

Abduction and Oppression: Subaltern Studies: An In-depth Analysis of ‘Idrees’ In Anees Jung’s Lost Spring: Stories of Stolen Childhood.

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Abstract

Subalterns are the group of people at the lowest rank in the society under suppression and subdued to raise their voice even for their basic rights. Indian English Literature has visualized the core of oppression in Indian society in terms of caste, religion, gender and other patriarchal forms. Apart from that, Anees Jung an Indian author has focuses the appalling truth of subalternity over children by means of labour and torture through real life incidents in her travel dairy Lost Spring: Stories of Stolen Childhood. The most horrendous incident depicted in the book is the devastation of the little boy Idrees by means of abduction. Affliction, anguish, misery, abuse and torture experienced by children as the sequel of abduction is distinctly explained in the dairy. This paper highlights the bitter truth of how children are trafficked illegally and suffer under suppression, remains voiceless as a result of people's selfish business motifs.

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Children, the essence of innocence are meek, puny, fragile and submissive, deserve to have colourful and playful childhood. However by the time of early childhood, they are being colonized and intimidate by various people in different ways. Existence become arduous and stay reticent to domineer as they depend on elders for their basic needs. Indian English writings showcase poverty, caste systems, and other patriarchal norms of the Indian society suppress some groups of people and make them submissive. It is a bitter truth that children also suffer under these systems and remain passive. Anees Jung an Indian author highlights such child subalterns in her travel diary *Lost Spring: Stories of Stolen Childhood*. She mainly focuses on the working children of Indian slum areas who lost their colourful childhood to fulfil their essential needs.

Anees Jung is a prolific Indian writer, best known for her work *Unveiling India* (1987). She has travelled through the rural parts of India and shares her experiences witnessed among the underprivileged people of the nation. *Lost spring: Stories of Stolen Childhood* is one among her travel diaries where she illustrates the pathetic living condition of children under the age of eighteen. She has visualized various forms of child oppression that are happening in India. Most of the children are exploited by their own parents and some of them are misused by the society. The working children never protest against dominations either by their parents or by the fellow men and they are ready to be docile. The diary also brings the significant fact of children being

beaten up by their own drunkard fathers are taken to the center of attention. Apart from all these forms, Jung mainly wants to focus the national shame of children being trafficked illegally and subjected to work, remains acquiescent in independent India where child labour is strictly prohibited. United Global Initiative to Human Trafficking has published,

India is a source, transit and destination country for trafficking in persons. Women and children are trafficked from neighbouring countries such as Nepal to India, and in many cases are trafficked to countries in the Persian Gulf, The Middle East and Europe. One of the main reasons for trafficking is for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation followed other reasons such as labour exploitation, organ transplant and forced marriage. (UN.GIFT 43-44)

Abduction of children using their innocence is a serious offence that rapidly spreads all over India. It is a kind of human trafficking in which small children are being kidnapped and abused for various purposes such as begging, forcing them to work in houses and factories for a mean salary, and sometimes without salary, sexual exploitation etc. National Crime Records Bureau has declared that there is a vast increase in the child kidnapping cases which raises up to two hundred and fifty percent in last five years and in every eight minutes a child is being kidnapped from all over India. The ILO estimation of 2012 stated that 21 million child victims are trapped in modern-day slavery. Of these sixty eight percentage of children were exploited for labour, twenty two percent were sexually exploited, and ten percent were exploited in state-imposed forced labour. Jung wants to expose the ignominy, that the factory owners and rich people are exploiting the children for their selfish business motives and explores the horror of child abduction and its consequences through the eyes of a real life character Idrees.

Idrees in Jung's book is a victim of child abduction who was kidnapped by a giant man by showing bunch of chocolates and pulled him into forced labour. The boy's age is not mentioned but it is known from his action that he is too small, so that he believed a stranger and gone with him for chocolates. His childish innocence was exploited by the man to attract him easily into his trap like a mouse in the snare. The socio economic background of the boy is also very poor that anyone can effortlessly take him under custody and nobody else other than his mother was there to search him. His mother is also not financially sound and doesn't have any other influence except her tears to search her son fullflegedly. Idrees believed the man for a childish happiness and travelled with him to a faraway land. After days passed, as he was growing slowly he forgot his native village, his mother and his people. All he remembers was the giant man, the chocolates, the train he travelled to another place. When he understands that he was being kidnapped, and exploited for labour he felt helpless and voiceless because, as a child there is no way for him to escape from there without a strong support. "Child labour is a close adjunct to child migration while trafficking is a critical dimension of such migration that often leads to exploitative child labour." (IPEC 15)

