

Chapter 1

Social Status of Negroes as Seen in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Background of the Study

American dream has failed to fulfill its mission in matters of African-American citizens and the fact is clearly reflected in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The present study tries to illustrate the dark side of black people and highlight how their dreams have been fragmented in white dominated society in Deep South America in 1930s. In spite of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1862, the blacks have been dominated, segregated and discriminated against. The main argument of this research is that segregation and discrimination against the African American forms the bedrock for the failure of American dream so far as the black people are concerned.

In the novel, Lee authenticates her notion that the so called white mechanism viewed and still views black people as Others except some whites' indirect favor for the black's dream of freedom. This mechanism in the contemporary society has restricted the freedom of black people. African American people were segregated and discriminated against in the community of Maycomb. Lee, in her novel, explores the efforts made against segregation through the characters Atticus Finch, Tom Robinson, Boo Radely, Calpurina, Scout, and Jem.

Lee, in this novel not only highlights the blacks' fragmented dream but also depicts white families' condition about how they are negatively criticized for their support to blacks. Atticus Finch, a noble man and a lawyer, defends a black man Tom Robinson, who is falsely convicted of raping a white woman, Mayella Ewell. He is victimized by the white community because he is a Negro. White insist that he should be oppressed in the community. The domination is out of the limit. He is shot in the

presence of the jury of court and his dream of being free ends forever.

After Tom's trial, Atticus's dream is also broken and his faith in law is badly shaken. While he is defending Tom, his children, Jem and Scout are tortured by Bob Ewell, Mayella's father. The children are not only discriminated against in the community but also treated very badly at school because their father is a supporter of Negro freedom. The children's dreams of freedom shatter along with the dream of their father and Tom. It suggests that not only has the dream of black people broken but the dream of whites who raised their voice in favor of black people have also been fragmented.

In the 1930s America was in the midst of the Great Depression. This was the time of horrible situation when the blacks had lost all human rights. After the Civil Rights Movement, the blacks' voice, feelings and anger were included in the mainstream of literature by the black writers like James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, and Toni Morrison as well as white writer like Harper Lee. Black's voice has been strongly raised through different literary genres like poem, drama, novel, etc. Through their writing, the authors favor black community and their dream to be free from the white people's oppression.

American dream means to get rid of poverty and any kinds of violence and discrimination. Everyone in America should be treated in equal manner, no matter what nationality or ethnic groups they belong to. The failure of American dream in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, gets reflected in the accusation of a rape charge against Tom. Atticus's fighting for former slave Tom's freedom from the false charge of raping is an attempt to restore American dream. Atticus wants justice since Tom was wrongfully accused of raping Mayella. His dream is to establish equality between the whites and blacks. Atticus, in order to fulfill his dream, defends Tom through his best

effort but it is all in vain when the accused is killed during the trial. It could be considered that Atticus must have felt his own dream of an equal, moral and decent society heading to a direction of complete failure.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the dialogue between two communities is depicted, along with the sympathy, empathy and a sense of common humanity in spite of the atmosphere of prejudice, racial oppression, and the presence of legally enforced segregation. Atticus' defense for Tom is of great importance as he tries to link the black and the white community and he has a voice for both.

The novel clearly deals with how American dream failed in Afro American context during 1930s. The black people were taken as a lower being of society. There was no reason of suppression upon them except their complexion and origin. They were segregated and discriminated against on the basis of color of skin which was not justifiable regarding the assumption of American Dream. In the famous speech "I have a Dream" Martin Luther King makes the nation of his dream "it is the dream deeply rooted in the American dream" and he further says, "I have a dream that one day my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character" (76).

This dissertation is an effort to investigate how American dream has failed to fulfill its mission in matters of African-American citizens on the basis of the answers to the questions: Why does the white mechanism in America segregate the black people in spite of the main philosophy of equality? How has Lee justified the failure of American dream in *To Kill a Mockingbird*? The research advances forward to the conclusion with the hypothesis that the American dream has failed to fulfill its mission concerning African-American citizens just because of their complexion and origin.

This study covers the issues of American dream in Afro American context as seen in *To kill a Mockingbird*. The major objective of this dissertation is to explore the reason behind segregation and white's dominations on black people as others and to justify the failure of American dream in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

This study primarily focuses on intensive textual reading and library research. It mainly seeks the aspects of American dream that has failed in Afro-American context during 1930s. It is based on the concept of American dream in Afro-American context.

American dream covers the vast range of study and analysis. Mainly it deals with freedom and equality of the American people from the socio economic point of view. In 1630s, in the small county of Maycomb, most of the African- American people were suppressed by white dominated society. Afro-American people were negatively conceptualized by the white people in the contemporary society. Many literary figures in the world have explored the causes and consequences on the philosophy of American dream that has failed in the Afro-American context. Furthermore this research will be the platform and the new insight for the new researchers as well.

Review of Literature

Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is unquestionably one of the most widely read books in American literature. It has made a significant difference between the issue of individual and in the culture as a whole. The novel challenges the stereotype of white people viewing African-Americans as others.

Since its publication in 1962, the novel has received many critical responses. It has received responses from numerous critics from different perspectives. Some of them have focused their commentaries on the issue of American dream, whereas

others have focused on the issue of morality, suppression upon blacks, ritualistic aspects, portrayal of characters and afro American tradition.

