

Mozambique Civil War and Farida Karodia's *A Shattering of Silence*

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ABSTRACT

Mozambique civil war was fought between Mozambique's ruling Marxist 'Front for the Liberation of Mozambique' (FRELIMO) and anti-communist insurgent forces of the 'Mozambican National Resistance' (RENAMO). Through the story of Faith, the novel reveals the reality of hundreds of thousands of children all over the world who are the victims of war, hunger, and political corruption. Being the sufferer of apartheid system, Farida Karodia has extensively written about the war, segregation during the apartheid, social and political situations in South Africa. 'A Shattering of Silence' deals with the history of colonialism and its brutal effects on the people of Africa.

Keywords- war, apartheid, segregation, colonialism.

A Shattering of Silence is written by South African writer Farida Karodia. Being the sufferer of apartheid system, she has extensively written about her past, war, segregation during the apartheid, social and political situations in South Africa. *A Shattering of Silence* deals with the history of colonialism and its brutal effects on the people of Africa. Colonialism comes through the violence which is one of the prominent features of apartheid system. Many African novelists wrote in the apartheid and post-apartheid period use violence as a weapon to express the effects of ongoing war and cultural awareness of that country.

In the present text, Farida Karodia talks about Mozambique civil war that took place between 1977 and 1992. Mozambique got independence in 1975. After independence, the civil war began. The war was fought between Mozambique's ruling Marxist 'Front for the Liberation of Mozambique' (FRELIMO) and anti-communist insurgent forces of the 'Mozambican National Resistance' (RENAMO). FRELIMO were trying to establish a single party socialist state. However, RENAMO strongly opposed the FRELIMO attempt. RENAMO were supported by anti-communist governments in Rhodesia and South Africa. In the civil war between FRELIMO and RENAMO around one

million Mozambicans were killed and starved due to shortage of food supply. The civil war ended in 1992 and the government was established by FRELIMO. The war broke the daily lives of the people and physical infrastructure of the rural area of Mozambique. It includes hospitals, rail lines, roads, and schools. In the present text, Farida Karodia talks about the violence of colonialism that emerged due to the Mozambique civil war.

A Shattering of Silence is divided into five books and has twenty chapters. This novel has Prologue and Epilogue in which the novelist tells about the narrator of the story, Faith. The prologue reveals that Faith's story is representative of the reality of hundreds of thousands of children all over the world who are the victims of war, hunger, and political corruption. The novel deals with the suffering experienced by children of war.

The novel begins with Faith's journey to Mozambique, after 30 years of exile. Along with her there is an American woman on the journey known as 'Sue'. Faith is the narrator and she explains to her friend how issues of the African continent are misinterpreted by western governments. According to her, the real life of Africa and the concept of Africa that westerners associate with their social, political, and cultural structures are different one. She has spent many years of her adulthood

in Mozambique. She has been the victim of the Mozambique civil war. So in 1972, with the help of Portuguese government forces and colonial secret police, she escaped from Mozambique. Now after 30 years of exile, she returns to visit her past in her home country. In this journey, she recalls her past, childhood memories, her family, and friends. She realizes her return brings a flood of memories that she is unable to control. She tries to search various images from her childhood but she becomes aware that the war of colonization has changed many things. Even though, she has a different pride about Mozambique and it can be sensed in her explanation to her friend:

“Although Mozambique is on the African continent, it has its own social, tribal, cultural, linguistic and economic structures that distinguish it from other countries or the continent”(Karodia ix).

With all these memories, Faith arrives at Mozambique and her past drags her in the memories of her childhood, when she is six years old. She lives in the remote village of Mozambique. Her parents, Rebecca and Alex Smith are the Protestant missionaries who have left a cosy life in Manitoba, Canada to settle in Mozambique. After living in the remote village, Faith’s parents notice that the life of inhabitants is more difficult and suffering one in Mozambique, due to the control of colonial society. The war of liberation created the sense of inferiority among indigenous. The land and fields of villagers are owned by Raul Morais - one of the largest landowners in the region. The Portuguese colonial estate owners in her remote village are very powerful and they oppose the government forces. Joseph Coelho is one of the laborers, who oppose the procedure of landowner, Raul Morais. This causes a frightful massacre in the village of Mozambique.

Faith recalls the day, when she witnesses the violence that takes place in her village. The people of Senhor Morais arrive to find a labor organizer- Joseph Coelho. As village people refuse to tell the information about him, they start to shoot everyone with gunfire. Faith’s father asks all family members to run and hide in the forest but they deny. Within a moment, the people of Senhor Morais destroy entire rural communities. Lodiya is Faith’s nanny’s daughter who pulls Faith with her and they go in a direction of forest.

Faith’s carefree childhood is demolished with the arrival of people of paramilitary forces who massacre the entire village with their brutal act. Though Lodiya and Faith are hidden in the forest, they clearly view the massacre that takes place in their village. After demolishing every living being in that village the paramilitary forces return, then Lodiya and Faith come outside. They walk to the way of their home and they see the dead bodies of all villagers. As they reach home they find all family members dead. This is a great shock for Faith and she becomes traumatic by this massacre. This

frightful violence leaves Faith in a stunning experience that she loses her voice and memory. Further, Faith and Lodiya go catholic mission at Sao Lucas. When Lodiya leaves the mission, Faith becomes alone and is converted to Catholicism and she shifts to Sao Thomas i.e. another mission church. In this mission church, Faith finds the children who have come there are half starved and ragged. It is a difficult life but children learn to survive. Then, a woman known as Mama Ria comes to church and she adopts Faith. At Mama Ria’s home there are many children, one of them is Rita and she becomes her best friend.

