



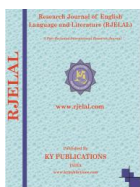
THE WHITE MEN'S POLITICS AND THEIR DOMINATION OVER THE BLACK AMERICANS: A STUDY OF *THE BLUEST EYE* BY TONI MORRISON

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Abstract

No color makes one beautiful. Every human being is beautiful with his own color and appearance. The white people of Europe propagated the idea of white beauty as a tool of their politics to show themselves superior to the black dominating over the blacks. They focused on the color because to be white for a black is unattainable as it is biological. They also tried to create self-hatred among the black spreading the white ideology. They hegemonized the black to accept the concept of white beauty and to be dominated using advertisements, media, actors and education. They also forced the black to be considered as ugly creating the least opportunities in the work places for the black community of America; alienating them from the society and torturing them both mentally and physically. As in *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola and her family are the worst victims of white men's politics. Pecola together with her family members is both mentally and physically tortured and tormented to accept the white ideology. However, Pecola and her mother have accepted the white ideology and Pecola has mostly desired to get the bluest eye; Claudia resisted against the white men and their ideology. At the end, Pecola has accepted the baby of Cholly Breedlove as a token of love and self-reliance and both Claudia and Frieda wish to have the safe delivery of it. Therefore, in this article I would like to show that how the white men employed their evil intention of using the color for dominating the black in America as a part of power politics, and also show the black people's reaction towards the white ideology with reference to *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison.

Key- words: Color, domination, hegemony, white ideology, and resistance.

To the white American, yellow hair, pink skin and blue eyes are the symbol of standard beauty. The white people believe that pale white skin, blonde hair and blue eyes are the only features, which make one beautiful, and the beautiful women have the right to achieve everything glorious in the materialistic world. They can fulfil all their dreams and desires. They get everything as they wish. They deserve the high place in the society too. They can

also rule all over the world. That is why in the novel *The Bluest Eye* Pecola was completely obsessed for fair skin, blonde hair and not only for blue eyes but also for the bluest eyes. As a critic Xu Shasha said:

"The focal character, Pecola, in *The Bluest Eye* is victimized by a society that conditions her to believe that she is ugly and therefore worthless, because she doesn't epitomize

white Western culture's ideas of beauty."(Shasha: Web)

The white Americans used the concept of beauty as a part of their politics to dominate the black who belonged to the working class. They imposed the idea on the black that to be beautiful, one should be white in color. If someone is black, he is not beautiful. They selected the physical shape of the human being as measurement of one's beauty. Claudia disclosed the white man's politics saying in *The Bluest Eye*:

Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs-all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. "Here," they said, "this is beautiful, and if you are on this day 'worthy' you may have it."(Morrison 1979: 14)

The white people spread the concept of white beauty throughout America in such a way that almost all Americans believe that only the white people are beautiful and the rest of the people are ugly. The white media also support the concept of white beauty so that the black people can easily accept the idea. They precisely politicize the concept of beauty to dominate the black completely in America.

The reasons for selecting color as a standard of beauty

In this article we will focus on the reasons of choosing colour as a tool of the white man's politics to dominate the blacks. The White people enslaved the African blacks, tortured, and tormented them in America. Though the black people were large in size and strong in physical power; they were dominated by the white people. To dominate them completely, the educated and cunning white people tried to hegemonize the black in a way that as they are black in colour, they are not beautiful rather they are ugly. Therefore, they are inferior to the white American. To convince the black, the white have chosen colour because it is biological fact. It is quite impossible for the black to be white in reality and to get yellow hair and the bluest eye. If the white could

use any other thing like money, knowledge of physical power as a standard of beauty, the black could attain this. As it was just unattainable for the black, they chose colour as the standard of beauty. A scholar Imane Hidayet Belad said:

"By the 1960's the American society introduced the beauty myth to black minority who accepted it blindly resulting in the destruction of an entire race. During this period, black feminist movements emerged due to the oppressive, racist and sexist acts on black women. As a result, numerous authors reflected on this problem among them Toni Morrison, a feminist author, in her novel *The Bluest Eye* where she attacks the founders of the beauty standards and the ones that practiced it (black and white individuals) using her own language, voice and perspective."(Belad 2017: Web)

• Self-hatred:

The blacks were unable to get the standard of beauty by obtaining pink skin, yellow hair and blue eyes. Therefore, they thought that they were not beautiful and so they were ugly. The novel *The Bluest Eye* focused on the idea of so called ugliness of the black people to the eyes of the white people of America. The entire Breedlove family believes that they are ugly. The white considered themselves superior to the blacks, as they were white in colour. Since the black people as Pecola and Pauline were neglected everywhere in America, they started hating themselves. As Manuela López Ramírez said:

"In *The Bluest Eye* the dissociation of the female adolescent identity stems from the colonization of Blacks by mainstream culture and the internalization of its standards of beauty, which engender self-hatred."
(Ramirez 2013: Web)

Hating her own colour, Pecola wants to be a beautiful woman obtaining the bluest eye to escape from the negligence of American white people. Pecola feels that she can overcome this battle of self-hatred by obtaining the bluest eyes. As Claudia said:

"Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed." (Morrison 1979: 35)

Even Pecola's mother Pauline has internalised the notion that black are not beautiful. She does not like to pass her time with her family members rather she feels comfort working in a white man's house. Thus, the black started hating them nourishing the concept of white beauty. As the blacks hated themselves for not being beautiful, the white people were able to dominate them easily.

