

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT ON URBANIZATION AS DEPICTED IN THE NOVEL “CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY” AS CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The study tackles the social and economic impact on urbanization as depicted in the novel “Cry the Beloved Country”. The study aims at investigating the impact of social and economic factors in the life of the author Alan Paton in his literary work Cry, The Beloved Country. The researchers try to figure out what are the factors that affect the human personality to transform him/her to act accordingly. The researchers raise an important question on whether the environment plays a crucial role in transforming one’s attitude, or fragile character could be easily affected by the environment. Moreover, the environment can be an essential factor in changing someone's behavior. The study reached that social injustice and inequity forced young men and women to leave the villages. The study recommends the necessity of making surveys about social problems in the community to be discovered and solved them.

Key words: Urbanization, Transform, Environment, Fragile Character, Behavior .

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Introduction

Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* is one of the most influential works of South African literature. Appearing at a time when the South African political system was being increasingly questioned, the novel drew worldwide attention to the horrors of apartheid, a political institution promoting segregation and discrimination. This book overviews Paton's novel and its social and political contexts. It discusses South African history and provides a sample of documents related to the origin of apartheid and the challenges facing South Africans under the segregationist regime. In doing so, it helps students understand the political climate of South Africa under apartheid, as well as the challenges of racism that continue to plague contemporary society.

Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948) is one of the most influential works of South African literature. Appearing at a time when the South African political system was being increasingly questioned, the novel drew worldwide attention to the horrors of apartheid, a political institution promoting segregation and discrimination. However, because historical and social issues figure prominently in the novel, it is sometimes difficult for modern students to understand. But because of the enduring plague of racism, it is all the more important for students to come to terms with the issues Paton raises. This book overviews Paton's novel and relates it to its social and political contexts.

The book begins with an analysis of the novel and gives attention to adaptations and films based on it. It then overviews South African history. This is followed by a selection of primary documents related to the origin of apartheid, the history and work conditions of miners, the social and economic conditions in urban and rural areas, the challenges facing South African women, and the state of post-apartheid South Africa. While the book does much to illuminate Paton's novel, it additionally helps students use the novel to explore important social concerns still present in society. Chiwengo, Ngwarsungu (2007). *Understanding Cry, the Beloved Country*. Westport, CT: The Greenwood Press. p. 21. [ISBN 9780313335082](#).

The novel captures the extremes of human [emotion](#), and Paton's faith in human dignity in the worst of circumstances is both [poignant](#) and uplifting. The novel shows the brutality of [apartheid](#), but despite its unflinching portrayal of darkness and despair in South Africa, it still offers hope for a better future. The novel itself is a cry for South Africa, which we learn is beloved despite everything; a cry for its people, land, and the tentative hope for freedom from hatred, [poverty](#), and fear. "Cry, the Beloved Country". Encyclopedia Britannica, 31 May. 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Cry-the-Beloved-Country-novel-by-Paton>. Accessed 31 October 2022.

The central problem of the novel is stated by Msimangu: it is the problem of a people caught between two worlds. The old world of ritual and tribal adherence, respect for the chief, and tradition have been destroyed, but nothing has been offered in its place. The white man has disrupted the old ways but refuses to accept the native in the new world. Currently, the natives live in an unstructured world where there are no values and no order to adhere to.

This idea is represented in the novel by Absalom and Gertrude, who lose their old values and become part of the lawless life in Johannesburg.

The novel is not only a study of social problems but also a study of human relationships. Kumalo, interested at first only in reuniting his own family, comes to understand the greater problems facing his race. In such a novel as this, the absorbing social message must be realized by vivid, human characters to make the theme memorable.

Many of the ideas of the novel are presented through the suffering of Kamalo. In fact, through suffering, several persons undergo a significant change. James Jarvis, through the suffering he undergoes as a result of the death of his son, learns to understand his son, whom he had not previously really known. Furthermore, he comes to a better understanding of himself, and finally, he develops an understanding of the social situation of the entire country. As a result of this suffering and consequent understanding, he becomes a reformed man and continues the work begun by his deceased son by contributing to projects intended to improve the state of the natives.

