

Racial Prejudice Against Blacks In Toni Morrison's Novels: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

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Abstract: The population of the world has been suffering with the evil of racism since the time immemorial which subsequently emerges into maltreatment of poor and powerless faction of the society. This research project has sought to investigate the age old theme of racism. This research explores the writing of a writer who belongs to the marginalized groups and who deals with the issue of racism from different perspectives. It deals with the blacks' victimization and inhuman treatments at the hands of whites. Black female writers find it hard to deal with the issue of racism and their sufferings, exploitation and victimization not only at the hands of whites but from their own people as they belong to the lower level of hierarchical pattern of power. The readers may realize reflections of racism in their societies or different parts of the world as per their experiences after going through the study in hand.

Keywords: Racial, Prejudice, Black, Victimization, Novel.

Introduction

Toni Morrison deals with the issue of racism from different perspectives but this research will investigate the causes and effects of racial prejudice against blacks which are the main reasons for blacks' victimization and brutalization. This victimization finds its way in different direction according to the hierarchical pattern of black people who belong to different age groups and gender. Racial prejudice emerges from skin color, geographical demarcation, socio-economic inequality and pride in past and causes long lasting impacts of hatred, hypocrisy, separate communities and genocide.

Morrison's novels present a clear picture of racial prejudice against blacks in American society. The researcher comes at exploration of the causes which leads to racial prejudice and the effects these behavioral patterns produce in the community of victims that has never been explored yet. The causes of racism against blacks are various—slave trade, skin color, socio-economic inequality, to name a few. These various factors have seeped so much in American society that they have caused devastating effects. These effects sometimes take the shape of exploitation, humiliation, rejection and crucifixion of blacks.

The main purpose of this research is to provide an initiative to the readers wanting to know about the victimization of blacks at the hands of whites only because of racial prejudice. It also provides the starting point for the students who intend to start and continue their research on black literature especially with reference to Toni Morrison's novels. People belonging to the marginalized groups have always been at the margin of the globe. This research also explores the writing of a writer who belongs to the marginalized groups and who deals with the issue of racism from different perspectives. Black female writers find it hard to deal with the issue of racism from feministic point of view and their sufferings,

exploitation and victimization not only at the hands of whites but from their own people as they belong to the lower level of hierarchical pattern of power. Morrison finds the genre of novel to import the issue of racism in a detailed manner.

Novel is a fictional work written in prose form to convey thoughts of people and cultural depiction of society. It is the most flexible type of genre as it has many possibilities to describe any actions, events, situations and the lives of people and their cultural impacts and societal changes that take place in the course of time. American novel developed during its colonial period. Early American literature of the colonial period is simply a collection of letters, biographical accounts of personalities, recordings of experiences, adventures and enterprises and calamities, dangers and disasters etc.

A good literature of purely aesthetic, artistic and poetic import was created at the end of 18th century. It was due to the fact that American nation was passing through its formative phase and crawling towards prosperity. Best literature coincides with freedom from political, social, religious and ethnic worries and problems. Colonial American literature delineates and map out the astonishing and breath taking adventure and a continuous struggle for survival in a land which Eliot named as 'The Wasteland'.

To begin with the history of the American novel, the first novel is written at the close of 18th century. It follows the British theme and style as at that time America was under the influence of British literary tradition and furthermore America's literary society was not mature enough to produce their own literature without some guidance. Charles Brockden Brown's first novel 'Wieland' was first published in 1798 which follows the Gothic style characterizing the grotesque and mysterious features in it. It was by the 1820s that American novels in their true spirit emerged.

James Fenimore Cooper's five part popular series 'The Leather-Stocking Tales' include the first realistic novel 'The Last of the Mohican'. The novel depicts a sensational adventure of escapes and captures and attacks and rescues. Richard Henry Dana's novel 'Two Years Before The Mast' explores the treatment of a ship captain towards the crew. He himself served as a crew member for two years. This adventurous but realistic novel elicits public response against the cruel treatment that has been given to the crew of the ship. 'The Scarlet Letter' by Nathaniel Hawthorne describes the tragic tale in Puritan America. Puritanism at best is not a favorable soil for the blossoming of literary art. 'The Scarlet Letter' deals with prick of consciousness and moral dilemma which make the story more effective and moving. It deals with human sorrows and their place and role in human universe. This shows Hawthorne's psychological insight into the affairs of human nature. His other novels are 'The House of the Seven Gables' and 'The Marble Faun'

