

Straits of Refugees in Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal*

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Abstract

The article scrutinizes the impact of the existential crisis of 20th and 21st century with the aim to examine the difficulties faced by the refugees and the way in which the immigrants or refugees are named. It also investigates the struggles that the Faloos faces in their country due to the newly organized political powers and their urge to migrate to Freedom States. The present paper is analyzed based on the conditions of existential Crisis. Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal* deals with the inner conflict of the refugees like Keita Ali, Yvette Peters and Viola Hill, when they are migrated from Zantoroland due to the political influence. The article is exposed in accordance with the emotional agony, helplessness, a sense of integrity, guilt, fear and loneliness of the characters. The political influence of Zantoroland and Freedom State undergoes a vital role in the transport of refugees and it leads to the crisis of an individual to exist in the Society. The part played by the political parties is evidently understood by the journalists and the common people in both the countries. The present study is useful to understand the dark side of a political administration that tries to hide the truth by migrating journalists as refugees to another country.

Keywords: Illegal, immigrants, crisis, politics, refugees

I Introduction

Lawrence Hill is an immigrant Canadian writer, whose writings are mainly concerned with the political affairs. The novel *The Illegal* published in 2015 deals with the migration and the journey of refugees in the fictional countries like Zantoroland and Freedom State. Moreover, it is just a document explaining the Blacks' experience in Canada. It left aside the historical perspective to fetch to light the economically and politically polarized current global reality of the fictional countries of Zantoroland and Freedom State. Migration starts from the time when the colonizers enter into the third world countries and it continues even after the independence from the European colonial powers. The migrated people are harmed by the war and violence due to military despotism and colonization. The paper highlights the hardship faced by the refugees and the way in which the migrants are titled or named.

Immigration attains a global authority in the 20th and 21st century and so it affects the life expectancy style of the people who move from one place to another to survive. Voyage starts from the time when the colonizers enter into the third world countries and it continues even after the independence from the European colonial powers. The political independence is not a culmination of the struggle for the immigrants. The struggle of the immigrants cannot be explained without the knowledge of the colonial Historical violence.

The impact of migration deceits in all the colonized countries. Historically, Canada is a place of migrants; Abella says that, "It is one of our great national myths that Canada has a long history of welcoming refugees and dissidents, of always being in the forefront of accepting the world's oppressed and dispossessed, of being receptive and hospitable to wave after wave of immigrants"(1988, 7). The immigrants or the refugees from other countries are called as the illegal or criminals. In the novel Keita Ali, a refugee is compelled to leave his homeland and live as an illegal in other countries like Freedom State. He is a "stranger in a strange land whose only transgression was to exist in a place where his presence was illegal"(1).

II Literature Review

Marie Lacroix (2004) analyzed the conscious thoughts and emotions exposed by their migrants in Canada. The experience of the refugees and their mental and physical strength are investigated by Beise (2009). Van Kaam (1964) discusses the crisis which all men experience during their course of life when they are migrated. He also focuses on the existential crisis that leads to physical and psychological downfall and its result to the struggle to attain self-identity. Kim -Cragg (2018) presented the image of migrants as an argument to interpret the way of life attained of migration and migrant identities. Fraile - Marcos (2019) in her interview with Lawrence Hill explores the challenge of African refugees or the Middle Eastern refugees with their struggle to attain self-identity.

III Methodology

The anguish faced by the people in Canada, as refugees are expressed through the conditions or the impact of existential crisis. Existentialism as a philosophical theory focuses about the existence of an individual person who enjoys the complete freedom to determine his fate, Existential crisis transpire when a person's basic rationale in life is questioned and threatened and are denied by emotional and situational problems. The study exposes various strategies that make the refugees feel marginalized in the society and thus it is considered as a situational study. The materials used for the current study are the scholarly articles and Hill's *The Illegal*.

IV Analysis

The political influence brands an individual to migrate from one place to another and it results to existential crisis. Gilliland and James opines, "Existential crisis include the inner conflicts and anxieties that accompany human responsibility, independence, freedom, issues of purpose and commitment" (1993, 9). Thereby Keita and his family members are subjected to the conflicts and anxieties that harms the human responsibility so they become the victims of existential crisis due to political instability. Keita's father, a journalist who is nicknamed as Yoyo is killed for outspoken some political views. Keita's father advises his son to migrate from the country "They've taken my papers, but you still have yours. You should leave the country when you finish school" (35) into the wealthiest nation of the Freedom State, where all the undocumented people live because they know that, "the president was responsible for his mother's death, father's torture and the death and the disappearances of countless others" (42). The political influence makes a change in the mind of the people to escape

themselves from their home town in order to avoid violence and save their life from the hands of politicians. Existential crisis ensues when a person feels hard to accept the activities that happen in the society. Keita senses bad about the attitude of the political parties towards his father in Zantoroland and wonders whether a person and his family could be punished for having his thoughts or only for committing those thoughts to paper. The political imbalance not only harms the life of the journalist but it affects the growth of the Faloo community. The clash between Faloos and Bamileke turns into violence as a result of it many people are killed and Faloo Zion Baptist church erupts in flame. Keita finds hard to accept the violence that happens in the society and remembers his parent's words, "*Run Keita. Just run*" (15) away from the place where the violence occurs. It shows the powerlessness and emotional coldness of Keita, who lives in the country amidst violence.

Keita questions his own self and it becomes an important role in existential confrontation. When Keita's father returns back to home after the demise of his wife from his abduction, Keita raises several questions with a thousand glooms of sadness massing under his skins and threatening to cut their way free. Keita worries that the troops may come to his father and say, "Who would care for them? Would Keita and Charity be raised by sympathetic neighbors? Faloos, but not people who knew them intimately?" (25). It depicts that the death of his mother and the separation of his father makes an individual feel too inferior to the other persons who survive around them.

