

Chapter VII

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Summation

South African Literature mirrored the changes that happened in the society before and after colonisation. South African writers presented the reality and the political happenings in the society. Hence, the writers were imprisoned for portraying the cruelty of colonisation and the problem of the native people. But after the arrival of writers like Nadine Gordimer and J.M.Coetzee South African Literature is viewed in a different perspective. J.M.Coetzee is a strong critique of apartheid. His humanistic attitude inspired him to write about colonialism and its impact. J.M.Coetzee's novels are powerful tools in portraying social evils. "Coetzee's novels are both realistic and allegorical, the losses they chart are, simultaneously or alternatively, personal, political, metaphysical, and cultural, and they are suffered without grandeur" (Janes 104).

During colonisation, the native people were victimised by the colonisers. The native men worked in the farms and industries owned by the whites. Women did household work in the houses of white people and the children were also employed for various works. The native people became bonded labourers and slaves. Rules of apartheid were very strict and it restricted the freedom of the natives. The colonisers have intruded into the lives of the native people and have completely erased their native culture. As the government was run by the colonial people, power was vested upon the colonisers. They ruled the country and suppressed the others. The police and the army were given utmost power. The government had complete power to suppress the native people who

rose against the oppressive measures. They arrested and shot the native people who violated the rule of apartheid imposed by the colonisers.

The police, the courts, the prisons; but also the army, which (the proletariat has paid for this experience with its blood) intervenes directly as a supplementary repressive force in the last instance, when the police and its specialized auxiliary corps are 'outrun by events'; and above this ensemble, the head of State, the government and the administration.

(Althusser 137)

Revolution in the society happened due to literature that highlighted about the problems faced by the people. J.M.Coetzee has sketched the picture of the colonised South Africa through his novels to inform the world the untold miseries of the colonised. “Coetzee remains outside his fictions; the illusion is that they write themselves through him, and they take their place in the world on their own terms without support from or reference to their creator” (Morphet 383).

Atrocities of the colonisers are stoically depicted in the novels like *Life and Times of Michael K*, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Age of Iron* and *In the Heart of the Country*. During the 1990's, J.M.Coetzee's novels written about South Africa paved way for the transformation in the society. His novels were received with good acclaim all over the world. “JC earns our respect not simply because of the content of his strong opinions, but because of the honesty with which he faces up to his stumbling efforts to live through what he recognizes to be the end of his life. As readers, we are familiar with the novelistic technique of embedding a moral argument in a larger human drama” (Lear 83).

As a versatile author, J.M.Coetzee has bravely depicted the inequality and discrimination that prevailed in South Africa. His novels give a bird's eye view of the horrors of apartheid, racial discrimination, economic instability, civil- war and the neurosis of the victims. J.M.Coetzee vehemently condemns the dominating attitude of the colonisers. He speaks on behalf of the marginalized people.

Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonised is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. (Fanon, *Black Skin* 09)

J.M.Coetzee's novels depict the brutalities and racial discrimination which was predominant in South Africa during the period of apartheid. Among the sufferers the most affected were women and the poor people. The people of South Africa were reduced “to a state of dispossession and deprivation not only of the land but also of their essential traditions, preserved by them over the ages” (Parvathy 71). The colonisers controlled the wealth and also the culture of the colonised people. They also underestimated the history, religion, art and culture of the native people.

The colonisers inflicted violence upon the colonised for self defence. They employ violence on the colonised people because through violence they suppressed and conquered the land. The native people were helpless and were denied their rights to live in their homeland. Certain areas in the city like Cape Town were meant only for the white people to dwell. The native people were forbidden to enter the residential areas where white

people lived. The native people fought to attain freedom. They disliked being called colonised and being treated with contempt.

The black man wants the objectifying confrontation with otherness; in the colonial psyche there is an unconscious disavowal of the negating, splitting moment of desire. The place of the other must not be imaged, as Fanon sometimes suggests, as a fixed phenomenological point opposed to the self, that represents a culturally alien consciousness. The other must be seen as the necessary negation of a primordial identity – cultural or psychic – that introduces the system of differentiation which enables the cultural to be signified as a linguistic, symbolic, historic reality. (Bhabha 51-52)

The native people were ready to face any kind of hardships to achieve freedom. “Dignity is not located in seeking equality with the white man and his civilization: it is not about assuming the attitudes of the master who has allowed his slaves to eat at his table. It is about being oneself with all the multiplicities, systems and contradictions of one’s own ways of being, doing and knowing” (Fanon, *Black Skin* 07). J.M.Coetzee depicts the necessity of equality and dignity for all citizens through his writings. His aim is to develop a nation which is free from apartheid. He wanted the people to treat their fellow human beings with dignity and love.

