

# Free gender issues in alice walker's beauty: when the other dancer is the self es...

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [Beauty and Woman:](#) \n \t
2. [The Gendered based Violence](#) \n \t
3. [Appearance and Attributes](#) \n \t
4. [Work Cited](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

As stated by Simone De Beauvoir ‘ One is not born woman, but becomes one’, (Beauvoir 295) gender is a socially constructed phenomenon rather than the biological phenomenon. Alice Baker, The true beauty lies in the self realization. It is not limited to the outer part or the bodily features of the woman, but beauty lies deep in the heart of the woman, in her self-realization. Outer beauty is temporary, whereas inner beauty is long lasting. Alice Walker in “ Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self” conveys the real definition of beauty describes the gender issues through apparently look small and insignificance, but they play crucial role in imbibing the gender discrimination in human mind. The story Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self is an autobiography of Walker. She narrates her childhood, and a horrible accident she had to undergo. She tells the reader that she was like ‘ Daddy’s girl.” She had been treated equally, but still the readers come to know the gender discrimination. The womanhood is imbibed in the girl at her tender age, and in her choice of toys also. It is a perception that the boys should always play with gun, and the girls should play with dolls. We seldom see boys playing with dolls. Though Walker explains that she was a tomboy

in her childhood, she was indirectly warned by the people around her that she was a girl, and she should choose the toy that is a girl's toy. ' Because I am a girl, I do not get a gun. Instantly I am relegated to the position of Indian. Now there appears a great distance between us. They shoot and shoot at everything with their new guns. I try to keep up with my bow and arrows.'

Sacrifice is another attribute associated with a woman. In every gender discriminated society, it is the rule that women are born to sacrifice for the sake of men, sometimes he is brother, and sometimes he is husband or father or any male figure. Walker also sacrificed for the sake of her brother. Her brother was responsible for injuring her eyes, but she never revealed the fact to anyone. She saved him from scolding and whipping, when her brothers emotionally blackmailed her. ' If you tell," they say, " we will get a whipping. You don't want that to happen, do you?" I do not. " Here is a piece of wire," says the older brother, picking it up from the roof; " say you stepped on one end of it and the other flew up and hit you." The pain is beginning to start. " Yes," I say. " Yes, I will say that is what happened." If I do not say this is what happened, I know my brothers will find ways to make me wish I had.'

### **Beauty and Woman:**

Being a woman, you have to be beautiful, and being beautiful, you must be perfect in your outward appearance. This is what the stereotype of beauty of woman. Before the accident, Walker was living a normal life, a confident girl, who is appreciated by everyone for her courage. She was a beautiful and

cute girl. She explains ‘ It was great fun being cute. But then, one day it ended.’ It ended because she had to lose one of her eyes. Her confidence too was disappeared with her eye. She was mentally tortured by the children in her school. She started hiding herself. She was constantly under the impression that she had lost her beauty because she had lost one of her eyes. She started connecting the term beauty with her eye. She wanted to remove the “ glob” from her eye so that she will look beautiful. She did not care much about the eye sight, but the most important factor for her was the glob in her eye which made her ugly. ‘ I do almost every night, I abuse my eye. I rant and rave at it, in front of the mirror. I plead with it to clear up before morning. I tell it I hate and despise it. I do not pray for sight. I pray for beauty.’

## **The Gendered based Violence**

The violence suffered by Walker was less physical, but more mental and psychological. She tells one of her humiliating experiences in her school, when a boy used to call her “ one-eyed bitch.” It was beyond limit, which forced the author to beat the boy until she was satisfied. Her experience in the school also was very weird. She felt that the students are criminals and they would criticize her for her ugly eye. The violence was gendered, but not directly. In the eyes of the people around her, Walker was a bitch, an ugly lady, just because she had an ugly eye. She was not fit in the parameters of beauty decided by the society. Initially she used to be “ cute” girl, but the loss of her eye suddenly made her ugly. Her other qualities, attributes were

not considered while thinking of her beauty. Hence, we can call it a gender based violence which was mental more than physical one.

## **Appearance and Attributes**

The social norms of female beauty are within a particular framework. They cannot go beyond the appearance of the woman. They seldom take into consideration the attributes of woman. Physical attractiveness is the major parameter of defining female beauty in male dominated society. "The white standard of beauty dominates the American society. Straight hair, blue eyes and white skin are the symbol of beauty while dark skin is " associated with ugliness and lack of morality." (Peach 139) The complexion, eyes, hair, height, and figure are the major parameters of female beauty in American society. Walker is an African American writer. Her skin is not fit for the concept of American feminine beauty. Her eyes too are not beautiful as per the American concept. But in the end of the story, she realizes that the colour and shape of eyes are not important. The important thing is the emotions in the eyes. The realization of real beauty of eyes happened when her daughter appreciated her eyes. The journey of Walker from appearance to attribute is described in the end of the story when her daughter says, " Mommy, there's a world in your eyes." In the end she finds another dancer within herself who was dancing joyfully. The joy was due to the self acceptance. The writer wants to refute the stereotype of female beauty by explaining that our self acceptance and self realization is the important step towards our journey to real beauty and not the superfluous one which is accepted by the society.

## **Work Cited**

De Beauvoir, S. *The Second Sex*. trans. by Parshley, H. M. London: Pan Books, 1949. Print.

Linda Peach, *Toni Morrison Hounds mill* (Eng) Macmillan, 1998.

Walker Alice *Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self*, retrieved from <http://public.wsu.edu/~hughesc/alice-walker.htm>