During the course of time Atticus's children pass from innocence to knowledge. They start to realize their own connection with the community, and they observe their father's heroism in the face of community's prejudice. Despite his full effort to save Tom, the Negro has been killed in the jury and then the children's faith on law has been broken and their dream of freedom has failed. In this context, Claudia Drust Jonson illustrates:

The children must grow up, learn civilizing truths, and rise above the narrowness of the place and time in which private codes and even some legal practices contradict the idealistic principles that the community professes: "Equal rights for all, special privileges for none," as Scout says. In practice, however, equal justice was not available to Boo Radley at that turning point in his life; nor is it available to the Tom Robinsons of this world. Within such a social climate, the children learn how citizens of their community, which is made up of different races, classes, and temperaments, interact in times of crisis. (107)

The outsiders in this novel are primarily represented by the unseen eccentric, Boo Radely and the African-American Tom Robinson. They are clearly outsider in the mainstream of Maycomb society even though they have lived in the community for long as they remember.

In the Afro American context of 1930s, various black writers including some white writers produced their literary works on behalf of black voice which helped introduce black people's identity, feelings and anger. The main purpose of these

writings was to include white people's support to black people for their freedom and voice. In the series of criticism, Leonard Cassuto states:

Atticus Finch, a noble white lawyer being as a white community man fought for blacks for their freedom. He has become something of a folk hero in legal circles and is treated almost as if he were an actual person. This is the great example in the human history towards the black community. He sacrifices himself for the successful reality of Afro-American dream. (56)

Atticus is the protagonist, reticent, dignified, distant man fighting against injustice. When the entire white world seems to have lost its head, it is he who remains sane and firm. Atticus reveals his bravery, strength and modesty when faced with objection during Maycomb's quarrel for justice.

Alabama is the place where Lee grew up. She has the real feelings of discrimination against the blacks by the white community. That is why; she has chosen the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird's* setting in Alabama. Among the white people, there was the man like Atticus who assumed that the black people were not harmful in the society; they were the innocent creature like mockingbird. Tom was innocent like mockingbird but he was killed without a justifiable reason. To illustrate the fragmented dream of black people, Harold Bloom in his *Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird: Father and Daughter in Literature* states:

Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They do not eat up people's garden, they do not make nest in corncribs, and they do not do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. They are the symbol of peace and harmony. To kill a mockingbird is to kill that which is innocent and harmless. That is why it is sin to kill a

mockingbird. (60)

Tom is one example of a human mockingbird. He is accused of raping, but he is innocent. The town commits the ultimate sin by finding him guilty and sentencing him to death. In effect, they have killed a mockingbird.

Lee establishes a historical context with which her audience can see the necessity for moral lessons. She does not only set the mood with the Great Depression, but also uses an attitude to enhance her message. African Americans in the South frequently faced false allegations, and juries, because of biases, and were wrongfully convicted. Tom Robinson's trial as illustrated in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is somehow similar to the 1930s Scottsboro trial.

In the case of Scottsboro trial the nine black men were falsely convicted of raping two white women in the train. They fought and defeated white men in the train which was not acceptable for the white people so the blacks were falsely convicted of raping. Then they were taken to court for the charge of raping. In the court one accuser white woman revealed the reality of the case and among the nine eight blacks got rid of the case but one got death penalty. Lee chose to use the high-profile, nationally exploited trial as the foundation for her novel. The novel's trial, like the Scottsboro trial, implicates a black man and accuses him of raping a white woman. The trials have similar evidence to prove the noninvolvement of the accused in the incident. Fictionalizing this historical event helps Lee to establish the misguided attitudes of many whites, especially those in the Deep South.

This novel is a reflection of contemporary American society. This society has always been enticing and enigmatic at the same time; attracting people all over the world to reveal the mystery, but the more the mystery is revealed the deeper it becomes to unfathomable limits. American society is known for racial discrimination.

And the slaves were transported from Africa to America for the economic purposes because Africans were good for plantation and agriculture.

Lee's novel mainly concerns the issues of black people's dream in the Maycomb society of Southern America. For some critics of cultural readings, the novel most dominantly deals with the black experience of suppression and domination. The novel tries to subvert the boundaries and hierarchies related to high literature, high art and many other aspects of human literature.

Donald F. Roden observes the novel as the illustration of the black culture that occupies the horizon of the black minds in America. He argues:

The theme of the novel may be extended even further than the racial issue or the ideas of trying to see the other person's point of view. The story of the unjust accusation against Tom Robinson, his trial, subsequent conviction and death is the focus of the plot. This entails analyzing the racial outlooks held by the individual characters as well as those held by the county at large and how and why that affected not only the trial of Tom Robinson but the lives of the members of the Finch family. (55)

The novel is not only limited to racial segregation but also includes black people's worse condition that prevailed in South America in 1930s. Being African-American in Alabama was not easy. In 1930 they had only been free citizens for sixty-five years. Racial discrimination and prejudice were still common in Alabama. Right up until the 1960s, there was a policy of segregation, which meant separate facilities, such as schools, toilets and restaurants, for whites and African-Americans. Alabama and many other American states had specific 'Jim Crow' laws to enforce segregation.

There was also a widespread belief amongst whites that African-American men were sexual predators and were a threat to white women. Many white men lived with black women without any doubt but it was thought to be scandalous for a black man to live with a white woman. A large majority of white people believed that African-Americans were second-class citizens and treated them accordingly.

