

SALLY MORGAN'S *MY PLACE*: A PERSONAL SAGA OF COLONIZATION IN AUSTRALIA.

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Abstract

Sally Morgan is an eminent writer of Australia. She is the recipient of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's Award in 1987 and also, the Western Australian Citizen of the year for Arts, Literature and Culture in 1989. The novel *My Place*, first published in 1987 is an autobiographical account of her kith and kin who had to undergo tremendous trauma on account of European colonization in Australia. In this book, she narrates the forced assimilation of the aboriginals into the 'white' community through coercive methods authenticated by law. To redeem her family's dignity, the authoress goes down the lane of history by meeting many people who would help her give details of the past about them. She learns how the aboriginals were alienated from their own homeland. So the title of her novel is expressing the rights of the natives of Australia over their motherland.

Key words: Aboriginals, Alienated, Australia, colonization, 'forced assimilation', rights, trauma.

Introduction

This book by Sally Morgan traces the colonial onslaught in Australia which began in the eighteenth century and pushed the natives on the periphery through forceful domination. Hitherto it had been believed that the European settlement on this island was a peaceful one as they just went to this uninhabited place and brought out the much needed development. However, Morgan unearths this falsity and proves that the colonizers unleashed a well plan strategy of domination for generations that resulted in not only exploitation and subversion, but also making them into different people from what they were, due to planned biological intervention of human birth.

As the narrator-protagonist of the novel she mentions the difficult childhood she had. Her father was an ex-army man who had become alcoholic on account of the traumatic experience that he had in the wars and his being unemployed at home. Her mother was a courageous woman however raising five children took a toll on her as well, especially after her husband's death. The mother did odd jobs and worked in different shifts in order to support the family. While at school, Sally was asked by the other school children as what country she had come from. The query was shocking as Sally believed she was from Australia like everyone else in school. So she comes home and asks her mother,

What do you mean where we come from? I mean what country? The kids at
school want me to know what country we come from. They reckon we are

not Aussies. Are we Aussies. mum? (Morgan 38)

To which Sally's mother snubbed her by saying that she should reply that she is an Indian. This pacified the daughter for a moment but it raised more questions that would come to Sally later on. Why weren't they accepted in the society as natives even though they and their family members were born in Australia. Many critics have made extensive study and found out that the aboriginals of Australia were blacks called Nyoongars. They were the original inhabitants of the place. However, the aboriginals were either annihilated or pushed out of the mainstream society by the colonizers. These views are authenticated in *Sally Morgan's My Place. A Critical Study* by Dhawan and Mitra.

And Sally comes to know of her aboriginal ancestry for the time when she finds her grandmother Nan crying one day. She complained that the children don't need or love her anymore as she is a 'black grandmother'. To which Jill replies "Boongs, we are Boongs" (Morgan 98). And then there is a series of back and forth conversation between Jill and Sally of which some excerpts are as follows

A Boong, you know, Aboriginal. God, of all things, we a Aboriginals. 'Oh', I suddenly understood. There was a great deal of social stigma attached to being Aboriginal in our school... They are like animals, don't they. We like animals.

(Morgan 98)

When Sally grows up she is able to study in a University due to the hard work of her mother and by availing one Scholarship meant for the Aboriginal people. With this she begins the daunting task of finding her roots and decides to write a book on her family's heritage. She decides to carry out a research on the Aboriginal history especially in Western Australia. She began by meeting and listening to stories of her grandmother and her siblings, finding her mother's birth's certificate, endlessly visiting relatives and eliciting information from them. And from all her efforts she comes to know that the aboriginals had to face a very harsh living because the colonizers had their own axe to grind. Firstly, the aboriginals were made to live in ghettos. They had to put up in these Settlements so that the 'white' people are able to live separately on their own terms while the former were left there to languish or die. The living conditions in these Settlements weren't healthy as a result many aboriginals died or lived in poverty and humiliation. However the worst trauma was a practice called Stolen Generation. The children of the aboriginals were forcibly taken away from their parents and put into Missions or given to foster parents who were 'white' in order to be brought up as Christians. Gladys tells Sally that she was sent to Parkerville Children's Home at the age of three. Arthur, Sally's uncle was taken away to the Anglican Mission. Daisy was taken away from her home when she was fourteen. She thought she was going to study whereas she was sent to Drake-Brockmans to work as a maid. Daisy's cousin Helen was sent to Moori River reserve. So these kids were raised to become handy workers and also exploited in every way. Their childhood was robbed and emotional ties brutally snapped. The term 'biopolitics' coined by Michel Foucault can be used to explain the plight of the natives. This term means a situation in which

people are denegated to the level of objects and treated as per the will of an dominating agency with total disregard to their concerns and feelings. In this context it would be conducive to put the views of Dhawan and Mitra. They mention that a federation was established in 1901 and all states of Australia developed and implemented the Acts for the protection of Aborigines. The Protection Acts of the various states had certain common features like

1. Aboriginal people did not have the right to vote.
2. The Aborigines could leave their reserves for a very short time and only with the permission of the Manager. Besides, each had to carry a permit.
3. The children of the Aborigines were wards of the State and could be separated from their parents and placed in Homes.
4. Aboriginal people could be arrested without a warrant.
5. The 'whites' were not allowed to socialize with Aborigines.

So, whatever the colour of the population of Australia is, the fact of the matter remains that historically, it were the Aborigines who were the original inhabitants of the island. They were blacks called Nyoongars. It was because of the colonizing policies of the colonisers that the blacks were either annihilated or made extinct by the white men sleeping with aboriginal women to bring up a white race. The protagonist's mother admits that Sally's father was a white man too.

Works Cited

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