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Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Apartheid as Cultural Determinant in J. M. Coetzee's
Life and Times of Michael K

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English
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Abstract

J.M. Coetzee's highly acclaimed novel *Life and Times of Michael K*, is concerned with the imposition of unwanted restrictions and confinements experienced by the central character Michael K, in the background of civil war due to apartheid in South Africa. Through the representation of personal, political and social crisis, Coetzee highlights the apartheid policy in South Africa that perpetuates the racist cultural values. He also focuses the strength of culture where Michael K is deeply rooted in order to resist the encroachment of all the opposing forces.

The text revolves around the pain and suffering of a victimized character named Michael K. Here, Coetzee also satirizes colonial hegemony, imposed ideology, culture and so called civilization that germinates the intra-racial conflict in South African Society.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

J.M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* deals with the lived experience of the central character, Michael K, and exposes his constant struggle throughout his life to maintain the going of his survival in his own roots. Depicting the situation of civil war due to apartheid in South Africa, it reflects the hostile socio- economic, political and cultural conditions in which Michael K is embroiled in the turmoil of restrictions and confinements in the camps. The central character of this novel Michael K undergoes the metamorphosis of his experience in suppression, oppression, and exploitation when he is culturally displaced. However, he keeps on escaping from the territory even though the opposing forces continue to follow him. Diving into his ability to escape from the grip of colonial forces in order to be stationed in the realm of his roots, the nation of the strength of an indigenous, apartheid which is inherent in Michael K, can be discerned and deciphered as the central concern of the novel. Coetzee here in this novel powerfully satirizes the colonial hegemony, imposed ideology, culture and so called civilization that germinate the intra- racial conflict in South Africa.

Life and Times of Michael K represents a struggle in which the main character struggles through a journey of torment and ignorance. It takes place during the time of a civil war that is going on throughout South Africa. The novel begins in the village of sea point where Michael K, a disfigured, coloured man lives with his mother. Michael K is a gardener who was born with a serious illness and he succumbs to her request of taking her on a journey to her birthplace. After facing many obstacles, Michael K's mother becomes violently ill and need to be taken to the hospital. He is

not allowed to see his mother until she dies and the hospital staff gave him her ashes. K takes the ashes and her personal belongings and proceeds with his journey, spending much time loitering around the countryside and villages he passes through.

The main aim of this dissertation is to draw into focus the frame of references where works were translated into the course of constructing literature itself struggle for liberal, non- racial values. Lewis Nkosi has developed the 'cross-border reader' in order to understand the ways in the African literary writing. This novel is written by J.M. Coetzee which is very strong, plain and unpretentious style which is distinguished by grim humour and powerful understatement. The quality of Coetzee's writing lies in his inner vision, dark, passionately compassionate, concerned with the nature of man. Michael K is unable to bear confinement and escapes, determined to live with dignity because of apartheid. So, in this novel, apartheid plays a vital role on the life of the title character Michael K. Anna K, Michael K's mother dies, leaving him alone in an anarchic world of brutal roving armies. The main cause of this problem is race because at that time, blacks are dominated by the whites. White people created the term 'apartheid' which keeps the distance between blacks and whites. Coetzee's novel can be taken as the true example of counter discourse of colonialism and imperialism. *Life and Times of Michael K*, also stands against the opposing forces like restrictions, confinements, injustice, suppression, oppression, exploitation, servility, enslavement, domination and so on. Coetzee presents Michael K, as a warrior struggling on the battlefield of war. It is the war between cultural resistance and the colonial encroachment. The opposing forces like restrictions , confinements, domination, exploitation, suppression, oppression are the characteristic features of apartheid and colonial encroachment where as Michael K's struggle to escape from such opposing forces is the dominant feature of cultural resistance.

Literature Review

The novel raises the very dominant issue of racism prevalent in South African society in which the main character Michael K has been made submissive as well as the creature out of the society. *Life and Times of Michael K* is set in a South Africa of around the 1970s in which there is a civil war going on. Race plays a dominant role over the life of central character. Due to discrimination the central character Michael K faces many ups and downs in life. It is a story of survival and isolation. The individual struggling against a society gone away and struggling to survive in his world. There is only a vague, ominous sense of how worse aspects really are in the great society, as when the doctor speaks with a camp- administrator regarding their apparently relatively lenient treatment of the camp-inmates: Coetzee says:

'But we are soft: I suggest

'perhaps we are soft; he replies.

'perhaps we are even scheming a bit , at the back of our minds. Perhaps we think that it one day they come and put everyone on trial, someone will step forward and say". Let those two off, they were soft". Who knows? many problems. (16)

Life and Times of Michael K shares the characteristics common in the totality of J.M. Coetzee's novels. The socio-political and economic sphere of life in South Africa is depicted even in the novel *Life and Times of Michael K*. It is a novel that depicts a man's life and his times embroiled in hostile political and social conditions. In this novel, Coetzee draws the picture of a common man baffled by unpredictable suffering and crisis in life. H.M. Tiffin critiques this novel from the perspective of post-colonialism as counter- discursive text. In order to comment on the nature of imperialism and colonialism, Tiffin argues, "Coetzee has restructured the earlier myth

typically in a different manner especially to expose the conquest of the virgin territory, the persecution of 'the other' and the nature of the totalitarian regimes"(197).

In Tiffin's words:

Only for Michael K of *Life and Times of Michael K* does the desert briefly bloom. More a persecuted Friday than a Crusoe imperialist, he has little time; however, to enjoy the fruits of this isolation before society attacks his peace. Coetzee rewrites the archetypal myth of Robinson Crusoe to comment on the nature of imperialism and colonialism, the conquest of the virgin territory, the persecution of the other' and the nature of the totalitarian regimes. For Coetzee, too, the desert image has special relevance for South Africa in terms of lack of shared culture a feeling of anomie, a feeling of solitariness, a feeling of not having human ties with the people around one. (198)

Tiffin stresses the view about Coetzee's writing on the archetypal myth of Robinson Crouse. He further describes and comments on the nature of imperialism and colonialism. Here, Coetzee's desert image is taken as a cultural solitariness.

He further argues:

If the earlier narratives are recounted from the perspective of those who are implicated in the imperial purpose, most of *Life and Times of Michael K* is told from the perspective of those it controls. Michael K attempts, in this political novel, to live outside of politics and history. As is clear in coetzee's earlier work, the 'real heroes' are those who attempt to escape, history, not those who connive in its making. (198)

Michael K is generally treated fairly that the truth is apparent. Michael K neither socially nor politically engaged in one particular stream rather he is standing above and beyond it all, untouched by any mortal sin. Michael K views:

How fortunate that I have no children, he thought: how fortunate that I have no desire to father. I would not know what to do with a child out here in the heart of the country, who would need milk and clothes and friends and schooling. I would fail in my duties, I would be the worst of fathers. Whereas it is not hard to live a life that consists merely of passing time. I am one of the fortunate ones who escape being called.

(44-45)

Michael K stresses the fact that man can retreat and let the world collapse around him while he tries to tend his own garden (and, possibly, maintain some dignity in a truly undignified world) is surely not of much interest- and if that is the manage to be portrayed, then would it not be more interesting to make the character a thinking man. Michael K is not entirely thoughtless he is slow, not stupid- but even in a society a peace he would be a marginal figure, and he would still not want to have children. Coetzee appears to be tired of his limited characters, switching to a first person narrative when the doctor takes over the telling of the tale. Basically a decent man, the doctor comes up against the brick wall that is Michael (or Michaels, as he knows him as). The doctor never really gets it, writing a letter to Michael (s) which he closes with what is plea for the impossible. This is perhaps, a society that can only be abandoned; living within it in any way is perhaps to be complicit harsh lesson.

