literature in 1983 and was Distinguished Professor of Literature between 1999 and 2001. Upon retiring in 2002, Coetzee relocated to Adelaide, Australia, where he was made an honorary research fellow at the English Department

of the University of Adelaide, where his partner, Dorothy Driver, is a fellow academic. He served as professor on the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago until 2003. In addition to his novels, he has published critical works and translations from Dutch and Afrikaans.

Coetzee has won many awards throughout his career, although he has a reputation for avoiding award ceremonies. His novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize, and he is three times winner of the CNA Prize. *Age of Iron* was awarded the Sunday Express Book of the Year award, and *The Master of Petersburg* was awarded the Irish Times International Fiction Prize in 1995. He has also won the French Prix Femina Étranger, the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, and the 1987 Jerusalem Prize for *The Freedom of the Individual in Society*. He was the first author to be awarded the Booker Prize twice: first for *Life & Times of Michael K* in 1983 and again for *Disgrace* in 1999. Coetzee was named on the long list for the 2009 prize for *Summertime* and was an early favourite to win. Coetzee subsequently made the shortlist, but lost out to bookmakers' favourite and eventual winner Hilary Mantel. Coetzee was also longlisted in 2003 for *Elizabeth Costello* and in 2005 for *Slow Man*.

His first book, *Dusklands*, was published in South Africa in 1974. *Heart of the Country* (1977) won South Africa's principal literary award, the CNA Prize, and was published in Britain and the USA. *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) received international notice. His reputation was confirmed by *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), which won Britain's Booker Prize. It was followed by *Foe* (1986), *Age of Iron* (1990), *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), and *Disgrace* (1999), which again won the Booker Prize. Coetzee also wrote two fictionalized memoirs, *Boyhood* (1997) and *Youth* (2002). *The Lives of Animals* (1999) is a fictionalized lecture, later



absorbed into *Elizabeth Costello* (2003). *White Writing* (1988) is a set of essays on South African literature and culture. Mr. Coetzee's best-known novels are *Waiting for the Barbarians*; *Life and Times of Michael K*; *The Master of Petersburg*; and *Disgrace*, which received the Booker Prize in 1999, making Mr. Coetzee the first writer to win it twice.

Coetzee is a writer of high caliber; he writes with the subject matter of human pain, weakness and torture which are often shown in historic context. The central issue of his writings is what is often regarded as the fundamental problem of literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. He basically deals on how we feel others' pain. Coetzee goes a long way in probing the need to connect on the level of how another person suffers. He writes about margins and boundaries. His characters are caught in between culture and historical states. He exposes the ambiguities of the human condition largely in a clear manner. Every time Coetzee publishes a novel, a great deal of discussion ensues. He skillfully reveals how a person thinks when he relates the mind of character especially the ambiguity and the contradictoriness of thought. The psychology of an individual is treated with respect when it is not portrayed as one sided. And at this movement in history or the past does not merely disappear with things. We are haunted by our past and by history itself, and Coetzee shows appreciation for the past in his works. At the same time, there is a strong emphasis on the existential idea that we are also free to choose our action at any given moment and that we must be responsible for our choices.

Susan Gallagher writes:

Coetzee deconstructs western hegemony and the disparate ideological agendas. He, however, is a figure who focuses to re-evaluate the limitation of the empire, colonialism and so on. He successfully turns a

temperament into a style, his sentences sound like of no one else. He stripes them down scouring them an adjective and sentiment. Coetzee possesses a profound interdisciplinary intelligence. Coetzee's work presents detailed work in linguistics and stylistics that is the foundation for the eventual mastery of his writing craft. It simultaneously projects a view of the character from outside as it is. (228)

*Life & Times Michael K* has been the most celebrated novel since its publication in 1983. Many critics, like H.M. Tiffin have analyzed the novel from different perspectives. Since the novel depicts the situation of civil war due to apartheid in South Africa, it has generated various ideas for analysis. Some critics have commented it as the postcolonial manifesto where as others say that it is a protest against western hegemony and mythical representation. But some other critics commented on Coetzee's art of writing. However, the major concern of this novel is human dignify in undignified world.

*Life & Times of Michael K* manifests the varied characteristics common in totality of J.M Coetzee's novels. This novel best exhibits the socio-political condition of the South African life under colonial domination. Coetzee depicts the picture of the destitute and the common folk who have been the victim of unpredictable suffering and crisis in life. Novelist, critic and academic, J M Coetzee is a leading South African intellectual who has made a significant contribution to contemporary South African culture. He is known for his portrayal of his native country both during and after apartheid. His initial concern of his writing is humanism in South Africa. His works contain many features which made him assertive writer in the literary canon.

The most important literary feature of his work is his focus on his criticism of colonial ideology. Colonial ideology was based on colonizers' assumption of their

own superiority which they contrasted with alleged inferiority of native people . He shows his characters refusing this superiority complexity of colonizer. His colonial ideology can be found in his novel *Heart of Country*. Avril Cridlan mentions: “South African author whose novel *In the Heart of Country* (1975) dealt with the rape of a white woman by a black man” (505).

His works advocate for social justice. In relation to social justice, Patricia Waugh says in her *Literary Theory and Criticism*, “ Various ethical and political dilemma raise within it, need not relapse into historicism, but can draw out questions of social justice in the most responsible fashion” (317).

Apartheid system which South African contemporary government implemented on people to segregate them as white and black is also one of the features we find in his works. In relation to apartheid Michiko Kakutani in *The New York Times* writes, "A fundamental theme in Coetzee's novels involves the values and conduct resulting from South Africa's apartheid system, which, in his view, could arise anywhere” (3).

In terms of narration, he generally narrates the story through the consciousness of a single character, i.e. focalization which occurs both in first person narration where the narrator narrates from the perspective of focalizer. His point of view rests apparently within the utterance of the narrating character. It simultaneously projects a view of the character from outside as it is. When he focuses on the bleakness of human condition in South Africa due to apartheid policy of government, he mostly uses well-crafted composition, pregnant dialogue and analytical brilliance. He mostly sets his novels in South African landscape, and his characters are also from South Africa. He shows his characters in deformed condition.

### **Coetzee as a Post-colonial Writer**

Post-colonialism has been widely used for the academic activities in the third world academia since late 1970s. The third world intellectuals share the same feelings and have similar experience under their colonial rulers especially English. These intellectuals have tried to subvert the Euro-centric concept of the colonizers. In post-colonial era, the indigenous people have to struggle with newly arrived culture and all of its beliefs, values, habits and traditions that have now become complicated with their own lives. Post-colonial examines an unconsciously changed culture through its literature and creates discourse of oppositionality which colonialism brought into being. Basically post-colonialism creates and introduces the two distinct parties of colonizer and colonized or oppressors and opposed. It also refers to more than just people adjusting to changes. So the term post colonialism can rightly be considered as continuing process of resistance and reconstruction whether visible or invisible to the colonized, the colonizers presence is unquestionably felt. The project of Post-colonial writing is to interrogate European discourses and discursive strategies from a privileged position within two worlds: to investigate the means by which European imposed and maintained its code in the colonial domination of so much of the rest of the world. A century of European (British and French mainly, but also Portuguese, German, Italian and Spanish) colonization left behind an African continent dazed, bewildered and confused. This is why modern African writers see the need for and admit a commitment to the restoration of African values. In fact, the western world equates knowledge, modernity, modernization, civilization, progress and development to itself, while it views the Third-World from the perspective of the antithesis of the positive qualities ascribed to itself. Such negative stereotypes are perpetrated by a system of education, which encourages all the errors and falsehoods about

Africa/Africans. Writing on the jaundiced portrayal of Africa/Africans in Western canonical works, Edward Wilmot Blyden asserted over a hundred years ago:

Africa and Africans are given negative images in Western books of geography, travels, novels, history and in Hollywood films about the continent. In these texts and records, Africans are misrepresented; they are portrayed as caricatures. Unfortunately, Africans themselves are obliged to study such pernicious teachings. (27)

Reacting to this mistake, Chinua Achebe declares: "If he were God, he would regard as the very worst our acceptance, for whatever reason, of racial; inferiority" (32).

Actually, the colonization of Africa is explicit in the physical domination and control of its vast geographical territory by the colonial world and its cronies. However, this physical presence, domination and control of Africa by the colonizer are sustained in the minds of the colonized. Therefore, more than the power of the cannon, it is canonical knowledge that establishes the power of the colonizer. It should also be stressed that the available records of Africa's history handed down by the Europeans, far from being a disinterested account of Africa, are interested constructs of European representational narratives. The view is supported by Ania Loomba, "The vast new world (Africa inclusive) encountered by European travelers were interpreted by them through ideological filters, or ways of seeing, provided by their own culture" (71).

African literature's fundamental engagement is with the colonial presence in Africa, dismantling its dehumanizing assumptions and resisting its pernicious consequences. The African novel, in particular, reflects an evolving consciousness at once historical, cultural and political. Bill Ashcroft, et al writes, "Therefore, the

central postcolonial argument is that postcolonial culture has entailed a revolt of the margin against the metropolis, the periphery against the centre, in which experience has become 'uncentred', pluralistic and nefarious"(12).

Bill Ashcroft further writes:

Postcolonial writers have rewritten particular works from the English canon with a view to restructuring European realities in postcolonial terms, not simply by reversing the hierarchical order, but by interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based. (33)

The African story continues to be (re) told by postcolonial writer. When Coetzee's *Foe* (1988) was published in 1986, it added to growing corpus of counter-discursive writings in postcolonial literature. *Foe* takes up some central postcolonial issues; the text seeks to uncover the silence and oppression at the heart of Defoe's classic novel to suggest the power of anti- colonial as well as colonial discourse.

