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KARMA HITS BACK IN THE CONTEXT OF J M COETZEE'S *DISGRACE*

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ABSTRACT

Every circumstance you face in life is the outcome of Karma. Your, words, thoughts, actions, the acts of others under your influence, your attitudes, expectations, and lifestyle all contribute to the creation of Karma. In the framework of JM Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*, this research article seeks to comprehend this concept of Karma. The novel is set in the post-Apartheid era, when African Americans reclaimed their rights, and the plot revolves around the main character, David, a professor. David, who enjoys his relationship with females at first, but finds himself in a pitiful state towards the end of the story due to his own karmas.

Key Words: Karma, Post-Apartheid

The famous proverb "As You Sow, So Shall You Reap" states that man is responsible for the results of his deeds. If an action is motivated by goodness, it will produce only goodness in the end. If the conduct was bad, the result is likely to be terrible as well. Misfortune and tragedies are the children of evil, and goodness is the child of good actions. If we do well, even if it doesn't provide the desired consequences right away, we can expect wonderful things in the future. And all the great faiths of the world also teach the same lesson that we can only receive good in life if we do good to others. Bible also states that "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you". The great Hinduism also believes in "Karma," which states that we become what we do and think. Similarly, all the major religions of this world insist on it. It all comes down to how we treat people and how we are treated.

This concept of karma can be seen in J. Coetzee' Most famous novel *Disgrace* which won him Booker Prize in 1999. He is the first writer who twice won the Booker Prize, the highest prize in British literature. In 2003, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. His works delve into history and reflect reality, and they hold significant research value. He grew up during apartheid, and the crimes committed during that time became ingrained in his mind. As a result, Coetzee used the global battle between oppressed and oppressor as a central theme in his stories.

His novel *Disgrace* is set in the post-apartheid South Africa. Apartheid is an Afrikaans word that means "separation." The National Party invented the concept of apartheid which was a powerful weapon and strategy to control the economic and social system of the country. It was a policy of legal discrimination and segregation aimed at South Africa's black majority. From marriage to job to housing, European colonial governments had imposed limitations on practically every aspect of their life. As early as the eighteenth century in South Africa,

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the white minority employed colonial power and weapons to oppress the majority population. Under British administration, a series of laws were created that progressively brought the majority of South Africa's territory under their control, forcing the indigenous people to work as low-wage labourers.

But it is said that what goes around comes around, the time changed, and Black got their right back in post-apartheid period and the group of people who were dominating in the beginning now trying to cope up with a changing world in an apartheid-free South Africa. White settlers voluntarily abandoned their monopoly political power, losing their land, political authority, and status in the process, which was perhaps unusual in colonialism's history.

The story of *Disgrace* is also around the idea of 'you reap what you sow'. David Lurie, a fifty-two-year-old white professor, and the central character of the novel is seeking to exploit others in the beginning but as the novel progress his karma hits back and brings him in pathetic condition.

The beginning of the novel deals with Lurie's sexual enjoyment with Soraya a black female. The affiliation of Soraya and Lurie, however, comes to end in a state of humiliation, grief, and rejection in the novel. As the narrative unfolds, we learn that David Lurie has been fired from his university professorship seducing a student named Melanie Isaacs who is a black female character. Melanie asks for the reason and Lurie replies "why? Because a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it". (Coetzee 08) As Coetzee depicts in the novel, she is perplexed in overcoming this situation, because she is still too young and the same age as David's daughter. She has no idea how to deny or accept him because he is the powerful professor who will decide whether she passes or fails, and she is completely at his mercy. But she took the courage and complaint against him. However, David does not accept the charge laid against him. But this incident brings disgrace to him, and he is suspended from the university.

This tragedy has had a big impact on David's life, and he moved in with Lucy Lurie, David's daughter, who lives in a predominantly black hamlet. Lucy enjoys the transition from Cape Town to the countryside, oblivious to the horrors that await her.

After arriving at his daughter's home, he is confronted with a series of unfortunate events. His car has been stolen, his daughter has been seduced, and he has been set on fire. In such conditions, he comes to understand the negative image of South Africa post-apartheid. He is now experiencing the misery of rape, which his daughter has also experienced. Melanie Isaacs was like this in the past. And he gradually realises that his "passion" for Isaacs and his daughter's rape have connections.

He was so preoccupied with sexual desire that he couldn't understand a girl's sentiments. He has not only used Melanie and Soraya to fulfil his desire, but also his friends' wives, and now this is the result of his karma only that his own daughter is going through the same pains.

At one point of time in the novel Lucy equates and associates her father with black rapists who despise white women and take joy in injuring and harming them. Lucy compares her father's illicit impulsive affair with his student to murder. She says piquantly, "When you have sex with someone strange when you trap her, hold her down, get her under you, put all your weight on her – isn't it a bit like killing? Pushing the knife in existing afterwards, leaving the body behind covered in blood – doesn't it feel like murder, like getting away with murder?" (Coetzee 67)

The situation for David grows considerably worse when, despite his pleadings, his daughter decides to marry an elderly black man Petrus, who is already a twice married man. Nevertheless, this is the result of his karma only that he is going through such mental trauma.

And now in new South Africa, he finds himself unusual. He recognises that his identity and position are being increasingly marginalised. As a white guy, David, like Negroes in his own nation when the white minority ruled, feels like an outcast. He broods: "It does not feel like his earth. Despite the time he has spent here feels like a foreign land".(Coetzee 83)

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Lucy on the other hand could be interpreted as a symbol for white South Africans, who feel guilty and are being punished for the crimes of previous generations. Lucy's Decision to marry Petrus might be the result of her acceptance of the post-apartheid regime and rule in which the whites had no claims to land and the place belonging to the blacks. As she responds to Lurie's asking about the attack, "Wake up, David. This is the country. This is Africa." (Coetzee 52)

Not only government policy but the wheels of fortune of black people turned during the post-apartheid. Petrus, the black man throws a celebration after learning that the post-colonial era has begun. The black man who was formerly employed by a white person has now become that person's exclusive life partner.

Whites in the post-apartheid era have no choice but to suffer through the same suffering, injustice, and humiliation that native South Africans had to experience to survive throughout colonial and apartheid periods. It paints a bleak picture of the new South Africa, in which whites who have lost their identity are forced to learn the unforgivable lessons of victimisation and injustice in a role reversal. There is no possibility of reconciliation or peaceful coexistence they must embrace the truth and rebuild their lives from the ground up.

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