



# Racial Prejudice Towards Black People In E.R.Braithwaite's *To Sir, With Love*

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**Abstract:** Race as a colonial power, it demands justice and penetrates the most significant aspects of global power. An epic allegory about race, E.R.Braithwaite's *To Sir, With Love* highlights the sufferings of novelist against racial discrimination, societal prejudice and how that becomes the blockade for his beginning of career. To become a teacher as a Black man and overcome the barriers in student-teacher relationship become very challenging for the novelist after post war London is also another crisis well depicted in his autobiographical novel, *To Sir, With Love*. The present paper analyzes how racism brings a dark side to the protagonist Braithwaite's career where he is forced to introduce himself as a "Black Man" in one of his interviews. As a Black man, the novelist's experience against misrepresentation of Black teachers and education in East End of London is also emphasized. This paper accentuates how race intrudes student-teacher relationship, where the students show their uninterest in learning and society too makes them feel difficult to learn.

**Keywords -** Education, Race, Discrimination, Societal Prejudice, Relationship, Barrier

Racial discrimination is against an individual that can be based on many aspects like discrimination in origin, language, culture, physical appearance. The physical appearance vitally like skin color and hair texture speaks loud about racial discrimination. Mainly the victims of racial discriminations are refugees, migrants. The refugees and migrants in United Kingdom are brutally affected by racism. A report says that the migrant faces racial discrimination at work place and the police are unfairly targeted on Black People. Racism becomes a biggest barrier to the students to achieve their academic attainments.

Due to racial discrimination many black people refused to get medical care for them and their family members. Employment opportunities are opened up for the white people and gives first preference for the white than the black people and the pay scale was different for the black people. Their life was a very hardship as a migrant. Even the author E R Braithwaite faced many hurdles in his career. Racial

discrimination and societal prejudice are fully occupied in the society of Britain in post war. The hurdles he faces during his job interview and the racism inside the classroom when he is as a teacher makes him to write a novel *To Sir, with Love*.

*To Sir, with Love* is an autobiographical novel focuses on racial discrimination, societal prejudice and mixed race romance. The author confines the difference between the period during the World War II and the post war. The difference is about the societal prejudice which takes places after the post war. The novel is about the true incident as a teacher in a secondary School in the East End of the London.

Racial Discrimination takes up the novel for the height of emotions among the characters in the novel. The Protagonist, Braithwaite is the representation of emotions, acceptance, struggles which undertook by the author himself when he accept him as a teacher. The novel carries flashback where the writer shifts the reader from the present to the past. Braithwaite divides novel into two during World War II and Post war. Novel shows the importance of getting employed, education. Many incidents in this novel portraits racism and societal prejudice like journey to his school in red double-decker bus, his interview, Education, student- teacher relationship.

Journey is a happy way of spending time for everyone. That too journey to the school makes all the students and teachers very interesting day. Students like to meet their friends to share their events happened in their home in the next day of their class and the teachers are excited to meet their students. In this novel author depicts his bitter journey towards his school.

He portrays the prejudice that takes place inside the red double-decker bus. Since Braithwaite is only black man inside the bus, a white lady refused to sit near him. Refusal of this lady shows a strong racial prejudice. And the need of mentioning the color of the bus in this situation shows importance of color among people. Because the color of the bus is rendering a race, were the color red represents white people. In the very first plot author makes his reader to understand the practices which is undergoing in the city of London. He introduces himself that he is the “only black person” riding in the bus gives importance to the racial discrimination under goes in the society. Even though he is sitting like a deaf what the conductor said about him that he is a Negro. “They joshed and chivvied each other and the conductor in the endless stream of lewdly suggestive and remarks and retorts, quit careless of being overheard by me – a Negro, and the only other male on the bus.” (5)

The untouchability of the white women who refuses to sit near Braithwaite is illustrated with the experience of young sweeper Bakha, the protagonist of the novel *Untouchable*. The novel focuses on untouchable of low caste people. The upper class people maintain untouchable among the low caste people. The low caste people should announce their arriving. Bakha, who failed to announce his arrival to high class man. Faces an intolerance of untouchable that the man stated that he needs to clean him again and to change his clothes due to Bakha's unannounced arrival. The aggressive words used by the upper class men stated us:

‘Keep to the side of the road, you low - caste vermin!’ he suddenly hear  
Someone shouting at him. Why don't you call, you swine, and announce  
your approach! Do you know you have touched me and defiled me, you  
cockeyed son of a bow legged of a scorpion! Now I will have to go and take  
a bath to purify myself. (89)

The untouchable in both the novel shows the antagonist way of societal prejudice in race. Societal prejudice in each and every person shows in different aspects. In day to day life not only the Negro or low caste people face any discrimination but all the people in different way like superior person in work place shows his prejudice towards his inferior employee. The prejudice and racial discrimination in Braithwaite's interview played a vigorous role in his career.

