

## **Toni Morison's Double Discrimination in the Bluest Eye in Comparison with Bama's Doubly Oppressed in Sangati**

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### **Abstract:**

*The paper is an analysis of the condition of Dalits in India and Blacks of Afro-American race. How they were ghettoized, persecuted and viciously outlawed from all avenues of decency, hope, progress and livelihood. Black writers and Dalit writers of both sexes have dealt with this theme extensively. Dalits in India are in similar position. "How Dalits are forced into ghetto. It reveals to the reader the rigidity and narrow mindedness of casteist in India which is relevant even today. In both Dalit and Afro-American society girls are viewed as sex objects without any consideration on the part of the males of the dominant culture. Both racism and sexism like a life threatening, non-nurturing force which exists even today.*

**Key words:** Racial discrimination, Dalits, Gender discrimination, caste-hierarchy.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The black woman, Toni Morrison, faced the reality of 'Double discrimination' of both race and sex. Racism and Sexism co-

exist in a traumatic alliance with in the life of the black woman. For the black woman, racial discrimination together with gender discrimination proves to be a deadly combination. This combination critically affects the lives and consciousness of African American woman. They are like the system of societal and psychological restrictions.

Sex and race have been interrelated in the history of American and the black woman Toni Morrison who has necessarily reflected the relationship in his novels. Blacks are, as a group who relegated to an under classes in America, in regard to their virtue also witness their women as well relegated to a separate cast by virtue of their sex. In the contemporary period, black woman novelist Toni Morrison has continued to analyze the relationship between class, race, and gender. All these three elements –race, gender and class are interwoven in the writings of all black writers.

Clearly, sexism and racism are systems of societal and psychological restrictions that have critically affected the lives of African-American women. Since sex and race have been so interrelated in the history of America, it is not surprising that when black women published novels, they necessarily reflected that relationship. (Sumana,29)

The *Bluest Eye*, “a timeless study of a social outcast who rejects herself “(Walker 1991: 50) implies on underlying desire for assimilation, verification and acceptance by White people. The novel revolves around the theme of slavery and racial oppression and it's far reaching consequences. In *The Bluest eye*, Pecola is an eleven year old black girl, poor, deprived, battered by all. For Pecola and her family, ugliness is a matter of personal conviction. If Pecola seeks her redemption through blue eyes then Claudia and Frieda find their through nerve and resilience. The same age as Pecola, they are little black girls like her and they take her under their wings. They have been looked after and are born winners, unfazed by the meanness of their lives or the hegemony of the adults.

“The Bluest eye” of Toni Morrison is a neo-slave narrative, concerned with the theme of racial exploitation during the world war era. Owing to the then existing circumstances of sexism and Racism, Pecola Breed becomes a ‘victim of the white society’. The black community in the novel has accepted white standards of beauty, judging Maureen’s light skin to be attractive and Pecola’s dark skin to be ugly. Claudia can sense the destructiveness of this idea and rebels against it when she destroys her white doll and imagines Pecola’s unborn baby as beautiful. Racism also affects the characters of the novel in other indirect ways. More directly, the sexual violation that Pecola suffered is obviously awful since it was incited by her own father, Chooly, who actually views her loss of virginity as entertainment.

Claudia recognizes that if we follow the white ideology of aesthetics we may gain beauty but only at the expense of others. Claudia blames the black community which adopts “a white standard of beauty ... that makes Pecola its scapegoat” (Furman, 1996, 21). Pecola is symbolically ‘dumped’: being pregnant, ugly, and mad.

Pauline Breedlove, Geraldine, Maureen Peal, and Pecola are black characters who try to conform to an imposed ideal of femininity. They are absorbed and marginalised by the “cultural icons portraying physical beauty: movies, billboards, magazines, books, newspapers, window signs, dolls, and drinking cups” (Gibson, 1989, 20). Pauline Breedlove, for example, learns about physical beauty from the movies. In Morrison’s words,

[a]long with the idea of romantic love, she was introduced to another – physical beauty. Probably the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought. Both originated in envy, thrived in insecurity, and ended in disillusion (Morrison, 1970, 1999, 95).

Consequently, in trying to conform to the ideal of white femininity, the black women characters despise their blackness

which in turn leads to self hatred. They see themselves through the eyes of white people and their worship of white beauty also has destructive effects on their own community.

Analogous to Toni, Bama, a Dalit writer voices the community's identity through *Sangati*, a novel resounding the autobiographical tone to it. The word *Sangati* means events, and thus the novel through individual stories, anecdotes, and memories portrays the events that take place in the life of the women in Paraiya community and how the Paraiya women are doubly oppressed. Women are presented as wage earners and it is up on them that the burden of running the family falls. The men on the other hand spend the money they earn as they please. In addition to that, the women are dreadfully vulnerable to sexual exploitation and harassment incurred on them by the men of their own community. The novel thus creates a Dalit feminist perspective. Her language is also very different from other Indian women writers as she is more generous with the use of Tamil Dalit slogans. She addresses the woman of village by using suffix 'Amma' (mother) with their names.

India is a country where caste divisions take priority over humane qualities. The upper caste people are called as aristocrats, suppress, humiliate, exploit, discriminate and marginalize the lower caste people, the 'untouchables', in every sphere of life. Women in the Dalit community are "Doubly oppressed" First Being a Dalit they are neglected because of their caste, and second, being a woman in the lowest of communities they are hardly considered in their own community or house for that matter. She redefined 'woman' from the political perspective of a Dalit. Bama's *Sangati* is a unique Dalit feminist to fulfill their family narrative.