Helen Tiffin in his essay writes how J.M Coetzee is maintaining his work *Foe* (1988) as a counter discourse, "J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1988) which explores the problem of white South African settler literature in relation to the continuing oppression by whites of the black majority" (100).

The postcolonial desire is the desire of decolonized communities for an identity obviously. It is closely connected to nationalism, for those communities are often, though not always nations. In both literature and politics the postcolonial drive towards identity centers on language.

My plan of the thesis is to see human dignity in J.M. Coetzee's novel *Life & Times of Michael K*. The problem I have raised is, does the novel *Life & Times of Michael K* really picturize the human dignity in undignified world? And why

Michael K and his mother are not behaved as human beings of the same society? I will show this human dignity in undignified world through the central characters Michael K and his mother Anna K who have to bear unnecessary troubles given by the society where they live. The whole concept of human dignity in undignified world is based on humanism. In chapter one, I have planned to write introduction about J.M. Coetzee and his literary features. Moreover, I also write about J.M. Coetzee as a post-colonial writer. In chapter two, I have planned to write about human dignity from prehistorical to modern capitalistic society. Despite that I will also show the different causes of loss of human dignity like race, gender, caste and science and technology. In chapter three, I will write dignity of Michael K and his mother Anna K in the society they live and cause of the loss of their dignity. In chapter four, I will conclude the thesis including my opinion basing on *Life & Times of Michael K*.

## **Chapter Two: The World and Human Being**

### **Human Dignity from Prehistoric to Modern Society**

Human beings are different from other non-human beings through different ways. In comparison to other non-human beings, human beings are different physically as well as mentally. Human beings, developed from homo sapience, spread in different parts of the world and made societies, nations and caste, race, language, clan and so on.

In the beginning, human beings were in egalitarian state. All the persons were free and equal. They did not have any ruler or king to be ruled. They did not know that at future there will be any such state and administration to rule the human beings. Those human beings who were developed from egalitarian society have created a big wall to segregate them through different means race, caste, economy and geography.

In the prehistoric period, there was no such world as our. In our world, at present, we have hierarchical society. People divide themselves not only politically but also racially and economically. We live in large cities with millions of people. We have law, administration, parliaments, cabinet, and governor. Our ancestors managed to live without such mechanism. Our ancestors lived in small, largely nomadic hunting and gathering bands containing about 30 to 50 people apiece. It was in this social context that human nature evolved from pre-historic to post modern. Elman R. Service writes." In hunting and gathering societies around ten thousand years back, an each contained not more than 30 to 50 people. They lived in isolated pockets scattered around the world in the most barren and forbidding environments" (157).

It has been only about ten thousand years since people began to settle down into villages, some of which eventually grew into cities. In such hunting and gather society, everybody knew everybody else closely. However, there were rudimentary



forms of agriculture. There was reciprocal exchange among the people. In reciprocal exchange, people did not specify how much as exactly what they expect to get back. This reciprocity only existed within kinship. Kinship was at the root of almost all relationship in hunting and gathering societies. People were not identified with their jobs as often are in our societies, they are identified by religious, economic and political activity. There were usually no formal leadership roles, no formal exchange systems such as a market place, and no distinct legal institution. Exchange systems such were based in reciprocity which follows family lines. Informal rules of behaviors were enforced through consensus rather than by courts or police. The band was very different from our complex forms of social organization.

The nature of hunting and gathering has led to special type of economic and family relationship that was common to most hunters and gatherers. The same limitations apply to their political organization, as well as their religious organization and many other aspects of their lives. Unlike modern industrial societies, in which religious, political and economic institutions are distinct, hunting and gathering societies blend their institutions. There was little or no control or ownership of property among hunters and gatherers. This is because the resources that support them are not controlled by the groups that use them. In relation to reciprocal exchange, Marvin Harris writes:

During the reign of reciprocal exchange and egalitarian headman, no individual, family or group smaller than the band or village itself could control access to natural resources. Rivers, lakes, beaches, oceans, plants and animal, the soil and subsoil were all communal property.

(219)

The absence of private possession in land and other vital resources means that a form of communism probably existed among prehistoric hunting and collecting band and small village. The structure of most hunting and gathering bands does not include social stratification or political hierarchy. Everyone in the society is more or less equal. If a person gains high status, it is because of age or wisdom or some talent or ability. However, higher status does not free that person from his or her obligations to the group.

Since the group has no permanent leader, leadership roles may shift from one activity to another. In a hunting party, one man may be a leader because of his skill as a hunter. There is no leader to enforce a code of law. Control over social behaviour is achieved largely by the weight of tradition. Accepted social sanctions are applied instead of formal law. Punishment may be light, consisting of nasty gossip or ridicule, or may go as far as actual violence. A person who behaves in an antisocial way and does not respond to mild sanctions may be exiled from the group. In some environments this could amount to death sentence. However, the society was communal. Everyone was equal. Marvin Harris observes what happens and how campmates react if a king who with lust for power tells:

From now on, all this land and everything on it belonged to me. His campmates, thinking that he had certainly gone crazy, would pack up their few belongings, take a long walk, make a new camp, and resume their usual life of egalitarian reciprocity. (217)

In hunting and gathering societies we find little division of labour. Most men engage in hunting and most women in gathering. Although one man might be a better hunter than another or one woman a better gatherer, still there are no status distinctions based on economic specialties. The emphasis is on sharing with group

rather than increasing the wealth of one's family. The few status differences that exist are usually based on achievement. There are few ascribed status positions in hunting and gathering bands while it is true that age and sex may be considered in assigning status. The differences within the band are not very great. Men are not so dominant over women, nor are older people dominant over younger ones. Each person contributes to the survival of the family and the group, and the decisions are made by consensus rather than by a strong leader.

Because of the size of most bands, there is a close personal relationship among its members. In a large society, like ours, in which we can not know every other member personally, we tend to identify people according to occupation as some other defining feature. With the rise of horticulture and pastoralism, social equality became impossible. There had even been some hunting and gathering societies in which the food supply was large and stable enough to support dense permanent settlements, and under these conditions social stratifications emerged. So it is not simply the way people obtain food that is important, it is the size of the group and the ability to acquire wealth and food that is important, it is the size of the group and the ability to acquire wealth and control resources. Robert K. Merton observes how private ownership emerged:

With horticulture, we see the beginning of private ownership of land as well as other possessions. This private ownership leads to social inequalities based on difference on wealth. Such difference was usually expressed in terms of wealth. A person can control the labour of others and how large a family a person can support. In most horticultural societies it is the male head of the family or household who attained

the highest state which is contrast to hunting and gathering societies, in which men and women have equal status. (265)

Pastoral societies also permit ownership of private property, but in the form of animals rather than land. However, ownership beyond what is needed to support one's family requires control over larger labour force to help feed and defend the herds.

Pastoral societies often showed greater stratification than horticultural societies because a family as group of families can acquire more wealth as measured in animal than would be case if they measured their wealth in land that must be cultivated as well as defended. Differences in wealth among pastoralists lead to the ranking not of individuals but of families, since animal tend to be the property of a group of related families.

Tribal societies are held together by a common language, ethnic heritage and territory. They shared a sense of equality. If they have leaders, the leaders cannot force the members of the group to behave in a certain way, without the support of group consensus. It is in chief clans that we began to see social stratification in which the chief and his or her close relatives command respect and obedience from the rest of the group. Marshall D. Sahlins writes:

The concentration of power in the office of the chief and the uneven distribution of power throughout the society form the basis for greater specialization, which itself adds to social inequality. Peasant societies offer more opportunities to form dense, permanent settlements. The use of animal power, irrigation, as other technological aids to transform the environment allows for the investment of large amounts of labour in the land and produces a greater yield from a given piece of land. As a result, the distribution of wealth and status can become more

uneven. Peasants were exploited by urban-based non-agricultural elites who control their labour and production either directly through ownership of the land, or indirectly, through taxation as control over market outlets. (164)

The chiefdom is a major advance over tribal political organization because it is the first political system in which power is centered. Before chiefdom, there were Headman, from Headman, Big man, and then Chief. Along with the Chiefdom, there came a system of ranking, or social stratification. In a band, all people are basically equal. While greater skill in hunting might give a man a greater voice in the organization of the hunt, it does not give him right to more than his share of the kill. A person might be recognized for some achievement or skill and obtain a certain amount of power or influence as a result, but such position is not permanent and can change with the fortunes of the individual.

In chiefdom, the leader is entitled to special treatment because of his position. His family lineage and village share in his prestige and high position. The chief may be in a position to tax the people or collect and allocate goods. Such power can easily increase differences in rank within the society, for the power to allocate goods will entrench the chief and high-ranking members their positions by giving them greater wealth and control over resources. It can also lead to an increase in the size of the society controlled by the central authority. About chiefdom, and gradual adaptation of power, Marvin Harris writes:

Supported by voluntary donations, chief could now enjoy lifestyles that set them increasingly apart from their followers. They could build bigger and finer houses for themselves eat and dress more sumptuously

and enjoy the sexual favors and personal services of several wives.

(224)

Primitive society was egalitarian, and till it was clan system there was egalitarian, society. But, in course of time, concept of private property thrive within the before and this concept deployed with the growth of labour. With this growth clan stumbled and broke into families. U.G Afanasyev writes how in primitive society human beings were divided:

With the growth of labour, the clan began to break up into families.

