

Inner Worlds of Women: With Special Reference to Anita Desai and Toni Morrison

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Abstract. *The woman represents the symbol of nature. She contributes to making progress in the family, society, and country through her active participation, the same as her male counterpart. But woman is suppressed into a lower status compared to the male power and position in the society intentionally, even after her great contribution in reality. This paper looks at how the inner world of women appears in selected novels by Indian English writer Anita Desai and African American author Toni Morrison. It focuses on Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*, *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* As well as Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved*, women are a prime focus. In Anita Desai's major novels, she depicts the world of heroines. They may be aloof, educated, sensitive, and faced psychological issues, racism, slave encounters, and emotional challenges in the insensitive world around them. Toni Morrison was always concerned about the unique position of Black women in American literature. She presents inner feelings of man-woman relationships, marital disharmony, character development, and themes such as abnormal psychology, identity, and resilience. The findings reveal a universal yet culturally distinct representation of women's inner experiences in both authors' works, providing important insights for feminist literary studies.*

Key words: Feminine, Sensibility, Psychological, Marital Conflict, Identity.

Introduction

After the 1960s, both Indian English and African American fiction grew as literary genres. Anita Desai and Toni Morrison emerged as important voices, creating stories that explore the psychological and emotional lives of women and give solutions to the future generations. This paper compares the inner world of women in Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1982), and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975) with Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), and *Beloved* (1987). 'Inner world of women' refers to the emotional and psychological awareness seen in an outstanding, improved race of traditional women, often shaped by societal pressures, marital problems, and cultural norms. This introduction discusses the history of Indian English and African American fiction, placing Desai and Morrison as key figures in their literary contexts. Desai, a winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award, is known for her thoughtful portrayals of Indian women. In contrast, Morrison, a Nobel Prize winner, explores the intersections of race, gender, and identity in African American settings. By examining both authors' works, the study aims to point out that compromise, maladjustment, ethics, cultural values, and moral values are considered as the remedies for the oppression undergone by women in the male-dominated society. Morrison and Anita Desai clearly depict this in all her novels.

In *Cry, the Peacock*, *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Anita Desai centres on female protagonists—Maya, Sarah, and Sita—who grapple with emotional sensitivity and societal oppression. Maya's descent into madness in *Cry, the Peacock* symbolises her resistance to patriarchal

norms and marital issues. Desai employs vivid imagery and a stream-of-consciousness style to illustrate Maya's psychological struggles. Similarly, Sarah's experience of isolation in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* emphasises cultural displacement and gender pressures. Sita's rejection of traditional domestic roles in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* reflects her discontent with societal expectations. Through introspective storytelling and meaningful settings, Desai captures the delicate yet strong nature of her characters' inner lives.

Toni Morrison's novels *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved* explore feminine sensibility within the contexts of race, trauma, and perseverance. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola Breedlove's wish for blue eyes symbolises her internalised racism and societal rejection, exposing her emotional fragility. Morrison's fragmented storytelling and vivid descriptions emphasise Pecola's psychological suffering. In *Sula*, the protagonist challenges gender norms and asserts her independence, even at the cost of being rejected. *Beloved* delves into Sethe's traumatic memories as a former slave, focusing on themes of maternal sacrifice and pain. Morrison's poetic language and non-linear narratives highlight the emotional complexity of her characters, presenting feminine sensibility as shaped by systemic injustice and personal tragedy.

Though Desai and Morrison come from different cultural backgrounds, their novels share a focus on feminine sensibility. Both authors depict women as emotionally complex, often pushed to their limits by societal and familial expectations. Desai's characters, such as Maya and Sita, experience oppression in patriarchal Indian households, with factors like education, social status, and finances worsening marital conflicts. Morrison's characters, like Pecola and Sethe, confront the intersecting struggles of racism, sexism, and historical burdens.

Both writers use introspective storytelling to explore their characters' inner experiences. Their female protagonists exhibit intense emotional awareness, leading to psychological turmoil or acts of defiance. Central themes in their works include marital conflict and social oppression.

Desai's stories are set in Indian society, focusing on domestic and familial limitations. In contrast, Morrison's novels are grounded in African American history and highlight the impact of racial trauma. Desai's writing style is introspective and rich in symbolism, while Morrison's is poetic and often non-linear, reflecting her characters' fractured experiences. This comparison illustrates that while feminine sensibility transcends cultural boundaries, it remains influenced by specific social and historical contexts, making both Desai's and Morrison's works enriching in feminist literature.