Though the presentation of apartheid on an international stage mediated through various discourses and institutions, this mediation solicited specific forms of

political commitment approbation that were crucial to the maintenance of the anti-apartheid at the international scale. Laura Chrisman recently argues:

South Africa is an immediately and transparently know the continues to support a particular relation of 'sanctioned ignorance' commentators in the west. Remedying this situation attention be paid to critically questioning the discourses which representativeness of particular accounts of South African culture. (8)

The unique culture of South African society has been made marginalized by the discourses of whites. As a result the particularity and uniqueness of that culture is lost. Attention should be paid critically in this critical situation.

Another critic Rob Nixon argues :

The mobilization of opposition to apartheid had to negotiate fundamental incompatibilities between the politics of organized opposition in South Africa , where liberalism was beleaguered tradition, and the need to mobilize an essential constituency in the west. Campaigns to mobilize international ti apartheid therefore required a certain degree of 'cross- cultural terms of what was politically serviceable. (78-79)

Rob Nixon stresses the fact that to defend the apartheid norms in Africa, there is the requirement of a certain degree of cross cultural terms from the western culture. So that the sprit of anti apartheid sense can be developed in African society.

According to Nicholas Visser on Michael K, it "situate[s] presented action with in the 'troubles' rather than in their after math" (69). The goal is not the point, rather, how one gets to the goal is the most important part of achieving liberation.

Similarly, another reviewer Hilde Bygdevoll from London, United Kingdom, has referred to the motto of life-long struggle of the central character Michael K. He states:

K continues to flee from the camp where he is held. We follow his struggle to live his life the way he wants to, free and as one to nature. What Bygdevoll intends to say is that Michael K. Continues his struggle throughout his life in order to achieve the glory of his indigenous culture. The motto of K's life is to lead a free and independent life from restrictions and confinements. Therefore, the vigor of his cultural passion makes him succeed to achieve his targeted goals of life. (28)

Hilde's fact shows the lived experiences of the main character Michael K. Michael K is chained by his own culture. So, he is struggling in order to achieve the glory of independent life. Samuel Durrant describes this trait of Coetzee's writing by observing:

Rather than providing a direct historical relation of the conditions of apartheid, they instead provide a way of relating to such a history. They teach us that the true work of the novel consists not in the factual recovery of history, nor yet in the psychological recovery from history, but rather in the insistence in remaining in consolable before history. (431)

Samuel advocates the genius of Coetzee's writing technique that Coetzee's writing breaks the history culturally and upgraded the marginalized history of African people. Michael K has been compared and contrasted with Kafka's character, too. Kafka's characters are generally perceived as the victims of circumstances.

Comparing and contrasting Michael K with a character from Kafka, Thomas M. Seay from New York, California United States writes:

Like a character from Kafka, we never learn Michel K's last name. However, unlike Kafka's characters he chooses a different response to the oppressive society in which he finds himself. He chooses dissertation. Rather than take on the system, he flees it and tries to construct a life of dignity. (30)

It is obvious in the text that Michael K struggles very hard like Kafka's character to live a life of his own way. He succeeds to escape each and every obstacle to achieve the goal. In this sense, M. Seay also doesn't refer to the very idea of apartheid and race in which the basic impetus of Michael is to continue his struggle to desirable goal of his choice of living a life of a gardener which is deeply rooted.

Joe Soler from Philadelphia, PA USA, says that this book namely *Life and Times of Michael K* Makes us think about our own existence. In his own words:

This book is perhaps the easier to read of Coetzee's but it is nonetheless not easy. This book captures so much of what it is to exist. His simple-minded main character's confusion and struggles are so well articulated that we see through his eyes and experience his feelings. Like all of Coetzee's work, this book makes you think about your own existence and makes you feel uneasy about it. I got this very uncomfortable sense as I read along questions our purpose and place in the order of thing while capturing what to me seems to be a convincing sense of the unease of the whole nation of South Africa in these transition times. (19)

Through the representation of personal, political and social crises, Coetzee highlights the apartheid policy in South Africa critiques the policy that perpetuate the racist cultural values. Though the apartheid is dominant and will have an elaborate concern with the culture and its relationship with apartheid, race and human existence.

Apartheid as cultural determinant means how J.M. Coetzee has proved in his novel *Life and times of Michael K*. The text has been reviewed from various perspectives at different times, much needed critical attention the apartheid as cultural determinant in the lives of African blacks. Thus, the present research focuses on the pain and pathos, sorrows and suffering, as portrayed in the novel who has immensely contributed to uplift the very pathetic condition of the blacks in the literary arena. Michael K has been made as a representative character from the side of victimized.

CHAPTER II

DISCUSSION OF THEORETICAL TOOLS

History of Apartheid

The term 'Apartheid' is very broad in its meaning. Apartheid was a system of legalized racial segregation enforced by the National party government of South Africa between 1948 and 1994. Apartheid had its roots in the history of colonization and settlement of Southern African with the development of practices and politics of separation along racial lines and domination by European settlers and their descendants following the general election of 1948; the National party set in place its programme of Apartheid, with the formalization and expansion of existing policies and practices into a system of institutionalized racism, and incidental Afrikaner domination. Apartheid was dismantled in a series of negotiations from 1990 to 1993, culminating in elections in 1994, the first in South Africa with universal suffrage. The legacies of apartheid still shape South African politics and society.

Apartheid legislation classified inhabitants and visitors into racial groups (black, white, coloured, and Indian or Asian). South African blacks were stripped of their citizenships. Legally becoming citizens of one of ten tribally based and nominally self-governing Bantustans (tribal homelands), four of which became nominally independent states. The homelands occupied relatively small and economically unproductive areas of the country. W.W.N. Eiselein, argues:

The government based the homelands on the territory of Black reserves founded during the British Empire period, akin to the US Indian Reservation, Canadian First Nations reserves, or Australian aboriginal reserves. Many black South Africans, however, never resided in their

identified "homelands". The homeland system disenfranchised black people residing in "white south African". (2-3)

The government segregated education, medical care, and other public services; black people ended up with services greatly inferior to those of whites, and to a lesser extent, to those of Indians and colored. The black education system was designed to prepare blacks for lives as a laboring class. There was a deliberate policy in "White South Africa" of making services for black people inferior to those of whites, to try to encourage black people to move into the black homelands.

Internal Resistance

Internal resistance to apartheid system in South Africa came from several sectors of society and saw the creation of organizations dedicated variously to peaceful protests, passive resistance and armed insurrection. In 1949 the Youth wing of the African National Congress (ANC) took control of the organization and started advocating a radical black nationalist programme. P. Eric. Louw argues in his book *The Rise, Fall and Legacy of Apartheid* argues:

The new young leaders proposed that white authority could only be overthrown through mass campaigns. In 1950 that philosophy saw the launch of the programme of Action, a series of strikes, boycotts and civil disobedience actions that led to occasionally violent clashes with the authorities. In 1959 a group of disenchanted ANC members formed the pan Africanist congress (PAC), which organized a demonstration against pass books on 21 march 1960. One of those protests was held in the township of Sharpeville, where 69 people were killed by police in the Sharpeville massacre. In the wake of the Sharpeville incident the government declared a state of emergency, more than 18000 people

were or nested, including leaders of the ANC and PAC, and both organizations were banned. The resistance went underground, with some leaders in exile abroad and others engaged in campaigns of domestic sabotage and terrorism. (13)

In 1961, prior to the declaration of South Africa as a republic an assembly representing the banned. African National Congress called for negotiations between the members of the different ethnic groups, threatening demonstrations and strikes during the inauguration of the Republic was ignored. Defeated, the protesters called off their strike. The ANC then chose to launch an armed struggle through a newly formed military wing, Umkhonto Wesizwe (MK), which would perform acts of sabotage on tactical state structures. Its first sabotage plans were carried out on 16 December 1961, the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River. Terreblanche argues :

In the 1970s the Black consciousness movement was created by tertiary students influenced by the American Black power movement. BC endorsed black pride and African customs and did much to alter the feelings of inadequacy instilled among black people by the apartheid system. The leader of the movement, Steve Biko, was taken into custody on 18th August 1977 and died in detention. In 1976 secondary students in Soweto took to the streets in the Soweto uprising to protest against forced tuition in Africans . (10)

Although the majority of whites supported apartheid, some 20 percent did not support apartheid. Parliamentary opposition was galvanized by Helen Suzman, Colin Eglin and Harry Schwarz. Extra- parliamentary resistance was largely contained in the South African communist party and women's organization the Black Sash. . Women

were also notable in their involvement in trade union organizations and banned political parties.

