

**A MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT ON**

**“FEMINIST IDENTITY REVEALED IN**  
**TONI MORRISON’S ‘THE BLUEST EYE’ AND**  
**CHINUA ACHEBE’S ‘THINGS FALL APART’ ”**

**SUBMITTED TO**  
**BOARD OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT,**  
**SAVITRIBAI PHULE PUNE UNIVERSITY,**  
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**SUBMITTED BY**  
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**SUBMITTED ON**  
**15<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2015**

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that, **Mr. Santosh Dadu Ghangale**, Assistant Professor in English has successfully carried out a Minor Research Project on “**Feminist Identity Revealed In Toni Morrison’s ‘The Bluest Eye’ and Chinua Achebe’s ‘Things Fall Apart’**” funded by B.C.U.D., Savitribai Phule Pune University during 2013-2015.

I hereby forward his project to the university.

Place: Ahmednagar

Date: 15/10/2015

## **CERTIFICATE**

Certified that the work incorporated in the Minor Research Project **“Feminist Identity Revealed in Toni Morrison’s ‘The Bluest Eye’ and Chinua Achebe’s ‘Things Fall Apart’”** submitted by me is carried out under the financial assistance from B.C.U.D., Savitribai Phule Pune University during 2013-2015. Material obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged in the project.

Place: Ahmednagar

Date:15/10/2015

**Mr. Santosh Dadu Ghangale**  
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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that the Minor Research Project entitled “**Feminist Identity Revealed in Toni Morrison’s ‘The Bluest Eye’ and Chinua Achebe’s ‘Things Fall Apart’**” by me submitted to B.C.U.D., Savitribai Phule Pune University during 2013-2015 is the record of work carried out by me during the has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associate ship, fellowship, titles in this or any other university or other institution of Higher learning.

I further declare that the material obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged in the project.

Place: Ahmednagar

Date:15/10/2015

**Mr. Santosh Dadu Ghangale**  
Assistant Professor,  
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**TO MY BELOVED PARENTS, WIFE AND DAUGHTER  
WHO WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUPPORTED ME  
IN THIS ENDEAVOUR.**

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**(MR. SANTOSH DADU GHANGALE)**

## **Introduction:**

As many other African American women writers, Morrison asserts that she situates herself within the African American community and its tradition of resisting discrediting views of the dominant society rather than aligns herself with the Black feminist model of critical inquiry, “because any model of criticism that excludes males from it is as hampered as any model of criticism of Black literature that excludes women from it”. Morrison’s assertion implies that for an African American woman writer it is more important to create for the nourishment of the African American community including both men and women than separate herself from it by assuming a Black feminist stance. Discernible in the essay *Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation* is her choice to remain loyal to the politics of Black nationalism/ethnicity and the rejection of Black feminism as separating African American women from men. Moreover, Afrocentric values those permeate the African American family, community, religion and culture point to a value system that existed before and independently of the system of racial domination, and reliance on Afrocentric tradition, that is precisely on what differentiates the African American community from other communities, seems to be particularly empowering for Morrison, as it is for her characters. Responding to the dominant and universalizing academic discourse of poststructuralist theory in the 1980s, Black feminist critic Barbara Christian articulated her disappointment with the feeling of being “intimidated, devalued” by the intellectual hegemony of Euro-American abstract logic that surrounded the definition of knowledge in the academia . As a woman of color she felt excluded by what she called “the race for theory”, which she saw as the “takeover” of white philosophers who had “reinvented the meaning of theory”, seeing that the world was “fast escaping their political control”. According to her, the popularization of Western abstract theory as constitutive for the definition of knowledge in the academia was alien to emerging literatures created by people who struggled to be heard, that is people of color, feminists, radical critics and creative writers. Christian felt particularly discouraged by the incomprehensibility of the language of theory, its prescriptiveness and the tendency to relegate to a marginal position of

“minority discourse” those African American writers for whom “literature is not an occasion for discourse among critics but is necessary nourishment of their people and one way by which they come to understand their lives better”. In her critique of “the race for theory”, Christian also indicates that in their effort to follow the injunction to theorize – and thus legitimize their place in the academia – feminists exclude women of color who have always theorized, but their notion of theory does not necessarily converge with what is considered academic theory. Consequently, her statement: “my folk [...] have always been a race for theory” may be interpreted, on the one hand, as pointing to marginalization of people of color by the dominant theoretical discourse; on the other hand, it is claiming recognition for African American women’s thought as a legitimate source and form of knowledge. More particularly, Christian’s assertion voiced criticism of globalizing gestures of feminist thought which insisted on the unified identity of “woman”, basing the construction of this category on shared experience of gender oppression instead of recognizing multiple cultural, social and political intersections which define women’s experience.

The Black Feminist Movement grew out of, and in response to, the Black Liberation Movement and the Women's Movement. In an effort to meet the needs of black women who felt they were being racially oppressed in the Women's Movement and sexually oppressed in the Black Liberation Movement, Black Feminist Movement was formed. All too often, "black" was equated with black men and "woman" was equated with white women. As a result, black women were an invisible group whose existence and needs were ignored. The purpose of the movement was to develop theory which could adequately address the way race, gender, and class were interconnected in their lives and to take action to stop racist, sexist, and classist discrimination.