Since the publication of this novel, it has been analyzed from different point of view. Different criticisms have been made by using different analytical tools. Nobody has entered to generalize this novel using American dream as a tool. This study is different from other critics because it tries to explore reason behind the failure of American dream in Afro-American context as reflected in Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation focusing the discussion around Harper Lee's *To kill a Mockingbird*, is a replica on failure of American dream in matters of Afro American citizen in Maycomb, a fictional town in South America in the period of 1930s. It consists of three chapters which analyze the issue of racism and discrimination against class and gender from the different perspectives, to reach the conclusion that these practices have paralyzed American Dream in the American society.

The first chapter of this dissertation is about the background of the research, statement of the problem, objective of the dissertation, hypothesis, methodology, delimitation, signification of the study and review of the literature. Different scholars have observed this novel from different points of view. Most of the scholar's opinion about racism, discrimination against class and gender is included in the review of the literature. This section also discusses about the condition of African American people in southern America in 1930s. Similarly the second chapter focuses on American

dream, segregation and discrimination in relation with the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The chapter deeply analyzes why and how the American dream has failed regarding the theme in Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Likewise chapter three is conclusive chapter of the entire dissertation. It offers a detail overview of the research.

Chapter: 2

Anti American Dream Practices: Segregation and Discrimination in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

American Dream

Historian James Truslow Adams often receives credit for first popularizing the idea of the American dream. In his 1931 book *The Epic of America*, Adams describes, American dream as "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement" (96) regardless of social class or circumstances of birth. But the concept of the American dream, as Adams defines it, actually existed long before him.

In 1630, John Winthrop gave his "City upon a Hill" sermon to his fellow Puritan colonists as they sailed to Massachusetts in 1630. Although Winthrop never used the word dream, he eloquently detailed his vision of a society in which everyone would have a chance to prosper, as long as they all worked together and followed Biblical teachings.

Gradually, that dream of opportunity evolved in colonists' minds into a God-given right. In the Declaration of Independence in 1776, Thomas Jefferson asserted that everyone in America at least, those who weren't enslaved by the colonists were entitled to "life, liberty and pursuit of happiness" (105).

The word American dream gradually began to appear in newspaper articles and books in the mid1800s, often in reference to hardy pioneers who headed westward to seek fortune, or to European immigrants who arrived in U.S. ports in search of better jobs and homes. By the early 20th century, it was a euphemism for upward economic mobility, the prototypical American rags-to-riches dream. In Sherwood Anderson's 1916 novel *Windy McPherson's Son*, the author describes his

protagonist as "an American multi-millionaire, a man in the midst of his money-making, one who had realized the American Dream"(69).

James Truslow Adams wrote a book about the history of the United States in 1931. In this book, he explained about the American Dream. He and many others believed that the dream was in serious danger. A land that had once been viewed as the land of opportunity was now mired in the Great Depression. The Depression had destroyed the fortunes of legions of self-made millionaires and cost Americans of humbler means their homes and jobs, forcing them to live in hobo camps and beg for spare change on street corners. Few believed President Herbert Hoover's words that "prosperity was just around the corner"(qtd. in Hartman 63).

Hoover's successor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, launched an array of social programs to help the impoverished, and had better luck convincing Americans to believe they could improve their lots in life. In a January 1941 speech to Congress, Roosevelt articulated his own vision of a new, government-assisted American dream. This dream included full employment, government help for the elderly and those unable to work and "enjoyment of the fruits of scientific progress in a wider and constantly rising standard of living"(Roosevelt 301).

That vision of boundless prosperity started to look real again after the end of World War II. The economy primed by massive amounts of military spending, the victorious United States emerged as the wealthiest, most powerful, arguably, and most envied society on the planet. In the 1950s, Americans, who made up just six percent of the world's population, produced and consumed one-third of its goods and services. Factories busily churned out products to meet the needs of an exploding population, wages rose, and increasingly affluent workers and their growing families moved into spacious new houses in the suburbs (Schultz, and William 140).

Many Americans in new middle class embraced a belief in seemingly perpetual upward mobility. They believed that if they worked hard enough, life would continue to get better and better for them and for their offspring. To be sure, some social critics saw dream to be overly materialistic, spiritually empty, intellectually stifling and destructive. Others pointed out the fact that America was not necessarily a land of opportunity for everyone, particularly those who belonged to racial and ethnic minorities.

The American dream is a national ethos of the United States, the set of ideals like democracy, rights, liberty, opportunity, and equality in which freedom includes the opportunity for prosperity and success, and an upward social mobility for the family and children, achieved through hard work in a society with few barriers.

The American dream as stated in *Rethinking the American Dream* by David Kamp proclaims that "All men are created equal" with the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (58). The meaning of the American dream has changed over the course of history, and includes both personal components such as home ownership and upward mobility and a global vision. Historically the dream originated in the mystique regarding frontier life. As the Royal Governor of Virginia noted in 1774, the Americans "for ever imagine the Lands further off are still better than those upon which they are already settled". He added that, "If they attained Paradise, they would move on if they heard of a better place farther west" (Dunmore 77).

The ethos today implies an opportunity for Americans to achieve prosperity through hard work. According to the American dream, this includes the opportunity for one's children to grow up and receive a good education and career without artificial barriers. It is the opportunity to make individual choices without the prior restrictions that limited people according to their class, caste, religion, race, or

ethnicity.