Final Years of Apartheid

Serious political violence prominent feature of South African from 1985 to 1995. There was virtually a civil war between the establishment and anti- apartheid forces, between rightwing and left-wing South Africans. From 1985 to 1989 both a government tried to crush left- wing organizations for four years police and soldiers patrolled South African towns. Thousands of people were detained. Deaths mounted on both sides. Many of those detained by the government were interrogated and tortured; while anti- government activists used the " necklace method" (burning people alive) to kill black people suspected of supporting apartheid. The government banned television cameras from filming " unrest zones". Government agents assassinated opponents within South African and abroad; they undertook cross border army and air force attacks on suspected opposition hide- outs, killing and maiming innocent civilians. The ANC and PAC in return exploded bombs at restaurants, shopping centers and government officials. By 1985, it had become the ANC's aim to make black townships " ungovernable" (a term later replaced by people's power") By forcing residents to stop paying for services. The townships duly became the focus areas in the apartheid struggle. Throughout the 1980s township people resisted apartheid by acting against the local issues that faced their particular communities. The focus of much of this resistance was against the local authorities and their leaders, who were seen to be supporting the government. Visser Pippa views :

The fact that they were also the ones responsible for rent collection merely added to their unpopularity: a common form of township protest was rent boycott. The official government of numerous

townships were either overthrown or collapsed, to be replaced by unofficial popular organizations, often led by youth organizations but also involving workers and local residents of all ages. In the early 1980s Botha's National party government started to recognize the inheritability of the need to reform apartheid. Early reforms were driven by a combination of internal violence, international condemnation, changes within the National party's constituency, and changing demographics- whites constituted only 16% of the total population in comparison to 20% fifty years earlier. (38-39)

Racial Segregation and Colonialism Prior to Apartheid

According to Martin Meredith in his book in the name of apartheid argues, "although the creation of apartheid is usually attributed to the Afrikaner- dominated government of 1948-1994, it is also partially a legacy of British colonialism which introduced a system of pass laws in the cape colony and Natal during the nineteenth century" (9-10). This stemmed from the regulation of blacks movement from the tribal regions to those occupied by whites and colored, ruled by the British.

The British, for instance, passed the franchise and Ballot Act in 1892, which limited the black vote by finance and education, following it up with the Natal legislative assembly Bill of 1894, which deprived Indians of the rights to vote. In 1905 the Lagden Commission implemented the General pass Regulations Bill, which denied blacks the vote altogether, limited them to fixed areas and inaugurated the infamous pass system. Laws were passed not only to restrict the movement of Blacks into these areas, but also to prohibit their movement from one district to another without a signed pass. Blacks were not allowed on to the streets of the towns in the cape colony and Natal after dark and had to carry their passes at all times. Mahatma

Gandhi, a younger lawyer at the time, cut his political teeth by organizing on- violent protests against restrictions which hurt middle- class Indians. Jan smuts' united party government began to move away form the rigid enforcement of segregationist laws during world war II. The practice of apartheid retained many of the features of the above segregationist policies of earlier administrations. Werner Eiselen, the man who led the design of apartheid argued that the government could not sustain segregation and white supremacy in 1948 , he proposed apartheid as a " political partition" policy instead of segregation in public facilities. The idea behind apartheid was more one of political separation, later known as "grand apartheid" than segregation later known as " petty apartheid". Hendrix French Verwoerd is considered the most influential politician in the growth of apartheid and desired it as " a policy of good neighbourhood". Blacks were discriminated against in almost every fact of life. Legislation stated where and how they could live, travel, work, be educated get married and mingle. Rob David , Dan O' Meara and Sipa Dlmini in his book *The Struggle for South Africa* arugues:

From the 1950s onwards, various laws were passed to keep the races apart and suppress resistance. The nationalists argued that South African did not comprise a single nation, but was made up of four distance racial groups, namely white, black , colored and Indian. These race were split further into thirteen ' nations' or racial federations. White people encompassed the English and Afrikans language groups; the black populace was divided into ten such groups. This had the result of making the white race the prevalent one. (4)

Race and Racism

Race is a notion for the division of human beings into physically, biologically and genetically distinct groups. The idea of race divides humanity into unchanging natural types on the basis of physical features that are transmitted through the blood.

Moreover, the term indicates that the mental and moral behaviour of human beings as well as individual personality, capacities, and ideas are related to racial matters.

We can find practice and study of race in the earliest human writing, in the earliest human writing Appiah says:

we can find more or less well- articulated views about the differences between " our own kind" and the people of other cultures. These doctrines, like modern theories of race, have often placed a central emphasis on physical appearance in defining the "Other" and on common ancestry in explaining why groups of people display differences in their attributes and aptitudes. (274)

Hypocrites in the fifth century B.C. in Greece sought to explain their superiority" by arguing the barren soils of Greece had forced the Greeks to become tougher and more independent" (275). However, in the *Old Testament*, the people's distinctiveness is defined in terms of relation to God rather than appearance and customs. In " Genesis", Jacob commands Abraham says: Get out of your country, from your family and from you father's house, to a land that I will shows you. I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing (11).

William Dunbar in a poem first used the term "race" in English language in 1508. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it becomes essentially a literary word denoting family, religion, nation, plant and animal life. In the late eighteenth

century, the term came to mean a distinct term of human beings with physical characteristics transmitted by descent. Europeans categorized human beings on physical grounds from the late 1600s. François Bernier postulated very distinctive characteristics based largely on facial character and skin color. Soon a hierarchy of groups was established. Whites were accepted at the top whereas the Blacks were relegated to the bottom.

Immanuel Kant in his *Observation on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764) used the German phrase for 'races of mankind'. It was probably the first explicit use of the term for the classification of human beings into biologically or physically distinct groups. Debates about whether human variation was caused by descent or environment continued violently throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The biological science ascended in the later nineteenth century. So descent emerged as the predominant model of human distinctiveness. Despite scientific base and application, the notion 'race' has established the simplest model of human variation color difference. Color became the means of distinguishing and identifying human beings. French anatomist Curvier was significant in the development of race theory. He divided human beings into three groups; the white, the yellow and the black. The division of the whole of humanity into three groups seemed so vague for any kind of analysis. However, the idea has become influential for the ideological reason that this topology is based upon a gradation from superior to inferior. The assumptions underlying this racial topology have remained persistent to the present today. The categories are more elaborately defined as 'Caucasoid', 'Mongoloid' and 'Negroid'. First assumption is that variations in the individual behaviour were linked to the different biological types. Secondly, differences between these types suggested variations in human cultures. Thirdly, the nature of the types accepted the superiority

of Europeans and Aryans in particular. Fourthly, innate characteristics play vital role in the friction nations and individuals of different type. This idea of race was superseded by the implications of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859). Darwin provided the story of race with a mechanism for species change in the idea of natural selection. He offered the probability for racial development (eugenics). This school of thought came to be known as social Darwinism. The assumption of superiority was supported by scientific racial theory.

