

## Chapter- One

### Introduction

#### Colonialism

'Colonialism' refers to a process of one country's domination over another country or people. This venture seemed possible through either military or psychological process. In the course of the colonization, at first the specific culture of the colonies is exploited because culture is regarded as the source of power. It is difficult to control any country without destroying or surpassing it.

Throughout the history, powerful nations have occupied other countries and ruled them as colonies. During the last 500 years or so, the countries of Western Europe have explored and colonized many areas of the world. The countries that have extended their territories are mainly Britain, France, Portugal and Spain. They have their power over the areas especially in Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Caribbean Sea and surrounded areas and the Pacific Ocean. People use the term *colonialism* to describe the policies that the government of a country adopts towards the people who live in territories ruled by it. Many countries that were once colonies or dependent territories have achieved independence. Albert Memmi elaborates the condition of colonialism in his *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*.

These people excluded from system will proclaim their exclusion in the name of national identity: it is colonialism that celebrates the patriotism of the colonized. Maintained at the level of animals by an oppressive system they are not given any rights, not even the right to live, and their condition worsens day by day: when a person's only remaining option is in choosing how to die, when they have received

from their oppressors only one gift 'despair ' what they got left to lose?

(4)

On the other hand, the colonizers also created fabricated discourse that simply overwhelms the tender mind of the colonized. The discourse, as theorized by Michael Foucault, is a system of statement within which the world can be known. His follower Edward Said extended his theory of discourse and linked it with real social –political struggle. He propagated that discourses are the result of real power-struggle in the society. Said's main interest is to study and analyze the relation between the west and the east and the role of Orientalism as a governing force in this relationship.

Said argues that *Orientalism* is the discourse of the west about the east. And it designates the long term images, stereotypes and general ideology about the orient as 'other'. Through such discourses they constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledge, discipline and value upon the dominated groups. As a social formation it works to constitute reality not only for the object it appears to represent but also for the subject which form the community on which it depends. Consequently, colonial discourse is the complex of signs and practices that organize social existence and social production within colonial relationship. Many critics define colonial discourse in their perspectives. Homi Bhabha defines colonial discourse in his *The Other*

*Question* as:

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity as the sign of cultural/ historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism is a paradoxical made of representation. It connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. Likewise the knowledge and identification that

vacillates between what is always 'in place' already known and something that must be anxiously repeated. (293)

Colonial discourse is based on 'Fixity of ideas' made by colonizers upon the colonized people. The colonizers always followed the fixed and stereotyped construction while representing the countries and the people they colonized. This fixity and the stereotypes are based on the dichotomy made by the colonizers between themselves and the colonized people, as Mudimbe criticizes:

Because of the colonizing structure, a dichotomizing system has emerged, and with it a great number of current paradigmatic oppositions have developed: traditional versus modern, oral versus written and printed; agrarian and customary communities versus urban and industrialized civilization; substance economic versus highly productive economics. (4)

The colonialist constructed a dichotomizing system because they believed that civilization science and progress originated from the west and the natives lacked them. They also created the hierarchy of race which represent 'we' for the race belonged to the superior position, and 'they' for the race belonged to the inferior position. In this way the western create a false myth about the orient naming them as uncivilized, barbaric, irrational, wild, cruel etc.

Hence, colonialism created many problems in the formal colonial. White settlers who conquered non white people often held the attitude that ethnic and cultural difference defined some people as superior and the other as inferior. Some colonizing countries began education programs that maintained white superiority by distancing native students from their own culture and history.

## **Post-colonialism**

The term "Post-colonialism" has been widely used for the academic activities in the Third World academia since late 1970s. The third world intellectuals share the same feelings and have similar experience under their colonial ruler especially English. These intellectuals have tried to subvert the Euro-Centric concept of the colonizers. In post-colonial era, the indigenous people have to struggle with newly arrived culture and all of its beliefs, values, habits and traditions that have now become complicated within their own lives. Each part of the changes may bring benefits as well as harms. The term has subsequently been used widely to signify the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonizes. Kambysellis says:

The term post-colonialism is taken as the name for condition of natives longing in post independent national groups and the need of those nations which have been the victim of imperialism to achieve an identity uncontaminated by Euro-Centric concepts. (7)

Post-colonialism examines an unconsciously changed culture through its literature and creates discourse of oppositionality which colonialism brought into being. Basically, post-colonialism creates and introduces the two distinct parties of colonizer and colonized or oppressor and oppressed. It also refers to more than just people adjusting to changes. Thus, adjustment includes the relationship between the changer and the changed. So the term "post-colonialism" can rightly be considered as continuing process of resistance and reconstruction whether visible or invisible to the colonized, the colonizer's presence is unquestionably felt. Even after the colonizer had left and the formally colonized nation has been liberated, the presence of the

colonizers still remains as something of a shadow. Post-colonialism touches many issues like language, land, nationalism and hybridism.

By exploring the colonial history of the native culture, the post colonial theory empowers a society with the ability to value itself.

Now, that post-coloniality has been released from the fixity of Third World location, the identity of the post colonial is no longer structural but discursive. Post colonial in this perspective represents an attempt to regroup intellectuals of uncertain location under the banner of post-colonial discourse. (Dirlik 332)

It makes clear that post colonialism, in the recent concept has been described in the term of discourse that resist the imperial power; that re-study the history of the colonized country.

The impact left by the colonizers on the native lands are studied on the same roof of post-colonial. Thus, colonial discourses are replaced by the post colonial discourse. Gyan Prakash talks on the subject and clarifies;

One of the distinct effects of the recent emergence of post-colonial criticism has been to force a radical re-thinking and re-formation of forms of knowledge and social identities authorized by colonialism and western domination. Recent post-colonial criticism seeks to undo the Euro-centrism produced by the institution of the west's trajectory, its appropriation of the 'other' as history. (Dirik 333)

This is to say that the post-colonial discourse try to subvert all types of discourses of colonial subjectivity.

The post colonial writers want to look back their colonized history. They want to make the native aware of the fact that their true history has to be revived. Frantz Fanon feels the need to re-study the history of once colonized country and says:

Perhaps we have not sufficiently demonstrated that colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. (Wretched Earth 210)

The anti-colonial writers, thus, questioning on the pre-colonial history of the natives, raise the voice for the once colonized country. As the colonial elites achieved their superiority by the means of discourse, the post-colonial writers, by following the same method, reclaim their history which is to be 're-captured' because their true history was distorted and destroyed by means of so called "civilizing mission" or such other "perverted logic".

The colonial norms have governed over the once colonized people even after the independence of their native land. The nationalist writers are very serious on this fact, and it is the cause why they have felt the need of re-construction of their history that is contaminated by the colonial power. "The post independent people are still unaware about the role played by their colonizers in manipulating their identity, who still term their imperial power as "mother country". The post-independent natives have to understand the fact that the colonial mother is not the "loving mother who protects her child form a hostile environment" (Fanon, Wretched Earth 211). To achieve autonomous national identity, the post-independent natives have to prove that

they are not savage, and they have to show that they also have their own culture as the colonial power boast of its culture.

Frantz Fanon in his book *The Wretched Earth* describes how the colonial power was able to sweep the mind of the natives away.

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

The central motives of the colonial discourse were to wash the native's mind away, and to impose the superiority of its culture. As we know, the discourse is power, the post colonial writers have applied the same method of composing the various discourses in reverse to colonial discourse. The post-colonial discourse, therefore, looks back the history of the colonized country, and from the dim marks of the indigenous, seeks to picture the true identity of the natives. Fanon terms these types of discourse as the "literature of combat" (*Wretched Earth* 240).

It is the literature of combat because it helps the nationalist writers to fight against the (mis) representation of the natives by the colonial power. It helps the writers to make the natives aware of the fact of their "notion of inferiority". It is literature of combat because the natives get knowledge that their culture is not inferior, in fact 'made' inferior by means of "perverted logic" of their colonizers.