Private property arose and the family became the owner of the means of production. The spread of private property disintegrated the clan.

The primitive equality gave way to social inequality. The slave and slave-owners appeared. (211)

Thus primitive equality becomes Chimera. Community disintegrated, and started for seeking properties. Because of this private ownership of property, human dignity began to lose and division started.

With the rise of private property, slave-owning system arose in medieval society. There were very critical conditions of slave. The owner left the slave only the bare minimum necessary to keep him from dying of starvation. There existed relations of domination and subjugation, cruel exploitation by the handful of slave-owners of the mass of slaves who possessed no right at all. The slaves had to work for the slave owners and perform all kinds of labour services for him. He could buy and sell slaves, but their lives no longer belonged to him.

This slave owning system promoted the Feudal system. In Feudal system also same thing retained. Feudal lords used to dominate the serf, and these Feudal lords also used to treat cruelly these serf. They used to implement all the state mechanism

to justify his property. U.G. Afansyev writes, "The state apparatus and armed forces expanded, religion became dominant in the intellectual life of society and was used by the ruling class to justify private property and the exploitation of the laboring people." (214)

After the end of the Feudalism, Industrial Revolution began in Europe. Again the whole population of Europe as well as other industrial countries is divided into rich and poor. Serf, who used to be exploited at the hands of Feudal lord, began to be exploited at the hand of capitalist, again they possessed nothing; but they are bound to sell their labour power and thereby come under the yoke of exploitation. Many millions of workers are concentrated at large plants and took part in social production. The fruits of their labour are appropriated by small group of owners of the means of production.

Rich people opened the industry, and the people who used to live in country side, started to migrate in the industrial areas. They used to work in the agricultural field. Their life was happy, and family was unified, but this industry brought division within family. Youth migrated to the industrial areas and started to live there. This migration not only brought split in the family but also frustration and unemployment. Though they came to the urban areas, they did not get any work. If they got, it was manual. They used to get that much amount which only persist their life. Social stratification and unified traditional family collapsed because of the technological changed. Seorage M. Forester writes:

Another important result of industrialization may be seen in the nature of the family. Family is a large one made up of their children unit.

There are a variety of the tasks for persons of both sexes of the groups all the members of the family moves to the city and enters the

industrial work force this is no longer the case. Here the crucial factor affecting the family becomes mobility, geographic (or physical) mobility and social mobility, the ability to rise in the system of social stratification. The urban industrial family moves often. In extra members merely hold it back not permit extra members to contribute their share to the family economy, as they could on the farm, and they be care a liability to those who must support them. (319)

The capitalism frustrated the poor and agrarian people. Then this capitalism created gap between haves and have not. Then this gap has increased such a dramatically that now in society those who have money and power think themselves gods to control those who are weak from all sides. In the context of socially weak human being who is powerless Salmon Rushdie writes:

For in the years to come you will find yourselves up against gods of all sorts, big and little gods, Corporate and incorporeal gods all of them demanding to be worshipped and obeyed the myriad deities of money and power, of convention and custom, that will seek to limit and control your thought and lives.(105-106)

Towards the ends of the last century capitalism grew into imperialism. The main feature of imperialism is the domination of monopolies, which replaces free competition. To this end the imperialist's intensity the exploitation of the working people in their own country and in the colonies and dependent countries.

At present, modernity has eaten up all the human beings and created a kind of hierarchy between poor and rich. Economic prosperity is linked with modernity, and those countries and people who are economically prosper, they are nominated as modern and cultural and those who are not nominated as backward and uncultured.



Primitive equality turned into modern inequality. Dignified world converted into undignified world. In this undignified world, human being is losing his or her dignity. Man inhaled animal instinct and started dominate to those who are comparatively weaker.

### **Loss of Human Dignity due to Caste System, Race and Gender**

Caste system which we especially find in Hindu tradition also created hierarchy among the people. In caste system, each person born into a caste membership is based on ascribed characteristics such as the caste membership of one's parents, which is passed down from one generation to the next. It can also be based on physical features such as skin color, again an ascribed characteristic that is inherited. The boundaries of a caste are maintained through the practice of endogamy, that is, a person may marry only someone from his or her own caste.

The best-known caste system was found in traditional India. Vestiges of the system remain, especially in rural areas, although it was formally outlawed when India became independent from Great Britain. In this system, caste membership carries with it a total social ranking. Every aspect of a person's life is limited by his or her caste. Because of the ascribed group is made up of related individuals, usually a set of families within the same village. Each caste is linked with an occupation, at least ideally. A person's occupation is based on the caste into which he or she was born.

The caste system in India operates according to customs established by the Hindu religion. Each caste is ranked in hierarchy according to Hindu principles that value certain kind of behavior, especially the avoidance of acts that are thought to be polluting. The members of the various castes are expected to follow these teachings to a degree that depends on their rank in the social hierarchy. The lowest rank,

commonly called out castes as untouchables. They are untouchable because they are considered so polluted that more contact with them would defile a member of a higher caste. Gerald D. Berreman writes:

In traditional Indian, a village consists of a number of castes, each with many members. Each caste performs a certain function; each occupation is linked to a caste and limited to its members. With each caste performing a special function, all are able to survive, but they are dependent one another. The ranking system that places castes in a social hierarchy ensures that this system will operate in a stable manner by forcing some people occupation they might not choose for themselves. (210)

Like caste, race also broke the human being. Race is the product of colonialism. Once again human beings are alike and different. The word racism in its usual sense, actually designates two very different things. On the one hand, it is a matter of behavior, usually a manifestation of hatred or contempt for individual who have well-defined physical characteristics different from our own; on the other hand, it is a matter of ideology, a doctrine concerning human races. Racism is an ancient form of behavior that is probably found worldwide. Racialism is a movement of ideas born in Western Europe whose period of influence extends from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth. It is a way of responding with biological data to what is actually a question of social psychological scientists may or may not believe in races, but their position has no influence on the perception of the man in the street, which can see perfectly well that differences exist. It is related to skin, colour, body hair, are superior to others which implies that they possess a unitary hierarchy of values, an evaluative framework with respect to which he can make universal judgments. It is a

value judgment of certain group on the ground of color. It is a kind of politics of these who think themselves superior. Thus subordination of inferior race or even their elimination can be justified by accumulation of knowledge in the subject of race.

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, Europeans had wondered aloud whether or not the African species of men could ever create formal literature, could ever master the arts and science. If they could, the argument is that African variety of humanity and the European variety were fundamentally related. If not, African was destined by nature to be a slave. This racial system is the product to conform other, especially black. This racial system especially existed after slavery system began in America and other pre-colonial countries. White people subjugated the black as slave and made them superior only because of the skin which is other than the black. They inferiorized the black into slavery. To identify the problems created by the race Frantz Fanon writes:

In the white world the man of colour encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, and The Negro is ugly.

(291)

In terms of gender, human beings were discriminated even since the beginning of human civilization. In the pre-historical period, males were hunters and females were gatherers. Female used to stay at home and male used to go for hunting. Same kind of discrimination still exists in human society. She has to follow what religion and society has given to her. If she attempts to go beyond that boundary created by society, she is blamed by different labels. She not only has to limit her wishes but also

has to tolerate all kinds of exploitation. This exploitation was there even in the mythical period. In both western and eastern myth we find exploitation and use of female for dire purpose. In the western myth, Zeus raped a woman named Leda in the form of Swan. She has to bear this sexual exploitation without volition. W.B. Yeats writes in his poem "Leda and Swan":

A sudden blow the great wings beating still  
 Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
 By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,  
 He holds her helpless breast upon his breast (1-4).

In Hindu myth, when there were clash between austere sage and gods, nymphs were the successful weapons. B. P. Koirala writes, "Whenever any of these inferior mortals aspired to become gods through penance, the gods sought to destroy the penance of people who abandoned all worldly pleasures. Their most successful emissaries of destruction were celestial nymphs" (430).

In western world Mary Wollstonecraft resisted patriarchal ideology in 1792 when she wrote "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman", Virginia Woolf resisted this ideology in 1929 when she wrote *A Room of One's Own*, Simone de Beauvoir resisted patriarchal ideology in 1949 when she wrote *The Second Sex* and feminist theorists continue to resist it today.

Traditional gender roles dictate that men are supposed to be strong (physically powerful and emotionally stoic) they are not supposed to cry because crying is considered as a sign of weakness, a sign that one has been over powered by one's emotion and they cast women as emotional (irrational) weak, nurturing, and submissive. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify inequities, which still occur today, such as excluding women from equal access to leadership and

decision-making positions (in the family as well as in politics, academia, and the corporate world), paying men higher wages than women for doing the same job. If any female tries to resist the patriarchy, she is labeled different names. Lois Tyson in her essay "Feminist Criticism" writes, "If she accepts her traditional gender role and obeys the patriarchy rules, she's a good girl; if she does not she's bad girl. These two roles also referred to as Madonna and Whore or angel and bitch" (89).

Patriarchy believes that women are born to be passive while men are born to be active because it is natural for the sexes to be different in this way. The process of differential treatment of girls and boys begins the minute children are born. A study by Judith G. Tudiver demonstrated the differential socialization of preschool age children:

Both mothers and fathers tended to be permissive and supportive with daughters, but did not feel that daughters needed to achieve or perform. However, parents of sons stressed the importance of achievement and independence. Fathers in particular were extremely concerned about socializing sons into a rather rigid definition of the masculine role. A great ideal of pleasure is associated with socialization of sons, which probably reflects the high value associated with being male in our society. (44)

Thus, because of gender also human being divided. This division gave male superior and female inferior position. The situation of black woman is more critical. She is dominated first by being black and second being female. This division created loss of dignity of female in patriarchal society.