Most of J.M.Coetzee’s characters are passive and non-co-operative but few characters like Michael K practised non-violent resistance as they were unable to bear the atrocities committed by the colonisers. Earlier, they silently witnessed and accepted the cruelty done to them. Later they became stubborn and demanded their freedom.

The violence which they have witnessed and experienced gave them utmost strength and

confidence to withstand humiliation. Important aspect of J.M.Coetzee's characters is that they don't expect others to sympathise with them. Many of them are introverts and they possess strong will power. "A fine-tuned understanding of the brutalities of life under colonialism and apartheid, together with a self-consciousness that articulates the prevailing cultural rules and conditions, the codes of its own practice, have made Coetzee the writer he is" (Attwell 223).

J.M.Coetzee, in *Life and Times of Michael K*, brings to limelight the problems faced by a man of slow-wit in the civil-war torn African society. *Waiting for the Barbarians* depicts the cruelties imposed by the Empire on its native people. *Age of Iron* deals with the theme of compassion and the problem of apartheid. *In the Heart of the Country* he describes the reversal of roles among the master/servant relationship and the patriarchal domination. In *Disgrace*, J.M.Coetzee has portrayed the victim versus the victimizer syndrome.

One of the hallmarks of J.M.Coetzee's literary career has been a peculiar combination of forthright critique and sinuous exploration- the corrosive confrontation with foundational institutions such as colonialism, for instance, combined with a palpable indirection in his characters' stories, his narrative delivery, and also his public persona. (Barney 17)

The native people were forced to do hard labour like clearing the railway track which was destroyed due to land slide and they were also not allowed to live in their own houses, separate camps were there and the native people were made to stay in the camps only. The colonisers treated the native people as untouchables and feared that they will breed new diseases. They were prohibited from using the public transport system. Even

in the hospitals they were treated worse than animals. In *Life and Times of Michael K*, Michael K's mother was not given proper attention by the doctors. Even Michael K was not given any information about his mother's death. They burnt her body and gave him only the ashes.

Michael K was forced to stay in the rehabilitation camps. The agony of the people in the camp is depicted by J.M.Coetzee in a vivid manner. Poor sanitation, lack of medical facility, insufficiency of doctors, drinking water, small partitions to stay and insufficient food, etc. are the features of rehabilitation camp. People who try to escape or who refuse to stay in the camp are shot dead on the spot. Hence, people passively accepted the injustice done to them. Michael K successfully escapes from the camps twice because he does not want to live under such inhumane conditions.

Through Michael K's character J.M.Coetzee brings out the importance of freedom. Though Michael K is a man of slow wit, his strong determination and will power to escape these atrocities insists the necessity of human beings to be treated with dignity. Michael K opposes the oppressive system by means of non-co-operation. In the camp hospital he refuses to eat the food which they provided and he avoids medical treatment. Michael K's philosophy of life is entirely different from others. He is a gardener by profession; he cultivates the land as well as his mind. He lives a simple life and eats whatever he cultivates. Michael K does not possess any zest for life but strives to maintain independence.

Instead of the simple, hare-lipped, coloured protagonist of Coetzee's novel *Life & Times of Michael K* being understood as the vulnerable outcast trying to survive the devastated landscape of apartheid's death throes, K is

identified as a Derridean trace, a signifier that is related only arbitrarily to a referent. The tighter Coetzee ties his ethics to the biology of all of us living in a body, the more determined is the discursive turn to ignore the suffering body. (Chapman 63)

During the colonial regime the rights of the native people were restricted; if they try to express their feelings either by protest or by strike they were punished severely. The native people were killed ruthlessly for no reason. The soldiers were given utmost power to torture anyone who violates the rules of the Empire. The poor fisher folk in *Waiting for the Barbarians* were tortured and confined by the soldiers. The fisher folk considered to be the barbarians are metaphors of the native South Africans. The ruthlessness of the Empire is depicted through the suffering of the oppressed characters. The barbarian people uprooted from their native land were tied by wire which runs from their cheeks to hands. They were not given food and place to stay. Men were made to stand naked in front of the town people. Colonel Joll accuses them as enemies of the Empire. “The kneeling prisoners bend side by side over a long heavy pole. A cord runs from the loop of wire through the first man’s mouth, under the pole, up to the second man’s loop, back under the pole, up to the third loop, under the pole, through the fourth loop” (WB 115). J.M.Coetzee focuses upon the brutality that the colonisers enforced on the colonised people.