The nation and the culture are always interlinked to each other. Culture is a powerful weapon to protect the nation. Culture gives internal spirit for the enhancement of the nation. The national culture, in Benedict Anderson's word is an "imagined community". Though it is imagined, it is the power that recognizes the

disintegrated indigenous into a binding thread of a nation. Fanon further says, "To fight for national culture means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material key stone which makes the building of a culture possible" (233).

The post-colonial writers, thus, speaking on the re-construction of the history of once-colonized country, and revival of national culture, are fighting against the imperial power to get the "true" identity of the natives. The central motif of the post-colonial discourse is to achieve true freedom of the indigenous language and their culture.

### **Colonial Oppression**

Colonial oppression refers to the state of cruel treating to the people of colonies in an unfair way especially by not giving them the same freedom, right etc. as other people. Colonial oppression came into existence since the time of colonization. Colonization itself is an act of suppression, oppression and subjugation.

The colonizers ruled many countries. European countries especially Britain, France Spain ruled the countries like Africa and India. After the independent era, the colonized countries were made politically free but other aspects like economic and ideological domination remained unchanged. This is the dessert for the colonizers. Today we call this new form of colonialism as neocolonialism which remains as an "apple pie" for western colonizers. The form is changed but the content is almost the same.

Colonial powers oppressed their colonies for several reasons. The spirit of adventure and the desire for knowledge inspired men to explorer unknown parts of the world. As man has unlimited desire, they go on acquiring the land. During the process, they exploit the native dwellers as they can not tolerate their activities. Colonizers often came to the colony with pre-occupied mind that they should establish their supremacy by any possible means.



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

Some colonial powers acquire and oppress the territory due to the expansion of population. They need colonial territories to which some of their people could emigrate. Because of this purpose, mainly colonial oppression is existed. Other countries oppress colonies in order to gain influence and power. Some people in Europe believed that colonial powers had a duty to spread Christianity and western culture throughout the world. Some also believed that the colonies should be developed for the advantage of the colonial people.

Here, too, *Life & Times of Michael K*, we can see myriad of examples relating to oppression and domination. As the main setting of the story takes place in apartheid era in south Africa, some time in the 1960's-1970's. The story is loosely based on reality, the author makes the country into a police state in order to set it. The military (government) is fighting rebels and all the civilians are caught in the crossfire. A tangle of papers and signatures is needed just to travel around the country. Michael K's desire to be left alone (his cry for freedom) doesn't impress the doctor at the rehabilitation camp. Michael K says that it was not his war, but the doctor replies that it is everyone's war. Michael K tries to hold out by sheer force of will and refuses to eat the camp food. Michael K wants to eat 'the bread of freedom' but he is caught at the grip of the colonizers. The more he strives to escape them, the more he becomes a victim of colonial oppression.

## **Writer, Text and the Colonial Theme**

Novelist, critic and academic John Maxwell Coetzee is a leading South African intellectual who has made a significant contribution to contemporary South African culture. He is known for his portrayal of his native country both during and after apartheid. He is further distinguished by his acute awareness of marginalization, his affinity for rural setting and his unique take on ethno-linguistic identity.

Coetzee is a writer of high caliber; he writes with the subject matter of human pain, weakness and torture which are often shown in historic context. The central issue of his writings is what is often regarded as the fundamental problem of literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. He basically deals on how we feel other's pain. Coetzee goes a long way in probing the need to connect on the level of how another person suffers. He writes about margins and boundaries. His characters are caught in-between culture and historical states. He exposes the ambiguities of the human condition largely in a clear manner.

Everytime Coetzee publishes a novel, a great deal of discussion ensues. He skillfully reveals how a person thinks when he relates the mind of character especially the ambiguity and the contradictoriness of thought. The psychology of an individual is treated with respect when it is not portrayed as one sided. And at this movement in history, it seems important to be aware of how complicated all issues are and how history or the past doesn't merely disappear with things. We are haunted by our past and by history itself, and Coetzee shows appreciation for the past in his works. At the same time, there is a strong emphasis on the existential idea that we are also free to choose our action at any given moment and that we must be responsible for our choices.

Coetzee deconstructs western hegemony and the disparate ideological agendas. He, however, is a figure who focuses us to re-evaluate the limitation of the empire, colonialism and so on. He successfully turns a temperament into a style, his sentences sound like of no one else. He stripes them down scouring them an adjective

and sentiment. Coetzee possess a profound interdisciplinary intelligence. In terms of narration, he generally narrates the story through the consciousness of a single character, i.e. focalization which occurs both in first person narration where the narrator tells what s/ he thinks and observes and in 3<sup>rd</sup> person narration where the narrator narrates from the perspective of focalizer. Coetzee's work presents detailed work in linguistics and stylistics that is the foundation for the eventual mastery of his writing craft. His special interest is in the construction of mobile point of view-mobile both in the time and space. The point of view rests apparently within the utterance of the narrating character. It simultaneously projects a view of the character from outside as it is.

*Life & Times of Michael K* has been the most celebrated novel since its publication in 1983. Many critics have analyzed the novel from different perspectives. Since the novel depicts the situation of civil war due to apartheid in South Africa, it has generated various ideas for analysis. Some critics have commented it as the post colonial manifesto where as others as the protest against western hegemony and mythical representation. But some other critics commented on Coetzee's art of writing. However the major concern of this novel is colonial oppression, subjugation and exploitation which is clearly seen upon the central character Michael K.

*Life & Times of Michael K* manifests the varied characteristics common in totally of J.M Coetzee's novels. This novel best exhibits the socio-political condition of the South African life under colonial domination. Coetzee depicts the picture of the destitute and the common folk who have been the victim of unpredictable suffering and crisis in life. Commenting on Coetzee and his novels H.M Tiffin has acclaimed all of Coetzee's novels as the manifestation of post colonial issue of freedom and independence from the western hegemonic trends. He says that Coetzee opposes Euro centric myths and stereotypes in an allegorical manner in his novels. H.M. Tiffin

termed Coetzee's novels as 'counter discourse' in his *Post Colonial Literature and Counter Discourse* including *Life & Times of Michael K*.

Only for Michael K of *Life & 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 fruit of his isolation before society attacks his peace. Coetzee rewrites the archetypal myth of Robison Crusoe to comment on the nature of imperialism and colonialism, the conquest of 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)

H.M. Tiffin analyses this novel from the post colonial perspective as a counter discourse to oppose Euro centric stereotypes. He says that it is rewriting of the archetypal myth of Robinson Crusoe. In order to comment on imperialism and colonialism, Tiffin argues, Coetzee has restructured the earlier myth typically in a different manner in order to expose the conquest of the virgin territory. As Tiffin has commented from the perspective of counter discourse. It is quite obvious that he is trying to strengthen the major issue of pan- African culture that functions as a means of resistance of African freedom and independence. Tiffin highlights the novel as counter discourse but doesn't pay keen concern on existential crisis of the protagonist Michael K and heroic struggle in order to rejoice human predicament. Michael K is submerged in quicksand of existential crisis because of social anarchy due to civil war but he is always seeking for freedom and independence of individuality in order to continue the life of his own choice.

Another criticism of the novel *Life & Times of Michael K*, Mike from Raleigh NCUSA has asserted that the whole novel revolves on the issue of an individual versus society. He also says that Coetzee's philosophical attitude towards an individual struggle for freedom and independence from belligerently poignant forces is prominent in the text. Analyzing the text critically he has reinforced the idea that:

Written at the time that apartheid was very strong, Coetzee gave a philosophy to life in the environment, which in this case is a surreal post civil war South Africa with all the horrors that come with the aftermath of a civil war, especially an African civil war. However Michael K makes the effort to shield himself from the harshness of his environment or situations where society makes it difficult for a private person to live a personal life that is independent of the forces of the environment. (14)

Here Mike exhibits the existential situation of Michael K from depth and comes to the point that post civil war environment and its aftermath bring horrors and suffering in the life of Michael K. Mike addresses the animosities of the society in which Michael K suffers and therefore attempts to protect himself from social harshness. No matter how much he tries he becomes the victim of colonial oppression. Michael K appears in the novel as a shattered figure who is unable to make any point for his further life improvement. He is made a scapegoat not for the sake of self but for others so he is depicted as a victim of environment and society respectively.

