



Swami Vivekananda Advanced Journal for Research and Studies

Online Copy of Document Available on: www.svajrs.com

ISSN:2584-105X

Pg. 160 - 163



REFLECTION OF POVERTY AND LOVE IN ATHOL FUGARD 'S BLOOD KNOT:A SYNOPTIC STUDY

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Received: 18/06/2025

Accepted: 19/06/2025

Published: 20/06/2025

Abstract

Athol Fugard, a major voice in South African literature finds a key place in post colonial study as a playwright, novelist, actor and director. He immensely contributed to the enrichment of world literature citing contemporary issues and post colonial trends in his works. His works include Blood Knot (1961), The Island, My Children ,My Africa! , The Road to Mecca, The Train Driver and Valley Song etc. He generally highlights the predicament of modern man and tries to bring out solutions and make his characters survive in the materialistic world now-a-days .In Blood Knot he realistically presents the harrowing effects of poverty in two half brothers' life. From the start of the plot, the grim of poverty is seen in Zach's and Morris's life. On the other hand the play deals with the romantic affair between Zach and Ethel which does not surface. As a black South African, Zach struggles to lead his daily life with his half brother and endeavours to continue his love affair through pen-pal relationship.

Keywords: Poverty, love, apartheid ,racial discrimination, alienation.

Athol Fugard 's name and fame spread like a jasmine blossoms in forest and its fragrance reaches far and wide shortly. He exploits the plot and art of characterization so skilfully that his plays have always hold upon the audience and readers and tie them in a ceaseless enthusiasm to complete reading or watching them. The plot is not so long or complicated to make the readers or audience get bored. Rather they are short ones to go through or watch the plays till the end. Likewise his list of characters is very small that confines them to three or four on which the development of the plot hinges. They are life like and realistic drawn from the low strata of the prevailing society. The number of characters is only two in Blood Knot appears in the plot and there are a few flat characters. It can not be ruled out that their presence is not so important. The round characters always depend on them to supplement the purport and success of the plays.

Adversity and prosperity are two states of human life. Here Athol Fugard states the adversity of two half brothers depicting their ill-fate, suffering, agony against the back drop of racial discrimination and apartheid. The grim picture of one room shack at Karsten, Port Elizabeth, suffices two half brothers' life styles and economic conditions. Athol Fugard delineates it realistically.

All the action takes place in a one room shack in the non-white location of Korsten, Port Elizabeth. The walls are a patch work of scraps of corrugated iron, packing -case wood, flattened card board boxes, and old hessian bags, one door, one window (no curtains), two beds, a table and two chairs. Also in evidence is a cupboard of sorts with an oil stove, a kettle and a few pots. The shack is tidy and swept, but this only enhances the poverty of its furnishings. Over one of the beds is a shelf on which are a few books (including a Bible) and an alarm clock. (P.3)

Being poor and black African, Zach has to work for a certain circus standing at the gate for long hours to restrict black people's entry. He works hard to earn bread and butter for them otherwise they will go hungry. As a result he has his foot sore that pains him profoundly. After a day's hard labour he returns home where his half brother, Morris is ready to look after him. The latter sweeps the rooms, cook meal, clean

utensil and prepare warm water for Zach's foot bath. Though Zach requests his authority to change that sort but he is very callous to treat him kindly and sympathetically. Thus Zach's conscience gets a heavy jolt when the authority rejects his plea. Morris questions him concerning his request to the authority. Zach replies:

Morris: But didn't you tell him Zach? I told you to tell him that your feet are calloused and that you wanted to go back to pots.

Zach :I did.

Morris :And then?

Zach: He said: Go to the gate or go to hell.

Morris: That's an insult.

Zach: What's the other one?

Morris: Inquiry!

Zach: No, no. The long one.

Morris: Inhumanity ! (P.7)

From the above dialogues Zach and Morris not only get only get hurt mentally but also suffer from inhuman treatment. Racial discrimination and apartheid belittle and injure them beyond imagination. They are not even treated as human beings and they feel that they are no better than beasts. Sometimes Zach feels alienated and offended for various reasons. The grim picture of poverty continues and the terrible effect of it has bad effects on the two brothers' life making it dull, pale and colourless. They struggle hard for their existence depending on Zach's low paid job, uninterestingly and boring job. There is gripping fear in two brothers' about Ethel's presence in Port Elizabeth. She will know their poverty and their black colour.

Despite Zach and Morris's grim poverty, the former is very interested to start a romantic affair with any virgin long before. He discusses it with his half brother so often. Finally they come to conclusion to start a pen-pal relationship that will please and pacify Zach. But one obstacle in the way, deters their progress in this regard that Zach is illiterate who neither reads nor writes. Morris is rather educated comes forward to assist his brother to read and write instantly on his brother's behalf. They search for pen pal relationship ads. in news paper and opt one who is Ethel Lange, 10 de Villiers Street, Outdshoonrn. She is eighteen years old and well developed and would like to correspond with a gent of sober habits and a good outlook on life. Her interests are nature, rock-and - roll, swimming, and happy future. Her motto is "Rolling stones gather no moss.