The Magistrate wants to safeguard the lives of the poor native people. But his duty is to maintain law and order in the town and arrest the people who act against the Empire. Though being a white man, the Magistrate steps down from his position and offers a place of abode for a barbarian girl. The barbarian girl was tortured by the Colonel and his men brutally. “The equation of the scars on her body with signs implies that

Empire has written itself on her body, inscribed her with an identity. When the Magistrate massages the girl, he is trying to see what the identity of 'barbarian,' which Empire has assigned her, occludes" (Marais, *Versions of Hospitality* 164). J.M.Coetzee has portrayed the character of the Magistrate as a symbol of self-sacrifice for he degrades himself in front of the town people. He was also given a women's dress to wear. He faced the consequence for being sympathetic towards the native people.

During a course of time the suppressed people became violent and they started to attack the colonisers. They demanded their rights and riots broke out in all parts of the country. The white people reaped the seeds of their domination. They were made to pay for the damages caused by them. But in this transition a few white people also suffered. Mrs. Elizabeth Curren, a white woman in *Age of Iron* was humiliated by the native people. Mrs.Curren lives an isolated life and suffers from cancer and it is a symbol for apartheid South Africa. As her cancer eats every bone in her body so also the colonisers' torture destroys each and every individual in the society.

J.M.Coetzee has written this novel in the epistolary form to give emphasis to the situation that prevailed in the colonised South Africa. She through the letter describes the social and political situation to her daughter. She feels happy that her daughter lives in a country where there is social harmony. Even though from the beginning of the novel, Mrs.Curren was helped by native people in her house, at one situation when she stepped out of her house she was harassed by a gang of native boys, they ill-treat and humiliate her. She sympathizes with the native people and they take her for granted. They use her car, house and money. "I was attacked by some children before you came. Attacked or violated or

explored, I don't know which. That is why I talk so strangely. They pushed a stick into my mouth, I still don't understand why. What pleasure could it have given them?" (AI 161).

Mrs.Curren grieves for the death of the native boys Bheki and John. From the beginning she advises Florence to take care of her son. But Florence wanted her son to take part in the revolutionary movement for obtaining freedom. After Bheki's death Mrs.Curren was shaken to the core. "...Mrs.Curren is an exceedingly sympathetic character: not only is she terminally ill, she is also fastidious in her desire to comprehend, and admit complicity in, the situation in South Africa's townships" (Mason 135).

Mrs.Curren abuses the political system for punishing the children who are innocent. Her mind was full of chaos and commotion and she always thought about the death of Bheki. Mrs.Curren was very sensitive to the lack of humanity in society. She trusted the native people like Mr.Vercueil, Florence and they also supported her in her hard times. Through Florence's family J.M.Coetzee states the situation of families of the oppressed in a colonised country. Florence worked as a housemaid to Mrs.Curren for earning money. Her husband lived in a faraway place and worked in a shop. They left their children in her sister's home. Everybody in the family were separated for making a livelihood. This depicts the economic problem that prevailed in a colonised country. Mrs.Curren paid them regularly for the work which they do. Few people like Mrs.Curren gave utmost freedom to their servants. Other white people treated the natives like slaves. Mrs.Curren treats Mr.Vercueil, a vagabond with utmost love and care. She also dies in the hands of Mr.Vercueil, a native man. J.M.Coetzee through this novel tries to establish that harmony will be restored between both the races in future.

