

Exploring Hegemonic Dominance In Farida Karodia's *Daughters Of Twilight: A Critical Study*



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Abstract: *The present study has discussed Farida Karodia's Daughters of Twilight in relation to Antonio Gramsci's notions of hegemony and dominance. Hegemony, in Gramsci's view, refers to the power of the ruling class to establish and uphold its supremacy by influencing societal norms, values, and cultural practices. He is of the view that the ruling class maintained its hegemony by constructing a set of values, beliefs, and social norms that the lower classes internalized and came to accept as the standard. The study aims at exploring hegemonic influence on characters and the consequences of their resistance in the selected novel. The study has used Gramsci's theory of hegemony with textual method of interpretation of the chosen text. Characters, in the selected novel, identify as intellectuals by Gramsci, who play a crucial role in challenging the established order. Physical resistance and manifest a tangible form of defiance against the ruling class.*

Keywords: Hegemony, Resistance, Dominance, Marxism

1. Background to the Study

Italian Marxist philosopher and political theorist Antonio Gramsci, in his book, *Prison Notebook* created a distinctive viewpoint on dominance and power. Hegemony as a notion helps us to understand Gramsci's ideas on dominance. According to Gramsci, consent and the creation of cultural and ideological norms are also used to retain dominance in capitalist society in addition to coercion and physical force. He created the word "hegemony" to refer to this type of power. Hegemony, in Gramsci's view, refers to the power of the ruling class to establish and uphold its supremacy by influencing societal norms, values, and cultural practices. He is of the view that the ruling class maintained its hegemony by constructing a set of values,

beliefs, and social norms that the lower classes internalized and came to accept as the standard. The ruling class spread its worldview and upheld its hold on society through cultural institutions like school, media, and religious institutions. According to Gramsci, the dominant class disguised the underlying power dynamics by portraying its interests and viewpoints as common sense and universal. In addition, Gramsci emphasized the importance of intellectuals in maintaining or opposing hegemony and dominance. He maintained that intellectuals, who are not only traditional academics but a broad variety of people involved in the creation and spread of ideas, were vital in forming public opinion and upholding or undermining established

ideologies.

According to Gramsci, the working class required its own indigenous intellectuals who could create a counter-hegemonic awareness and question the status quo. Steve Jones in his book *Antonio Gramsci* claims that, Gramsci in his book, *Prison Notebook* talks about hegemony, dominance and resistance of working class. Gramsci argues that 'every social group, coming into existence... creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals' (1971: 5). While in orthodox Marxist fashion he sees these 'social groups' (or classes) as fulfilling a function within economic production, we need not apply this observation exclusively in class terms. It was, for example, integral to the development of a politicized black identity, above all in America, that this emergence was theorized and represented by black intellectuals. Similarly, political movements around women's liberation, gay rights and environmentalism are strongly associated with the intellectuals who work to give them 'homogeneity and an awareness of [their] function... in the economic... social and political fields' (Jones, 2006). By this, he means that there is a specific process through which working class shows resistance against elite or ruling class. Marxist theory emphasizes the development of class consciousness among the working class. This refers to a collective awareness and understanding of their shared social and economic conditions and their common interests as a class. By recognizing their exploitation and oppression under capitalism, the working class can unite and mobilize against the ruling class. The working class can resist hegemony through organized strikes and the formation of labor unions. Strikes are a powerful tool for workers to collectively withhold their labor, disrupt production, and demand better working conditions, higher wages, and improved rights. Labor unions provide a platform for workers to negotiate with employers and collectively advocate for their interests.

Working-class's resistance can also take the form of direct action, such as protests, demonstrations, and occupations. By taking to

the streets and publicly expressing their grievances, workers challenges the dominant power structures and bring attention to their demands. Direct action disrupt the normal functioning of society, thereby exerting pressure on the ruling class to address the concerns of the working class.

