

A Comparative study of Demolishing Platitudinous of Racial Discrimination in "The Sellout" and "Slumberland"

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Abstract - *The Sellout* is a fictional novel, a satirical commentary on race relations in America. The whole story of this novel makes social commentary on stereotypes. Like Paul's other works, this novel is also humorous, but it is also true that Paul does not consider himself a satirical writer. *The Sellout* was published in 2015 by Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, Oneworld Publications (a United Kingdom's publication). *The Sellout* received the 'National Book Critics Circle Award (Fiction) in 2016, while this novel also won the Booker Prize in 2016. This book was traditionally the first American book to win the 'Booker Prize'. Ostensibly, *Slumberland*, Beatty's third novel, seeks to debunk such monolithic and monotonous racial myth-making. *Slumberland* is a story of stereotypes abused and archetypes reclaimed which delights in racial essentialism even as it decries it and dismisses hipness using the hippest touchstones Beatty can lay his hands on.

Keywords - Racial Inequality, Demolishing Platitudinous, Racial Discrimination, Black Racism, African-American Society.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Sellout* begins with the narrator of this novel. Narrator of the novel lives in the fictional town of Dickens (California). The narrator's name is referred to as 'Bonbon'. He is on trial before the Supreme Court for crimes related to his attempt to restore slavery and segregation in his hometown of Dickens. Bonbon sits in front of the court and starts thinking about what happened till now and how? He remembers his childhood days and upbringing. Bonbon had a tenuous relationship with his father. His father was an unorthodox sociologist who held high hopes for Bonbon to become a respected community leader in Dickens. After Bonbon's father was murdered by the police a few years ago, Bonbon struggles to find his life's purpose and his own identity. Bonbon estranges from the community and makes agricultural efforts to grow artisanal watermelons and marijuana, although his father would probably dissuade him from doing so. One day the town of Dickens spontaneously disappears from the map after becoming unincorporated and Bonbon is responsible for this change. "Hearing the words. "Circumnavigate and of demarcation" come out of my mouth made me realize that even though I was making this. Shitup on the spot,

I was more serious about this than I thought I was. and Yew, "I'm bringing back the city of Dickens". (100)

MAIN TEXT

Bonbon sets out to restore Dickens's existence by any means necessary. To draw attention to Dickens's existence, Bonbon enlists the help of an old man, as well as a former child actor (Hominy Jenkins), to paint provocative road signs and boundary lines. But those efforts go in vain. However, even after this he continues in his efforts. During this, Hominy causes a major accident and the incident leads Bonbon to a Supreme Court case. Paul here depicts Bonbon's mental hesitation or lack of confidence. Bonbon wears a suit for the first time and feels uncomfortable. Some salesman had sold this suit to him by persuading him. Here Bonbon lacks confidence due to color. This was because Bonbon was stared at by the jailer. Here it is shown by Paul, how people are stared at because of racism or apartheid and how the victim of these staring eyes becomes uncomfortable by losing their self-confidence. He starts feeling as if there is some kind of deficiency in him due to which he is being stared

at. However, this imagination of his or his thoughts are not real. Second-class behavior caused by apartheid or racism gradually works as a termite on their self-confidence. It is very strange indeed to see a human being defined as a strange type of creature. However, it happens many times that even a normal vision seems to be a vision of racism. Black people's self-confidence is shattered over and over again, so they start seeing everyone else the same way again. Reality is not like this, but their imagination makes them think so. Yes, why not? They are always looked down upon, suppressed and crushed, sometimes not treated as human beings just because they are black. After going through a long history full of sorrows, now some people of dark color are also apprehensive to some extent. He has not been able to recover from the tales of his slavery, because he has still not found such an environment in the society. Paul has not been a part of that history, nor is it his real life experience. But he has composed this novel with great clarity and logical approach. Where it is experienced just by reading the novel, as if we ourselves are living the life of that novel in the form of a story character.