## **Black Women in the Feminist Movement:**

Black Women who participated in the feminist movement during the 1960s often met with racism. It generally took the form of exclusion: black women were not invited to participate on conference panels which were not specifically about black or Third World women. They were not equally, or even proportionately, represented on the faculty of Women's Studies Departments, nor were there classes devoted specifically to the study of black women's history. In most women's movement writings, the experiences of white, middle class women were described as universal "women's experiences," largely ignoring the differences of black and white women's experiences due to race and class. In addition to this, well-known black women were often treated as tokens; their work was accepted as representing "the" black experience and was rarely ever criticized or challenged.

Part of the overwhelming frustration black women felt within the Women's Movement was at white feminists' unwillingness to admit to their racism. This unwillingness comes from the sentiment that those who are oppressed can not oppress others. White women, who were (and still are) without question sexually oppressed by white men, believed that because of this oppression they were unable to assume the dominant role in the perpetuation of white racism; however, they have absorbed, supported and advocated racist ideology and have acted individually as racist oppressors. Traditionally, women's sphere of influence has extended over the home, and it is no coincidence that in 1963, seven times as many women of color (of whom 90 percent were black) as white women were employed as private household workers. It has been the tendency of white feminists to see men as the "enemy," rather than themselves, as part of the patriarchal, racist, and classist society in which we all live.

Not only did some white feminists refuse to acknowledge their ability to oppress women of color, some claimed that white women had always been anti-racist. As bell hooks points out "[t]here is little historical evidence to document Rich's assertion that white women as a collective group or white women's rights advocates are part of an anti-racist tradition." Every women's

movement in the United States has been built on a racist foundation: women's suffrage for white women, the abolition of slavery for the fortification of white society, the temperance movement for the moral uplifting of white society. None of these movements was for black liberation or racial equality; rather, they sprang from a desire to strengthen white society's morals or to uplift the place of white women in that society.

### **Toward a Black Feminist Movement:**

Faced with the sexism of black men and the racism of white women, black women in their respective movements had two choices: they could remain in the movements and try to educate non-black or non-female comrades about their needs, or they could form a movement of their own. The first alternative, though noble in its intent, was not a viable option. While it is true that black men needed to be educated about the effects of sexism and white women about the effects of racism on black women's lives, it was not solely the responsibility of black women to educate them.

Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns. Now we hear it is the task of women of Color to educate white women-in the face of tremendous resistance-as to our existence, our differences and our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought. In light of these facts, the women decided to forge their own movement, the Black Feminist Movement.

Building a Black Feminist Movement was not an easy task. Despite the need for such a movement, there were few black women in the early 1970s, which were willing to identify themselves as feminists. Barbara Smith articulates the reservations of many black women about a black feminist movement:

Myths to divert Black women from our own freedom:

1. The Black woman is already liberated.
2. Racism is the primary (or only) oppression Black women have to confront.

3. Feminism is nothing but man-hating.
4. Women's issues are narrow, apolitical concerns. People of color need to deal with the "larger struggle."
5. Those feminists are nothing but Lesbians.

These myths illustrate long-held misconceptions about black women, including the belief that the extraordinary strength black women have shown in the face of tremendous oppression reveals their liberation. In fact, this "freedom"-working outside the home, supporting the family economically as well as emotionally, and heading the household-has been thrust upon black women. Women of all races, classes, nationalities, religions, and ethnicities are sexually oppressed; black women are no exception. Upon further examination, the other myths prove to be false. Racism and sexism must be confronted at the same time; to wait for one to end before working on the other reflects an incomplete understanding of the way racism and sexism, as forms of oppression, work to perpetuate each other. Black feminism struggles against institutionalized, systematic oppression rather than against a certain group of people, be they white men or men of color. While it often requires no stretch of the imagination to infer man-hating in some early (and some recent) feminist writings, the goal of feminism is the end of sexism. It is only a sane response of an oppressed people to work toward their own liberation. Finally, the assumption that feminists are nothing but lesbians reveals the homophobia which persists in many black communities as well as a misunderstanding of both lesbians and motivations for joining the Feminist movement.

As we approach the 1990s, women's history in the United States seems to be headed in three main directions. Scholars are variously studying the intersection of race, class and gender, exploring the meanings of gender, and working to integrate women's history into mainstream scholarship. These endeavors are not discrete, but instead overlap with and complement one another. Together, they have enriched and expanded women's history, but they, nevertheless, cannot by themselves reinvigorate the influence of feminism within the field. Let me briefly discuss some of the possibilities and problems presented by each approach. The effort to achieve greater