Immigrants to the United States sponsored ethnic newspapers in their own language; the editors typically promoted the American Dream. In the series of criticism Lawrence R Samuel argues:

For many in both the working class and the middle class, upward mobility has served as the heart and soul of the American Dream, the prospect of "betterment" and to "improve one's lot" for oneself and one's children much of what this country is all about. "Work hard, save a little, send the kids to college so they can do better than you did, and retire happily to a warmer climate" has been the script we have all been handed.(7)

The American dream that has lured tens of millions of all minds in the past century has not been a dream of merely material plenty, though that has doubtlessly counted heavily. It has been much more than that. It has been a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in the older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders which had developed for the benefit of classes rather than for the simple human being of any and every class.

Martin Luther King, Jr., in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (1963) rooted the civil rights movement in the black quest for the American Dream:

We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands ... when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, thereby

bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. (qtd. in James 147)

The American dream legally protects every American's right to achieve their potential that allows them to contribute their utmost to society. It is the belief that the best way to ensure national progress is to protect citizens' right to improve their lives.

To convert the blacks' dream in reality, the social activists from black community raise their voice against white domination. Martin Luther King Jr. has given his speech on the title 'I Have a Dream' in 1963, August 28, at the Lincoln Memorial Washington D.C., dreaming the black people's freedom and justice. He addresses:

I have a dream today! I have a dream that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" –one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. (73-79)

His soaring rhetoric demanding racial justice and an integrated society becomes a mantra for the black community and familiar to subsequent generation of Americans as the US declaration of independence. His word proved to be a touchstone for understanding the social and political upheaval of the time and given the nation a vocabulary to express what was happening.

Practices Against American Dream

The American dream is a reoccurring theme throughout the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It is used in many ways, but it is essentially an idea which suggests that anyone in the US can succeed through hard work and has

the potential to lead a happy, successful life. This idea has been expanded and refined upon to include ideas such as freedom, fulfillment and meaningful relationships. In American Society to be living the dream is considered to be an achievement.

The stereotypical dream is usually portrayed as being married, having two children and living in a three-bedroom house with a white picket fence. For many people this outcome may seem very possible and easily achievable, but for others such an idealistic vision is unattainable, particularly if ambition and greed become factors. This novel uses different social situations to criticize different beliefs about the American dream.

In the novel, the main character, Atticus, believes wholeheartedly in the promise of the American dream. He believes that a well liked and a personally attractive man in society will acquire the material comforts offered by modern American life. His obsession with superficialities drags him away from the more rewarding understanding of the dream that his hard work without complaint is the key to success. His blind faith in this superficial interpretation leads to his rapid psychological decline when he is unable to accept the disparity between the dream and his own life.

Lee's ideas about the failure of American dream are quite appropriate in the novel that gives justice to the main characters. Throughout the novel the sheer determination upon black characters portrays the idea that success comes through perseverance and belief. Two examples of this are Miss Maudie and Mrs Dubose. After the fire in her house, Miss Maudie does not complain even once. Instead, she sees it as an opportunity to build a better house. Mrs. Dubose's determination is shown through her morphine addiction. On this occasion, Lee states that determination does not always lead to the dream. "She was going to leave this world

beholden to nothing and nobody” (Zakaria). Lee criticizes the dream's ideas about equality through the use of social prejudice regarding Tom Robinson case.

The novel, besides a black person, also includes a story about a young girl, her brother, and her father who is a lawyer. This girl, Scout, grows and learns about many things through the course of the time. Scout grows up in many ways, seeing truth of bitterness of the society. She is innocent but she is continually suffering from the harassment of the white dominated society. When speaking of the American dream in this novel one must perhaps look at Scout’s father. He is a man who is noble, honest and humble. He fights for the rights of an African American falsely accused of raping a white woman even though the small town despises his involvement. He fights for justice and equality in the world and one could well argue that this is his attempt to actualize American dream.

Atticus is happy in his economic success, though he is relatively poor. He is economically independent, and is happy enough with that. He pushes his American dream to involve all people, dreaming that people showed justice no matter who they are, and perhaps dreaming people were not so ignorant or fearful of what they did not understand. He is an honorable man fighting for justice, as evidenced when he tells Scout, “I wanted you to see what real courageous, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do” (Lee 124).

Through this novel, Lee is able to show two perceptions of the American dream one who is rooted in reality and works for a dream of equality and justice, and the other who lives in a fantasy world with an unattainable version of the American dream. Both are disillusioned at times with the circumstances of life, but Atticus,

being rooted in reality, can truly achieve his American dream whereas Scout's dream is shattered in reality. American literature is no stranger to the concept of the American dream, its roots being in the very conception of the country itself. As society changed so did the dreams of the people, captured by Lee in her novel. The American dream began as an achievable lifestyle, but it would later transform into an unattainable reality to those rooted in fantasy which left dreamers disillusioned and broken by reality.

Segregation

Segregation has been a problem for a long time. The most well-known form of segregation in the United States is racial segregation. The most prevalent issue is between the white and black people. Racial segregation was used to separate by race or more commonly skin color. The people of America had separate bathrooms, separate houses, separate seating, separate work forces, and even separate water fountains for the whites and the blacks.

