

## A BLACK GIRL'S QUEST FOR WHITE VALUES IN TONI MORRISON'S 'THE BLUEST EYE'

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### Abstract

*Toni Morrison has emerged as a significant African-American writer. She is known as a voice for the exploited black people in white America. Being an African-American writer, Toni Morrison is highly conscious of her own marginalization and slavery. Through her novels she describes miseries and plight of black people. Black people have lots of struggle to live life in white society. Sometimes they are also treated low by their own race. The research paper traces the struggle of eleven year old girl Pecola in the novel 'The Bluest Eye'. She is poor, ugly, black girl who longs to have blue eyes. Pecola suffers doubly due to her black and female identity by society as well as her parents. Pecola suffers not only as a black but also as a female. Being a female gender she is subordinate and pressed under the patriarchy. The paper explores struggle of black woman for recognition in Toni Morrison's 'The Bluest Eye'*

### Keywords-

*Struggle, Recognition, marginalization, slavery, racist, black, victim, suffer, subordinate, patriarchy, madness*

**A BLACK GIRL'S QUEST FOR WHITE VALUES IN TONI MORRISON'S 'THE BLUEST EYE'**

- **Dr. Narendra V. Pathak**

**T**oni Morrison is the most popular novelist in the history of African-American literature. She has boldly projected Afro-American feminist consciousness in her writing. Like other black people Toni Morrison actively fought for racial oppression. Through her novels she vividly describes traumatic condition of black people who suffers racisms, classicism and sexism in white American society. She also deals with many general themes like love, death, betrayal, evil etc. Her novels are inspired by William Faulkner, Alex Haley, Ralph Ellison and Virginia Woolf but she has established herself as distinct author having the original style. She is winner of the Nobel Prize in 1993 for literature. Morrison is indebted to Toni Cade Bambara for the concept of the 'African Spirit'. Toni Morrison carries forward black assertiveness and self definition which is imbibed in African folk culture.

Self-recognition or identity is debated subject in postcolonial literature. It refers to one's rights for equality in society because they suffer from alienation, racism, marginalization, slavery and gender-bias. Linden Peach comments,

The black community is envisaged as existing like a cell within the larger white body of America, sustained by traditional strength and values- but being weakened by divisions it. These divisions are the result of the gradual embourgeoisement of black people as a consequence of a complicated process of adjustment and accommodation to white norms. (Peach 28)

Morrison's aim is to free Black people and women from slavery. She belongs to a group of writer's in America- Maya Angelou, Toni Cade Bambara, Paule Marshall, Alice Walker and Ghorra Naylor. While exploring the complexity of black women in White America she tries to resolve self-recognition as African-American. Her novels reveals the meaning of blackness in depth. It is not just a colour but it becomes the identity of African People. Morrison's educational background and early professional life has

helped her a good deal in moulding herself into a creative writer with social and political consciousness.

'The Bluest Eye' describes the suffering of a black girl who desires for blue eyes. Blue eyes represents white beauty. Blue eyes, blond hair and white skin are American standards of beauty. It dominates or influences black people as lower. They struggled against white people to get their recognition as a human being. 'The Bluest Eye' is the most powerful attacks on the western standards of female beauty.

Pecola belongs to the Breedlove family which lives under the same roof. Pauline Breedlove is Pecola's mother and continuously drinking Cholly is her father. Pecola is a little black girl. The world has led her to believe that she is ugly and the epitome of 'beautiful' requires blue eyes. Therefore every night she says that she will wake up with blue eyes. Her quest for Blue eyes is the quest for love from society because her black race is hated. Her classmates know that she is not beautiful and worth anything except as the focal point of their mockery. They gaily harassed her- "Black e mo. Black e mo. Yadudd sleepnekked. Black e mo black e mo ya dadd sleeps nekked. Black e mo--- (The Bluest Eye 50)

The impact of white ideologies is visible through the above attitude. Pecola is the victim of the dominant social structure on the black community. Many people looked down on Pecola and treat her as low, which led her towards separation. Being disappointed, she observes herself in the mirror and tries to find out the secret of her ugliness. She faces hatred due to her ugliness. She feels isolation and sat alone on school desk. She also knew that when one of the girls at school wanted to be particularly insulting to a boy, she could say, 'Bobby loves Pecola Breedlove!' this is very insulting experience for Pecola. Her teachers and classmates are so cold to her that she feels alone in school. She desires for blue eyes as she believes that with blue eyes she would be loving, beautiful and popular and everybody would like her. According to Cynthia Davies-