Likewise, *Life & Times of Michael K* is typically included in Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature. In this encyclopedia Coetzee's novel *Life & Times of Michael K* is mentioned as follows:

*Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) which won the Booker Prize, concerns the dilemma of a man of limited intelligence beset by

conditions. He can neither comprehend nor control during a civil war in an unnamed country. (255)

This comment exposes the hardship and suffering of an individual. The so called civil war caused a great suffering upon innocent people. This comment hints on the trauma of a common man Michael K who suffers the predicament of his life due to the lack of broad knowledge and inability to comprehend the on going socio-political reality exposed before him. The more he attempts to escape from the colonizer's hand, the more he falls into trap in one way or the other. He can not get released from the colonial oppression.

Joe Solar from Philadelphia USA conveys and comments that this book namely *Life & Times of Michael K* makes us to think about our own existence. His basic opinion is to show that Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* does have some sort of connection with human existence and its crisis due to unprecedented war and violence. To speak his own words:

This book is perhaps easier to read of Coetzee 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 works, 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 questioning our purpose and place it in the order of things. (15)

Joe Solar has pinpointed the serious concern of human existence in the novel. However he does not pay keen attention towards the ground and impetus, which enables him to continue this life.

I came to study this novel getting the inherent textual issues of my best. I could not stop reading it twice and thrice. I found this novel a truly astonishing one. I finished *Life & Times of Michael K* in a state of elation, for all the misery and suffering it contains. I enjoyed the very art written beautifully in a strong, plain and unpretentious style. The text has really inspired me to the magic of writing, its simplicity and open-endedness.

During the reading of this novel, plenty of questions were aroused regarding suppression, oppression and subjugation. Being such an innocent character why did he get miseries and sufferings? Why did certain group of people treat him like an animal? Was he satisfied with his life standard? What should he have done to get release from such burden? These were the very serious questions revolved around the text. And those issues always haunted me very much.

Michael K got such troubles because of colonial oppression. During the colonial era, the colonized were suppressed and oppressed. The colonizers liked to impose their culture and tradition upon the colonized for a certain time span. As a result the colonized had to undergo restricted freedom. Even at that time, people's fundamental rights were seized. Due to this reason Michael K was going through a troublesome period keeping all his normal life aside.

## Chapter-Two

### *Life & Times of Michael K- A Text in Response to Colonialism*

#### *Life & Times of Michael K- A Critical Summary*

*Life & Times of Michael K* is a story of a simple man named Michael K who is physically impaired. He has got a "hare lip" since his birth. Because of this deformity, Anna K (Michael K's mother) had trouble feeding from both her breast and a bottle, which frustrated her even more. The only thing that worked was feeding him from a spoon. The midwife had said that the lip would close over time but it did not. Anna K took Michael K to work with her and isolated him from other children. She polished floors while he sat in silence. Michael K was not judged smart enough to attend regular school so he was sent to a special state institution, Huis Norenus. There, Michael K not only learned reading and writing; but he also did manual labor such as sweeping, scrubbing, bed making, dish washing, basket weaving, wood work and digging.

Michael K found a job as a gardener in the city of Cape Town. He assisted his ailing mother when she summoned him. He shared space with his mother. As the health condition of his mother deteriorated, Michael K quitted his job and catered his mother to carry out her wishes to return to her birth place in the country, Prince Albert. Unfortunately, Michael K failed to get a travel permit so he built a cart out of scrap and began the journey on foot pushing his frail mother in the cart. After being turned back once at the check point on the edge of the country, Michael K succeeded in getting out of town but his mother died soon afterwards. He was able to get only the ashes yet he accepts it as a usual phenomenon. He continued his journey bearing his ashes. The turbulence of war that he felt at Sea Point followed him. He devised hiding strategies to avoid road patrols. He spent time in guarded camps, Michael K escaped a camp and found what he believed to be his mother's home. As soon as he reached there, he determined to work in the land and run his life. He worked in the



farm but succeeded no more. He was always in a state of trauma and fear. He lived a poor and feeble life. His efforts were as successful as those of insects he caught to eat.

Michael K was weighed less than ninety pounds when he entered the medical ward at the Kenilworth rehabilitation camp in Cape Town. The doctor was told that he was running a staging ground for rebels in the mountains. Michael K had collapsed during physical training and had labored breathing signs and a low heart beat. The doctor asked why someone in such obvious bad shape would be forced to do strenuous exercise. The guard said that Michael K resisted without complaining it.

Michael K did not eat food but said that there was nothing wrong with him. He denied bread because he wanted to eat the bread of freedom. He wanted to get freedom from the hand of the colonizers. He somehow defied the military barriers and escaped leaving the camp doctor questioning the values of life and society.

As Michael K came out of the camp, he sat on a bench beside a miniature golf course on Sea Point, facing the sea, resting, gathering his strength. He felt peace and relaxed for sometime on the bench. Michael K reclined on a filthy, infested mattress and knew who he was and what his status was.

Thus, the story of Michael K is the story of a man caught up in a war beyond his understanding, but determines to live his life however minimally, on his own terms. J.M. Coetzee has produced a masterpiece which has the astonishing power to make the wilderness boom.

### **Textual Analysis**

John Maxwell Coetzee is one of the most acclaimed post colonial writers of South Africa. Coetzee is best regarded for his vivid portrayal of socio-cultural influence through the fictional fabrication in which the certain characteristics of the people are shown to be embroiled by the turmoil of civil war in South Africa. He is the receiver of novel prize in 2003 for literature and booker prize in 1983. Coetzee has been living in the USA and making cultural studies. Some of the successful works

that he has ever issued by now are *Dusk Lands*, *In The Heart of The Country*, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Foe*, *White Writing*, *Age of Iron* etc. Coetzee's other works include translation studies and literary criticism.

The very novel of Coetzee *Life & Times of Michael K* exposes the real hazards in the life of the central character Michael K. It begins with the birth of Michael K, continues with the dramatization of his life long struggle for existence and finally ends with the hope of survival and rejoicement. Therefore, the textuality of the text appears to be the site of what Richard Tarnas says "open-endedness and indeterminacy". Michael K struggles to escape the indeterminacy of life even in the era of colonization. Due to colonial oppression he is jeopardized yet he heroically accepts and continues his entire life in order to maintain the glory of his survival. His aspirations of livelihood are endangered by the unwanted colonial oppression and subjugation of whole way of life style of South African migrants from countryside to the metropolis.

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

Michael K is deprived of motherly love i.e. he was brought up in an institution. Michael K assists his ailing mother when she summons him. He shares space with his mother and carries out her wish to return to her childhood home, he sets off with her for Prince Albert. Michael K's mother dies but he continues accepting it as usual phenomena and continues his further journey bearing her ashes.

The turbulence of war that he felt at Sea Port follows him. He devises hiding strategies to avoid road Patrols. He spends time in guarded camps where he has to undergo grave sufferings. It is not due to his weakness in character but it is because of hostile society and political turmoil that makes him suffer. However, he keeps on escaping the snafu eventhough the opposing hostile forces continue to follow him. The central character of the novel, Michael K is just a tip of an iceberg who is struggling at the time of civil war. He is the representative of common life at the time of civil war. He is deeply rooted in existential crisis. He is politically dominated and economically exploited. He tries his best to escape the confinement of such treachery yet he can not do. Because of this reason he has to become the victim of colonial oppression.

Michael K, around which the whole novel rotates, has been playing the multi-disciplinary role in the novel. He can not stay taking a fixed role. He doesn't get any thing permanent. Towards the beginning he is a simple gardener who is displaced and alienated time and again from his profession and originality because of the dynamic play of time and space. Time and space are fleeting every movement in which his existence is rooted. He is never exhausted to search for his identity with the vigor of infatigable struggle amidst the turmoil of hostile circumstance triggered by colonial oppression.

Coetzee regards Michael K as a typical South African character who represents the entire pan–African life style. He is deeply accustomed to his tradition, culture and so on. He is, however, politically dislocated, suppressed, oppressed and exploited under the imperial subjugation. Indispensable right such as right to equality, right to freedom, rights regarding criminal justice, right to property, right to religion, right against exploitation is totally seized. Even Michael K is not let go to his native

hometown of his own in a free and fair manner. He is time and again struck by the roving armies. He has to dodge them by walking through the dense forest with no clear reason.