### **Science and Technology**

At present, science and technology have overcome all the traditional boundary of human phenomena. Now human being no longer visits from one place to another place on foot like primitive people. For us New York is nearer than one village to another village which primitive people used to pass. We can cross Pacific Ocean in a few days. We have modern technology which has even made space nearby village. Because of this rapid development of science and technology, the world has become a village. We do not visit one place to another for sending message. We can talk with the people of another continent sitting in a room. Our computer has made this possible. We cannot only send message we can search what are needed for us. But because of economic and geographic reason all the people do not have access for this science and technology. It has also created a kind of gap between us. Person who has enough wealth, they can possess that technology. Those countries and people who can not possess and handled such technology are counted as backward and uncivilized. Now technology and modernity have become synonymous word. Therefore white European world and some other East Asian world are counted as modern and civilized, and African and some Asian countries and their people are thought as backward and uncivilized. Dimitri A Chrstrakis writes how this digital device divided human beings, "This digital device used to separate rich from poor; now it separates parents from their children" (163).

Thus, human beings who were in egalitarian state in prehistorically period gradually lost dignity due to property, caste, race, gender and science and technology. Although division created by caste and race is not practiced at present as it was, it still exists implicitly. We are not get ready to marry and mix up with those who are other than our race and cast. We feel pride of being upper caste and white race. Division of gender is also at the shade at present. But when the work labour and making decision

come, women are considered inferior gender. They are given low wages and are not involved in decision making. At present, science and technology is creating big wall between human beings. Those who have technological gadgets, they are counted as prosper and those who do not, are considered as unsuccessful.

### **Rise of Colonialism and Division of Human Being**

At the end of Middle Age, Christopher Columbus found America. This was the beginning of European people moving outside Europe and finding new land. European domination of the new world began. Spain, France, England, Portugal and The Netherland were the main contends for the plunders of natural and human resources, and over the next few centuries, European empires extended themselves around the globe. During the nineteenth century, Britain emerged as the largest imperial power and by the turn of the twentieth century the British Empire ruled one quarters of the earth's surface, including Indian, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Ireland and other African, the West Indies, South America, the Middle East and South East Asia. British colonial domination continued until the end of World War II.

In the beginning, it was the civilizing mission, but later that civilizing mission turned into colonizing mission. This colonization created segregation between those who are colonized as inferior and those who colonize as superior. These colonizers believe that only their own Anglo-European culture is civilized, sophisticated and native people were defined as savage, backward and undeveloped. Some colonizers saw themselves at the center of the world and the colonized were at the margins. Colonizers thought them as the embodiment of what a human being should be and Native people were considered other. Thus, they developed the discourse of other. Lois Tyson writes this as, "This practice of judging all who are different as less then

fully human is called othering, and it divides the world between us (civilized) and them (the other or savage)" (420).

Although colonial conquest was predicated on the power of superior arms, military organization, political power and economic wealth, it was also based on variety of cultural technologies. Colonialism not only has had cultural effects but also it was itself a cultural project of control. Without colonialism, culture could not have been so simultaneously and so successfully ordered. If colonialism can be seen as a cultural formation so also culture is a colonial formation but culture was not simply some mystifying means for colonial conquest and rule. Nicholas B. Dirks writes about the culture as, "Culture was imbricate both in the means and the ends of colonial conquest. Culture was invented in relationship to variety internal colonialisms. Culture became fundamental to the formation of the class society, the naturalization of gender division in western bourgeois society, and to developing discourses of race, biology and nationality" (58).

Western colonial nations did not simply exploit colonized nations for economic profit, but depended upon the process of colonialism and colonial rule for securing the nation-state itself. Colonialism can be seen both as a historical moment-specified in relation to European political and economic projects in the modern era and as a trope for domination and violation. Culture can be seen both as a historical constituted domain of significant concept and practice and as a regime in which power achieves its ultimate apotheosis linked together. Colonialism and culture can be seen to provide a new world in which to deploy a critical cartography of the history and effects of power. In relation to culture and its influence in maintaining the colonialism, Nicholas B. Dirks writes, "Colonialism is now safe for scholarship and



culture seems an appropriate domain in which to measure the effects of colonialism in the contemporary world” (59).

Colonizer polluted the cultures of colonized in long run while maintaining the colony. They imposed the western culture to persist the colonial power. Because of the influence of culture, the culture of colonized has been hybridized. These colonized people neither become colonizers nor their own nations. Today, the most important problem of former colonized is their own nativeness. Their culture, language, landscape and so on are polluted because of colonization. Its best example is *Mimic Man* by V.S. Naipaul:

Colonialism entirely directs the cultural life of a conquered contested culture whose destruction is systemically sought the native culture freezes into a defensive posture there are no new developments or initiatives only a rigid adherence to hard care of culture which is identified with resistance to the colonial oppressor. (121)

Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of form and content. They formed a colonial discourse and named them as Orientalism. Edward W. Said in his book *Orientalism* writes:

Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imaginary, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial style. Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the orient and the occident. (24-25)

Orientalism is the discourse of the west about the east. It designates the long term images, stereotypes and general ideology about the orient as others. Through

such discourses they constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledge, discipline and value upon the dominated groups. As a social formation, it works to constitute reality not only for the object it appears to represent but also for the subject which form the community on which it depends. Consequently, colonial discourse is the complex and social production within colonial relationship, Said's main interest is to study and analyze the relation between the west and the east and the role of Orientalism as a governing force in this relationship.

The colonialist constructed a dichotomizing system because they believed that civilization, science and progress originated from the west and natives lacked them. They also created the hierarchy of race which represent we for the race belonged to the superior position, and they for the race belonged to the inferior position. In the way the western created the false myth about the orient naming them as uncivilized barbaric, irrational, wild, cruel etc. Frantz Fanon describes how the colonial power was able to sweep the mind of the natives away:

Colonial domination was indeed to convince native that colonialism came to lighten their darkness. The effect consciously sought by colonialist was to drive into the native's head the idea that if the settlers were to leave; they would at least fall back into barbarism and bestiality. (210)

The more colonial rule began to establish, the more human dignity came into crisis. Human being began to discriminate human beings. This discrimination turns into cruel treatment upon those who were colonized. Colonization itself became the synonym of suppression, oppression and subjugation. Colonial power oppressed their colonies for several reasons. The colonizer came to the colony with pre-occupied mind that they should establish their supremacy by any possible means. The

information brought back by explorers led, in many cases, to the development of trade with the newly discovered areas. Once the territory is in the Colonizers' grip, it can not operate its work. The colonial power imposes their production on those colonies. The produced goods can easily get the market on such areas. As a result, the market is easily flourished with the expansion of market. The colonizers need a bigger amount of raw materials which they cannot obtain from their in the territories colonized. They need to search them in the territories colonized. They exploit the natural resources available in these areas. They also seek a wider market for their own product. People get oppressed in course of the expansion of market.

Some colonial powers acquire and oppress the territory due to the expansion of population. They need colonial territories to which some of their people could migrate. Some people in Europe behind that colonial power had a duty to spread Christianity and Western culture throughout the world. When these western people began to live in the colonial land, the demarcation line between colonizers and colonized came into exist. This caused the loss of human dignity.

The legacy of colonialism continued even after independence. Now native people have to suffer not because of colonizers, but because of newly arrived culture and all of its belief, values, habits and traditions that have now become complicated within their own lives. Because of this, they had to suffer from daible consciousness Lois Tyson writes how these former-colonized native suffer from hybridity:

Many of these individuals tried to imitate their colonizers, as much as possible in dress, speech, behavior, and lifestyle. Postcolonial critics refers to this phenomena as mimicry, and it reflects both the desire of colonized individuals to be accepted by the colonizing culture and the same experienced by colonized individuals concerning their own

culture which they were programmed to see an inferior. Postcolonial theorists often describe the colonial subjects as having a double consciousness or double vision, in other words, a consciousness or way of perceiving the world that is divided between two antagonistic cultures: that of the colonizer and that of the indigenous community.

(421)

At present human dignity is at stake. Those countries, people, organization and corporation have power are in top hierarchy. They are using power to control those who are powerless. The world has been becoming undignified, and because of this, human dignity is lessening.

My concept in this thesis is to show the gradual beginning of human division from the prehistoric period to the modern industrialized period as well as the cause which created human division. To show this concept, anthropological book and books related to colonialism and post colonialism were the sources. Moreover, I took help from Marxist philosophy. Anthropological books help to understand egalitarian society existed in the prehistoric, and how gradually, human beings divided. Colonial and post colonial texts guided to know how the colonizers exploited the native people they colonized and created big wall between them in the name of race. Marxist philosophy mainly helped to show the division existed in slave owning, feudal and capitalist system.

In the novel *Life & Times of Michael K*, J.M. Coetzee very beautifully shows the undignified world, and he even shows how Michael K and his mother Anna K have to face undignified world because of their economic condition and race. The novel centers on colonial landscape and apartheid system implemented by government. Due to the apartheid system, Michael K and his mother cannot go freely

to Prince Albert. They are frequently stopped and interrogated by roving armies because of their race. They are black and poor. Because of her poverty and colour, Anna K has to lose her life, and Michael K has to starve several times. Anna K is not cared in the hospital because she is black, and moreover, she cannot afford to pay money for treatment.