Likewise, Kumalo undergoes tremendous suffering through the death of his son, Absalom. He is disillusioned by finding his sister and then his son in desperate and degenerate conditions; still, later he has to face the death of his son, a shattering experience that brings him to understand many more of the complexities of life. He realizes that man cannot live simply by the old values; instead, he has to work toward creating new and different values of equal importance. Thus, he returns to his village with a new understanding of life and the basic nature of the change taking place in South Africa.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Young people moving from rural to urban areas face social and economic problems that form their personalities. The researchers believe that a person under specific circumstances can change accordingly.

1.2 Objective of the study

The study aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. To find out to what extent social and economic factors played by urbanization can affect one's personality.
2. Deciding how far a fragile character is negatively influenced by urbanization.

1.3 Questions of the study

1- To what extent can social and economic factors played by urbanization affect one's personality?

2- How far does urbanization have a negative impact on fragile characters?

1.4 Hypothesis of the study

1- Social and economic factors played by urbanization can affect one's personality

2- Urbanization has a negative impact on fragile characters?

1.4 The significance of the study

The environment can be an essential factor to transform a good person into a bad one and vice versa. However, this could not be true in general as a person gets older, he/she will be more adhere to his culture and tradition despite the changing environment that he/she lives in.

1.5 Delimitation

The study is limited to the impact of social and psychological changes that happened to South Africa's society during the era of apartheid.

The analysis of the Novel

Johannesburg

Kumalo's wife encourages Kumalo to use the money they saved for Absalom's (their son) college, as well as the money she has saved for a new stove, to go to Johannesburg to check on his sister. She believes they will not need it for Absalom's education because Absalom is already gone to Johannesburg, when people go there they do not come back, and they get lost, and no one hears of them at all.

Johannesburg represents the evil forces; it is almost impossible to come back when you are caught up in it. [a href="https://study.com/academy/lesson/symbols-in-cry-the-beloved-country.html"](https://study.com/academy/lesson/symbols-in-cry-the-beloved-country.html)Symbols in Cry, The Beloved Country.

Gold

When gold is found, everyone becomes excited that work will be found, but the black workers are not the ones who make money. It is the white men who become richer.

The black workers live in terrible, overcrowded conditions where they can barely survive. Furthermore, the land that is mined is destroyed and the villagers no longer farm there.

Gold represents corruption, misappropriation, and injustice as the rich white men get richer and the poor black men face poverty and devastation.

The Church

Kumalo's faith keeps him grounded through his time in Johannesburg and he regularly prays over issues that affect Ndotsheni, his family, and South Africa in general. Like the town, the church has suffered from poverty and neglect. It is falling apart and suffering in multiple places. Kumalo tries to hold the church together, just as he tries to hold the town and his family together, but is unable to do so.

Earth/Land

Earth represents motherhood is respected and loved, but it is destroyed through urbanization through mining in search of gold. There is corruption, decay, and drought, resulting in poverty, starvation, and thirst.

Horse appears periodically to raise Kumalo's spirits, and his visits are occasionally followed by some generosity from his grandfather (an unexpected milk delivery, for example, or the arrival of Napoleon Letsitsi). Both Arthur and his son, then, help to bring good to their fellow men.

City vs Nature

The city of Johannesburg is portrayed as a place to which people are inevitably drawn and they never return, regardless of race. What keeps them there varies from person to person sometimes they are killed, or put in prison, or descend into poverty or crime but the constant is that they never return to their homes or families. Arthur Jarvis leaves his father and goes to Johannesburg, but dies before he can return home. Absalom Kumalo leaves home and becomes tangled up with bad people, accidentally kills a man in a robbery that goes wrong, and is sentenced to death. Gertrude Kumalo loses her husband and then gets drawn into the liquor trade. John Kumalo goes to the city, becomes a corrupt and powerful man, and is lost to Stephen.

All of these people are taken from the land of nature – and turned into something terrible inside the borders of Johannesburg. The city consistently breaks families apart, corrupting the social unit that stabilizes communities, and brings about death. Children die of illness in the shantytowns. People are run over by buses. The city ensnares those who come to it with the promise of money and then buries them in poverty. Absalom is caught in just such a trap, and in trying to escape it, becomes unrecognizable to his father. "Symbols in Cry, The Beloved Country." Study.com, 5 September 2016, study.com/academy/lesson/symbols-in-cry-the-beloved-country.html.