Many great writers saw the cruelties and brutalities of the Civil War which effected their conception and way of thinking. They led more towards realism and naturalism. They tried to depict true American society, economic condition, conflict, racial discrimination and gender conflict. The first realist work came from the pen of Herman Melville in the shape of Moby-Dick. He was greatly influenced by Dana's 'Two Years Before the Mast' which presents the factual details and realistic picture of society. The complex story deals with the hunt of white whale also hit the issue of man's place in society and in the universe. 'The Red Badge of Courage' by Stephen Crane explores the horrible and psychological effects of terror experienced by warriors. It deals with young Henry Fleming's nostalgia about fear in his first battle.

The age of regionalism and realism produced best literature in American literary history especially in the genre of novel. These novels portray the realistic picture of human nature and of society. Novels dealing with human nature explore the psychological insight into the characters and their feelings, thoughts and perceptions. 'The Portrait of a Lady' by Henry James explores the psychological dilemma of a lady who has a powerful sense of independence. Isabel Archer is vibrant, passionate and committed to her self independence. She marries a cynical and conventional man named Osmond. Osmond's attempt to control her under his influence and to suppress the individuality of Archer makes her capable to revolt against suppression.

'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' is regarded as a magnum opus. It narrates the story of a runaway orphan Huck and of Jim, a black man, who is escaping enslavement. It is the most famous work of Mark Twain which deals with the issues of slavery and its effects. Both Huck and Jim's adventures magnify the cruelties of which men and women are capable. This provides the panoramic view of American society and its impact on individual's personality.

World War 1 changed the cultural, social, religious and ethnic atmosphere that was prevalent before it. It greatly effected the

conception, thinking and way of life. Its effect on literary circle was inevitable. Many writers see the war as the great failure of the old ways and systems. Novelists explore new ideologies, themes, style, and narrative devices in order to import their subject matter that would suit to that environment.

'The Great Gatsby' and 'The Age of Innocence' by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Edith Wharton respectively reflect the psychological effects of the great war on individual's personality and perception. The horrible shadows of World War 1 on individual's psychological and physical aspects are portrayed by Hemingway in his concept of lost generation. He presented the aimless and disillusioned life of the people who witnessed World War 1 and whose victim he himself was. 'The Sun Also Rises' reflects a complete picture of society and about love and loss.

William Faulkner's 'The Sound and the Fury' set a new tone and technique in the development of American literature. Through the technique of stream of consciousness Faulkner projected the real aspect of human nature reflecting the inner working of the mind. Stream of consciousness deals with psychological realism whatever any character thinks about anything. This makes novels more realistic and the true representation of society through the filtered mind of a character.

Mid-century voices projected their personal experience and wrote about society in which they were living. 'The Grapes of Wrath' by John Steinbeck reflects the lives of a family during Great Depression. It deals with the problems of migration, settlement and livelihood. The disillusionment that Joads feel during their settlement in California from Oklahoma is represented in a realist way. In 1940 Steinbeck won Pulitzer Prize for his great novel 'The Grapes of Wrath'. Ralph Ellison, a black American writer gave a new trend in the realm of fiction. His novel 'Invisible Man' narrates the story of a young man who leaves South for Harlem in search of identity. But his fall of idealism occurs when he has been made to realize that he is an invisible man who has no identity in a society which is replete with racial prejudices.

Modern literature is multidimensional and cosmopolitan in its dealing of theme and style. Every writer adopts new and revealing style to import their subject matter and perspective. The novel 'Breathing Lessons' narrates the story of a couple Maggie and Ira Moran. The story is narrated through flashback and character's mind revealing the realistic happenings that occur in almost every individual. It is about the reunion of Maggie with her son's wife and baby which ends up in some realization about Maggie's relationship with her husband.

'The Joy Luck Club' deals with the issues of gender, generation, culture and family through the realistic picture presented by the first generation Chinese American Amy Tan. The novel reveals the history of Chinese American immigrants their lives and culture through the depiction of the lives of four Chinese immigrant women. 'Humboldt's Gift' by Saul Bellow describes the story of Charles Citrine and his

association with his friend Von Humboldt Fleisher. After his death Citrine begins reviewing his life and thinking about death. Bellow wins the 1976 Pulitzer Prize for fiction for 'Humboldt's Gift'. He also wins the 1976 Nobel Prize for Literature.