Ann K has illusion of primitive happiness, which she has experienced in the childhood age, living in Prince Albert her home country, but she loses her life before experiencing the undignified condition which Michael K happens to experience. They cannot get the train ticket, so Michael K makes a cart and carries his mother for Prince Albert. This shows that how they are shunned aside from even scientific technology. This avoidance is promoted by their economy and race. Finally Michael K arrives from where he had started his journey to Prince Albert. He understands his identity as a gardener. This identity he has understood when he lost his mother, when he is tortured by the roving armies, and when he is exploited by white girls sexually. Despite that, his economic condition and race also cultivate this awareness.

### Chapter Three

#### **Human Dignity in Undignified World in *Life & Times of Michael K***

Human dignity refers to self-respect and self-esteem which human being possesses as a natural right to live. When a human being gets birth, he or she needs every right to live in socio-political and socio-economic environment. This environment should provide right in an equal manner because all the human beings, black or white, yellow or brown are equal. They have same over-soul. This over-soul does not discriminate not only on the basis of race but also caste and gender. Therefore, this right to live and work is natural right of human beings.

Around ten thousand years back or in pre-historic period, human beings were in egalitarian state. They did not have to live under any obligation. Although they did not have any property, they had equal rights over natural resources. So was the nature of human beings; therefore at present also, they have right to live in free and equal manner. But, this right to live freely and equally is at stake at present because of sometimes race or caste and sometimes gender and economy. J.M. Coetzee, very beautifully portrays the dignity of human beings in undignified world through the characters Michael K and his mother Anna K. They become victim of this undignified world. They are discriminated not only because of color but also because of economic.

#### **Protagonist's Painful Experience in White Society**

*Life & times of Michael K* is a story of a simple man named Michael K who is physically impaired. He has got a “hare lip” since his birth. Because of this deformity, Anna K (Michael K’s mother) had trouble feeding from both of her breast and a bottle, which frustrated her even more. The only thing that worked was feeding him from a spoon. Anna K took Michael K to work with her and isolated him from other

children. She polished floors while he sat in silence. Michael K was not judged smart enough to attend regular school so he was sent to a special state institution, Huis Norenus. There, Michael K not only learned reading and writing ; but he also did manual labor such as sweeping, scrubbing , bed making, dish washing, basket weaving, wood work and digging.

Michael K found a job as a gardener in the city of Cape Town. He assisted his ailing mother when she summoned him. He shared space with his mother. As the health condition of his mother deteriorated, Michael K quitted his job and catered his mother to carry out her wishes to return to her birth place in the country, Prince Albert. Unfortunately, Michael K failed to get a travel permit so he built a cart out of scrap and began the journey on foot pushing his frail mother in the cart. After being turned back once at the check point on the edge of the country, Michael K succeeded in getting out of town but his mother died soon afterwards. He was able to get only the ashes yet he accepts it as a usual phenomenon. He continued his journey bearing her ashes. The turbulence of war that he fell at Sea Point followed him. He devised hiding strategies to avoid road patrols. He spent time in guarded camps; Michael K escaped a camp and found what he believed to be his mother's home. As soon as he reached there, he determined to work in the land and run life. He worked in the farm but succeeded no more. He was always in a state of trauma and fear. He lived a poor and feeble life. His efforts were as successful as those of insects he caught to eat.

Cynthia Ozick mentions the suffering of Michael K as:

His theme is the wild and merciless power of inanity. Michael K suffers from the obdurate callowness of both, rulers and rebels- one tramples the vines, the other blows up the pump. At the end of the

story, he dreams of drinking the living water drawn out of his mother's earth, if only drop by drop, If only from a teaspoon. (1)

Michael K is weighed less than ninety pounds when he enters the medical ward at the Kenilworth rehabilitation camp in Cape Town. The doctor is told that he is running as staging ground for rebels in the mountains. Michael K has collapsed during physical training and has labored breathing signs and a low heart beat.

Michael K does not eat food but said that there is nothing wrong with him. He denies bread because he wants to eat the bread of freedom. He wants to have freedom from the undignified world. He somehow defies the military barriers and escaped leaving the camp doctor questioning the values of life and society. As Michael K comes out of the camp, he sits on a bench beside a miniature golf course on sea point, facing the sea resting, gathering his strength. He feels peace and relaxes for sometime on the bench. Michael K reclines on a filthy, infested mattress and knows who he is and what his status is.

The very novel of Coetzee *Life & Times of Michael K* exposes the real hazards in the life of the central character Michael K. It begins with the birth of Michael K, continues with the dramatization of his life long struggle for existence, and finally ends with the hope of survival and rejoices. Michael K struggles to escape the indeterminacy of life even in the era colonization. Due to colonial oppression, he is jeopardized, yet he heroically accepts and continues his entire life in order to maintain the glory of his survival. His aspirations of livelihood are endangered by the unwanted colonial oppression and subjugation of whole way of life style of South African migrants from countryside to the metropolis. Cynthia Ozick says how Michael K responds to the things around him, "Michael K responds only what it appears to be divinely orderly- despite every incapable decree and man-made restraint. He names



no tyranny and no idea. He cares for his mother, he cares for his the earth, he will learn how they come to the same in the end” (1).

### **Effects of Apartheid and Colonialism on the Life of Black People**

In the background of civil war due to apartheid in South Africa, the novel *Life & Times of Michael K* reflects the hostile socio-economic, political culture and existential crisis in which Michael K is embroiled in the turmoil of restriction and confinement in jail and camps. Because of civil war Michael K undergoes psychological as well as physical traumas. He is often beaten and looted eventually leading him to withdraw his job.

The central character of the novel, Michael K is just a tip of an iceberg who is struggling at the time of civil war. He is a representative of common life at the time of civil war. He is deeply rooted in existential crisis. He is politically dominated and economically exploited. He tries his best to escape the confinement of such treachery yet he cannot do. Because of this reason he has to become the victim of undignified world. Harriet Gilbert mentions this as :

Coetzee regards Michael K and Anna K typically as South African characters, who represent the entire pan African life style. They are deeply accustomed to their tradition, culture and so on. He is, however, politically dislocated, suppressed, oppressed and exploited under the imperial subjugation. Indispensable right such as right to equality, right to freedom, rights regarding criminal justice, right to property, right to religion, right against exploitation are totally seized. Even Michael K is not let go to his native hometown of his own in a free and fair manner. He is time and again struck by the roving armies. He has to dodge them by walking through the dense forest with no clear reason. (6)

The novel takes place in South Africa during a civil war in the 1970-80s. Often, throughout K's journey, he is stopped by officers who threaten to shoot him or who takes his belongings. Also, more than once he is taken into a camp that vaguely resembles a concentration camp. There, they are given food but K denies it. He grows weaker until he finally escapes. Later on he is taken to a hospital instead because he is too weak to work. There he refuses food as well. This refusal of food represents K's opposition to the war and to higher order. He does not like taking direction from anyone and feels that the war does not have much effect on his life, just an event that is getting in the way of how he wants to live. John Carroll writes, "set in a turbulent South Africa, a young gardener decides to take his mother away from the violence towards a new life in the abandoned countryside, but finds war follows wherever he goes " (1).

### **Loss of Human Dignity in *Life & Times of Michael K***

Society has given certain role to the female. Her work is to serve according to wish of male society. She has to feel lucky, when she gets company of male whether he is just born infant or mature or deformed or normal. In the novel, Anna K gives birth to a deformed baby Michael K as a son. Hospital midwife tells Anna K that she is lucky to have a baby at home, but Michael K is deformed which Anna K does not like. Midwife speaks this line because she is also taught same thing by this patriarchal society, "You should be happy, they bring luck to the household" (3).

Working the house of a white family, Anna K gets sickness. She is hospitalized because of gross swelling of legs and arms, but she is not properly cared by the nurses because of her condition-economic and race. Her situation signifies the situation of black women in African continent of white society and effects of apartheid," She had spent five days lying in a corridor among scares of victims of

stabblings and beatings and gunshot wounds who had no time to spend cheering up an old woman when there were young men dying spectaculars death all about" (5).

Anna K and Michael k are economically poor and racially black. In the midst of white community such poor persons are not cared, and in such white community, human dignity gets value according to colour, "Revived with oxygen when she arrived, she was treated with injections and pills to bring down the swelling . . . . She had no dressing gown. Once, feeling her way along the wall to the lavatory, she had been stopped by an old man in grey pajamas who spoke filth and exposed himself" (5).

For eight years, Anna K served in the house of Cafe D' Azuz as a domestic servant. She used to come in at nine in the morning and stayed till eight at night. She worked faithfully as a servant. She was satisfied with the work but because of her sickness, wage is cut by a third. Here J.M Coetzee wants to say how white people take their domestic servant. For white people domestic servant is like empty bottle with content. When the bottle is empty, it is thrown:

For eight years Anna K had been employed as a domestic servant. . . .