1.1 Research Objectives

To analyze hegemonic influence in the selected novel

To discuss the consequences of working class' resistance against hegemony of elites

1.2 Research Methodology and Procedures

The present research study has employed Gramsci's theory of hegemony. The chosen theory has two important implications; firstly, how the apparatus of the state or a political society can lead strongly the various strata of society to accept the status quo, through legal institutions, the police, soldiers and prisoners, secondly, how and where the political society, as well as civil society, with all its institutions at their disposal, ranging from educational institutions, religions, and family up to the production of meaning and value of the product, directing and confirming agreement forms 'spontaneously' various strata of society with the status quo (Holub, 1992, p.5). Close reading technique is used in the novel for gathering, analyzing and interpretation of the text. The researcher in the first step has read the novel thoroughly. This phase of reading is termed as pre-reading. Then in the second step the researcher has kept the main theme of research in his mind and read the novel through that lens. This type of reading is termed as critical reading. In this phase the researcher highlights the main points and quotes related to the theme of the current study. After this phase the researcher in the third stage interpreted the highlighted quotes from the novel. In the final stage the researcher has been written the findings of the research based on the analysis of the selected quotes under the theory of Gramsci.

2. Analysis and Discussion

The present section deals with Farida Karodia's *Daughters of Twilight*. This study has analyzed

the selected novels through the lens of Antonio Gramsci's theory of domination and hegemony.

2.1 Dominance of Elite Class over Working Class

According to Gramsci, there is a specific process through which working class shows resistance against elite or ruling class. The working class can resist hegemony through organized strikes and the formation of labor unions. Strikes are a powerful tool for workers to collectively withhold their labor, disrupt production, and demand better working conditions, higher wages, and improved rights. Labor unions provide a platform for workers to negotiate with employers and collectively advocate for their interests. Farida Karodia's *Daughters of Twilight* is set in Africa, the protagonist, being Indian, encounters various forms of dominance and hegemony from the local population. The author skillfully portrays how other characters perceive and treat him and his family. Hegemonic influence on characters can be sensed at a number of points. For instance, there's a scene where Yasmin, one of the characters, is sitting on the sidewalk outside her house, unaware of Jacobus Steyn sneaking up behind her to take her doll. This act of Jacobus seizing the doll can be seen as an assertion of dominance, highlighting his power over Yasmin. It reflects a display of control and authority, which aligns with Gramsci's concept of domination, where the ruling class often uses coercive tactics to maintain power. Furthermore, Yasmin's position on the sidewalk holds a symbolic meaning related to Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony. According to Gramsci, the ruling class not only enforces its dominance through physical means but also through cultural influence. Yasmin's location outside the home signifies her position in the lower social strata and her exclusion from the centers of power, metaphorically representing the cultural and societal hierarchy.

The first thing the statement emphasizes is the actual physical act of Jacobus Steyn "creeping up" behind Yasmin and snatching the doll. The act might be interpreted as a display of dominance and demonstrates the direct influence that Jacobus has over Yasmin. The use of coercive tactics and physical force by the

ruling class to keep control over the subordinate classes is included in Gramsci's definition of domination (Gramsci, 1971). Furthermore, Yasmin's position sitting on the curb of the sidewalk outside the house also hints at a spatial dynamic connected to Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony. According to Gramsci, the establishment and maintenance of supremacy by the ruling class involves not only force and violence but also the control over cultural institutions and the propagation of its worldview. Yasmin's location outside the home represents her position as a member of the underclass and exclusion from the dominating locations of power in a metaphorical sense.

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist philosopher and political theorist, had a unique perspective on dominance and power. His most well-known creation, the "Prison Notebooks," contains the most of his convictions. Understanding hegemony as a concept aids in comprehending Gramsci's theories on dominance. Same is the case in *Daughters of Twilight* where Yasmin experiences dominance at the hands of Cobus who is from elite class.

2.2 Working class's resistance against the Elite Class in *Daughters of Twilight*

Due to this dominance the lower class is compelled to stand against the elite class as reflected in the novel. A character named Baboo shows a resistance against the cruelty of Cobus as the mentioned quote, appears to be a conversation between two people, contain an act of resistance against elite class. We can find various components that link to Gramsci's theories after examining it in the context of his theory of resistance. "You filthy bastard, 'Baboo grunted through gritted teeth, pummeling the white youth in the stomach" (p. 6).