Pecola is the person in this novel who makes us feel that they are inferior as objects. She undergoes all the dramatic experience of life dreaming that she would see the world with blue eyes and come out of blackness. But no one takes pity on her. She suffers the reality of racial discrimination and inequality and goes mad. (Pathak 45)

Pecola's parents Cholly and Mrs. Breedlove fought usually. It greatly upsets Pecola and she often wished she could disappear when it really occurred. Pecola's experience insider the walls of the ugly storefront represents a microcosm of the violence and

oppression she witnesses and experience . Cholly and Pauline Breedlove routinely enact for the children not scenes of love but fierce physical and verbal battles stemming from their life frustrations. Pauline neglects her own family for her white employer's home and children. She a mammy figure. Cholly sets fire to their stonefront home. Pecola gets relief from her parents abusive language when she moves in with the Mac Teer family. Pecola used to drink several quarter of milk from their home just to use their Shirley Temple mug and gaze at young Temples blue eyes which she yearns for herself.

Pecola is led to isolation because she knows the reality that nobody loves hers. No one supports her as a child. Her family does not support her, her teachers hate her, classmates laugh on her and native people neglect her. No one turns to her. Her adult role models are three uncouth prostitutes that were looked down upon by all the women in the town. Although these women, Miss Marie, Miss Poland and Miss China provided with her with some entertainment and enjoyment in her rather depressing, mundane life, they didn't advise her or listen to her troubles or problems. Pecola gets kindness only from these prostitutes otherwise from all others she never gets praise or positive response.

Pecola thinks that if she gets blue eyes she will be loved and admired by everyone. She has identified what it is the people around her would like her to be and she is trying to live up to that. She wants blue eyes because she has seen girls having blue eyes are adored and admired so ideal image of blue eyes gets fixed in her mind. The choice of blue eyes is due to the racist society she has grown up in. The fact that she wishes to alter her appearance in order to be treated better as human being. She wants to be loved and accepted by people.

At Mrs. Breedlove's workplace Pecola is always insulted by Mrs. Breedlove- "crazy fool—my floor, mess—look what you - work - get on out - now that ---crazy--- my floor. My floor---my floor. Her words were hotter and darker than the smoking berries and we backed away in dread" (The Bluest Eye 84, 85) instead of comforting Pecola Mrs. Breedlove scolds her when she walks over the floor. On the other hand Mrs. Breedlove loves white girl more than her own daughter- " The little girl in pink started to cry Mrs. Breedlove turned to her. Hush, baby, hush come here. Oh Lord look at your dress. Don't cry no more. Polly will change it." (85)

It troubled Pecola once again. She thinks that she is not loved and not wanted. She rejected by her own mother. She hates her being black Pecola is also raped by her father and becoming pregnant by him. People even tried to put the blame on her. Pecola informed her mother about the rape and Mrs. Breedlove didn't believe her. Cholly's sexual history starts off painfully as well. His first attempt at sex was scorned, mocked

and watched by two white police officers. They flashlight on his behind. He was terrified so they go away. Cholly was influenced by his unsatisfying life. He tries to pacify his rage through drink. It is this rage that poor Pecola inherits and it is this rage that rapes her. Pecola becomes pregnant and is ordered to leave the school. So she begins to slip into her madness. She develops an imaginary friend to whom she speaks about her 'new blue eyes'. She was given these new blue eyes by soaphead church, the town psychic and spiritualist, who convinced her that if she fed an old dog some food, which actually had poison mixed in it and he had an erratic reaction. She would be given blue eyes. She fed the dog and he died. Pecola has got the fairy tale world which she expects her wish of blue eyes. Only gave temporary happiness. She talks with new friends how blue and beautiful her eyes are and how jealous everyone is of them.

At the end Pecola is isolates from the town both physically and emotionally. Mrs. Breedlove and Pecola shifted to the edge of the town in a little brown house. A young girl's life is ruined as a result of society's placing of beauty on such a high standard. So it is clear that in 'The Bluest Eye' Toni Morrison regards racism as the African primary obstacle. Toni Morrison reveals her class consciousness by exploring the interracial prejudices caused by petty bourgeois Afrfrican, those who aspire for the same goals and aspiration of the white values or beauty.

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