In the Heart of the Country deals with male domination and female subjectivity. Magda, an unmarried white woman suffers in the hands of her father. Magda is not able to tolerate the immoral behaviour of her father. She is possessive of her father and she does not wish to see him with other women. Even though he dominates and ignores her she loved her father very much. J.M.Coetzee portrays the patriarchal discourse in this novel. Magda was often executing her father's orders, cooking and maintaining the house. Magda longed for her father's love. Even if she sat with him on the dining table he avoided conversations with her and concentrated on eating. He also brings in a new wife and later he indulges in an illicit affair with his servant's wife. So, she murders her father and later she is seduced by her servant Hendrik. At first Magda used her authority to dominate the servants. But after her father's death she is reduced from the position of a master to a slave. "Voiceless under the authority of her father, but in turn forced to inhabit the voice of authority when speaking to the servants" (Macaskill 450). Hendrik, the servant threatens and forces Magda to have sex. Here the white woman is abused by the native man for his own benefit. The servant when he is given a power misuses it and turns out to be the master. This novel reflects the condition of the dominant class which has become a minority during the years when apartheid is on the decline.

When Hendrik and Anna left the farm Magda due to loneliness started to lose her senses. She started to hear noises and to speak on her own. "I have uttered my life in my own voice throughout (what a consolation that is), I have chosen at every moment my own destiny, which is to die here in the petrified garden, behind locked gates, near my father's bones, in a space echoing with hymns I could have written but did not because (I thought) it was too easy" (HC 150). Magda is psychologically affected by the events

which happened around her. Alienation, loneliness, male chauvinism, master versus servant relationship, oppressor and the oppressed are the themes dealt in this novel.

J.M.Coetzee depicts the reversal of power in this novel.

In the Heart of the Country's narrative of a dysfunctional rural Afrikaans farming family that become embroiled in sexual relations across the colour line, culminating in the repeated forced sexual encounters between the narrator/protagonist Magda and the farm foreman, would have sat uncomfortably with the censors of the apartheid state in which such interracial contact and humiliation of a white woman was punishable under the Immorality Act. (Wittenberg 135)

The violence which they perpetrated boomeranged upon them. The suppressed natives took an upper hand over the people who tried to dominate them. They fought vigorously for their basic needs as well as for dignity and freedom to live in their homeland. Becoming a slave in their own homeland is a bitter reality which they had to digest. Even in the public places like hospitals, colleges, schools racial discrimination prevailed. *Disgrace* highlights racial discrimination prevalent in South Africa during post-apartheid era. Lurie, a fifty two year old white Professor seduces his student Melanie Issacs, a native girl. He uses her for his own pleasure and at last faces the consequences. Lurie is in a position of educating the young generation but he misuses his position and seduces a young girl who is of his daughter's age.

What there is must go into circulation, so that everyone can have a chance to be happy for a day. That is the theory; hold to the theory and to the comforts of theory. Not human evil, just a vast circulatory system, to whose workings

pity and terror are irrelevant. That is how one must see life in this country: in its schematic aspect. Otherwise one could go mad. (D 98)

Lurie's daughter Lucy was raped by three native men and as a result she is pregnant. And a white woman is made to give birth to a native man's baby. Lucy is made as a victim and the native man has become the victimiser. Here, the oppressor turns out to be the oppressed. Lucy is an example of an independent woman who managed to run a farm on her own. Even after the hardships she wanted to stay there and face the world as she is strong-willed. After his humiliation, Lurie seeks refuge in his daughter's farm. Lucy overcomes the trauma and continues to live in the farm. Her surrendering the farm to a native man is a symbolic of the post- apartheid South Africa where the natives hold the reign of power. Lurie's transformation also indicates the changing social scenario after apartheid.

The main character of the novel has to rely on countless "others" in the last phase of her life: an estranged daughter, a homeless intruder to her backyard, the young black boys involved in the social turmoil of South Africa of the mid-eighties. In her struggle to accept their otherness she realizes that it was produced by her own values in the first place, and that she can only accept it rationally, not emotionally. (Kato 378)

The oppressed people used violence as a tool to threaten white people. The colonisers employed violence on the natives to suppress them. Gradually the native took vigorous measures to regain their freedom and they started to threaten the colonisers. The native people sacrificed even their lives for the sake of their country's freedom. Irrespective of the race in the process of acquiring power, money and land people have become beasts.

