

---

## A HUMANISTIC READING ON JAMES HANNAHAM'S '*DELICIOUS FOODS*'

---

**P.Shelonitta**

Doctoral Scholar

ManonmaniamSundranar University,India

---

### **Abstract:**

Human trafficking remains a significant problem in Africa. It exploits the children, women and men vulnerably for forced labor as well as the prostitution. Human trafficking includes taking control over the people through duplicity or force, for exploitation or economic gain. At every moment 3.5 million Africans are being trafficked. 99% of Victims detected in West Africa are trafficked within their own country or region. 83% in North Africa, 90% in East Africa and 62% in Southern Africa. This shows the pathetic situation of the people who lives in these regions. *Delicious Foods* works around the protagonist's mother Darlene who comes as a strong victim. This research study focuses on her family.

**Keywords:** children, women, trafficked, victim etc

Darlene, strong women on *Delicious Foods* is the focal of the work. After the death of her husband Nat, she was unable to cope with her grief so she turns to drugs and quickly she gets addicted to it. And in one day she disappears without a trace. The innocent eleven year-old Eddie, now left alone. And he is badly in search of her. Later it is learnt that Darlene has been lured away with fake promises of a good job and a rosy life. A shady company named *Delicious Foods* shuttles her to a remote farm, where she is held captive performing hard labor in the field to pay off the supposed debt for her food, lodging, and the constant stream of drugs the farm provides her. The company selected the people who were addicted to the drugs like cocaine. So that they can keep them in debt throughout their life.

Once a person enters into the farm he cannot even think of returning back to his home. Because the things provided for them cost double or and they were paid very less. If anyone questions about it and then it will be their end part of life. They will be tortured to the extreme level. Darlene is also tortured in the farm and she loses some of her front teeth's. This shows the cruelty of the farm officials. Jackie, a lady introduced herself to Darlene. She is the one who gave fake promises and offers a job with good salary and accommodation. The sentence she phrases made Darlene to go along with them without even giving news to her son or other people who are close to her. They said, The Company's associates do agricultural work, harvesting a wide variety of fruits vegetables and legumes. Darlene gets excited on hearing to

---

it. She started imagining like on this job she will be picking fruits and vegetables and she will be an innocent little girl again. She is really not aware that she is going to be trapped. When Darlene was young she grown up lonely. So she finds it as a perfect place.

A image come up in Darlene mind, of a bodacious-ass horn of plenty that had all kinda green and red peppers and shit spilling out, and bananas and carrots and grapes and whatnot, and everything be cold, crispy, fresh and wet with morning dew on account a being just picked. In her head, somebody snapped a carrot and it sprayed a li'l bit of mist into the air (66).

These are the expectations of Darlene about that farm as said by Jackie. Jackie also said her, Three-star accommodations, Olympic-size swimming pool, Recreation activities, Competitive salary and Vacation. She showed Darlene a picture of some condo-type complex with a kidney shaped pool smack-dab in the center. They showed off just to make her believe. Then Jackie tops it off with benefits, health care. And she says that they have a dentist to take care and help out with any problems they have.

Jackie promised her that the pay are not super-high, but they offer the workers a salary above minimum wage, the competitive rate in the field. Darlene felt like the first luck hit her in the whole six years since she lost her husband Nat. When Darlene requested to call her son. Jackie says her that they will make her to use the phone which they get there with free of charge. Darlene did not take it very serious and she is completely out of mind and believed them wholeheartedly. Darlene and other few workers like her are made to sign the contract. Darlene happily signed her full name as Darlene Hardison being unaware of the following circumstances which is going to be happening to her.

This shows how people are being trafficked. The minibus gone through a route where there is no street lamps and nothing. . They didn't found any houses or buildings nearby. Instead they find tall green grass, cornfields, telephone poles and wires in the surroundings. Finally the minibus stopped in a particular place and the place is completely bad full of chicken shit odors' made them uneasy and they were asked to stay in that place for the night. Darlene questioned Jackie about the three star accommodations which she promised her previously. Jackie simply replies her that she can go at any time, but she has to pay for the ride and for the accommodations as in the contract. She asked six hundred dollars for the ride and accommodations. Jackie asked her to pay it back by working in that place. They not even allowed her to speak with her son. Still Darlene has a hope that in the morning everything will get well. The company people started showing their real face. Mostly this kind of places is kept hidden. Similarly, Darlene and the other co-workers are kept in a place which is miles away from the city. They cannot even escape and ask for anyone's help.

In the morning she finds a man holding a gun warning her to go soon for the roll call or else she will be losing ten dollars from her salary. At this point, she did not really able to

---

describe what is happening around her. She thought that everything is going to be fine and she will be back home. But she did not realize that it is a place of doing illegal business. And she has been trafficked. Darlene went to work along with other men so that she will be paid more and she can pay off her debts and get back home soon. First job assigned to her is to pick the watermelon, she suffered more and broken her nails. In that roasting climate Darlene feels like eating a watermelon.

In Delicious Foods, people are not treated equally. They are treated similar to that of animals. They cannot do anything as they wish. They will be questioned for each and everything. It will be equal to that of a prison. Darlene wishes to eat a watermelon but she cannot do that. This is the worst situation of a nigger. They are the one who cultivate and harvest the fruits but they cannot taste one in that farm. If they do so they will be fined severely.

It's one hundred degrees out here and we're slinging around these twenty-pound fruits all dainty like they already belong to some white lady in the Garden District? If I want to stop and eat one myself, who cares if people call me a bigger just for wanting what anybody in their right mind would want? If eating and resting and surviving makes you a nigger, then sign me up! (116).

