

# HOME AS A MYTHICAL PLACE FOR DIASPORIC PEOPLE: A POST-COLONIAL STUDY OF DEREK WALCOTT'S DREAM ON MONKEY MOUNTAIN

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## Abstract:

This research paper explores that how 'home' becomes a mythic place for Diasporas in Derek Walcott's play *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. It analyses a Caribbean Negro, Makak's quest for 'home' and identity in a colonized multicultural West Indies. Living on the island, he feels excluded from the sense of belongingness to the land and he is subjugated by White colonizers due to his fact of blackness. Hence, he develops a desire for home and considers Africa as his land of origin. After return to roots, he feels himself a misfit in that culture and thus home becomes a place of no-return. The exploratory and explanatory approaches have adopted for this research paper. Therefore, it is qualitative in nature rather than quantitative. Its groundings are laid on postcolonial diaspora theory. They have strong feelings of attachment to their "homeland" (Safran).. The text of the play, *Dream on Monkey Mountain* will be used as the primary source for research and also John McLeod's *Beginning Post colonialism* for theoretical perception. By the study of this research, future scholars will be able to understand the concepts of Diaspora, home, hybridity and ambivalence in postcolonial diasporic Caribbean writings.

**Key Words:** *Post colonialism, Hybridity, Multiculturalism, Ambivalence, Caribbean Negros*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Derek Walcott is a Nobel Laureate poet and playwright of West India. Being a mulatto, he is conscious of multiculturalism of Caribbean society and its conflicts. Therefore, his works explore the aftermaths of colonialism on the Black West Indians in form of hybridity, identity loss, boundaries of race, desire of home, political chauvinism, diaspora, etc. The quest of Caribbean identity and desire for home are the primary concerns of his works. He blends the indigenous and European identity to form a new. He suggests in his essay "What the Twilight Says: An Overture" that a writer must use his "schizophrenia, and fusion of the old and new self" for the creative purposes. The fusion of culture and imagination is also present in the play *Dream on Monkey Mountain*.

*Dream on Monkey Mountain* is a phantasmagoria and a theatrical masterpiece of Walcott. It is a postcolonial allegory of Caribbean Negros in which Walcott searches their home through the character of Makak. He is an old and lunatic charcoal burner who destroys things in a local café at the death of his friend Moustique. He is arrested by Corporal Lestrade, a mulatto who enforces the foreign laws on the natives and despises his fellow Negros. With the help of Makak, he regains his faith and accepts his blackness. He follows Makak with the two prisoners, Tigre and Souris, in his travel to Africa and promotes black law. He instigates the protagonist to kill the white apparition to get rid from the desire to be White.

Makak visions Africa as his real home because he feels rejected by the colonizers and desires for home. A white goddess appears in his dream and tells him that he is the descendants of warriors and king of Africa. She urges him to go back to Africa. After travelling to his land of origin

in the dream, he murders the white goddess. But he feels alienation from the culture of Africa and returns Monkey Mountain with the acknowledgement of this place as his home. In an interview by J.P. White (1996), Walcott says, "I say, he goes back to his mountain. When he goes back to his mountain, it's his mountain. It belongs to him (pp166). It suggests that Makak accepts his belongingness to Monkey Mountain by giving up the idealization of both European and African origins. His search for home ends with reconciliation to multicultural West Indies.

This paper aims to explore the quest of 'home' and diaspora identities of Negroes in Caribbean colonized islands. For this purpose, Derek Walcott's play *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1976) will be examined in terms of home as a mythical place for Diasporas. The displaced people can relive the past self-identity in their dreams only than in the reality of multicultural community. The objective of the research is to show that how migrants return to their land of origin become difficult in reality. Although, they can visit that place geographically but cannot reconcile themselves with present cultural norms of the old country owing to their acculturation. Thus, this study is important in research of Caribbean diasporic writings. It involves inductive research methodology for the discussion and conclusion.