*Sangati* exposes that how a man spend money to earn as they please but on the other hand a woman has to fulfill their family responsibilities. The theme of *Sangati* is "subjugation to celebration", the condition of Dalits were very bad as they were

not allowed to enter into the temple, and schools for education. This form of Discrimination based on identity akin to racism.

Dalit feminism points out repeatedly that Dalit struggle has tended to forget a gender perspective. In Dalit society every woman lives under the double power of caste and patriarchy. Women are considered as the symbol of sex and object of pleasure. If Sangati deals with several generation women and downward generation women, the older generation belongs to narrator, and the generation coming after as she grows up. Bama, conveniently exposes caste and gender problems both outside and inside the community and also focuses generally on Dalit women on various issues such as gender, sexual, class and caste discrimination.

Bama gives another picture of the community. Although both men and women come after a hard day's work in the field, men go straight to the bazaar or chavadi to while away their time, coming home only for their meal, but as for the woman they return home wash vessels, clean the house, collect water, gather firewood, go to the shops to buy rice and other provision boil some rice, make a kazhambu or a kanji and are supposed to feed husband and children before they eat what is left over and go to bed. (59)

Even they lay down with their bodies wracked with pain, they were not allowed to sleep whether she dies or survives, and she had to finish his business. Women were not allowed to take part on any occasion, the man themselves would dress up and act as woman rather than allow us to join in (32).

Bama deals with the gender bias faced by Dalit as well, by women right from their childhood. Girl babies are always considered inferior and less taken care. Dalit girls hardly enjoy their childhood. They have little time to play as she has to take care of their younger siblings. Maikkanni is one such girl who starts work from the day she learns to walk. (70) she has to go to work when her mother delivers a baby. The life of a Dalit girl

was tormenting but the life of a grown up Dalit woman was worse.

The story of narrator's cousin Marriamma tells a lot about the sexual assault the abuse faced by Dalit women and their inability to stand up against it. Bama is very careful in portraying the picture of a Dalit woman. Bama shows gender discrimination meted out to them throughout the lives of Dalit women. Bama realistically portrays the physical violence, like lynching, whipping and canning Dalit women by their own fathers, husbands and brothers. Bama explores the psychological stress and stairs. The voices of many women speaking and addressing one another with each other, sometimes expressed in anger or pain. Bama says that man can humiliate woman many times, he can disrespect a woman, it is very normal. But in this partial double minded society, woman has no right to speak. This is acceptable to all.

Bama, feministically voices out the grievances of Paraiya women. Characters like Vellaiyamma Patti and a small girl and the narrator herself, who learns the story from her grandmother which becomes development of the novel. In the novel many strong Dalit women had the courage against the shackles of authority. Bama said they live under pressure and get to enjoy their life fully.

The prevalence of caste-hierarchy in India within subcastes of Dalit community. In Sangati, the catholic priests were also gender biased and treated the converted Dalit woman as inferior . Bama used two modes of narration in his book sangati: one is confessional and the other, is conventional. And thus she goes deep up to the historical perspective of Dalit community. Bama has, personally experienced the marginalized. She sums up their situations in following lines:

“Everywhere you look, you see blows and beatings, shame and humiliation ..... Became we have not been to school or learnt anything, we go about like slaves all our lives , from the day we are born till the day we die, As if we are blind, even though we have eyes”.

Bama as a feminist writer, protest against all forms of oppression and sufferings faced by Dalit women and gives from the state of depression and frustration. She presents a positive identity to Dalit women focusing their inner strength and vigor. Through Sangati Bama holds the mirror up to heart of Dalit women. She makes an appeal for change and betterment of the life of a Dalit women in the variety of fields, including sex, and gender discrimination, equal opportunity in work force, education rights, etc. Finally, Bama is clear that no one is going to help the hopeless women in her community, it is up to the woman themselves to take their lives into their own hands. Hard labor and precariousness of Dalit women leads to a culture of violence, and this runs through the novel.

## **CONCLUSION**

As we begin our next generation of Dalits, they are initiated to gather "All are same across the world." In future, Bama's novels would intend to strengthen our communities, reducing poverty, providing equal rights to both men and women to take severe action and control oppression to tackle women's problem as well to reduce sexual abuse and to control women's Hazardous situation which eventually is followed by racial discrimination of colonizers all over the world.

In particular, Bama claimed that Dalits women had been sexually and racially harassed by a male domination. We believe all lives have equal values and that includes people who want to lead a peaceful life against the oppression of women, alienated society and gender discrimination in our society. She highly voiced her pride in Dalits. It's now to turn on Morrison's idea that any black woman could be seduced by a male dominant culture, they can't fight back. Once she admits herself the problem of sex, she finds herself unable to overcome the same.

As we arrive at a conclusion of the novel of Bama's Sangati is on Dalits' liberation in an analogy of the Afro-American's race and sex discrimination of oppressed communities of 'The Bluest Eye' by Toni Morrison. We hope this exhibit of the past engagement sparks our imagination for the future, seeing how we can take steps to improve the lives of the next generation in both the communities.

Sangati, is also, a story of the association between two events long before. The latest thrust to step up marginalized ties is initiated here. One compelling example is that the novels narrate how Afro-African and Dalits have engaged in slavery ties. Both the authors have dedicated themselves as 'People-to-People ties toward their community. Above all, we must have necessary steps taken by a new law of reducing discrimination of race and sex issues. Both novels highly support the voiceless of marginalized society and the agony of their lives which provide an in-depth understanding of the life of women in the community. Bama looks at the different treatments of Dalits emancipation in her novel Sangati, the caste and gender discrimination and calls it as 'doubly oppressed'. In the light of Morrison's 'The Bluest Eye' it is apparent that the oppression suffered by women of the community through the community in terms of race and sex is termed as 'Double discrimination'.

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