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The Power of Story Telling in the Novel *Red Tea* Adapted as the Film *Paradesi*: The Literary and the Cinematic

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Abstract

This article undertakes a comparative analysis of the portrayal of poverty and suffering in Paul Harris Daniel's novel *Red Tea* and the Tamil film *Paradesi***.** Both works delve into the harsh realities faced by impoverished communities, highlighting their struggles, resilience, and the systemic injustices that perpetuate their sufferings. Through a thematic exploration, this study elucidates the narrative techniques employed by the respective creators to depict the socio-economic hardships experienced by the protagonists and their communities. Additionally, it examines the cultural and contextual nuances that shape the representation of poverty and exploitation in the two mediums. By juxtaposing the literary and cinematic interpretations, this analysis aims to deepen our understanding of the universal themes of human endurance and dignity amidst adversity. Ultimately, this comparative study underscores the power of storytelling in fostering empathy and social consciousness towards the plight of marginalized populations.

Keywords: Exploitation, Marginalised, Voiceless, Injustice

1. Introduction

In the realms of literature and cinema, narratives often serve as powerful vehicles for illuminating the struggles and resilience of marginalized communities. Paul Harris Daniel's novel *Red Tea* and the Tamil film *Paradesi* stand as poignant testaments to this notion, both offering compelling depictions of the enduring suffering experienced by the impoverished. Through their respective mediums, these works delve into the depths of poverty, exploitation, and societal neglect, portraying the harsh realities faced by their protagonists and their communities. In this comparative analysis, we aim to explore the thematic parallels and narrative techniques employed by Daniel and the creators of *Paradesi* to bring to light the plight of the downtrodden. By examining the cultural contexts and artistic choices inherent in these works, we seek to unravel the universal truths about human endurance and dignity amidst adversity, thereby shedding light on the socio-economic injustices that continue to afflict our world. Through this exploration, we hope to underscore the transformative power of storytelling in fostering empathy and advocating for social change.

Karl Marx's concepts which held that capitalists could only gain richer by lowering wages, hence diminishing the living conditions of workers until they had no alternative but to revolt, is echoed in the widely held claim that the affluent become richer and the poor get poorer. The subaltern, a topic of dispute in India even after independence, was illustrated in the current study. Through his book *Red Tea***,** Paul Harris Daniel addressed the topics of capitalism, feudalism, colonialism, and imperialism. The Tamil version of the English novel *Red Tea***,** *Eriyum Panikadu***,** served as the inspiration for the Tamil film *Paradesi***.**

2. Aim of the Study

The primary goal of the study is to shed light on social injustice and exploitation. It attempts to further understanding of the relationship between literary works

and their film adaptations. The statement might be interpreted as a critique of the capitalist system, as the elite class gains from the inexpensive labour provided by coolies. The study explores the terrible realities that uninformed individuals face in Indian society. It focuses on how the hardships faced by the protagonists serve as a mirror for larger societal injustices.

3. The Personal Observation of the Author Paul Harris Daniel

The main concern of this paper focuses on the Novel *Red Tea* by Paul Harris. Tea plantations in India during British colonization involved the forced labour of poor South Indian plains people to labour on tea plantations in the Eastern Ghat hills. The author, Paul Harris Daniel was born in Agatheeswaran, Nagercoil in 1910. He was chief medical officer in Periakaramalai Group Hospital, and Mudis Estate Hospitals in Valparai from 1941 to 1965, these hospitals treated people who were working in the tea plantation estates. He also acted as a union organiser. He and his family resided in a bungalow supplied by the nearby plantation company. At Valparai, he launched the Anaimalai Staff Association cooperative movement. He planned an event at Valparai Ground as part of his election campaign. In the unspecified year, he invited Mr. T M Soundararajan and LR Easwari. He had been a devout Christian but never took part in the Christianization of plantation labourers. He never stopped advocating for the welfare of plantation employees, their health, sanitary living circumstances, etc. The campaign for Bharat Scouts and Guides began at the Plantation School (PeriaKaramalai Aided Middle School), where Mr P Israel was the Head Master at the time. On seeing the plight of the people there, he was moved to write a novel about the hardships of those people. The comparative research demonstrates that to target the visual audience, commercial adjustments are necessary for the novel's adaptation into a movie.