Segregation is to separate or set apart from others or from the main body or group. In this novel, Scout feels downfall of segregation. In her age, even families would turn against each other because of skin color. Segregation was not one-sided in this time. The black people of the church did not feel obligated to treat the white children with any hospitality when they did not get any respect from other white people in the community.

Tom sees himself being nice to Mayella. Mr. Gilmer and the audience see a black feeling bad for a white. Tom is placing himself higher on the social ladder than Mayella. This is a huge mistake on Tom's part. Jem is very confident that his father is going to win the case. Reverend Sikes tells Jem not to be so confident because he had never seen a jury favor a black man over a white man (Lee 230). Reverend Sikes sees

the reality of the situation more than Jem does. Jem did not yet understand that the jury pays more attention to race than they do to evidence. Atticus's opinion differs very much from the other white men in the community. He believes that what is fair is fair. He does not believe in judging someone by the color of their skin.

Racial segregation is shown further when the Negroes enter the courthouse, after the white. This is shown explicitly in the novel as the Negroes, having waited for the white people to go upstairs, began to come in. The fact that they had to wait for all of the white people to go upstairs before being able to go themselves, this shows the differences in social standing between the white community and the black. Another example can be shown, when the Idler's Club member says "Whoa now, just a minute, holding up his walking stick. Just do not start up the stairs yet awhile" (Lee180). This behavior by whites only further demonstrates the differences in social standing, where the white people are allowed to have the first choice over the seats of the colored ones.

In the court the black's files are stored in the last and priority is given to the white's files at the first. Whites are seated in front of the judge and blacks are ordered to sit in the balcony. Four niggers are given their front row seats. The balcony where the black are speaking is named as colored balcony. Whites and blacks are separated in the public place like court; this is an example of segregation.

Whites are superior to the blacks and the black people must show respect to the whites by giving their own place for the white. Jem, Dill and Scout are not allowed to stay with among the whites. They ordered to stay with among the blacks in the colored balcony. This also implied that the white's children are antecedent over the blacks.

The black people left the front row seats, which they waited very long for. They were not asked to move, but they knew that the white children would get the seats because they were considered to be a better race. It shows that the laws had broken these people down, and made them so ashamed, that they simply left their spots.

The segregation towards the Blacks in Maycomb is highlighted by the way that the black people file into court last and are seated in the balcony. Their politeness towards Jem, Scout and Dill is again shown when people give up their front seats for them. This also implies that in this society white children have priority over black adults. It is ironic that the children will have the same viewpoint as the black people during the trial.

The issue of segregation is the central motif of the novel. The society is split between people who hate Atticus and those who like him. He shows understanding and sympathy towards those who might be different or less fortunate. These values are carried onto Jem and Scout. For example, when Scout brings Walter Cunningham home for dinner and then she mocks his table manners, Calpurnia the housemaid scolds her and says that all guests should be treated with respect no matter what their social station. Atticus also makes judgments based on behavior and not their background. Unlike Aunt Alexandra, who calls poor people like the Cunninghams trash because of their socio-economic status, Atticus tells his children that any white man who takes advantage of a black man's ignorance is trash.

Throughout the novel blacks are referred to as niggers, and those who support them or show them any kindness, nigger lovers. Scout fights with many children in the school yard due to their misunderstanding of Atticus' courage. Hypocrisy also runs deep in the so-called good people of the town, the churchwomen form a missionary

circle to support the work being done with the heathen savages in Africa, but condemn those who fight for the rights of the black residents in their own town.

The segregation of Maycomb is not based solely on race. Anyone who is different, or who remains outside the social circles, is ostracized and segregated. Boo Radley is labeled as a monster and outcast because he never leaves his home. It is not enough to just leave him alone; he is an object of gossip and games. The children reenact stories they have heard about him and dare each other to spy on him. Atticus dissuades his own children from doing this, and at the end of the novel, Scout and Jem understand Boo's role as a mockingbird, bringing good to the community in return for nothing.

The Ewell family should not be overlooked as being the victims of prejudice. The Ewells, although white, are almost as despised as the Negroes. They live in poverty, removed from respectable society in their own segregation. They are the targets of scorn and derision. Mayella, a girl ruled by an alcoholic and violent father, is offered help by a man who should be her inferior. Tom Robinson is possibly the only man who has ever shown her any respect and, misreading this, she makes inappropriate overtures. When this is discovered her father forces her to turn the situation to their advantage by accusing Tom of rape. This incident shows that racism creates a cycle that continues far beyond any initial incident.

Discrimination

Racial discrimination is often based on the partiality of color. The word discrimination denotes the denial of equality based on personal characteristics such as face and color. Discrimination denotes all forms of differential behaviors based on race. There are many other forms of racial domination also; they exclude the blacks intellectually, religiously, socially and morally from the society.

Racial discrimination has been badly practiced in America since the time the Africans were first brought to the nation. The social body and mind of the white race had been acting against the Negroes. It was supported by an active and increasingly hostile sentiment and emotion that constitute the historical cause of that abnormal social situation in the United States. The social situation of the Negroes was very miserable, painful and problematic. It embraced years of ethnological misinterpretation on the one hand and social customary practice on the other. Despite the fact that the Negroes were involved from the beginnings in the problems of America; first as a group of colonies, then as a nation but the Negroes had been placed at the last rung of the social ladder.