Throughout the novel, nature and the city are at odds with one another. When Johannesburg becomes too full, its population spills out into shantytowns in which disease and poverty run rampant. Its citizens are constantly wondering what will happen when it rains, or when winter comes. Nature becomes something to fear rather than something to sustain. Meanwhile, the thirst for wealth that the city imbues in all its residents drives a mining industry that rips up the earth, further destroying the contract between the land and its people.

The Tension between Urban and Rural Society

[Alan Paton](#) uses the conflict between urban and rural society and the various qualities they represent as a major theme of the novel. For Paton, rural life is best exemplified by Stephen Kumalo and his personality, while urban life is best exemplified by [John Kumalo](#). Paton clearly places his sympathy on the qualities of rural life, rural society represents family, religion, morality, and stability, while the chaotic urban life that Paton describes represents the breaking up of families, hedonism, and atheism.

Studying science and Education at university has an influence on Alan Paton's writing because dealing with students from different ethnic groups regardless of the color of their skin makes him see things differently. Another aspect that affects Paton's writing when he starts working in the reformatory with delinquent youth from slums for rehabilitation to change the teen's mindset toward life as to prepare them to the future by making them depend on themselves.

Along the same line, Paton's joining the South African Liberal Party has a great impact on his writing as he believes in equality and justice among all South Africans, as well as traveling to the United State of America, New York is also one of the so many factors which change and effect Paton's writing because at the time he travels to New York there was Civil Right movement which was seeking the equality and justice between blacks and whites in American, New York was considered as a save heaven for the black folks those who flee from the slavery of the South part of the United State.

Hence, all these factors play an important role in the author's life and definitely affect his writing, which was shown clearly in his novel *Cry, Beloved the Country* by depicting the change and transformation that happened to the characters.

Cry, the Beloved Country chronicles the searches of two fathers for their sons for Kumalo, the search begins as a physical one, and he spends a number of days combing Johannesburg in search of Absalom. Although most of his stops yield only the faintest clues as to Absalom's whereabouts, the clues present a constantly evolving picture of who Absalom has become. As Kumalo knocks on the doors of Johannesburg's slums, he hears of his son's change from factory worker to a burglar, then from promising reformatory pupil to killer.

When Kumalo and Absalom are finally reunited after Absalom's incarceration, they are virtual strangers to each other. The ordeal of the trial brings them closer together, but it is not until after the guilty verdict that Kumalo begins to understand Absalom.

Stephen Kumalo's son Absalom is a young black man who feels he doesn't find the opportunity to achieve his needs in his own village, then he moves to Johannesburg to find a job, but city life is quite different from the life of the village in every essence of life socially and economically rather he finds himself in a vacuum cycle cannot fulfill either his dream of making money or a job. "Cry, the Beloved Country. (2022, October 26). In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cry,_the_Beloved_Country".

Furthermore, instead of getting a job he seeks, he finds himself indulging in the world of crime by involving in murdering the advocate Arthur Jarvis, as a matter of fact killing Arthur has many symbolic facts about young black men who do not distinguish between their achieving their desire and the interest of the whole community. Arthur was a lawyer who defends blacks rights despite his efforts of bringing justice for the blacks ironically Absalom murders him.

Moreover, Absalom is an innocent young black man who comes from a different environment in the city where social and family bonds are very important, living in a village

with all its values, and beliefs and having the respect of the elders as a conservative society. Shifting from such an environment to an open society has a great impact on his notion which causes him a cultural shock he cannot bear, with the demand of life in the city that Absalom cannot cope with, and then he finds himself immersed in the crime world.

From another angle, Stephen Kumalo's sister Gertrude is another standing example of changing the society and the environment play a role in a character's life and attitude, she moves to Johannesburg for a better life thus she finds herself in a world of prostitution and she cannot go back to the village, because such an act is not acceptable in conservative societies, the speed of city life and changing mindset makes her to do so and she doesn't want to go back to the village.

