



QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF PAULE MARSHALL'S BROWN GIRL, BROWNSTONES AND PRAISESONG FOR THE WIDOW

B. Bhagya Laxmi

Research Scholar, Department of English, Osmania University Hyderabad.

Abstract

The topic of this paper was the quest for identity in Paule Marshall's Brown Girl, Brownstones, and Praise song for the Widow novels. Paule Marshall's work has had a significant impact on the development of current African American literature and philosophy. Her works about the intersection of race, class, and gender have made her famous. Her writing encourages readers to think about how society constructs difference. Her writing has received accolades for its poetic prose and perceptive social analysis, and she has received numerous awards for her contributions to the arts. Marshall's work is worth exploring for anybody interested in Afro American writing, even if she is not as well-known as some other writers in the field. Race, ethnicity, country, religion, gender, and sexual orientation are just a few of the characteristics that play a role in identity creation. The purpose of this paper was to look at how American women writers of African heritage define identity. It focuses on how these authors describe their identities in connection to their racial and ethnic backgrounds in particular.

Key Words: *Quest for Identity, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds.*

Introduction

Paule Marshall's work has had a significant impact on the development of current African American literature and philosophy. Her works about the intersection of race, class, and gender have made her famous. Her writing encourages readers to think about how society constructs difference. Marshall teaches creative writing at Princeton University in addition to her literary accomplishments. Paule Marshall is an African-American author who has written extensively on the subject. President Barack Obama awarded her the National Medal of Arts in 2016 after a long and successful career as a writer. Marshall stresses the importance of self-awareness and historical learning in fostering racial reconciliation and growth in her work. "There is no greater power than that of tale," she has been quoted as saying. Her work gives a unique perspective on race relations in America, as well as significant insights on how we as a country may move ahead. We encourage you to dig further into her books to learn more about this pivotal character in American history. Paule Marshall's work is significant in the subject of Afro-American literature, and her novels provide readers a unique viewpoint on race relations in the United States. Her writing has received accolades for its poetic prose and perceptive social analysis, and she has received numerous awards for her contributions to the arts. Marshall's work is worth exploring for anybody interested in Afro American writing, even if she is not as well-known as some other writers in the field.

Definition of identity in American, in African Americans women writers

People might ascribe to a multitude of distinct identities in today's world. Race, ethnicity, country, religion, gender, and sexual orientation are just a few of the characteristics that play a role in identity creation. The definition of identity as defined by American women writers of African heritage was the subject of this chapter. It focuses on how these authors describe themselves in relation to their racial and ethnic backgrounds. Provide a concept of identity in American culture, with a focus on African-



American women writers, in this chapter. The book then delves into how these authors define identity and how it affects their lives and work. We can obtain a better understanding of what it means to be black and female in America today by understanding how these writers see identity.

“Identity, as Stuart Hall asserts, is shaped at the unstable point where the „unspeakable“ stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture.” Psychologically viewed, Identity refers to personal and group identifications. Additionally, identity is concerned with self-definition, and the self is conceptualized as a fairly stable, internal entity that is rarely modified to fit the context. In fact, “the self is a core sense of who one is. That is, you are who you are; shifting is indicative.

Quest For Unity - Brown Girl, Brownstones

The protagonist's journey from estrangement to unification is depicted in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*. It is a torturous re-definition of self. Selina Boyce is divided between her father's passion for Barbados and her mother's determination to achieve the American dream in the storey, which depicts a clash of cultures. In actuality, it is a novel addressing a variety of topics. "The private and general struggles for survival and clash of values (material versus spiritual, pragmatism versus dreaming, old versus young, white versus black); the physical and imaginative coming of age of a young Barbadian girl caught in the tangled web of Barbadian New York life," according to Kimberly W. Benston.

"A community powerful in its cohesion and demanding in its admittance standards, a group set against a world that has prejudiciously formed its strategy for survival and improvement," writes Selina of the community in which she finds herself. It can be claimed that the novel is divided into two principal plots. The first is, as previously said, the domestic feud between Silla and Deighton Boyce. It takes up the first three chapters of the book. The second storey follows Selina's growth as a person and her independence, which is highlighted in the final section. The presence of Selina is what ties the two storylines together. The novel begins with a description of the Brownstone houses :

In the somnolent July afternoon, the unbroken line of brownstone houses down the long Brooklyn street resembled an army massed at attention. They were all one uniform red-brown stone. All with high massive stone stoops and black iron-grille fences staving off the sun. All draped in ivy as though mourning. Their somber facades, indifferent to the summer's heat and passion, faced a park while their backs reared dark against the sky. They were only three or four stories tall - squat - yet they gave the impression of formidable height.