Lee's novel contains several accounts of discrimination. One example of discrimination is Aunt Alexandra against Walter Cunningham. She tells Scout that she is not of their class and she is not allowed to invite him for dinner again. This is the example of Aunt Alexandra discriminating against people of a lower class than her.

Scout makes a strong realization about the people in her town who highlight discrimination. It all starts with her teacher talking about how Hitler was a terrible man because of his prosecution of the Jewish people. She then points out that the United States is a democratic country where no one is prosecuted. This statement brings back a memory of the trial of Tom for Scout. At the trial Scout heard her teacher say that Tom deserved to be convicted and some other racists' remarks. This makes Scout see that there is prosecution going on in her world against African Americans. Scout has finally realized that some of the people in Maycomb are hypocrites. She sees that a group of people are being discriminated against just because they are different even though they are innocent.

Calpurina who has been giving her long service to Atticus's family is an

important character in the novel. She is black and has been working for a long time for a white family. Atticus treats Calpurnia as a lady, and that is exactly what she is. Indeed, she is a mirror of Atticus, in that she rejects the color bar too, and takes Scout and Jem to a black church service in defiance of some African American's sentiment against admitting whites into their worship. It is an unusual event in the Deep South at the time the book is set and she is clearly determined to bring the event off without backing down to any objections. However, she faces objections.

On arriving at the venue, she encounters a member of the African American community who shows hostility to the presence of two white children. As Scout, the fictional narrator of the novel recounts: "Lula (a black member of the congregation) stopped, but she said, 'You ain't got any business bringin' white chillum here – they got their church, we got our'n. It is our church, ain't it, Miss Cal?'" "Calpurnia said, 'It's the same God, ain't it?'" Scout notes that "... she was talking like the rest of them" (Lee 131). She is an important figure in Scout's life, providing discipline, instruction, and love. She also fills the maternal role for the children after their mother's death. Calpurnia is a mother herself and raised her son, Zeebo, to adulthood. Calpurnia is one of the few black characters in the novel who is able to read and write, and it is she who taught Scout to write.

The issue of common humanity is depicted in the novel in relation to litigation. It is intriguing and shocking to read the way of the legal system in the Deep South which is skewed against African Americans. The novel focuses on the Finch family. The father of the family, Atticus, is bringing his two children up with a strong sense of moral values, and with a total rejection of the racial and gender prejudice and oppression that surround the family. His views are illustrated well in the following dialogue with his daughter, Scout:

“‘Scout,’ said Atticus, ‘nigger-lover is just one of those terms that don’t mean anything – like snot-nose. It’s hard to explain – ignorant, trashy people use it when they think somebody’s favouring Negroes over and above themselves. It’s slipped into usage with some people like ourselves, when they want a common, ugly term to label someone.’ ‘You aren’t really a nigger-lover then, are you? ‘I certainly am. I do my best to love everybody....’” (Lee 120)

Scout’s question is ambivalent. It can be read as her seeking reassurance that her father is not sinning against racist white attitudes; it can also be read as the girl seeking reassurance that her father cannot be labeled and condemned by white society with that vile soubriquet.

Atticus’s rejoinder is conclusive and inclusive. The plot has several levels. One is the interaction between Scout and her brother Jem, and the epiphany they arrive at on the issue of race and the ethics of equal human value. Scout uses the word nigger early on in the novel, and is reproved by her father: “Don’t say nigger, scout. That’s common” (Lee 83). The modern reader might find the word common snobbish, but the sense with Atticus is that it is beneath his daughter to use such a foul word about her fellow humans. Scout’s inquiring mind seeks to understand the situation in her locality, and this includes how justice is administered .She asks her father: “do all lawyers defend n-Negroes, Atticus?” “Of course they do, Scout.” “Then why did Cecil say you defended niggers? He made it sound like you were running still” (Lee 83).

The Negroes show Scout’s biting back the word nigger. Scout is learning, and the novel contains a kind of dialectic in which Scout, and to a lesser extent, Jem, tests her attitudes and those of others against the touchstone of her moral authority of her

father Atticus. Atticus would never dream of using the bad words to insult the people around him. Yet, and in reference to the insulted word, it strikes the reader as strange that Calpurnia uses it. When confronted by the hostile Lula, she says “Stop right there, nigger” (Lee 131). Yet there is the suspicion that Calpurnia sees herself as being of higher status than other people of color, being the much empowered member of a high status white household, and the bad word for negro is used to draw this distinction. This is, perhaps, not the most positive voice of African-American females. However, it can also be argued that Lee depicts a strong African-American woman who chooses her own discourse. By the 1980’s African-Americans in the media started to make extensive use of the negative words for blacks. At the same time whites in US society found that they most certainly could do anything for the blacks. A large part of racism is labeling and condemning, and this is a wide and lamentable phenomenon. White women writers can oppose it as well as the white society.

The demonization of Boo Radley, who is seen as a freak because of his reclusion, but in the event saves Scout and Jem’s lives, is one of the central subjects of the book. Again, the theme is prejudice versus reality, and Boo Radley is a mirror of black people in the community, who are also labeled as criminals and condemned without evidence and logic.