J.M.Coetzee has set a benchmark in authentically depicting the hardships faced by the South African people due to colonisation and apartheid. J.M.Coetzee was born and brought up in South Africa, so he is aware of the social and political happenings and the environment which prevailed in a colonised country. He has analysed and understood the South African socio-political ethos in the right perspective. The unique feature of J.M.Coetzee's novels is that they give a deep insight into the social problems that prevailed in the country.

Even though other writers have dealt with the same concept, J.M.Coetzee's way of narration has conquered many readers around the globe. People read his novels not only for pleasure but for his brilliant style, realistic portrayal of the characters, setting, language and so on. J.M.Coetzee, in *Life and Times of Michael K*, has described the physical problem of Michael K in positive terms. He didn't mention his physical ailment implicitly. Michael K's physical disability is revealed as: "Because of his disfigurement and because his mind was not quick..." (LM 04). In all the novels, J.M.Coetzee has portrayed the protagonists as characters who inspite of their physical and psychological problems wanted to achieve freedom and equality in the society.

J.M.Coetzee has used variety of symbols to emphasize the happenings in the society. The Magistrate, in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, is interested in excavating the ruins. J.M.Coetzee uses phrases like "nowhere to nowhere" (WB 17) to describe his work. When he enquires the barbarian girl he identifies that the soldiers have blinded her eyes by using an iron throng. After undergoing humiliation under the hands of the soldiers the magistrate also notices the same kind of wound in his eye.

The magistrate uses almost identical tropes-the similes of a “grazing” caterpillar and a “fat caterpillar” -to give the impression that his wound is identical to the girl’s. In other words, he attempts to manipulate figurative language within narrative to claim an identification of his wounding by Empire with that of the girl. (Yeoh, Ethics, Truth-telling 338)

J.M.Coetzee’s usage of adjectives to describe a character is unique. In *Age of Iron*, the derelict Mr.Vercueil who occupies Mrs.Curren’s garden is described as “A horsy, weather- beaten face with the puffiness around the eyes of an alcoholic. Strange green eyes: unhealthy” (AI 06). J.M.Coetzee uses figurative languages like simile, metaphor, irony, symbol, etc to depict the real situation. This feature is regarded as an important aspect of J.M.Coetzee’s writing. This element stimulates the reader’s interest and also avoids monotony. J.M.Coetzee always gives the happenings of the colonised country implicitly such as; Apartheid, racial discrimination and the suffering of the people. In *Waiting for the Barbarians* the torture inflicted to the barbarian girl and her wounds is symbolic of the Empire which tries to prove its authority through violence.

In the Heart of the Country is an epistolary novel, the conclusion of the novel is ambiguous, there is an uncertainty that whether the events happen or the story is an imaginary one. Magda describes everything imaginarily because she is confined in her small bedroom. Initially she also dreams of murdering her father and his new wife. “The woman snaps upright in bed, glaring about her, drenched in blood, bewildered by the angry wheezing and spouting at her side” (HC 12).

J.M.Coetzee has given implied statements regarding the happenings in the colonised country. In *Disgrace*, David Lurie the protagonist is a Professor and he teaches

Communication course in a University. Students of all kinds of racial background attend the University. In the post-apartheid South Africa the student forum was active; they fought against the exploitation of Melanie by Professor Lurie. Thus, Lurie was stripped of his job and in Lucy's farm he thinks: "Two weeks ago he was in a classroom explaining to the bored youth of the country the distinction between *drink* and *drink up*, *burned* and *burnt*. The perfective, signifying an action carried through to its conclusion. How far away it all seems! I live, I have lived, I lived" (D 71). The students were very much aware of their rights. They came forward to organise awareness programmes and joined together to protest against human rights violation.

Disgrace does not lack for self-referential and allegorical elements, it subordinates them to the central tenet of realism- that the illusionistic surface remain unbroken- and deploys the tactics that contemporary realists frequently use to enhance the magic effect: present- tense narration, adding immediacy; free-indirect viewpoint, tethering the narrative loosely to the protagonist; and an accumulation of vivid details, serving to construct meaning and reinforce theme. (Hahn 176)

J.M.Coetzee's description of the characters is lively, crisp and simple. "Indeed, the deepest cognitive and epistemological issues in Coetzee's writing are seldom far removed from subtleties of grammatical tense, mood and aspect. This is a feature of Coetzee's work that has now been extensively recognized" (Crewe 27). J.M.Coetzee's narration always has layers of meaning. A reader has to read between the lines to infer multiple meanings. For instance the following passage from *Disgrace* reveals his style.