4. Lack of Awareness of the Illiterates

In 1925 plot of the novel *Red Tea* begins with the character *Karupan*and *Valli,* who is living in Mylodai, Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu, India. He earns his livelihood with the wages of any kind of labour. The pay he receives is just a pittance which has not fulfilled any need of his own or his family. Kayatharu is the nearest village, which is the junction for all villages around it. At regular intervals, there is a fair in Kayatharu and ill-treatment of the slaves by the owners and employers is quite common there. The novelist made sure to portray the existing culture and lifestyle in South Tamil Nadu. This novel also gives details of aggressive efforts taken by the upper caste people to prevent the publication of the book. The way the novelist has described the dwelling of Karupan (a black-skinned person) the wretched squalid life led by the untouchables. Once he went to Kayatharu *s*earching for work, he met a supervisor, who asked him to work in the Aanamalai estate. After discussing with his mother and wife, he points out a man named Vairamuthu, a fellow villager who has become prosperous after working there. Finally, they decided to leave for Aanamalai estate. As Karupan and Valli, many people are procured by the same supervisor to work in the Aanamalai estate.

After they reach the estate, the very next day they eagerly wait to witness the world which is supposed to make them prosperous. They are registered to work in the estate soon after undergoing a medical examination. When the protagonist reports his illness to his boss, the supervisor disregards it and forces him to appear for work after a few days. They finally realise they are in an inferno which they presupposed to be Utopia. After a few days, Karuppan's wife Valli also becomes ill. She fights hard for a while to gain the consent of the supervisor to visit the hospital. The hospital is in terrible shape. The patients are given the medication by the peon in the doctor's absence, unaware of its suitability. Valli's condition worsens and she even slips unconscious in the following months of June, and July the monsoon starts and brings in an outbreak of communicable diseases. In the rainy season, it is impossible to stay in their hut. They are staying with a patriarch called Muthaiah.

5. The Futility of Living

Labour contractors Kanganies, or masteries, are appointed by higher caste Hindus to serve their ends. They offer cash advances to landless labourers from the plains to induce them to move to the hills. Journalist and historian Ranjit Das Gupta notes that this often meant that debt is transferred from the hereditary landholder or moneylender to the planter and contractor. Workers are not permitted to leave until their debt has been paid off,

which in many cases takes years of work on the plantation, a situation economic historians characterize as 'debt bondage' P.H. Daniel has novelised the account of labour conditions in south India and describes living conditions on plantations. In *Red Tea*, Daniel details the process by which advances are given and debt bondage occurs, the inadequate housing and poor health facilities, and the near impossibility of escape from this predicament. Many die of illness even at their viable ages due to the failure of sanitation and ominous bloodthirsty leeches from all around the estates. Hundreds of people migrate from their villages but only a few remain alive during these struggles. The story ends with the protagonist realises if he had not chosen this life he would have not lost his little daughter and his caring wife, but time had passed already and he had to go into the slush of the tea estate for another day's life and to feed his remaining blood to the leeches of the forest. The film concludes with the lovers' reunion amid the harsh existence in the tea plantation.

6. *Red Tea* Depiction on Silver Screen

From the White Pages to the Silver Screen, this research paper draws inspiration from The novel *Red Tea* which is adapted into the Tamil film *Paradesi*. Bala is the writer and director of the 2013, Tamil- film *Paradesi*, which means "Vagabond". In that film actors and actresses Atharvaa, Vedhika, and Dhansika starred realistically. The movie portrays the lives of impoverished, carefree villagers who are persuaded to labour on tea plantations and how they are compelled to live out the remainder of their days as slaves without any possibility of escape or hope. *Paradesi* is set in a British-run tea plantation near Munnar in the late 1930s. A scheming middleman, addressed as "Kankani" (supervisor), connives to get the residents of a poor Tamil village to work on a plantation in exchange for a respectable income. These innocent people had no idea that they will spend the rest of their lives as "coolies" at a tea plantation, forced into slavery. It's a double-edged sword: those who attempt to flee risk having their calf muscles severed, while those who grudgingly remain suffer from torture and fatal illnesses. Succinctly put, they are doomed to be slaves for the rest of their lives and cannot escape the tormenting ordeal of servitude.

