

INDIVIDUALITY AS THE DISTINCT IDENTITY: A STUDY OF N. K. JEMISIN'S *THE FIFTH SEASON*

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Abstract

N. K. Jemisin, an African American writer, has received Hugo awards for her novels come under the title, *The Broken Earth Trilogy*. *The Fifth Season* is the first part of *The Broken Earth Trilogy* and it is a prequel to *The Obelisk Gate* and *The Stone Sky*. *The Fifth Season* is a science fiction fantasy which deals with the apocalyptic world wherein the novel explores the racial concepts too. In the novel, *The Fifth Season*, the character named Essun who is being under the clutches of identity crisis as of marginalisation have been introduced. Individuality creates the identity of a person, when the identity is being unrecognised then it has to be created by one's effort. If one's identity is not being accepted by oneself and also by others and let not allow to create his/her own identity means it is where the marginalisation comes. Similarly, in this story *The Fifth Season*, Essun is the female protagonist and the orogene, there are people called orogenes who have the power to quell and create the earthquake, keeps ill-treated by the normal people. Postcolonialism is a theory displaying the impacts of the people's oppressions, sufferings, injustice, marginalisation, identity crisis and so on. When a person is in the state of accepting the identity given by others to him or her, then it is also a state of marginalisation. So, it is the individuality of a person shapes one's identity. The paper discusses on how the protagonist, Essun is oppressed and depressed by her marginalised identity and also how she has marginalised herself by not accepting her individual orogenic power.

Literature explores the society that tends to make the necessary changes that the society really wants. For literature, the language is a medium and so it has its widespread branches throughout the world such as Greek Literature, Latin Literature, English Literature, American Literature, African Literature and so on. African American literature is the literature written by Black American writers who are all write to make the world known their creativity and experiences as being Black Americans. N. K. Jemisin is an African American writer, has received many awards like Hugo Award, Nebula Award, Locus Award and etc., for her brilliant works. *The Broken Earth Trilogy* is one of her novels which has received three Hugo Awards consecutively for the each three novels the trilogy comprises. The novels, *The Broken Earth Trilogy* comprises are *The Fifth Season*, *The Obelisk Gate* and *The Stone Sky*, the science fantasy novels regarding the apocalypse of the world.

Postcolonialism is a theory developed to be the stream of expressing the impacts that the colonisers had left on the colonised after colonisation and all the colonised writers share was about the traumas, humiliations, sufferings they have been undergone during colonisation. "It has been suggested that the 'post' refers to everything that happens after the colonial intervention so that historically postcolonialism encompasses the colonial

period as well as its aftermath" (Childs and Roger 184). The paper centres the concept of identity by emphasising how the female protagonist Essun in *The Fifth Season*, is got affected to have the distinct identity of her own as she is marginalised and treated as other. Essun has no freedom at all as she is being under the control of the Fulcrum which behaves as colonisers.

Aimé Césaire, for instance, claimed in his 1955 Discourse on Colonialism that between colonizer and colonized there is '[n]o human contact, but relations of domination and submission which turn the colonizing man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production' (Césaire 1997: 81). (Bertens 206)

Being the orogene, Essun is not allowed to have her individual identity and also she is not willing to accept her orogene power because her individuality will ruin her life if it reveals.

The Fifth Season is of the female protagonist named Essun who is an orogene living in disguise as a normal human being and has married Jija without revealing who she really is. Essun has portrayed in three different perspectives as Essun, as Damaya, and as Syenite to share her crisis in identity. The novel opens with the perplexed Essun as a mother who has just lost her three

year old son Uche to death. Uche was murdered by his father Jija who got found that Uche is an orogene. By discovering the truth of Essun's reality, Jija takes her elder daughter Nassun with him and has gone somewhere else because he found that Uche cannot be an orogene if his mother is not an orogene. In the world that nears the complete ending because of the furious earthquakes, Essun is attempting to find her daughter Nassun who is also an orogene by birth to save her life from Jija.

An orogene is the one who has the power to control and create the earthquakes, so all the orogenes are treated as animals by the normal human beings, and never let them survive in the apocalyptic continent called Stillness, as they have the fear and hatred towards orogenes.

The orogenes of the Fulcrum serve the world," he says. "You will have no use name from here forth, because your usefulness lies in what you are, not merely some familial aptitude. From birth, an orogene child can stop a shake; even without training, you are orogene. Within a comm or without one, you are orogene. (Jemisin 34)

Essun is living in disguise to avoid the consequences of the truth of her that she is an orogene. Essun decides to live in disguise because she wants to live, but she will be under the watchful eyes of the Fulcrum, an organisation for training the orogenes. Being freely lived is the real freedom that is not the case in Essun's life. Every actions of her will be watching by the members of the Fulcrum, because Fulcrum wants to save the continent Stillness, it tames the orogenes by training them to control their own orogenic power. In the present state, Essun's individuality has been under control, she has to conceal her identity if she wants to live, especially to live as a normal human being. As she does not want to accept her individual identity that is being orogene, makes Essun to lose her individual and distinct identity.

Damayais Essun's childhood name and her life as Damaya is depicted in the novel, *The Fifth Season*. When Damaya's parents are confronted with Damaya's orogenic power, they do not want to have her with them. They informed to the Fulcrum and she has taken away by the Guardian, Schaffa from the family but Damaya does not feel worried to leave her family as she just wants to make a family which accepts her as she is. The journey to the Fulcrum is an hazardous journey which she realised later. In that journey, she gets the knowledge of what is orogene and why people do hate them.

Damaya inhales, horrified. It has never occurred to her that roggas—she stops herself. She. She is a roggas. All at once she does not like this word, which she has heard most of her life. It's a bad word she's not supposed to say, even though the grown-ups toss it around freely, and suddenly it seems uglier than it already did.

Orogenes, then. It is terrible to know that orogenes can kill so many, so easily. But then, she supposes that is why people hate them.

Her. That is why people hate her. (Jemisin 89)

When journeying to Fulcrum, Damaya has been harmed by the Guardian, Schaffa who tested her self control by breaking the bones of her hand. Her hands are throbbing in pain, though she has screamed and tried to escape from his grip, she couldn't.

... "No!"

"Never say no to me," he says. The words are hot against her skin. He has bent to murmur them into her ear. "Orogenes have no right to say no. I am your Guardian. I will break every bone in your hand, every bone in your body, if I deem it necessary to make the world safe from you". (Jemisin 99)

This shows how Damaya and all other orogenes are marginalized. Damaya is not allowed to satisfy to do anything without the concerns of her Guardian. Damaya changes her identity when she reached her adolescence as Syenite believing that she too would become as coarse and strong as the rock syenite. Syenite has become strong and powerful and so she is ordered to breed with the old orogene named Alabaster, by Fulcrum which is also one of the tests that should be compulsory done, in order to give birth to the powerful orogene through her. She is not permitted to choose the way she wants to live and with whom she wants to live. In the world of order and control, Essun changes her identity as she wants to have own individuality to be recognised as the distinct identity. But, her changing of identities showing the self marginalisation as she believes that her name's identity would bring her recognition rather accepting her individual identity of being an orogene.

The paper concludes with the notion that just the name of a person never defines one's identity but his/her own individuality or unique quality determines it. One has to accept that one individual quality to make his/her distinct identity known to the world. The female protagonist, Essun is made to change her identity from Damaya to Syenite and from Syenite to Essun as she is seeking to create the

distinct identity of her own rather accepting the individuality that already she has, to have a life that becomes valid to live among the normal people.

Works Cited

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