Scapegoating worked in practice while it had religious power behind it.

You loaded the sins of the city on the goat's back and drove it out, and the city was cleansed. It worked because everyone knew how to read the ritual, including the gods. Then the gods died, and all of a sudden you had to cleanse the city without divine help. Real actions were demanded instead of symbolism. The censor was born, in the Roman sense.

Watchfulness became the watchword: the watchfulness of all over all.

Purgation was replaced by the purge. (D 91)

Lurie says that moral codes of conduct were created to combat the social order. J.M.Coetzee gives utmost importance to the social order and he wants everyone to perform their role in the society perfectly. Through Lurie, the author tries to bring consequence of earlier sins committed. Lurie's stay in the farm results in his personal transformation and he tries to seek redemption for his past.

In spite of the physical deformations and psychological trauma, J.M.Coetzee's characters strive hard to achieve a dignified niche in the society. J.M.Coetzee has given equal importance to both the racial groups in his novels. During colonialism native people suffer but during post- colonialism it is the white people who suffer as they have become the minority.

J.M.Coetzee was influenced by the writers like Kafka and Beckett, which is evident in the ideas and thoughts reflected. *In the Heart of the Country* is an example for this. Magda invents stories and the novel is written as a first person monologue.

Coetzee enables the reader to remain abreast of a first-person narrator who is grappling with the events of the novel and, however imperfectly,

assessing and reassessing his own response to them in retrospect. And all this is made possible by that evolving, self-discovering process known as the present, with which the reader is all too familiar. (Harrison 81-82)

J.M.Coetzee has depicted social realism by portraying various social evils.

J.M.Coetzee is an anti-apartheid writer who promotes the necessity of humanism in his novels. He strives to achieve equality among mankind. J.M.Coetzee is appreciated as “an embattled hero of the margins” (McDonald 297). J.M.Coetzee’s protagonists either involve in silent protest like Michael K in *Life and Times of Michael K* or radically protest like Magda in *In the Heart of the Country*, who murders her father for indulging in affair with his native servant’s wife. The South Africans either colonised or the colonisers did not think of evading violence or shame but faced reality. They stand against injustice and fight vigorously for their freedom. They are very stubborn and determined towards achieving their goal. “Coetzee’s novels have been constructed in different ways by different audiences, and have thus been subjected to alternative and shifting aesthetic and political evaluations” (Barnett 289).

J.M.Coetzee examines the problem of identity crisis in his novels. In *Life and Times of Michael K*, Michael K searches for self identity and achieves it at the end of the novel. Magda in *In the Heart of the Country* feels cut off from the outside world.

J.M.Coetzee depicts the necessity of interdependency of slave and master, coloniser and colonised in South Africa.

Colonisation created economic instability in South Africa. Those who fought against the ruling government were sent to jail and were also murdered. In spite of all the

troubles the native people fought vigorously. Later, they started to impose violence upon the colonisers.

The violence which governed the ordering of the colonial world, which tirelessly punctuated the destruction of the indigenous social fabric, and demolished unchecked the systems of reference of the country's economy, lifestyles, and modes of dress, this same violence will be vindicated and appropriated when taking history into their own hands, the colonised swarm into the forbidden cities. (Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* 05-06)

Apartheid was banned when the situation went out of the hands of the colonisers. At one point the colonisers were not able to control the boycotts and riots. Hence, they vacated the country and moved to their homeland. After that few white people who stayed there surrendered their lands to the native people. The white people who stayed in South Africa lived in perpetual fear of being attacked by the natives. The native people took revenge for the cruelties which they had been subjected to in the past.

J.M.Coetzee in his later novels focus on the condition of the white people in decolonised South Africa. *In the Heart of the Country* and *Disgrace* are the novels based on this theme.

He is a white African in whose novels the country of apartheid and the post-colonial presence of South Africa are scrutinized in a clear and uncompromising light that makes sure no traces of injury and destruction can escape. He is a brilliant writer of prose who can be regarded as a rejuvenated version of an all-too known figure in world literature.

