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## Post-Apartheid South Africa - Shifting Paradigms of Marginality in J. M. Coetzee's Disgrace

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### Abstract:

*Marginality is a valueless, lower and insufficient position of people offered by native government. In South Africa, it was of Blacks in apartheid while in post-apartheid, it occupies the white settlers. A kind of revenge or vengeance is hidden in the actions of black majority. The present novel is characterized by a bleak vision of Coetzee's racially divided homeland. We find that political change can do nothing to eliminate human misery. It chronicles the inner history of his country's transformation from racial dictatorship to a post-apartheid society.*

**Key words:** Marginality, Apartheid, post-apartheid, Disgrace, silence, isolation, identity

Life in South Africa is intolerable for a man of colour. South Africa is a country of great physical beauty but its soul is dead. The most notorious political fact of South African history is the Apartheid policy. It stands for the political system of racial segregation in South Africa, where the white minority discriminated against and politically marginalized the black majority for decades. Although the system of apartheid has vanished in 1994, it has left deep scars in South African Society that will take many years to heal. Disgrace takes place in South Africa, a country that for many years was ruled under a system of racial segregation called Apartheid. Apartheid, which in Afrikaans means, "Separateness," was a system held in place from 1948 until 1994. After 1994, the paradigmatic shift has been occurred which is labelled as Post-Apartheid. The white settlers have become the matter of target and lynching. The Present paper focuses on the same shift with various aspects of the concurrent political climate of South Africa.

First of all, the researcher will define 'marginality,' the word 'marginal,' simply means, small in size or importance or subsided, the Collins Dictionary meaning is as follows,

- pertaining to a margin.
- situated on the border or edge.
- at the outer or lower limits; minimal for requirements; almost insufficient: marginal subsistence; marginal ability.
- Minor and not important; not central.
- written or printed in the margin of a page: a marginal note.
- Sociologically, marginal is marked by contact with disparate cultures, and acquiring some but not all the traits or values common to any one of them.

From the above meanings, we find that marginality is a valueless, lower and insufficient position of people offered by native government. In South Africa, it was of Blacks in apartheid while in post-apartheid, it occupies the white settlers. A kind of revenge or vengeance is hidden in the actions of black majority. The present novel is characterized by a bleak vision of Coetzee's racially divided homeland. We find that political change can do nothing to eliminate human

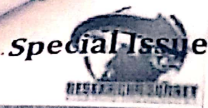
misery. It chronicles the inner history of his country's transformation from racial dictatorship to a post-apartheid society.

The identity is at the core or one of the important aspects of Marginality. The problem of white identity is a drastic paradigmatic shift in Post-Apartheid South Africa. Before it, the target was blacks. The identity is formed through the 'self' and 'other.' The problem of white identity and reversal role of identity are projected throughout the novel *Disgrace*. David Lurie, a white ageing professor of Romantic Literature, finds himself at odds with the new dispensation where old certainties are gone. In this new age, he is deprived of the privileges of the race. Once a Professor of Romantic poetry, now he is an adjunct Professor of communications, with the change in his institute, from Cape Town University to Cape Technical University. David falls short of the standards of the 'puritanical times' he lives in, as he refuses to issue a statement of confession and remorse though he is guilty in the charge of sexual harassment of his student Melanie Isaacs. As a result, he is banished from the university.

Hate is another structure of society which operates racial otherness and marginality. We find it on the attack on Lucy's smallholding and her rape. It is the manifestation of the economy of hate that operates in the structure of racial otherness. A white woman settler and small-scale farmer in the rural Eastern Cape, Lucy is the 'other' of Petrus and the majority black population settled there. The violence and rape in the smallholding is a man oeuvre to subjugate and eliminate her white female identity from the land of the majority of black male. In a situation where the white hegemony is slowly and inexorably replaced by black cruelty, David Lurie discovers that like the dogs in the Animal Welfare Clinic, all that is left at his disposal in his physical body, a shroud of flesh without transcendent meaning. Being a marginal, Lucy enunciates the lack of transcendent meaning when she tells to David,