inclusivity by studying not merely women but also the 'intersection of race, class and gender' has several clear advantages. By placing race and class on equal footing with gender, we can incorporate into feminist scholarship the hard lessons of practical feminist politics (which in the 1970s were often though not exclusively based on the needs of middleclass, white women). By treating gender as part of a complex of factors, we can better approximate the real experiences of women, whose identities are formed not by sex alone. By focusing on the intersection of several factors, we can study linkages between systems of oppression that are too often treated as discrete and independent. And by explicitly linking historians of women with their most natural allies within the profession (such as labour and African-American historians), we can try to break down part of the ghetto of women's history, getting at least some other fields of history thinking about gender. Clearly, the concept of the intersection of race, class and gender has enhanced and deepened women's history, but it also presents us with certain problems; for it is both unnecessarily exclusive and potentially hierarchical. 'The intersection of race, class and gender' has been rapidly enshrined as a politically correct approach, but it frankly often strikes me as a politically correct compromise that accommodates the interests of the more powerful while excluding the more silent. With its almost mantra-like status, the litany of race, class and gender implies that these three factors do it all, and that is manifestly not true. What about ethnicity (something that is occasionally whispered at the end as a fourth category)? What about sexual orientation (something almost studiously ignored)? What about marital status? Race, class and gender are three important factors whose intersections we must study, but if we use them as the only three factors, we will be heading toward a dead end.

We must also recognize that studies analyzing the trinity of race, class and gender, although ideally encouraging theories of dynamic interaction, often fall far short of that goal. To feminist historians wanting to encourage Marxist historians and African-American historians to start thinking about women, 'the intersection of race, class and gender seems the obvious tool. But in practice, non feminist historians often use this tool in appalling ways,

talking about race, class and gender and then ranking gender beneath the others and if used hierarchically, 'the intersection of race, class, and gender' becomes yet another bad manifestation of old political struggles. At a recent forum on 'Gender, Class and Culture in the Study of Labor History,' the festivities concluded with a (male) labour historian trying to cajole the participants into acknowledging that gender is not as analytically important as class.

Few people like to study oppression and subordination, but the study of patriarchy is, to my mind, as central to women's history as is the study of capitalism to labour history or the study of racism to African-American history and the study of patriarchy promises to revitalize women's history in the United States. Despite its many advances, women's history is still somewhat marginalized; while we should properly seek to break down that marginalization by integrating the history of women with the histories of class and race, by looking at the uses of gender as a universal signifier of power, and by considering the questions of mainstream historiography, we must also create our own historiography, centered on the crucial question of the endurance of patriarchy. Despite its feminist origins, women's history has lost much of its non historical feminist audience in the United States; by addressing a central concern of all feminists - the nature, structures, and endurance of patriarchy - we can try to regain their attention. In making the central issue of feminism the central subject of women's history, we will be working not only within the very best traditions of history (for the greatest historians have always been motivated by moral and political commitment) but also within the very best traditions of feminism which, from its origins with Christine de Pizan in the early fifteenth century, has sought inspiration and understanding from the past.

Black feminists further assert that African American women have a shared historical reality and, thus, a shared worldview of historical resistance to their own oppression and dehumanization (Collins, 2000). The marginalization of African American women as members of a specific group characterized by their gender and race creates a shared experience. For example, for many if not most African American women, race is the most

salient construct centering both their individual and group identity (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996). This commonality is not viewed simply as a shared physical reality; rather, race is viewed as a sociopolitical term with cultural underpinnings that distinguishes between true biological differences and also classifies people according to sociopolitical and economic categories where membership is determined by physical characteristics (Helms, 1995). Both as a biological construct and socio-historical reality, ideas about race have placed African American females in a complex dual relationship to both Black culture and the dominant culture that Black women have to negotiate in their daily interactions (Hooks, 1984). It is argued here that, for African American women, these broad shared set of experiences, framed within a unique racial and gender context, influence the ways in which sexual scripts shape their development as sexual beings. This in turn directly impacts their sexual risk decision-making processes. As such, it is important to examine the ways in which African American female sexuality socialization takes place at multiple locations, and how these locations' degree of influence may differ as a function of racial and gender experiences. Simon and Gagnon's (1984, 1986, 1987) framework of sexual script development serves as the foundation for illustrating this. The authors delineated three levels of sexual script socialization: (1) cultural, (2) interpersonal, and (3) intra-psychic levels. These three levels interact simultaneously as African American females synthesize their triadic sexual socialization (via race, gender, and sexuality messages) and develop ways to understand how to integrate these macro and micro meanings. Thus, while acknowledging the existence of within-group difference, the model put forth here attempts to illustrate what is universal and what is unique in the interactions of gender, race, and sexuality.

