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## **The Tale of Troubled Times: The Trilogy of Tahar Ben Jelloun**

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### **Abstract**

Tahar Ben Jelloun has always been focused with the condition of women in North Africa and the themes of his novels generally concern Maghreb society. He always tries to showcase the condition of their relationship between men and women in a Muslim society, state and law, individual and collective approaches, eroticism, love worried about the country, the passion for freedom. His novel sheds a cold light on an often misunderstood and sometimes unimaginable side of North African life; he is unwavering in his commitment to exposing the sacrifice and pain inherent in the struggle to rise above poverty and move in the western world. Here I will explain the pitiful condition of Jelloun characters by means of his Trilogy.

**Keywords:** immigrants, trilogy, Arabic history, North Africa, Magrebian, feminism etc.

“Trouble is inevitable and the task, the best way to do it, the best way to be there. - J. Butler.  
Tahar Ben Jelloun was born on December 1, 1944, in Fez, Morocco. He is a French-Moroccan novelist, poet and essayist, who has written expressively about Moroccan culture, the immigrant experience, human rights and sexual identity. The use of language is an interesting factor in Ben Jelloun's work. Critics have argued that Ben Jelloun is aimed at a French audience. After all, although Ben Jelloun is Moroccan and Arabic is his mother tongue, he chose to write in French. Similarly, in her novel *Les Yeux Baisses*, a young Moroccan fall in love with the French language and wishes to become a French writer. Some say that it is difficult not to compare the situation of this character with that of Ben Jelloun. But Ben Jelloun simply states when he started to write, it came normally to write in French... He feels freer when he writes in French. From this statement he means that the Arab is his wife and the French is his mistress; and he was unfaithful to both, it is evident that bilingualism is an integral part of his life as well as a theme in his works. Regardless of Ben Jelloun's inclination for French or lack thereof, he is smart enough to incorporate languages into his writing. For example, in *La Nuit Sacrée* (The Sacred Night), it refers to a woman who waits for people in the toilets as *L'Assise* which in French means "the seated woman" and which in Arabic translates to *gellas*, the title given to women who sit and wait on those in the toilet. This use of the duality of languages adds to the complexity and sophistication of his pieces.

Ben Jelloun's novel sheds a cold light on an often misunderstood and sometimes unimaginable side of North African life; he is unwavering in his commitment to exposing the sacrifice and pain inherent in the struggle to rise above poverty and move in the western world. Tahar Ben Jelloun has always been concerned with the condition of women in North Africa and the themes of his novels generally concern Maghreb society. He always tries to focus on the relationship between men and women in a Muslim society, state and law, individual and collective approaches.

'Enfant de Sable'(Sand Child) is the first novel in what is now a renowned trilogy. When it was published in 1985, Tahar Ben Jelloun did not expect to continue it in 1987 with its sequel, "La Nuit Sacrée", which earned him the same year the prestigious French literary prize, the Goncourt, awarded for the first time to an Arab author. In 1997, the last volume "The Night of Error" was published. All three focus on the treatment of women in Moroccan society. In France, 'L'Enfant de sable', the story of Ahmad/Zahra, the girl brought up as a boy, was an immediate bestseller and will become part of the French school curriculum. At the end of the novel, several storytellers each tell a different story to explain Ahmad/Zahra's disappearance and Tahar Ben Jelloun has been inundated with letters from readers asking what really happened to her. The sequel happened, not because the reader suggested it but because, except for that, the readers wouldn't have suggested it.

In particular, in writing 'The Child of Sand', he responded to a need to look at the condition of women in a way that was completely different from the feminist literature of the 1980s which he considered to be rhetorical, strident and unimaginative. By making the main character a child whose life has been forcibly turned against its natural course as a woman, it was able to open up in the novel many of the seemingly intractable problems that women in this society face as well as the clearly apparent one of the inheritance. For Tahar Ben Jelloun being a storyteller is both a job and a passion that allows him to say more than facts and events.

