

Family and race in a raisin in the sun

Dhaygude Kakasaheb Dhondiba

Department of English Sant Ramdas Arts, Commerce & Science College, Ghansawangi, Maharashtra, India

Abstract

Aspirations and dreams are the major forces that provide meaning to human life, it is the driving force that pushes human being to achieve novelty, when a person finds his or her inability to materialize the dreams in ones land, migrates to another land. The African migrants frustrated with the ignoble conditions of their native land, move towards European and American countries for better opportunities. These people were terribly shocked when they found that so-called liberal countries and their people do not accept them. Lorraine Hansberry through her works shed light on the dark aspects of liberal world where the blacks have to struggle for survival; this paper presents racial discrimination presented in the works of Lorraine Hansberry.

Keywords: colour, discrimination, dream and segregation etc

Introduction

African writers echo the various atrocities and injustice caused by the colour of the skin of their countrymen; their works are replete with the subjugation as well as the vehement protest of their brethren against racist invaders. African communities are victims of hatred, exploitation, discrimination, detestation and racial marginalization. The indigenous race is despised, blamed and heaped all sorts of deformities on them only because of the colour of their skin. There are various phases of racism; the worst form of racial segregation is the utter disrespect towards other races which culminates into the annihilation of weaker races. It sometimes results into the extinction of the unprepared human races. The genesis of racial superiority can be traced into human mind which considers its race as superior and other inferior and effeminate. The racial foundation is based on unscientific and logical grounds; it is the psyche of the prejudiced mind that attempts to assert its ascendancy by frightening and subjugating and in extreme cases exterminating the opponents whom he or she considers as unequal or superior or a potential threat to its dominance. It is the sense of persistent anxiety and suspicion that engender feelings of distrust towards other culture and civilization. Even after attaining ascendancy, the dominant group because of insecurity and to maintain its hegemony creates an exaggerated image of the threats. There are numerous consequences of racism on human beings, the racial prejudice sediments the social structure and prepares stereotype images and dogmas about the other traces, the prejudiced thinking infects the races and it passes from one generation to the other. The racial embitterment not only infects illiterates but the civilized and well educated people also are seen as the victims of the biased attitude. Even the literary output and its practitioner's are not away from racism, their views are also subjective and their minds are filled with stereotype images of other races, this happens particularly in case of African coloured populous and their literary persons. Even the black artists like their black countrymen are subjected to subsidiary treatment and denied due recognition. The well-known Afro-American female playwright, Lorraine Vivian Hansberry presents through the

major works like *A Raisin in the Sun* and *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*. Within a short period of lifespan who succumbs to pancreatic cancer and left this planet at a mere age of 36 years, a prospective career has met a tragic death, presents the futility of black people's dreams and the resistance from the dominant white community which never allows the coloured populous in their closet circles. Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun* is one of the finest dramatic performances, which is the first play of an African American woman that saw the Broadway floor. at the mere age of 29 Hansberry becomes the recipient of numerous prestigious recognitions and awards like New York drama critics circle award, a literary output consists of many works like *On Summer*, *The Drinking Gourd*, *What Use Are Flowers?*, *The Arrival of Mr. Todog*, and *The Movement: Documentary of a Struggle for Equality*.

As a child Lorraine enjoyed comparative luxurious life and she is from a good family; a daughter of a prosperous real estate broker August Hansberry and mother Nanny Lucy, a school teacher. As the brunts of racial discrimination she has experienced from her childhood, as her father who bought residence in the white majority residential complex which was strongly opposed by the racist whites, which prompted her father to sue the white people, it was a prolonged battle for the rights of blacks and it also indicates the determination on the part of the blacks to protect their rights. Her father never deterred by the anger of the dominant white majority and he won knocked the doors of US Federal Court. Although he got relief from the racist discrimination but the deep rooted prejudice against the coloured mass is never withered.

Lorraine follows her father by voicing against the atrocities and worked for the rights of blacks, she believes that Afro-Americans should not rest or idle as they have to struggle for the rights and their struggle should be organised one, she not only contests for the rights of black people in United States but also calls for all African people to smash the cycles of slavery, unless and until their own native lands are free from colonial exploitation the never enjoy rights in the adopted lands. Even the migrated Africans never take a free breath even in the adopted lands; their assimilation and

surrender towards the whims of the new people and their land never assure them a free place. Through her writing she supports the different struggle for independence of African continent, while exposing the white subjugation tactics she says that the dominants use every means; fair as well as foul to weaken and enslave the Negroes. Even she doesn't spare the so-called liberal intellectuals, she says that these people instead of blaming the means of black people for protesting against their injustice, they must accept the reality as the people who are trampled down from generations have no option.