Review of Literature

Ahlawat, Abhinav, *Eco-Feminist Study of Toni Morrison's Novels: The Bluest Eye, Sula and Beloved*. Mandsaur, M.P., India, International Journal of Humanities and Social Invention, ISSN (online): 2319-7022, (print): 2319-7714, Volume 2, Issue 8, August 2013, P. 56-68 The present paper aims at the study of emotional and psychological lives of women in Toni Morrison's novels. It is based on the study of three novels: *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula* and *Beloved*. It shows how both women and nature are related to each other in the sense of pain, birth and exploitation in the patriarchal society.

Shiva, Vandana. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited Publication, December, 2009. The book suggests that there are three related conferences on development ecology and gender. It argues that there is an intimate link between the degradation of women and nature in contemporary society.

Emara, Maha Abdel Moneim. *Anita Desai's Fire on the Mountain: An Ecofeminist Reading*. Washington, D.C.: *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, January 25, 2017. The present research paper deals with ecofeminism as a social, political and philosophical movement. It focuses on the oppression of women and exploitation of nature as interconnected phenomena. This paper analyses Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) in the light of ecofeminist critical theories.

Xue, Jain. *A Study of Toni Morrison's Home from the Perspective of Ecofeminism*. United Kingdom: International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science, Vol. 5, June 2018. Home is the tenth novel of Toni Morrison, the first and so far the only female African American writer to win the Nobel Prize. Through the story of a Black brother and sister who run away from home and finally choose to return.

Morrison shows her unique interpretation and thinking about racial and female problems. In the light of descriptions and metaphors about nature and females, the thesis employs the theory of ecofeminism to analyse the relationship of females and nature.

Gaard, Greta. *Towards a Queer Ecofeminism*, Hoboken, New Jersey, United States: Wiley on behalf of Hypatia, winter, 1997, Vol. 12, No. 1 (winter, 1997), p. 114-137. Although many ecofeminists acknowledge heterosexism as a problem, a systematic exploration of the potential intersections of ecofeminism and queer theories has yet to be made. By interrogating social constructions of the 'natural' and the various uses of Christianity as a logic of domination and rhetoric of colonialism, this essay finds those theoretical intersections and argues for the importance of developing a queer ecofeminism.

Suganthy, M.A. *A Study of Ecofeminism in the Select Novels of Anita Desai*. (Ph.D. thesis), Annamalai Nagar: Tamil Nadu, India, December, 2019. Anita Desai is affiliated with the category of women writers who offer their experiences to literature. She is recognised today for her originality and versatility as well as the indigenous flavours she offers in the portrayal of the characters in her fictions. When she was twenty-six years old, Desai started her debut novel, '*Cry, the Peacock*'. She admits that in her twenties, when she started writing her novel, *Cry, the Peacock*, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and Henry James had had a stronger compelling effect on her. The title of the novel 'Fire on the Mountain' is derived from the Nobel Prize winner William Golding's celebrated novel entitled 'Lord of the Flies', second chapter 'Fire on the Mountain'. Anita Desai describes the human sentiments in juxtaposition with not only their actions but also with their environment, as she did in her novel 'Fire on the Mountain'.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The present research paper discusses the dual world, i.e., women's world and nature's world. One has to take care of both visible and invisible worlds. It is necessary to discuss the aims and objectives of the present study. It is mentioned as below:

1. To study about the feminine sensibility in the novels of Anita Desai and Toni Morrison.
2. To study women's psychological issues faced by modern man.
3. To spread the awareness about the environmental crisis.
4. To study the current issues, oppression and sensitiveness of women.
5. To study the theme of existentialism is necessary in the modern era.
6. To study and analyse the adverse effects of environmental issues on human minds.

Research Methodology

The researcher will follow various methods of research depending on the necessity of the subject. The historical method, qualitative method, interpretative method, analytical method, critical method, comparative method, evaluative method, and descriptive method will be followed. The researcher will follow the MLA research method for the present research work.

Conclusion

This research delineates that Anita Desai and Toni Morrison adapt the same technique – stream of consciousness – in their novels. Desai's focus on Indian women's domestic struggles and Morrison's exploration of racial and gender obstacles for African American women reveal both shared and unique aspects of women's lives. Through their different narrative styles—Desai's reflective symbolism and Morrison's poetic fragmentation—they make significant contributions to feminist literary discussions. The study encourages further examination of cross-cultural feminist narratives and how women are portrayed in world literature.

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