Toni Morrison's 'The Bluest Eye' is a work which continues to represent the desire of the female to obtain not only power, but a sense of place in the world. The novel's introduction includes an explanation from the narrator, Claudia, who notes: "there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941... It was a long time before my sister and I admitted to ourselves that no green was going to spring from our seeds". This is important because it is the understanding of two female children who have come to terms with their existence as black girls in the world. The meaning behind their revelation essentially means they are unable to bring forth an object of beauty in a place where "the earth itself [was] unyielding" (The Bluest Eye pg. 5). It seems that the earth and everything in it was unyielding for those like Claudia, Frieda, and Pecola. These African American girls express a pivotal point in the maturation process. At their age, they have already been exposed to the truths associated with the existence of minority females within an Imperialistic society. They are black and essentially ugly, unlike the beautiful Shirley Temple or even fair skinned Maureen. The difficulties faced by these three girls provide evidence of what life is like for black females. Unfortunately, their tale may not prove beneficial to learn the reasons why, as noted in the introduction: "but since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how". The how of the narratives of Claudia, Frieda, and most importantly Pecola are formed most certainly by the Imperialistic ideals pertaining to both race and gender. Tapping Khayati once again, one may agree that The Bluest Eye is partly a psychological race study. Khayati explains: "The Bluest Eye shows, in a manner reminiscent of Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks, how the epistemic violence of the other is both outside and inside; it operates through the internalization of the self as other" (315). In this sense, the girls find that their identity is shaped not by how they view themselves, but how the world views them. Thus, everything that the girls know about themselves is completely negative. The world does not view them favorably. The truth remains that their identities are suppressed. The suppression of the girls begins at home. At home they are children who should be seen and not heard. Claudia explains that adults never spoke to her; they simply gave them "directions... They issue orders without providing

information” (The Bluest Eye pg. 10). The children in this type of community are completely opposite from the family Morrison introduces to the reader with her excerpt of the narrative of Dick and Jane. Dick and Jane are best representative of the ideal, Imperialistic family who has been afforded every advantage; furthermore, their advantages create an existence apart from what children in poor black communities face. The beautiful house of Dick and Jane is not at all like the old, cold house where Frieda and Claudia live, nor is it like the decrepit dwelling of the Breedloves. If one is a product of their surroundings it should be easily apparent that these children will grow into adulthood with a different understanding of life: their capabilities, dreams, and aspirations will be stifled before they are ever developed. The girls prove this throughout the text as they reveal the difficulties associated with their normal day to day lives. For Claudia and Frieda perhaps it is the conflict they feel within their home. At home no one listens or trusts them. They are children after all. It is also feasible to believe that a part of their struggle is derived from their race: they are black. Not only are they black, Claudia and Frieda having features that they consider ugly and apart from what society says is beautiful. Pecola shares this internalized conflict, a conflict that is worsened by the surroundings in which the children live. Everywhere they turn there is an obstacle. The obstacles present themselves in the forms of first their own families, their communities, and the world itself. Thus the children in their suppressed state turn inward to exact revenge upon the only thing upon which they have power: themselves. Khayati explains this process begins when individuals of color begin to question “what is black in him/ her, and desires what belongs to the white person”. What do these children desire? Claudia and Frieda reveal their wants early in the text. Morrison sets the scene as the two girls watch their neighbor, Rosemary Villanucci, a white girl who has things that they do not have. Rosemary lives in a nice home above her father's cafe. They have a 1939 Buick. She has a level of authority afforded by her race and affluence. Thus, the girls stare at her in the opening scene, desiring to take her bread and butter as well as “wanting to poke the arrogance out of her eyes and smash the ownership that curls her chewing mouth” (The Bluest Eye pg. 9).



Rosemary exists as a reminder of what the two girls know they will never be; what they will never have. In order to cope, the girls do what they do best: self-loathe. A part of this process is revealed through their obsession with the racial other as signified by their like and dislike of Shirley Temple. Frieda adores Shirley Temple while Claudia hates her not because of how she looks, but because of what she represents. Shirley Temple is the perfect object of adoration. Claudia attests that part of her dislike was also derived from her lack of maturity. She had not reached what she describes as “the turning point” in the development of her “psyche”. She attests that upon reaching that level, as Frieda and Pecola had, she would be allowed to love Shirley Temple (The Bluest Eye pg. 19). One learns that, with time, Claudia would find delight in the model of Shirley Temple and the Imperialistic power she represented. Her delight, however, would not be as desirous as Pecola's wish to have blue eyes. Khayati explicates the predicament of Pecola Breedlove by noting: “Pecola's fantasy that her life would be worthwhile if only she could have blue eyes is an extreme example of the common delusions of other black women. Confronted with the dominance of cultural stereotypes”(316). Pecola's fantasy moves a step past the adoration expressed by Claudia and Frieda and moves into a more dangerous realm. It is here that Pecola's level of self-hatred is amplified by the mere truth that she desires what she cannot have for it is not truly the blue eyes that she desires, but the life that the blue eyes will bring along with it. Her delusions of a peaceful life are born of the truths she associates with life for whites; the children are well kept, the mother and father are loving and caring; parents don't fight, for they “must not do bad things in front of those pretty eyes” (The Bluest Eye pg. 46). Pecola is damaged. Her present existence is exacerbated by the destruction of her psyche by everything that society says is right. Consequently, one may understand the stifling of the black female psyche. Proof of this is further evidenced through the adult female characters in the text. Despite the fact that characters such as Pauline are older and have supposedly reached the point wherein their adult psyches have fully developed, the novel reveals that their development has been stopped at some point causing them to remain stagnant. Although it seems that they