The twentieth century has brought a significant change in the theoretical attitude to race. The 1911 Universal Races Congress in London demonstrated liberal thought and focused on monogenic the idea that there is only one species of man on earth. Modern scientists, according to Kwame Anthomny Appiah, " believe that such classification as Negro, Caucasian, and Mongoloid are of no importance for biological purposes"(227). They do not take race as an important aspect of people's identity. Modern science does not believe in racial difference. The 1951 UNESCO *statement of the Nature of Race and Racial Difference* asserts that mental features should not be incorporated in the classification of human beings in terms of race and environment is more important factor than inherited generic elements in forming behaviour. However, in the 1960s, there was a sudden rise in biological thinking about human behaviour. The writers such as Lorenz, Morris and Andry asserted that personal behaviour was chiefly controlled by ancient instincts that could be modified by culture. This gave the way for a sudden increase in race thinking in popular science in the 1970s. Baxter and Sansom's *Race and Social Difference* (1972) established the term 'race' in debates about human variation.

Fanon was the first to notice that most important fact about race. Racist ideas such as 'blackness' were the psychological force of their construction of self. It means

they acquired and objective existence in and through the behaviour or people. The self images and self- construction might be transmitted from generation to generation. Thus, the fact of blackness' came to have an objective determination not only in racist behaviours and institutional practices, but more insidiously in the psychological behaviour of the people. So, Fanon stressed on the objective psychological that fact of race as a determining part of social process. The Fanonist stress on construction of individuals' self- perceptions has been the part of the response of nay black commentators by critics such as Appiah. They found that the perceptions of race have acted only negatively. However, fictional race may be shown to be as an objective category. Its power as a discursive formation remains unabated.

So, a volatile term "race" takes center stage continuously whereas the theories on which concepts of race were maintained have become more and more effaced.

Culture

The term "culture" in anthropology means the very part of the environment that is the relation of man. The term 'culture' seems to be an indispensable but multi accented term with a complex and still open history, which in itself expresses the complexity of general human history. The word culture in English is derived from the 'Latin cultural' which means the act of cultivating the soil. This very act of cultivating the soil within the certain locality territory on states is also termed as an culture. Later the term has been applied to any customs, art, social institution, literature, music etc; which is cultivated and practiced in society. Culture is seen as indeterminate site of conflict that can not be pinned to a single totalized meaning. Cultural studies are a multi or post- disciplinary field of inquiry which blurs the demarcations between itself and to its subjects. As intellectuals emphasized that the intellectual promise of cultural studies lies in its attempt to cut across diverse social and political interests and address

many of the struggles with in the current scene , Richards Johnson describes cultural studies as a process, a kind of alchemy for producing useful knowledge and codify it Culture, therefore, belongs to the realm of bonder human consciousness that is both developed and shaped by society, religion, history and geography. This system of inherited conceptions is expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, , perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life. It is in this sense that culture triggers the sense of belonging ness.

The idea of culture as people's whole way of life" first came in the late 19th century with the publication of works on couture and culturalism by Richard Hogart , Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson, and start Hall, the scope and function of culture has achieved extension. Eventually culturalism has become an approach that insists analyzing the culture of a society, the textual forms and documented practices of culture, it is possible to reconstitute the patterned behaviour and consternation of ideas shared by the men and women who produce and consume the texts and practices of that society. William defines culture by distinguishing three ways of thinking about it:

First there is the 'ideal' in which culture is a state of process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal values. Second , there is the 'documentary record', the recorded texts and practices of culture. Third, there is the social definition of culture, in which culture is a description of particular way of life, which expresses certain meaning and values not only in art and learning but also in institution and ordinary behaviour. (58)

In his introduction to white writing, Coetzee tackles head on the racist infections of cultural progress, specifically in devastating manifestation in the South African

context. The critiques the evolutionary schema of ascent, likening it to the layered concretions of an archaeological site, hunters, pastoralists, earthly agriculturalists, advanced recapitalize peasant agriculturalists.

Historical presence

Coetzee's work gives us pause to reflect on what happened in history and its long lived ramifications elaborating how historical forces shape present political contexts and identity determinations. One would imagine that after the erasure of history, specifically, African histories- from public arenas, cultural productions, and educational settings that the subject of history would take on new valence and be ever- more popular. Oddly, however, history is not a growth industry in South Africa, nor, as it happens, is archaeology. As Jean Comarott notes, Terence Ranger said some years ago, " History is becoming today what anthropology was in Africa in the 1950s" (127). Although South Africans seem to have been exercising their newfound rights of access to historical records and cultural performances, and as achieve fervor has groped the democratizing gist, this has made little impact on the place of historical disciplines in the academy. One of the major tasks for the new generation is to pursue a notion of " transparency" in this new democratic ethos, including the opening up of records and of new arenas for public expression and ecologies of experience and the farthest reaches of apartheid and the struggles of countless people to resist racial oppression", other voiced concerns include fear of a reversal of history, in which either the populist ANC vision of the past will supplant all others or modes of rewriting will become triumphalist, celebratory accounts that simply replace white centrality with afro-centric agendas. The education Minister, Kader Asmal, following the sentiment of Mbeki and others has declared that promoting a strong study of the

past is a particular educational impetrative in a country like south Africa, which is itself consciously remarking its current history.

Coetzee himself, in the guise of his characters has made pointed claims of disinterest in the future, while alternatively reentering the importance of history.

Elizabeth Costello, for example, provocatively states:

In fact the future in general does not much interest me. The future is, after all, only a structure of hopes and expectations. It resides in the mind, it has non reality. OF course you might reply that the pasts is likewise a fiction. The past is history, and what is history but a story we tell ourselves, a mental construct. But there is something miraculous about the past that the future lacks. What is miraculous about the past is that whole nations, perhaps even humankind as a whole, have succeeded in making thousands and millions of individual fictions- the fictions bone by individual human beings cohere well enough to given us a shared past, a shared history. The future is different. We do not have a shared fiction of the future. The creation of the past seems to have exhausted our collective creative energies. Compared with our fiction of the past, our fiction of the future is a sketchy barren, bloodless affair, as all visions of heaven tend to be. (38)

Cultural heritage has assumed the status of cultural capital and, as in many contemporary societies, this reification is itself rooted in a capitalist value system. However, although the government has touted that heritage after a well spring for national prides and for economic growth in South Africa the enabling infrastructure and linkages made between resources and outcomes often remains tenuous. After the 1994 elections, revitalizing a programs of specifically African heritage was a necessity, albeit one secondary to the agendas of restitution and civil infrastructure

development. Yet heritage is repeatedly considered one of the prime moves for economic and spiritual empowerment after the depredations of the apartheid state. It is ultimately white investors that showcase indigenous culture for national and internal tourists: The performers themselves are typically the resourceless communities who have little to market other than their own "traditional", "exotic" market appeal. The environment of repressive tolerance that consistently reproduces such scenarios recognize cultural difference only in so far as the cultural difference proves profitable and, hence, amenable to popular stereotypes. Abdi Ali in his book *South Africa and politics of writing*, "Coetzee, speaking of his own motivations and working against such a dynamic, claims that although "some cultural artifacts reinforce the myth of our culture, others dissect these myths. In our time and place, it is the latter kind of work that seems to me more urgent" (47)

What many commentators have found difficult to grasp is that, rather than mimetically reproducing the past historically facticically reproducing the past's historical facticity, Coetzee's writing wrestles with the material, bodily affect of that history. Although a realist account of past brutality- colonial and apartheid- would constitute a palatable historical narrative, allowing us to mourn and move on, Coetzee's novels resist this process of easy narration and relentlessly force us to confront the brute, indigestible materiality of the suffering that began with European colonization.

It is on the basis of this claim of the apartheid, which is J.M. Coetzee's masterpiece of literary work *Life and Times of Michael K*. J. M. Coetzee has examined the apartheid which is deeply rooted into the human conscience and how human beings succeed to restrain from the hazard as chaos of violence due to the encroachment of opposing forces. How and why Michael succeeds to resist the

encroachment of all the opposing forces by escaping time and again from the restrictions and confinements even though the civil war due to apartheid in South Africa.

