

## **DEJECTION AND REJECTION OF TRUST IN SUZAN LORI PARK'S VENUS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper critically explores various problems faced by the American women in the western societies. Parks characters also undergo a variety of experiences, often Painful under the patriarchal oppression in the society portrayed by Suzan Lori Parks in her play, Venus. Parks has excellently provided a vivid picture of the treachery encountered by the black people in America such as dehumanization, historical sexualization of black female bodies, criminality duplicity, fraudulance, Female subordination, racism and betrayal of trust. These have all been the outcome of colonial violence. Park has also cautioned the world to be aware of such horrors and put an end to offences like sexual exploitation, killings, corruption of mind and betrayal of trust. The paper traces the history of Venus and the social victimization against the African women. It also talks about the freedom of African women to express their identity in the society. Finally the paper reveals a clear picture of victims of battering, Murder, ridicule, molestation and assault. Parks has exposed such flaring injustice done to women by men. Venus tries to make her life better but she is pulled down by the Male dominated western society. Finally the paper points out the lusty eyes that considers women as a mere sexual object in the west.

**Key words:** physical violence, sexual harassment oppression, Injustice, Male-dominance.

Suzan - Lori Parks, a black American playwright, and novelist, expresses the Plights of African women in most of her plays. She was born on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1963 in Fort Knox and has produced many dramas and essays. Suzan - Lori parks was the first Afro- American woman who won the Pulitzer Prize for drama for her Play Top dog / underdog in 2002. And Parks has gained another award in 1996 for her plays Venus. Parks is quite out right in stating that women are maltreated and sexually exploited at every second and at every corner of the world. Women is treated as an object victims of all violence in the world that entails inflicting physical, sexual, emotional, material and intellectual damage. Parks transparently portrays that a black woman is doubly and multiply oppressed due to their race and gender.

The play, Venus was written in (1996) by Suzan-Lori Parks. The Play Venus narrates the life of an African girl, Venus. Venus as a happy and free girl of sixteen in Africa is transported to London with the false promise of golden streets and prosperity. But the moment she is out of her land, she is deceived sexually and later she is sold to the Mother-showman. This is not taken very seriously by Venus in the initial stage but later she realises that she has been betrayed and deceived by the maligned who have been very much after monetary benefits. Parks Venus does not like to yield to the pressures of the Mother showman but voices out her disapproval only to be refused by her. She Protest against accommodation, food and meagre wages provided to her. When Venus stands before law, she herself announces that she exposes her 'sinful' physique to leave the nation as white. She encounters the racial conflict at this point and she decides to tour around the world and be a boss of herself that never happened. It is no doubt that Venus proves her mettle by with standing all the humiliations inflicted on her. Therefore, this paper specifically focuses on the suffering and problems faced by the black women in American societies as portrayed by parks in Venus.

Dejection and Rejection focuses on the playwright's effort to represent the difficulties encountered by the Black in her plays. Parks throws light on many issues that include racism, gender discrimination, love and slavery that are relevant to the development of her protagonists. Dejection and Rejection shows the fact, truth and bitter experiences of the Afro Americans Parks demonstrates the patriarchal and hierarchical oppressions imposed on African American women in order to question and challenge the dominant order of Patriarchy, seeking for African American women's empowerment.

Parks represents the Afro-American women of the postcolonial era. She as a playwright considers it her prime duty to unravel the hidden and forgotten truths about the hardships faced by the black women who are still degraded as low for their colour despite being talented and skillful. African – American writers, particularly women writers are highly realistic in exposing the harsh realities of oppression and exploitation undergone by the Black community that has been languishing in the corners or the periphery of the American Society for a better living and comfort. The bitter experiences have enforced them to rise with strong vigour and fighting spirit to crush the racist community of America under their feet. Angela Y.

Davis comments, “As racism developed more durable roots within women's organization, so too did the sexist cult of motherhood creep in to the very movement whose announced aim was the elimination of male supremacy (122).

Subjugation of women is equally hazardous to racial discrimination. Modern women writers and activists have been toiling to achieve their legitimate and right space in the male dominated society and hence Suzan Lori Parks is no exception. Unlike the white actors of *The Glass Menagerie* playing the role of black people, Parks suggests that the black actors should have been employed to act their roles to make the play appear more realistic and original. She strongly believes that the exploitation encountered by the black community can be represented only by the black but the actors of the other race. She proudly acknowledges that the Africans are multitasking and resilient enough to prove their uniqueness in foreign soil. Thus, she aspires to create a social space and cultural identity in America.

The Playwright in her plays has powerfully displayed the pain and agony experienced by the Africans, the victims of European colonialism and industrialisation. The innocent Africans have become an easy prey to the malicious intentions and the dominance of the white imperialists. The colonial impact is perfectly quite reflected in park's play.

The historical Saartje Baartman was a popular freak show attraction who was also nicknamed Hottentot Venus. The dramatist has derived the title and the story of the play “Venus” from this historical character. The play focuses on colonial exploitation, racism and commodification of Africans, to the extreme. The readers and the novelist tend to identify themselves with Venus. The death of the historical Venus at the age of twenty six after being physically and emotionally exploited by white men has become a scar in the minds of the Africans.

With an intention to watch the enation and freak show of Venus. Parks has exposed the racist and sexist attitude of the majority white. Though Venus is introduced to the heartless audience as an African dancing Princess, she is expected to cause fascination by exposing her physique. The dramatist has criticized the lecherous attitude of the white man who treats woman as an object of sex. They are unable to understand the very core of an enslaved woman rather they seek pleasure in watching her physique and ridiculing her.