Michael K reaches the native land where he does not recognize anybody. He has got nobody to accompany him yet he is determined to stay in the lonely hut and busy himself in the farm. He attentively involves in the farm planting various fruits and vegetables with the hope to get brighter as well as comfortable life. He even can not find that place as the secluded one from the touch of war as a result he is compelled to leave it. He is accused of having some connection with the guerrillas. He is the man of clear image yet due to colonial activity, he is not left to be tortured. He is taken to the camp and is forced to live as a prisoner inside the barbed wire.

Even towards the ending part of the novel, Michael K becomes the sexual victim of the colonizers. He is made an object to quench their sexual thirst. The women who were unknown to Michael K compelled him to involve in that filthy act of harassment. "She bent down and took his penis in her mouth. He wanted to push her off but his fingers recoiled from the stiff dead hair of the wig" (178).

Michael K is so simple and innocent character that once he says he hasn't spoken with any other women till his matured age. He couldn't think of having illicit relationship with women. He got trapped into the net of the colonizers.

### **Colonial Elements in *Life & Times of Michael K***

*Life & Times of Michael K* by J.M. Coetzee is a novel of colonial expression since the novel is set when the colonial exercise was its height. The novel begins with the indication of disfigurement of the central character Michael K. He is physically impaired that's why he is deprived of well pampered education. He is taken out of school after a short trial and committed to the protection of Huis Norenus in Faure,

where at the expense of the state, he spends the rest of his childhood in the company of other variously afflicted and unfortunate children learning the elements of reading, writing, counting, sweeping, scrubbing, bed making, dishwashing, basket weaving, woodwork and digging.

Michael K has been assaulted very badly when he is going home. He is ill-treated on the way.

On his way home from work late on Friday he was set upon in a subway by two men who beat him, took his watch, his money and his shoes, and left him lying stunned with a slash across his arm, a dislocated thumb and two broken ribs. (4)

The novel exposes the fragmented lives of the characters living in the city of Cape Town. In the midst of civil war, Michael K and his mother Anna K face chaos and confusion, and eventual fragmentation and displacement. Anna K even at the severe time of illness gets no proper treatment. He is neglected by the nurses in the hospital. They have no time to care up an old woman when there are many young men. When Anna K is taken to hospital, she is treated with injection and pills to bring down the swelling. In fact her illness is not thought decent rather it is suppressed by such filthy medicines and others.

During her stay in Cape Town, she was occupying an unhealthy and unhygienic room. It was used as a closet by Cote d' Azur. On the door, there was a sign: a skull and crossed bones painted in red, and underneath the legend "danger-gevnnr-ingozi" was written. This is the vivid evidence how have-not groups were treated by the haves.

Another colonial elements can be observed that Michael K is always fed up with the situation outside. He neither can live in peace in his compartment nor can

return back to his rural home town. He is barred of returning back in the name of security check or say other rules and conducts. He says, "I feel like a toad under a stone living here" (9).

*Life & Times of Michael K* visualizes a terrifying scene of vandalization. How the city is undergoing through a state of impunity and unrest? Who are responsible behind the terror? Why are they creating a chaotic state?

There was a fight, and a crowd soon gathered. Parked cars were smashed open and pushed broadside on into the street. Sirens announced the curfew and were ignored. An ambulance that arrived with a motorcycle escort turned about short of the barrier and raced off, chased by a hail of stones. (11)

Likewise, the security check is so rigid that they even do not consider the people in great problem. They do not exhibit that they are the servant of the nation for the sake of safety. Yet, they do not have any humanitarian feeling of love and affection. May be it is the colonizing area or they have to show their superiority over the natives.

The policewoman slapped the counter to still him. Don't waste my time. I am telling you for the last time, if the permit is granted, the permit will come! Don't you see all these people waiting? Don't you understand? Are you an idiot? (20)

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

Moreover Michael K is over embedded with nothingness of life. His surrounding is full of dense and darkness because of fragmentation and suffering caused by hostile, social, economical and political situation. Social turmoil and instabilities are common in Michael K's life. "The hook-nosed overseer passed by, slapping the tail of his coat with his stick. 'Cheer up!' said the man, giving K a smile, punching him lightly on the shoulder" (43).

In the same way, Michael K is often confined and displaced in camp and jail. Encroachments of imperial forces also bring forth the moment of tension and torture in the life of Michael K. Then tension and torture herald fragmentation, dislocation and sense of isolation. For example, "As soon as he returned back from mountain to the city of Cape Town, he was arrested and kept in cell full of hungry, tired, weak and unable to stand. Only skeletal figure without flesh (69).

Michael K reaches his native farm which is badly mutilated that it can not be recognized easily. It needs repairing at the roof. Even inside the farm the cobweb is widespread sticking in every corner of the room. There comes a grandson of Visagi who even feels unsafe alone. He also appeals Michael K not to leave the farm for the safety of his life. It can be imagined how terrible the situation was in the country. And everything seems possible due to apartheid in the colonial era.

Michael K's life keeps confronting new situations and new environments. Basically, he is reinvigorated to lead a life of suffering and traumas. He no more can establish a rapport relationship with other people. Due to apartheid, he was no more regarded a human. People have lost a sense of humanity. It is because there is no situation to believe others so easily. The situation in the country is not favourable to provide with a day's shelter at a time of need. "K approached the woman at the door

'Excuse me', he said, 'can I have something to eat? I have not got a plate. I come from the hospital'. 'It is for the children only,' replied the women, and looked away" (76).

The situation outside is terrifying. People are undergoing through a hard time. It is very difficult for them to spend their time in a safe manner. Their life is in a state of risk or dilemma.

In three days, you will be standing at the gate here with tears in your eyes pleading with me to let you back. Why do you want to run away? You have got a home here, you have got food, you have got a bed, you have got a job. People are having a hard time out there in the world, you have seen it, I don't need to tell you. For what do you want to join them. (85)

Michael K is physically feeble, mentally retarded, economically bankrupt and suppressed figure. He often regains his existence by eating bark and drinking dew but he accepts them without any hesitation. As soon as he reached his mother's wagon house, there he lies as an escapee. He can not lead a normal life. He is sturdy at the beginning so he kills the wild dogs and other birds for his survival but towards the later days he grows weak and powerless. He is neither able to kill animals nor birds. He should satisfy on lizards. He has a sense of fear in his every pace of his life.

He went back to his burrow and spent the day in hiding, shaken by the certainty that soldiers had been on the farm and that they had come on foot. If they were hunting rebels in the mountains or tracking down deserters or simply making a tour of inspection, why had they not come in jeeps or trucks? Why were they being stealthy, why were they hiding their track. (107)



With the passing of his time, he knows very well that he would one day be caught sooner or later. He is paralyzing his day-to-day life in the small hut. He is so frightened that he enters the wrecked hut as soon as he sees a helicopter in the sky. He is hiding from other patrolling roving armies too. Unfortunately, he is caught despite his attempt to escape from them.

The soldier who was holding K gripped the name of his neck between thumb and forefinger and guided him down till he was kneeling, till his face was touching, the earth. 'You heard what the officer said, 'he said, so tell me. Tell me your story. He flicked the beret away and pressed K's face hard into the earth. With nose and lips squashed flat, K tasted the damp soil. (122)

One can easily guess the cruel behaviour of the soldiers towards the native people. The colonizers looked very aggressive toward the local people. But the natives can not resist the soldiers. They have to be victimized time and again. It is because they have their strong attachment toward their native town.

Oosthuizen gave K a cuff on the side of the head. 'So what's this about, monkey? He said 'You playing games with us?' The dogs were loaded back into the van. Everyone was losing interest in the search. The young soldiers stood about in the sun taking, drinking coffee. (124)

Another colonial element seems that the person's real identity is changed in order to impose extra burden. The name of the central character Michael K has been changed to Michaels. Michael K has been accused of being an arsonist running after a flourishing garden on an abandoned farm. He is said to have served the local guerrillas.

