***"A Far Cry from Africa" by- Derek Walcott.***

1. In which year the poem ‘A Far Cry from Africa’by Derek Walcott was published?

Ans. 1962

1. In which year the poem ‘A Far Cry from Africa’by Derek Walcott was written?

Ans. 1950

1. Who were Kikuyu?

Ans. Kikuyu were the learned people of Kenia who made a movement in Kenia against British colonial rule for their freedom, and this movement was called ‘Mau-Mau Movement’.

1. In which year Walcott won Noble Prize?

Ans.1992

1. ***Critically analyse the poem "A Far Cry from Africa" by Derek Walcott.***

**Ans.** Derek Walcott, a poet and Dramatist, was born in 1930 in Saint Lucia. As he was belong to both African and European roots he identifies himself as a mongrel. This mixed heritage makes him able to identify the post colonial situation more effectively and successfully. In the poem "A Far Cry from Africa" the poet ironically describes how he rejects the British culture and the colonial ideology.

The poem "A Far Cry from Africa" belongs to post colonial poetry. Mainly the poem discusses the events of the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya in the early 1950s. It was a bloody battle during the 1950 between the European settlers and the native Kikuyu tribes in Kenya. Kikuyu was the largest and most educated tribe in Kenya. As the British people invaded more and more their land they outrageously reacted. The Kenyan tribes rebelled against the British who stole the motherland of them. The rebellion was under a secret organization called Mau Mau. It is estimated a large number of Kikuyu as well as whites were slaughtered during the process.

The poem starts with the painful jarring harsh experience of the rebellion that changed the tranquil peaceful setting of the country. The nation itself compared to an animal, as it indicates it is an animal like a lion, “tawny pelt” and how Kikuyu started the bloody battle. The Kikuyu are compared to flies who are feeding on blood. Next we are informed the aftermath of the rebellion. The poet describes that the country before the conflict was a ‘paradise’ and with an ironical comment he indicates the death, inhumanity and destruction occurred in the land. There is the juxtaposition of the conflict against something divine with the image of corpses scattered through a paradise. The worms that can be seen as the ultimate emblem of stagnation and decay that cries at the worthless death. Sarcastically poet indicates how the humans are reduced to statistics. And at the same time though scholars justify the presence of white men in Africa and the process of civilizing the natives, the poet indicates the fact that it was a failure with the brutal death of the small white child and his family. People behave like animals ‘savages’ hints and remind us the persecution endured by the Jews. Jews were killed in millions due to their ethnicity during the time of Hitler.

Next the poet creates a picture of white men in searching for natives who are hiding behind the bushes. The sound of ‘ibises’ hints a bad omen. Again the repetition is shown through the word ‘wheeled’. The civilized men thrived on conquering others. This process of violence and conquering each other indicates the law of the jungle. The violence of ‘beast on beast’ can justify according to the law of nature, the law of jungle. Yet it cannot be applied to the ‘upright man’ who are stretching out themselves to reach the ‘divinity’. Apart from the task of stretching themselves to reach ‘divinity’ they end up with ‘inflicting pain’ which is killing and which is the law of jungle; killing for prey. They call for the massacre they create by killing as war. Ironically, wars between people are described as following the beat of a drum — an instrument made of an animal hide stretched over a cylinder. Though the natives think the act of killing white men brings them ‘courage’ it ends up with fear. Moreover the poet emphasizes the fact that though the natives justify their task mentioning it as a ‘brutish necessity’ and considering it as a national cause they just clean their hands with ‘the napkin of dirty cause’. So the poet suggests the fact that the natives’ cause is dirty and ugly though they consider it as right and nationwide. He sees a comparison with the West Indians who had their share of harsh experiences with Spain.

The theme of split identity and anxiety as reflected in "A Far Cry from Africa" by Derek Walcott. A Far Cry from Africa by Derek Walcott deals with the theme of split identity and anxiety caused by it in the face of the struggle in which the poet could side with neither party. It is, in short, about the poet’s ambivalent feelings towards the Kenyan terrorists and the counter-terrorist white colonial government, both of which were 'inhuman', during the independence struggle of the country in the 1950s. The persona, probably the poet himself, can take favor of none of them since both bloods circulate along his veins. He has been given an English tongue which he loves on the one hand, and on the other, he cannot tolerate the brutal slaughter of Africans with whom he shares blood and some traditions. His conscience forbids him to favour injustice. He is in the state of indecisiveness, troubled, wishing to see peace and harmony in the region. Beginning with a dramatic setting, the poem "A Far Cry from Africa" opens a horrible scene of bloodshed in African territory. ‘Bloodstreams’, ‘scattered corpses,’ ‘worm’ show ghastly sight of battle. Native blacks are being exterminated like Jews in holocaust following the killing of a white child in its bed by blacks.

The title of the poem involves an idiom: “a far cry” means an impossible thing. But the poet seems to use the words in other senses also; the title suggests in one sense that the poet is writing about an African subject from a distance. Writing from the island of St. Lucia, he feels that he is at a vast distance both literally and metaphorically from Africa. “A Far Cry” may also have another meaning that the real state of the African ‘paradise’ is a far cry from the Africa that we have read about in descriptions of gorgeous fauna and flora and interesting village customs. And a third level of meaning to the title is the idea of Walcott hearing the poem as a far cry coming all the way across thousands of miles of ocean. He hears the cry coming to him on the wind.

The animal imagery is another important feature of the poem. Walcott believes that human, unlike animals, have no excuse, no real rationale, for murdering non-combatants in the Kenyan conflict. Violence among them has turned into a nightmare of unacceptable atrocity based on color. So, we have the “Kikuyu” and violence in Kenya, violence in a “paradise”, and we have “statistics” that don’t mean anything and “scholar”, who tends to throw their weight behind the colonial policy: Walcott’s outrage is very just by the standards of the late 1960s, even restrained. More striking than the animal imagery is the image of the poet himself at the end of the poem. He is divided, and doesn’t have any escape. “I who am poisoned with the blood of both, where shall I turn, divided to the vein?” This sad ending illustrates a consequence of displacement and isolation. Walcott feels foreign in both cultures due to his mixed blood.

Walcott depicts Africa and Britain in the standard roles of the vanquished and the conqueror, although he portrays the cruel imperialistic exploits of the British without creating sympathy for the African tribesmen. This objectively allows Walcott to contemplate the faults of each culture without reverting to the bias created by attention to moral considerations. Walcott’s divided loyalties engender a sense of guilt as he wants to adopt the “civilized” culture of the British but cannot excuse their immoral treatment of the Africans. The poem reveals the extent of Walcott’s consternation through the poet’s inability to resolve the paradox of his hybrid inheritance. The title itself too indicates the state of mind conflict of the poet, a cry from a great distance away and moreover it shows the alienation and the inferiority of the poet. The poem ends with a picture of violence and cruelty and with the idea of searching for identity.

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