

A Cross-Cultural Inquiry into the Psychological Fragmentation of Female Characters

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Abstract: Toni Morrison is an Afro-American novelist who explores the rural Afro-American communities. Through her novel, she portrays the issues concerning the life of Afro-American especially women. The cultural oppression of the black community has been portrayed in the novels of Toni Morrison and also these novels raise the question regarding Afro-American women and her issues related to the male-dominated society. The dominance faced by American women due to hierarchy has also been portrayed in Toni Morrison's novel. As per societal norms, women are oppressed based on cultural norms fabricated via male of the dominion society. Women need psychoanalysis therapy in order to bring out the pain. Women is a victim under the domination that is presented in the patriarchal society. Women who belong to Africa and India faces various issues due to the patriarchal society. Women had been undergoing many intricacies which made them to enter into the concept of Fractured Psyche and it still be endured in the modern era. Fractured Psyche is nothing but the broken psyche of a person that deals with mental change. Fractured Psyche is related to the broken mind in which a person lacks in making decision, moreover the person is anxious or depressed and he/she overthinks to attain something. Hence, the present study will intend to focus on the fractured psyche of women characters in the novels of Toni Morrison. The women characters psyche will be analyzed using Freud's psychoanalytical theory which will be compared to the life of women in Indian society. The culture dominance of the American society will be cross analyzed with Indian culture for illustrating the women's position in the dominion society. Later, the study will analyze the fractured psyche of women characters in Toni Morrison's novel due to the dominion society.

Keywords: Dominated society, Psychoanalytical, Fractured psyche of women, Women oppression, Resistance

1. Introduction

The world around us illustrate the prevalence of violence against human rights and women especially women of color (Martínez-Falquina) (p.118). Afro-American women have been physically and mentally exploited by the white dominant society and also their own community. Along with black women, men of the black community has to fight against the dominant society. Black women have been either sold as a slave to White men or left in the house when men of the family went to seek the job in the North. Eric William pointed out that,

"Slavery was not born of racism, rather racism was the consequence of slavery"

(Mohammed and Alamrani) (p.1)

The major problem in the African society is exploitation and sexual harassment which is prevalent in Indian society as well. The black women have been exploited by the White men of the society whereas Indian women have been subjugated based on the culture framed by the male dominant society. The black women have been humiliated both physically and sexually by the White men whereas women from Indian society have been humiliated and exploited by the traditional patriarchal system (Chakravarty) (p.520). Patriarchal system is prevalent among people around the world which makes people, especially women to think that men are superior to women and has all privilege to subjugate and exploit women. Though in recent times, women began to protest for equal rights, still there are women who have been exploited by the male dominant society (Kharbe) (p.76).

Women have been psychologically affected due to oppression and exploitation. These exploitations have imprinted in the psyche of women which created traumatic life experience (Wathore) (p.70). Women had been undergoing several convolutedness which made them to enter into the concept of Fractured Psyche, and it still be endured in the modern era. Fractured Psyche is nothing but the broken psyche of a person that deals with mental change. Fractured Psyche is related to the broken mind in which a person lacks in making decision, moreover the person is anxious or depressed and he/she overthinks to attain something (Krithika and Gnanaprakasam) (p.1). Through the portrayal of black women in her novels, Morrison illustrates traumatic experience and psyche of women (Wathore) (p.70). Based on psychological aspects, the present study will intend to focus on the fractured psyche of women characters in the novels of Toni Morrison. Women characters' psyche will be analyzed using Freud's psychoanalytical theory which will be compared to the life of women in Indian society. The culture dominance of the American society will be cross analyzed with Indian culture for illustrating the women's position in the dominion society. Later, the study will analyze the fractured psyche of women characters in Toni Morrison's novel due to the dominion society.

The main focus of the current study is discussed below. Section 2 discusses about the female characters in Toni Morrison's novel and analyze the psyche of black women in Toni Morrison's novel. Section 3 compares the life of black women with Indian women and analyze the role of cultural dominance in women oppression. Finally section 4 concludes by providing certain ideology to overcome the oppression and form the new India.