Twentieth century is marked as a great progress in black literature in America because of the large scale migration from South to New York to avoid racism and poverty during First World War. The New York City neighborhood of Harlem became the center of black cultural life, attracting many writers and artists. Many great writers expressed their views and feelings in their works. In order to texture their thoughts and feelings they took to the genre of novel for novel is considered to be the best art form for importing deep personal feelings and to give a true picture of society in a realistic manner.

Afro-American novelists took it for importing the unspeakable injustices and inhumanities that were directed against blacks in colonized America. Among them Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison are the greatest and most prominent writers. Ralph Ellison earned a considerable reputation for his novel 'Invisible Man'. This novel presents a black man's frustration for his identity and explores white's discriminated treatment with blacks. Richard Wright is one of the first African-American authors to protest racial prejudice and discrimination against blacks and white society's negative influence on black culture. His novel 'Native Son' scrutinizes the causes and effects of racism and how and why a young black individual is driven to murder.

Another autobiographical work of his is 'Black Boy' which also discusses the race relation in America. Another African-American author who contributed a lot in African-American literature is Alice Walker. She is a novelist and poetess who expressed her feelings of racism in her works. Her works mostly occupy the theme of love, suicide, civil rights, and Africa. She received the Pulitzer Prize for her best known novel 'The Color Purple'. Toni Morrison's works deal with the black experience, black community and the matters of race. She is one of the greatest novelists and first Afro-American novelist who won the Nobel Prize in literature for her works.

American history of novel deals with the gradual development in the realm of fiction. Its themes and subject matter gradually widen the scope of its domain. Many writers find novel the best genre of literature to import national and international issues and to make their writings cosmopolitan. Cosmopolitan writing means writing "concerned with global/universal themes and issues"ⁱ— political, social, ethnic, and otherwise. It is also concerned with individual person—immigrants. The post-colonial era has witnessed the large scale migration from the colonized world to Britain, to North America and to France, Canada and Australia. The plantation of these large ethnic minorities "have influenced the national cultures and brought about a kind of 'neo-colonialism'"ⁱⁱ.

Fictional works, set in colonized world and in a colonial background are said to be 'novels of Empires'ⁱⁱⁱ. They import universal theme tracing out the history of the people who have been corrupted and polluted by the civilized world. Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' and E.M. Foster's 'A Passage to India' project the theme of colonialization and its devastating effects. Toni Morrison's novels especially 'Beloved' and 'Paradise' deal with the black history as slave and community problems. Her novels project the global theme and problems that marginalized groups face in the globe. Cuddon explains it as:

Cosmopolitan writing is an attempt to cross the boundaries and frontiers of nations and nationalism; it stresses the global nature of everyday life and tries to depict societies and individuals as globally representative.... Cosmopolitan writing can now also begin to be seen as an attempt to come to term with the state and position of the immigrant.^{iv}

Toni Morrison's novels employed the characteristics of Black art to project her theme that may suit to her works and make her writings cosmopolitan. She is of the view that she would prefer that her books "were dismissed or embraced on the success of their accomplishment within the culture of which"^v she writes. She says:

I don't regard Black literature as simply books written by Black people, or simply as literature written about Black people... There is something very special and identifiable about it"^{vi}

In Toni Morrison's words a novel "has always functioned for the class or the group that wrote it"^{vii}. Explaining about the novel of manners she says that it is "an art form designed to tell people something they didn't know"^{viii}.

The art form that was most prevalent in middle class was music for Blacks. But with the passage of time the novel replaced it and gave new shape and vitality to the genre of literature. It serves to perform certain functions which cannot be conveyed in speech and other genres of writing. For Morrison it is a "way to accomplish certain very strong functions"^{ix}— to get out new information about life, treatment, action and reaction. For Morrison a novel... should try deliberately to make you stand up and make you feel something profoundly in the same way that a Black preacher requires his congregation to speak, to join him in the sermon, to behave in a certain way, to stand up and to weep and to cry and to accede or to change and to modify— to expand on the sermon that is being delivered.^x

Morrison's works possess the same characteristics of black literature in order to make the people understand about the colonized world and literature written in that period. The impact of age on writer's personality is always very great as a writer lives in that society and has a deep association with his/ her environment, people and culture. Morrison's works not only reveals the contemporary issues but also unearth the age old theme of racism from different perspective—

feministic. Her novels are 'The Bluest Eye', 'Sula', 'Song of Solomon', 'Tar Baby', 'Beloved', 'Jazz', 'Paradise', and 'Love'.