After Mama Ria’s death, again Faith shifts to Sao Thomas and is adopted by Dona Maria. She is sent to convent school at Santa Teresa. In this school Faith learns sign language because she is unable to utter the word. At Dona Maria’s home Faith learns many things regarding Portugal war and politics. As she finishes her education at Convent, Faith is recruited in the clinic and she teaches sign language to deaf children. Later Faith is engaged with David but instead of marriage they prefer to live together. Further Faith gets attracted to Juan Guerra, who is a doctor working in the same hospital. Initially they come close to each other through their work and gradually both become attracted to each other. Meanwhile in Mozambique, the issue of ‘disappearance of children’ becomes a serious one. Faith becomes much worried about this and with the help of Helia de Souza and Rhonica, she tries to find the kidnapped children. Later Faith hears that the people from hospital staff provide medical assistance to the rebels. Rita is one of the members of this staff and she is arrested by the force and later beaten violently. As a result, she loses consciousness. Juan and Faith try their best to save Rita. Finally they arrive at Dona Maria’s home for a safer place, as military police are searching for them. Dona Maria helps them to escape from this and she makes one plan for their escapement. With the help of this plan Dona Maria successfully relieved them out of the country. She makes arrangements for Faith and Juan to get to London and Rita is shifted to the convent at Santa Teresa. In the Epilogue of the novel, Faith tells that London is beginning as the new chapter of her life. She finishes minor surgery on her vocal cords and she gets her voice back that is lost due to the traumatic experience.

In *A Shattering of Silence*, Karodia tries to explore the effects of colonial war where a protagonist’s identity and voice are lost. She focuses on the sense of loss of colonized people is very deep and distressed that creates the psychological, social, and political problem in the life of an individual. In the novel, she examines the plight of children who are brutalized by war, hunger and political corruption. The colonial conditions of the Mozambicans were pathetic and worst under Portuguese rule. The protagonist of the present text, Faith is a victim of this oppressive colonial conditions and she struggles to overcome her problem of lost identity. The suffering experienced by children of war in the present novel

explores the predicament of Mozambican child victims of war. It is not limited to the Mozambique only but it extends to the children of 'color' in the apartheid South Africa who were also the victims of political and social abuse.

The present analysis of Karodia's *A Shattering of Silence* seeks to understand the violence experienced by Faith due to colonialism. Her formation as a voiceless character can render the problem of psychological as well as linguistic development of the person in Africa. It can be said that Faith's character is affected by unfavourable social and political conditions of colonial war. She has lost everything in her life due to this colonial violence, even her own voice and memory. After shifting at various mission churches she finds, there are thousands of children who suffer from difficult life to survive. This leads her towards the resistance and she tries to overcome her inability to speak.

Karodia in the beginning of the novel through the narrator of 'Faith' tries to show the effect of the civil war and how people in Mozambique suffer its drought. On the way back to Mozambique Faith notices the scenario of African life. She realizes the issues of poverty and unemployment are still the biggest problems. She observes people either live in shacks or they are homeless, and their children are begging. It shows how Mozambique suffered by colonization as the number of migrants increased rapidly at various lands of Africa. Faith's village is also dominated by the estate owners who behave like masters of their land. It is evident when Faith says:

“The estate owners had always controlled every aspect of village life, determining everything from what we villagers ate to what they could grow and where they could sell their cash crops. Many of these estate owners were a law unto themselves, their dictatorial actions either condoned or ignored by the colonial government” (Karodia 7).

The villagers are always considered as a slave. With recalling these colonial memories, Faith recalls her childhood. She realizes the sense of despair as she tries to reveal her past and the violence she has seen. As village people refuse to tell the people of Senhor Morais about Joseph Coelho, they start killing everyone including children, infants, cattle, men and women. The massacre is going on till midday. The highest peak of their brutality can be traced in the following incident:

“One of the men pointed his rifle at a woman known as Firipa, who was wearing a bright yellow headscarf. In her arms she held a six-month-old son, Xavier. She got

to her feet and shuffled forward, her son perched on her hip. She stood before her executioner as he leveled his rifle. A single shot rang out and she fell at his feet. Her son disengaged himself from her lifeless arm and crawled close to her body, wailing loudly” (Karodia 15).

After this, the attackers kill the children and infants heartlessly. They try to smash their skulls against the hard wall; they open the bellies of the three pregnant women, and destroy their foetuses. Finally, they rape the young girls and they remain silenced when there is not a single figure alive except Faith and Lodiya (Karodia 15).

Faith and Lodiya notice that their parents are the victims of these attackers and but they are helpless. When Faith and Lodiya see their parents as dead, they find them in the worst condition. It is evident in the description of Faith:

“The bullet hole my mother's forehead had turned black. My mother's head had ultimately come to rest on my father's chest. Her braids had come undone and were drawn across his chest like two pale ropes. One of my father's legs was curled under his body. His glasses were broken, the frames askew” (Karodia16).

Faith witnesses this brutal violence. She feels that all emotions and feelings have disappeared in her mind. Faith undergoes a drastic change in her personality. She becomes very frightened as the act of the estate owner is so brutal that she views it clearly. Looking at the dead bodies of her parents, Faith becomes unconscious. She is not able to cry and utter a single word as she loses her ability of speaking. It is the worst impact of violence on her mind.

To conclude, the novel clearly shows the impact of Mozambique civil war on the people. Their life is physically and mentally shattered. Karodia has broken the silence of the victims and showed to the world the brutality of colonialism which is the sole reason for the war. Though the violence has made Faith unspeakable, after 30 years she bounces back and shatters forced silence of colonialism and Mozambique civil war. She tells in a very clear and loud voice the injustice done to the native people by the people who fought for the power.

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