

Intersectionality in Urmila Pawar's The Weave of My Life: A Memoir of Dalit Woman and Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye

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Abstract

This study focuses on the intersectionality of Urmila Pawar's The Weave of My Life: A Memoir of Dalit Woman and Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye. With these two works, the experiences of Indian and African-American women and the roles of caste, race, gender, and class in constructing them are brought out. This paper aims to scrutinize how both authors use their literary voices to express their experiences in a prejudiced world. White domination in America can influence the white ideology of beauty in African-American society. Correspondingly, upper caste domination in India can influence the ideology of superiority in Indian society. This study attempts to uncover the intersecting oppression of race, gender, and caste in these works and to explain how Indian and African-American women survive with oppression and exploitation. In this sense, this study also plays a part in having a better understanding and recognizing the significance of Pawar's and Morrison's work to the present-day discussions on intersectionality to the consideration of identity and justice.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Caste, Race, Gender.

Introduction:

Indian caste-based society experiences oppression as the impact of the dominance of the upper class. African American society experiences the same oppression as the impact of the

White Beauty Hegemony. Holding such values makes Indian and African-American women feel inferior and hate physical characteristics that are far from their own identities. African-American women who have darker skin colors experience the hardest oppression because they also become victims of oppression committed by some circles of African-American society, which tend to consider them unequal. This reflects the complexity of the oppression experienced by African American women. Without self-consciousness, African-American women can become trapped in values that deteriorate their self-pride in their identity. This paper analyzes the intersectionality of caste, race, and gender, highlighting the multiple forms of oppression and discrimination faced by Dalit and Black women. Both authors focused on women's experiences and their struggles for justice and equality.

Research Method:

This study uses a qualitative approach with a content analysis method to explore how Urmila Pawar's The Weave of My Life: A Memoir of Dalit Woman and Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye serves as a tool for social oppressive structures related to caste, race, and gender. The data used in this research are secondary qualitative data consisting of primary texts. The data were contextualized with the literature on social justice movements to examine the relevance of Morrison's narrative to contemporary social challenges. This paper reveals how Toni Morrison and Urmila Pawar critiqued modern society's structure and served as relevant pedagogical tools in academic discussions on race, gender, and social justice in society.

Intersectionality:

Kimberle Crenshaw, a prominent American civil rights advocate and a leading scholar of critical race theory coined the term *intersectionality* in her 1989 article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." (Britanica) In essence, intersectionality is "a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power." Kimberle Crenshaw, 2015

The concept of intersectionality addresses experiences of oppression that cannot be understood as the result of ordinary patterns of discrimination. It focuses on "interlocking systems of power." It affects people from marginalized groups by studying various categories of power, such as the hegemonic concepts of motherhood, beauty standards, and masculinity present in society.

The term intersectionality refers to social work and community organization by providing affording insights into the diverse experiences and needs of individuals belonging to marginalized populations.

Dalit Feminism:

“The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman’s Memoir” is a prominent effort of Urmila Pawar’s life experiences, how she spans her childhood in a small village in Maharashtra to her adult life in Mumbai. Urmila Pawar, as a Dalit woman, faced discrimination and oppression at various levels, including within her own community, as well as in a larger society. The memoir explores her personal and political journeys. She faced various challenges, obstacles, and her own voice as writer and activist. Urmila Pawar focuses on the complexities and touches of Dalit feminist politics through her memoir and the ways in which caste, gender, and class intersect to shape the lives of Dalit women in India. She also encouraged the importance of education and empowerment in overcoming the obstacles faced, especially by Dalit women, and the role of literature in creating a more inclusive and just society. She portrays the multiple layers of discrimination and marginalization that she faced, both from a larger society and within her own community. She shows how her husband and other male family members would physically and emotionally abused her. Urmila Pawar, as a woman, not only suffered economic exploitation, but also faced a barrier in the education process. She, as a Dalit girl, was not encouraged or allowed to attend school and had to fight to get an education. She faced discrimination and prejudice from teachers and classmates when she tried to engage in such activities. She also experienced sexual harassment and assault from men in her community, as well as from higher-caste men in positions of power.

Black Feminism:

Toni Morrison’s works have portrayed black feminist thought significantly, particularly in explaining the complex relationship between race, gender, and identity through the experiences of black women in America. Morrison portrays narratives that highlight the experiences of black women living under multiple pressures, both from systemic racism and sexism stemming from patriarchal structures in her works. Morrison focuses on black women’s experiences, which differ substantially from those of white women and therefore require a specialized analysis that focuses on the intersections between race, class, and gender.

Kimberle Crenshaw, a legal scholar, introduced the concept of intersectionality. She was also inspired by Morrison’s narratives, which explored the intersection of race and gender. Crenshaw emphasizes the importance of viewing oppression from an intersectional perspective, where black women face unique forms of oppression because they are at the intersection of racism and sexism. In her seminal work on intersectionality, Crenshaw denotes the idea that legal and social structures often overlook the complexity of black women’s experiences, which do not just deal with one form of oppression. Morrison depicts the experiences of black women facing gender- and race-based violence through her works, which emphasizes Crenshaw’s argument about the need for a more holistic approach to understanding the injustices experienced by black women.

Morrison represents a cultural deficiency in society, mainly through images, sight, or visuals. This condition, which black sees and perceives, is the definition of propriety and normalcy. It is fostered by the presentation of white beauty as an ideal. The title “The Bluest Eye” is both telling and eye-catching because the novel is about blacks and blue eyes, which, in a strict sense, is a physical attribute of whites. Morrison raised black women’s experiences in America through her literary lens, and formed an intellectual foundation for black feminists to develop more inclusive and thoughtful theories. By demonstrating the complexities of black women’s experiences under the dual pressures of racism and sexism, Morrison helps concrete the way for discussions on intersectionality and expands our understanding of how black women’s identities and experiences continue to be shaped by multiple social forces.

Conclusion:

Bluest Eye explores the impact of systematic racism, sexism, and oppression on black women in the United States. The novel focuses on how race-based beauty standards created by white society undermine black women’s self-perception. The main character of the novel Pecola experiences an identity crisis due to the internalization of these beauty standards. The novel illustrates the traumas; both historical ones, such as slavery, and more contemporary ones, such as social marginalization, continue to shape black women’s identity in society. In autobiography, *The Weave of My Life: A Memoir of Dalit Woman* Urmila Pawar portrays several personal experiences that highlight the ways in which Dalit women fight for justice and equality. Urmila Pawar’s memoir shows the multiple forms of suffering she has experienced as a Dalit woman in India. She demonstrates how patriarchy and caste intersect to create a unique form of oppression for Dalit women. It helps as a powerful testimony to the resilience and strength of Dalit women, who continue to fight for justice and equality through various forms. Autobiography depicts the ways in which Dalit women resist and challenge the social, economic, and political structures that perpetuate their marginalization.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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