Firstly, the character Baboo is expressing a strong emotional response when he says, "You filthy bastard." This emotional outburst stands for a challenge to enforced power relations as well as a rejection of the dominant ideology. Resistance, according to Gramsci, is challenging the ruling class's values and beliefs, which are frequently portrayed as inherent or universal (Gramsci, 1971). Baboo shows his displeasure

and antagonism to the established system by the words he chooses, which indicate his refusal to accept it. Secondly, direct opposition is demonstrated by Baboo's physical act of "pummeling the white youth in the stomach." According to Gramsci, resistance can take many various forms, with physical conflict or violence being one among them. In this instance, Baboo is expressing his agency and battling the white youth's supremacy by utilizing physical force. It might be interpreted as an effort to reassert dominance and undermine the current hierarchies of power.

Gramsci asserted the significance of intellectuals in either bolstering or contesting hegemony. He contended that intellectuals, a diverse group encompassing not only conventional academics but also those involved in generating and spreading ideas, played a pivotal role in molding public perception and either endorsing or questioning established ideologies. Gramsci further proposed the need for native intellectuals within the working class, capable of challenging the prevailing hegemonic structure and nurturing counter-hegemonic consciousness. In the chosen novel, Baboo serves as the native intellectual challenging the dominance of the elite class by administering physical punishment to Cobus.

"I've had enough of the stupid Sterkstroom Apostolic Primary for Coloureds" (p. 10). In the same domain other characters in the selected novel also shows the resistance against the hegemony of the elite class as reflected in the novel. The elite class specifies separate schools for working class where Yasmin and Meena are studying, the teachers treat them with cruelty, and so, Yasmin refuses to continue her education over there. The quote expresses annoyance and resistance towards a particular educational establishment, the "Sterkstroom Apostolic Primary School for Coloureds." We can find various components in this quotation that relate to Gramsci's theories by examining it in the context of his notion of resistance to hegemony.

To begin with, expressing "I've reached my limit" implies a feeling of dissatisfaction and unhappiness with the current circumstances. As per Gramsci's perspective, the initial stage in

addressing resistance involves cultivating a critical awareness and recognizing that the current social structure does not serve the interests of the lower classes. The speaker's evident frustration in this particular scenario showcases their refusal of the prevailing educational system and their dissatisfaction with its results.

The phrase "Sterkstroom Apostolic Primary School for Coloureds" draws attention to a particular educational institution. Gramsci addresses the critical role that cultural institutions, such as schooling, have in preserving cultural hegemony. Social hierarchies and power imbalances are reinforced when one institution dominates a particular racial or ethnic group. The speaker's criticism of this institution challenges the way it strengthens social differences and proposes resistance to the hegemonic control exercised through education.

Gramsci argued that the working class needed its own native intellectuals who could challenge the hegemonic order and foster a counter-hegemonic awareness. In the above quote Yasmin stood against the schooling system which was only limited to the black people.

At another place, Meena also shows resistance against the curriculum of the school by breaking the page from her book because there is the picture of white girl on the page which shows superiority of the white people. As in the novel, Meena says, "I rapped out the offensive page, it drifted to the floor, like a leaf shed from a tree, and fell beside my foot" (p. 20).

The foundation of Gramsci's theory is the idea of "cultural hegemony," which describes how the ruling class maintains its power by its control over cultural institutions, values, and beliefs. It entails opposing and subverting the dominant ideology and making space for alternate viewpoints as a way to resist this hegemony.

The statement "I rapped out the offensive page" suggests that using rapping as a means of expression is a form of cultural resistance that challenges prevailing narratives, often associated with marginalized communities. The speaker's act of rapping against the offensive page represents a countercultural form of

protest. It is frequently linked with marginalized communities. The speaker is rapping out the offensive page in a countercultural act of expression. The metaphor of the offensive page "drifting to the floor, like a leaf shed from a tree" denotes a symbolic disengagement from the prevailing paradigm. The speaker automatically disengages from the oppressive rhetoric imposed by the dominant class, just as a leaf naturally separates itself from a tree. This action represents the denial of the prevailing story and the assertion of individual liberty.

