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REVIEW ARTICLE

**VOICE OF FEMALE: TONI MORRISON'S THE
BLUEST EYE AND BELOVED**

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Voice of Female: Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye and Beloved

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Abstract – This article aims to investigate two novels of Toni Morrison, *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye*, by a cultural materialistic approach. Cultural materialists emphasize on the cultural aspects and elements of literary texts. They study issues such as race, gender, sexuality, social class, and slavery. In other words, they put under investigation the marginalized people of society, like black people, females, and slaves. In this regard, Toni Morrison is a great writer whose writings are replete with cultural issues. As most of the main characters of Toni Morrison's novels are black people, so it can be concluded that for her, marginalized people of society and minorities especially females, are at center. Therefore, in this paper, it is aimed to emphasize on cultural elements of Morrison's novels, *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye*, and determine what stance she takes toward such minorities.

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For nearly a year, I shopped around the house, the store, the school

and the church like an old biscuit inedible. Then I met rather got to knew

the lady who threw me my first lifeline Mrs. Bertha Flowers was the

aristocrat of Black Stamps...She was our side's answer to the richest white town.

(Maya Angelou,15)

Voice is termed as sound uttered by the mouth especially by human beings in speech and the one above is a 'Black Female Voice' which projects the fear of a speaker who hides herself behind the one who is Bold-Single Voice and an Aristocrat for the entire Black Females to the richest Town, In the words of a prominent writer Maya Angelou as shown in her above statement, against the richest whites.

Voice becomes more powerful when it is widely read and heard and such is the writings of Black Female writers like Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, and Toni Morrison. Their writings were not out of "Inspirational Muse" but rather they produced a social protest and human enlightenment during the 20th century because Black writings was under siege for almost two hundred and fifty years of slavery-it was a legal crime for the Blacks to read and write even for the males too. Here we will discuss on how Toni Morrison spoke as an Individual for the types (BLACK FEMALES) taking into consideration her two works **The Bluest Eye** and **Beloved**.

With Toni Morrison writings one comes to a definite turning point in the history of Black women's literature. She has won many prizes and awards and sits in chairs of Mainstream American Literary Organizations and is the main speaker at major literary gatherings. She portrays the life of Blacks in general and a Black female in particular is her major concern: who were exploited triple with the yoke of race, gender and class. Morrison reconstructs the black images through her writing and illustrates the richness of black culture. As Barbara Smith says that Morrison includes, "the traditional Black female activities of root working, herbal medicine, conjure, and midwifery into the fabric of (her) stories" (174). Her writing states how black people are denied from the equality and treated as animals in their own society. She feels that the black had received only a little in the literary field and finds a vacuum in American literary discourse. As McKay says, "Black have a story, and that story has to be heard" (152). Therefore, Morrison places the narrative techniques of stories which are abundant in information about black culture, and tries to fill the gap that has developed between those who have profited educationally and economically through her feminist writings. The **voice** of the oppressed black females in the African American society is silenced; therefore **The Bluest Eye** articulates the victim's voices.

In **The Bluest Eye**, black women are portrayed in relation to the influence they suffer from the white ones and from society in their search for their own selves. These black women are excluded from a universe of love and tenderness where the figure of man is a key element for their imprisonment in madness, silence, sexual oppression and lack of hope. Silent, desperate, and isolated, these women

cannot escape a life of unfulfilled desires. The novel has some of the recurring points that would become decisive in all Morrison's following works. According to Davis (1999) her characters exist in a world defined by its blackness and by the surrounding white society that both violates and denies it. The destructive effect of the white society can take the form of outright physical violence, but oppression in Morrison's world is more often psychic violence. She rarely depicts white characters, for the brutality here isles a single act than the systematic denial of the reality of black lives (p. 07).

Morrison's first novel, **The Bluest Eye** explores the problems of establishing self-worth in a society where one is the victim of both racism and classicism. The novel details the lives of three young girls and their families and the way in which they struggle and sometimes lose their battle for self-affirmation in a world that set forth Anglo Saxon standards of physical beauty. Shruti Das makes her remarks about **The Bluest Eye**,

The Bluest Eye is the story of a young black girl Pecola, her

Inability to either understand or adjust to the ways of the world around her and the consequences thereof.

she is pitted against two hostile worlds: one the

white world that entices her with values unnatural to her,

via blue eyes, and then ruthlessly rejects her, the other,

her own people, her own culture.

(Bhatnagar, *Feminist English Literature* 216)

In **The Bluest Eye** the characters remain isolated in their houses. Pauline Breedlove identifies herself passionately with the 'Proud House' (The Bluest Eye 84) of her employers but neglects her own. Morrison's art of characterization is highly admirable no matter how evil she portrays her characters. They always exhibits a balance of virtues and vices. The characters in her early novel never really find peace or seek forgiveness or have an affirming opportunity of self-realization she exercised. The language is musical as the story demands. As Margret Atwood, says,

"Beloved is written in a prose that is by turn nice graceful, rough,

lyrical, sinuous, colloquial and very much to the point"

(Exeo Fromm 2)

The Bluest Eye traces the story of two families –The Breed loves and the Mac Teers .unlike The MacTeers

who tolerate the forces of racism and classicism, The result of this is most actually demonstrated through their daughter Pecola who is ridiculed by her teachers, classmates for her ugliness, Pecola prays for blue eyes as a solution as they have put this as the minimum Anglo-Saxon standards of Physical beauty .Pecola seeks the power of a spiritual healer and finally she believed that he has given her blue eyes. Apart from this the novel also establishes the great potential of **Morrison's narrative voice which represents the black community voices especially the female voices which are suppressed and unheard.**

Her novel **Beloved** is one of the most celebrated books which trace a story of a woman Sethe who killed her baby girl to save her from the clutches of slavery. But the apparition of the baby keeps on haunting her who returns in flesh as a young woman and calls herself as "Beloved" seeking revenge on its killer. **The ghost who comes to life in this novel provides a way for Morrison to use supernatural to give voice to those who died at the hands of slavery.** Morrison wants to say that people should mourn for the ancestors, who died at the hands of slavery before they move towards future. The novel is working out of mother's grief and forgiveness to a more than sixty million men and women who lost their lives to slavery.