'The Bluest Eye' is the first work of Toni Morrison in the realm of fiction which narrates the story about a black girl who longs for a pair of blue eyes and blond hairs. She is impressed and attracted by the beauty of white girl and craves for blue eyes to look attractive and charming and to be loved by society. Morrison uses the technique of sharp contrast by developing both families Breedlove and MecTeer in order to heighten the effect of the narrative. Pecola Breedlove, the central protagonist of the novel, undergoes under many societal forces which are operating in the society for whites. She is neither loved by her family nor by the society which mostly constituted on double standards. While on the other hand MecTeer sisters are protected and loved by their family. Pauline Breedlove, mother of Sammy and Pecola, is abusive and jarring to her children. She does not show any sign of love and sympathy to her children rather to the Fisher's where she works. Pecola's father, Cholly, rapes her daughter and makes her pregnant. The black girl has nothing to do and to go. Like Sammy she is not free to run away from home because she is too young to go outside and find her place in a male and white determined society. Her baby dies due to immature birth and Pecola goes insane. The novel handles the significant theme of race, gender, age, and the idea of beauty examining the life of Pecola and the impact of social forces that collectively work and fabricate her tragic fate.

Toni Morrison's second novel 'Sula' deals with themes of race, feminism, historical effects, love and the nature of evil. It scrutinizes that how these intertwine to effect the beliefs and actions of individuals. It also explores the theme of evil and its significance in human life. Nel and Sula, the two friends, are perfect compliments of each other although their brought up was in two contrastive environments. Nel brought up in a conventional atmosphere and conforms to norms while Sula's family is very different from Nel's. Sula follows the completely deviated path. Her complete break away from society makes her the most arrogant and rude girl. She frequently sex with many blacks and whites and leads a completely divergent life as the personification of evil. This evil personification ironically improves the community's loose life. Her presence gives the whole community a sense of unification and harmony. But with the death of Sula the harmony in the lives of the community people vanishes and they restore to their original nature.

'Song of Solomon' deals with the theme of flight, gender discrimination, racial prejudice and slavery. The novel begins with the dramatic death of an insurance agent, Robert Smith, who wanted to fly in order to escape human limitations. The next day Ruth Foster Dead, the daughter of the first black doctor, gives birth to the first black child, Milkman, born in Mercy Hospital. Milkman, in his early childhood, loses interest in life when he comes to know about human limitations that man cannot fly. He is cared and looked after by his mother and aunt Pilate. He takes after his father the

habit of the lack of compassion and materialistic pursuits for accumulating wealth.

Milkman oscillates between past and present— present does not have anything to attract him and past have bitter experiences of his family's life. When he comes to know that his aunt Pilate has accumulated wealth, he hatches a plan to get it making his friend, Guitar Bains, his accomplice. Guitar is greatly disappointed because he needed gold for the execution of his plan by killing innocent whites to avenge the injustices against African Americans. Milkman searches gold in Monotour County thinking that it might be there but he again faces failure and starts looking for his long lost family history instead of gold. Encouraged by the discoveries made by Circe, an old midwife, he moves to his grandfather Jake's ancestral home in Virginia. There he discovers about his great grandfather, Solomon, a legendary flying African who escaped by breaking away the chains of slavery to Africa leaving his wife with twenty one children to look after. She went insane. Milkman's discoveries about his family give him a purpose in life.

'Tar Baby' is Morrison's fourth novel which explores the strength of relationships that people have and questions about the thread sensitive relationships of family. It deals with the theme of racial discrimination that leads to rejection and renouncement. Valerian Street, a wealthy businessman is living with his wife Margaret and niece Jade in his Caribbean Island home. Christmas preparations are being made and people are happy at their homes in the wintry season. Valerian family is disturbed by a fugitive who has been using the house as a hiding place. He introduces himself as Son and questions about family relationships that have been taken for nothing. He points out that people wear a mask and dual identity in order to maintain family bonds and relationships. Impressed by Son's talk and ideas, Jade falls in love with him and Son reciprocates the same feelings. Both move to New York and then to Son's native town in Florida. A breach in their relationships is created when Son wants to reconnect with his family's roots and to maintain his individuality while Jade willfully rejects the black way of life and tries to maintain her individuality and identity. Both love each other passionately and differ in their ideologies and identities. In this novel Morrison presents a good picture of a male protagonist— Son which is very rare in her novels. Through Tar Baby, Morrison draws our attention towards the social evil that how the differences in ideologies and identities lead to the clash of civilizations and individuals as well.