Racial discrimination has a profound effect on children and youth. Apart from the ill effects of racial discrimination on the delicate minds of children, it also has a fatal effect on the youth. Many times, due to racial discrimination, frustration arises in the youth and this frustration also generates anger. This anger can reach any accident or crime. The 'Sellout' depicts the mainstream of racism in American society and also criticizes it. The American mainstream imposes the discourse of racism on the culture, thereby stereotyping minorities on the basis of their ethnicity. "The Sellout" reflects on relevant issues in contemporary America. This novel depicts the marginalized people and their relevant struggle just because of their ethnicity. This novel is actually an attempt to search for individual justice and racial harmony. To address the struggles of African-Americans, Paul imbues the novel with characters of African-American descent. Sometimes the white society understands its purpose to harm the blacks. This novel by Paul basically presents the tension of racism by the slavery system. The narrator of this novel is a person from the black community, who has never committed any crime. But still he happens in the court. He didn't know anything about his mother and his father was killed by the American police. Family crisis is visible in this novel from the very beginning. Discrimination on the basis of color is still considered all over the world. We think that everything has changed and this is the 21st century, but it is not so. The reality is that even today black people are not given equal status. Some youths and children are affected by the racist ideology and they start falling prey to addictions. This novel by Paul basically presents the tension of racism by the slavery system. It is also shown in this novel, how a black man considers himself better than another black man. He thinks that he is the best black person among black people. Sometimes even accepting the reality is avoided by people just because of fear. Black people

feel that the society in which they live is monopolized only by white people and they cannot remove the bitter feeling of slavery from their mind; Or it can be said that we cannot forget. Sometimes, in the race to earn money, people do not get free time from their routine and busy environment, to listen or think about their surroundings or social environment. Through the plot, Paul has shown that for some people, money is more important in life and they do not care about other things.

Beatty's 'The Sellout' book is Booker award winning work, which opens with a veto against the African American stereotypes. The novel's opening introduces the narrator, a black community man who has never committed a labor crime but happens to be in the court. The session of the court begins with Me vs the United States of America As the story begins, the narrator is standing before the supreme court on charges of slavery and racial segregation. In the story, no one uses the narrator's name instead referring to as 'The Sellout'. During roll call Foy never called me by my proper name, but simply yelled, "The Sellout!"(95) He has no name; sometimes 'me' is used for him. It also indicates that he has no personality. It can be interpreted as a slave renaming exercise. During slavery era, slaves are not allowed to use their African names. They are given the surnames of their owners and their purpose is to erase the identity of the slaves The new racism is based on the culture of the blacks and whites. That is, the Western culture as the highest in the society. It molds their spirits as powerful. There is cultural racism prevalent among the people, which is well illustrated in Beatty's "The sellout" That's the problem with history, we like to think it's a book- that we can turn the page and move the fuck on. But history isn't the paper it's printed on. It is memory, and memory is time, emotions, and song. History is the things that the stay with you". (115) 'Me' suffers from an identity crisis and feels unrecognized in the novel. His father taught him to answer two basic questions. "Who am I? And how may I become myself?" (39) Eventually, Hominy becomes the narrator's slave, and Hominy expresses his desire to become the narrator's slave. Hominy says to the narrator. "Sometimes we just have to accept who we are and we have to act accordingly. I'm a slave. That is who I am. It is the role I was born to play. A slave who just also happens to be an actor. But being black ain't method of acting." (77)

Things like discrimination and abuse on the basis of ethnicity are common in the United States, but Paul has successfully demonstrated how black people have their daily lives and daily aspects. How do they experience racism on a daily basis and how does it affect them? Paul has taken the risk to explain to all those involved in the racial process that racism is a stereotype by sarcasm in a way through his novel. In the process, he confronts the stereotypes that are common to African Americans in the United States. Paul's portrayal of people of color in entertainment takes on serious topics such as gentrification, police

brutality, and ongoing segregation across the United States in a worldly and equanimity. They don't argue in the guise of racism. But the truth is, even today people hesitate to sit next to a black man on the bus.