The brutality over children to be submissive towards the oppressors is brought to light through Idrees. He was taken to a place called Mirzapur which is very famous for carpet weaving business. He found more children like him weaving carpets in a lonely house. The factory authorities tormented them to get as much best and quality work they can able to do. "They were tied to looms and beaten into knotting carpets. If they did not perform, they were mercilessly thrashed, hung upside down on trees, their bodies burnt with lighted cigarettes. Many of them carry the scars. They have lost their memories, only the horror remains."(Jung 23) As a child, Idrees knows his physical weakness that he cannot fight with the abductors. Instead of getting

distressed, he surrendered himself to the factory authority and gave sixteen hours of work for a very low wage and unwilling meals. Jain says,

In other words children make up a submissive defenseless labour force with no possibility negotiating their conditions of work (which are usually imposed unilaterally and arbitrarily by the employer), with no trade union to defend them and with virtually no access to or employment injury insurance or social Security schemes (where such exist).”(Jain 337-338)

Through this incident, Jung portrays the realistic picture of many children like Idrees who are forced to work and the factory owner’s inhumanity of squashing the energy of children to get a bulk turnover.

The children depicted in the book except Idrees work for the betterment of their families due to extreme poverty. Parents make use of the loop holes in the Child Labour Act and allow their children for exhausting labour. Here in Idrees’ state, he is a child with single parent and his parent didn’t violate the act but the factory authorities violated the law and made him work illegally. Despite poverty, Idrees’ mother doesn’t wants her son to work. Instead she worked for the needs of her son. Not like other working children, Idrees got proper care and affection from his mother. So that it is much more difficult for him to live a miserable life under the suppression of business people. The raid of South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude rescued number of little boys like Idrees concealed under the thread in the carpet weaving industry. They were beaten up wildly not to open their mouth so that they can’t be identified by the officers. They all are constrained to hold their breath and their voices are dumbed under the thread. After the coughing of one little boy, number of boys were rescued from the threads. The little kids suffocated and struggled for a single breath for hours. The incident highlighted the extreme state

of torture and agony of kidnapped children in the mighty hands of big shots and factory owners. “In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illness and sometimes left to fend themselves on the streets large cities, often at a very early age.” (IPEC 14)

Idrees’ state is deplorable when compared to the other boys hidden under the threads. Unlike others, the brutality to the core has come to light through Idrees as he was buried under the mud in a river bed. When he was rescued by the officers he lost his memories and eye sight. The utmost barbarism over children is exposed to the world through the real life character Idrees. His suffocation and quest for life under the mud resembles the emotional suffocation of each and every children in India whose voices are dumbed by such brutal suppressors. His struggle for a single breath is the struggle of all children whose existence are a life time challenge. Here Jung reminds the question of Spivak “With what voice-consciousness can the subaltern speak?” (Spivak 27) Idrees was blind and lost his memory when he was handed over to his mother. His mother too became blind of crying for her son’s loss. The whole family got ruined by the abduction of a single child. “Idrees lost his memory and bears on his body the scars of being tortured at the carpet manufacturing unit where he worked.” (Jung 134). Jung exemplified the real incident of Idrees for children who lost their families and enforce to toil under the abductors.

Jung has taken child kidnapping an emerging injustice to children into consideration and exposes the horrific truth of throwing children into violence and miseries all over India. Children of proletariat, single parent and middle class are getting into the trap of abduction very easily and sometimes bourgeois children are also kidnapped by money minded people. The purpose of abduction may differ but the consequences are same which cast the innocent little children into

a troublesome life of anguish and distress. This happens not only due to the business mentality of rich people but also due to the negligent of the parents or guardians who is in charge of the children. They are getting tortured physically, mentally and emotionally and scared to raise their voice or fight against them. They are also benign and immature to take any decision to carry over their lives. The innocence and curiosity of children will be utilized by the abductors to cast them into travailed labour. Through Idrees, Anees Jung not only reveals the colonization of children, but also raises her voice, and gives awareness for the parents to safeguard their children from abuse by utmost care.

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