A Raisin in the Sun is a real picture of American aspirations and dreams, like most of the migrants the protagonist of the drama Lena who is addressed by her family as Mama has a dream of her own home, almost all the migrants from African left their country in search of better prospects, opportunities and livelihood in Europe as well as America. The unending poverty, colonial exploitation and the suffocating traditional ways, Africans were frustrated and in an effort to get reprieve from these they moved towards the land of their new dreams. Lena's son Walter who has been working as a driver, as most of the migrants in the migrated lands gets low profile job and the job fetch him mere income, it is natural for human being for experienced the pangs of poverty and experiencing luxury in the new land, wants himself or herself to taste the comforts of life of the new land. Walter like other coloured immigrants despises of his current assignment, wants to be rich and it is also quickly, as his patience wreaked, Beneatha, daughter of Leena and sister to Walter, a modern girl who wants to assert her individuality. She realises the importance of education, and eager to be a medical practitioner so that she will get recognition and dignity in society. Every dramatic Persona in this play has some dreams and the dreams are associated with their urge for identity and self respect. All these dreams were suddenly sprouted by the insurance check of Mama's deceased husband. Before the arrival of cheque of \$10,000 everybody plans him but it was not germinated. Mama wants to materialize her deceased husband's dream of her home.

Lorraine Hansberry's portrayal of the conditions of their livelihood and the apartment in which they have been living, as six persons are living in a two bed apartment with sharing toilet and bathroom, it symbolizes the wretched conditions of the Negroes who left their land in search of better livelihood in the new land but their dreams were also shattered in their dreamland. Most of them have to face bitter conditions than their own country, as Mama wants to purchase a new spacious home where she and her family is free from the anxieties of life and receive some sort of dignity and where her grandson will enjoy while playing in the lawn and she will witness his beautiful childhood. Mama thinks that her as well as Walter's childhood is spent in poverty, she doesn't want her grandson's childhood will meet the same fate. Walter a limousine driver is fed up with his present life, as he wants to be rich so that he and his family enjoy luxuries of American livelihood. His wife Ruth, a symbol of traditional women follows her husband's footsteps in good and bad times and never complains. Walter wants the money to open liquor shop for better livelihood, Mama's reluctance towards Walter's move shows the credulity of woman who abhors investing her husband's money in alcoholic enterprises which harms human health as well as against spiritual tenets.

Like most of the dreams of migrants Walter's dream also do not fructify as he chooses wrong persons and handover the sum to Bobo and Willy who deceive and abscond, leaving Water's dream unfinished. The younger family's dreams of their own home, mama makes installment for a new home in the white majority residential areas, when the whites come to know the arrival of blacks as their neighbor, as they couldn't digest blacks presence, they send their representative; Karl Leader who offers more lucrative price for the Younger's recently bought home to ward off their entry into the white area. The attempts made by the white community shows that the racial prejudice is so deeply rooted in the minds that the whites never allow the blacks as their neighbor, as they felt the mere presence of the blacks as polluting.

Walter was in a position to accept the deal to avoid future clashes with the white neighbours, Hansberry says the survival attitude of black man who easily succumbs to the forces of intimidation. There are also persons like George Murchison, who is boyfriend of Lena's daughter Beneatha, although a black but totally accepts all the norms and livelihood patterns of the new adopted land, a wealthy and educated man but never bothers about the pecuniary problems of his sweetheart's family. Through George Murchison Hansberry presents the new sham assimilated class of coloured populous who ignore the sufferings of their own people. Even this class moves to such an extent that it despises its past. Beneatha is the mouthpiece of Lorraine Hansberry who never accepts the ways of George in annihilating one's culture; she finds respite in through education. Instead she follows Joseph who is proud of his heritage and also acquaints her with African culture.

Conclusion

Lorraine Hansberry through her work *A Raisin in the Sun* presents the picture of racial discrimination, hopes, aspirations and dreams of Afro Americans as well as the assimilated class of her own people who feel proud in despising one's culture and embraces the alien values that have devastated lives of their countrymen.

References

1. Abell Joy L. "Lorraine Hansberry's *Les Blancs* and the American Civil Rights Movement." *African American Review* Print, 2001, 459-470.
2. Hansberry Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun* New York: Vintage Print. *To Be Young, Gifted and Black: Lorraine Hansberry in Her Own Words*, 1994.
3. Harris, Abram. *The Negro as Capitalist: A Study of Banking and Business among American Negroes*. Philadelphia: The American Academy of Political and Social Science Print, 1936.
4. Henderson, George. *Ethnicity and Race: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Brownwell Print, 1967.