## 2. Research Problems/ Statements:

The research aims to seek answers of the following questions:

- A. What is Walcott's justification for Makak's diasporic identity in the Caribbean island, St Lucia in his play *Dream on Monkey Mountain*?
- B. How does home become a mythical place of desire and play its role in the acknowledgement of individuality in Walcott's play?

3. **Limitations of the Study / Research Methodology:** The research is analytical because its primary focus is on the text of Walcott's play *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. The scholarly articles and research journals are also examined as the secondary sources of information. To explore the thematic concerns of the research, Postcolonial diaspora identities by John McLeod work as the theoretical framework in the analysis of the play.

4. **Significance of the novel:** The objectives of this study are to analyze the loss of home and search of identity of Negroes in a diasporic society and reconciliation with the hybrid identity through the character of Makak. This study is significant as it deals with the aftermaths of colonization in form of diaspora, racism, multiculturalism, identity crisis, and hybridity. It fills the gap in research of postcolonial diaspora literature of West Indies. It proposes that "home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination" (Avtar Brah). The diasporic people desire to go back to their home to find their true identity so that they can enjoy the power in their own space but come across to the realization of hybridity that makes home a place of nowhere.

## 5. LITERATURE REVIEW:

This paper explores the mythical place of home in diaspora identities that is examined by many postcolonial theorists, to scrutinize Makak's search for home and identity in Walcott's play. As Josephs (2010) argues that this play is a fantasy in which, the mad protagonist dreams of returning to Africa in search of his identity. In this context, it is notable to define diaspora, home, myth and hybridity.

Diaspora means dispersion of people from the land of origin to a new with the sense of attachment to the old country. As John McLeod (2000) quotes Robert Cohen to define it, Ashcroft et al defines diaspora as, the voluntary or involuntary migration of peoples from their land of origin to a foreign land, is the result of colonization (pp 68-70). Bhabha (1994) in *Location of culture* coins a term 'unhomely' for diasporic communities. Unhomed means the dislocation of culture, ambivalences and ambiguities. Brah (1997) argues that the concept of diaspora puts the discourse of 'home' and 'dispersion' in a creative tension, develop a homing desire while critiquing the discourses of fixed origins (pp 192-93). McLeod suggests in his book *Beginning Post colonialism* (2000) that home has an important role in humans lives. It gives them a sense of their place in the world and sense

of belongingness (p 210). Like Diasporas, home is also a construction of human psychology. Just as Avtar Brah (1997) points out, "Home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination". In this context, the migrants glorify the image of their home, which differs from reality.

According to Armstrong (2005), myth is an ability to think or conceive something from the past to reality that does not actually exist in the present reality. Avtar Brah asserts "Home is a place of no-return, even if it is possible to visit the physical territory that is viewed by migrants as place of origin". Hall (1988) states that diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves a new, through transformation and difference. McLeod explains that 'it is race or ethnicity in the discourse of nationalism that develops the individual sense of rootedness within the homogenized community. While in diasporas, one's identity emerges in the 'in-between' position of someone (p 214). Bhabha stresses that the 'in-between' spaces help to elaborate and differentiate the selfhood and new hybrid identities. The concept of hybridity is significant in Diasporas because it helps to think beyond fixed and binary notions of identity depends on views of rootedness and cultural or racial purity (Itd. In McLeod. 2000, p 219).

Hogan (2007) comments that Walcott's play is all about the constitution of colonial identity, its development, varied forms and a response to the social and personal identities in the world. Brown argues, "Walcott's play focuses instead on the multicultural unity of black American and Caribbean experience." Haney declares that dream in Walcott's play proposes that realization of cultural hybridity can be achieved effectively through a visionary experience. The play is the Myth of Edenic Possibilities that desires to create a second Paradise in the Caribbean land (Guerin et al., 1985, p. 187). This paper is based on the qualitative research methodology. It analyzes the text of the play following the theory of diaspora. It suggests that diaspora offers new possibilities to view identity and sense of belongingness.