A year ago, however, she had begun to experience dizziness and tightness of chest when she bent down. Then the dropsy had set in. The Buhrmann kept her on to do the cooking, cut her pay by a third, and hired a younger woman for the housework. (6)

Anna K wants to leave the city, Cape Town, and move to the place, Prince Albert, where she was born. She feels frustration because of the city life. It gave her nothing except frustration of poverty, restlessness and overwork. This frustration is caused by her colour of skin which she has brought when she got birth. She dreams to live in Prince Albert because she feels that there she gets primitive happiness. She

remembers the happiest moment of life she experienced in her childhood in Prince Albert. To fulfill that illusion, she tells her son to take her to Prince Albert. This memory is to search that place which gives right, equality and happiness even to the black people:

She had hitherto only idly dreamed of: a project of quitting a city that held little promise for her and returning to the quieter Country side of her girlhood. Anna K had been born on a farm in the district of Prince Albert. . . . In Anna's memories the years before Oudtshoorn remained the happiest of her life, a time of warmth and plenty. She remembered sitting in the dust of the chicken-run while the chickens clucked and scratching, she remembered looking for eggs under bushes. . . .She dreamed of escaping from the careless violence, the packed bushes, the food queues, arrogant shopkeepers, thieves and beggars. (7-8)

Anna K and Michal K both want to go to home country of Anna K. He goes for ticket reservation. He does not get the ticket for immediate departure. Humanity is nothing for those who think themselves agents of state because humanity is color. He tells to the clerk about his mother's condition but clerk says, "K pleaded for earlier departure, but in vain: the state of his mother did not constitute special ground, the clerk told him; on the contrary, he would advise him not to mention her condition at all" (9).

Anna K wants to fulfill her illusive dream by going to Prince Albert, but Michael K gets neither Permit nor reservation ticket. When he does not get ticket and permit, he thinks to take his mother keeping her in wheel-barrow. This shows how poor and black people are shunned from the modern technology. They are compelled to take shelter primitive means of transportation:

He took hand-tools and a wheelbarrow, which he trundled back to sea point. Working in the alley behind the flats, he broke up an old crate and knocked together a platform two feet square. . . .She shuffled out into the grey late afternoon and allowed Michael to settle her in the barrow. He wheeled her across Beech road. (10)

In the Midst of city and people of rich man Michael K and his mother are living dilapidated life. Their life does not seem to be different from animals. It happened because of the poverty as well as low grade wages. They cannot get good job and wages because they are black. Coetzee narrates this situation as:

K had never been into the flat before. He found it in Chaos. In a wash of water driven through the window by high winds lay broken furniture, gutted mattresses, fragments of glass and crockery, withered pot-plants, sodden bedding and carpeting. A paste of cake flour, breakfast cereal, sugar, cat litter and earth stuck to his shoe. (14)

Likewise, the security check is so rigid that they even do not consider the people in great problem. They do not exhibit that they are the servants of the nation for the safety and humanitarian feeling of love and affection. It is the colonizing area or they have to show their superiority over the natives. This giving problem to the black people in South Africa is the representation of the dark side of colonialism which Coetzee presents as:

The policewoman slapped the counter to still him.

Don't waste my time. I am telling you for the last time, If the permit is granted, the permit will come!

Don't you see all these people waiting?

Don't you understand? Are you an idiot? (20)

Michael K with his mother cannot walk freely without any bondage. He has a sense of fear triggered within him. They are tortured time and again. They wish they do not encounter any police patrolling on the way. Otherwise they give a number of unnecessary problems upon them, "Once a patrolling police van passed slowly down the street and he had to hold his hand over her mouth" (27).

Anna K wants to leave city. She wants to go to Prince Albert, but Michael K and Anna K do not have permission to cross even peninsula borders. But they do not have to permission. They are not given because of their race. Michael K and Anna K belong to black community. Coetzee mentions this as, "I don't care who you are, who your mother is; if you have not got a permit you cannot leave the areas, finished" (23).

Michael K has never experienced happiness in his life. During his life, he ate that food which is no better than dog's of rich people. When, for the first time, he eats delicious food, tear comes from his eyes. He could not get good food to eat because he and his mother never got good job which could provide good wages and good food. To this condition Coetzee writes, "The pie was so delicious that tears came to his eyes. ...K listened to the birds in the trees and tries to remember when he had known such happiness" (30).

Michael K frequently suffers at the hands of soldier. When he goes towards Prince Albert, he is ceased by patrolling soldier. After his mother's death, he is going towards Prince Albert taking his mother's possession and Ashes. His mother had some money which he keeps now. Soldiers suspect on him for this money. They think Michael K has stolen the money. To this kind of behavior, Michael K resists against the soldier. This kind of behavior of soldier signifies the way of dealing to the colonized by colonizer, and Michael K's resistance signifies colonized people's resistance, "What do you the war for? K said. For taking other people's money?"

‘What do you think the war for?’ Said the soldier parodying the movements of K’s mouth. Thief watches it” (37).

J. M. Coetzee shows very brilliantly how colonized people accept the colonialism due to the poverty. They take the camp life as blessing of hegemony of colonizer. They even do not resist. If anyone tries to resist, they try to cool him to understand himself and his condition. When Michael K shows his resistance, people try to pacify him, “Then don’t be so miserable. This isn’t jail. This is not a life sentence. This is just labour gang. It’s peanuts. ‘Cheer up’, said the man, giving K a smile, punching him lightly on the soldier. Soon you’ll be your own man again” (43).

Michael K has to face much trouble in his life. He does not know in the world there is a word of help from anyone. The human dignity is a fictive thing and an entity that does not exist. Once while talking with a man, he expresses his disbelief in the help:

K allowed this utterance to sink into his mind. Do I belief in helping people? He wondered he might help people, he might not help them, He did not know beforehand, anything was possible. He did not seem to have a belief, as did not seem to have a belief regarding help.

Perhaps I am the stony ground, he thought. (48)

Michael K and his mother Anna K dream good, peaceful and happy future in Prince Albert. They have illusion. When they move from Cape Town to Prince Albert with this illusion, Anna K died on the way. She could not re-experience the situation which she is supposed to experience, but Michael K reaches there and gets disillusioned from all the illusion. When he reaches there, he does not get what he is supposed to get. He finds everything in dilapidated condition. This dilapidated condition of house metaphorically stands for nothingness in country side also. If Anna

K has come to Prince Albert, she might have felt the predicament of country side. She dies before she gets disillusioned:

He approached the house and circles it. . . .Behind the house was a rockery garden in which nothing was growing. There was no wagon house such as he had imagined. . . . On the rise behind the house stood a pump whose head was missing. Far out in the veldt the vanes of a second pump glinted. Cupping his eyes he peered through the window but could make out nothing. Barely able to see in the gloom, breathing an odor of paraffin and wool and far. (51-52)

In country side also, there are problems for the poor and economically backward people. For the poor, there is no happiness and peace in mind. They have to bear this burden in the whole life. As Michael K who has to bear all the tortures given by both city and country is utterly disillusioned about Prince Albert which his mother has dreamt, “It was the first time he had heard his own voices since Prince Albert. He thought: here I can make any sound I like” (56).

For the white people, all the blacks are inferior race. They are slave, and slavery is good for them. When Michael K is cultivating a left piece of land, there comes a man who identifies himself as grandson of Visagie. He addresses Michael as servants, “May grandparents were lucky to find you’, the grandson went on. People have a hard time finding good man servant nowadays” (62).

Michael K has become like a stone because of his experience of torture given by roving armies and disillusionment of dream which he has been breeding within him. He has lost all human feeling, so he does not like to be in human company. He wishes to be free from all kinds restriction which he has been experiencing. He feels



he has become different kinds of man. This different is his unidentified consciousness which has been developing within him:

I have lost my love for that kind of earth, he thought, I no longer care to feed that kind of earth between my fingers. It is no longer the green and the brown that I want but the yellow and the red; not the wet but the dry; not the dark but the light; not the soft but the hard. I am becoming a different kind of man; he thought if there are two kinds of man . . . I am becoming smaller, harder and drier every day. (67)

White statesmen not only inferiorize black through physical colour, they inferiorize through language. These white people often speak taboo words, and make these black people morally down. This is one of the weapons of white people to show their superiority. J.M. Coetzee presents very beautifully how white people inferiorize the black through language, “Fuck off”, said the police man.’ Ask your friends. Who do you think you are that I should give you a free living?”(77).

In a camp where Michael K stays for sometimes shows his resistance against the camp administration. He resists because he wants to roam and work according to his will. There we find some traces of anti-colonial ideology:

“I do not want to work.

Why do I have to work? This is not a jail.

You don’t want to work, but you want other people to feed you.

I don’t need to eat all the time. When I need to eat, I will work. . . . ‘I

don’t want to be in camp, that’s all, said K. (85-94)

Because of the exploitation, black people are compelled to work in the camp and accept the camp life, inside the camp; they have to live with limited freedom. Not only these black people have difficulty to live but also they cannot perform all the

ritual activity properly. They cannot take the body to bury in the place where they like. Moreover, they have to be ready to work leaving all the wishes. This very behavior of woman whose baby dies, puzzles Michael K. That woman comes back to work even after her baby dies a few days back. Michael K now feels that he has begun to understand life and the camp exploitation:

Two days later the baby that had cried in the night died. The child was buried in the back block of town cemetery. The mother, a girl of eighteen, returned from the burial service and refuses to eat. She did not weep, merely sat beside her tent staring out in the direction of Prince Albert. . . . Michael K spent hours standing against the fence where she could not see him, watching her. Is this my education? He wondered. Am I at last learning about life in the camp? . . . Seeing her in midst of other people, K could detect no sign that she was different from them. He never spoke to her . . . dead bodies could be as offensive as living bodies. (89-94)

When the camp mates get burnt because of fire, Michael K raises his voice. Here we find how he resists against the administration that does not care the injured man, “In camp, and first time he had raised his voice in the camp, and people looked at him curiously” (96).

When he feels suffocation inside the camp he runs away from the camp to be free. He wants to live freely. He used to raise his voice from the moment he was brought to the camp. Here we find anti-colonial view of J.M Coetzee. Michael K’s running away from camp completely signifies anti-colonial ideology, “He walked all night, feeling no fatigue trembling sometimes with the thrill of being free” (97).