CHAPTER III

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL

The main aim of this novel is to draw the frame of references which constructed the apartheid and cultural values. J.M. Coetzee's novel *Life and Times of Michael K* reverses some of the Afrikaner myths. The Afrikaner myths have always been very important for Afrikaner identity. The Afrikaners's past of resistance against the English domination and their worship of the pastoral way of life have been a driving force behind apartheid. Through their myths the Afrikaners saw themselves as a kind of chosen people. As Susan Vanzanten Gallagher mentions in a story of South Africa, their stories were based on "heroic qualities" of "independence and isolation" (152). The title character Michael K suffers very much due to cultural values and race. African people especially Afrikaners often feel like the wronged people, because in the early 1900s their wives and children were placed in British concentration camps. Afrikaners still have very strong feelings about this. However, in *Michael K* those same Afrikaners are the ones running concentration camps. Coetzee applies reversal again. Apparently, they have not learned from the past. Gallagher says:

[t]he implication of this part of Michael K's story is practically blasphemous to the Afrikaner mind. The suffering of the homeless and abandoned of Jakkalsdrif is equated with the holy suffering of the Boer women and children at the hands of the cruel British administrators. This juxtaposition not only highlights the ironic turn of events in south African history but also elevates the suffering of the black majority to its own mythic level. (150-57)

Michael K emphasizes his position outside the binary in south Africa when he tells the medical officer. "I am not in the war," though the medical officer does not believe this, because he is convinced everyone has to pick a side" (138). Michael K's sense of self comes from within, from what he likes to do, but the people around him reject this. His identity is not based on his social position or what he owns. According to Gallagher:

Michael K's own understanding of himself as a person rather than a social role is demonstrated in the narrative's significant omission of any direct references to race, except for the racial category abbreviated on his charge sheet. This silence reveals his refusal to capitulate to society's labels. (147)

The people he comes across can never see him as a simple gardener. The fact that he does not want to own the land he makes him even more incomprehensible. He does not want to divide the land or fence it in. People do not know what to make of him, because he does not seem to want anything. By emphasizing this position Coetzee shows to both centre and margins that they do not have to be on opposite ends. Michael K shows that it is possible to take up residence outside of South Africa's division into black and white. However, in *Life and Times of Michael K*, it is not only white people who ascribe identities and social roles to Michel K. The black man called Robert explains their situation in the concentration camps to Michael K :

They said, "where would you rather sleep, out in the veld under a bush like an animal or in a camp with a proper bed and running water?"

They said, " you get a choice and you choose Jakkalsdrif. Because we are not going to have people wandering around being a nuisance." But

I tell you the real reason, I'll tell you why they were so quick to pick us up. They want to stop people from disappearing into the mountains and then coming back one night to cut their fences and drive their stock away. (80)

In this novel *Life and Times of Michael K*, Coetzee addresses the oppressed group by showing them how the Afrikaners' behaviour has come to resemble their own behaviour. The fact that the black man Robert is in a sense recruiting Michael K, like the Afrikaners try to do through the camps shows black people have taken over the habits of their white oppressors. The Afrikaners go from oppressed to oppressors, as they have in fact done in South Africa by enforcing apartheid. Black people are now fighting back with the same weapons and tactics as the Afrikaners have used themselves. Coetzee is worried that this will only lead to another dominating group. The medical officer also foresees that the race - track, which presently serves as a training camp for blacks, will eventually become a concentration camp for blacks, as well as concentration camp for whites. Michael K does not want to become an oppressor and, therefore, does not want to start a life that resembles the Afrikaner way of life. When Michael K comes across an abandoned farm that was previously owned by the Visagies, he does not want to inhabit it, nor does he take the tools and furniture the previous owners left behind:

There was much else he could have taken to make life easier for himself: a grid, a cooking- pot, a folding chair, slabs of foam rubber, more of the feed sacks. He scratched among the odds which he could not imagine a use. But he was wary of conveying the Visagies' rubbish to his home in the earth and setting himself on a trail that might lead to

the re-enactment of their misfortunes. The worst mistake, he told himself, would be to try to found a new house, a rival line. (104)

He figures that even if he were to rebuild the farm, eventually a new oppressed group would come along to take it away from him again. Therefore, he refuses to have anything more to do with the Visagies' way of life because it leads into that endless spiral of wars, violence and domination. This also shows Coetzee's concern that when the black population were indeed to seize power, they would continue in the same way as the white Afrikaners and eventually, the black people themselves would be running concentration camps. Thus, again he is also addressing the periphery. In the text, the powerful theme is apartheid where culture plays a vital role which affects the title character of this novel Michael K.

Michael K, in the novel, *Life and Times of Michael K* is in between as he refuses to take any kind of role in south Africa's war between black and white people. He is also physically in between because, as becomes clear, he is labelled as a coloured man on the charge sheet by the police who arrest him when he has fallen asleep " in the doorway of the Volkscas office" and think he suffers from alcohol poisoning (69-70). Since the reader experiences Michael's story from his perspective, the reader will feel reluctant to identify with medical officer. Derek Attridge also says in J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading as:

[t]he literary work is an event for both its creator and its reader, and it is the reader who brings the work into being, differently each time, in a singular performance of the work not so much as written but as writing. The meaning of a literary work, then, can be understood as a verb rather than as a noun; not something carried away when we have

finished reading it, but something that happens as we read or recall it.(9)

Michael K fears that the men in the war, who are too busy leaving their mark on history, forget how to take care of the earth. Coetzee's continuing desire to pin other people down both alienates the readers from him, because white people sympathies with Michael, and makes the readers realize that ascribing identities is wrong. In addition, white people treat Michael K and the other prisoners badly in the camps. The only nice people Michael meet who do not try to pin him down, is the family who feed him and gives him a place to sleep. The man there says, "People must help each other, that's what I believe" (48). The fact that they have their own house seems to imply they are white, but this is very unclear. At the sometime, however, they refuse to believe what Afrikaners do to black people who trespass on their lands. They are very naive about the war and whether they are black, white, or coloured, they are not identified with. Michael K does not associate himself with them either he does not know if he would help other people. This is another example of Michael K not holding on to a belief system that robs him of his individuality.

Attridge claims:

Phrases like "He thought" are frequently resorted to, continually reminding us that we are outside Michael K's consciousness. Yet this stylistic choice- together with the use of the past tense allows Coetzee to sustain through the fiction the otherness of K's responses: although we never learn in moving detail of his thought- processes and emotions, we never feel that we have assimilated them to our own.

(50)

Apartheid as cultural determinant, Since most of the people fear the rebels as they chase away the stock and threaten drive the Afrikaners out of South Africa by force, and as Michael K implies they may not be different from the Afrikaners. The black people could simply be replacing them. Probyn quotes Coetzee says:

The whites of South Africa participated, in various degrees, actively or passively, in an audacious and well-planned crime against Africa.