Every now and then, Michael K is kept under the soldier's inspection. He is let no more a freeman. He has been asked as many questions as they could. "Tell us about your friends who come to the middle of the night and burn down farms and kill woman and children; said Noel "That's what I want to hear" (139).

Moreover, the novelist, Coetzee, presents some horrific pictures towards the later part of the novel. The camp has been overcrowded with scores of prisoners. Some prisoners are shot dead with no clear reason. Mostly the dead are buried in an unmark grave out in the veld. The deceased have got no tributes. Though they have given up their life for the hope of the arrival of peaceful environment yet they don't have their own identity. They are no more recognized with their name and address but with counting numbers.

Towards the concluding part of the novel, Michael K even happens to be the victim of sexual abuse. As he escapes the camp, he goes half naked to the waist. He has no sandal on his feet. He is met by a woman and other people. They come across the beach where many people are basking themselves in the sun. The lady gives Michael a drink and a sandwich. He has been made to follow her. On the way, the lady makes Michael K a fool. To quench her sexual thirst, Michael K can make no any stand of his own. He has to run according to the wish of the lady.

## **Chapter-Three**

### **Natives and Their Identity Crisis**

#### **Nationalism**

Nationalism is a political doctrine according to which people with the same language and culture should be grouped together as a nation. Nationalists believe that each nation should have its own government and should be free of interference from other countries.

In this sense, every citizen of the state accepts that his nation best represents his national feeling. He is devoted for the welfare of the country so he feels and actively expresses such devotion. As a rule, nationalism develops among the people who are under the rule of another country. Nationalism also develops in areas where people who differ in race, language or religion live together. In such an area nationalists work for political independence. They believe that they can represent their own language and culture only by setting up their own government.

Nationalists use various means to achieve their aims. They try to make their people proud of their culture and traditions. Some nationalists achieve their aims by peaceful means. They may press their claims for independence through political institution such as parliaments, or they may organize a campaign of resistance against their rulers. Mohan Das Gandhi organized a campaign of non-violence resistance against British rule in India in the early 1920s. Sometimes, nationalists organize armed rebellion in order to achieve their aims.

Nationalism may cause misunderstanding and even hatred among people. Colonial government suspect nationalists of trying to disrupt law and order. On the other hand, nationalists suspect colonial governments of discriminating against them.

In countries where several people live together, minority groups may suffer as a result of nationalism.

If we talk about a bit history of it, Nationalism seems to have developed after the French Revolution. This theory was developed from the idea of German thinkers such as Johann Fichte who opined in his *Addresses to the German Nation*. He mentioned the most important fact about a nation is that it has a common language. A language is not only a means of communication with other people, but also a record of a nation's characteristics and history. He said that each nation should have its own government in order to preserve its own language and culture.

Another thinker from Germany, Johann Herder (1477-183), too, expresses the similar notion that the most important about the peoples of various countries is not the qualities they have in common but the ways in which they differ from one another. He believed that it is a duty of people to preserve the qualities that distinguish them from other peoples.

Here, in the novel *Life & Times of Michael K*, we can observe a true sense of nationalism from the perspective of Michael K, an obscure young gardener, and his mother Anna K. In South Africa, whose civil administration was collapsing under the pressure of years of civil war, Michael K decides to take his mother on a long march away from the guns towards a new life in the abandoned native land, Prince Albert. They were of the opinion that they could get mental relief or be secluded from the possible danger of war that was existing in entire South Africa. No matter how much they tried, they couldn't skip away from the roving armies and their physical as well as other psychological tortures. The story of Michael K is very heart-rending because he is caught up in a war beyond his understanding but is determined to live his life due to strong attachment to the native culture, tradition. In other word, he is not ready

to give up his life due to pious sentiment of culture and tradition and nationalism as a whole.

### **Identity Crisis in Colonial Era**

Identity is a term that is always connected with an individual or community. Moreover it is attached with ethnicity, class, gender, race, sexuality and culture. Behind the existence of an individual, there is always a role of identity. People express their identity by culture or by history or attaching oneself with the land. Identity is related to individual social culture as well as spiritual and existential aspects of human life. Every human being regards their identity by enrolling within the boundary of definite culture and society.

People of eastern world seem fascinated with the western people and their culture. They jump blindly to be as westerner only to experience frustration. The culture, the land and the history always reflect the identity of the individual. Identity gives protection to the individual and makes easy going in the everyday life. Individual feels secure and bliss remaining within the particular culture and society which gives their firm identity to the individual. Thus, it becomes necessary for the individual to enroll within the specific culture. As Cornel West conceives:

Identity is fundamentally about desire and death. Here you construct your identity is predicated on how you conceive of death; desire for recognition; quest for visibility; the sense of what Edward said would call affiliation. It is the longing to belong, a deep, visceral need that most linguistically conscious animals who transact with an environment participate in. And then there is a profound desire for protection for security, for safety, for surety. (15-16)

In this way, identity is quest to make own self known, to own dignity. It is longing to belong some where, owning definite culture and history. It is the fact since the evolution of history that every individual belongs to specific land or group, so they can exist and live. Individual without fixed identity is definitely going to extinct, they don't have place in the world. So, identity is and should be taken as a fundamental issue.

During the colonial era, the identity of an individual is thwarted and caught up in cultural limbo, then they face identity crisis. The colonizers invade the distant territory to establish their own government. They impose their own culture and tradition upon the colonized. As a result the native consider their own culture, custom and tradition; religion and race to be inferior to those of their master and try to identify themselves with the empire.

The colonizer's trick upon the native makes them far from their original homeland, their own caste, creed and custom due to which their caste, creed and custom have become meaningless to them, and thus, they can not identify themselves with those remote rules and codes. However, they are different from the master in cultural, traditional, racial and religious background, they can never successfully associate themselves with the colonizer either. They suffer from dislocation, placelessness, fragmentation and loss of identity. They become mimic men who imitate and reflect the colonizer's life style, values and views. As these psychological problems can not be removed even after independence is achieved, independence itself becomes a word but not a real experience. Without the colonizer, the colonized see themselves as lost in their post-colonial society that fails to offer a sense of national unity and identity.

Likewise, at the period of colonization the identity crisis is seen as part of a wider process of change which fragments the central cultural structure and social process. Stuart Hall claims "modern identities are being disinterred, that is dislocated or fragmented (274). The modern people experience their identities being fragmented in the multiracial and multicultural society.

Individual feels the crisis of identity when people have been dispersed temporarily from their native land due to colonial oppression or so on, they can not locate into the fixed culture and society, which necessarily gives the sense of alienation. In long run of life, individual suffers from frustration being unable to join with the root culture. Along with V. S Naipaul, many contemporary writers express their cultural dislocation and fractured identity in the alien land and search for root culture for their stable identity.

Coetzee has tried to manifest a sense of identity crisis in colonial era through the medium of the central characters Michael K and his mother Anna K in *Life and Times of Michael K*. Anna K dreams of returning back to the origin.

Lying in bed in her airless room through the winter afternoons with rain dripping from the steps outside, she dreamed of escaping from the careless violence, the packed buses, the food queues, arrogant shopkeepers, thieves and beggars, sirens in the night, the curfew, the cold and wet, and returning to a country side where, if she was going to die, she would at least die under the blue skies. (8)

Here, certain words like 'airless', 'careless', 'violence', 'arrogant', 'sirens in the night', 'the curfew', 'the cold and wet' etc words or the phrases are used to indicate unfavorable situation in an unknown place. The writer, perhaps, is trying to show that the character has got his identity in crisis due to such hectic colonial practices. Anna

K's desire to go back to the countryside has some connotative meaning. First of all, it connotes that one can never forget of his/her native land and the other is that due to lack of native 'land', 'culture', tradition, one often undergoes loss or displace. Homeland, culture and tradition etc. are the only things through which a new spirit of life can be achieved.

Likewise, Michael K's mission to search for the identity comes to an end when he succeeds to reach prince Albert and identifies the shelter as stated by his mother Coetzee narrates K's success in the following: "He approached the house and circled it. The shutters were closed and a rock-pigeon flew in at a hole where one of the gables had crumbled, leaving timbers exposed and galvanized roof-plates buckled" (51).