Gramsci also argued that the working class needed its own native scholars who could forge a counter-hegemonic consciousness. In the above context, Meena, is from the working class and raised her voice by turning the page from her book and speaks against the supremacy of the white people.

In the same fashion the sister of Meena, Yasmin, also shows resistance by trying to rescue her sister from the punishment of the teacher. As Yasmin says "You can't cane her...She's only a baby" (p. 21). The selected section refers to a physical discipline or punishment being applied to Meena, most likely a small child who is referred to as "her." Caning typically represents a strict and authoritarian display of power and authority. It also emphasizes the child's helplessness and innocence. The speaker highlights how wrong and cruel it is to subject her to such harsh treatment by highlighting how young she is. The quote expresses a defense of the weak and a challenge to the oppressive exercise of power in terms of resistance against domination and hegemony. It emphasizes the understanding that even the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society, such as a baby, deserve attention and safeguarding.

According to Gramsci, the elite class when exploits the lower class crossing all the boundaries, so, the lower class resists against the elite class in one way or the other. He further says that the working class also accompany each other, like in the case of Yasmin and Meena, in revolt against the elite class.

2.3 Consequences of Working Class Resisting Elite Class

This is a fact in the light of Gramsci's theory, resistance against hegemony, ideology and dominance that the lower class have to face consequences in one way or the other. The same is the case in the selected novels. In the selected novels, most characters suffered due to the revolt against the high class people. This section of the current study highlights the miseries face by the lower class in the light of the selected novels.

In *Daughters of Twilight* a lot of characters suffer at the hands of the Elite class. Some of the sufferings of the working class in the selected novel through the lens of Gramsci's theory are as follow.

In the novel, after the mishap between Baboo and Cobus, Baboo suffers a lot at the hand of young white bourgeoisie, Cobus. This incident is reflected in the novel as "But this was not the end of the matter. A few weeks later Baboo came home bloodied. Cobus and three friends had laid in wait for him (Karodia, 1986, p. 6). This expression alludes to a past occurrence or dispute, highlighting an ongoing circumstance or tension. It prepares the scene for the future Baboo-related incident. Baboo's physical injuries upon returning home suggest that he has been a victim of violence. It suggests that he has been singled out and hurt physically, probably as a result of some earlier quarrel or altercation. This quotation illustrates the effects that might result from individuals challenging or defying established systems or societal conventions. Baboo might have taken actions or made statements that were interpreted as posing a danger to or challenging the established power structures in the community. He thus experiences physical abuse as a means of punishment or retaliation.

As Gramsci is also of the opinion that if the person react against the upper class was a distinct character. As a result, that person must suffer greatly as a result of this uprising. The same is the case with Baboo. Baboo speaks against Cobus individually. Thus, he faces severe injury and cruelty from the young white Elite. In the same novel, Baboo also faces

another consequence of losing his own homeland. As in the novel, “Although the decision was painful one for Ma Papa, they reasoned that it was for Baboo’s own protection. The matter was settled promptly and arrangements were made to send him to his new home” (p. 6). This suggests that Ma and Papa, Baboo's parents, had to make a challenging choice. It implies that they were probably put in a scenario where they had to think about their child's safety or well-being. The parents of Baboo justified their choice as being in his best interests. They thought that the deed would give him some kind of security or protection. This suggests that a decision was taken promptly, and arrangements were made to move Baboo to a new residence. The goal might be to get him out of the situation that caused worry or potential damage. This quote implies that Baboo's resistance or difficult behavior had consequences for his future even though it isn't mentioned clearly. Sending him away to a new home denotes a reaction or consequence to his behavior or situation. It can be assumed that his opposition may have upset the established power dynamics or worried his family.

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