have come to terms with their existence as the racially other, black women within a society that has taught them to hate themselves find it difficult to unlearn what has been consciously subconsciously inserted into their understanding of the world. For Pauline her goal may not include having blue eyes as her daughter wishes. No, she finds comfort in having order, structure, and cleanliness. Like Geraldine whom Morrison offers as a point of contrast, Pauline desires an orderly existence, orderly perhaps like that of the whites she works for. She also desires a good relationship like that between a white man and a white woman. She expresses her joy of watching films and seeing “white men taking such good care of women... big clean houses... them pictures gave me a lot of pleasure” (The Bluest Eye pg. 123). Pauline, as a woman, is basically caught in the same predicament as her daughter. She identifies color in the world as existing at two separate poles that are “in perpetual conflict” (Fanon pg. 27). If these poles are in constant conflict, how can one survive when this conflict exists within their very psychological construct of the world?

Morrison allows us to see through Cholly that the mind of the black male will not allow itself to hate the oppressor. He is left mentally scarred when he is forced to continue sexual intercourse by a group of armed white men. We learn that “His subconscious knew what his conscious mind did not guess-that hating them would have consumed him” (The Bluest Eye 151). Cholly's inability to hate the oppressors' surfaces in his ability to hate what he decided was the cause of the situation: the woman. This method of thought does not leave Cholly; instead it surfaces in the beating of his wife and the eventual rape of his daughter. Everything act of the woman, even her inability to be protected by the black man, was an affront to him. Before he rapes his daughter, Cholly comes to terms with his daughter's actions: her hunched back, her sadness, “her misery was an accusation” (The Bluest Eye pg. 161). For the black male, everything is perhaps an accusation, a reminder of what he cannot do. Thus he is forced to remind her that he is powerful. He can act this out through mental domination or as noted here, physical domination. It has been noted that Morrison's attempts through her novels is to make a connection between the literature and the reader. What

then is the connection offered by works like *Beloved* or *The Bluest Eye*? Whereas, Walker's quintessential female characters essentially act as caricatures for various women in society, it seems that Morrison's women are quite effective in their ability to connect specific periods and the existence of women during those periods to the reader. Pecola, Claudia, Frieda, Pilate, Sethe, are excellent figures that help one to understand periodized existence for African American women. From slavery to the depression and even afterwards, the women of Morrison's works shed light on the female psyche; its attempted development as well as its stifling by both society and black men. Yet there is apparent connection between the periodized experiences of these characters and other black female characters expressed through other writings. Therefore, there is proof that the shared existences of these fictitious women are likened to those of the very real women who created them, women who essentially understand their role as a beast of burden.

No matter what background a woman comes from, she is, from birth, oppressed by the very factors upon which her birth negates. The female sphere is designed and constructed by patriarchal forces that extend natural authority to males. In the case of black women (as well as women of color), their male counterparts, though seemingly stripped of any power within the world are given authority over their women. Consequently, a woman must maneuver the social sphere by first overcoming the genetic defects associated with her birth as a female. A woman must know her place or else she may find herself reprimanded or punished for her actions. The act of silencing is another method of oppression that also seeks to punish women. Women, like children, should be seen and not heard right?

The lived experiences of black women are decorously noted by recurring bouts of abuse. However, more often than not the abuse of white women has largely been left unexplored or discussed to the same degree that other women have been. Whereas blacks and other women of color have been vocal about the forms of abuse for which they have suffered, white women's stories of abuse are no less prevalent. The forms by which the abuse takes place may be different, yet that does not dispel the fact that some form of abuse occurs. If one is oppressed, then they are consequently

abused. In this fashion, women are again united by the common association of their experience with abuse, physical and/or psychological but essentially abuse.

The project attempts to study the women characters in the light of both authors. Toni Morrison, being an African – American novelist tries to handle the women characters in her novel '*The Bluest Eye*' as well as Chinua Achebe, being an African novelist tries to do the same in his novel '*Things Fall Apart*'. The study is rather interested in the treatment carried by women characters sometimes being as the prominent characters or oppressed characters than the plot or theme of the both novels. The initial issue finds the expressive way to deal with the novels in the light of major perspective called 'Feminist Literary Criticism'. The project is closely concerned with the mindset of the women characters and the results as well as subjection of them in due the course of time in the aforesaid novels respectively.

The project intends to give new horizons in the field called 'Black Literature' at its disposal. The research takes into account the point of view of an African- American woman novelist being as a 'Woman' towards women characters and on the other hand the point of view of an African 'Male' novelist towards the women characters. The both novelists are considered as Black Novelists or least important according to the mainstream white novelists.

The most important thing about the research is that the literature consists of essences, or what something intrinsically is. We may only know those essences through language, perception, culture of representation, but something remains the same regardless of our knowledge and perception. In the same way the said research attempts to bring those hidden and untouched issues of handling of women characters by the black novelists who live in the different settings of the world.

The major idea in this study is that masculinity in general was active and life- giving, while femininity as passive and receptive. Since long period of time woman is always considered as a cheap subject which is valueless but the research further wants to juxtapose the thinking process of an African- American novelist Toni Morrison and African novelist Chinua

Achebe. Being from the separate continents both are dealing with the same theme but in the process how they stamp themselves as a 'Woman' novelist or 'Male' novelist is noteworthy to study.