'Beloved' is widely regarded as a magnum opus. It deals with psychological and cultural implications of slavery on individual and society. The novel is mythical in scope as it narrates the legacy of slavery. The setting of the novel is psychologically profound and paves the way for the novelist to delve deep into the minds of his characters. The novel justifies the overwhelming presence of past in life. In this novel Morrison explores themes of love and family in a world where slavery has only recently become a thing of past.

'Beloved' is a conglomeration of Gothic and historical fiction. It shows the indelible impact of racial prejudice and slavery not only on the psychology of individual but also on the mammoth patterns of civilization and history. It deals with the story of an ex-slave female victim, Sethe, who in order to break away from the chains of slavery fled to save her life and her children. Eighteen years have been elapsed since she fled from Sweet Home— which ironically represents the brutality of Schoolmaster. Sethe is now living with her daughter at Denver at 124. The community has boycotted them because of Sethe's brutally killing of her infant daughter eighteen years ago when she escaped from Sweet Home where she was working as a slave. Sethe fled from Sweet Home in order to make herself and her children free from the brutalities and cruelties of Schoolmaster who was interested in the scientific study of blacks. She fled in her pregnancy and gave birth to a baby with the help of a white girl Amy. After enjoying twenty-eight days of freedom with her four children, she was traced by her old master. Instead of going back to a slaved life she tries to kill her children rather than allowing them to live a slaved life. She succeeds in killing her young infant daughter. Her master rejects her considering her insane and dustbin property which is now of no use for him. Sethe is released by the law to raise her remaining three children. The apparition of the dead child begins to haunt the house. At first Beloved's ghost shows its love to its mother Sethe and its sister Denver.

Paul D, an ex-slave, visits 124 to see Sethe and her children. Both, Sethe and Paul D, are haunted by their past which no longer has any attraction for them. For both the past has a bitter experience and which they didn't want to remember. Paul D falls in love with Sethe and starts living with her in spite of Beloved's ghost's hate. He leaves the home when he comes to know about Sethe's murdering of her daughter. Beloved's ghost continuously haunts Sethe and it becomes parasite which grows ever stronger as Sethe grows weaker. Denver goes to the community for help. Beloved's ghost leaves Sethe by leaving indelible impression on her spirit when a group of women exorcise it. Paul D, Sethe, and Denver resolve to live a happy life far from past memories.

'Jazz' is second of the three novels that Morrison set herself to write a trilogy beginning with her fifth novel 'Beloved' and ends with her seventh novel 'Paradise'. These novels deal with the issues of memory— both personal and cultural. Morrison wants to convey the reconstruction of memory which is named as 'rememory' in 'Beloved'. Through the techniques of stream of consciousness and flashback, she projects the realistic picture of American society where youth and age and sex and seduction are central to American people. As the title of the novel suggests, music acts as not only as a catalyst to accelerate the impact of sexuality but also to control the citizens.

The novel, set in 1926 Harlem, deals with the amorous affair between a fifty years old black woman, Violet Trace, and her

husband, Joe Trace. They move to South in order to escape the pains of color discrimination. Their early years were difficult but the couple found solace in their unflinching love for each other. After getting financial stability, the breach between them starts widening. The conjugal love between them starts weakening with the passage of time when Violet feels loneliness and a desire to have a baby. She starts sleeping with a doll and enjoys the company of birds. The termination of their relationship gives stimuli to Joe to develop a liaison with eighteen years old Dorcas. Dorcas is shot dead by Joe when she leaves him. Joe then reconciles to his wife Violet and is happy to get their lives and love back together.

'Paradise' is Morrison's seventh novel that completes her trilogy. It deals with the issues of racism and community problems that were central to contemporary America. 'Paradise' gives a sharp contrast of the attitudes, behavior and livings of different people by paralleling the lives of two communities— Ruby and Convent. Ruby presents the utopian concept of a community where love for past and tradition are welcomed where outsiders are unwelcomed and where adultery, alcohol and rebellion are strongly rejected and condemned. Because of this reason the people of Ruby can find and preserve the purity of their line which goes straight instead of developing any diverting branch. On the other hand, Convent presents a complete contrast to Ruby where loose life is accepted and where strangers are welcomed. Both Ruby and Convent are founded to give shelter to those who are in need and give the idea of home. But unlike Ruby's strong laws and outsider's rejection Convent's door are always open for outsiders. Morrison, through her novel 'Paradise' wants to convey a revealing message that we will never learn but besides it she leaves open the room for hope and improvement.