(Leusmann, *Cultural Critique* 60)

Most of the characters in his novels feel isolated from the society. *Life and Times of Michael K*, projects the protagonist Michael K who feels completely alienated from the outside world. He leaves the city and lives in an abandoned farm house and later in the mountains. He hates living with people in the camps. He even restricts his speech and remains silent throughout the novel. J.M.Coetzee has portrayed him as a character who wants to free himself from the hurdles of colonialism.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the magistrate feels himself cut off from the town people because he suffers humiliation under the hands of Colonel Joll and his men. He is treated like 'the other' because of his sympathy towards the marginalized. He is made to face humiliation because he wanted the barbarian girl to be united with her people. But after Colonel Joll and his men leave he takes his position as a magistrate and motivates the people to cultivate the land. This reflects his optimistic point of view of recovering after the ruthless trauma he has undergone.

Age of Iron depicts the story of a white woman Mrs. Elizabeth Curren, who leads an isolated life with the help of a native servant maid. Her daughter left South Africa and settled in America and she communicates with her through letters. She had no one to speak with and also to exchange her ideas. A native man comes to her rescue when she suffered from extreme pain due to cancer. She feels sympathy towards the native people and she also suffers humiliation in the hands of native boys. Mrs.Curren also feels jealous of her house maid for being surrounded by her children. She finds herself isolated in a colonised country.

Magda In *the Heart of the Country* finds herself alienated after her father's death in the farm. Magda, an old spinster lived an isolated life in a farm which is located in the

outskirts of South Africa. She occupies a small bedroom and envies her father for having affair with various women since Magda is not married. After murdering her father she is raped and neglected by the servant Hendrik. Magda leads a lonely life in the farm completely isolated from the society. This made her to loose her senses and she speaks to the invented sky gods at the end of the novel.

Disgrace depicts the life of Professor Lurie and his daughter Lucy. Lurie finds himself alienated from the society after his disgrace in the University. Everybody mocked at him and he leaves to her daughter's farm. Lucy leads a lonely life in the farm. She is an independent woman and passively accepts the injustice done to her. Both father and the daughter find themselves alienated in the foreign land and nobody comes to their rescue at the time of their hardship.

Thus the theme of alienation and isolation is repeated in most of his novels. His protagonists are victims of the social and political situation depicted in the novel. The events which happen around make them to react violently or to remain passive. Except in *Age of Iron* all the characters are passive. In *Age of Iron* the boys Bheki and John engage themselves violently in the revolutionary activities against apartheid. Characters like Michael K, the Magistrate, Mrs.Curren, Lucy are passive and tolerate the violence imposed upon them. They silently witness the violence and they oppose the system through non-co-operation.

The suffering of women and rape is also repeated in a few novels like *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *In the Heart of the Country* and *Disgrace*. The barbarian girl in the *Waiting for the Barbarians* is brutally humiliated by the soldiers. She is made to stand naked in front of her father and brother. She is also crippled, blinded and raped by the

soldiers. After that she is rescued by the magistrate and he also uses her for his own pleasure. The girl is symbolic of the cruelty meted out to the victims of the Empire. Magda, *In the Heart of the Country* is raped by the black servant Hendrik. Magda longs to be embraced and loved by Hendrik but her modesty is violated by the native man. The major similarity of the barbarian girl and Magda is their suffering under the hands of men. They both are physically and mentally tortured by men in various forms.

In *Disgrace*, Lurie seduces his student. Melanie is frightened as Lurie is her Professor. Lurie takes advantage of her frailty and finally she withdraws from her course. Melanie's dream of acquiring a university degree is shattered by Lurie. This old man and young girl relationship is repeated in many novels of J.M.Coetzee. *In the Heart of the Country*, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, etc portray this type of relationship.

White, male, and middle class, a university professor of literature at a Cape Town University, David has for most of his occupied a position of centrality in relation to the South African symbolic order-- a world of white patriarchal distinctions, rules and logic. In terms of characterization, David is the exact opposition of the protagonist of Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*. (Stratton 84)

Lucy's rape reflects the insecurity of white women in post-apartheid South Africa. She passively accepts her plight and she does not complain to the police; because she knows very well that white people who have become minority will not get justice in the decolonised country.

“The double oppression, social and sexual, of the woman cracks and is finally shattered; and its essential nature as the social oppression of the family as a whole is

revealed” (Fanon, *Dying Colonialism* 04). Irrespective of race, the brutality done to women is similar and they are made as victims in the apartheid as well as in post-apartheid society. Even though women like Lucy are independent violent perpetrators of racial prejudice changed their life. Women are dominated, suppressed, subjugated and made to live under the superiority of men.