The topic is chosen to study the women characters as they are being subjected in real life circumstances, therefore being the mirror of society, literature reflects it skillfully. The study wants to move forward along these lines which talks about how it is hard to be a female and negotiate self love and growing up with a kind of a double jeopardy of being both not at the top because you are a woman as well as you are black. At one point Morrison said she got in more trouble being a woman than being a black. Mostly reading and analytical method will be used to study the topic. The journals and periodicals will be referred for the same.

Comparing these two novels we find more women characters in '*The Bluest Eye*' respectively. God governs the man, man governs the woman, this is the order of nature, but there should be break in this set formula. In the case of black woman, she is 'doubly marginalised' in a way. Toni Morrison falls under Elaine Showalter's term 'Gynocriticism' at her best, but Chinua Achebe is exception to it. Although both novelists are from same race, research intends to study them as different human beings i.e. 'Woman' and 'Man. Certainly, this study will highlight the oppression of woman in literature.

In '*Things Fall Apart*', the reader follows the trials and tribulations of Okonkwo, a tragic hero whose tragic flaw includes the fact that "his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness." (16) For Okonkwo, his father Unoka embodied the epitome of failure and weakness. Okonkwo was taunted as a child by other children when they called Unoka agbala. Agbala could either mean a man who had taken no title or "woman." Okonkwo hated anything weak or frail, and his descriptions of his tribe and the members of his family show that in Ibo society anything strong was likened to man and anything weak to woman. Because Nwoye, his son by his first wife, reminds Okonkwo of his father Unoka he describes him as woman-like. After hearing of Nwoye's conversion to the Christianity, Okonkwo ponders how he, "a flaming fire could have begotten a son like Nwoye,

degenerate and effeminate" (143)? On the other hand, his daughter Ezinma "should have been a boy." (61) He favored her the most out of all of his children, yet "if Ezinma had been a boy [he] would have been happier." (63) After killing Ikemefuna, Okonkwo, who cannot understand why he is so distraught, asks himself, "When did you become a shivering old woman?" (62) When his fellows look as if they are not going to fight against the intruding missionaries, Okonkwo remembers the "days when men were men." (184)

Achebe shows that the Ibo nonetheless assign important roles to women. For instance, women painted the houses of the *egwugwu* (84). Furthermore, the first wife of a man in the Ibo society is paid some respect. This deference is illustrated by the palm wine ceremony at Nwakibie's *obi*. Anasi, Nwakibie's first wife, had not yet arrived and "the others [other wives] could not drink before her" (22). The importance of woman's role appears when Okonkwo is exiled to his motherland. His uncle, Uchendu, noticing Okonkwo's distress, eloquently explains how Okonkwo should view his exile: "A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland." A man has both joy and sorrow in his life and when the bad times come his "mother" is always there to comfort him. Thus comes the saying "Mother is Supreme".

There are constant struggles between gender, identity, commodification, and class. Among the men and women in many African tribes that still exist today, there are divergences, which will always remain intact because of the culture and the way in which they are taught to treat each other. Chinua Achebe wrote the novel, *Things Fall Apart*, which is a great piece of African literature that deals with the Igbo culture, history, and the taking over of African lands by British colonization. The ongoing gender conflict is a prominent theme in *Things Fall Apart* presenting the clash between men and women of the African Igbo society. Throughout history, from the beginning of time to today, women have frequently been viewed as inferior, men's possessions whose sole purpose was to satisfy the men's

needs. Maybe it's because men are physically stronger than women and have always had the ability to control them that way. In *Things Fall Apart*, the Igbo women were perceived as being weak. They received little or no respect in the Igbo society and were harshly abused. The recurring theme of gender conflicts helps drive the novel *Things Fall Apart* by showing how important women are to the men, yet they do not receive the treatment they deserve.

Most so called feminist critiques of Chinua Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart' reduce men to husbands, and women to wives. Even progressive movements like the struggles converging on marriage for same-sex couples, centralize this biblical relationship, and in a biblical way, there's nothing progressive about that. If we sincerely count gender and gender relations, we should count correctly. It may be a Christian fixation that prioritizes the hetero patriarchal marriage over all other relationships as individuals and with kin and Klan. In addition, in the *Things Fall Apart* society, these other relations were contributors to individuals' identities. Certainly, this is riddled with conflict, the same as any relationship faces conflict, and perhaps confrontation. One might even argue that the misogyny in the pre-colonial society was, too, an unresolved conflict—a narrative within a narrative of conflict resolution.

Over four books, Achebe demonstrates a spiral of conflict and resolution, layering these stories, and having them mirror one another. This means that the internal conflicts mirror the ones the characters face in the world, and brilliantly, Achebe breathes life and depth to his characters by demonstrating how their internal dialogue informs their views of themselves as well as their actions. So, fate is a clear matter of cause and effect in the *Things Fall Apart* cosmological world.