The children of the town are frightened by Boo in a rather exciting way, and he is seen as a bogeyman, one who might at any time come at the children of the town. He is supposed to have committed a violent crime, and is arrested and taken into custody. Yet, “The sheriff had not the heart to put him in jail alongside Negroes, so Boo was locked in the courthouse basement” (Lee 12). Even those accused of serious crimes are treated differently if white, and the sense here is that Boo as a white man and must be protected from the contamination that racists perceive as

coming from contact with black people. It should be noted that Boo is a completely silent character. Again, this is a mirror of the situation of so many persecuted African Americans, he has no voice.

Lee demonstrates awareness that social exclusion and denial of self-expression cuts across the racial divide. The main and most dramatic strand in the plot as mentioned elsewhere, is the court case Atticus fights in defense of a black man, Tom Robinson, who is falsely accused of raping a white woman. Atticus ably defends his charge, but knows in his heart that the culture of the Deep South is against him, and he will lose irrespective of evidence and due legal process. Scout asks her father whether he will win the case, and he immediately responds in the negative. Tom Robinson is killed while trying to escape, and the man who brought the charge against Tom Robinson, Ewell, tries to murder Atticus's children in revenge for Atticus's opposing him and being a nigger-lover. He meets poetic justice by being killed in turn by Boo Radley, who appears in defense of the children.

The court proceedings display another aspect of representation and voice in respect of white and black citizens in the Deep South. Atticus, in defending Tom leads his client's accuser, Mayella, to contradict her false story, but to no avail. The way the dialogue in court progresses is telling. Atticus asks of Robinson, 'You never asked him to do odd jobs before?' 'I mighta,' conceded Mayella. 'There were several niggers around'' (Lee 203). One can note that the offensive term for African Americans is allowed without question, for the voice of the white woman is free in expression, however vile the things it expresses.

Atticus asks Tom Robinson why he ran away from the scene of the supposed crime, and the black man answers, "Mr. Finch, if you was a nigger like me, you'd be scared, too" (Lee 215). It seems he has accepted his insulting label. So many un-

empowered black Americans seem voiceless; in fact there is a vibrant stream of cultural expression that attempts to cross racial barriers and give voice to the black community in the USA.

Tom was discriminated against because if he was a white man who committed the same crime he might not be shot. He is discriminated against when the guards decide to shoot him. Even though he was escaping this was a drastic measure. It was so extreme because Tom was already crippled and he probably would not have gotten far. The guards had probably been planning to shoot him before he was even at the fence. They had already decided in their hearts that Tom was a terrible criminal just because of his skin color. If it had been a white prisoner that person would not have shared Tom's fate.

Discrimination is shown in the trial of Tom. For example Mayella takes no responsibility for her actions, and decides to point blame on Tom instead of showing integrity and doing what is right. It is even more outrageous that she can get away with it while Tom has to sit in prison for months for something he never did. This shows that a white person's word will be taken over a black man's word anytime in this time period and location. Mayella does not even feel guilty sitting on the stand lying because she does not care about what happens to Tom. She might even feel that he is not a real person.

The biracial children that go to the courthouse are also discriminated against, but they are discriminated against both white and black people. This is another example that the white people hate the black people and vice versa. Neither race wants anything to do with these children because they contain blood of the other race.

Tom is proven innocent. It is impossible to get the white jury to overcome their bias, and accept the innocence of a black person, and Atticus is deemed

disgraceful by many in the white community for backing a black man accused of molest a white woman, and not only Atticus but also his children suffer from the prejudice of the white community. The prejudice of this society is so strong that harming fellow whites, even their children, is seen as justified if these whites are seen to side with black people.

Tom's trial was affected by the concept of racial discrimination. It is truly a testament to the corruption of society that when a person who has earned a bad reputation is held in higher esteem than a person who was born with it, as is the case with Bob Ewell and Tom Robinson. Even though Tom was obviously honest in his testament, the jury sided with Bob Ewell because he was white. They made this decision despite the fact that the Ewell family was widely known to be a worthless part of the society. Jem, not being racially prejudiced, could not understand this mentality.

The hatred that the white citizens of Maycomb felt towards the black community extended to anyone who got in touch with them, especially the Finch family because Atticus was appointed to defend Tom. Scout and Jem suffered the most from this hatred because their peers were children, who were nearly always less candid than adults. Most of the people who were unhappy with Atticus would just try to keep away from him, which was bad enough.

Lee's novel mainly concerns with the theme of discrimination against race, class and gender. Discrimination was very common act in the early and middle 1900's. In this book, discrimination is displayed by the acts of hatred and misunderstanding because of someone's color. People of color are treated unfairly. During this time in the southern states, black people had to use separate bathrooms, drinking fountains, sections in restaurants, churches, and even go to separate schools.

Discrimination is prevalent when people that are different are called names. Some people thought blacks were automatically dumb because of their color. They were not allowed to do anything but menial tasks and hard labor because they were thought to be dumb.

Larry Getlen has critically evaluated and appreciated the novel. She points out that the novel is full of Black Nationalism. She comments that the novel is set on the basis of the past and that most of the incidents are set within the house. Truly is set in an apartment and raises the issues related to the identity of the characters. Getlen appreciates the novel in the following words:

In telling the story of Atticus Finch, a lawyer battling institutionalized racism in the Deep South, the betrayed innocence of his children, Jem and Scout, their reclusive neighbor, Boo Radley, and the death of justice in the face of bias and hate, Alabama native Harper Lee created one of the most cherished novels of our time.(106)

Lee writes the novel with specific references to several historical events reflecting the social sentiments of the 1930s. By considering the social structure, racial situations, and stereotypes challenged during these decades, one must acknowledge Lee's use of history as vital to the novel. The novel's historical foundation begins in the opening paragraphs when Lee refers to General Andrew Jackson, the seventh president of the United States, who advocated the owning of slaves.