It is not the leaders who struggle to get freedom in J.M.Coetzee’s novels; it is the ordinary, common men who struggle to get back their freedom and dignity. The author has used ordinary characters and they are made noble by the role they perform in the novel. J.M.Coetzee wanted to convey the harsh realities of colonisation and its impact on the society. So, he has deliberately avoided the exact details of the place, situation to give an universal appeal to his narrative.

To assert their superior status in society people belonging to a particular race started to employ violent measures to perpetuate racial discrimination. The innocent people are exploited in terms of economic, political and social means. Characters like Melanie in *Disgrace*, Anna in *In the Heart of the Country* are prone to sexual violence by the people of superior race. Even, white women like Magda and Lucy suffer the same in the hands of native men. Such injustice is the result of hatred and racial discrimination.

J.M.Coetzee depicts relationships between the coloniser and the colonised in his novels for instance the relationship between Mrs.Curren and Mr.Vercueil, between the Magistrate and the barbarian girl. The relationship is built out of compassion, responsibility and insists the importance to interdependence of both the races. J.M.Coetzee states that compassion is required for creating universal brotherhood. Thus, J.M.Coetzee’s message to the society is that in spite of racial difference every individual should be treated with dignity and love.

The work of literature or art is to portray the issues prevailing in the society. Through literature, writers create awareness among the reading public. J.M.Coetzee has succeeded in bringing out the trauma faced by the marginalized people in the society. J.M.Coetzee still produces fictions based on the trauma faced by the marginalized in alien lands. *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016) is the latest novel by the author. The novel has been short listed for the Man Booker Prize. This novel depicts the suffering of a small boy in a foreign land.

J.M.Coetzee's writings are widely read all around the world and recently a three day conference titled 'J.M.Coetzee in the World' was conducted in Australia to explore and honour the works written by the author. Theme of violence, fantasy and reality, exploring the self, theme of marginality and racial conflict are the thrust areas which has been explored regarding the research works concerning J.M.Coetzee's novels. Many research works are carried out worldwide on the fictions and the non fictions of J.M.Coetzee. Further scope of research on the works of J.M.Coetzee can be done in the themes like pragmatic approach, image of women, narrative techniques and post-modern perspectives. J.M.Coetzee's works always allure both the readers and the researchers all over the world.

J.M.Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for the authentic depiction of social reality in South Africa. J.M.Coetzee's dialogues are loaded with multiple interpretations and his novels are well crafted. He has used many literary devices like allegory, irony, satire, etc to show the real situation that prevailed in South Africa. He holds a unique place among the South African writers for he has brought out the socio- political turmoil which prevailed in a colonised country. "The unhomey moment

relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence” (Bhabha 11).

Due to colonisation the native people were refused their rights and were made as homeless destitutes. This suffering has made them mentally strong and they suffered physically by the rules imposed by the ruling government. Their struggle to renew their ownership of their land is beautifully depicted with metaphysical narratives in J.M.Coetzee’s novels. “Nobody reads Coetzee for “mere entertainment” or if they start out so, they soon drop the book altogether. He is one of the most widely discussed and taught contemporary writers” (Kato 374).

J.M.Coetzee exposed the realistic situation of South Africa during the colonial and the post-colonial period. Socio-political ethos turns topsy-turvy during post-colonial period, thus changing the hierarchical position existing between the dominating and subjugated races. J.M.Coetzee insists upon humanism and tries to imbibe the milk of human kindness among his readers with a vision to establish a just society where equality prevails. J.M.Coetzee stands as a testimony to the ethos of poetic justice as it is not a mere picture of society but arouses a warning signal to the future generation stating that a nation that forgets the tenets of universal brotherhood will be doomed. The only panacea for a nation divided on the basis of racial difference is to encompass humanity through compassion.

History taught the world how to respect human beings irrespective of social, economic and political background. J.M.Coetzee has very faithfully and honestly pictured both the dark and bright side of African Society and advocates to respect and honour each individual. To put it in a nutshell the universe will be blooming with smiling roses if we understand the value of life and assure dignity of every individual.