This sort of cause and effect relationship towards fate—distinct from what many view as tragic in Greek tragedies in skirting this issue—implies a culture of dialogue, not suppression, or repression. It acknowledges conflict as inevitable to humanity, and conflict provides instances to apply

community-centered dialogue and create widespread growth and change. It therefore implies that an individual has not only the right but also responsibility to express their authentic selves.

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Naturally, this power has the potential to get abused, and there is still social hierarchy, i.e. oppression. But the genius of this book and of the African culture that Achebe describes and provides an outlet for those inevitable conflicts: Dialogue. It's when dominance enters the game and closes the possibility of difference that things really began to fall apart. Certainly, Achebe has clear views about this crisis, but he in no means romanticizes hetero patriarchy. Indeed, his is mainly a treatise on masculinity, as much as gender is necessarily deconstructed in the creative, artistic, and empirical world.

Yet, any critique, which only regards the heterosexual relationship, abandons other areas of care and support. This abandonment is repeated as a self-fulfilling prophecy—abandoning care leads to abandoning care. Hence the love and abandon that dominates our pop music should come to no surprise: Heterosexual romantic love will conquer all. And when that love goes bad—kick him to the curb, cut off his balls, or burn her house down. When conflict arises, they easily abandon one another. All goes as expected.

They came when misfortune dogged their steps or when they had a dispute with their neighbours. They came to discover what the future held for them or to consult the spirits of their departed fathers (Achebe, 2002, p.12). The way into the shrine is a round hole at the side of a hill. Both the devotees and those who come to seek knowledge from the god crawl on their belly “through the hole and found themselves in a dark, endless space in the presence of *Agbala*. No one had ever beheld *Agbala* , except his priestess” (Achebe, 2002, p.12). Unoka, Okonkwo's father is said to have consulted *Agbalato* to know why he was not making it unlike other farmers in his village. In the spirit of their culture various people pay homage through the priestess of *Agbala* to find out a lot of things, which they consider very important in their lives. Their success and their failures are explained by



Agbala. Achebe offers the reader several glimpses of gender-related matters, in actions by individuals as well as the community. In the words of Owomoyela, "Achebe's portrayal of women in his earlier novel is quite sensitive, and that it accurately depicts the regard Umuofia has for women, despite instances of abuse of women by men, which are in any case never applauded or condoned"(Owomoyela, 2002, p.7). Okonkwo commits a taboo by beating his wife during the week of peace and is made to atone for it. In fact, according to the *Ezeani*, the priest of the Earth goddess, Okonkwo is punished for committing two crimes: (i) the beating of his wife which is frowned upon by the society (ii) it is also an offence against the earth goddess who as earlier pointed out is the ultimate source of life. In the encounter between Okonkwo and Obierika after the killing of Ikemefuna, the greatness and power of the goddess come to the fore. According to Obierika: "What you have done will not please the Earth. It is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families" (Achebe, 2002, p.61). The influence and power of the earth goddess is also captured in one of Aniebo's short stories titled "Dilemma" in which Mgbeke the mother of Nwankwo tells her son:"From the day of your birth to your death you'll not escape the earth. If you fly, you'll come back to her. If your head touches the clouds your feet will remain on her. When you die you return to her" (Aniebo, 2000, p.138). Other instances of respect and concern for womanhood include, among others, Nwakibie's regard for Anasi his oldest wife and the younger ones. Okonkwo in his younger days had gone to Nwakibie's house (for Nwakibie was a wealthy man) to beg for yam seedlings. As the custom demanded, he took with him a pot of palm-wine and a cock to Nwakibie. The grace and reverence with which Nwakibie's wives were called in and served the drinks show clearly the level of respect and acceptance accorded women in the novel. Of Anasi, the recording consciousness says thus: Anasi was a middle-aged woman, tall and strongly built. There was authority in her bearing and she looked every inch the ruler of the women folk in a large and prosperous family. She wore the anklet of her husband's titles, which the first wife alone could wear (Achebe, 2002, p.11). Nwoye's mother is seen as a mother of "all". But for her care

and love towards Ikemefuna, the latter would have died-a mere lad plucked from his mother's house to live in an alien environment. Apart from the physical care to Ikemefuna and her children, she provides other psychological and needful services. She is a known creative artist who can tell a lot of good stories to her children. It is these stories of wisdom that draw Nwoye closer to the mother. The traditional wisdom of women in the society of the novel when it comes to activities like marriage, important funeral rites, coronations and other events cannot be wished away. They take time off to teach some moral lessons into the lives of their children by telling them folktale sat nights. Another woman of substance who is also revered in the novel is Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. Agbala, is one of the most famous oracles in the clan. The encounter between Okonkwo and Chielo in Okonkwo's compound is very instructive. Chielo has gone to pick Ezinma (an ogbanje) in the night claiming that Agbala wants to see her. In spite of Okonkwo's appeals that she should come back the following morning since Ezinma is sleeping, Chielo ignores him and her voice "was as clear as metal". She carries Ezinma away in the dead of the night warning Okonkwo, "Beware, Okonkwo". Chielo's role in this particular night and her activities as the priestess of Agbala demonstrate her duty as the custodian of culture and tradition. In terms of public service and spiritedness she presents herself a good states woman devoted to the service of humanity in the society. She has a cultural sense of purpose and dignity. Many men of Okonkwo's stature cannot stop her from carrying out her duty to humanity. Her efforts in the dead of the night when others (male and female) are enjoying their sleep are aimed at keeping Ezinma alive. In Igbo cosmology, as Kolawole has correctly noted, Nneka "Mother is supreme" underlies the attitude of respectability to womanhood. "When the social edifice disintegrates, when a man is dishonoured, disgraced, or exiled... he takes refuge in his mother's home or village" (Kolawole, 1997, p. 63). Okonkwo is banished to Mbanta, his mother's land because the crime he committed is against the earth goddess by inadvertently killing a clansman. Okonkwo's mother's land provides spiritual succour to him while on exile. It should also be remembered that Okonkwo before the destruction