In the early years of the British Raj, Raasa (Atharvaa) is a carefree young man who lives in a small village in the Madras Presidency. Having been abandoned at a young age, his grandmother raises him. A local girl, Angamma (Vedhika) falls in love with him. They get close and quickly let the whole Hamlet know they are in love after she at last admits her emotions for him. Raasa's mother disagrees, saying he should not marry anyone because he is unemployed and careless. Raasa then moves to the village nearby to look for employment. A kindly Kangani who thereafter accompanies Raasa back to his village is encountered by him. The Kangani provide employment opportunities for the locals at the highland British tea plantations. He assures them of good housing and generous pay. Raasa gives his consent to the Kangani, like many of the villagers in the hopes of being able to send money home each month to help his ailing grandmother. Watching him go makes Angamma and his grandmother heartbroken. Things are not as the Kangani promised when Raasa and the villagers eventually make it to the tea estate. With an iron grip, the Kangani and his goons control the plantation. The management of the British plantation has no regard for the labourers. Raasa befriends Maragadham (Dhansika), the wife and kid of the lone worker who has managed to flee the plantation thus far, and her small daughter. Raasa receives a letter from his grandmother stating that Angamma now lives with her after her family finds out she is pregnant with his child. At one point in the story, workers realize that they have been made slaves to the British imperialists. Raasa feels homesick and tries to escape from the place but unfortunately, he is caught by the Kangani's henchmen and cuts the left leg's main bone, just like every other worker who had tried to escape and failed. Many plantation labourers, including one of Raasa's villagers, perish quickly due to a pandemic outbreak. An English socialite requests that the plantation management treat the labourers with a licensed physician during a tea party. A Madras-based physician, disguised as an Indian Christian convert, visits the plantation with his English spouse. But instead of attending to the ailing employees, they are occupied with attempts to convert them to the Christian faith. Towards the end of the plot, Raasa's time at the plantation draws to an end. Sadly, he is unable to attend to Maragadham's illness and her eventual death. After that, he adopts her daughter and bids his time to go. He is later informed, though, that in addition to inheriting Maragadham's debt to the plantation from her parents, he also bears the responsibility of working there for nearly ten more years to pay it all off. He sees fresh slaves being brought in as he sits upon a hill and

bemoans his lot in life. Angamma and their son are visible to him among them. He chases after them and, with tears in his eyes, declares that they have both ventured into the depths of hell.

7. Conclusion

The aim and thesis statement demonstrate the social injustice and advance our comprehension of the connection between literary works and their cinematic adaptations. Since the elite class benefits from the cheap labour supplied by coolies, it may also be seen as a critique of the capitalist system. Examines the awful realities that ignorant people must deal with in Indian society. It focuses on how the protagonists' struggles act as a reflection of broader societal inequities. Even though the story takes place during the British era, inequality is prevalent in our culture today. Since labourers' cheap labour is used to enrich the wealthy class. Educated people or graduates in particular make meagre compensation as specified in the quote, "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer" is an aphorism attributed to Percy Bysshe Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry.* In addition to that, the above statement proves that wealth inequality is a complicated problem with many underlying causes. It is not only the case of the rich domineering and the poor contemplating. When talking about wealth disparity, it is critical to take the larger political, social, and economic structures into account. The distribution of wealth is also shaped by sociological and historical causes. Wealth disparities can be sustained by economic policies and institutions, as well as systemic problems such as unequal access to healthcare, education, and employment prospects.