The ways of convincing the black to accept the white ideology

Educational Institution

Educational Institution is the place where everyone can get the views of his basic rights. It makes one conscious of good and evil. It is a matter of sorrow that Pecola, a black girl, cannot enjoy her basic rights in the school where she gets admitted. She is bitterly abused by both the white teachers and students. In her school, she is not able to meet the other students except Claudia and Frieda. Rather, the white children humiliate her. They also mock at her telling:

"Booby loves Pecola Breedlove! Booby loves Pecola Breedlove!" (Morrison 1979: 34)

Even Pecola's ugliness makes her ignored and despised at school by teachers and classmates. She is the only member of her class who sits alone at a double desk. Here teacher never tries to glance at her and calls on her when everyone was required to respond as we find:

"They tried never to glance at her, and called on her only when everyone was required to respond." (Morrison 1979: 34)

In school, white children get the first priority from the teachers. On the other hand, teachers neglected the black children so that they could not be educated properly. Being humiliated by the white students and teachers, Pecola wants more and more to get the bluest eye to be liked by all. Thus, the white people used education and educational

institution as a tool to hegemonize the black that they are ugly and they cannot be as equal as the white people in every sphere of life..

- **Working-place:**

In working place, white people took the significant position whereas the black took the lower post like servants, cleaners etc. They also undertook hard labours and heavy construction jobs. The whites were the employers and blacks were the employees. As, in *The Bluest Eye* Pauline has been working as a servant in the white man's house for a long time. Being a servant, she becomes very happy. Even she likes to pass her time working in the white man's family hating to live with her husband and children, as she has not a good relation with her husband who usually beats her without finding any valid reason. When she has found an adorned house of a white man, she also becomes very happy and inwardly dreams to get so. However, it was very difficult for the black like Pauline to get such a beautiful house and family like her white master. That is why she is highly convinced to feel herself as inferior to the white. Claudia said:

"It was her good fortune to find a permanent job in the home of a well-to-do family whose members were affectionate, appreciative, and generous. She looked at their houses, smelled their linen, touched their silk draperies, and loved all of it." (Morrison 1979: 98)

Thus, creating very poor opportunities in the job market for the black, the white people enforced the black to neglect themselves and consider the white as superior to the black.

- **Media and advertisement**

Film industry plays a very significant role to dominate the black people in America. As people were highly motivated by the actors and actresses, Pecola was also greatly influenced by the white actors and actresses. In the film industry, the white were grabbing the major characters and the black were playing the role of minor characters. Gaeta Garbo, Ginger Rogers and Shirley Temple were white

actresses. The white were the super stars and the black acted as servants or other minor characters. The black people were not able to show their talent playing a vital role in any film because the white people didn't not give the black any kind of opportunity to get the higher position in the film so that they could not develop the concept of achieving the higher position in the society. Rather they were shown as servant or hard working man and woman to be mentally dominated and to think the mass unskilled and poor. There were lots of advertisements of white models. On the other hand the black were not selected to become a model of advertisement. So, they were bound to gaze at the white models in different advertisements. Pecola was greatly impressed by the beauty and the popularity of Shirley Temple. Shirley Temple with her hallmark dimples, corkscrew golden curls and twinkling blue eyes was the highest paid child actress of the 1903's and the early 1904's. When Pecola moves in with Claudia, she finds a Shirley Temple mug. She begins to drink out of it at every opportunity she gets thinking that it will make her beautiful and make her look like the beautiful girl she sees in front of her. As Claudia said:

"She was a long time with the milk, and gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple's dimpled face. Frieda and she had a loving conversation about how cu-ute Shirley Temple was."(Morrison 1979: 12-13)

And thus a black girl like Pecola hopes to get the white skin considering the white girl like Shirley Temple as more beautiful than her. Pecola and Frieda were also fond of white baby doll. The white people used the blue eyed baby doll as a weapon to impress the black children. They showed the blue eyed baby doll as the most significant gift of the Christmas day and the most cherished thing of a girl child. It became the symbol of white beauty. That is why most of the girls desired to have it as their Christmas gift. Being a black child Pecola liked the blue-eyed baby doll very much. She was very curious to have it as she was greatly influenced by the white politics. The white tried to allure the black making the blue eyed baby doll popular to every white girl even to the black. They institutionalized the concept

of white beauty using the mainstream media, magazines and newspapers. As Claudia said:

Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs-all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured.(Morrison 1979: 14)

Pecola and her mother are hegemonized to accept the white as beautiful and consider themselves as ugly. It is because they are not white in color and they don't have the blue eyes to be considered as beautiful. Being motivated by the white ideology, Pecola has been very excited to have the bluest eyes and Pecola's mother wants to pass most of her time in the white man's house. And thus the white people of America have been a little bit successful to hegemonize the black to accept the white ideology and culture.

