



BLACK WOMEN WAS THE VICTIM OF MALE DOMINANCE IN PAUL MARSHALL NOVELS

DR. N. VIJAYAKUMARI

Assistant Professors
Department of English
Vels University Chennai
(TN) INDIA

D. KAVITHA

Research Scholar
Department of English
Vels University Chennai
(TN) INDIA

ABSTRACT

Paul Marshall is the eminent and leading novelist of twentieth century African American literature. She does not keep her characters within the certain limits and boundaries. She does not keep her characters within the certain limits and boundaries. She does not confine them inside the isolated black communities because she believes that self is not defined as getting freedom by breaking away from community and describes it as the ability to recognize one's continuity with the larger community. Afro-American culture and heritage is the only wall which is able to protect them against the whole oppression existing in the racist society of America.

Key words: *community, boundaries, culture, heritage*

INTRODUCTION

The literary panorama of America, at that age was dominated by James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Amira Baraka and various other black male writers, who depicted their female characters as stereotypes that white Americans had in mind about black women. Her life was governed by others; they told her how she was supposed to look, act or sound like. This stereotype of Black women by White Americans also by blacks was so deep rooted, that even the black women novelist, who preceded Marshall, did not dare to 'think' of replacing these negative stereotypes with something too plain. These helpless Black women never even pondered upon theirThe literary panorama of America, at that age was dominated by James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Amira Baraka and various other black male writers, who depicted their female characters as stereotypes that white Americans had in mind about black women.

DR. N. VIJAYAKUMARI

D. KAVITHA

1 Page



Her life was governed by others; they told her how she was supposed to look, act or sound like. This stereotype of Black women by White Americans also by blacks was so deep rooted, that even the black women novelist, who preceded Marshall, did not dare to 'think' of replacing these negative stereotypes with something too plain. These helpless Black women never even pondered upon their self-definition or self-evaluation, which was so essential to create an image of their own, as the Blacks were hardly considered as human beings. They were considered as dehumanized creatures drifting through darkness without any specific center of None of the writers ever tried to examine Black women's lives in relation to their culture, their community and the complexities that they were going through in America. Nobody ever dreamt of exploring into the psychological aspects of Black women's lives. Even the scopes and creative visions of the women writers of the age were caged. Thus, the Black woman was lawfully confined to these stereotypes as if it was the sole reality of her existence. Marshall's creativity was nurtured right from her childhood under the influence of her mother. She noticed how her mother and other Barbadian women gathered in the basement of the kitchen and expressed their creativity in the form of storytelling or poems. Paule would sit amongst these women and listen. This gradually enhanced her depth and knowledge about the different myths from Afro American and Caribbean cultures. Thus, these innocent ordinary women sowed the sapling of creativity, aesthetic foundations and an inclination towards writing .

Despite the suffering and exploitation because of being black, these female descendants of slaves and foreigners maintained the humanity within themselves. They had the weapon of speech which they used skilfully, to overthrow their agency of poverty, colonial exploitation, and the evils of racism that they had to encounter in their day-to-day life. Paule learnt her initial lesson that she has a weapon - that of the oral expression like her mother and her mother's friends, or writing medium, that would allow her to counter act or protest. Her childhood closeness with her mother created an impression in her mind. The second stage of Marshall's apprenticeship was her conventional American modes of education. She visited Brooklyn Public library at the Macon Street Branch, which is a few blocks away from Brownstone. It is this place that provided her the keys to open the King's Treasure, just like Ruskin Bond's Sesame and Lilies. Here she studied about the lives of Jane Austin, Thomas Mann, Joseph Conrad and many others.

Marshall started her journey into the literary world, which promised commitment to the black womanhood. She stood with a voice which was so heroic that we are instantly impressed by her tenacity of purpose. Marshall's significant contribution lies in to her refusal to portray the black woman as a stereotype. The stereotype image was that of a loose, immoral, primitive, pleasure seeking and sinful woman. Marshall standing as a voice overthrows these negative images. She believed that making a positive image was necessary for Black women, so as to reconstruct history and bring about a cultural revolution.

