



Traumatic Saga of Dysfunctional and Domestic Depression in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

Dr. Dnyaneshwar Kisan Satbhai

Assistant Professor, Department of English, K. K. W. Arts, Science and Commerce College,
Pimpalgaon (B), Tal. Niphad, Dist. Nashik
dnyaneshwar.satbhail23@gmail.com

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Abstract— *The intangible subjectivity of beauty creates inferiority and deep perpetual impact in the psyche of innocent child, and The Bluest Eye is the fine epitome of it. Toni Morrison's has indignantly exhibited the sobs and sighs of psychologically inflected wounds of the black family. The concept of the beauty has to be formed to establish the new and equal civil liberties in the world, which will inspire man to look at each other as human being. The novelist depicts a tormenting study of trauma rooted in dysfunctional family and domestic depression within African-American societies. The researcher focuses on how systemic racism, internalized notions of beauty, and socioeconomic marginalization inflict deep psychological wounds on individuals, particularly children. The novel reveals the emotional neglect, domestic violence, and cracked parental associations generate a cycle of despair and self-loathing. It also shows domestic spaces not as situations of protection but as arenas of sustained trauma, where inherited pain is silently transmitted across generations. By interrogating the imposed standards of white beauty and their destructive impact on Black identity. Pecola, the novel's protagonist, has been victimized due to her blackness and ugliness.*

Keywords— *Dysfunctional, intangible, indignantly, marginalization, strategic, bigoted, hideousness.*

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, published in 1970, symbolizes as an insight into the destructive forces of racism, internalized self-hatred, and the breakdown of domestic foundation within Afro-American societies. It is universally proved and accepted that the futuristic inclusive growth of a child lies in the foundation laid at the initial stage in the family by the parents. The western bigoted idea of beauty is the basic cause of Pecola's traumatic and emotional collapse. The racist standards of beauty destruct self-worth and contribute to emotional and psychological suffering within Black families like Breedloves. Morrison portrays depression not only as an individual condition but as the result of poverty, racism, neglect, and family violence. "The concept of physical beauty as a virtue is one of the dumbest, most pernicious and destructive ideas of the Western world." ¹ Pecola feels that blackness has condemned her to ugliness and neglected the Western standards of beauty under racial pressure of the dominant culture. The novelist demonstrates that these beauty

standards contribute directly to Pecola Breedlove's emotional and psychological breakdown, showing how external ideals can shape and damage an individual's identity.

Psychologically if a child is constantly imbibed that he/she is not good looking or unattractive, he/she starts believing in it, similarly in his essay Ruth Rosenberg states, "In cantering her story on an ordinary girl who is taught by her colourist culture that she is ugly, Toni Morrison portrays the cruel ground which forecloses Pecola's longing to be loved."² For Pecola's family, the Breedloves, life was just one disappointment after another. Poor, black, and ugly left them little room for self-improvement. The Breedloves made their home in a storefront and,

They lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly...Except for the father, Cholly, whose ugliness was behavior, the rest of the family-Mrs. Breedlove, Sammy

Breedlove, and Pecola Breedlove-wore their ugliness, put it on, so to speak, although it did not belong to them.³

The concept of ugliness that did not belong to them was always haunting their lives; everywhere they looked the society shone back at them like a giant mirror portraying nothing but hideousness, which is resulted from biased mind, and incomprehensible to any reasonable person.

The nurturing at home assists a lot in the life of any individual. The opening epigraph of the novel from a Dick and Jane, is strategic placement to signal the tension between idealized social narratives and the lived realities of those excluded from them. The peaceful image of "Dick and Jane and the pink air around them" functions as a cultural standard against which the characters' lives are measured and found wanting. The irony is painful: where white middle-class families are described as happy and complete, the Breedloves are fragmented and emotionally wounded. The contrast between these worlds underscores the novel's central concern with how exclusion from dominant cultural ideals shapes personal and familial identity. "The master had said, 'You are ugly people.' They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement; saw, in fact, support for it leaning at them from every billboard, every movie, every glance."⁴

The novel exhibits the most upsetting and disturbing domestic system, at the both levels: personal and social. Barbara Christian and Deborah McDowell emphasize that the Breedlove family's dysfunction is deeply rooted in internalized racism, economic deprivation, and patriarchal violence. Domestic depression in the novel is not merely psychological but structural, shaped by white aesthetic standards and social exclusion. Cholly Breedlove's brutality and Pauline's emotional withdrawal demonstrate how oppression fractures parental roles, turning love into neglect and protection into harm. Thus, Morrison portrays depression as a collective affliction, passed silently across generations. Essentially, the novel is a traumatic saga that exposes how systemic oppression, entrenched poverty, and broken homes collide to inflict emotional injuries on personalities, especially young Black girls like Pecola Breedlove. "Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes... Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope."⁵ It shows the agony and urges of young Black girls like Pecola Breedlove. Morrison not only describes Pecola's psychological collapse but also contextualizes the trauma of Pecola. The safe and harmonious atmosphere is the base for the overall development, on the contrary, Pecola's family suffers from low self-esteem which is rooted in the idea that they are basically ugly. The sense of ugliness is hard to shake because the world around them seems to confirm it. The

established American beauty standards are the people with white or light skin, graceful and small noses, and blue eyes, but the Breedloves is exception to it. Being confronted with billboard ads, movie stars, and even candy wrappers that present a beauty ideal the Breedloves could not achieve though it is deeply rooted in the hearts of the them.