In Delicious Foods, every day they supposed to pay the crew in the afternoon during the roll call. Most of the people will not even get more than ten dollars. Everyone are kept in debt by the company. They will give the people drinks and drugs saying it as a party and later the company makes it all in that people's credit. For each and everything they are asked to pay and the prices are comparatively high. And no one can question the company for it. They are left helpless. And the equipment's which are provided to them are rusted and broken. They are not given any masks to safeguard themselves and there is no clean place to wash their hands. People are not satisfied in that place because they are paid ten dollars and are asked 20 dollars for their lodgings every day.

If anyone tries to escape or do any malpractices inside the company means after that nobody knows what exactly happens to them because they will be hit hard and will be taken to the hospital but they won't return back anymore. They will be killed. Later Sirius, a co-worker of the farm gets escaped from the place. It is more than one and a half months since Sirius escaped from the company so Darlene gets the hope that soon someone will come for their rescue. And she will be re-joining with her son and family. Titus known as TT another worker in the farm is bit hardly for just questioning about the missing Sirius. He is highly wounded and they did not give him any proper medications. However Darlene supports him well.

Darlene's son Eddie, soon gets the information that his mother has been trafficked. Being a child, he already lost his father and he did not wish to lose his mother too. So he took a strong decision to bring back his mother home at any cost. So he gets enter into the same

minibus and finally reached the farm along with the tuck, a drunkard bum. Tuck is the one who gives information about Darlene to Eddie. So Eddie compelled and took Tuck along with him. The crew is kept quarantined because the drunkard bum suffered from some contagious disease. The food is given to them only once a day.

Eddie used to divide the lunch evenly and saved half of his for dinner. Tuck, the drunkard bum also came for him so Eddie takes care of him too. He enquires about his mother to the persons who brings food for them. But no one answered him properly. But still Eddie keeps searching for his mother. And finally in one day he saw his mother. Darlene looks like something dead. Eddie much worried seeing the pathetic situation of his mother. Eddie was terribly shocked seeing his mother. But as a child he was not able to do anything. Eddie waited for the right moment so he started working along with his mother. And he was the only one who was not addicted to any kind of drugs. How is one among the supervisor of the company often complaints Eddie that he had not done anything properly? He hits him very not even thinking that he is a kid. Initially Eddie learnt the job and he performed well. Days passed Darlene, TT, Michelle and Eddie made plans to escape from the farm. But nothing gets successful.

Another incident to know the cruelty of the company is how fined a person four hundred dollars just for biting an unclesed sweet potato. The food provided for them are unhealthy. Eddie later seeing the unhygienic thing around later managed to clean the chicken house and fixed all the these year taillights with the help of other workers. Soon Sextus Fusilier, the owner of Delicious Foods heard about it and learnt that the boy is capable of fixing a TV so he took him to his home to repair a computer. Eddie get use of it to search and get away the documents related to the company but unfortunately no papers are found. No other people know that a company like that exists in the world.

Eddie suffered of sunburn but no one pays attention to it instead they criticized him saying whether the niggers would get sunburn. Since he is a nigger, it does not mean that he will not get any kind of rashes or sunburn. How purposely hurts him showing him to be superior. The workers were not given any proper equipment's to cover-up themselves from the hot sun. The company did not care for anyone. The complete motive of the company is nothing else but profit. And they are ready to sacrifice the lives of humans.

The company sells the basic products for the workers at very high cost. Six ounces of generic sunblock cost \$12.99 in the company. So the workers are in a compulsion to work more to get their basic needed products. And the company always kept the workers in high debts that they cannot settle it for their life time. The companies provide drugs unconditionally to the workers which made many workers not to think of escaping from the place. In the end Darlene also choose to remain in the farm only because of the drugs and refuses to hear the words of her son. The workers are made to work for long hours normally the work would stop at 8 p.m., but how made Eddie to work for more hours and he was not stopped by anyone. Eddie the innocent

one came to Delicious Foods in search of his mother. But he lost half of his early life in the farm. The employers gave him more physical work like fitting the mechanical issues.

One day Tuck stole a package of Jujubes from the store worth of five dollars. Later Jackie find it out and called Eddie and Tuck together. Jackie said to Eddie that he must punish Tuck. Eddie was not able to do that because he was the one who took Tuck along with him and he must take responsibility for him. So he refused to do that but how and Jackie compelled him to beat Tuck with the shovel. When Eddie refused to pick-up the shovel,

Later Eddie became the official handyman. Michelle wanted him to work as a double agent. Because he earned the trust of his superiors so he can easily try to find the information about the place other data's and she wanted to terminate their contracts and leave the premises. The first thing Michelle asked Eddie to figure out the layout of the farm. Eddie spent part of his time to find something useful which will help them to escape in Sextus's office. But he did not find anything about Delicious Foods. He concentrated on finding details about the business, records of money paid or documents related to payroll. Delicious was an anonymous shell company. And soon Eddie learnt that the company did not exist any proper papers. When Eddie learnt the truth that Delicious is a shady company, he feels bad that they have been cheated and exploited for so many years. And he did not want to stay back their anymore.

One cannot describe the feelings and pain undergone by Eddie at that time. However he escaped from the particular place he suffered more later to uplift his life. Eddie enters into the farm voluntarily to safeguard his mother from the hands of fusiliers but for his fate he lost his hands as well as he was unable to safeguard his mother at that moment. From the above incidents one can clearly understand how the people are being trafficked in the name of job with attractive salary and exploited by offering drugs.

#### **References:**

- Hannaham, James. Delicious Foods: A Novel. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2015.