Afrikaners as a self defining group distinguished themselves in the commission of that crime. Thereby they lent their name to it. It will be a long time before they have the moral authority to withdraw that brand mark . . . Is it in my power to withdraw from the gang? I think not . . . more important, is it my hearts desire to be counted apart? Not really. (10)

Coetzee does not want to be a colonizer, but also does not want to relinquish everything that is white. In a way, he also feels he has to take a certain responsibility for apartheid and drawing away from this would "morally" be wrong. He also realises that he may be trapped in a certain way of thinking because of his white surroundings. Coetzee's emphasis is on role denier, which places him beyond the post-colonial and inside the model of hybridity. We readers follow Michael's perspective. Michael K is reluctant to take any kind of role. He refuses to support the whites and refuses to join the rebels. He wants to be his own man. The medical officer thinks:

A stone, a pebble that, having lain around quietly minding its own business since the dawn of time, is now suddenly picked up and tossed randomly from 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. Through the intestines of war. An unbearing, unborn creature. (135)

In this novel *Life and Times of Michael K*, the medical officer is the one who continually attempts to define and label Michael. It becomes clear that the identities the medical officer comes up with are wrong. He never stops trying to interpret and label him. He would eventually willingly change places with Michael K. He comes to see Michael K as some kind of savior or spiritual leader and the medical officer wants to be his follower or disciple. From the moment he meets Michael and tries to understand and interpret him due to Michael's silence does not get the answers he seeks and thus, starts to create a story for him. He invents a romantic vision of Michael that is meant to explain his motives for not eating and not talking. The medical officer eventually does not stop him from continuing this practice. Coetzee shows in this novel how people can be involved in sustaining apartheid even when they are against it. Michael K has been treated badly by the soldiers due to the racial discrimination prevalent in African society. The soldier says:

'where did you steal all this ?' said the soldier. 'you're a thief, aren't you ? A thief running away over the mountains'. He proved the handbag with his book. ' show me', he said. He touched the jewelers box. He touched the coffee tin. He touched the other box. ' show me,' he said. and stepped back. (36-37)

The title character Michael K is haunted by the soldier. The soldier is asking unnecessary question to Michael K. It declares that black people are not the part of society but they are the second grade people of the society or country. In fact racism is not a stable ideological form remaining the same for a long period. It rejects all the epithets of singularity and prefers different shapes and different political relations.

Here, in this novel Michael K suffers due to race. The term "race relations" refers to those forms of behaviour that arise from the contacts of different racial groups. The concept encompasses all relationships that determine the relative status of racial group in the community. Michael K, here, in this novel presents as a black community man. His mother Anna K also presents as a same group in this novel. Differences in physical and genetic traits are important in contributing to the economic, social and political of race relationships. Domination of one culture over another by imposing cultural values, or by restricting the possible improvisation of cultural behaviours of the latter one causes psychological disintegration in society. Racial issues aroused by the whites were considered to be unquestionable disintegration. *Life and Times of Michael K* shows the black and white people's view about racism. Especially racial issues aroused by the whites were considered to be unquestionable because the white race and its cultural products are superior to the black ones.

Michael K and his mother are suffering from policeman when they are going to train station. The policeman woman says "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? Next!" (20). Here, in these lines Michael K and his mother Anna k are not allowing to stay in the train because they are black and they have to wait like other black people. The police woman is angry with black people like Michael K and Anna k. The police woman is a woman but she is white. Anna k is also a woman but she belongs to black group. So, the policewoman is treating badly to her and her and her son Michael K. The title character of this novel *Life and Times of Michael K*, Michael K wants to be a gardener but no one believes him. Furthermore, Michael K has a harelip and is not very clever, he can not really clarify his ideas. His silence adds to his elusiveness and makes

people want to pin him down even more. Everyone around him has been drawn into South Africa's political debate and they believe everyone is in the war. For them, Afrikaners or with the black and coloured man are second class people. In fact, Coetzee's own concerns about being an accomplice in the oppressing of others because he is himself a white man. He doesn't want to play the role of the white Afrikaner, nor can he see himself as completely apart from this group, because as a white man he has certainly profited from his position in society. He cannot be like the black man either. Michael K deals with these concerns from the perspective of a man who is also genetically in between.

Coetzee in this novel also remains vague about the intentions of the rebels. He never says outright what they want. He wants readers to know that even though he doesn't reject the black rebels as such, there is always the danger of the new group becoming the next oppressor. He fears they end up doing precisely what the Afrikaners did in the past. As Michael K realizes when a farmer tells him "[t]here will always be a need for good fencers in this country, no matter what". (95) In other words, when the black people come to power, the land may be divided up all over again. Michael K doesn't want to leave traces behind. He does not want to leave his imprint on the earth and believes in cyclical time. The rebels, however, do leave marks. They cover up their presence, the fire they used for example; for fear of being detected. yet, Michael K can see "their marks everywhere" (111). They also flood the land when they leave. Perhaps, because they leave marks, Michael doesn't want to join them. Michael also doesn't want to join them, "because enough men had gone off to war saying the time for gardening was when the war was over, whereas there must be men to stay behind and keep gardening alive". (109)

Cultural Determinant

Culture plays a significant role to affects the Michael K who is the hero of the novel *Life and Times of Michael K*. Culture, after a long prehistory and a period of crystallization at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, acquired the strategic function today, including in philosophy begun to become generalized in the world. There are a number of elements or institutions that determine ones identity and cultural diversity in the world. Religion, Socio-Political infrastructure, topography, climate and language are the tools that collectively shape cultures and identity. Among them, language is the most powerful factor because it forms not only systems but also Universe. Identity is never a peaceful acquisition because it is claimed as a guarantee against a threat of annihilation that can be figured by 'another 'identity', a foreign identity or by an 'erasing of identities', a depersonalization. It would be more precise to say that identity is a discourse of tradition. And one of the privileged names of tradition, in contemporary society, is precisely 'culture'.

Coetzee has created an imaginative character Michael K, the central character of the novel, by presenting Anna K, in advance. The plot exposes hardships and troubles suffered from Anna K in general and Michael K in particular. It begins with the birth of Michael K, continues with the narration of his life- long struggle for existence, and finally ends with an optimistic hope of his survival. Coetzee says in his novel 'he would say, one can live' (184) shows the optimistic hope of his survival. Similarly, Michael K says: " I am not a thief. Nevertheless he imagined a shot cracking out from the back windows of the farm house, he imagined a huge Alsatian streaking out to attack him" (39). These lines show how the title or central character Michael K clarifies with police due to his race and cultural values. According to Stuart Hall, "It has to analyze certain things about the constitutive and

political nature of representation itself, about its complexities, about the effects of language, about textuality as the site of life and death. Those are the things cultural studies can address" (285).

We can see the tension emerging in responses to *Life and Times of Michael K*. This novel makes visible the specific horizon of meaning through the showing cultural values. Michael K's social position is delineated in the course of the narrative, but without recourse to race that is a standard feature of most South African writing remains unclassified by radicalized signifiers throughout the novel. Here, Michael K is addressed by figures of authority. Radicalization is presenting in this novel as a process of interpellation into institutionally supported in hierarchical interpellation into institutionally supported in hierarchical differentiation. Furthermore, not only race but also cultural apartheid values.

Specially white people treat black people as a slave. Likewise, Michael K is a one type of character who becomes the victim of whites due to his cultural values. Following lines clarifies the cultural values, "this isn't jail,' said policeman, 'this is a camp, you work for your food like every one else in the camp.' How can I work when I am locked up? where is the work I must do?' 'Fuck off ', said policeman. 'Ask your friends, who do you think you are that I should give you a free living ?" (77). Michael becomes neither god nor like men but likes to become slave due to the deep influences of apartheid cultural values forced upon him.

Here, the policeman mistreats and uses dirty language to Michael K. Police man is a white person. So, he has a authority to do anything but Michael K can't use dirty language because he belongs to black community and white people's culture dominates black people's culture. Furthermore, Coetzee makes quite clear about the origin of Anna K and her son, Michael K . Anna K knows that her health is

worsening and may be she can't reach her destination. Therefore, she tells her son everything about her root. She says, "I forget the actual name of the farm, but we can ask people will know. There was a chicken run and pump up on the hill. We had a house on the hillside. There was prickly pear outside the back door. That is the place you must look for"(27).