The idea of slavery and racism is also presented in 'The Sellout'. Taking theoretical insights from Paul, the discourse of racism in mainstream American culture is implemented. Through several characters, the injustice of American society calls for the need for racial harmony. To address the feelings of African-Americans, Beatty assimilated his voice with characters of African-American descent and expressed his dissatisfaction with racist thinking. Paul has discussed a variety of issues through his novels - Characterizing racism, slavery, discrimination from a human perspective and critiquing racism in the context of contemporary American society and its impact on American society. The sellout novel primarily focuses on, How are white people?

Regarding The Sellout the literary critic Peter Kennelly writes, "This is not to say that Beatty soft soaps the realities of black life in the ghetto: it is just that, operating at the rhetorical, external level he does, they are a bit too easy to read about without suffering any lacerations at all" (9)

Amanda Foreman, the head of the judging panel, said at a press briefing in London before the winner was announced. It plunges into the heart of contemporary American society. The Sellout novel resembles around the real place of America, because it helps more easy to counter and critique the values of the society. Places of America California, Washington DC, White House. In simple representation of real place of USA, it presents the mainstream values.

Elijah Anderson, a renowned scholar in the field of literary and criticism, defines discrimination in the American context as "almost every black person in America has experienced the sting of disrespect on the basis of being black. A large but undetermined number of black people feel acutely discrimination they everyday lives, discrimination they see as both subtle and explicit" (7)

The Sellout brings the reference of President Barak Obama, the reference of Obama uses here is political. To show the conflict between the black and the white communities. The main concern of author is to show the racial issue at novel. Beatty uses the clash and irony to bring out the issue of racism and to critique it. Politically and economically, African-American people have made changes after the long effort. The Civil Right Movement has granted rights and duties for black people and it has been said that it is the period of post-racial era and those issue of racism, like segregation, marginalization and conflict have been completely abolished from the society. Even today African- American people not get equal right as think and as like we guess, but reality was different. On the basis of color and the attitude of people was different.

So, Paul Beatty present that both president Obama and Trump cannot accept racial equality as simply way thou President Donald J. Trump presents as resists. So, the author presents voice of raises the voice against the social structure.

Things like discrimination and abuse on the basis of ethnicity are common in the United States, but Paul has successfully demonstrated how black people have their daily lives and daily aspects. How do they experience racism on a daily basis and how does it affect them? Moreover, institutional racism relies on the active and pervasive operation of anti-black attitudes and practices to maintain superiority. The statement whites are better than the blacks therefore black should be subordinated is a racist attitude, and it permeates the American society on both the individual and institutional level. Consequently, many social problems like exclusion of an individual and some group, violent attacks and different types of conflicts occur in the society. Such kinds of racist behaviors of state's institutions make black life very complicated in America. In constitutional's articles all citizens are equal but in practice blacks are facing discriminations everywhere. Thomas Jackson writes: "Dictionaries are not much help in understanding what is meant by the word. They usually define it as the belief that one's own ethnic stock is superior to others, or as the belief that culture and behavior are rooted in race. When Americans speak of racism they mean a great deal more than this" (1). Here Jackson's point is for American context, race is not only biological and physical differences between two persons as dictionaries define it. But it is a significant factor to determine one's social, economical and political status. So the dictionaries' definition can not include the whole emotions, feelings and experiences of the black community in the American society. It also unable to include the hatred, feeling of superior and prejudices of white towards the black.