The community oozes wholeness and strength in its solidarity, shared heritage, and colour, as shown in the line above: "They were just three or four floors tall - squat - yet they gave the sense of daunting height" (emphasis added). However, despite the fact that "each house had something distinctively its own," all dwellings "shared the same brown monotony," according to the next line. The ambiguity in their design seemed to doom them all."

Selina, "a ten-year-old girl with scuffed legs and a body as straggly as the clothes she wore," is found in one of these houses. Whites used to live in the Browns tone houses. The West Indians "slowly edged their way in" after they left (4). Selina imagines herself as a member of the white family who were the house's first occupants in the silence that surrounds her:

She stood, her arms outstretched in greeting, and the white family who had lived here previously, whom the old woman upstairs had always mentioned, glided up the stairs with faint footfalls. Their



white hands traced the bannister, and their gentle whispers pleaded with her to breathe life into them. As they surrounded her, fusing with her, she was no longer a black girl alone on the top of an old home, but one of them, imbued with their beauty and gentility. She threw her head back till it trembled triumphantly on the stalk of her neck, then swept downstairs to the parlour floor, holding aloft her imaginary gown.

As a result, Selina pretends to be someone other than herself, but when she walks in front of a mirror, she is once again herself. Eugenia Collier has pointed out that "Children approaching adolescence frequently fantasise about being closer to their heart's desire. However, a black child's wish to be regarded as a part of white society eloquently expresses the estrangement caused by discrimination. It represents a split personality. It indicates a particularly harmful type of alienation: alienation from one's own self."

The novel's theme of Selina's search for herself is hinted at in the first few chapters. Selina, while being younger than her sister Ina, appears to be more involved in her life. In many ways, the two females are diametrically opposed. Selina is aggressive, iron-willed, and arrogant, whereas Ina is meek, defeatist, placid, and quiet. "Ina was tiny but gentle, gliding gracefully through puberty, spared its discomfort," unlike Selina. The gap in their attitudes is evident from the very first conversation between the two sisters. When she wakes up Ina, who would never be fit for life's rigours, and tells her she is an unattractive baby, Ina responds,

"Look who's talking about somebody being ugly as a baby I You was ugly then, you, re uglier now and you'll get worse". Thus she fails in her attempt to disturb Ina's emotional composure. Her immaturity compounds her isolation from her family.

Selina's father is the only member of her family she likes, perhaps because he, too, is a dreamer. However, whereas Deighton wishes to return to Barbados, Selina wishes to move away from her black roots and blend in with whites. In fact, a fascinating triangle between the father, mother, and daughter exists. As previously stated, Deighton longs to return to Barbados, Selina wishes to blend in with whites, and Silla accepts reality and wishes to settle in New York. Silla is of the ground, but Deighton cannot comprehend or accept the status imposed on him by persecution. Deighton, in Silla's opinion, is a man who "He is oblivious to his own thoughts. He is always on the lookout for something huge, and he is hoping he will not discover it ". Silla, on the other hand, is one of those cautious, wrathful women whose eyes scorched, searched, and laid bare, whose tongues slashed the world in unrelenting suspicion. They rode the train to Flatbush and Sheepshead Bay every morning to scrub floors. The fortunate ones had steady madams, while the rest strolled those clean blocks or stood on corners, each with her apron and working shoes in a bag under her arm, waiting for someone to offer her a day's employment. On their walk to school, white children would laugh at their blackness and shout "nigger," but the Barbadian women would suck their teeth and reject them. Their only thinking was of the "few raw-mout Pennies" that would finally "purchase house" at the end of the day.

Quest for purity praise song for the widow

Widow's adoration song examines the relationship between personal and documented history, as well as how it influences collective cultural beliefs,' says the author. This novel, set in the United States and the Caribbean, dramatises the links between Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean mythology and uses them as the foundation for Avey's judgement of her existence. Praise song, the novel's title, reminds us of the characters' African origins while also indicating that ritual is central to the storey. "Marshall's Praise song insists that New World black rituals are living and functional, and that they contain an essential



truth that, beyond rationality, the body and spirit must not be split by the 'shameful stone of false values,' that we must feel, with humility, 'the nurturing ground from which (we) have sprung and to which (we) can always turn for sustenance,'" writes Barbara T. Christian.

