



THE SEEKING OF LOVE IN ZORA NEALE HURSTON'S *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*

VISHNUPRIYA. S.

Assistant Professor,
Department of English,
Thassim Beevi Abdul Kader College for Women,
Kilakarai, Ramnad.
(TN) INDIA

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this paper is to trace the value of love through the story of Janie's Crawford, the novel's protagonist. In Janie's plight towards liberty and recognition, love and happiness, Hurston reflects the colored women's thrives and experiences in the American black society. Janie, who has the concept that marriage must involve love and happiness, goes for a search of unconditional and fulfilling love which she finally finds with her third husband Tea Cake, but only after she has passed through the wasteland of being a possession before entering the pear tree garden of her actualized dreams of love and happiness.

Their Eyes Were Watching God examines with a great deal of the struggle of a black woman named Janie Crawford to escape from the traditional concept about love and marriage and the narrow social restrictions of her class and sex. The novel is of four periods; each one reflects a stage in Janie's life. The first shows Janie's life with Nanny, her grandmother who rears her up. The second period is about her life with Logan Killicks, her first husband, while the third is about Janie and Joe Starks, her second husband. The last period shows Janie's love story with Tea Cake, her third husband.

Nanny, Janie's grandmother who raised her up, was an ex-slave. In her youth, she dreamt to be a free woman and have a family and a house of her own but she couldn't achieve this dream. Her daughter Leafy, whose father is Nanny's white master, was her only hope to make

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a respectable family and make Nanny's dream true. But Leafy was raped by her school teacher and the product was Janie. Leafy began drinking and stayed out of home at night then she vanished. Nanny's disappointments made her feel that Janie is her last hope to marry a respectable man and be a housewife.

This atmosphere Janie lives in creates her sense of difference and rebellion. She yearns for love and happiness because she does not live in a typical family nor sees a normal marital relationship in her mother or grandmother's life. That is why, she longs for a comfortable life and idealistic marriage relationship. When Janie becomes a teenager at the age of sixteen, she starts to think about her individuality and independence and yearns for the loving mate who completes her. She feels that she needs someone who gives her love and intimacy.

One day, Janie meets a boy from the neighborhood named Johnny Taylor. They talk for a while then when he leaves, he kisses Janie. Nanny sees them from the window. This action frightens Nanny to the extent that she decides to marry Janie off as soon as possible. She scolds Janie and keeps her at home as a punishment. This shows that Nanny objects to any hope for Janie to love or make romance. Nanny does not hate Janie but her love for Janie is a protective love. She wants to protect Janie and guarantee her future.

Nanny prevents Janie from going out or speaking with any man since she has met Johnny. She insists that Janie marry Logan Killicks, a widower who has asked for her hand, to guarantee her a respectable life. Logan is an unattractive old farmer but he owns a house and sixty acres. Nanny finds him a safe shelter for her granddaughter. Janie objects to this marriage and pleads Nanny to let her wait. Janie's concept of marriage contrasted Nanny's concept mentioned before. She wants a romantic marriage which comes out of love and intimacy. Janie submits to Nanny's will and marries Logan though she does not love him believing that love will come eventually after marriage. She accepts the traditional concept of marriage waiting for love and happiness to come.

Logan confines Janie's freedom and neglects her existence in his life. He is not suitable for her neither in age nor in thoughts. His everyday concern is to work, eat and sleep. He does not flatter Janie nor cares about her shape or interests. Janie realizes that Logan is not the love she is looking for. One day while working in the field, Janie meets a handsome man named Jody Starks who came down the way from Georgia and made a stop near Logan's field asking for some water. Janie brings him some water and they make a speech. Joe Starks, or Jody as people used to call him, is a young man in average size and dark complexion.

Janie's awareness that this marriage will not bring love makes her realize that her dreams can only be fulfilled through her own pursuit of them. She assesses the end of their relationship



and decides to assert herself and elope with Joe. The next day, Janie arranges to meet Joe secretly and travel with him. She leaves Logan believing that Joe will guarantee her love and happiness.

Days passed and Joe proves himself to be strong and trusted on man, for these merits, people elect him the mayor of Florida. Joe wants Janie to obey him, complete his orders and bear his jealousy. Her every day job is to stand in the store and follow Joe's orders. She is sure now that Joe's love for her is a love of possession and not an ideal love. Seventeen years has passed and Janie pretends compliance and patience but she hides her pains inside. Janie tells Joe that his promises about love and happiness all went in vain. He is so busy with his wealth and status to care about his wife. The next time Janie speaks her feelings to Jody, he is on his death bed. He dies listening to Janie's voice. Joe dies and his death marks a new beginning for Janie.

Janie is still longing for the man who satisfies her spiritual and sexual desires. She re-examines her thoughts and finds that Nanny's concept was wrong because she had seek superficial values like wealth, security and status instead of the values of love and happiness. Days passed, in her store she met a new person who is Tea Cake. His presence ends Janie's long time restlessness and boredom. She feels that this is a new experience in her life. She has never met a person who has an interest in her as a person.

Tea Cake is everything that Logan and Joe could not have been. Tea Cake keeps on going to the store and accompanies Janie to her house every day. Janie tries to keep their relation formal so as not to commit faults and fall in a faked relation again. Janie decides to be formal with him and see if he is after her wealth. Tea Cake shows no signs of greed but care and love for Janie. Later they both fell in Love and married eventhough many people were against their wish.

Janie feels real love for the first time in her life. Tea Cake and Janie's relationship exhibits the qualities of the ideal marriage. Only now she feels a strong and crushing love. She is not controlled by a domineering husband. She finds the true love and the ideal marriage she has longed for. She trusts Tea Cake and tells him about her wealth in the bank. He promises that she will never touch them as long as he is alive. He helps her achieve love and happiness in marriage, a search she has been through from her teen age. Tea Cake assures Janie that he would love her forever. Days passed, Tea Cake was in his death bed and though death has taken Tea Cake from her, but he is still alive metaphorically and his memory surrounds her.



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