

The Portrayal of Women Oppression in Yaa Gyasi's *HOMEGOING*

KAVIPRIYA A.¹, DR. V. SUTHARSHAN²

¹ Department of English, Dr. N. G. P. Arts and Science College, Coimbatore

² Assistant Professor, Department of English, Dr. N. G. P. Arts and Science College, Coimbatore

Abstract- *“Homegoing” by Yaa Gyasi is a novel that traces the lineage of two half-sisters, Effia and Esi, born in 18th-century Ghana. The novel explores the effects of slavery and colonization on their families and communities over several generations, highlighting the intergenerational trauma that continues to shape the lives of their descendants. Despite its weighty subject matter, the novel is also deeply human and empathetic, with fully-realized characters whose experiences are shaped not only by historical forces but also by personal choices and relationships. Through the stories of Effia, Esi, and their descendants, Gyasi shows us the enduring power of resilience, hope, and connection in the face of even the most oppressive circumstances. The main objective of this study is to provide a detailed account of the struggles faced by women in Yaa Gyasi’s “Homegoing”. The study’s focus is on the experiences of Effia, Esi, and Willie, who encounter the most frequent and significant forms of oppression and struggles throughout the novel. However, it’s important to note that this study is limited in its scope, as it only seeks to address the specific problem of identifying the different types of oppression faced by these three characters and their efforts to resist it in Homegoing.*

Indexed Terms- *Oppression, Slavery and Colonization, Gender Inequality*

I. INTRODUCTION

“Homegoing” by Yaa Gyasi is a powerful and haunting novel that explores the lasting effects of slavery and colonization on the lives of individuals and communities. The novel traces the lineage of two half-sisters, Effia and Esi, born in 18th-century Ghana, and follows their descendants over several generations as they grapple with the legacy of historical trauma. Through the stories of each character, Gyasi offers a

powerful meditation on identity, race, and the ongoing struggle for liberation and justice. Despite the weighty subject matter,

“Homegoing” is a powerful and poignant novel by Yaa Gyasi that traces the lineage of two half-sisters, Effia and Esi, born in 18th-century Ghana. The novel begins with Effia’s story, as she is married off to a British slave trader and lives a comfortable life in the Cape Coast Castle. Esi, on the other hand, is captured and sold into slavery, destined to be transported to the United States. The novel follows the descendants of these two women over the course of several generations, as they navigate the effects of slavery and colonization on their families and their communities. It also depicts the sufferings, struggles and oppression faced by the women in their society. Through the stories of each character, Gyasi explores themes of identity, race, gender inequality and the legacy of slavery.

One of the most powerful aspects of the novel is how it illustrates how the trauma of slavery continues to reverberate through the generations. Each character’s story is deeply intertwined with the history of slavery and colonization, and their experiences are shaped by the systemic oppression and violence that have shaped their women’s lives. However, despite the weighty subject matter, “Homegoing” is also a deeply human and empathetic novel. Gyasi creates fully-realized characters who are flawed and complex, and whose experiences are shaped not only by historical forces but also by their own choices and relationships.

Ultimately, “Homegoing” is a powerful and haunting work that asks readers to confront the legacy of slavery and the ongoing effects of systemic oppression. Through the stories of Effia, Esi, and their descendants, Gyasi shows us the enduring power of resilience, hope, and connection in the face of even the

most oppressive circumstances. “*Homegoing*” by Yaa Gyasi introduces us to Esi, the other half-sister, who is captured and sold into slavery. The chapter begins with a vivid and harrowing depiction of Esi’s experience in the dungeons of the Cape Coast Castle, where she is held captive before being shipped off to the United States. Gyasi’s descriptions are visceral and haunting, underscoring the brutality and dehumanization of the transatlantic slave trade and also the treatment of women.

Despite the violence and trauma of her experience, Esi remains a resilient and determined character. She refuses to be broken by her captors and maintains a fierce sense of self throughout her ordeal. The chapter also introduces us to other characters who will become important later in the novel, including Ness, a slave who serves as a midwife, and Kojo, Esi’s son, who is born into slavery in the United States. Gyasi highlights the deep connections between the characters, despite their disparate experiences and circumstances. Even as Esi is ripped from her home and family in Ghana, her story is intimately tied to the stories of the other characters in the novel, illustrating how the effects of slavery reverberate across time and space and also the life struggles and oppression faced by the women.

“*Homegoing*” is a powerful and emotionally charged exploration of the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade, and the resilience and humanity of those who were forced to endure it. Gyasi’s vivid and nuanced characters draw us into their stories, and her uncompromising portrayal of the brutality of slavery makes clear the enduring impact of this dark period of human history. Even though slavery played a major role in the novel, the struggle and oppression faced by the women are also important to note. This study examines the struggles faced by female characters in Yaa Gyasi’s novel, “*Homegoing*”. Within the novel, Effia Otcher, Esi Asare, and Willie Black each encounter various types of oppression. For instance, Effia’s parents’ control and regulate her life, including their decision for her to marry James Collins, who has a dark secret related to slave exploitation. Similarly, Esi is kidnapped, imprisoned, and raped by British soldiers after being taken to Cape Coast Castle. Despite her resistance, she struggles to escape the dungeon. Meanwhile, Willie experiences the difficulties of being a woman seeking employment and

is harassed by her husband, Robert, in a jazz club bathroom.

The study is primarily concerned with two key points, the first being an exploration of the different forms of oppression that these three women face in the novel. The second point of this study is to examine the oppression faced by the three women in Yaa Gyasi’s “*Homegoing*” and their respective efforts to overcome it.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, “*Homegoing*” by Yaa Gyasi is a profound and moving novel that explores the lasting impact of slavery and colonization on the lives of individuals and communities. Through the intergenerational stories of two half-sisters and their descendants, Gyasi offers a powerful meditation on identity, race, trauma, and the struggle for liberation and justice. Despite the weighty subject matter, the novel is also deeply human and empathetic, with fully-realized characters whose experiences are shaped not only by historical forces but also by personal choices and relationships. Gyasi’s writing is vivid and powerful, drawing the reader into the lives and worlds of each character and illustrating the profound connections that exist across time and space and also the oppression faced by women.

The main point of discussion pertains to women’s efforts to resist oppression, which can take various forms. The types of oppression experienced by women may include exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Therefore, women employ diverse strategies to resist oppression, including Willie’s persistence in securing employment, Willie’s intellectual questioning, Esi’s problem-solving abilities, and Effia’s advocacy for human rights based on her intellect. Through the stories of Effia, Esi, and their descendants, Gyasi shows us the enduring power of resilience, hope, and connection in the face of even the most oppressive circumstances. This novel is a powerful testament to the human spirit and a reminder that we must continue to work towards a more just and equitable world for all.

REFERENCES

- [1] Gyasi, Y. (2016). Homegoing. New York, NY: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group
- [2] Madeline Cohen, author of ClassicNote. Completed on May 24, 2017, copyright held by GradeSaver
- [3] Laura Miller. "Descendants." The New Yorker. May 30, 2016. July 5, 2017
- [4] Diana Evans. "Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi review – the wounds inflicted by slavery." The Guardian. January 13, 2016. July 5, 2017
- [5] "GHANA TIMELINE – THE GOLD COAST." The Crawfurd. July 5, 2017