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HIGH PREVALENCE OF 'RACISM' AND 'OPPRESSION' THROUGH THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

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Abstract

The subject of race is one of the most recurrent and controversial themes in literature. Literature is a mirror of different cultures, races and phases of society. It also occupies a huge symmetry in the African American literary heritage. There is also a huge discrimination between the races and also slaves are treated because they are black and all that black is regarded as inferior. Toni Morrison is the first Nobel Prize African American laureate and also a leading figure. She has deliberately created an extreme situation to improve a point. Toni Morrison's 'The Bluest Eye' shows a dualistic tale of the oppressors and the oppressed. The novel illustrates about the racism, oppression and marginalisation of blackness. Morrison used 'Blue Eyes' metaphorically which is easily understood. My paper dwells upon the appearance and a desperate situation which is suffered by a lonely and shunned girl 'Pecola'. If she had blue eyes she would be treated differently. 'Racism' is a main issue in our society also, it is also a never endless process. The research paper conduce to cover several issues that concern the black race in the light of The Bluest Eye. Sometimes we came to know that beauty is one of the qualities that makes people proud of themselves and the black races are suffered a lot. The novel addresses the social forces that drive understanding between the social constructs and harmony of the postmodern notion of discourse such as beauty, normality, family and sexuality. It also focuses that African American Literature is very rich, when it comes to the celebration of Black Beauty.

Keywords: Racism, Marginalisation, African American Women, Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* etc.

Racism deals with the negative attitudes and held by various people and groups in the United States and have been reflected in discriminatory laws, practices and action in various times. Racism against various ethnic or minority groups has existed, since the early colonial era. It has manifested itself in a variety of ways including genocide, slavery, insulation, naturalization laws and

racist immigration. Racial politics always remains a major phenomenon, and racism continues to be reflected in socioeconomic inequality. Racial discrimination related to various sectors of society including the economy, housing, business, health care, the media and politics etc. we also seen that oppression is malicious treatment on society or exercise of power. It may be overt or covert

depending on how it is practiced. Oppression refers to discrimination when the injustice does not target and may not directly affect everyone in society. Oppression is a major part of society, it works in a social order and consequently it is studied in sociological perspective, because it not focuses on liabilities and responsibilities but also bonds of rights and duties.

Toni Morrison, the first African-American woman to win the Nobel Prize for literature (1993). She wrote many works like *'The Bluest Eye'* (1970), *'Sula'* (1973), *'Song of Solomon'* (1977), *'Tar Baby'* (1981), *'Beloved'* (1987), *'Jazz'* (1992), *'Paradise'* (1998), *'Love'* (2003) and *'A Mercy'* (2008), provides view into the complexity of the black community. She also focused on something that she nostalgically calls "*village literature*" and which "*highlight the presence of the African continent*".

Toni Morrison delineates the futility of racism in black society at the various layers of experiences, she also focuses on a variety of multidimensional approach to the black experience in white America. Her vision is to show as creative which not only reflects American social reality but also helps to shape the present multiracial nature of contemporary society through her various novel. Morrison closely attack the black and whites' psychology in her work and shows us to get a shortest glimpse into their domestic life, married life, business activities and after that to survive against the hostile circumstances and to save their children from cruel clutches of the establishment of white. She also responded a social perspective towards Africanism. To her,

"Africanism is inextricable from the definition of Americanness", and criticism, to her, cannot remain, "too polite or too fearful to notice a disruptive darkness before its eyes."

G.M. Frederickson in his book *'Racism a Short History'*, states that:

"Racism originates from a mind-set that regard them as different from us in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable. This sense of difference provides a motion or rational for using our power advantage to treat the ethno

racial other in ways that would regard as cruel or unjust if applied to members of our own group".

Toni Morrison's beneficence towards the development of African American Literature and novel in particular is outstanding, that is why she has received maximum critical attention and gives most importance to African social, cultural, religious and traditional values.

The first utmost known piece of African-American Literature was Lucy Terry's poem "*Bar Fight*". It was written in 1746 and another writer is Phillis Wheatley (1753-84) who published her book "*Poems on various Subjects*" in 1773, three years before the American Independence.