The house on the hillside, the farm, prickly pear outside the back door, a pump on the hill, are some of the images that characterize the cultural determinant in apartheid. Coetzee illustrates the cultural impulses in Michael K in the following way. " The impulse to plant had been reawaken in him; now in a matter of weeks, he found his waking life bound tightly to the patch of earth he had begun to cultivate and the seeds he had planted there"(59). Coetzee has justified the cultural values to resist any type of opposing forces that try to ruin human life. For instance, Michael K never loses his resistance even when he finds himself in hostile situation:

He felt hungry but did nothing about it. Instead of listening to the crying of his body he tried to listen to the great silence about him. He went to sleep easily and had a dream in which he was running as fast as the wind along an open road with the cart floating behind him on tyres that barely skimmed the ground. (66)

This means cultural values affect the Michael K. He wants to win the whites by doing good deeds but whites give tortures him. Here, in these lines, opposing forces try to ruin him. It is cultural awareness that makes Michael K silent because he realizes that he has approached the atmosphere of his native place.

Michael K was telling his story to some people at Jakkalsdrif who were sitting around a campfire. He talks about his mother to Prince Albert and working on the railways and everything is done. However, he felt he could not finish, "There was a

silence. Now I must speak about the ashes, thought K, so as to be complete, so as to have told the whole story. But he found that he couldn't, or could not yet" (79).

These lines show the black man's and white man's talking. Here, Michael K is talking to prince Albert about his mother Anna K. But he could not finish his work because there is a fear of whites who treat them very badly and the culture is also different between blacks and whites. Michael K does not have much to say in regards to the time he spends at the visagie farm. He tells his stories to the refugee camp doctor, but doing at the Visagie residence. The doctor wants very badly to help K out, but Michael K is not able to articulate in a convincing manner that he is innocent of any crime. Not only is Michael K vocally silent, but he is also in a state of physical and emotional exhaustion. His body is weak and because of that, he can barely function. He has no desire to conform to the authority's desires, and instead chooses silence. This silence is somewhat extended from his physical state, which is defined by exhaustion and weakness. Michael's final answer to survival and making a statement is to run away from refugee camp. Coetzee presents Michael K in a murky atmosphere that further worsens his conditions.

Michael K represents in this novel productive force of life guided by the principles impulses of cultural determinant where as exploitation, domination, restriction and confinements represent destructive force guided by war and violence. Therefore, Michael K becomes too angry when the soldiers start digging the land and destroying its productivity. " The sight of the stranger digging up his earth agitated him more than he would have guessed" (125). This line shows the hostile confrontation between the cultural values and its hostile forces. Coetzee glorifies Michael K's resistance to camp's life and colonial exploitation in terms of cultural stamina. He says that Michael K deserves a high respect for sacrificing his life and

times for the sake of cultural values and determinant. The doctor characterizes Michael K's glorification. The doctor says, "The garden you are presently heading is nowhere and every where except in the camps. It is another name for the only place where you belong Michael's, where you do not feel homeless. It is of every map, no road leads to it that it is merely a road, any only you know the way" (166).

The road which leads to Michael K in his cultural determinant and cultural heritage.

Apartheid and Culture

The term 'apartheid' is classified into "grand apartheid" and "petty apartheid". Grand apartheid involved an attempt to partition Africa into separate states, while petty apartheid segregationist dimension. The National party clung to grand apartheid until the 1990's, while they abandoned petty apartheid during the 1980s. Coetzee chooses a character that has difficulty speaking, a character who seems to be untained by the imposing powers of language. Yet, Coetzee is also the white medical officer, who tries to interpret Michael K. Coetzee, however, doesn't tell his readers the medical officer's interpretations are right or wrong. Bishop points out that Michael has become:

The subject of interpretation" and that through this "Coetzee puts us, as readers, in the very position he finds so questionable." In addition, by choosing the perspective of a coloured man, he speaks from a physical in between position. Coetzee himself defines expectations by depicting a man outside of any kind of system, much like he himself tries to be.

(18)

Apartheid and culture are very important factors in this novel *Life and Times of Michael K*. One element affects another element. Here, apartheid affects the culture and culture affects the apartheid. So, both elements are interrelated each other.

Huntington has already claimed that culture has power. No doubt, the power of culture is manifested by the collective effort of people who are guided by it. "The distributions of cultures in the world reflects the distribution of power. Trade may or may not follow the flag, but culture almost always follows power" (91). Similarly apartheid or racism at personal level includes an individual belief that an entire racial group is inferior or superior as the basis of physical features to be linked to intellectual and moral characteristics. If these personal characteristics get connected with cultural institutions like religion, education and military institutions in order to exclude or include not a person but also an entire group, it takes the form of institutionalized racism. Contemporary form of racism i.e. new racism attaches to the concepts like patriotism, nationalism, gender differences, etc. These concepts give a way to definition of race in terms of culture, race and identity. Coetzee says:

Wine we have got milk we have got, two kinds of milk'- casually he indicated the woman with the baby- 'but water, no, my friend, I regret there is no water in this place. Tomorrow, I promise. Tomorrow will be a new day. Tomorrow you will have everything you need to make a new man of you. (175)

The light of hope in racism and culture indicates the new life, new ideas where nobody raises his/her hand about the race and culture. All are equal in every field. Similarly, Michael K is also free from tomorrow. These lines indicate that future is bright for blacks in coming days. Coetzee says, "In the room where his mother had lived there was a dense clutter of furniture. As his eyes accustomed themselves to the dimness he made out scores of tubular steel chairs stacked from floor to ceiling"(180). Michael K's mother's room shows the culture of that time. Tubular steel chairs stacked from floor to ceiling indicates the African culture. Similarly, "three

painted plaster statues: a deer with chocolate-brown eyes, a gnome in a buff jerkin, knee-breeches and green tasseled cap" (80) also clarifies the classical cultural items of that time. The hero of this novel Michael K says to clarify about him; "the truth, the truth about me. 'I am a gardener'. (181)

Here, Michael K is telling about his fact. He says that he is a gardener but nobody believes him because he is black. In this novel, black skin people are treated very badly like Michael K. He talks to himself:

I was mute and stupid in the beginning, I will be mute and stupid at the end. There is nothing to be ashamed of in being simple. They were locking up simpletons before they locked up anyone else. Now they have camps for children whose parents run away, camps for people who kick and foam at the mouth, camps for people with big heads.
(182)

These lines present the effects of apartheid and culture. Michael feels uneasy in the camp. According to Michael K, people who work in the camp are whites and they treat blackman very badly. White people chase the black people. White people torture the black people.

The last part centres around Michael K's return to sea point. He meets up with some travelers who offer him a place with them. They are running from the police, and try stealing from Michael K. He also has a sexual encounter with one of the women involved in the group. After this experience, he returns to the room that he used to stay in before leaving from sea point. He ends with a thought about the possibility of having to share the room with someone else, and imagines an old man whom he would take back to the country with him. Throughout the entire novel,

Coetzee has an underlying theme of apartheid. Michael K just wants to escape, to be content with the simple things in life.

Coetzee creates such an atmosphere in his artistic reflection as never presented before in order to convey the message of how powerful apartheid and cultural values are. For instance, the soldiers try to manipulate him by arguing that there must be his friends hiding somewhere in the annual. But Michael K refuses their argument with the words of his confidence, " I'm not what you think", he said, 'I was sleeping and you wake me, that's all' (123). They accuse him of giving a shelter to the insurgents and growing foods and vegetables for their sake. Surprisingly, they blame him to be speaking a lie instead of revealing the truth. Therefore, Michael refutes their misunderstanding and tells them that he lives alone and what they think about him is totally wrong. This sort of verbal confrontation explicitly makes the conspicuous contestation between the cultural determinant and apartheid like opposing forces.

Irving Howe's review of *Life and Times of Michael K* presents the dilemma facing South African writers trapped by their location, "A great commanding subject haunts the South African imagination subject can also turn into a kind of tyranny, close, oppressive and destructive. Imagine what it must be like to live as a serious writer for Africa: an endless clamour of news about racial injustice"(26).