of his property had been known for his fame and achievements throughout the nine villages and even beyond. For Okonkwo, the crime and the subsequent humiliation reduce him to the status of a pauper. We note with emphasis that but for his mother's place Okonkwo had lost all hope of survival and reintegration. It is also in recognition of the place and value of motherhood that Okonkwo names his first child born him in exile, Nneka. As Uchendu, Okonkwo's maternal uncle informs his children and Okonkwo after the latter and family have come to live with him in Mbanta, when there is sorrow and bitterness, a man finds refuge in his motherland: It's true that a child belongs to its father. But when a father beats his child, it seeks sympathy in its mother's hut. A man belongs to its fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. (Achebe, 2002, p.94).

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## CONCLUSION

The Black Feminist Movement was formed to address the ways sexism, racism, and classism influence the lives of black women whose needs were ignored by the black men of the Black Liberation Movement and white women in the Women's Movement. The movement has spawned several important organizations which are committed to the struggle against all forms of oppression. They have created a unique model for cross-class organization in which the needs of the poor are not usurped by the needs of the middle-class and the wealthy. The effectiveness of the movement has not been uniform in the white feminist and black communities. Many white women in the feminist movement have acknowledged their racism and made attempts to address it in anti-racist training seminars. Feminist theory now includes an analysis of the way race, class, sexuality, as well as gender influence women's lives. The women's studies departments of many prominent universities and colleges now have courses which focus on black women's writings and history, in the United States and in other countries. However, in the black community, the movement has not been as effective. The rhetoric of current black liberation movements still fails to adequately address issues which affect black women. Awareness of sexism has increased within the black academic community but the popular culture (especially that which primarily involves black men, such as the rap music industry) continues to be extremely sexist and misogynist.

There are several challenges facing the Black Feminist Movement. Most importantly, the movement must find a way to broaden support among black and Third World women. Education about the true nature and goal of the movement as well as resources and strategies for change must reach the women who have little or no access to the movement. There is a need for the development of mentor relationships between black women scholar/activists and young black students, both female and male. Individual struggle must be connected with a larger feminist movement to effect change, and so that new black feminists need not reinvent theory or search again for history that was never recorded. There is also a need to develop black female subjectivity to

address black women as the primary audience of theoretical and critical black feminism. Black women and men need to develop a critical style which encourages further dialogue and development of ideas rather than merely "trashing" and silencing new black feminist voices. Respect for fellow black women must be developed and guarded in spite of the sexist, racist, and classist "cultural baggage" with which all Americans are weighed down. Differences among black women must be acknowledged and affirmed, rather than ignored. Finally, alliances must be strengthened between the black feminist movement and its parent movements. The black feminist movement must hold the current male-dominated black liberation movement accountable for its sexism and at the same time work with the movement to end the oppression of black people. As well, there must be a working dialogue between the white-dominated feminist movement and the black feminist movement to continue to develop theory and action which strives toward the end of sexism. The power and influence that each of these groups has cannot be ignored. As one NBFO member has said, "White women are our natural allies; we can't take down the system alone."

In traditional African society like Umuofia, the female sex is respected and its roles highly esteemed. Contrary to many unfounded assumptions, Achebe does not see them as nonentity. In marriage, a man is made to pay substantially as a way of showing the value of what he seeks after. It is in that context that we can appreciate the marriage between Ibe and Akweke. Women are treated as Amazons of culture and tradition.

They are perceptive and competent thereby complementing the efforts of men in the society; a mandatory element for collective survival. Achebe does not portray women in a patronizing manner but clearly depicts the reality of the African society which recognizes the patriarchal and matricentric units of the society. Anyone who understands the Igbo philosophy and the nuances of 'Things Fall Apart' will realise that Achebe demonstrates convincingly that women are considered very important in the affairs of the society he portrays in spite of the patriarchal subjection of

women by the like of Okonkwo. Achebe's feminism is womanist, non sexist and balanced. Both sexes are important to each other and for the survival of the society. Roles are assigned to each other in such a manner that allows for mutual respect and understanding. This is in accordance with the nature of his society. It is therefore a misreading of Achebe for critics like Peterson to think that the novelists "quite contented" with the inequality of the sexes.

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