

CORRUPTED FATHERS AND THE AFFECTED DAUGHTERS, A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NOVELS *THE BLUEST EYE* AND *WHERE SHALL WE GO THIS SUMMER?*

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ABSTRACT

In the Novels, *Where Shall Go This Summer* by Anita Desai and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison the daughters Sita and Pecola Stated suffering inwardly because of their corrupted fathers. This critical analysis attempts to compare these two novels. The two novels are from different countries. The culture, society and customs of both the countries are totally different from one another. But there are also similarities in the aspect of the writers.

KEYWORDS: A Comparative Analysis of the Novels

INTRODUCTION

The novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer* revolves around the protagonist Sita and her mental suffering. Likewise *The Bluest Eye* also centers on the inner sufferings of the protagonist Pecola. In the novel the protagonist Sita was pregnant for the fifth time and she did not want the baby to be born. Hence she wanted to go to her childhood island Manori in order to escape from the real situation. In the island Sita recollected her childhood days and her disappointment in married life. Her husband Raman was not an understanding husband; he was very mechanical. Even her mother-in-law's family seemed aliens for her. She was not able to adjust with any of the people around her. Her daughter and sons too were not aware of her inner problems. Sita was overwhelmed by the thought that Manori, a magic island (as she considers) will be her only rescue. Sita wanted to escape from that bitter reality. As Mahasudan prasad points out:

Disgusted with the sweaty hustle and bustle of humdrum life in Bombay and tortured by the "paronic" fear of her fifth undesired pregnancy and imminent parturition, Sita alone with her two children, Menaka and Karan, leaving behind her husband in despair, runs away from Bombay and comes to Manori, a small island off the Marre mainland, "on a pilgrimage" to "achieve the miracle of not giving birth". Her flight to Manori is actually ascribable to her deep-seated reverence for life and to her unwillingness to accept violence that pervades all existence. (64).

But when she went to the island to keep her baby unborn, she understood that Manori was no longer a magic land. Hence when Raman came to Manori to take Menaka, her daughter with him, Sita also accompanied him.

The novel *The Bluest Eye* centered on Pecola, an eleven years old girl and her psychological suffering. Pecola was molested by her drunken father, Cholly and she was left alone deserted, even by her mother Pauline. Being alone, Pecola was left in the home of Mac Teers as a case of charity. Pecola was of the opinion that the reason for the bad things happening around her was due her to ugly eyes. She thought that if her eyes were blue all would love her. So she longed to

posses blue eyes and this is highlighted throughout the novel. She thought that, having blue eyes would solve all her problems and earn respect from others. As the novel progresses Pecola became totally addicted to the Blue eyes and in the end of the novel she escaped from reality by imagining herself of possessing blue eyes. The final pathetic conversation with her imaginative friend who admired Pecola's blue eyes shows the real condition of Pecola. But she was happy by the end of the novel.

In Manori, Sita's recollection of her father's memory, made it clear for her basic psychological affectation. Her father pretended to be a genuine person to the people of the Island but he was a hypocrite. He had an affair with her step sister Rekha and fooled the island people by making them believe that he knew magic. Sita was dominated by her father, a male figure in the society. To her reality was very hard to be borne so she opted for illusion, to get rid of that reality. Sita's act is an outcome of her psychological affectation due to frustration in life. At last Sita understood reality and agreed to go with Raman to Bombay.

Moreover Pecola's father was initially responsible for her psychological suffering. He never knew how a father should be. He hated his children. He acted as a hypocrite and he had sexually assaulted Pecola twice and was a reason for her pathetic condition.

The psychological disturbance of Pecola and Sita rooted from their childhood. Pecola suffered because of her father and this lead to her psychological disorder. Likewise, Sita was troubled, because of her father's pretension and it led her to a mental suffering. Nostalgia gives us a clear glimpse of their psychic disorder. Both their fathers were corrupted to the core. Their corrupted background affected their daughters and became the reason for their mental disorder. Moreover, both the protagonists had broken their own homes. Every day they suffered from frustration, loneliness and disappointment.

Men have powerful impact on the lives of women. Men have their own codes of lives. In, Toni Morrison and in Anita Desai's novels, men are portrayed as selfish, free spirited and dominant persons. Though all men were not so bad, some men like Sita's father and Pecola's father were charged because they were the basic reason for making their daughters' lives miserable. Sita's mental problem started because of her father's relationship with Rekha and she totally concluded, all relationships as 'farce', whereas Pecola's problem started because of her father's arrogance towards her. Both their fathers were corrupted and Sita's father concealed his corruption till the end, whereas Pecola's father's corruption was revealed by him. Cholly and Sita's father had a very good reason to justify their actions. Cholly was a drunkard and Sita's father was believed to be a saint like person. But, no doubt, both became the strong reason for their daughters', psychological agony.

Toni Morrison depicted a simple villain Cholly, the father of Pecola. Pecola had a disintegrated family and both her father and mother were two poles apart. They engaged themselves in their own ways and they neglected the parental duties, towards their children. Because of racial discrimination, both suffered under the hands of the white. They showed their contempt on their children.