Parks exposes the pain of dejection, rejection and betrayal encountered by an African woman who has become a victim of vicious strategies and tactics of the Americans. Venus is a silent, voiceless and invisible character whose status is no more than an inanimate object. Venus is put to untold suffering under the custody of Mother-showman. She is not allowed to speak in her show and whenever she is about to speak in public, the Mother showman silences her. The Mother- Showman beats her and orders her not to reveal it to anyone. She is put in long term silence which may stand for the historical silence imposed on people of African descent.

When Venus is in the hands of Mother-showman she raises her voice against the poor accommodation and food and poor wages provided to her by Mother- Showman. Venus is placed in Centre stage and rotated 360 degrees in order to be totally Visible to all Spectators from all side. However, when Venus tries to claim her share or the Profit from the shows according to her agreement with the Mother-showman, she is called as ugly mouth and she refuses to give her share. A Black woman is denigrated merely as a visual object just because of her colour and physical structure. Parks points out that racial prejudice and its increased awareness of discrimination is based mainly on gender. This biased attitude leads to degeneration of human values and unending chaos.

Anarchy and lawlessness against the black community in America reflects the Colonial attitude that devours the subaltern, particularly the black women. When Venus stands before law, she admits that she exposes her sinful physique to gain name and fame as well as money. Parks Venus encounters the racial conflict and hence she decides to tour around the world and be a boss of her that has never happened. Venus and Mother-showman were counting that they have earned out of the show. Mother-Showman counts in hundreds and Venus in multiples of tens. Though the girl is smart enough to count, she is not aware of the exploitation that she undergoes every day. Here the dramatist throws light on the greedy, and deceitful attitude of the whites in contrast to the innocent and poverty - stricken Afro-Americans. The true picture of the Afro-Americans is realistically revealed by parks so as to enable the readers to understand the repulsive nature of the dominant white. Parks exhibits Venus as a revolutionary character after having encountered with cruelty, domination, betrayal and callousness. The colonized has no other option to

express his/her emotion other than shedding tears mourning over the pathetic Plight in a foreign land where the colonized have been controlled, dictated and oppressed by the colonizer. Instead of becoming more and more silent, Venus mustering courage decides to demand her rights and legitimate space to her white master but in vain. Though she gains immense popularity among the American mob she still remains a circus creature Venus is produced in front of the court for being accused of various charges. The court announces that she is indecent and she herself confesses it without any realization that she has willingly accepted to perform in the freak show. The court enquires the witnesses and they finally assumes that she attracts the audience through her witch craft.

The playwright has attacked the court for being high partisans as they have failed to seriously analyse and understand the misfortunes, distresses, torments and crisis experienced by an African woman who in no way shares the cultures tradition and language as the land.

Sexual exploitation is a highly contemptible social evil. It may even force the victim to commit suicide. Parks raises her voice in support of such victims, particularly the Afro-American women who have no recognition in the European nations. When the perpetrator is a trustworthy person it causes inexorable pain to the victim. Venus is one such victim who succumbs to the false agreement of Baron Docteur. Her colonial condition has put her in a situation to trust Baron Docteur as she believes him to be her saviour at that particular moment. The Baron Docteur after achieving his desired sexual satisfaction refuses to announce Venus as his partner referring to his economic and social status. This is a treacherous deed plotted against a voiceless black woman who has no other option than to endure it with heavy hearts.

Parks reveals an instance of female subordination and oppression. The expected love, care, equity, mutual support and liberty is denied to Venus. Her confinement within four misery to her tormented soul. The playwright indicates that women even do not have the liberty make decisions and execute it.

The treachery encountered by Venus begins right from Africa to the European Nations. America and France. It is undoubtedly torturous for a person to be a victim of treachery all through the life. Venus is an epitome of slavery, racism and oppression, Colonialists who pose to the world and still have made believe some of the people of the colonies that they have done a miraculous job for the betterment and upliftment of the colonial mass have been torn apart by Parks proving the world the treacherous and cruel nature of colonialists.

Venus' hopes have all been shattered into umpteen pieces. She has become a Scapegoat under the custody of Mother-Showman and Baron Docteur. Venus is betrayed even by fate and death. When she was alive, she was unfairly exhibited in freak shows and later became a victim of sexual exploitation. Even dearth has failed her as her body parts have been preserved and exhibited in a museum and later, in reality was handed over to the southern African Government under the regime of Nelson Mandela for burial. It is unfortunate that her body was given a clean burial by the colonial powers either in African tradition or by the European rituals.

Parks satirizes the Europeans particularly the Americans for their denial of full humanness to the African Americans. The dissection portrayed by the playwright has its own symbolism. Parks has provided her admonishing context and the treacherous context of the superior race through her subversive portrayal of the complex relationship between the pain in the play Venus. The role played by gaze in imposing pain has very long history. Colonial rule has ruined the indigenous culture, tradition and identity. Parks laments that in the West, the black bodies were kept under the critical observation of the White. This is undeniably true as the black people were to subject auction. The Cuban poet Nancy Morejon Voices the same in her poem Black Women. Auctioning of slaves in America and the exhibition of Baartman in Europe took place simultaneously which has demonstrated the truth about, the horrors experienced by black bodies under the gaze of the White. The playwright believes that the play will urge both the factions to identify themselves with the characters present on the stage and understand the difference between good and evil and promote humanity for the betterment and co-existence of the fellow human beings.

Parks makes a plea to the American authorities and officials to maintain equity and justice in the American Society to cease violence of any kind, especially against black women. She also request them not to shatter their hopes of the Afro Americans who are also made of flesh and blood.

As a conclusion it is clear that nothing can be made of compulsion. The Government has to handle treasonous and treacherous activities with iron hands. AS M. Anderson highlights the dramatic and political premises of black feminist drama and investigates the intersection of race class and gender in twenty-first century dramas.

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