In 'The Child of Sand' and 'The Sacred Night', Ben Jelloun combines the rich Arabic tradition of storytelling with the most modern issues of our time, the question of justice and the treatment of people with humanity and equality. By portraying his female characters in the black depths of oppression and sordid ugliness and throwing them abruptly into a framework of storytelling myths and legends, he brings his readers to many emotions, dreams and reflections. on hard and challenging truths.

Ahmed/Zahra was born to a father who already has seven daughters and decided that the eighth born would be a boy no matter what. The father considers his daughters a curse, it's as if they don't exist and of course for inheritance issues they don't exist. When the eighth daughter is born, the father announces to the woman and the midwife that "it's a boy!" After fifteen years of marriage, you finally gave me a child, a boy. My first child. Look how handsome he is, touch his little testicles, his penis; he's a man!" (Jelloun 1997,28) Of course, these are all lies, but the girl is forced to grow up as Ahmad. There is no way to fight her tyrant father, so she submits to the ugly, disgusting reality of her mother's worries about her breasts "which she bandaged with white linen, pulling the strips of cloth so tight I could barely breathe. It was absolutely vital that no boobs appeared." (Jelloun 1997.78)

Submission is not the solution and Ahmad confuses his father by marrying an epileptic and crippled cousin and becoming a petty tyrant like him. But what still gnaws at Ahmad is his relationship with his father. The "decisive test" which marks the turning point of his life is the death of his father. This makes him a semi-mad recluse who continues to reign over his obedient sisters and sick mother, while seeing his state of sexual being as a challenge that must be resolved. Ahmad decides that he must "return to himself", but to re-educate his emotions, his body must "face the adventure, on the roads, in other cities, in other places". Zahra encounters more horrors and joins a circus as a sex-change monster, becoming the main attraction and then disappearing. Here, the storytellers take over as they refuse to accept that

Zahra can simply disappear. One has a particularly gruesome story of Zahra's vicious rape and sodomy at the hands of the circus boss that resulted in their two bloody deaths, while another, dismissing it as evil, states that he found the dairy of Ahmed and tells how Zahra returned to the family home and died there as a recluse. "The Sand Child" may seem like endless digressions.

"The Holy Night" continues Zahra's story, urging readers to discard previously told stories and listen to the facts. And who watched the last storyteller from afar but Zahra herself, who now tells her own story. Her tormented life, her father asking her forgiveness on his deathbed and telling her to be a woman, are woven into a mythical framework, which begins with Zahra leaving 'the Sacred Night', the 27th night of Ramadan, the Night of Destiny, to his adventures as a woman. She constantly relives the trials of her youth, remembering that her mother, who never spoke, asked her one day, with a desperate and threatening force:

"Just give me a month or two of life after your father's death!" How I wish I could breathe for a few days or weeks without him. It's my only desire, my only wish. If I died before him, I would go doubly bruised, horribly devastated, humiliated... breast for so long, since before you were born. This cry awaits me, gnaws at me, and I want to live so as not to die with it still inside me". (Jelloun 2000.72)

In the final volume of "The Night of Error" we can see a fatal fate wanted that Zina was conceived during a night struck by a curse. She will be born on the day of her grandfather's death. So that's why it was pathetic a party becomes a mourning. Struck by fate, cursed forever, she will be a child, then a woman on the fringes, the one through whom misfortune comes. Zina will make cruelty her way of being in the world and will take revenge on men captivated by her beauty, seducing and then destroying her lovers. Here we can find the violence of the relationship between man and woman, eroticism, love worried about the country, the passion for freedom ..

**Conclusion:-** Ben Jelloun explores the violence of revenge that is there deep within, waiting to explode from within an overly oppressed woman. It goes to another level to say that the woman can be unfair to the man and then arrive at a mutual relationship, neither harmonious nor tender but which cannot be reduced to a relationship of power. But again, the woman in The Night of Error is unreal, existing within the essential framework of legend, seemingly the best climate for spreading harsh and uncomfortable truths. Ben Jelloun depicts a social cauldron where a pattern of repression and reverberated violence spares no one, neither dominant nor dominated.

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