Morrison's works deal with the issue of racism and discrimination on the basis of class and gender. She uses different techniques to import her perspective. History has always remained a big tool to deal with the issues of racism. Morrison places her characters in present but those characters are obsessed with their past— which is inerasable and which they don't want to remember. She uses stream of consciousness techniques to deal with present and past condition of black people, their deplorable life and their relation with whites from a feministic point of view.

Morrison presents the causes and effects of racial prejudice against blacks in her novels. It seems that she is questioning about the causes of racism which give stimuli to race matters and at the end produce very horrible and devastating effects on the dominated race. Many critics give different views about her dealing of the theme and issue of racism and its causes and effects from different perspectives that the researcher has presented in next chapter.

End Notes

ⁱ J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1999, p. 182.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid, p. 183.

^v Toni Morrison, "Thoughts on the African-American Novel", in Beverly Ann Chin et.al. *Glencoe Literature: The Reader's Choice*, New York: Glencoe McGraw-Hill, 2000, p. 33.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Ibid, p. 30.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Ibid, p.31.

^x Ibid.

Literature Review

Toni Morrison explores age old theme of racial prejudice with new verve and vitality. She was born in an age which was congenial for the unity and development of black literature. Every writer owes his creative work to his society. Especially the works of literary writers not only reflect what is happening in the society but also portray how the writer perceives these changes. This adds social and psychological dimensions to a literary work. Morrison is also one of them. She was very much influenced by different social factors—the church and the Harlem Renaissance—and literary personalities— Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, and Alice Walker.

Harlem Renaissance, an American cultural and literary movement of the 1920s and early 1930s marked a new spirit and era in Black English literature and unity. It is also known as the New Negro movement. It was the first time that African- American literature took a new shape and importance in the literary circle. It was not only a literary movement but also political one; and served as the voice against slavery, racial discrimination and many other cruelties that the blacks were facing in "white America"^x. This oppression shaped blacks into a strong and undefeated form. Reverdy C. Ransom, a social religious figure, expressed the same feelings in his poem 'The New Negro' as:

HE IS NEW, he is old as the forests primeval.
Stark in their nakedness of limb,
His forebears roamed the jungle and led the chase.
Crystallized by the heat of Oriental suns,
God made him a rock of undecaying power,
To become at last the nation's corner stone.
Rough hewn from the jungle and the desert's sands,
Slavery was the chisel that fashioned him to form,
And gave him all the arts and sciences had won.
The lyncher, mob, and stake have been his emery wheel.
TO MAKE A POLISHED MAN of strength and power.
In him, the latest birth of freedom,
God hath again made all things new.

Europe and Asia with ebbing tides recede,
America's unfinished arch of freedom waits,
Till he, the corner stone of strength,
Is lifted into place and power.
Behold him! Dauntless and unafraid he stands.
He comes with laden arms,
Bearing rich gifts to science, religion, poetry and song.
Labor and capital through him shall find
The equal heritage of common brotherhood,
And statesmanship shall keep the stewardship
Of justice with equal rights and privileges for all.
HE KNOWS HIS PLACE to keep it
As a sacred trust and heritage for all.
To wear God's image in the ranks of men
And walk as princes of the royal blood divine,
ON EQUAL FOOTING everywhere with all mankind.
With ever fading color on these shores,
The Oriental sunshine in his blood
Shall give the warming touch of brotherhood
And love, to all the fused races in our land,
He is the last reserve of God on earth,
Who, in the godly fellowship of love,
Will rule the world with peace.^x

'The New Negro' reflects the standards that had been given to blacks before 1930s. It gives an insight about the attitude and behavior of whites towards blacks which move them for literary revolt against social and political issues— race, gender, colonialization and exploitation.