2. Psyche of Black Women in Toni Morrison's Novels

The women exploitation, especially the sufferings of black women have been illustrated through the female characters in Toni Morrison's novels. Toni Morrison is an Afro-American novelist who explores the rural life experience of Afro-American communities (Wagner-Martin) (p.1). Through her novel, she portrays the issues concerning the life of Afro-American especially women. The cultural oppression of the black community has been portrayed in the novels of Toni Morrison and also these novels raise the question regarding Afro-American women and her issues caused by the male-dominated society. The women in Toni Morrison's novels have been fit to pessimistic characteristics of stereotypical society and also those characters resist the prevailing patriarchy in the society (Byers) (p.1). Morrison demonstrates the melancholies of black women's history in slavery. Besides, the resistance and anguishes of women have been illustrated through the female characters in the novel (Mohammed and Alamrani) (p.5).

Through the novel *Beloved*, Toni Morrison illustrated the sufferings of black women in the hands of white dominant society. The novel represented the slavery period of the black community in the history of African society. The intricacies and resistance of black women as collective has been illustrated in *Beloved* (Mohammed and Alamrani). Among women in the entire society, Black women belongs to double marginalized community, because they are marginalized by their own community as well as by white dominant society (Soleimani and Zarrinjooee). The suffering of black women due to the slavery system and also by their own community, has been illustrated in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. This novel portrays the sufferings of black women due to slavery, rape and racism.

"The unconscious interferes with ego in constructing such a behavior".

(KHALEEL) (p.3)

Freud's view has been illustrated through characters in Morrison's *Beloved* (KHALEEL) (p.3). In this novel, Sethe kills her own daughter in order to free her daughter from slavery. This story describes about the suffering of being slave to the male elite community. The brutality of slavery has made Sethe to kill her own daughter. Sethe has been brutally abused by her schoolteacher's nephew (Ouakouak and Bekkari). This incident had created trauma in the mind of Sethe which lead to the murder of her own daughter. The viciousness of white society made the black community to feel so powerless in protecting one's own family and also one's own self. When Sethe was brutally abused by her schoolteacher's nephew, she couldn't fight for herself and couldn't fight to protect her own family. The reminiscences of the traumatic past incident affected the life of Sethe which also cost the life of her own daughter.

"The essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious".

(Pyon) (p.5)

As per Freud's psychoanalysis, the concept of dream and repression is subjected as one's past experience which is preserved and confined to the one's psyche. In all these concepts, memory plays a significant role in the theory of Freud. The concepts of dream, repression and unconscious could be regarded as function or dysfunction of memory (Pyon) (p.5). Sethe's memories haunt her daily life which affects her psyche. The psyche of Sethe is affected in the form of fear, anxiety and fright. Freud distinguished the concept of anxiety, fear and fright which could illustrate the state of Sethe in *Beloved*. According to Freud, fear illustrates subject of which to be scared whereas anxiety denotes the feeling that something obnoxious could happen. Meanwhile, fright describes the state of the person during obnoxious situation (Mehra).

With the above mentioned concept, the psyche of Sethe could be distinguished. She feared that her daughter also needs to face the brutal society which harasses women for one's pleasure. The thought of her daughter being abused by the male, has affected her psyche which resulted in murdering her own daughter. The black women are not allowed to voice out the violence of white community rather they have to tolerate those violence. When Sethe complains about her being raped by her master, she gets punished for reporting the crime. Through this novel, Morrison portrays the brutality of slavery and powerlessness of black community (Mosalla Nejad, Shahabi and Raeisi Sistani) (p.135).

In the novel *Bluest eye*, Morrison has portrayed the sufferings of black women due to slavery system and beauty standards. In this novel, the female protagonist desired to have blue eyes just like her white friend in order to escape dominance and slavery system. The beauty standards played a significant role in patriarchal society. The character called Pecola has driven insane for attaining the beauty standards of white community (Yuliana, Kurnia and Mustofa). These beauty standards has made women to loath herself and attempts to quest for false identity.

"Pecola, suffering from a sense of self-loathing and false identity..."