As a young black girl, Pecola's sense of self is rooted in rejection. She feels and experiences the contempt she perceives in her parents' voices, in the public places where people talk behind her back, and in the general cultural message that equates beauty with whiteness. "It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights—if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different...Pretty eyes. Pretty blue eyes. Big blue pretty eyes."⁶ Pecola's obsession with blue eyes captures the central complexity perpetually exists in her mind.

The domestic situation of the Breedlove family can be considered as pathetic and full of neglect, violence, and hopelessness. Cholly Breedlove, Pecola's father, embodies the destructive effects of trauma inflicted by racism and abandonment. His own history—marked by rejection, loneliness, and early encounters with sexual shame—shapes him into an emotionally volatile and abusive father. "When he was drunk, he was dangerous."⁷ Cholly's inability to provide a stable and loving home is not merely a result of individual pathology but reflects the broader social conditions that have systematically stripped Black men of dignity and opportunities for healthy emotional expression. His tragic life story reveals the cyclical nature of trauma: Cholly's father abandoned him, and he, in turn, abandons his children emotionally and physically. "They fought each other with the same, unnatural violence that they displayed toward their children."⁸ In this way, the novel illustrates how structural forces such as racism and poverty not only harm individuals but also corrode the familial bonds that might otherwise mitigate suffering.

Pauline Breedlove, Pecola's mother, embodies the interplay between internalized oppression and domestic dysfunction. "She beat Pecola with a blue-handled knife."⁹ This stark moment shows how abuse is normalized and sudden within the Breedlove household. When Mr. Cholly has burned the house, Pecola moved to Macteer's house and entered it. In Claudia's words, the Breedlove family has been suddenly homeless and defenceless, and outside the bounds of normal. She remembered how important it was for her as the youngest sister to be without shelter or homeless. She describes it as the true danger of existence and says: There is a difference between being put out and being put outdoors. If you are put out, you go somewhere else; if you are outdoors, there is no place to go. The

distinction was subtle but final. Outdoors was the end of something, an irrevocable, physical fact, defining and complementing our metaphysical condition. Being a minority in both caste and class, we moved about anyway on the hem of life, struggling to consolidate our weaknesses and hang on, or creep singly up into the major folds of the garment.¹⁰

The impact of domestic torture on Pecola is further complicated by the community's reaction to her and her family. "Adults do not talk to us—they give us directions."¹¹ It proves that the family disturbance is the real cause of the Pecola's ruined world. The shame and ridicule Pecola experiences at school and in social interactions reinforce her belief that she is undeserving of love and beauty. Rather than finding solace among her peers, Pecola is continually reminded of her perceived inferiority, "All of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed."¹² Pecola's internal mind becomes the waste ground of the self-loathing and indignant thoughts

The sexual assault by Cholly is inhuman and unbearable act from the general perspective, it is the dreadful blending violent and tender feelings when he is thirty-seven years old when he rapes his daughter Pecola. He is a drunker, comes upon her while washing the dishes, a weak body, and a ragged dress. He thinks, "Why did she have to look so whipped? She was a child—unburdened—why wasn't she happy?."¹³ Cholly is overcome with the emotion of how much his daughter deserves and needs and how unable he is to do anything useful for her. Lynn Orilla Scott writes: The... incest incident takes place at the end of the chapter recounting the father's life and is told exclusively through the eyes of the father. The reader sees the father's deed as the conclusion of his traumatic moments with intimacy and love —traumatic that are strikingly similar to those of his daughter.¹⁴ Pecola's is taken aback, confused, powerless, and violated. She is unable to speak and only makes a sound, which she describes as "a hollow suck of air in the back of her throat... like the quick loss of air from a circus balloon"¹⁵ Finally, she collapses and experiences a sharp and painful anguish, she does not resist her father, which shows her helplessness and suffocation, even she is not capable to realise whether the family member is exploiting her and her home is unsuitable place for her.

Morrison has revealed the realistic situation of domestic depression in the novels which functions at several stages such as emotional, financial, cultural social, psychological and cultural, and the consequently the community experiences the inhuman treatment imposed on it. Morrison's representation of depression is not intangible but embodied in the everyday experiences of her characters:

in Pauline's weary servitude and emotional withdrawal, in Cholly's volatile outbursts and pathetic surrender to despair, and in Pecola's silent suffering and ultimate psychological fragmentation. The narrative exposes how depression is both an indication and a cause of domestic dysfunction. The last remark in the novel is the fine example of juxtaposition "The damage done was total."¹⁶ the traumas of sexual abuse of children with a near jesting routine of physical humour exemplifies Morrison's realist vision's richness and fullness. It also emphasizes that some individuals, like Pecola, have no defenders interested in defending their innocence, while Mr. Breedlove's behaviors such as beating, sexual harassment, and alcohol damage the whole family is ruined and, all the members are departed from each other, the impact of the domestic disintegration. Individuals are distinctively different from the society around them through the society cruelly victimizing them.

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