The white Americans enforced the black to be considered as ugly

In many cases the white tortured and tormented the black people to accept the white ideology and to consider themselves as ugly. The black people are not really ugly rather they are forced to be considered as ugly. In America, the black people were the worst victims of racism. When we go through the fiction, we find that Pecola has been forced to be treated as ugly though she was not ugly in the real sense of the term. Wherever she went she did not get any opportunity to explore her talent because she was forcefully separated from the mainstream culture of America because of her blackness. Even she did not get any help from the light colored people. Though they were not completely white in color, they feel superior to the black as Maureen considers herself as more beautiful than Pecola. And almost all the time she tries to insult Pecola saying:

"Safe on the other side, she screamed at us, I am cute! And You ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I am cute!" (Morrison 1979: 56)

As Pecola was black in color, she was not liked by the light colored Maureen rather was tortured and

tormented. When she met Junior, a white boy, she experienced the most horrible incident of her life. When Junior allured her saying that he wanted to show her a new thing, she accepted the proposal as she was not proposed by any white boy ever. But taking her in his house, he tried to humiliate her and torment her physically. He killed his own cat though Pecola tried to save her. When His mother came back he showed Pecola as a murderer of the cat. His mother bitterly criticized Pecola saying:

“Get out,” she said, her voice quite. “You nasty little black bitch. Get out of my house.” (Morrison 1979: 72)

Even when she became very crazy to have the bluest eye after being physically and mentally tortured by the white men, she went to Soap head Church and got nothing. Rather she was again humiliated by the religious man as he used her to kill the dog and then he became completely frustrated and hopeless to get the bluest eye.

Like Pecola, her father Cholly was also tortured and tormented by the white people at the time of his boyhood when he was forced to have a physical relation with a lady before the eyes of some white men, which greatly shocked him. Being a black man he was not able to show his talent in the society where he lived rather he was also the worst victim of racism as he did not get any job to maintain his wife and children. He was frustrated and that is why he became a drunken and could not maintain his family properly. And thus the black people in America were physically and mentally tortured and tormented by the white people to be considered as ugly.

The white men alienated the black people in the white community using the white ideology and power. When the black had not any other option to live and to sustain in the society, they willingly or unwillingly accepted the idea of the white man and started believing that they are ugly and they are worthless. So they are not able to be liked by anyone. And that is why we see that Pecola believes that she is ugly that is why, she is not liked by any anyone rather she is tortured and tormented by everyone. To escape from such condition, she wants

to get the bluest eyes and thus she wants to be a beautiful girl. When Pecola went to Junior’s house she becomes very happy watching such a beautiful house and she desired to possess such beautiful things in her own house. But it was quite impossible because she does not find any good relation between her father and mother, rather they always quarrel because Cholly is disappointed as he has not any satisfactory job to earn money. So, he is a drunken and is not careful about his wife and children rather he wants to pass his unhappy time of his life. On the other hand, her mother is not satisfied with her father too as she likes the house of the white master. Though she is beaten by her husband, she does not leave her husband as she does not have any other place to go. So she has accepted such incident of unhappy life as her regular activities. As they live in a very unwanted condition in a white society, Pecola’s brother is not also a happy young boy that is why he becomes very violent in mood. He does not like to stay at home rather when he becomes angry he usually breaks the goods of his own house. Though Cholly, Pecola and her brother have talent, they are not able to show it because of the white man politics as they are segregated, and they are not able to get proper education. They are not able to get any help from religion, society and government. They have become completely failure in their lives and they are bound to be treated as ugly and worthless.