With **Beloved** Morrison probes deeper into the psychological effects of missing mother –infant bond and unearths the psychological damage of slavery to the mother –child relationship. **The novel reflects the harsh reality of being a mother and voices the position of daughters, grandmothers, fathers, male friends, neighbors, community and the mother herself.** The text centers on the historical fact that there were black women during slavery that suffocated their babies rather than allow them to be offered up to destruction by slavery.

Morrison brings to life of "the dead girl". when Beloved comes back to pass judgment on Sethe, and Sethe realizes that Beloved is the ghost of her third child, she wants desperately to make her understand that she tried to kill her babies so that they would be protected from captivity forever. Beloved becomes mean-spirited and exploits her mother's pain. Sethe, tries to impress upon her how slavery made it impossible for her to be the mother she wanted to be.

Morrison is using her creative writing to bring the attention of people to issues of mothering and tension between community and individuals. She draws the attention of people to the crucial position of black women in the United States. She interweaves racial and sexual consciousness in Beloved. Morrison founds the Black Women the corner-stone of the community. They are in

"Umbrella figure, culture bearer, in community with not just her children, but all children"

(Robust Step to 228).

In **The Bluest Eye** this role of women is given to Pauline who feels that she has responsibilities as wife, mother and provider. The demands of her life force her to put dreams aside. She instinctively reorders her world in terms that make sense to her.

Pauline is not the backbone of her family, providing support and encouragement to her husband and love and nurture to her children. She is not the cross but the martyr, who lives only to die for a holy cause. Cholly, in his weakness and sin, is the perfect foil to her holiness and perfection, however his reformation would have been devastating to her because she only feels perfect in contrast to him. Pauline becomes a reflection of the powerful image that surrounds her—ugly in contrast to white women, and good in contrast to evil black men. These are her excuses for not making herself a whole, beautiful black woman. She does not spare her children from her exaggerated sacrifice of herself in a false martyrdom for she assumes they are as evil as their father and as ugly as she is. She uses fear and violence to shape and control her children. Pauline thus ensures that Sammy will grow up to be like his father and Pecola like her. Sammy and Pecola are thus even more defenseless to fight the powerful images that seek to enslave their minds.

Toni Morrison as a feminist celebrates the strength of black women despite the racism and Sexism leveled against them. She not only explores the issues that concern physical standards of beauty, the nature of female friendships, male-female relationships but also provides solutions for the black women to their problems.

“The black woman writer is regarded as the individualist personified and therefore a witch”

(Houston Baker 117)

But the Black woman writer has not stopped trying to understand her identity as well as the identity of her people.

“To understand our origins we must journey through

different straits and in the end we may only

find confusion”

(Houston Baker 1).

Morrison has found a sense of order and has shown it clearly in her work.

Toni Morrison as a writer has made a significant contribution to American literature and the canon of

writing by Black Woman. Her books contribute not only to the understanding of the specifics of life as a Black Woman, but also the prominent issues of Survival for the entire Black Community.

Thus Black American women writers know that they are strong and intelligent and have something to say, their concerns focus enabling others primarily whites to recognize their abilities. They leave us with hope that black women's inner self could be defined, accepted, celebrated. They speak confidently from their own point of view loud and clear and are fighting battles on behalf of not only millions of black women but for the whole community of women who are treated as second rate the world over.

So Toni Morrison through the female characters she portrays in **The Bluest Eye** and **Beloved** have shown the plights of black female as a child (Pecola and Beloved) and even in the form of a mother (Pauline and Sethe) Thus the objective of this study is to project

1. The different voices of black females which is unheard and surprised.
2. The Voice which has the fear of being inferior.
3. The voice which is A Female one - fear of being a female in the patriarchal society.
4. The Voice which fear to be unheard because of being Black.
5. The Voice which wanted to be heard but fear of being suppressed by the white society

In her writings Toni Morrison has brilliantly articulated these voices in the form of script which are thus made available to the entire masses and thus the issues of these Black Females are widely read accepted and known and this is the well better means for the solutions to their issues. As in the words of Guru Nanak Dev

We are born from woman

We are shaped in woman's womb

We are engaged and wedded to woman

And The family continues because of woman

When one woman dies we seek another woman

We are bound with the world through woman

Why to talk ill of her who gives birth to kings

The woman is born of woman and there is none

without the woman there is one true lord.

The above lines are well said and therefore voices of woman must be heard by the entire cosmos in a way of credit to the world she builds in by giving birth to thousand souls. The one in whose hand the entire population lies must be heard and rather than to be suppressed she must be given space to express. This study of Female voices as projected in **The Bluest Eye** and **Beloved** will pave way for the voiceless souls in the world to voice for their rights of being the part of it.

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