DR. N. VIJAYAKUMARI

D. KAVITHA

2 Page



Brown Girl, Brownstones, Marshall's first novel tells the story of the coming of age of Selina Boyce, a girl growing up in a small black immigrant community. Selina is caught between her mother, who wants to conform to the ideals of her new home and make the American dream come true, and her father, who longs to go back to their homeland, Barbados. The issues dominant in the novel – travel, migration, psychic fracture and striving for wholeness – will be important structuring elements in her later works as well. Praisesong for the Widow is in many ways the closing point of Marshall's explorations concerning the fractured West Indian psyche. The main characters, Avatara and Jerome Johnson evoke the Silla and Deighton Boyce, the parents of Selina in Brown Girl, Brownstones. Similarly, to the couple in the earlier novel, Avatara and Jerome are caught up in pursuing capitalist comforts. As Deighton, Jerome dies without ever realizing that there may be a different way of survival. Unlike Silla, Avatara discovers a possibility to reconnect with the heritage of the cultures of African descent when traveling to a Caribbean Island. Here, the remains of African cultures are preserved in legends, dances, myths and rituals.

The psyche will also be understood on the basis of the particular behavioural trends that the women showed due to long and sustained pitiable conditions that they had to endure. In this chapter an attempt is made to understand and analyse the condition that led to the development of fractured psyche of black females as depicted by Marshall in her works.

Marshall stands as a voice of the immigrant Black Community. She specially focuses on the black women's struggle, their migration, and their situation in the new land of the colonized. She has reflected in her works, the black immigrant females, struggling worldwide to find their identities to survive in poverty, and at the same time maintaining their native cultural identities. The black female immigrants faced powerlessness, because of white superiority and secondly due to male dominance.

Racism, chauvinism, discrimination, or hostility towards other races, can have a very adverse effect on the person who suffered from it. The effect of their social bigotry, can affect the mind, soul and heart of an individual. It can also be one of the reasons of fractured psyche among the African - American immigrant as depicted in the novels of Marshall. Due to their immigrant colonial status and colour the immigrants had to suffer racial discrimination

Marshall draws our attention to the museum like holy quality of the place that does not match Selina's body, which is not frozen and timeless as the whites. Her torn and dirty tolling with blackness peeing out of it, indicates movement and decomposition. Her body's vulgarity, its blackness is foreign to white presence that still haunts the home even after they were not actually present. The description of whiteness present in the room is actually the influence of racial discrimination that Selina had endured throughout, so much so that even when the

DR. N. VIJAYAKUMARI

D. KAVITHA

3 Page

whites were not actually present, Selina was afraid to occupy the room, as it was once possessed by the Whites. Her dark colour finds itself in an uneasy relationship in the white space and she voices her brown body and indeed her black voice does not belong to the brown stone. Selina seems to be hanging between white ideology and self-hatred.

Probing into the fractured psyche in black female in Marshall's novels, we come into the conclusion that the critical situations in the life of her protagonists is responsible for their fractured psyche. These small groups of human beings with dark skin suffer, as they have been displaced from their roots, suffering by being colonized, due to lack of identity in the new displaced place, where they are looked down due to their skin colour. Selina, the second-generation immigrant, in *Brown Girl Brown Stones* is exposed to racism, sexism and lack of nationalism in America. After being exposed to all these factors, she suffers from fractured psyche and she finds relief in accepting Baijan roots and culture.

The history of the Black Women is a portrayal of self-empowerment in a fight against the forces that tried to silence them. The Black woman struggled against racial and sexual discrimination. The theme of this study is recovery of self; and claim of cultural past-the two important aspects which Marshall deals while making the reconstruction of fractured psyche. Both literature and history depict the condition of Black Woman in America. In colonized White America, her condition, both physical and psychological was extremely traumatic. She was not in her true self and was rather in a psychic bondage in the very society she was living in. Rejected by the White society, the Black woman was a cultural wreck which left her shattered and made her survive with a fractured psyche. Marshall uses the aspect of 'rejoining the roots', by oral story telling thus developing the images and identity so as to reconstruct their fractured psyche. The process of socialization and internalization of White imperialists and their ideas, made an impact on her mind. She became a 'zombie', a body without soul.

REFERENCES:

Bell, G.O. "Brown Girl, Brownstones: A Review." BIM 8.30 (1960): 134-36. Print.

Benston, Kimberly W. "Architectural Imagery and Unity in Paule

Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*." Negro American Literature Forum Bone, Robert. "Merle Kinbona was Part Saint, Part Revolutionary, Part Obeah

Woman: The Chosen Place The Timeless People." The New York Times Book Review (1969): 4-5. Print.

Brown-Hinds, Paulette. "In the Spirit: Dance as Healing Ritual in Paule Marshall's