

# Women's Plight - Global Issues Either in Past or in Present

Waheed Shafiah<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This paper concentrates on the problems and atrocities faced by women world-wide. Since long time, women have been facing by many problems. Day by day the issues are becoming extremely critical so that women cannot find safe place in the entire world. Society receives all these problems as usual without any solution. The most important issues pertaining to women are marriage, dowry-related violence, abortion, crimes against women inheritance. Other crimes like rape, kidnapping, eve teasing and indecent exposure can be grouped as misdeed against women. In many countries sexual assault by a husband on his wife is not considered to be a crime which is the biggest offense where most of the women have been undergoing for a long time.

I would like to focus on some of the issues happening in and around the world and also the troubles which are focused by the women writers between continents. Contemporary women writers like Anita Desai, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker focus on the women issues in their writings till date in different continents either in Asia or in America. Though these writers belong to different continents, the issues they bring out into their writings are related to women are almost same as well as in past or in present. Most of the women writers have been trying to change the attitude of men towards women. They show the realities and pitiable lives of women in their writings. Violence against women is a universal problem so it must be condemned universally. Yet, this problem continues to grow more and more without any proper solution.

**Keywords:** *Male Domination, Oppression, Exploitation, Experimentation, Savery, Vesicovaginal Fistula, Psychological Trauma*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globe is a beautiful place where men and women can live happily. Since the early days of the Industrial Revolution women in Europe and North America have made considerable progress towards equality with men. Western countries did not improve the status of women, but degraded them further more by exploiting even their children in factories.

Middleclass women are confined to the home by taking care of their children. Their husbands do not work but disappear during the day. These idle women are frail and sensitive. Most of the women are illiterate, malnourished, exhausted, or even ill, and are forced to work long hours for little reward. In underdeveloped countries boys are favored over girls since their birth. Parents consider sons as a guarantee for their economic security in their old age. Girls, on the other hand, marry into some other family. So boys are better fed, clothed, and educated than girls.

Today, in this prominent place women are becoming more famous. Though their number is increasing, they still fight for the long-standing prejudices. Women face an enormous

pressure to follow social mores and traditional roles within their families. It creates a barrier to a business woman in the entire world as the still-too-thick glass ceiling at companies. Women have made great strides in the corporate world in the last three decades by earning attractive income. They are still discouraged by their family members. Their careers are in the hands of their partners' who always depress them.

## 2. ALICE WALKER

African American writer, Alice Walker is recognized as one of the leading voices among Black American women writers. Her writings portray the struggles of black women, their experiences and issues like female circumcision and suppression. She has climbed the proverbial ladder of success. Her works clearly centered the struggles and spiritual development affecting the survival whole of women. She has brought the renaissance of African women writers.

## 3. THE COLOR PURPLE

Her most popular novel *The Color Purple* chronicles the life of poor abused southern black women who eventually triumphs over oppression through affirming female relationship. It deals with the role of male domination in frustrating the black women's struggle for identity and independence. It shows how women are oppressed and manipulated by men and humiliated into powerlessness.

It is an epistolary novel written in the form of letters to god. The novel starts with Celie fourteen year-old, vulnerable, abused black girl by her father and then by her husband. She is raped, beaten and humiliated by them. She suffers in silence. Her first letter to God shows that she has been raped by her father, Alfonso. She falls pregnant and taken out of the school. He puts children for adoption. He causes emotional damage to Celie without showing any respect for her as a human being. Women are exploited very seriously Celie is married to Albert to raise his children and is expected her to work in a farm. She endures uncomfortable nights with her husband Albert. Married life to Celie is not comfortable.

## 4. TONI MORRISON

Toni Morrison is the first African American honored woman. She is the most important novelists in America today. She was born in 1931 in Lorain (Ohio), the second of four children in a black working-class family. She studied humanities at Howard and Cornell Universities, followed by an academic career at Texas Southern University, Howard University, and Yale. Since 1989, she is a chair at Princeton University worked as an editor for Random House. She gave numerous public lectures, especially in African-American literature. She made her debut as a novelist in 1970. A member since 1981 of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, she has been awarded a number of literary distinctions, among them the Pulitzer Prize in 1988. Her longstanding greatness resides in her ability to animate specific stories about the black experience.

## 5. HOME

Her latest novel *Home* tells the victims who are psychologically affected and scarred by the actions of the white xenophobic characters. Morrison portrays the perception of 1950s in America through her characters in this novel. The novel opens with the protagonist Frank Money who is a shell shock soldier haunted by memories of brutal warfare in Korean War. His civil life is violated by post traumatic stress disorder.

Frank's parents work for 16-hour a day by picking cotton and planting crops, His parents has left his sister's life Cee in hands of Frank. Frank and Cee have to bear their grandmother's unkindness and cruelty. Frank's parents died at young age, one from lung disease, the other from a stroke. So he must return from his place to protect his ailing sister,

Toni Morrison's *Home* also shows the oppression of women has taken the other form in the lives of the black women. Especially African American men and women who contemplate on unskilled labor, service jobs, farmers and farm laborers. Black women are treated brutally by the whites. Whites have taken the advantage of Black's illiteracy. The protagonist's sister Cee, an uneducated girl is in search of a job. She tells her friend about her desperate need for a respectable job. Cee says

***I know, but I need a real job where I can save. And no,  
I'm not going back to Lotus" pg 57***

Cee has got a job as a medical assistant for a white doctor named Beauregard Scott. She is given instructions and duties by the white doctor that she has to clean the instruments equipment, maintaining the schedule of patient's names, time of appointments and so on. Cee is given wrong information about her work that Dr. Beau has taken an undue advantage of her illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. These are the words spoken by the Dr. Bueu to Cee about her responsibility.