As mentioned above Michael K reached the place which he had been searching as the identity in colonial era.

### **Michael K's Struggle for Freedom**

Freedom indicates liberty or state of being free to live as one chooses without too many restrictions from government or authority. To oppose eventual attacks of external forces and sprout the intention of independence is freedom. What makes an individual struggle for freedom? What enhances him/her to gain it? What are the obstacles that oppose and hinder an individual from obtaining it? All these questions are the typical things to be dealt here because J. M Coetzee has expressed a deep concern over such issues.

The novel *Life & Times of Michael K* exposes the fragmented lives of the characters living in the city of Cape Town. Because of the civil war in South Africa, Michael K and his mother Anna K face chaos and confusion, and eventual fragmentation and displacement. This novel at the first sight presents a horrible



picture of the city of Cape Town where social turmoil, violence, death, decay and destruction govern. But if we securitize it, the novel gives the real picture of human beings surviving in present day situation. In stead of prosperity and integration, characters are torn apart because of death and destruction caused by war and violence. Michael K and Anna K resist it from their own manner however their struggle goes in vain.

The intense and acute desire for freedom is identical with the reason behind their dream of escaping the hostile environment of Cape Town and sustaining their life in the sweet and bright atmosphere of Prince Albert. The existential displacement and alienation have caused an individual search for the bliss of freedom and open-endedness. In the same way, the sense of insecurity from the continuous feats and hazards inspire an individual to lead carefree life without any external deteriorating force. And it becomes his intense struggle throughout the novel, *Life & Times of Michael K*.

Michael K seems optimistic throughout the novel. He is very clear that one day he would reach the desired destination no matter how hard he should do. Therefore he says "we will try again but next time we will go by the back roads. They can not block every road out (23). It is absolute clear that Michael K is guided by strong passion that's why he dares say 'by the black road'. He struggles to achieve freedom yet his strives are meaningless in the eyes of the colonizers.

In the same way, Coetzee makes quite clear about the origin of Michael K and Anna K where lies complete freedom and independence. That's why they are intensely intended to reach in the realm of peace and freedom. By making it blatant he intends to lead the readers to a free floating paradigm. For example, Anna K knows that her health is worsening and may be she can not reach her destination. Therefore she

reveals everything about her village, a dream land of freedom. She says, "I forget the actual name of the farm, but we can ask people will know. There was a chicken run and a pump on a hill. We had a noose on the hill side. There was prickly pear outside the black door. That is the place you must look for" (27).

All the description made by Anna K about the place is the place of freedom, independence and rejoicemet. By the use of such sentences Coetzee perhaps magnifies the indigenous native soil in South Africa which quench the quest for freedom. "That is the place you must look for" is in fact Coetzee's assertion of freedom and independence that everyone should look for. So, the central character Michael K struggles for freedom.

J.M Coetzee tells that Michael realizes the bliss of his native atmosphere with full of freedom. Coetzee makes the impact of passion for freedom upon Michael K clear in the following lines:

I could live here forever, he thought, or till I die. Nothing would happen, every day would happen, everyday would be the same as the day before, there would be nothings to say. The anxiety that belonged to the time on the road began to live him. Sometimes, as he walked, he didn't know whether he was awake or asleep. (46)

By this Coetzee means to say that when someone comes near the target during the quest, the anxiety of success is almost over. It is the same in the case of Michael K. When he comes to the countryside area, his anxiety to achieve the goal begins to cripple. Michael K's quest for freedom comes to an end when he succeeds to reach Prince Albert and identifies the shelter. It is an unfortunate things for him that even finding his native land he can not stay peacefully. He is always in a state of fear and terror.

Although Michael K undergoes grave suffering with the hope of happiness and rejoicement in the future. Because of this reason, he continues his effort despite hardships and difficulties. When Michael K steps Prince Albert, pigeons fly in the sky. It signifies that when Michael K reaches the origin of his quest, the passion for freedom independence and enjoyment galvanizes him. And finally he becomes optimistic to the future. This very optimism is the locus of post modern human survival. The assertion "As time passed on he permitted hope to grow up again in his breath that all would be well" (113). Here Coetzee further makes an explicit idea regarding the germ of optimism inherent in Michael K. He means to say that even at the time of war people can easily survive with freedom. Those who have strong faith upon self stamina can easily oppose and resist the encroachment of all the opposing forces including even the war. Therefore one strives to oppose external attacks in his way in order to preserve free floating human survival.

In this way Coetzee has highlighted Michael K's struggle for freedom. He attempts time and again to achieve freedom but it is not long-lasting. It fades away in a short time span.

### **Apartheid, Homeland System and Michael K**

Apartheid was a system of legalized racial segregation of political and economical discrimination against non-European groups in South Africa. The term was first used as the name of the official policy of the National Party (NP) in 1948. Though racial segregation, sanctioned by law, was already widely practiced. Its roots were in South Africa's earlier policies of separation. It was dismantled in a series of negotiations from 1990 to 1993, culminating in elections in 1994, the first in South Africa with universal suffrage.

Apartheid legislation classified South Africa's inhabitants and visitors into racial groups (Black, white, coloured and Indian) and then separated people using their arbitrary and unscientific classification, allocating grossly unequal civil rights.

The Group Areas Act of 1950 established residential and business sections in urban areas for each 'race' and strengthened the existing 'pass' laws, which required the non-whites to carry identification papers. Other laws forbade most social contacts between those of European descent and others, authorized segregated public facilities, established separate educational standards, restricted each group to certain types of jobs, curtailed non-white labour unions, denied non-white participation in the national government and established various black African 'homelands' out of the territory of Black Reserves founded during the British government in the Nineteenth century. Under HF Verwoerd's jurisdiction, however, this land was seen as a way to control the increasing movement of black people into the city. Black people would work in the cities but live in their own areas, where they would be housed, educated, and vote for their own internal governments. The ultimate plan was to create ten independent national states out of these homelands.

The state passed two laws which paved the way for "grand apartheid", which was centered on separating races on a large scale, through spatial division; that is, compelling people to live in separate places defined by race. The first grand apartheid law was the Population Registration Act 20 of 1950, which necessitated all citizens' being categorized according to race and this being recorded in their identity passes.

Official teams or Boards were established to come to an ultimate conclusion on those people whose race was unclear. This caused much difficulty, especially for coloured people, separating their families as members were allocated different races.

The second pillar of grand apartheid was the Group Areas Act 21 of 1950. Until then, most settlements had people of different races living side by side. This Act put an end to diverse areas and determined where one lived, how one survived and how one earned a living by virtue of racial inequality. Each race was allotted its own areas establishing the base for forced removals in later years.

The policy of separate development came into being with the accession to power of Dr. HF Verwoerd in 1958. He began implementing the homeland structure as a cornerstone of separate development. Verwoerd came to believe in the granting of "independence" to these homelands. Border industries and the Bantu Investment Corporation, were established to promote economic development and the provision of employment in the homeland to draw black people away from "white" South Africa.

The Tomlinson Commission of 1954 decided that apartheid was justifiable, but stated additional land ought to be given to the homelands, favouring the development of border industries. In 1958 the promotion of Black Self-Government Act was passed, and proponents of apartheid began to argue that, once apartheid had been implemented, blacks would no longer be citizens of South Africa; they would instead become citizens of the independent 'homelands'. In terms of this model, blacks, became (foreign) "guest labourers" who merely worked in South Africa as the holders of temporary work permits.

The South African government attempted to divide South Africa into a number of separate states. Some thirteen percent of the land was reserved for black homelands- representing fifty percent of South Africa's arable land (Davenport, 1977: p 268). That thirteen percent was divided into ten black "homelands" amongst eight ethnic units. Four of these were given independence, although this was never recognized by any other country. Each homeland was supposed to develop into a

separate nation state within which the eight black ethnic groups were to find and grow their separate national identity, culture and language. Each homeland controlled its own education and health system.