He goes on to question whether the real significance of Coetzee lies in an apparent more beyond politics to universal themes of apartheid. The statement "The kitchen and pantry were noisy with buzzing of flies" (57) means the blacks are like flies and they are disturbing the kitchen where kitchen is like the white community. Coetzee says, " K held up the four dead birds, their feet together in a tangle of claws. There was a pearl of blood at the beak of one of it goes down,' he said. 'you wouldn't get

yourself dirty, not even your little finger" (63). It means blacks are not dirty even theirs activities. Anna K who is the mother of Michael K suffers very much and dies at last. Michael K has a problem of harelips but he thinks he is not passive of harelips but he thinks he is not passive but active. Due to apartheid, Michael K and his mother get pain and problem. When Michael K retains the stream of his origin, the passion for sweetness and light becomes blatant. Michael K starts living life of his own as a gardener in his native place. Bordering is the realm of his culture in which he enjoys the bliss and ecstasy with sweetness and light, slowly and gradually, there involves a sensation of culture as passion in him. In the lucid exposition, Coetzee narrates the cultural passion and values involving in Michael K. He says:

This was the beginning of his life as a cultivator. On the shelf in the shed he had found a packet of pumpkin seeds, In the space of a week he cleared the land near the dam and restored the system of furrows that irrigated it. Then he planted a small patch of pumpkins and a small patch of miles; and some distance away on the river banks, where he would have to carry to it, he planted his been, so that if it grew it could climb into the thorn trees. (59)

Here, Coetzee has reflected the process of gaining sweetness and light through cultivation. The state of Michael K's cultivation suggests the state of being led by cultural values. His cultural value shows some beneficial works which he is doing in this novel:

And if the old man climbed out of the cart and complained, saying, 'what are we going to do about water ?', he, Michael, would produce a teaspoon from his packet, a teaspoon and a long roll of spring. He would clear the rubble from the mouth of the shaft, he would bend the

handle of the teaspoon in a loop and tie the string to it, he would lower it down the shaft deep into the earth, and when he brought it up there would be water in the bowl of the spoon, and in that way, he would say, one can live. (183-184)

The cultural values which Michael K knows it very well how to strive for living and how to maintain his culture forever. Here, J.M. Coetzee's novel *Life and Times of Michael K*, through the representation of the personal, political and social crisis, experienced by the protagonist due to the apartheid policy in South Africa, critiques the policy that perpetuate the racist cultural values. Coetzee presents the vivid situation of the contemporary colonial states.

Coetzee powerfully satirizes those colonial hegemony, imposed ideology, culture and so called civilization that germinate the intra-racial conflict in South Africa. South African people have not their own type of identity due to colonial hegemony. White people are imposing their own type of ideology to the black people. Black people in Africa especially the title character of this novel Michael K dominated by the whites severely. So Coetzee powerfully satirizes such type of hegemony. Such type of ideology and hegemony germinates the intra-racial conflict in South Africa. Coetzee presents the vivid situation of the South Africa. African people are deprived of their rights. In this novel, Michael K is deprived of his rights due to apartheid which creates the intra-racial conflict. White people also impose their own culture that affects the African black people.

Michael K is a black person and he belongs to black community. Coetzee, here, in this novel through the representation of personal, political and social crisis, try to show the apartheid policy in South Africa. White people create own type of policy that perpetuate the racist cultural values. Due to apartheid, African people are

suffering. Black people's own type of identity is lost and they are compelled to follow white man's culture and its values. Coetzee himself is a white man but he is not against black people. He is positive towards the black people. Coetzee remains between black and white community.

Coetzee plays with plot when Michael K spends much of his time in his shelter at the Visagie residence. By using the issues of apartheid and cultural values, J.M. Coetzee powerfully presents the vivid situation of South Africa. He creates the background of the civil war due to apartheid in South Africa to create convincing atmosphere. Coetzee satirizes colonial hegemony that creates the racial conflict in South Africa.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

J.M Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* was published in 1983. This novel raises the very dominant issue of racism prevalent in South African society. The Afrikaners have come to fear the black population that threatens to take over, and because of this, the Afrikaners try to contain as many of them as possible in camps. The range of geographical, historical, socio-political and cultural issues rampantly burning during the post-colonial movement in South Africa, the novel powerfully satirizes the colonial hegemony prevalent in South Africa. The main character, a coloured man, Michael K, tries to stay aloof, but is continually drawn into the debate against his will. On this journey into the interior of South Africa, he is repeatedly placed in camps, where he meets the white medical officer, who fears the Afrikaners are losing the war. In addition, he continually tries to place Michael officer, who fears the Afrikaners are losing the war. In addition, he continually tries to place Michael in particular category. Michael K's vision and his identity has dominated. Coetzee has reflected the site of colonial and imperial attack in South African grain on the one hand, and the counter-attack by the strength of the pan-African culture to resist not only the encroachment of colonial and imperial forces but also of all the opposing forces that try to ruin the South African culture, nationality and social identity on the other.

Coetzee presents the victory of the culture over all the opposing forces such as colonial restrictions, confinements, suppression, oppression, domination, exploitation and so on. He has successfully demonstrated the strength of South African culture. Depicting the situation of civil war due to apartheid in South Africa, it reflects the hostile socio-economic, political and cultural conditions in which Michael K's

embroiled in the turmoil of restrictions and confinements in the camps. Michael K and his mother are deeply rooted in their culture due to Apartheid. They are culturally displaced and politically dominated, suppressed, oppressed and exploited due to apartheid. The plot of this novel is clear, clean, straight and the work of a mature imagination at full power which presents the clear apartheid in South Africa. The African lives have been a driving force behind apartheid. There is no Afrikaner nation, if black people have come to honour the same values as white people, they are no longer. Michael's meeting with white people cannot condone his behaviour. Specially, whites are imposing their ideology to the blacks. If it is a child, then generally guilt (or death) must eventually attach; a simpleton, however, remains simple in a state of purity, innocence, and grace. There's obvious appeal to that, and yet it's also terribly limiting. Michael K is struggling against society. In fact, he is deprived of their rights. It is the story of survival and isolation.

J.M. Coetzee has tried to present the apartheid theme in this novel. He is raising the voice of blacks especially Michael K. Coetzee satirizes colonial hegemony and civilization. The White people's civilization is very different than black people's civilization. Through the representation of Michael K, Coetzee shows the social crises due to apartheid and cultural values.

The apartheid policy in South Africa that perpetuates the racist cultural values. White people want to impose their ideology upon black people. Michael K is a type of character who is always against the white people's ideology. Coetzee's novel has been proved that it is the voice of dominating and exploiting group. South African society as a racial worked-up and maintained. The moral framing of literary fiction is keeping South Africa at a distance by assimilating apartheid.

In fact, racism is not a stable ideological form remaining the same for a long period. Coetzee tackles head-on the racist inflections of cultural progress, specially in devastating manifestation in the South African context. In addition Coetzee draws attention to past war effects "including a will to forget, a horror of repetition"(9) and a purging of language that ensured that form of race consciousness would itself to terminated or go underground to emerge later in mutated form. Here, however political prudence determined that this legislation would not follow that rationale of eugenics or biological destiny but would still mandate race classification, race separation, and race dominance.

Coetzee has presented the apartheid policy and cultural values of South Africa throughout the text of *Life and Times of Michael K* By showing the colonial hegemony, imposed ideology, culture and civilization, Coetzee suggests that human beings are not only victims of apartheid policy and cultural value of whites but also capable of resisting such type of policy and other sort of opposing forces. Apartheid and culture and inter-related each other and they are like a part of society. Coetzee has explored an imaginative figured named Michael K and presented him before us means to say that we should never neglect our cultural norms and values in our life. Apartheid policy in South Africa and cultural values makes the Michael K very suffering in every sector. Through the victimized perspective, the novel highlights the apartheid cultural values and severe victimization due to which the right to the life of people in South African culture that has been seized inhumanly.

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