Avey's fake personality is dissipated as a result of her involvement in the Carriacou Excursion, a group excursion to a small Caribbean island where individuals reconnect with their ethnic roots. They pay respect to their forefathers and mothers by performing the Big Drum Ceremony and singing the Beg Pardon Song. Avey finds her connection to the Arada Nation on Carriacou and reclaims her true name, Avatara, for the first time "It is via nommo, the correct naming of a thing, that it comes into life in African cosmology. Avey transforms into herself after she learns her full name."

Avey Johnson, the protagonist, is a sixty-four-year-old black widow. She gladly boards the Bianca Pride, a luxury cruise ship, for a trip to the Caribbean, but she soon has unexplainable discomfort and restlessness. Avey acts strangely, and her friend Thomasina Moore makes a witty remark about it: She spent the entire day alone. She did not show up till supper time and then barely touched the food on her plate. I have not spoken to anyone in a long time. I should have seen something was not right. And now, this morning, she is all dressed up and ready to leave the ship for good. Like this 1 all of a sudden And without a single word on why! 'I can not put my finger on it,' she says. 'Who does she think she is fooling?' Someone would need a good motive to accomplish something like this. No, something is at the root of this shambles.

Troubled by dreams and discomfort Avey decides to return to the security of her suburban home in White Plains, New York. She simply expresses her desire to spend the rest of her vacation at home. Caught in the riptide of her anger, Thomasina cries out, "That's why if I've said it once I've said it a thousand times: it. don't ...pay. to Go...no... place. with niggers! They'll mess us ever'time!". Avey fails to give the reason for her quitting as "it was just that something - she couldn't say what – had come over her the past couple of days. She couldn't explain it. She could make no sense of it".

The author adds, "Widow's adoring song investigates the relationship between personal and documented history, as well as how it shapes collective cultural views." The linkages between Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean mythology are dramatised in this novel set in the United States and the Caribbean, and they serve as the foundation for Avey's assessment of her own existence. The title of the work, Praise Song, alluded to the characters' African roots while also implying that ritual is crucial to the storey. "Marshall's Praise song insists that New World black rituals are living and functional, and that they contain essential truths that, beyond reason, the body and spirit must not be split by the 'shameful stone of false values,' that we must feel, with humility, 'the nurturing ground from which (we) have sprung and to which (we) can always turn for sustenance,'" writes Barbara T. Christian. Avey's phoney identity fades as a result of her participation in the Carriacou Excursion, a group trip to a small Caribbean island where people reconnect with their ethnic roots. They execute the Big Drum Ceremony and sing the Beg Pardon Song to honour their forefathers and moms. On Carriacou, Avey discovers her connection to the Arada Nation and for the first time claims her full name, Avatara. "In African cosmology, nommo, or the correct naming of a thing, is how it comes to existence. After learning her entire name, Avey evolves into herself."



The protagonist, Avey Johnson, is a sixty-four-year-old black widow. She eagerly boards the luxury cruise ship Bianca Pride for a trip to the Caribbean, but she quickly has mysterious uneasiness and restlessness. Avey behaves strangely, prompting a funny remark from her friend Thomasina Moore: She was alone for the entire day. She did not arrive until after supper and barely touched the food on her plate. In a long time, I have not spoken to anyone. Something was not quite right, and I should have noticed it. She is all dressed up and ready to depart the ship for good this morning. Suddenly, I like this one. And without a single explanation! 'I do not know what it is,' she says. 'Does she think she is fooling anyone?' Someone would need a compelling reason to do something like this. Something is at the heart of this catastrophe, no doubt.

Conclusion

Finally, "brown girl, brown stone" by Paule Marshall is a narrative about celebrating the widow and her strength. The narrator sets out on a quest to find a brown girl who will lavish praise on the widow as she deserves. The storyteller takes the perfect girl to the widow's house and praises her for everything she has accomplished. This storey teaches us the value of giving credit where credit is due and appreciating women's power. Finally, Paule Marshall's brown girl, brown stone is a study of the interplay of power between races and genders. The novel is written in the form of a series of letters between a black woman and a white female acquaintance. Selina, the heroine, honours the widow for her bravery in the face of prejudice and racism. Selina also considers her own experiences as a black woman in the United States. This novel provides readers with a unique viewpoint on race relations in America, as well as the force of solidarity among women of many races. "Brown girl, brown stone," by Paule Marshall, is a narrative about the fortitude and endurance of black women. It demonstrates how these ladies have managed to thrive in the face of adversity. The storey also inspires people to follow in the widow's footsteps and be resilient in the face of adversity.

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