"They are not going to lead me to a higher life, and the reason is, there is no higher life. This is the only life there is. Which we share it with animals. That's the example people like Bev try to set. That's the example I try to follow. To share our human privilege with the beasts. I don't want to come back in another existence as a dog or a pig and have to live as dogs or pigs live under us." (74)

Silence and Isolation are the attributes of marginality. Once they were manifestations of blacks but today in South Africa, they are signifiers of marginality. They signify marginal's struggle for survival, weakness, defeat and resignation, and cry for freedom. It speaks the structural relationship of oppressor/ oppressed or the power of an unuttered alterity to undermine a dominant discourse. Coetzee's perception of silence and isolation is reflected through Lucy in the novel, 'Silence,' in *Disgrace* stands for marginality which indicates defeat and weakness. In the second half of the novel, it deals with the issue of sexual violence on Lucy done by black rapists and 'silence' kept by Lucy herself. Lucy and her father, David were attacked by three black men, and Lucy was sexually assaulted. Her life was shattered. After this wake of the outrages committed against him and his daughter, David demands for justice, but he does not get response from the overstretched police. Both felt insecure and thought on different levels how to face the situation. The rape made Lucy frustrated, silent and isolated. She became fearful that she might have venereal infection of HIV. The memories of rape haunt her so terribly. She wants to avoid each moment and everything. It indicates her weakness and defeat. So, in order to protect herself and her simple way of life, Lucy consents to become the third wife in her neighbour's polygamous family even though he may have arranged the attack on her in order to gain her



property. Here, her decision to marry with Petrus and to keep child points out her scarification for peace, and reflects the uncertainty of post-apartheid South Africa where 'all values are shifting.' It also indicates the efforts of white settlers (minority) to survive in the majority of black.

When we consider the title of the novel, Disgrace, it indicates the plight of marginality. The word 'disgrace' means – a loss of reputation, or doesn't sound too pleasant. A loss of reputation is the loss of white settlers' position in post –apartheid South Africa which is represented by David Lurie and Lucy. E.g. David Lurie and Lucy experience disgrace in many ways. His banishment from the university and his daughter Lucy's painful condition of rape in a brutal and abusive way are signifiers of disgrace.

In a nutshell, Coetzee explores the predicament of white complicit- marginalized self while struggling for an ethical reconstruction and integration in a country that shows the pathetic condition of white settlers which once oppressor in apartheid South Africa.

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important for them because he gets a very little share but also he shares this with the dogs. His wife runs towards dogs and collects all the breadcrumbs because she thinks that the crumbs are not enough to feed the family. It means she is also worry about the animals but more about her family members because they were working in the whole day in the land. She cooks the Dulli with the stale breadcrumbs and gives it to all. When the Stale breadcrumbs were eaten by the grandfather it becomes poisonous food for him because it was a stale breadcrumb which becomes a reason of food poisoning. It creates the health problem and gives a death to the grandfather but before the death he gives message to the grandson.

.....Never depends on age old bread associated with our caste. Get as much education as you can take away this cursed bread from the mouth of the Mahar.s. The poisonous bread will finally kill the very humanness of man. These lines are suggesting that the short story "The poisonous bread" is a symbolic title which tells as about the poisonous caste system which. become a reason to make society poisonous. Grandfather gives a massage that education can help to remove the troubles and atrocities from the life dallit people. He also says that this poisonous caste system will kill the humanity of the human being. So before this happen we should rebel against the poisonous caste system which destroys the identity of untouchables, depressed and deprived people means dalit people

### Conclusion

This article focuses on the social discrimination, poisonous caste system and exploitation of Dalit people in the society. This article also talks about the difference between the mindset of upper class and lower class people. Upper caste people are not ready to give share to the lower caste people for their work, whereas in the novel we can see that the lower caste people are always ready to give their share to the animals that shows they gives importance to the equality. "The poisonous bread" short story tell us about the poisonous mindset of the upper caste people who spread the tradition of the poisonous caste system to destroy the humanness of the man. The main character from this short story, Yetalya Ajya has suggested a solution that education is the only way which will change this mindset of upper caste people and remove the troubles from the life of Dalit people.

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