The pen-pal relationship is already commenced which gladdens Zach as well as regular correspondence is also started between Zach and Ethel. But the real problem matters and the brothers get entangled in predicament as Ethel is a white skinned maiden and her brother, Cornelius is a police man a motorbike. All such thoughts put Zach in ever increasing trouble. His countenance grows pale and pallor. In South Africa the most hated apartheid tradition was in force. As a result it causes an unbridgeable gulf between the white and black skinned people living there. Pen-pal relationship, romantic affair and wedlock are strictly prohibited by law there. That is why the black

skinned people suffer, get harassed, tortured and tortured in their daily life. The white skinned people are the sole cause of their affliction and mental agony.

Ethel continues her pen-pal relationship without knowing Zach's black skin colour. If she had known about it, she would not have started such a relation. The real problem arises when Ethel so often tells Zach to send his photos. But Zach and Morris evade her by pretending bad weather, climatic condition as well as seasonal bad light. Then Ethel wants to visit Port Elizabeth with her friend and meet Zach. Her proposed visit problematizes the matter and aggravate the situation. How can the two brothers handle the situation? It is a matter of concern and headache for the two half brothers. If Zach meets Ethel, every thing will be disclosed. Then he will be arrested for violating apartheid tradition. Morris may save Zach from the peril but it will bring a new twist. As a consequence Zach will lose Ethel for ever. The two brothers gather their grit and self confidence to solve the problem.

It is the affection, love, care and concern between Zach and Morris that it is proved here. It is really their blood knot which paves a way to avert an impending danger. It is decided that Morris will play the role of Zach and he can manage the dire straight. Thus Zach opens the tin and takes out all the saved money meant for buying a farm out of the town in future. Though the brothers have their abject poverty, they have saved some money for their future planning as preplanned by Morris. On the other hand it shows that their quick and reckless decision to utilize the money for sake of Zach's love. Likewise Zach is thoroughly blind in love and wants to continue it for some years. Without love his life is meaningless and valueless as he does presume. Zach goes to buy a pair of socks, a spotty tie, a clean white shirt, a hat, a suit, a cigarette case, a lighter and a real ostrich wallet etc. When Morris dons all such attires and have costly instruments, he looks like an English man so that there will not be any problem.

In this context the conversation between Zach and Morris indicates their brotherly love, affection and care for each other.

Zach: Wait Morrie! Wait! Fair is fair. Now this time you stand still...and listen.

Morris: I won't. I won't- no.

Zach: Yes, you will, because Ethel is coming and you want to meet her. But like you say, not like any old hot not in the street, but smartly. Now this is it. You are wearing a pretty- smart -for a meeting with- the lady type suit.

(Morris, clutching the tin to his chest, closes his eyes. Zachariah creeps closer.)

Shiny shoes, whick socks, a good shirt, and a spotty tie. And the people watch you go by and say: Hey ! Who's you? There goes something!...(P.126)

The above dialogues show that how close the two brothers are. They are ready to do any sacrifice for each other according to the situation and necessity. Here their poverty does not matter. On the other hand their brotherly love and care neither weakens nor impacts their blood relation. Likewise their blood knot so far the title of the play is concerned remains intact and unbroken till end of the play.

However the pen-pal relationship takes a new twist after Ethel changes her decision abruptly not to visit Port Elizabeth. She sends her final letter to Zach mentioning her marital engagement with Luckyman Stoffel. Morris immediately reads out the letter sent by Ethel.

"Dear Pen-pal, it's sad news for you but good news for me. I've decided to get married. Ma says it's okay. The Lucky man is Stoffel, who plays in my brother's team, fullback. It's a long story. Lucky thought, she had him but she didn't, so now we're not on taking terms no more. Stoffel works at Boetie's Garage and doesn't like competition so he says Pen-pals is out if we are going to get married to each other..."

From Ethel's letter it is clear that the pen-pal relationship that creates a romantic affair between Zach and Ethel comes to an abrupt and unexpected end. But with the end of this affair, it does not impact on the half brothers' relation as the blood relation ties them in an unbreakable thread for good.

Before the romantic affair through pen-pal relationship comes to an end, there is unbridgeable gulf between the two brothers. Morris now readies for the rendezvous, Zach buys the type of clothes that a white man is likely to wear. He also spends a lion's share of money that he has earned to buy a farm outside the town. As Morris dons the clothes, shoes and tie, his mannerism, speech, showy nature becomes evident like a white man. The more he adopts the style and voice of a white man, the more he starts to treat his half brother as inferior as if Zach were his servant. His behaviour, attitude and mind set alters as Morris is white skinned and literate. His superiority and disdain for Zach grows increasingly extreme, the latter expresses his vindictive desire to murder Morris in role playing.

Despite their different skin colour, there is perfect harmony, mutual understanding and reciprocal bond between Zach and Morris. The last dialogue shows their blood relation and unending love, care for each other.

Zach: No, Zach. You see, we're tied together. It's what they call the blood knot...the bond between brothers.

The play focuses on the grim picture of poverty, remapping love affair between Zach and Ethel through pen-pal relationship. The ceaseless brotherly affection, care and love between them leads to a happy ending of the play as it is the blood knot, ties the two brothers so tightly that cannot be loosened and broken under any circumstance that Athol Fugard aptly concludes the play, Blood Knot.

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