## 6. Critical Analysis:

According to Derek Walcott (1970), the play is a dream that exists in the mind of its protagonist and the writer's. Therefore, it can be interpreted in various dimensions by its readers (p 290). The whole play revolves round the visions of Makak. As Dasht Peyma (2009) points out that Makak's travel to Africa is the result of White goddess inspiration. He says that his return to the land of origin and his escapement in the jungle, both are the constructions of his mind. Symbolically, dreams represent the collective quest of Caribbean peoples' for rootedness in the land (p 159).

The play is set in an unnamed island of West India. Most of the action in the play happens in the jail that is a real place. Walcott investigates the Caribbean quest for identity and home. He portrays predicaments of black people and their struggle in identity-making, in the backdrop of colonialism and multiculturalism of West Indies. On this place, the people come from different regions of Africa and Europe for plantation, trade and other purposes. Those people bring their cultures over there and thus it is difficult to tell about the original and true Caribbean culture. Hence, this play enacts the ambivalent relationships between Europe and Africa.

The play starts with the quotation of Sartre in which he says that a colonized person becomes mad by rejecting his own self-identity due to the hatred imposed on his psyche by the colonizers' sense of superiority. Then the prologue starts with the jail scene and appearance of chorus, two prisoners, Corporal Lestrade and Makak. Corporal has arrested Makak to interrogate him about the destruction of things in the local café. Lestrade is the spokesperson of the White's law and hegemony on the island. He has lost his self-identity and become a mulatto. He condemns his fellow black men as they are 'animals, beasts, savages' and nasty (Walcott.1970, p 216). He racializes all the blacks as savage Niggers. According to his theory of 'genesis' (p 216), all apes transform into humans because God call them man except one group i.e. niggers. They do not evolve and remain monkeys. Thus colonizers reject the humanity of Negros. Then he asks some questions from Makak about his name, race and religion.

In the response of Lestrade's investigation, he says that he wants to go home because he is tired. Corporal asks him Africa is his home. Makak's response shows his despair to being 'rootless'. He is tired of being a stranger in the country and having no personal values because he does not have his own dominant cultural roots in the island. Consequently, he desires for home and true identity of self that he has forgotten due to his inferiority complex of being Black and idealization

of Whites. McLeod argues that living in the Diasporas, the people feel banished from the sense of belongingness to 'the new country' and they are mocked by the colonizers due to their cultural practices in the new land (p 208). The migrants or the colonized develop a sense of inferiority and sense of having no home because of being rootless. They start to think about the old country as home.

According to Robin Cohen (1997), Diasporas can be defined as the societies of people in a nation who think that they have emotional attachment to language, culture and religion of their old country. Hence, it always exists in their psychology and influences them emotionally (p 9). Next, the mock trial scene begins in Walcott's play. In which, Lestrade becomes a lawyer who puts Makak's case before two judges, Tigre and Souris. He says that Makak is docile like an animal and tells about the damage done by Makak in local market. Corporal explains that 'he claims about himself as healer and savior of his Black race and successor of African kingship' (p 225). He censures his claim by saying that it is his lens to view himself as superior but there is no reality.

#### 7. Post-Colonial Analysis from text:

Makak presents himself as a mad old man to make a defense of his avow in the market. He exclaims of vision about the woman who appears in God-like figure and tells him about his identity as 'God's warrior' (p 226). Afterwards, he starts a long speech by addressing Corporal. He reflects on his inferiority of race and color. He never looks into the reflection of the water while drinking water from the stream for thirty years. Before drinking, he stirs the water to 'break the image' of himself (p 226). He despises his skin color because his black color makes him to feel inferior to colonizers. He does not want to see his image in the water because of the 'corporeal malediction' of Blacks (Fanon). Makak says that he is living alone on the Monkey Mountains for thirty years. Fanon points out in his essay "The Fact of Blackness" that negation of black identity by the colonized people is the psychological repercussion that develops sense of isolation among them. They question their identity as 'who they are and how they should identify'.