Pecola's mother, Pauline worked in a poor, fairly white people's family. The woman there was always complaining and she found it difficult to work in the family. The mistress of the house always intrigued her. When her front tooth fell, she was terribly upset, because it secluded her from, other black women.

Pauline's craze for beauty increased, day by day. One winter, Pauline became pregnant and Cholly was very

happy and nursed her. Pauline left her job, as she wished to care for the baby. She gave birth to Sammy and again she became pregnant. Pauline was bored with life so she started to see movies. Pauline admired the romance between the white people. She imagined that she could get a cute baby. Unfortunately, she gave birth to a female child and felt upset, when she saw “she was ugly”. (98)

Pecola’s suffering started from day one, when Pauline felt that she was ugly. Instead of giving confidence, she neglected her. Pauline again started to go to a job, in a rich family. She took care of the white children and ignored her own children. She liked their big good house and wished to be there always. She lost her self worth. This lack of self worth was reflected in Pecola.

Cholly was no better than Pauline in his inferiority complex. His mother abandoned him and put him in a railroad. He was rescued by his great aunt Jimmy. He went to school for four years and became nervous, when somebody asked him about his father. He left the school and took up a job. When Aunt Jimmy died of peach cobbler, he was left alone. He cried aloud for her death. The destruction however, actually begins much earlier than his marriage. Cholly’s abandonment by his parents racially disconnected him from the family. Later the interruption and the frustration of his first sexual encounter by two white hunters increased his separation from the world of generative and reproductive time.

When he was a boy, Cholly was anonymously teased, by two white men. After his aunt’s burriel, he went about with his boy cousin Jake and playfully with two girls, Suky and Darlene. Cholly joined the company of Darlene and they started a sexual play. But their play was disturbed by two white men and they asked him to go fast. They asked him to carry on the intercourse before them, Out of their compulsion, he did the act of intercourse and so he hated Darlene. Being forced by the white men, he did it. Being powerless before them, he turned his hatred into the one who is more powerless than him, the girl Darlene, who accompanied him in witnessing his degradation. Inwardly, he developed some psychological problem. He was suppressed by the white, who were dominant and instead of showing his aversion to them, he started to show it to the persons, who were inferior to him. This resulted in raping his daughter Pecola.

Cholly’s rape of Pecola, in effect culminates, the psychological, social and personal depreciation by the white society that has raped Cholly and his entire life. As his surname implies, Cholly can only breed, not love, and his brutal act against his daughter, produces a child who cannot live. Toni Morrison novels depict the black society and portrayed the condition of the people. As Cynthia A. Davis Says:

All of Morrison’s characters exist in the world defined by its blackness and by surrounding white society that both violates and denies it. The destructive effect of the white society can take form of outright physical violence, but oppression in Morrison’s world is more often psychic violence. (217).

Though, Cholly loved Pauline and married her, his romantic attitude faded soon. He started to dislike her and also he hated his children. He used to neglect his family and his duties as a husband and father. He was not able to sacrifice, his God like freedom for his marriage, as his free state is described by Toni:

Cholly was free. Dangerously free. Free to feel whatever he felt – fear, guilt, shame, love grief, pity. Free to be tender or violent, to whistle or weep free to sleep in doorways or between the white sheets of a singing woman. Free to take a job, free to leave it..... He was free to drink himself into a silly helplessness, for he had already been a gandy dancer, done thirty days on a chain gang, and picked a woman’s bullet out of the calf of his leg. He was free to live his fantasies, and free even to die, the how and the when of which held no interest for him. In

those days Cholly was truly free. Abandoned in a junk heap by his mother, rejected for a crap game by his father, there was nothing more to lose. He was alone with his own perceptions and appetites, and they alone interested him. (125-126)

When his marital life denied him freedom, he started to drink too much. He often fought with Pauline. This affected the children, Pecola and Sammy psychologically. Whenever they fought, Pecola asked her mother to be calm and Sammy asked his mother to “kill him”. He had no idea of, how to be a good father to them. He reacted to his children, based on, whatever he felt at that moment.

One Saturday afternoon, as a full drunkard person, Cholly came to his home. He saw Pecola, washing dishes, in the kitchen. He had totally forgotten that, he was her father. Just before he did, Pecola shifted her weight and scratched the back of her calf, with her toe. It reminded him of Pauline. When he met her the first time, Pauline was doing the same thing. Cholly crawled towards her and caught her foot and she lost her balance. He had a vision dilemma, whatever Pecola did, he saw Pauline in her prime. “He wanted to fuck her – tenderly... But the tenderness would not hold. The tightness of her vagina was more than he could bear” (128) after satisfying his desire, he had a mixture of tenderness and hatred. “The hatred would not let him pick up her; the tenderness forced him to cover her”. (129).