Lee picked out several instances of discrimination in the novel. The ways of discrimination against the characters are different from each other. Some of them discriminated against on the origin of their race and color of skin. Some of them are discriminated against on support of an African American. Though there are many other forms of discrimination in the novel but Lee, more importantly indicates the

incidents of novel around the theme of discrimination against race, which is quite opposite to what American assumes.

Chapter: 3

Racist Influence: A Failing Factor of American Dream *In To Kill a Mockingbird*

To Kill a Mockingbird, first published in 1960, is an enduring masterpiece of American literature. This was a time when America, especially the Southern states, was not rid of racism and segregation. In this society, judgments of character was often prejudiced and based on superficial and materialistic values. The great mystery and fear attributed to the character of Boo Radley bears this out. The fictional County Maycomb in Alabama of the 1930 is the arena of this great social drama.

In the novel there is also conflict between the white communities that pushes Atticus' dream of equality in the dark hole. Bob Ewell who is classified as upper class white always dominates middle class white and black. On the one hand, he makes his daughter Mayella make false accusation against Tom in the court; on the other hand, he tries to kill Atticus's children after returning from court. It proves that upper class white people break dream to be equal and free of middle class white people and black people.

The novel is both critically acclaimed and widely with its popular, rare distinction. What makes its appeal so widespread and everlasting is its realistic portrayal of existing social problems. Broadly speaking, the novel talks of discrimination along three axes – race, class and gender. The social conflict across racial lines is the most obvious and the most controversial issue. Despite blacks winning equal rights like whites, their rights largely remained nominal. In terms of their actual status and treatment in society, the black experience was only marginally better than in the days of chattel slavery. What Harper Lee was able to achieve is exploit her linguistic and literary gifts vividly, imaginatively and dramatically

exposing these conflicts. This dissertation has explored the predominant communal conflict between whites and blacks and identifies the manner and method in which language is used in articulating this conflict.

American Dream has been broken in America since the time the Africans were first brought to America. The social body and mind of the white race has been acting against the Negroes. It is supported by an active and increasingly hostile sentiment and emotion that constitute the historical cause of that abnormal social situation in the United States. The social situation of the Negroes was very miserable, painful and problematic. It embraced years of ethnological miss-interpretation on the one hand and social customary practice on the other.

The Afro-Americans lived in a state of constant humiliation. Their dignity as an individual was not acquitted and they got no respect from the white and even from the non-white people of the world. The Afro-Americans were segregated at school, were deprived of the public facilities and had to suffer excessive police brutality. Their true identity was only that of a wage earner and professional man in American society. They were never provided with skilled jobs, rather they continued to be concentrated in the less skilled jobs and most of them remained unemployed.

The Afro-Americans were living with both socially and economically depressed status. It is due to the discrimination against them in training and employment opportunities offered by the armed services, discrimination against them in vocational and academic training; discrimination against them by labor organization; discrimination against them in referral services by the organs of government. Moreover, the Afro-American students had been denied admission to the standard school. Even if they were given admission, the students were not given equal treatment. They were required to sit at a separate table in the library and had a specific

seat in the classroom.

Though the Negroes have similar mental capacity and moral propensities to whites, they are not accepted as whites' social companions. Even today, many Negroes are poor and uneducated. They are exploited in various ways in the society directly or indirectly. They are separated from the white community to prevent relation between the people of two different races. They are made to feel inferior showing the result of different prejudiced scientific experiments. Even they used scientists to justify the inferiority of the blacks declaring the blacks have smaller size and shape of skull than the whites. It is nothing more than their strategy to rule over the blacks.

According to American dream every citizen should be given equal rights no matter what race or class the people belong to but in the novel in Tom Robinson's case it is not applied. He is not given equal rights as white people. He is convicted of raping a white woman and sentenced to death. Upper class white people viewed black people as others. American dream is against discrimination, but in the novel the characters like Scout, Jim, Dill Harris and Boo Radely are discriminated against only for the reason that they are helping a Negro. Scout and Jim are discriminated against in the school by other white fellows because their father is a supporter of a Negro. They are humiliated by Bob Ewell due to his confrontation with Atticus. Here the children's freedom collapse, which is against the essence of American Dream. Boo is confined in his house due to his assistance for Atticus.

American dream assumes all the people to be free by their birth but it has failed in the case of Calpurnia. For long she has been working at Atticus's house as a housemaid. She has to do a lot of work for the children according to the instruction given by her master. Atticus respects her as an ideal woman though she has some restrictions at home. She has to complete all the tasks within the rules that are already

set at home. In this regard she is not free which is against the theme of American dream. Similarly, since Atticus handles the case of Tom Robinson he is always dedicated for Tom's freedom but his mission fails due to the white mechanism in the society. All the characters in the novel tend to fulfill their dream of freedom, prosperity and well being but the situation of contemporary society never favors their dreams to be fulfilled. Thus racist influence stands as a big hindrance on the way to the fulfillment of American dream.

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