The reaction of the black to the white and their concept of beauty

Being motivated by the white ideology and power, most of the blacks accepted the concept of beauty of the white people in America. The whole Breedlove family accepted the concept of white people and their philosophy and that is why Pecola and her family members think that they are ugly. Among them Pecola and her mother started changing their own identity and culture. As Pecola wants to be treated as a beautiful possessing the bluest eyes and her mother started hating her own family and culture considering the white men and their house is suitable to live and pass her time

But few of them did not accept the concept of white beauty. Claudia is one of them. Claudia boldly rejects to have the blue eyes, white skin, straight hair to be a beautiful woman rather she thinks that she is a beautiful woman with her natural appearance. She also rejects the social status that the white people enjoyed in the white society. Claudia is a revolutionary figure in the fiction. She doesn't like to change her identity and culture rather she is very happy with her own self. She does not like Pecola and Frieda who are very happy to have the white baby doll as a Christmas gift rather she said that "I destroyed white baby dolls." (Morrison 1979: 15)

She does not like the white skin and the white baby doll which symbolizes white beauty. The white people used it as a part of their politics to convince the black girl to accept the white ideology. As a part of revolution and resistance to the white ideology and culture, she does not like the white baby doll. Even she does not like to meet the white girl because they feel themselves as superior to the black. But Claudia does not like such kind of superiority that is why she violently reacted against the white girl saying:

"When she comes out of the car we will beat her up, make red marks on her white skin, and she will cry and ask us do we want her to pull her pants down" (Morrison 1979: 05)

Self-reliance

Being tortured and tormented both mentally and physically by the white men the black people understood that they should come forward to save their own rights in America; that is why we see that Claudia does not accept the white people's culture and ideology rather she tries to save Pecola whenever she faces problems as when Maureen bitterly criticized Pecola, Claudia came forward to save Pecola and started abusing Maureen. It is because when they will be united they can achieve their goal. As a black writer, Toni Morrison also tried to teach the black the importance of self-reliance showing Claudia as a revolutionary girl. Even when no one likes Pecola, she is liked by Cholly and he made physical relation with Pecola twice to satisfy

her dream to be a liked one by a man. Even all the black people were not upset after hearing Pecola's pregnancy. As both Claudia and Frieda were very excited to see Pecola's safe delivery. They were not shocked at finding Pecola as a pregnant rather they usually discussed the matter and once decided to pray to God so that Pecola could bring birth her new baby. They also planted marigold and waited to the last time and when Pecola lost her baby they became upset too. Pecola herself has not accepted the fact-- the loss of her baby normally and consequently she became mad.

Conclusion

As Toni Morrison is a black writer, she is quite aware of the sufferings of the black people in America. She expresses her inner feelings through the *The Bluest Eye*. And she has shown that how the concept of beauty, employed by the white people as a part of power politics, can destroy one's life. Throughout the novel the author tries to show the techniques used by the white people to dominate the black in America. A critic Dr. Neelam Bhardwaj said:

"The life of African-American women had been affected by racism, sexism and classicism. These so-called systems of social and psychological restrictions were put on the Africans living in that country when the coloured people were regarded as inferiors. As the blacks were relegated to a lower class by virtue of their race, women were related to a separate caste by virtue of their sex. In the same way, black women were also victimized not only on the basis of races and sex but they were also badly treated by class exploitations which was the greatest oppression of blacks in America." (Bhardwaj 2016: Web)

As an American citizen, Pecola has a right to get almost all the facilities to explore her talent but she has not got a little bit opportunities from the white society, people and the government. Wherever she goes she suffers a lot. She did not get proper education because of the worst racial environment the school where she was bitterly abused by the student and teacher. Instead of getting friendship in the school she was tortured by the white boy Junior. At home, she was also the

victim of white politics. As her father was a jobless drunken man, he did not get any opportunity to live his life with his family members with peace rather he was also the victim of white man's lust. The white people of America also used almost all the cultural institutions of America to convince the black to be considered as ugly, to be considered as inferior to the white and to accept the white as their master. To hegemonize the black, the white used the black man and woman as the very insignificant characters in the cinema, advertisement and magazine whereas the white played the significant role in almost all media. Being influenced by the white politics, Pecola and her mother have been very crazy to accept the white men's ideas and culture as their own. Pocola's mother started hating her family and her house whereas Pocola wants to get the bluest eye to be a beautiful lady in the society led by the white people. But being an authoress of the fiction Toni Morrison did not accept the white politics of using colour as a way of segregation. That is why throughout the mouth of Claudia, the narrator of the fiction, Morrison resists the concept of white beauty and culture. From the very beginning to the end of the text, Claudia does not support Pocola and Frieda's affection towards the love of white beauty and culture rather she hates the white man and their concept of white beauty and that is why she said that she did not like the white baby doll. Even she likes Pocola and her baby too though most of the white people think that Pocola's baby is unwanted. As a black author, Toni Morrison was successful to focus on the white man's politics of dominating the black people in America hegemonizing them. If it was needed, the white also enforced the black to be dominated. No white man, woman and the government did come forward to help the black community of America to give them their basic rights. That is why as a conscious woman, Toni Morrison boldly and precisely portrayed the real picture of the black people of America through portraying the pathetic picture of the Breedlove family and finally through portraying Pocola, the worst victim of the white poetics in America.

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