Seeking a job is like a battle between a person's talent and his balance in personality. A person needs to seek a job which should fill his satisfaction as well as a job satisfaction where the personality speaks loud in the career. Braithwaite his personality gives him negative impression on him.

Braithwaite as an immigrant he did not find any difficult to find a job during the World War II. He worked in Royal Air Force. He never thought of his color while he worked as a pilot. The color which was not an intruder to him to become a pilot. But during post war he experiences a different world. After the war his color speaks out instead of him and his talent. He sees many hurdles to find a job. He gets an appointment for an interview and rejected only because of his color. Where the interviewer gives an open statement that he is qualified for this job but the white people cannot work under a black man. That is their superior cannot be a black man. In another interview he get rejected because he is too qualified for the menial job and because of the statement he is a black. He tries all his ways to get a job but in an interview he is forced himself to advertise himself as a “Black Men” before he attends the interview.

Mr. Braithwaite, My associates and I are completely satisfied with your replies and feel sure that in terms of qualification, ability and experience, you are abundantly suited to the post we have in mind. But we are faced with a certain difficulty. Employing you would mean placing you in a position of authority over a number of our English employees, many of whom have been with us a very long time, and we feel that such an appointment would adversely affect the balance of good relationship. (35)

The experience of Braithwaite where he introduces himself as a black man gives a knowledge of the post war period. The same experience is seen with the author Beryl Gilroy in her book *Black Teacher*. As an immigrant she finds difficult to find a job as a teacher where racial discrimination takes its opportunity to show its real color. She gets rejected in many interviews only because of her color that she is a black.

The authors Braithwaite and Beryl Gilroy both face racial discrimination in their career. Their talents are become fade before their color. Before they judge their talent they see their color. This can be stated with famous quote that "Never judge a book by its cover". They both use education as a tool to diminish the racial discrimination and shows vital power of education through their novel.

Education is meant to attain the knowledge. The field, which make student to develop their reasoning power, Develop their personality. Where they get trained to show their personality. Education is a platform to show the student's hidden talent. Through this novel Braithwaite showed a different face of education that spoiled the student in East End of London. That is the racism takes its vital part in education.

Greenslade secondary school in East End of London shows a different face of education which practiced in this school. Although he faces many hurdles to seek a job, finally Braithwaite become as a teacher. Braithwaite is the only Black man in this school. This made the students difficult to accept him as their teacher. Because students are corrupted with racial discrimination and the society. The relationship between students and teachers in this school takes its backside. The student lacks to show their talent instead they gave disrespectful manner towards their teachers. The student uses to call Braithwaite as a "Blackie teacher". Braithwaite tries very hard in many ways to attain their interest by reading psychology books rather he fail to regain their attention.

Thereafter I tried very hard to be a successful teacher with my class, but somehow, as day followed day in painful procession, I realised that I was not making the grade. I bought and read books on the psychology of teaching in an effort to discover some way of providing children with the sort of intellectual challenge to which they would respond. (63)

Racism which denied the students to accept the ways he introduced to understand that learning is important. And social background of the students which they felt that they lack respect as an adult. Same racism is found in the novel *Black Teacher* where the narrator is the only first black head mistress. She faces the habit of boredom from the students by throwing the books on her. A student uses to test her regarding her behavior as a black. The school was filled with racial discrimination where she finds it difficult to face the students. But both the characters in these novels love their student. Because they believed that the children are not born with race and color prejudice. Due to their love towards their students they are ready to face the hurdles in their teaching profession.

My experience had shown that children are not born with race and colour Prejudice. They absorb it from the adults around them. But since I was the first black headmistress in the lively borough of Camden, I was bound to encounter bigots of all sorts, the child who would always test me, and teachers who would be inhibited by my color. (14)

Braithwaite and Beryl Gilroy find a way of showing the respect and affection towards the student will make the students to understand the importance of learning. The way of addressing the students as sir or madam gave a successful way in Braithwaite's teaching. Love and affection can change any person into good deeds. Likewise they both through the affection they attained the attention of the students and become a lovable teacher in the life of students.

Racism and societal prejudice take up the opportunities of the individual black people. These are the novel shows that even in the society of prejudice in race the person can become a bright person in the heart of the students. Were only the adults has the power to change the future of nation. Through Love and affection, which makes the students to understand that race is not a vital part of their life.

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