Morrison also experienced racist attitudes at her home. She admitted that she grew up "*In a basically racist household within more than a child's share of contempt for white people. She also inherited the love for writings from her father and grandmother Ardelia Wills especially storytelling and ghost stories. She also said that she became "intimate with supernatural"*". Most probably in *'The Bluest Eye'*, she examines beauty and value from the perspective of the black community and how black society imposes an inappropriate white standard on its constituents. In this novel, Pecola Breedlove is a female protagonist, who is a young African American girl coming of age during the 1940's. she faces a lot of discrimination related to '*racess*' and '*oppression*' and to be loved and accepted by her community as well as in a world which rejects and diminishes the value of the members and defines beauty according to an Anglo Saxon cultural standard. Sometimes we think that '*Colour*' plays a vital role in the life of every human beings, not only for human beings but also for the society. Pecola's yearning manifests itself in her tragic aspiration to have blue eyes, the question is that, really beauty matters. There are many areas in which the discrimination of colour was reflected especially black community and it established coherence of the black society.

Morrison chooses to open *'The Bluest Eye'* with a reference from the childhood Primer Dick and Jane. "*Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family.*

Mother, Father, Dick and Jane live in the green and white house. They are very happy” (Morrison, Bluest 1)

Benjamin Issac, (2014, 14) states that:

“Racism is an attitude toward individuals and groups of people which posits a direct and linear connection between physical and mental qualities. It therefore attributes to those individuals and groups of peoples collectives traits, physical, mental, and moral, which are constant and alterable by human will, because they are caused by hereditary factors or external influences of climate or geography.”

Morrison also wants the reader to understand the images available of the black society internalize racism to reflect, that being happy, content and successful meant that someone in white, middle-class Suburbia, she also uses the Dick and Jane citations to expand on the appalling fact that this “cheerful and perfect” white family was an accepted part of the educational learning systems. Furthermore, the novel is divided into the four Seasons of Fall, Winter, Summer and Spring, which inform the reader that “to everything there is a season” and that the actions occurring in this narrative are a part of the inevitable cycle of life and the domination of the society “whiteness” which will eventually repeat itself. Sometimes this all-situations effect towards psychological backdrop of the novel. This also emphasizes the perspective that the boundaries of black society are set and defined by the dominant white. Here, the main thing is that oppression, who was oppressed and by whom, most of the times female were suffer this thing. Suffering by female community is further exemplified by social pressures. These pressures are mainly of a psychological nature, may be enforced by physical violence.

The characters of Morrison’s novel, reach their fullest potential and development within the boundaries of the community. The survival of characters’ also depends upon them existing within the boundaries of the community. Morrison also explains in her novel ‘*The Bluest Eye*’, Pauline Breedlove has a limp, caused by a rusty nail which

penetrated her foot when she was a child. Pauline’s constant struggle according to her role in society and her eventual search for physical beauty, leads her through many changes which impact the survival of the culture of the black community. We also came to know that the central figure of the novel ‘*The Bluest Eye*’, is Pecola Breedlove. Her physical deformity is her “ugliness” a perception that is shared by the community and that forms the own identity of the girl. She is also judges as a “winged, but grounded bird” and is always suffers as a victim, even schoolboys are taunting her “Black e mo”, the verbal abuse of her mother, the tormenting of Junior, or Geraldine insulting her by calling her “black”. Pecola never speak and does not fight back but she also wants to change her attribute according to the society. She always wants to change her black eyes to bluest eyes. According to the condition, Pecola is “a little black girl who wanted to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and seen the world with blue eyes”. (Morrison, bluest 176). Here Morrison also focuses in the eyes especially Blue Eyes are synonymous with “whiteness” and Morrison’s character always believes that the quality of “love” is found within the white society.

Morrison also uses different shades and contrast of “blackness” in all her characters to explain diverse class differences within the black community. Her all-novel deals with different grades of colours collectively the community reinforces the identities of its members through belief and heritage and individuals must remain a part. But people never understand this colour is a god gifted and it is a natural thing, it is not in the hand of human beings.

The characters in different novels are shown in the setting of a society in which it is constantly weighed down by the heritage of slavery and racial brutality and is profoundly rooted in cultures and customs that have formed and influenced the African American culture. Morrison also emphasizes the importance of the black society as very contemporary individual must negotiate their culture and heritage which are found in the unity of the community.

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