Tormented physically and mentally, Pecola lay on the floor uncared. His rape was an outcome of his total corruption and made the young girl’s world a miserable one. She was assaulted physically by her father twice but her mind was assaulted by the society every day. Maureen, Geraldine and Yacobowski were only samples and they are personifications of the society and its attitude towards her. When Pecola came to know that her mother also did not believe what she said about the rapist, she disintegrated and felt a complete strain in the heart.

Totally collapsed because of her worst family, she hated all human relationships and like Sita she considered all relationships were only falsehood. She wanted to escape from the unreal, self-centered, hateful world into a world of illusion. In her imaginative world, there were only two persons, herself having blue eyes and her friend. She wanted to forget her corrupted, merciless father and the society altogether. She moved to a state of insanity but she was happy.

Like the father of Pecola, Sita’s father too was a corrupted figure. Sita’s father became a main figure in Manori. He was a freedom fighter and after the war he settled with his family in Manori, a small island. Since he became old and weak, he wanted to spend the rest of his life in prayers. He used to say, “I never had time for it before independence. There was too much practical work to be done. Now I am an old man, I have arrived at the age for preparing to meet my maker”, - “That will be my prayer room”. (60)

Very soon those private prayers extended as devotional meetings. Rekha used to sing songs, by playing “tempura”. Slowly, he gained the respect and greetings of the island people. He looked very much like a saint. Very late only, Sita came to know that her father was a hypocrite.

The island Manori was devoid of, all modern equipments and there was no drinking water. For that, Sita’s father decided “We must make one”. (62) Hence everyday they started their work after prayer. After the island people’s hard work they got water in the well but it was only brackish water. But he made the people to believe, it was sweet. Sita felt her father’s betrayal, “Only later, down the beach with her brother, she confessed to its awful taste – and felt contrite, all night, for her betrayal, her failure to find the well water sweet”. (63)

But Sita’s father slowly began to deceive the innocent people of the island. He gave medicines to them but they

believed his 'miracle cures'.

One day, when Kanti-amma's son was cured of scorpion bite by Sita's father, the woman believed, "he did magic", "he knew magic" (65). The innocent people started to call him "Babaji" and they believed and followed, whatever he said. Even they went to the extreme of leaving a cobra, since Babaji told, it will never come again; Sita too believed him but when she heard the conversation of two women, she was disappointed. About her father a young woman grumbled:

'Not magic'... 'He has medicines that are all. Medicines for everything Don't you see him take them out of his pocket? He has some even for the soil. He was speaking to my man about it when we were in the fields, planting brinjals. He told us the name of the medicine we must put in the soil to make brinjals grow. Medicines for the soil! 'Don't we put fish manure around the roots of the coconut palms? Don't you know anything? Born empty, weren't you? Eh?' (67)

Even Sita agreed that her father had some practical knowledge. But when the people called him Babaji, he never said anything to that.

Sita's father gave importance to Rekha and left Sita and Jivan in isolation. One day in a casual talk with Jivan, Sita came to understand that Rekha was not their sister. Though, she resisted Jivan's argument "That is one of your stories, Jivan", (72) inwardly she felt, he was right. From that time she had become deprived of Rekha and had started to see her father with doubt.

Sita's psyche was totally dismantled by her father, one day. All the little hopes vanished from her, when she witnessed a conversation between her father and Deedar, his friend. When Sita heard the sound of smashing jewels, she came silently and heard their conversation:

"You studied chemistry at school with me! Don't tell me you believe pearls and gold have therapeutic value?" (75)

Sita was not able to believe her father's hypocrisy. Moreover, she was not young enough to tolerate the jewels being smashed. She knew, they were poor and she always used to wear ragged clothes, but her father's activities made her to suspect him.

Jivan, who was better than Sita told her that it may be their mother's jewels which she might have been left with their father. Sita considered his act of smashing the jewels as 'merciless' because he left his own children ragged. In order to deceive and to get good name from the islanders, he smashed the jewels and added it with the medicines to make them believe that he was doing his best for them, more than any doctor could. Sita had hidden all these memories in her subconscious mind.

The utmost shock came to her when she learned that their mother had run away from their father to Benaras. This incident psychologically affected Sita. As a child she could not connect things as Jivan did. She longed for her mother. She felt isolated, dejected and deserted. She hated the activities of her father to the core. Even after her marriage, she had thought of her mother and went with her husband to Benaras to search for her. But Sita was disappointed and, regretted that she was not even able to keep a photograph of her mother.

The broken family affected the inner conscious of Sita. Her childhood days were troubled ones like Pecola. She knew that her father was a corrupted, selfish hypocrite. Because of her father, she was alienated and the thought, that even

her mother had deserted her, increased the torments in her heart.

Home is the place where an individual starts to grow and develop. But because of their broken homes they started to suffer inwardly and this led, to their psychological disorder. Whenever, they remembered their past disappointments, they had an inward struggle. Pecola never liked to remember her past, so she created an illusion, with her blue eyes and Sita did not want to indulge in the artificial society and wanted to escape from reality, hence she created an illusion to destroy her past.

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