

The Agony of Leaving Homeland in Hannah More's 'Slavery: A Poem'

Abstract

Romantic women writers have a considerable share in voicing against social issues. Although their works have gone into oblivion, they have no less contribution than that of the canonical male authors of the period. Hannah More (1745-1833) was one of such conspicuous poetic voices of the Romantic Revival. Her delineation of the unspeakable suffering of African slaves served a great deal to point out the injustices society inflicted upon those unfortunate souls. In this paper, I will try to analyse her 1788 poem, 'Slavery: A Poem', from an abolitionist stance. I intend to read the poem in terms of its portrayal of the deplorable condition of the African slaves, the pain associated with the separation of family, and More's ways to sympathise with them and instil the same feeling in her readers as well. As revealed in various documents, an umpteen number of Africans were trafficked and chained on ships mercilessly. Thus, shortage of space to sleep and insufficient water to quench thirst, let alone having food, led them to anguish. Most of the time, such an excruciating journey was completed with the end of innocent lives. Sometimes, in the course of the transportation of human commodities, the dingy and unhealthy conditions of ships produced transmissible diseases that required the removal of the deceased bodies daily. Focusing on this barbaric practice, British women antislavery poets composed sentimental verses to impel the government by diverting public opinion against slavery. This paper will critically discuss how More vehemently argues that having access to liberty is a natural right which cannot be constrained to a group of people. In the poem, she details the series of wrongdoings exercised by slave traders while berating them for their evil deeds. Reading the poem closely, I will endeavour to present how the liberty of the underprivileged souls is overtaken by the so-called 'polished' race generation after generation by exercising sheer political power and making their lives miserable by alienating them from their dear native land.

Keywords: *Slavery, trafficking, agony, family, Hannah More.*