'Race is both a biological and social concept'^x. Biologically it is due to difference in genetic heritage. While socially the "skin color has been linked to personal worth, intelligence, eligibility for friendship, and marriage and a host of other traits".^x Toni Morrison quite observingly follows the tradition of African- American Literature as a novelist to give racism a conspicuous space in her novels. She opted for the genre of novel to texture her thoughts, feelings, and emotions that she felt during her childhood, adulthood, and at mature stage of her life. As Peach explicitly explains the reason why novel is considered to be the best form of literature to import such theme— racism. She says "For African and African-American writers the novel has been an important vehicle to represent the social context, to expose inequality, racism and social injustice."^x

Another aspect of racism is also personified in Morrison's novels. She is of the view that capitalism is the key element in order to maintain racism and white power. The race who is in power tries to suppress other races through exploitation and deterioration. This factor is quite visible in Morrison's novels. As in 'Beloved' the school master is capitalism personified and exploits the blacks to their very last by even extracting milk from Sethe that she had for her children and also by

placing Sethe as an object and to ask his students to pick out the 'human' and 'animal' characteristics of her. This capitalistic nature in Morrison's novel has been expressed by Peach that her novels:

...explore on some level how capitalism give rise to and maintain racism and how ... white power gives rise to white racism whilst white racism in turn serves white power.^x

This unlimited 'white power' is important, for whites, due to maintain and perpetuate racism which is a political one. It is this political and capitalistic nature of whites which incites them to maintain that power through different ways. It may be due to race and gender, or may be due to cast system.

In 1949 Washington was deeply conscious about the caste system. This caste-consciousness deeply affected the mind and perception of Toni Morrison while she was educating herself in America's most distinguished Howard University. Caste-consciousness is developed by the mistreatment that the blacks were facing in a country to which they did not belong but planted there in order to grow into a new shape and chiseled by the mould of slavery. In an interview with Nadelson in 'The Guardian', Morrison recalls her past in such words:

Thinking on it I suppose I was backward, but I never longed for social integration with white people. For a place to pee when shopping, yes, but I was prey to the racism of my early years in Lorain where the only true interesting people to me were the black people.^x

Morrison is talking about her early childhood experience which she and her family experienced in America. It seems that "harmony could never exist between the races... [and] that black people and white people should work together but not sleep or even eat together".^x This demarcation of double standard and different laws for blacks and whites solely based on colour discrimination left indelible impact on human nature.

Abdellatif Khayati explains the views about Morrison's novels and their impact on human nature. He says that she is very inquisitive in framing the structure and thematic value of her novels that suit the modern concept of racism. By eliciting references from history, Morrison projects new form and concept of racism that prevails there in the mind and ideologies of the white people. Ideologies do differ in their way of perceiving the world and in their conception about the geographical differences. The former is abstract phenomenon while the latter is concrete one. These abstract and concrete phenomena do affect the conception of black writer especially a woman writer such as Toni Morrison. As Khayati explains this:

It [race] no longer demarcates solely ancestry or racial background, but instead becomes a way of referring to and disguising forces, events, classes, and expressions of social decay and economic division far more threatening to the body politic than biological 'race' ever was.^x

Another aspect of racism that is quite apparent in Morrison's novels is that of the white and black contrast that was most prevalent at that time in America and which she presented in her novels. Morrison's depiction of the characters, their attitudes and the treatment given to blacks quite explicitly show her realistic approach. She encompasses all the black characters in her novels and they are the center of her attention. White people are explicitly negligible as Linden Peach refers to one of her interviews in Tate. She says: When I view the world, perceive it and write about it, it's the world of black people. It's not that I won't write about white people. I just know that when I'm trying to develop the various themes I write about, the people who best manifest those themes for me are black people whom I invent. It's not deliberate or calculated or self-consciously black, because I recognize and despise the artificial black writings sine writers do. I feel them slumming among black people.^x

Toni Morrison touches the core issue of racism through different perspectives. She has dealt racism from personal perspective as she herself was the victim of racism during her childhood. When one is in hot water, ice does not melt. The same is true for all blacks. She herself knows "the pain of being black".^x Morrison's novels deal with the past which acts as a ghost and is continuously haunting the blacks. Blacks are facing the new challenges in American society and culture for their advancement and growth—a society fussed with racial discrimination and prejudices. Morrison explains the pains that blacks are facing in a completely multi-ethnic country that's social and cultural values are completely different from those of their native countries. Blacks were taken as slave to America to serve for whites the hectic manual labours in fields, in industry and at home and farmhouses. But even after taking freedom their life is deplorable. They are still living there as second class citizens. To think about slavery and racial prejudice is painful for them, a bitter experience which connects them with their past and which they don't want to remember. Morrison explains this in an interview with Time as:

...it is about something that the characters don't want to remember, I don't want to remember, black people don't want to remember, white people don't want to remember. I mean, it's national amnesia.^x