***'Also, be prepared for the reality of medicine: sometimes blood, sometimes  
pain. You will have to be steady and calm. Always. If you  
can you'll do just fine. Can you do that?" pg 64.***

Cee is interested in education and sometimes she thinks about her useless school she cannot complete her education. She feels very happy by seeing all the books in Dr. Beau's room. She examines the books which are in doctor's room passionately by running her fingers on it like Race, Heredity, and Society and she promises herself that she takes time to read a book, know and understand about 'eugenics' and thinks that she is in the right place to educate herself.

Later on, the white Dr. Beau started experiments on her womb. Day by day Cee loses her weight and her regular periods are lasting due to fatigue.

**“She dead “pg 114**

***‘Your womb can't bear fruit”***

The women nurses Cee with root medicine and saves her life with great difficulty. Here I would like to mention about James Marion Sims. He was a very important surgeon

from Alabama. His experimentation took place with slaves. He took the skulls of young children, young black children. He opened their heads and moved around the bones of the skull to see what would happen, posited as a cure for disease, but there was no rationale for that. He also decided to remove the jawbone of a slave, but this slave was pretty intractable. He did not want the surgery. He loudly protested against it.

He did his reproductive experiments with black women. He bought or acquired a group of black women who he housed in a laboratory over the period of five years. Approximately, he did forty surgeries on one slave alone. He sought to cure a devastating complication of childbirth called vesicovaginal fistula. This cures entailed repeatedly doing incisions on their genitalia which is very painful emotionally difficult to imagine.

About 400 black men in Macon County, Alabama, with syphilis — who had been diagnosed with syphilis, at least — were studied over a period of forty years by the United States Public Health Service. There were 200 men who were not infected who were held as a control group, also black men. Over the course of forty years, these men were duped into thinking that they were in a treatment program. But they weren't. They were given pain pills, which, as it transpired, were simply aspirin. They were given spinal taps, which, as it transpired, were not for the good of their health or to monitor their health, but rather to ensure a supply of sera for the development of a syphilis test. So they were used over forty years, even after the advent of penicillin. When penicillin was recognized as a cure, it was withheld from these men.

## 6. ANITA DESAI

Anita Desai an Indian novelist, short story writer especially noted for her sensitive portrayal of the inner life of her female characters. Most of her novels explore tensions between family member and the alienation of middle class women. She was born to a Bengali father and a German mother on June 24, 1931. She grew up imbibing western and Indian cultures. She has presented an ideal image of modern 'New Woman'. Her novels are certainly reflects of social realities from psychological perspective. She closely examines the emotional world of womankind. She deals with various thoughts, emotions and sensations of various levels of consciousness. Most of her characters are members of the Anglicized Indian bourgeoisie; whose marital problems are in the forefront. Her most recent novel is *Fasting, Feasting* set in the twentieth century Mexico. Desai departed from her familiar territories and set the story of identity and self-discovery in Mexico.

## 7. FASTING, FEASTING

In her latest novel *Fasting, Feasting* Desai portrays the situation of women in India and about the intricate family relations plays out in two countries, India and the United States. It tells the story about an average middle-class Indian family. Mama and Papa are parents bestowed with three children.

It tells an exploration of the Indian mentality about the condition of women, marriage system and two cultures. It brings out the layers of emotions that woman ought to feel

and how the character of Uma, is treated throughout the novel like a virtual slave in her own house and an outcast in the society due to her marital status. It revolves around the issue of repression, especially for the female characters. The women are not allowed authentic voices in their homes or their societies. The eldest daughter Uma, is neither pretty nor educated. She is not smart as her younger sister Aruna. She is almost in her late teens when the youngest of the lot, Arun is born. The 'fasting' section of the story focuses on Uma's travails how her parents stopped her from continuing her convent education so that she would take care of the newborn Arun, and how she has had two marriage attempts. One is where her family is cheated by giving dowry and other has broken within a short time immediately after marriage. Because Uma's father comes to know that the groom has already got married. He is blessed children. Uma fails miserably in her life by stamping her unlucky fate for marriage.

## 8. CONCLUSION

These are the some of the critical women situations that are projected by women writers in their writings either in Asia or America. The Pathetic situations have been happening to women since many years. The recent Delhi rape issue, Ayesha's issue, everyday rape issues in newspapers and many other horrible cases we come across. These Victims may be our friends, neighbors, relatives and family members. Most of the educated women suffer in silence and doesn't like to be exposed their issues to others. To eradicate all sorts of these problems moral values, ethics, value of life, respecting towards elders and ladies are taught to boys since their childhood. Children learn from their parents and from their teachers. It is the responsibility of parents to educate child in all ways of life to lead a successful and happy life. Moral values and ethics should be inculcated in their studies from the beginning of their education. It is the responsibility of each one of us as being the citizens of India to change our better future generation.

## 9. REFERENCES

- [1] Morrison Toni: Home, Random House 2012
- [2] Desai' Anita: Fasting, Feasting 2000
- [3] Walker Alice: The Color Purple
- [4] <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/20/books/review/home-a-novel-by-toni-morrison>
- [5] <http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-11-12/books>
- [6] Morrison Toni, Carolyn C. Denard : What Moves at the Margin: Selected Nonfiction
- [7] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J.\\_Marion\\_Sims](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._Marion_Sims)

\* \* \*

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Gudlavalleru Engineering College, (Affiliated to Jntu, Kakinada), Gudlavalleru, Krishan (Dt), Andhra Pradesh 521356, Email.id: waheedshafiah@gmail.com