Lestrade also alienates him, self from his fact of blackness by making himself a tool of colonizers to enforce orders in the land. He asks him the reason of his hallucinations, it is the result of anger over the Whites. Makak answers that one night he sees a woman who is 'loveliest like the moon' in his dream. He idealizes her beauty and whiteness as Walcott compares her whiteness with the moon. Fanon also stresses that the desire of a White woman can easily be seen in the Black man because by making love to White woman leads him to Whiteness. She inspires him by kissing him in his sleep, to be a warrior and to return to Africa. Then, he starts his journey to Africa with his friend, Moustique. He becomes a healer and cures a snake bitted man through coals. Here the word 'coal' can be a metaphor Black race and the 'snake bite' symbolizes the oppression of Whites (Berslin). Actually he cures the loss of identity by making them to 'believe on him and on themselves'. He thinks that his healing 'powers are rooted in the land of his home' i.e. Africa.

He returns to Africa, by giving up his idealization of Englishness and with the love for Africanism and Blackness. Soon, he becomes disillusioned about this African identity when he sees bloodshed of Whites by Black people. He witnesses the racial and communal differences in his imaginary home of justice. Earlier, he views African homeland as the paradise. His visit of Africa in the imagination helps him to get realization of the myth of African paradise. His solitary view of Africa shatters by the communal and racial violence in its land. He views the Caribbean island as his true place of accommodation. Thus, Avtar Brah rightly says that the desire of home is a fallacy in the imaginations of diasporic people.

Makak behaves as an ape that mimics the orders of Lestrade as Moustique points out 'a puppet besieged by power hunters'. He asks Makak to kill the White goddess of his dream to get rid of his inferiority complex totally. Lestrade thinks that she is the instigator of all their pains. Moustique calls her a "diabliesse", a hybrid image of the devil. Makak does not want to kill her because of his affiliations with her and he longs for her. But Lestrade makes him to kill her and his stress on her beheading shows an instigation to get rid of colonial misconceptions about Blacks identity.

He says that if he does not kill her, he will be caught in the trap of "neither one nor the other" in-between position. This hybrid or in-between position is tormenting as it generates inferiority in the psychology of Blacks, according to Lestrade's view. On the other side, there are some theorists as Kureishi, Rushdie and Bhabha who consider the in-between positions are more productive and dynamic. Lestrade in the play talks about the 'fixity' of home and identity. At last, Makak kills the White apparition that symbolizes his transformation into a new sense of identity. He becomes free

from the sense of inferiority due to his black skin color.

He rejects the internalization of Whiteness/Englishness and the Africanis as well. In fact, he realizes his true 'individual' identity as Felix Hobain, neither a White nor a Black. After her murder, he declares before God that 'now he is free' (p 320). He also gets freedom from his animalistic name 'Makak' and remembers the original. As an individual person, he comes to know that Monkey Mountain is his real home because he is living over there for years. He revives his faith on God as well. His friend, Moustique claims his belongingness to the unnamed island from where he comes in the local market. Makak also acknowledges that mountain is his land of origin when he realizes his individuality. The play ends with the repetition of words "going home" by the chorus. Walcott justifies that a return to heavenly Africa seems a folktale rather than a reality.

#### **8. CONCLUSION:**

Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is a surrealistic play that portrays one's struggle for home and identity in a transcultural society. Throughout the play, the protagonist, Makak suffers psychologically for his quest but he comes out of his conflict with the acceptance of his individuality. Bhabha argues that diasporic communities are contesting spaces. There people often suffer due to conflicts in past and present identities and culture. Therefore, they start internalize their past self-identities and construct a desire for the old self. In reality, to get access to the past self is impossible because of time and place differences. Thus, their desire for home becomes a myth as McLeod gives references of different writers to prove his stance. In the play, Makak also returns from his dream of Africa into reality with the realization of his individuality.

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