Once homeland was granted its "independence", its designated citizens had their South African citizenship revoked, replaced with citizenship in their homeland. These people were then issued passports instead of passbooks. Citizens of the supposedly "autonomous" homelands also had their South African citizenship circumscribed, and so became less than South African. The South African government attempted to draw an equivalence between their view of black "citizens" of the "homelands" and the problems which other countries faced through entry of illegal immigrants.

While other countries were dismantling their discriminatory legislation and becoming more liberal on racial issue, South Africa continued to construct a labyrinth of legislation promoting racial and ethnic separation. Many white South African supported apartheid because of demographic that is separation and partition were seen as a means of avoiding a one-person-one-vote democracy within a single unified South African state, which would render whites a politically-powerless minority. In addition, leaders of the above homelands became important defenders of apartheid.

Apartheid placed great emphasis on "self-determination" and "cultural autonomy" for different ethnic groups. For this reason, "mother-tongue" education was strongly emphasized. Thus, in addition to pouring resources into developing Afrikaans educational materials, resources were also poured into developing school textbooks in black languages like Zulu, Zhosha, Sotho, Tswana and Pedi. As a result, one of the consequences of apartheid was a South African population literate in Black African languages.

Michael K was a native South African from the rural hometown. He was politically and economically discriminated by the native government. The government had arbitrarily classified the people like him as the black. He had to carry his identification paper while moving. He needed a permit while going to the various town. Without the permit there was no chance of roaming around because he was tagged as an "other race". The then government forbade most social contacts of him with other white people. He, along with the other black, could only consume segregated public facilities. He was even restricted certain type of prestigious job. He was compelled to do a work as a gardener because he had his mother to feed and look after. His mother got sick as she couldn't bear the white culture imposed upon her. In order to get relief Michael K decided to take his mother on a long march away from the guns towards a new life in the abandoned countryside. Unfortunately she died on the way to her hometown leaving him alone in an anarchic world of brutal roving armies.

He was tracked down and locked up as a collaborator with the rural guerrillas time and gain. He couldn't bear confinement and escaped because he had determined to live with dignity. Unfortunately his sweet dreams failed one after another. He was always suppressed, oppressed and exploited in every step of his life by the cruel government.

Michael K wanted to escape war and live in a peaceful manner in his old farm. As he reached there, he couldn't be acquainted with the circumstances. He had to remain as a unknown citizen there involving himself in some agricultural works. He busied himself planting pumpkin seeds in the farm. He had determined to live his life in that farm doing some productive works. He liked to be disconnected from the disorderly world because he wanted peace and the safety of his life. He did not like to

be threatened by the roving armies. He was the man having no political interest. He neither had expected that he would be benefited by means of any policy adopted. So, he went out doing his personal works like planting, looking after the sheep and others.. But he no more got satisfaction because the war followed him. The roving armies approached there and took him to the camp where he got tortures and misbehaves. The more he struggled to escape from the hand of the colonizers, the more he fell in a vicious circle of pain and suffering.

Michael K was economically bankrupt. He never took the pleasure of life in terms of wealth. He was brought up amidst scarcity. Due to lack of enough food, he followed a wealthy white lady as a result he was sexually harassed. The white lady made Michael K a tool to quench her sexual thirst. He was a poor man having no stand of his own. He did nothing for the coming generation. He was the man suppressed and oppressed by the colonial power.



## **Chapter- Four**

### **Colonial Power and Its Effects on Individual**

#### **Colonial Effect on Michael K**

Michael K got a long-term adverse effect due to colonial suppression in anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. He is the central character revolving around the fictional art. Although the country was declared an independent yet the colonial hangover was rampantly prevalent in the country. Because of this reason, the native people no longer could escape from political, social and economic effects.

Colonialism brought organized system of government and law to many territories. The colonial power gradually built up administrative systems based on European systems of government. Gradually many colonial peoples became accustomed to regarding their territory as a separate country, distinct from neighbouring territories. In such territories, new leaders came forward. They were influenced by the European ideas. They had the knowledge and confidence to rule their own territories.

Michael K had got a severe political effect in his personal life. He had been brought up during the apartheid era. Apartheid legislation classified South Africa's inhabitants and visitors into racial groups. And after this, they separated people using this arbitrary and unscientific classification allocating grossly unequal civil rights.

The colonial government paralyzed the life of Michael K by introducing a system of pass law in the cape colony and Natal during the period. Such laws were passed not only to restrict the movement of the black into these areas but also to prohibit their movement from one district to another without a signed pass. Blacks were not allowed onto the street of towns in the cape colony and Natal after dark and had to carry their passes at all times. Those passes couldn't be achieved by the blacks

by easy means because they (the whites) thought that granting passport was a privilege not a right. Because of this reason, Michael K while going to his hometown did not get a permit as a result he suffered even in an emergency state.

Michael K from the very beginning of the novel followed the path set by the government. He was unable to get proper education, medical care and other public services because the government segregated such facilities with inferior standard for the black. They were not permitted to enter in the school intended for the whites. Likewise beaches, schools, universities, parks, restaurants, shops and even post offices were segregated for the particular race. So it was hard to run the life in a joyous manner for the blacks like Michael K.

Michael K underwent through identity crisis since his hometown was ruptured by the colonial power. Michael K was even not allowed to settle in his hometown that's why his fundamental rights and duties were seized. He was accused of involving in some illegal acts such as feeding the guerrillas who were supposed to be the inferior class by the colonizers.

Likewise, there were many social effects hampering the life of Michael K. Since the time of colonialism, it has changed the way of life of millions of people like him. Many natives were displaced for the safety of their life. Michael K too, happened to settle in Sea Point with his mother. He had a troublesome time during his stay in the town. He received certain education and trainings in the schools established by the colonial powers or by missionary societies. By living and working with the settlers, Michael K became acquainted with European ideas and thoughts but he was not happy in his new surrounding. He had a sense of insecurity as a result of the change in his way of life.

Conflict between the colonial people and the settlers resulted from their attitude towards each other. Many settlers believed that they were doing the colonial people a service by developing the territory until the colonial people themselves were fit to assume this responsibility. Many colonial people believed that the settlers were intruders in their country who were oppressing them.

Michael K was physically a lonely figure having some trainings with other afflicted and unfortunate children. After he returned back from the city to his home town, he was no more recognized by the people. He felt alone among the people as he, too did not recognize others. "Mr. Vosloo or Mr. Visser who was a farmer long ago, that is who I am looking for. I don't know the name for sure, but if I find the farm I will recognize it." (50)

Michael K was different from a normal social man. He has gone a long journey of his life in the company of his mother and other certain people. He hadn't got many friends. During his life he had no sense of passion towards any girls. He neither talked to any girls nor had he any girl friends. He was a simpleton with no idea around the world. His most and the basic thirst was his simple living.

He replied: 'I am what I am. I was never a great one for the girls'. I felt like eating him that, never mind the girls, he would find it easier to get along if he could talk like everyone else; but said nothing, not wanting to hurt him. (131)

Michael K was regarded as a distinct figure from other detainees in the concentration camp. He became a special person making them offer a typical attention towards him.

We can see scores of examples displaying the economic effect of colonialism on the character Michael K. Being a black, he has been barred in every prestigious job. He is the character from poor economic background. He has gone to Prince

Albert from Sea Point in search of work. He worked as a gardener there. He even lacked the basic needs. "In the middle of the night he woke chilled to the bone. Unable to sleep, unable to leave because of the curfew, he sat shivering on the chair till daylight while his mother groaned and snored." (7)

Colonialism also had some ill-effects on the economy of colonial territories i.e. Michael K's hometown. It has been believed that the colonial power had consumed a vast amount of natural resources and other possibilities as a result Michael K couldn't succeed in life. He became penniless. During his journey to his hometown, he did not seem that he had moderate amount of money. He was in the scarcity of money. He had his mother with him whom he had to feed and look after. He was troubled time and again.

If they fell into that sea of hungry months, K thought, what chance would he and his mother have? How long could he push her around the streets in a wheelbarrow begging for food. He wandered aimlessly all day, and returned to the room sunk in gloom. (14)

Michael K became the victim of sexual abuse toward the later part of the novel. He was overwhelmed by the white lady's meagre sandwich. He followed her because of his hunger. She satisfied her sexual desire by forcing him. The person who neither talked with the opposite gender became a white's prey because of the economic effect of colonialism.

