

Marginalisation and Prosocial Behaviour- the Clarion Call by Gloria Naylor in *Bailey's Cafe*

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ABSTRACT

*Marginalisation is the process of not allowing a group of people to participate in the society. They play their roles and find their identity with denied freedom. Black women's experiences in America regarding work, family, and community, their grounding in traditional Afro- American culture suggest that Afro-American women, as a group, experience a world different from that of those who are not black and female. Even long after the abolition of slavery, the complex issues of colour, race, and gender remain the deciding factor in treatment of black people. The colour difference remains a singularly significant rationale for discrimination between the 'lighter races and the darker races' of humanity all over the world. W.E.B. Dubois has observed in his work *The Souls of Black Folk*, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour-line, - the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (14). For black women, the colour line further becomes an edged weapon with gender bias and class for their oppression.*

Black women have always suffered because of being black, women, and poor within and outside black society. White man's exploitative attitude toward them and black man's belief in the concept of Anglo-Saxon beauty have forced black women to lead a life of deprivation and oppression. It results in a life full of miseries and humiliation. Factors like poverty, economic dependence, and racial discrimination have contributed toward low self-esteem and inferiority complex in black women. There is discrimination against them in educational institutions, in jobs and in wages. They are the lowest at the economic and social ladder. Black women are depicted as what they are not, but appropriated by various groups of society in their own ways. There are physical, moral, and spiritual pressures on them. However, some of them show courage and fight back with all their might to resist all kinds of exploitation. Despite being partly defeated, these women never feel totally crushed. With self-respect and courage, they try to save themselves from their tormentors and develop self-consciousness.

Key words: Marginalisation, prosocial Behaviour. Hope, Courage, Suffering, Exploitation, Way station.

Gloria Naylor's *Bailey's Cafe* (1992) depicts lonely, uprooted, and suffering women for no fault of theirs. Various sections reveal the mood for revealing pain and agony of the characters. Names such as "Maestro, if you please" calls attention from the reader and tell about the person or conductor who is set to tell the tales of sadness and pain. Other sections are also named 'Sadie', 'Eve's song', 'Mary (Take one)', and 'Mary (Take Two)' preparing the reader for the pain and dilemma the women characters go through because of racism and sexism.

The term Marginalization can replace the Prosocial behaviour. C.Daniel Baston, a psychology researcher, introduced it. Prosocial behaviour fosters positive traits beneficial to the society. It depends on the situational and individual factors. It is generating a kind of help without expecting anything in return. The characters in Naylor's *Bailey's Cafe* depict the need for helping each other whenever there is a need. The principle of charity highlights the characters Sadie, Eve, Nadine, and Bailey.

The novel takes place in New York. It is a collection of tales with a magical cafe set up. The novel opens with Bailey- the maestro to narrate the stories of women and men visiting Bailey's inn. The cafe is the way station to

give hope for its visitors who come there with hopelessness. Later, the sharing and caring atmosphere provided by Bailey and his wife Nadine, Eve makes them all redeem their self. The journey of hope starts without any expectation in return.

Eve is a customer in the cafe, but as administrator of the boarding house, she holds more supremacy within this world than anyone else seems to. She makes actual decisions about who may stay, and who will go. Eve's character is that of a well travelled and essentially a self-made woman. Naylor cements Eve's role as the cornerstone for the women who find her boarding house. Because of her experiences, she is able to give in abundance without expecting anything in return.

Sadie, the next customer of the cafe, works hard to please her mother. She cleans her house keeps everything clean, which was never appreciated, but resulted in disappointments. She accepted her life with confidence, marries an old man, and left alone after his death on the streets. Her life changes when Iceman gives her a new life in the cafe whereby he wants to marry her and take her off the streets. "She knew this dear sweet man was offering hr the moon, but she could give him these stars" (78).

The sufferings of black women portrayed in *Bailey's Cafe* are common problems in America but belong to different walks of life, their status in the family and society. Father, son, and other male members of their community judge them; hence, their individual self crushes the confidence because of the behaviour of male members of their community. The sufferers come to Bailey's inn to find solace. The Cafe offers its customers a menu of indifferent food items except on weekends. The inn is only a way station. Eve's boarding surrounded by wild flowers and it tells the story of different women who stay there and have their own totemic bloom. Eve as the proprietor of the inn is very mysterious and powerful with her motives. The second powerful woman in the novel is Nadine, Bailey's wife. Her brother sold Eve's boarder Esther at the age of twelve to a man, locked her in the cellar. The next character Sadie works hard and cleans her home every time to satisfy her mother ends up her life as a whore. Mary in Take one chapter is a beautiful girl used by men, in order to punish her she disfigures her face with a beer -bottle opener.

Jesse Bell is disgusted with her husband's class-conscious uncle Eli. She turned to drugs and made her way to Bailey's door. Mariam, was a Jew from Addis Ababa to New York who came to Eve's boarding carrying a new life and hope to the dead end street. The self of women in Bailey's Cafe undergoes changes and it brings them a space for curing their souls.

Bailey's Cafe highlights Naylor's expansive vision of humanity beyond racial, gender, and ethnic boundaries as she recreates life with hope and redemption. It is the novel of new beginning. Naylor dares to engage important issues affecting the women of colour worldwide and thus rescues the stories of women from silence and unconsciousness. At a time when women across the globe are experiencing unprecedented oppression, Naylor's voice is a clarion that demands society to hear.

Works Cited

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