At the core of Slumberland is a melancholy, that of a black man in a universe of whiteness. One who is living the pure sorrow of never being seen and also the deep sorrow of being unable to see himself. Perhaps it is the point of the tasteful tone. that one can never really get to the heart of a difficult question using tropes and ideas. Ringing the bell of personal truth, the hero of this novel is full of cultural sentimentality. It is not acknowledged by Paul, that Darky has any kind of privilege over a power and that many blacks do not have, to make his place in the world so intelligently. Perhaps an invisible mass of blackness is the basis for Darky's journey of discovery. It is necessary to explore this idea in this novel, as it is arguing against a monolithic notion of blackness. Perhaps there is some truth in Paul Gilroy's view that race and class go hand in hand. The breakout novel from a literary virtuoso about a disaffected Los Angeles DJ who travels to post-Wall Berlin in search of his transatlantic doppelganger. Hailed by the New York Times and the Los Angeles

Times as one of the best writers of his generation. Paul Beatty turns his incisive eye to man's search for meaning and identity in an increasingly chaotic world. After creating the perfect beat. DJ Darky goes in search of Charles Stone, a little-known avant-garde jazzman, to play over his sonic masterpiece. His quest brings him to a recently unified Berlin, where he stumbles through the city's dreamy streets ruminating about race, sex, love, Teutonic gods, the prevent defense, and Wynton Marsalis in search of his artistic and spiritual-other. Ferocious, bombastic, and laugh-out-loud funny. *Slumberland* is vintage Paul Beatty and belongs on the shelf next to Jonathan Lethem, Colson Whitehead, and Junot Diaz. "Blackness is passé and I for one couldn't be happier, because now I'm free to go to the tanning salon if I want to, and I want to." (*Slumberland*, Page No.-4) The novel *Slumberland* begins with the claim that Blackness is over. But in a West Berlin bar called *Slumberland*, white women go to pick up black immigrants and African workers. Beatty's disdain for the polite conventions of African-American literature may be shared. The narrator is depicted engrossed in his quest - "I asked Doris if she knew Charles Stone. She shrugged and asked me to describe him. I got out, "Black... musician...older gentleman", before I realized I was describing half the bar's clientele, and that I didn't even know what the Schwa looked like."(*Slumberland*, Page No.-61)

In this research, I have analyzed it from the point of racism. Paul gives the image of racial discrimination in contemporary American society. He also shows the double standards of American establishment in the case of liberalism. His characters protest against such discrimination and raise the voice for equal rights. Finally, Paul's satires the American establishment and tells how their liberal agenda is being dysfunctional. The consciousness of color or skin base discrimination in modern phenomena is quite less but until it was deeply rooted. Mainly human was being classification on the basis of race. Race began to be understood as a biological factor and racial hierarchy. It was done so the level of cultural in the society and it creates the high and low culture and American value too. In this context, Margaret M. Russell, the Associate Professor of law from Santa Clara University America, writes, "The concept of 'representing race' within the context of everyday legal practice is neither new nor voluntarily learned; at a basic level, it is what we do whenever we enter a courtroom or conference room in the predominantly white legal system" (766). From the very lines we see that the concept of race shifted from economical biological factor to, social, and other factor like political too. It is not only the tool we use it as sake of literary tool but it also uses reformation and change the idea and concept. Thus, the use of critique help now day to counter the mainstream value of American society and want to reformation in the short period. The formation of development of recent American society was unacceptable for Black, Afro-American and third world people because they must improve policy level as well as law. Therefore, the novel *The Sellout* critiques the mainstream American values to

fulfilled racial value and equality for all who have dominate from long time. White people facial was white but they seems like black in the core of heart because it need to be behave like white, they consider as like god and superior than other community not only that they feel themselves very special. But the critique and counter is that how they can be near to super power and god? In the novel author criticize white attitude through the deconstruction, contextual voice and counter the mainstream value.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, both novels (*The Sellout* & *Slumberland*) of Paul demonstrates the awakening self through the unknown black narrator in white hegemonic society. It is also about the marginalized black people who dare to raise their voice in racist society. Black peoples consciousness towards their dignity, life, liberty and pursuit of happiness helps them to regain their lost identity. Paul's novels *The Sellout* & *Slumberland* plays the important role of agency to present the voice for voiceless people.

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