Man is free and happy in natural state. When he is in natural state, he does not have to live himself within the boundary. All the seasons naturally move. It is only society which binds human being with time and economy. When man is far away from society in natural state, he eats whatever he grows or gets. In nature he feels more free there than society. In the novel *Life Times of Michael K*, Michael K feels free when he lives in burrow, but in society he is hated, controlled and exploited; therefore he does not like to go within the society. When he is kept in the camp, he resisted to be free. Hence, it is the society which divides human beings:

He did not know what month it was though he guessed it was April. He had kept no tally of the days nor recorded the changes of the moon. He was not a prisoner or a castaway, his life by the dam was not a sentence that he had to serve out . . . but most of all, as summer slanted to an end, he was learning to love idleness, idleness no longer as stretches of when there was work to do; it was all the same. . . . He saw himself lying in his own house, the rust was merely rust all that was moving was time, bearing him on ward in its flow. (115)

After leaving camp, Michael K begins to live in a burrow like house which he has built. There he grows vegetable, like pumpkins, melon etc. He eats them and sustains his life. But he is caught by a group of soldiers. They suspect him and begin to search his place. They make him difficult to live. It clarifies that black people have no right to live. They have to bear unnecessary trouble given by armed forces:

The truck arrived to the air was loud with voices and the squawk's and rasp of two-way radio; soldiers were crowding around to seek and his house he had built. Spread at one of them shouted: I want the whole area searched! We are looking for footpaths, we are looking for holes

and tunnels, and we are looking for any kind of storage site! . . .He was in camouflage uniform like everyone else; there was no badge K could see to tell he was in charge. . . . So when are your friend coming. . . . He was hit a terrific blow in the pit of the stomach and fainted. (121-122)

The colonizer shows the big brother feeling towards the black people. They seem to become kind and sympathetic, but their intension is different. Through this means, they want to inferiorize the black people, “They sat him up against wheel of the jeep. One of them fetched the beret and dropped it in his lap” (123).

The colonial ideology is strongly implemented in the novel. Colonial people always ridicule and give trouble to the colonized especially because of the color of their skin. Michael K is a black man, and he is physically unsound. Due to his race and physically unsound, he is often troubled by police officer, "He poked K in the ribs with his boot. He is not sick; he always looks like this, hey, Michaels? . . . So what; this about, monkeys' he said, you playing games with us?" (124).

When one is under colonial domination, one has to bear all the tortures given by colonial people. One cannot have any way except escaping. Michael K is very depressed because of frequent troubles given by soldiers, who belong to other than native black. In the novel, he wants to escape from troubles given by the soldiers. His desire to escape signifies his desire to escape from colonial domination, “I used to think about flying. I always wanted to fly. I used to stretch out my arms and think I was flying over the fences and between the houses” (133).

Because of extreme oppression on Michael K, he has become like a stone. He does not speak with anyone even with doctor. However, this is his technique to be free, but other people see his condition of silence sympathetically:

He is like a stone, a pebble that lain around quietly minding it is our business since the dawn of time, is now suddenly picked up and tossed randomly from hand to hand. A hard little stone barely aware of its surroundings, enveloped in itself and its interior life. He passes through these institutions and camps and hospitals and God knows what else like a stone. . . . I cannot really think of him as a man, though he is older than me by most reckonings. (135)

In the community of white people, the condition of servant is nothing. Michael K's mother was a slave in the house of white man named Cote d' Azur. When she gets sick she does not get any help from him. She wants to go to her own birth place Prince Albert. She feels a kind attachment in that place than Cape Town. But while going to Prince Albert, she dies in the hospital. When she dies and when her body is cremated he does not know. To this situation, Michael K feels very unpleasant. His dissatisfaction is to demand good response from the people:

'My mother worked all her life long', he said. She scrubbed other people's floors, she cooked food for them, and she washed their dishes. . . . She went on her knees and cleaned the toilet. But when she was old and sick, they forget her. They put her away out of sight. When she died they threw her in the fire. They gave me an old box of ash and told me, 'Here is your mother, take her away, she is no good to, us.'

(136)

When one cannot live life freely, it is natural that one protests. In the novel, J.M. Coetzee shows frequent anti-colonial movements in South Africa. People are attacking on mechanism of colonial administration. Because of this, Michael K is suspected. They are waiting his cure because he is sick. Despite the sickness, he is

keeping silence because he hates them, “There was an attack on the town’s water supply last night. The pump was blown up as well as a section of pipe, . . . The police would like another chance to talk to Michael about those responsible, namely his friends from the mountain” (137).

Threatening and interrogating unnecessarily are the means of colonial people to control and suppress the innocent colonized people. Michael K attempts to convince them he is not in the war, but they do not believe on him. They frequently interrogate and threaten him to get the information, and he frequently denies his involvement in any war:

At last he spoke, ‘I am not in the war.’

And if you do not co-operate you will go to a place that is a lot you stand baking in the sun all day and eat potato-peels and mealie-cobs, and do not survive, tough luck, they cross you number off the list and that is the end of you! (138)

Another colonial element seems that the person’s real identity is changed in order to impose extra burden. The name of the central character Michael K has been changed to Michaels. Michael K has been accused of being an arsonist running after a flourishing garden on an abandoned farm. He is said to have served the local guerrillas. Every now and then, Michael K is kept under the soldier’s inspection. He has been asked as many questions as they could, “Tell us about your friends who come to the middle of the night and burn down farms and kill woman and children, said Noel’ that’s what I want to hear” (139).

Human beings need freedom. They do not need anything, if they are restricted. Michael K remains silence, when he is given food to eat. He does not eat because he wants to be free from restrictions. Remaining silence is a kind of protest which

Michael K does, and his remaining silence signifies that he wants to be free and wants to get freedom from the camp life:

There are hundreds of people dying of starvation everyday and you won't eat? Why, are you fasting? Is this a pretest fast? Is that what it is? What are you protesting against? Do you want your freedom? It turned you lose, if we put you out on the street in your condition, you would be dead within twenty four hours. You can't take care of yourself. . . . 'I can't eat the food here, that's all. I cannot eat camp food.' (145-146)

The nature of colonialism is separate that it does not see the difference between human beings and non-human being. For them, the most important thing is to rule over civilian of another country using force. These colonies do not even concentrate general rights of ordinary civilians. They kill them according to their personal ego. They do not have any cause to oppress and suppress, and finally kill them according to their personal ego. They do not need any causes to oppress and suppress, and finally kill. When these colonized people are killed by colonizers, they are thrown like unused battle:

There were at least twenty en route, the prisoners told us. The dead were buried in unmarked graves out in the Veld. . . besides, who is to say that twenty in four hundred is an unacceptable rate? People die, people are dying all the time, it's human nature, you can't stop them. (159-160)

Slowly, one of the unnamed soldiers began to understand himself, and compares him and Michael K the level of consciousness and cry of will. He feels the way Michael K behaves himself and other as a kind of consciousness build up. In the

camp when Michael K was interrogated by soldiers, Michael K does not eat food provided by camp. The soldier reckons this reluctance as a development of consciousness for freedom to live:

I watch you day after day I slowly began to understand the truth: that you were crying secretly, unknowingly to your conscious self (forgive the term), for a different kind of food, food that no camp could supply. Your will remained pliant but your body was crying to be fed its own food, and only that. Now I had been taught that the body contains no ambivalence. The body, I had been taught, wants only to live. Suicide, I had understood, is an act not of the body against itself but of the will against the body. (163-164)

J.M. Coetzee presents the resistance of Michael K in such a brilliant way that he wants to give new idea of freedom to the world. When wants of freedom dominate our lives, we see nothing except freedom. As Freud says, our unconscious mind is the store house of those desires which we perform unconsciously. We do not know, but we perform. Lois Tyson in 'Psycho Analytical Criticism' writes the same concept developed by Sigmund Freud, "You cannot always get what you consciously want, but you get what you unconsciously need. The notion that human beings are motivated, even driven, by desires, fears, needs, and conflicts of which they are unaware that is unconscious" (12).

Towards the concluding part of the novel, Michael K even happens to be the victim of sexual abuse. He escapes from the camp, and he goes half naked to the waist. He has no sandal on his feet. He is met by a woman and other people. A lady gives Michael a drink and sandwich. He has been made to follow her on the way; the



lady makes Michael K a tool to quench her sexual thirst. Michael K can make no stand of his own. He has to run according to the wish of the lady:

There was whispering; then someone unbuttoned the last button of the overalls and slipped a cool hand in. K opened his eyes. It was the woman: she was kneeling beside him fondling his penis. He pushed her hand away and tried to struggle to his feet, but the man spoke. 'Relax my friend,' he said, this is Sea Point, this is the day when all good things happen. (178)

With the long run of time escaping from the camp and people from outside he becomes aware about the nature and characters of people. He learns from his experience about the nature and the way they behave him. He even knows what they think to him:

When my steady was finished, people would have shaken their heads and been sorry and angry and plied me with food and drink, women would have taken me into their beds and mothered me in the dark. Whereas the truth is that I have been a gardener, first got the council, hates for myself, and gardeners sound their tire with their noses to the ground. . . . I am like an earthworm, he thought which is also a kind of gardener or a mole also gardener, that doesn't tell stories because it lives in silence. (181-182)

Thus, J.M. Coetzee who is a South African novelist portrays the loss of human dignity in South African landscape through the major characters Michael K and Anna K. His setting especially centers in apartheid and colonial South Africa. In the novel, Anna K and Michael K represent whole South African people who have

been subjugated and oppressed by colonial government. J.M Coetzee is successful in portraying the loss of human dignity.

