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The Victims of Poverty and Mal-Nutrition in *Soul Gone Home* of Langston Hughes



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ABSTRACT

This research paper will discuss on the play called 'Soul Gone Home. It is written by a popular African American author i.e.; Langston Hughes. He is a pioneer of modern Black literature. Racial discrimination is one of the major issues and theme of the African American literature. In this research paper will focus on the issues like racism, gender discrimination and a victim of mal-nutrition. There are some prominent Black

authors such as Toni Morrison, Richard Wright, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Claude Mackey etc. Theirs writing is the outcome of explanation, slavery, discrimination, humiliation, revolt, racism, revenge, rebel, supersession, poverty, victims, inequality, unjust etc.

KEYWORDS

Gender discrimination, mal-nutrition, discrimination, victims, racism, poverty, etc.

RESEARCH PAPER

Introduction: Racism is one of the major themes in African American literature. Langston Hughes is a wider user of this concept to determine and designate the realities of Blacks in the southern America. He describes racial discrimination into his dramatic work. *Soul Gone Home* is an important play. It deals with the poverty, mal-nutrition, racial discrimination. It is one act play. In this play, where white characters appear, they are little more than symbol-evil, good or in one act play. Here is a comment made by Smalley as follows:

“The conception of *Soul Gone Home* is that of fantasy, and it contains some ironically comic moments, but its impulse is far removed from comedy. In a vignette-like episode, Hughes creates with great economy the kind of play Zola called for in his preface to *there’s Requin*”.

Soul Gone Home is one of the most important plays by Langston Hughes; it focuses on a critical condition of black family in southern America. There are two characters playing vital role in the play that is Ronnie and his mother. There is extreme poverty of black family and it affects more their lifestyle. There was not stability to the black family in the southern America. They always ready to earn money through any activities. They don’t have any identity in the white world. If they want to survival in the word then they must struggle for their existence. The repressive dominance attendants, who are white as the mother knew they would be.

Langston Hughes uses subtle yet powerful imagery to illustrate the plight of a black family in a white dominated society in his one- act play called *Soul Gone Home*. The pennies on Ronnie’s eyes mentioned at the beginning and end of the play refer to an ancient custom and also to the poverty that can blind one in a monetary sense. So, here is a conversation between mother and Ronnie on the feeding good food to him.

“When I had money, ain’t fed you? (Hughes,1271),
You said you ain’t got no money for milk and eggs, (Hughes,1271),
Wealth of a spiritual or emotional nature is never mentioned”.

The above conversation is dealing with the financial crisis and family relation has been collapsed. Here, Ronnie has become a duly victims of poverty as well as insufficient nutrition for his health. Unfortunately, he has also become a victim of Whites. The mother and Ronnie have become the victims of poverty as well as racial discrimination. Ronnie was a dark boy in a torn white shirt. This contradiction show he becomes victims of economic and cultural poverty. So, Ronnie has died due to mal-nutrition and family financial conditions. He came out from the spiritual world and he expresses his feelings and anger towards her mother. The circumstances are made to the human being; and Ronnie became a victim of this circumstances. He abuses to her mother form spiritual world. There is a dialogue related to the financial crisis.

“Son: You never did feed me good, that’s what I mean! Who wants to come into the world hungry and go out the same way?

Mother: What you mean hungry? When I had money, ain’t I feed you?”.

This is an argument between on nutrition and feeding to Ronnie. He always mentioned here you are a bad mother. You don’t have provided proper food to me. Ronnie dies due to poverty as well as sufficient nutrients for his body. The starvation has resulted into the death of Ronnie, a young black boy undernourishment and tuberculosis. According to Hughes, economic condition is one of the governing factors that decide the relations. The poor economic conditions of blacks have lost their harmony in their relations.

This play deals with the conflict between an uncanny mother and the spirit or ghost of her dead son. Their talk and confrontations reveal the general conditions of the blacks in southern America. There is one more dialogue.

“Mother: Undernourishment?”

Son: Undernourishment. You heard what the doctor said last week?

Mother: Mow, what’d he say?

Son: He said I was dying of undernourishment, that’s what he said.

He said I had TB because I din’t have enough to eat never when I were a child”.

The mother, totally controlled by poor economic conditions, is unable to take the responsibility of her son and as a result is alienated from him emotionally. After this dialogue the play came at the end. Here, Ronni’s mother tries to understand him, the only money can’t do in life., I like you too much. I had cried for yourself at your birth. She said that she had lost her marriage offers due to you. So, no one was ready to accept you. This is reality of black women as well as mulatto child. This is a kind of racial discriminations, the whites create a temporary relation with black women, but eventually they become the victims of them. So, Ronni’s mother has been taken care of him from last sixteen years. Hughes suggests that economic reality is the only governing truth and all the relations revolve around it. The intensity of the emotional relationship is strongly controlled by the circumstance in which they are forced to live there without any argument.

At the last scene the ambulance takes away the dead body of thin Ronnie. The mother laments on his departure. The two men in the white coat, who carry the dead body of Ronni, it symbolizes the white society and exploitations of blacks in the southern America. It is also suggested that there are many black dead bodies waiting for the ambulance.as the white men leave the stage, the mother stops lamenting. Her final gesture is the climax of the play. She begins to powder her face and prepares her body to earn some money. Her action implies that hunger has reduced her to the act of prostitution. The white world has spoiled her dignity and womanhood. She says that she would offer her dead son some flowers if she can pick up a dollar that night. This is worst conditions of black women in Southern America.

William Miles observes that the last two actions are very significant to expose the white world as the source of the problems. For the African Americans: the complete indifference of the white ambulance drivers and the mother’s symbolic whitening of her face before she goes out to prostitute her body. He summarizes the play in the following words.

“Through the skilful combination of situation, structure, character and symbol.

Hughes has produced a compact and powerful play of a people, so isolated that even the ordinarily secure relationship between mother and son is impossible.

And while this thematic consideration is sense of universality in that its social commentary relates to any oppressed minority”.

Soul Gone Home creates a depressing experience exposing the exploitation of the blacks. In the white world. It leaves certain questions in the minds of reader about the existence of a deprived minority group in America. It is saying that the circumstances made to the human being. Here, the mother becomes a prostitute due to her poor condition. She has also lost her sixteen years child due to undernourishment. The last statement of this is ‘Soul Gone Home’ it means that Ronnie died here. Now, she is ready for earning money through prostitute. So, the blacks are suffered dully racial discrimination and poverty. Ronnie becomes victims of racism as well as mal-nutrition. The blacks are always struggled for their existence in the white world.

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