(TANRITANIR and Aydemir) (p.441)

The society made women especially black women to believe that they are born ugly. The societal beauty standard makes women to hate themselves. Societal norms have psychologically imprinted in the minds of women that women who have white skin color and blond hair, are considered as beautiful. Those who are failed to checklist those listed beauty standards are regarded as ugly. In this novel, even Pecola's mother considers that she is ugly because her skin color is light brown. Through these characters, Morrison vividly describes about the dominant standards. She illustrates that societal norms created by the white dominant society has been the obstacle to the development of the black community (Paul and Mayilraj). The societal norms for beauty standards has made black community to despise themselves. Pecola has always dreamt of meeting the white community's beauty standard which only affected her psyche (Khatri). Russell, Wilson and Hall stated about color discrimination as,

“The psychological fixation surrounding colorism has led to many blacks to discriminate against one another for decades and because it has long been considered unmentionable it has been called the last Taboo among blacks”.

(De Freitas) (p.2)

Morrison portrayed the ideology of black women who despise their own community and also address themselves as ugly. Pecola's mother Pauline address her daughter as ugly and refrain herself from loving her daughter. Pecola has been sufferings from psychological trauma because of the racism, societal norms and dominated society. Morrison depicts the darker lifestyle of colored community. The black women are being victimized by their community as well as by the elite dominant community. The brutal behavior of dominant society has traumatic impact on the life of victim. In American society, colored community especially women has always dreamt of building a respectable position in the society and to be freed from the slavery system (Zahra and Rabbani) (p.2). Every women in the society has always desired for building a unique identity in the dominant society.

3. Women as voiceless community in the society

The women of contemporary society always endeavors to free from cluster of tradition and dominant society. Similar to black women, Indian women also faces frees issues due to the dominant society. The life of Indian women varies from the life of western women. The tradition followed in India imprison the identity of women. The women in the society are bound to follow certain rules constructed by the male dominant society (Dostanić). Black women are brought as slave to the white community whereas Indian women are brought as slave to one's own husband in the name of marriage. Both Indian women and Black women are struggling to create an individual identity in the male-dominant society. Women have always been tutored to follow the rules structured by the male of the family. Women especially Indian women are made to believe that male of the family are meant to suppress the women (Oza).

The behavior of male in the dominant society and norms of dominant society has psychological impacted the life of women in the dominant society. As mentioned in the novels of Toni Morrison, black women are being exploited in the hands of white male dominant society. Meanwhile, Indian women are being exploited by their own family along with dominant society (Panthi and Patil). In Morrison *The bluest eye*, black women are made to believe that they are born ugly. Even the parents of black community address their own children as ugly. In *the bluest eye*, Pecola's mother address her as ugly which made Pecola to believe that she is born ugly. This has psychological affected the life of Pecola where she believed that the women who meets the beauty standards of white community are tagged as beautiful (TANRITANIR and Aydemir). Similarly, Indian women are considered as curse and humiliation to one's family. There are family in Indian society which despised the birth of girl child (Bala and Raghav).

The concept of motherhood plays significant role in the life of women. Most of the women wants their own child, especially girl child to be free from the glitches of patriarchal society. Mother has even gone to extent of killing one's own child in order to free the infant from the brutal society. The character called Sethe in *Beloved* represents the psyche of women especially mother who killed her daughter because of her own traumatic experience. Similarly Indian women has tries to safeguard their own children from the brutality of the patriarchal society. Yet, in Indian society males are the one who decide whether to keep the girl child or not. The women are not given rights on their own children (Dostanić).

4. Conclusion

The male dominant society exploits the life of women in the name of family and societal norms. The women are alienated from their own family and restricted to take part in the decision making. The women are considered as voiceless community in the society. Their voices regarding the violence of male, are being unheard by the society and also they are not volunteering to report the brutal nature of male. Though the modern world has incorporated various method to voice out the issues of women, women are not willing to disclose the issues caused by the male of her family. The women are psychologically affected by the societal norms. Though men are the one who constructed those norms, some women are not ready to fight for their own selves. Hence, women has to voice out their own problem in order to escape the brutal behavior of male and also dominant society.

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