### **Sense of Alienation**

Alienation refers to a position of estrangement of individual either from the society or culture. The very word has its conceptual and teleological meaning in Marxism especially in Karl Marx's writing. But today, it has been very widely used to denote the cultural estrangement under which the individual feels loss of their root

and cultural belongings. In this sense the term is applied psychologically to comprise the dimension of powerlessness, isolation, normallessness and self-estrangement. It is the state of being isolated in the newly located land. It is the culture and social estrangement under which the individual feels a loss of the cultural belongings. The situation of dislocation and displacement in the alien cultural ground gives the sense of being alienated. Thus, alienation is the negative result of migrating to the unknown territory.

The dislocation and displacement of the individual give the sense of alienation. Diaspora does the same because the diasporic subject also feels the same loss of culture and loss of dignity. Alienation is the state whereby individual experience being stultified in the alien culture and society. Desertion and isolation surrounds individual in the unknown land and culture to which individual can not escape. It becomes the fate of individual to live the life of solitariness and isolation in the alien culture, with the sense of alienation and discrimination among the weirdoes.

Here, too, the central character Michael K and his mother Anna K are forced to leave the dwelling place where they had been accustomed to. Due to unrest in Cape Town, they had to give up the place in search of a secure place. The plight of these two characters, both of whom are physically disabled, gets worse as they find themselves without a secure home or income in a South Africa torn apart by civil war. A dream of a better life in the country motivates their decision to leave the city behind. Their tortuous journey out of Cape Town (Michael K pushes his mother in a wheel barrow) offers little sign of liberation or escape. Michael K's mother dies, along with the dream they shared, long before they reach the dreamed of destination.

Due to his estrangement of his culture and civilization, he becomes powerless and isolated from the South African territory as a result he becomes an alien figure among the mob. He loses every cultural belongings.

Michael K is culturally, socially and socio-psychologically situated on the periphery of a more dominant group. Being a black he can't make himself involve in the mainstream governmental affair of South Africa. He is always pushed from one place to another as a result he is never attached with certain culture. He is always an alien figure.

As Michael K fails to attain his culture and root, he roams hither and thither in a frustrated mood. He no longer gets his identity. He becomes a marginal man. Everett H. Stonequist writes "The marginal man is the one who leaves one's social group and culture. He is unable to fully adjust to new group or culture. He always remains on margin of both and considers himself of not belonging to either of the cultures. He also notices contradictions and hypocrisies in the dominant culture" (18). The collapse of the foundations of social, cultural, political and economic life, their simplification, evident lawlessness and uncertainty contribute to the display of mass marginal phenomena. In some sense, marginalization becomes one of the main characteristics feature during colonial suppression, oppression and subjugation. This is the reason why Michael K feels alien even in his own territory in the novel *Life & Times of Michael K*.

## Chapter- Five

### Conclusion

J. M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* has become a brilliant classical manifesto having abundant ideas regarding colonial activities in the sphere of history in South Africa. The novel has occupied a glorious position not only in South Africa but also throughout the world with its Booker Prize in 1983.

In the novel, Coetzee has reflected a site of the colonial and imperial attack in South African grain. The writer succeeds in portraying a horrific picture on how the colonizers were able to encroach the colonial power to try to ruin and demolish the South African culture, nationality and social identity. Coetzee has done this by creating an imaginative character Michael K ( a representative of South Africa as a whole) who is embroiled in the turmoil of war, violence etc. The writer exposes the hardships and sufferings of an individual. The condition of civil war had caused individual suffering. The very fact hints on the trauma of a common man, Michael K, who suffers the predicament of his life due to the lack of broad knowledge and inability to comprehend the ongoing socio-political reality exposed before him. He becomes a mere victim as he can not resist the opposing forces such as restriction, confinement, suppression, oppression, domination, exploitation, subjugation and so on. The textuality of the text has widely covered the geographical, socio-political and economical issue rampantly affecting and influencing life of the common people.

Coetzee not only wants to show the then political and cultural circumstance of South Africa but also shows the reflection of the site of rigorous, social, economical and other opposing forces that try to ruin individual life. The colonizers seize the fundamental rights such as right to equality, right to freedom, press and publication right, right regarding criminal justice, right against preventive detention, right to

information, right to property, cultural and educational rights, right against exploitation, right against exile, right to privacy in totality of the South African native dwellers.

Despite Michael K's search for the origin, passion for culture, resistance to all opposing forces, he is grieved a lot from the hand of the colonizers which is highlighted in the novel *Life & Times of Michael K*. No matter how much he strives, he is caught in a vicious circle of pain and suffering.

Michael K is even prevented from going back to his own culture as a result his mother Anna K dies en route to Prince Albert. She was the victim of dropsy which was caused because of the unsuitable environment due to the imposition of colonial power. And so, she was left disordered even at the hospital. Though Michael K reaches his native town yet he can not settle in his farm. He is always in a state of fear and chaos due to colonial oppression during the apartheid era.

Similarly, Michael K is physically feeble to resist the encroachment of all the opposing forces from the very beginning. He very often loses his confidence during the severe hard struggle. Michael K can not take his stand as he is not granted a pass/permit. He can not struggle against all the opposing forces rather he remains a mute listener. He is submerged in the life of alienation, domination and scarcity. Eating once a day, sleeping under culvert and drinking dews are the moments of his existential crisis.

Likewise, the originality of resistance is seen in Michael K triggered by the passion of culture. But he surrenders before every sort of opposing forces that try to destroy his culture and ruin his life. He gives up his desire to attain his goal. He never establishes his identity rather escapes from the imposition of imprisonment of colonial



restriction and confinements. Coetzee, here highlights Michael K as a failure figure in true sense.

Moreover, Michael K is a homeless, family less and penniless figure. After the death of his mother he has no kiths and kin. He is absolutely a solitary figure. Homelessness and joblessness are also the equally burning problems that Michael k faces. Such situations, of course, bring the moment of solitariness and fragmentation. Even in such moment of grief and sorrow he is not assisted by the colonial administration. But he is tortured time and again. It is because the colonial people did not want him to set free either physically or psychologically.

Coetzee makes Michael K to realize that survival is never a peaceful acquisition because it is always under chaos and confusion. Michael K is embroiled in the turmoil which fragments him. He neither can achieve solace from the people around him nor with the government established. He wants to get relief with some other artificial means but it is not long-lasting. The idea of joke at the time of crisis inspires him to continue the life as a gardener. Michael K makes his choice of life but the choice is not to create the meaning and unity rather to preserve his survival. His choice as a gardener is his ultimate compulsion. He gets no alternative profession to run his life. Most of the blacks like Michael K get the job in such sector. But gardening sprouts the germ of hope and optimism amidst fragmentation, scarcity and problem.

Coetzee has presented other textual evidences to present the grim human living condition. Michael K even doesn't feel secured from the hand of the colonizers. He conceives eventual traumas and sufferings during the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Michael K strives to preserve his sweet dream and strong desire amidst the violence and unrest but fails in this regard. He is always oppressed by the

colonizing power physically, socially, economically and even psychologically. That's why he never succeeds in his life.

Thus, J.M. Coetzee has illuminated suppression, oppression and fragmentation of the central character Michael K due to colonial reason throughout the text *Life & Times of Michael K* by showing the various evidences in the text. Coetzee manifests that the whole native South African people like Michael K, culture and society was exploited during the anti-apartheid movement. The native people had to suffer a lot during the colonial era. The voice of the blacks was not heard rather they were segregated from the mainstream there. They never tried to understand the feeling and sentiment of the native people. They always involved in paralyzing and crippling the normal life of the individual from every sector. To illustrate the idea, J.M. Coetzee has explored an imaginative figure named Michael K and presented him before us. He was ill treated by the military forces and other people who were popularly known as the whites. They seemed active in crippling the life of the native people. Here, he means to say that like other natives, Michael K was made a victim of colonial oppression.

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