## Chapter -4

### Conclusion

#### Human in Vicious Circle

J.M Coetzee's *Life & Time of Michael K* has become a brilliant classical manifesto having plenty of ideas related to loss of human dignity in South African landscape. The novel has occupied a glorious position not only in South Africa but also throughout the world with its contemporary theme.

In the novel, Coetzee is successful in portraying a horrific picture of loss of human dignity through the central characters, Anna K and Michael K. Michael K and Anna K are racially black, economically poor and socio-politically backward. Their race, impoverishment and socio-political situation are the major causes of their predicament. Had they not been black, poor and backward, they might not have been in such situation. Anna K works her almost youth in a white man's house, but when she gets sickness, she is thrown. She has to live in such house which is no more than animal farm. Despite that, she has to live under threat because white people frequently come and create chaos.

Michael K is physically awkward. He is attacked from the beginning. He is not only a racial but also asexual victim but also sexual. He is shunned off from every comfort of life by state mechanism. He even gets trouble by revolutionary black people. He cannot live freely under the blessings of nature. He is time and again troubled by white as well as black people. Finally, he is sexually harassed by white girls. His mother dies and leaves some possession for her son, but he gets problem even due to that possession. He is suspected as thief.

Coetzee also shows camp life where poor and socio-politically backward people stay miserably working for colonizers. Camp is the place where colonizers

implement their hegemony and colonized people accept the hegemony of white colonizers without resistance. To portray the loss of dignity, Coetzee especially focuses on race, economy, hegemony and colonialism. Coetzee not only wants to show the then political and cultural circumstances of South Africa but also shows the reflection of the site of rigorous, social, economical and other opposing forces that try to ruin individual life. The colonizer seizes the fundamental rights such as right to equality, right to freedom, right against preventive detention, right to property, right against exploitation and right to privacy in the totality of the South African native dwellers.

Despite Anna K and Michael K's search for the origin, passion for past happiness, resistance to all opposing forces by Michael K, J. M Coetzee shows how the socially marginalized people suffered grieved a lot at the hands of the colonizers through camp life as well as the miserable life of Anna K and Michael K. These socially marginalized people, no matter how much they attempt, are caught in the vicious circle of pain and suffering.

Michael K and Anna K are even prevented from going back to their own culture, place where, they get happiness; and as a result, Anna K dies en route to Prince Albert. She is the victim of dropsy which is caused because of the unsuitable environment in the city. When she is hospitalized, she is not taken care in the hospital due to her socio- economic problem. Though Michael K researches his native place, he cannot settle in his firm freely. He always stays in a state of fear and chaos due to colonial oppression during the apartheid era.

Similarly, Michael K is physically feeble to resist all the encroachment of all the opposing forces from the very beginning. He very often loses his confidence during the severe hard struggle. Michael K cannot go to his country freely because he

is not given permission. He cannot go against all the opposing forces except remaining mute listener. His feebleness, race and economic condition could be the cause of being mute a listener. He frequently remains silence because he is feeble to resist physically; and due to this, he is submerged in the life of alienation, domination and scarcity. Eating once a day, sleeping under the culvert and drinking dews are the moment of his existential crises. He surrenders before every sort of opposing force that tries to destroy his culture and life. He gives up his desire to attain his goal. He never establishes his identity rather escapes from the imposition of imprisonment of colonial restriction and confinements. Coetzee highlights Michael K as failure in true sense. Moreover, Michael K is a homeless and penniless figure. After the death of his mother, he has no kith and kin. He becomes absolutely a solitary figure.

Homelessness and joblessness are also the equally burning problem that Michael K faces. Such situation, of course, brings the moment of solitariness and fragmentation. Even in such moment of grief and sorrow, he is not assisted by the colonial administration, rather he is tortured time and again. It is because the colonial people do not want him to set free either physically or psychologically.

J.M. Coetzee makes Michael K realize that survival is never a peaceful acquisition because it is always under chaos and confusion. Michael K is embroiled in the turmoil which fragments him. He neither can achieve solace from the people around him nor with the government which is there to guarantee rights of people. He wants to get the relief with the artificial means but it is not long-lasting. The idea of joke during crisis inspires him to continue the life as a gardener. Michael K makes his choice of life, but the choice is not creating the meaning and unity to preserve his survival. His choice as a gardener is his ultimate compulsion. He gets no alternative profession to run his life. It is only gardening that develops his hope and optimism

amidst fragmentation, scarcity and problem Coetzee has presented other textual evidences to present the grim human living condition. Michael does not feel secured from the hand of the colonizers. He tolerates all the traumas and suffering that he gets during the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. He strives to preserve his sweet dream and strong desire amidst the violence and unrest but to no avail. Eventually, gardening becomes the ultimate source to continue his life; and he understands it and realizes that he is born to be a gardener. He is always oppressed by the colonizing power physically, socially, economically and even psychologically. That is why, he never succeeded in his life. What the dignity is, he could never experience and neither his mother too.

Thus, J.M Coetzee portrays the human dignity in undignified world through central characters Michael K and his mother Anna K and their struggle to exist. Michael K and his mother Anna K have to struggle to exist in undignified world because of their race, economic condition and apartheid policy of government. These two sons and mother represent South African black people. Like Michael K and Anna K, native black had to suffer a lot during the colonial era. The voices of blacks were not heard; rather they were segregated from main stream life.

### Works Cited

- Afanasyev, V.G. "Feudal Formation." *Marxist Philosophy*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics : Progress Publishes, 1980. 211-214.
- Ashcraft, Bill, et. al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Ashcraft, Bill. *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1995.
- Birks, Nicholas B. "Colonialism and Culture." *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gereth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. Second Edition. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 1995. 57-61.
- Blyden, Edward Wilmot. *In Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*. 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. Chesapeake, New York: ECA, 1990.
- Carroll, John. *Life & Times of Michael K*. *New York Times*: Penguin ( Editorial Review). (February 1983).
- Christakis, Dimitri A. " Smarter Kids, Brought to you by the Letters T and V." *Flax-Golden Tales :An Interdisciplinary Approach to Learning English*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Ed. Moti Nissani and Shreedhar Lohani. Kathmandu: ekta books, 2010. 163- 166.
- Cridlan, Avril, et al. *The Wordsworth Encyclopedia*. Volume 2. 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. London: Helion Publishing Ltd, 1995.
- Dirks, Nicholas B. "Colonial and Culture." *The Post- Colonial Studies Reader*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Ed. Ed. Bill Ashcrafts, Gereth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 1995. 50-60.
- Fanan, Frantz. "The Fact of Blackness." *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Ed. Bill Ashcraft, Gereth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin.. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. 2006.

Fannon, Frantz. " On National Culture and the Pitfalls of National Consciousness."

*The Wretched of the Earth*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Trans, Constance Farrington). New York: Grove Press, 1961. 220-226.

Foster, George M. *Traditional Society and Technological Change*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

Gallagher, Susan. *A story of South Africa: J.M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context*. 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. London: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Gerald, D. Berreman. *Caste and Other Inequities: Essay on Inequality*. 1<sup>st</sup> Ed, India: Meerut, 1979.

Gilbert, Harriet. *Life & Times of Michael K. Encyclopedia Britannica*. Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 20 Sept 2010.

Harris, Marvin. "Life Without Chief." *Flax-Golden Tales: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Learning English*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed Ed. Moti Nissani and Shreedhar Lohani. Kathmandu: Ekta Books, 2010. 214-226.

Kakutani, Michiko. *Life & Times of Michael K. The New York Times*. (July 2011).

Koirala, B.P. "A Tale." *Flax-Golden Tales : An Interdisciplinary Approach to learning English*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Ed. Moti Nissani and Shreedhar Lohani.. Kathmandu: Ekta Books, 2010. 430-433.

Loomba, Anna. *Colonialism/Post- colonialism*. 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1998.

Marshall, D. Sahlins. *Tribesmen*. 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. New York: Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

Ozick, Cynthia. *Tife & Times of Michael K. The New York Times*. Viking Press, (November 1983).



- Robert, K. Merton. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York: Glencoe, Ill Free Press, 1957.
- Said, Edward. " Orientalism". *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcraft, Gereth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. London: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 1995. 24-25.
- Service, Elman R. *The Hunter*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York: Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1979.
- Susdie, Salman." A 1996 Commencement Speech." *Flax- Golden Tales: An Interdisciplinary Approach to learning English*. Ed. Moti Nissani and Shreedhar Lohani. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Kathmandu: Ekta Books , 2010. 102-107.
- Tudiver, Juduth G." Parents and the Sex-Role Development of the Pre-School Child." *Sex Roles: Orgins Influences and Implications for Women*. Ed. Stork Adamo. 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. Motreal: Eden's Press Women's Publication, 1980. 219-227.
- Tiffin, Helen. "Post Colonial Literature and Counter-Discourse." *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gereth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 1995. 97-101.
- Tyson, Lois. "Feminist Criticism." *Critical Theory Today*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006. 83-120.
- Tyson, Lois. "Post-Colonialism Criticism." *Critical Theory Today*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2006. 417-446.
- Waugh, Partrcia. *Literary Theory and Criticism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York: Oxford University Press Inc, 2007.
- Yeats, W.B. "Leda and Swan." *Elements of Literature*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Ed. Robert Scholes, Nancy R. Camley, et. al. London: Oxford University Press, 1997.