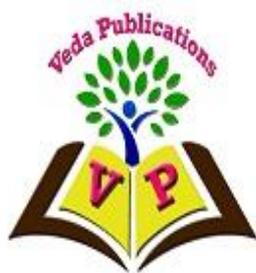


**CROSS-CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE SCARLET SONG BY MARIAMA BA**Dr. M. Sandra Carmel Sophia<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Ambedkar Bodigadla<sup>2</sup>*1\* Professor of English, Aditya Engineering College (A), Surampalem, EG Godavari, AP,**2. Dr. Ambedkar Bodigadla, Adhoc Faculty of English, College of Horticulture, Dr. YSR Horticultural University, VR Gudem, AP.*

Email (s) sandrasophia27@gmail.com ; ambedkar.mindmission@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2022.v9spli1.05>**ABSTRACT**

Senegalese feminist writer Mariama Bâ's exasperation with the destiny of African women is projected in her novel, *Scarlet Song*. The work is an honest depiction of the injustices meted out to African women in all spheres of life-family, society, and politics. Ba felt that chauvinism and unfairness always reign supreme for men. Women should work hard work round the clock only to accomplish nothingness at the end. So, Ba expressed in her works that women should use literature as a 'non-violent' but 'effective' weapon to overcome their excruciating pain and struggles in the hands of men and society. *Scarlet Song* deals with the dire need for women to construct "empowered" spaces -a space not as the "weaker sex", but the strong one despite being faced with cross cultures. The novel is about a marriage between a European and African. The marriage bonds are rigid because the wife cannot accept the conventions of a strict married life which is full of traditions and customs. Eventually the wife suffers the marriage. The book is criticism of age-old cultural norms and mores, the tyranny of tradition and explores the despair of cross-cultural marriages. Certainly, the book has implications of cross-cultures.

**Keywords:** *African women, injustices, cross-cultures, Marriages.**Author(s) retain the copyright of this article*

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In *Scarlet Song* by Mariama Ba, the male protagonist Ousmane Gueye is greatly influenced by male characters. *Mariama Ba* strategically places certain types of characters in Ousmane's life so that his character develops as the story progresses and this keeps the reader interested. However, Ousmane comes to terms with what he understands is best for his situation.

*Scarlet Song* has gained international attention because the book deals with the urgent need for women to create "empowered" spaces for themselves. The book criticizes the tyranny of tradition and expounds the despair of cross-cultural marriages. The novel focuses on the oppression of culture. According to Ruthellen Josselson's theory of women's identity development, she states that when women are faced with a confrontation, they either progress or shut themselves.

The novel talks about the fascinating glimpse of how culture can imprison even the most educated people. It focuses on issues such as the clash of cultures, racism-black or white, the role played by women in supporting the patriarchal system and the oppression of the white woman in the Black Country. It is a cross-cultural novel which focuses on the tragic events that happen because of the cultural differences between the protagonist Mireille and her husband. As the most visible marker of difference in the cross-cultural marriage of

Ousmane and Mireille, race indeed plays a significant role in the tragic events of the novel. However, the marital demands of adjustment and integration which confront Mireille defy a distinctly racial explanation. As Bâ herself points out, the problem of a white wife is more interesting from the point of view of shock, from the point of view of the morality of the man's mother and from the point of view of society.

*Scarlet Song* reveals that abuses and transgression of duties abound in polygynous marriages. In the Senegalese Muslim society on which the novel focuses, economic means dictates a man's choice of the number of wives. Various examples in other texts suggest that most male characters, despite their Western education, generally succumb to the temptation to exercise their cultural rights to polygyny after a spell in a one-man, one-wife situation. In *Scarlet Song*, Mariama Bâ presents Mireille to be the victim of her own individual discrepancies. She adamantly refuses to participate in any of the traditional events that are part of Senegalese life. She fails to be on familiar terms with the importance of communal life, which forms the essence, the backbone of any African society. She adopts a classical attitude and loses valuable ground and comfort. Her beautifully decorated home- thick rugs covering the floors, lampshades everywhere, original paintings on the walls and a library of precious and rare



books- has now become a sort of curiosity shop where weekend friends could meet:

According to Mireille's strict upbringing, the only place for food was the living-room or the kitchen. The war on cockroaches had its rules! It was unheard of to nibble a piece of bread in the bedroom. As her husband's equal, she would challenge his ideas and decision when these did not suit her. She considered she was his partner in the marriage. Certainly, that did not displease Ousmane. But no man is averse to being the leader and having the last word. A man doesn't refuse the prerogatives he is granted.

(1986: 148).

Mireille fails to adjust herself with the Senegalese family and culture. She has already lost the support of her mother-in law, and is about to lose that of her husband's friends, and perhaps ultimately, Ousmane's. Ousmane was irritated by Mireille's way of life; he fails to endure it any longer. Finally, he expresses his disgust:

Cut her off... let her eat her heart from neglect and boredom...Don't react to her everlasting fault finding...make it easy for her to leave, and then there'll be no ambiguity

about the role I shall be able to play; I'll be guaranteed a free hand...!" (150).

In her book *Scarlet Song*, Mariama Ba characterizes the way of life and beliefs in Africa in the 1960's. The first of the four principles ways that Mariama Ba characterizes this is the cross-culture marriage. She depicts the hardships of two people from different cultures that want to be married. The troubles that they have when they announce to their families their intentions. Second, the Senegalese Muslim society. Mariama Ba characterizes the Muslim beliefs, and how it defines the lives of Ousmane and Mireille. She describes the beliefs of this religion, and the way that it influences Ousmane's decisions for his families, and the people of his village. Third, racism. She characterizes the racial tensions of the time, and how it affects the lives of Ousmane and Mireille. She depicts how their families and friends really feel about the other race, and how they live with the tensions of this. Fourth, blending of the old and the new traditions. Mariama Ba depicts how Ousmane blends his old way of life to the new ways. He gets an education, and has issues about being colonized. He tries to live within the old ways while trying to live in the new. He has a war within himself over this. Mariama Ba characterizes the cross-culture of Ousmane and Mireille marriage. Like many of the people from different cultures, that want to be together, they are going to have trouble



adapting to the different culture, especially with the marital demands of adjustment and integration.

Thus the novel focuses on women like Yaye Khady, Mireille, Ouleymatou, Auntie Kine, Mame Fatim, Maimouna, and Rosalie as being materialistic and exploitative; conservative; caring and supportive; subjects of regressive culture and as full of superstitious. As a feminist writer, Mariama Bâ writes from a cultural point of view the readers get to know how the African woman is oppressed and suppressed by the society. Even though the African woman is unwilling, she has to comply with the cultural prescriptions.

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