Migrating from one place to another or finding a new place to survive actually happens when there is some economic crisis or status crisis. According to Fraile-Marcos "*The Illegal*, which chooses to live aside the Canadian Soil altogether and focuses on the issues of refugees and asylum seekers, a topic of huge global urgency" (182). It is elucidated through the character of Charity who travels from Zantoroland to America for her higher studies, when there is a status crisis after the abduction of her father, whereas, Keita is compelled to leave his country to save his life from chastisement and death to Freedom States because "Keita knew that Freedom State had enslaved Zantoroland for some two centuries but, after abolishing slavery, have deported most black people back to Zantoroland"(17). Though Keita knows that the ruling power in Freedom States will send back all the illegals who tries to settle in their country, he tends to live in Freedom State as an illegal to balance his economic crisis. It shows the psyche of the refugees to live in the place of trouble just to earn and educate themselves from the migrated country.

Fear, loss, rejection, betrayal and withdrawal from the people becomes a major figure that leads a person into a state of identity crisis. Keita qualms when he receives a mail from his sister and George Maxwell informing about his sister's imprisonment in the Zantoroland because he knows the brutal nature of the political violence. Keita says:

His sister, in Zantoroland? Jailers? Not possible! Keita desperately hoped this was a prank, but he feared . . . Panic rose in Keita's throat and sweat covered his forehead. He wished he could get out and be alone, so he could scream and pound his fist into the earth. But he couldn't escape, he couldn't scream and he felt trapped in the back of the bus. (167)

Fear in his mind, rises in seeing the mail of George Maxwell, haunts more to his consciousness because he senses that he is going to lose his sister the only companion his life due to the political violence.

Betrayal also plays an important role in destructing the happy and peaceful life of the people in the society. Charity is betrayed by the political powers of Zantoroland, with the news that her father is imprisoned in the Pink Palace and he needs the assistance of his daughter in the emergency. But Charity is caught by the police when she enters into the county for the suspicion of treason. It is the plan made and

work down by the Republic of Zantoroland to demolish the whole family of the journalist. So betrayal makes an individual feel inferior in the civilization, the cause of the existential disaster and it tempts a person to migrate from one place to another.

Existential difficulties originate when a person or an organization loses its confidence in others. An official document that relates to the welfare of the government is considered to be more confidential than other documents and when it is leaked out of the office it creates glitches in the society. Hill explores the effects of leaking the official government documents in his novels. In *Any Known Blood*, Cane the fifth, as a speech writer to ministers brings out a confidential report in a Minister's speech, with the help of his writing proficiency. Whereas in *Illegal*, the government loses its trust towards Ketia's father when he tries to leak out the confidential matter in the newspaper regarding the Faloo community. The president of Zantoroland fears towards the attitude of Yoyo and to put an end to his attitude. He is abducted and killed in the Pink Palace.

Refugees are treated as inferiors in the migrated countries more over they are treated like illegals and forced to live in the borders of the society. If the people are forced to live continually at the blink of the society it disturbs the mindset of the people and it is focused through the character of Ketia and Yvette Peters. The colour of the people often pushes a man to the border of the society. Yvette peter, a black woman in Afric Town is forced to spend her nights with the white political leaders in Bombay Booty whereas, when Keita enters into the same place the bouncer said, "Don't go near any white customers . . . they're here for fun but don't want to be recognized"(212). The term 'fun' indirectly refers to their urge to spend their nights with the black women hired for money in the hotel. It reflects the pathetic nature of the black woman refugee in Afric Town who accepts to have 'fun' just to balance her financial crisis.

The reason for the migration of people from one place to another, indirectly focuses on the struggles that the native faces in their homeland and the crisis to exist in the native place. Viola, who enters into Zantoroland examine the reason for the migration and finds out that,

Amnesty International, the Zantoroland authorities had executed at least twenty dissidents and had incarcerated dozens more in the year 2017 alone. In addition, the government or its mercenaries were killing members of the Faloo business class, and even the friends of Faloos among the Kano majority. This had incited even more Zantoroland to attempt the passage across the Ortiz Sea.(343)

It is evident that the people start to migrate when they are threatened in the society where they live. The people who have migrated to Freedom State without proper document are treated as illegal's or refugees and threatened by the police that they will send them back to their homeland. The people who returned back to their native land is titled as returners and killed in Zantoroland and their bodies are placed in the Fountain of Independence in Yagwa which is called as a Fountain of Blood after the death of Yoyo Ali.

The exchange of money and refugees between Freedom State and Zantoroland is a deal between two countries, where the innocent people suffer and faces violence, including death without knowing the cunning nature of the ruling political parties. The journalist who tries to put this incident in the newspaper is arrested and killed because "The Faloos ruled this country for seventy-five year, Maxwell said, 'and

it's our time to eat'" (355). This line highlights the notion of political parties to destruct the growth of the common people in both the countries.

V Conclusion

The migration of people from one place to another with legal documents is subjected to several ill treatments like that of the people who enters into another country without documents as refugees for their survival. This leads to raise a question does political parties work for the betterment of the people in Freedom States and Zantoroland. The novel *Illegal*, claims that the government political parties are the one who harms the lives of the people to extract huge sum of money from other countries. Thereby the refugees and the journalist become the victims in the hands of political parties. The various other areas for the study of Hill's *The Illegal* are multicultural and transcultural identities, culture and language, feminist analysis and so on. The novel can also be exposed as a dystopian fiction.

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