Consequently, the author makes it clear that social injustice and inequality make young men and girls leave the village into megacities in search of opportunities for a better life. The author believes that only white folks are allowed to own the land and blacks are not the source of injustice and killing between blacks and whites in South Africa. Whites consider blacks as a murderer, Absalom and Gertrude are victims of such inequality, and biased in their society. The issues of injustice and inequality between blacks and whites arise from the source that whites feel what they possess are theirs, however, blacks feel whites stole the land and the wealth which historically and genuinely belong to them and have the right to take advantage over. [Susan Galbraith, "Lost in the Stars at Glimmerglass"](#), DC Theatre Scene.com, 3 August 2012, accessed 14 February 2013

In addition to that, there is another factor that was a clear exhibit which is closely related to inequality, in a sense when John Kumalo reminds his brother that black priests are paid less than white ones, and argues that the church works against social change by reconciling its members to their suffering. He paints an infuriating picture of a bishop who condemns injustice while living in the luxury that such injustice provides. This is related to the South African Liberal Party and its liberal notion that the author once was a part of it, if there is corruption and injustice in all aspects of the society then religion is not an exception.

Findings:

The results:

The study reached the following results:

- 1-South Africa witnesses social injustice and inequity, which led young men and women to leave the villages, this is clearly only, reflected in the novel "Cry the Beloved Country".
- 2-Alan Paton's education has contributed to the influences of his writing, Alan Paton, was obviously, very admired by the United States of America Lincoln, which was much known for demising slavery in America.
- 3- Alan Paton witnessed a very segregated and racist regime in South Africa. This led him to stand with the right of black people in demanding their rights.

4-The biographical discussion found that Alan Paton's personal experience and historical heritage of the parted systems in South Africa influenced his novel writing.

5-Simply, Alan Paton's literary works expose the great dilemma of the history of the racial British systems in South Africa as the result he reflects his moralist in his writing more than being an author.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Suggestions:

Conclusions:

Many authors contributed to the field of literature in a way that develops literary works in general. At the same time assist to raise criticism about the subject that concerns their literary works in regard to their own community. Alan Paton is one of the African novelists who work truthfully for his nation and country in order to unite the community which is broken by the apartheid regime, trying to fix the things which have been broken and amend the society. The novels reflected South Africa at the time of the apartheid system. Alan Paton depicted the situation in South Africa, how beautiful it was, and how he suffered very hard trying to send messages to his own race to stop such discrimination against black and indigenous people to build a country that can represent them all as one nation. Alan Paton throughout his novel calls for equality and freedom for the entire race that exists in South Africa.

Alan Paton narrates his novel regarding his experience and biographical background. As has been mentioned by the theory of biography; the writer is influenced by the surrounding of his social issues and in turn, reflects what he experiences or examines society in his or her works. So essentially, all literature is autobiographical in nature. Alan Paton used all the aspects of social identity and social problems which exist in his community not only but also Paton include some of the transcripts of Abraham Lincoln, United States presidents, and how Lincoln ends the severity. Alan throughout his novel tries to expose the social problems and at the same time tries to get the solution to the problems. Clearly, Alan Paton throughout his characters tries to expose his ideas and deeply exposed the solutions.

Recommendations

1. To understand and appreciate the hidden ideas of Alan Paton. It's important to study the modern approaches to analyzing literary works such as biography, social and others
- 2- Alan Paton throughout his literary work addressed the world, talking about the issues of discrimination and what is beyond its extent. so it's significant to make surveys about social problems in the community to be discovered and solved them.
- 3- Alan Paton's works are especially to be searched in depth by the students of English literature and social studies.

4- Alan Paton's works should be dealt with higher education institutes particularly social sciences such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology, to enable them to discover the social problems which are reflected throughout literary books.

Suggestions:

The research suggests that many areas of Alan Paton's works need to be studied, by other literary studies. These suggestions are as follows:

1-The present study could be replicable on a wider scale that includes all the aspects of the factors that influenced Alan Paton's literary works.

2-Alan Paton, literary works should be conducted to further field base research to obtain the deep ideology and the history of early established America.

3- "Cry of the Beloved country" dealt with biographical methodology, critical and social surveyors should go deep into the author's biography which will enable them to elaborate on their studies.

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