The bitter experiences that they face only on the basis of racial prejudices and discrimination have deep roots in America. It is such a horrible and awful past that blacks 'don't want to remember'. This treatment with blacks is due to ideological and ethnic differences. Peach explains the same issue of black-white ideological and ethnic concepts in such ways:

Perhaps in her own perspective on the state lie the origins of two of the major preoccupations of the novels: the pursuit of individual advancement by black people in a white-determined nation and culture at the expense of their black ancestry; and the reclamation of black solidarity based upon, to use her own word from *Beloved* (1987), 'rememory' of

slavery and white America's continual denial of black people.
x:

Race is a predominant matter in Morrison's novels. She projected the theme of racism through her novels that quite artistically textured in the fabric of the story/plot. The plots of her novels revolve round the theme of racial prejudice just as it is working as a centripetal force for it. Abdellatif Khayati is of the view that "for Morrison race matters, as it does for Cornel West"^x. According to West "the presence and predicaments of black people are neither additions to nor defections from American life, but rather constitutive elements of that life."^x

Racism is the most prevalent phenomena in the world that takes different shapes and forms through the ideological differences. These differences do not only exist at mature level but rather on lower level as they are injected into the minds of the young generation through educational institutions. Education acts as a catalytic force to stimulate the intensity of the differences— ideological, geographical and physical. This is a multi-ethnic world and everyone has the right to live freely. But whites whom Morrison calls "men without skin"^x are steeped with racial prejudice. This instigates negative feelings against blacks and cause violence and humiliation of them. "Blacks people are victims of an enormous amount of violence"^x, says Morrison. She further says that racism is "taught and institutionalized"^x at educational institutions. It is an invisible spiritual as well as physical lesion that blacks are suffering from whites. In an interview with Times, Morrison explains the same feelings in such words:

...racism is a scholarly pursuit. It's all over the world, I am convinced. But that's not the way people were born to live. I'm talking about racism that is taught, institutionalized. Everybody remembers the first time they were taught that part of the human race was Other. That's a trauma. It's as though I told you that your left hand is not part of your body.^x

Thus racism plays a pivotal role in Toni Morrison's novels. Inheriting influence from the far reaching aspects of black history, Morrison fills her novels with glaring undercurrent of racial prejudice. Race is a matter of great importance and it takes different forms and perspectives. It also works as a capitalistic phenomenon that tries to crush the dominated race. Morrison also deals with racism from personal perspective giving it an autobiographical touch. Racism in America works on different levels— physical and psychological. It is Morrison who textured both these elements in her novels in such a way that gives new vitality and freshness to her work.

Morrison being a female black novelist, deals with the issue of racism from different perspectives that have never been dealt before. The plot of her novels mostly revolves round female characters, who suffer a double burden of racism and gender. Women in a realistic way present the real picture of multi-ethnic society that gives little space to them. They are

mostly the victim of racism at every level, that is, younger, middle and older age groups; and place, that is, at home and in society. Next chapter deals with this issue of black female victimization and exploitation at the hands of whites and its consequences on the lives of black family.

End Notes

^x Linden Peach, *Toni Morrison*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995, p. 4.

^x Raverdy C Ransom, *The New Negro*, New York Amsterdam News 3 Jan. 1923: 12 as quoted by Jon Michel Spencer, "The Black Church and the Harlem Renaissance", *African American Review*, Volume 30, Number 3, 1996, p. 453.

^x Joseph F. Healey, *Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Class*, California: Pine Forge Press, 1995, p. 22.

^x *Ibid*, p. 23.

^x Op. cit., Peach, p. 2.

^x *Ibid*, p. 7.

^x *Ibid*, p. 5.

^x *Ibid*.

^x Abdellatif Khayati, "Representation, Race, and the "Language" of The Ineffable in Toni Morrison's Narrative", *African American Review*, Volume 33, Number 2, 1999, p. 314.

^x Op. cit., Peach, p. 5.6.

^x Reterieved from:

<http://womenshistory.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.time.com/time/community/morrisonessay.html> at 02:55am., on 1st October, 2005.

^x *Ibid*.

^x Op. cit., Peach, p. 4.

^x Op. cit., Khayati, p.314.

^x Cornel West, *Race Matters*, New York: Vintage, 1994, as quoted by *Ibid*.

^x Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, London: Vintage, 1997, p. 211.

^x Reterieved from:

<http://womenshistory.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.time.com/time/community/morrisonessay.html> on 1st October, 2005, at 02:55am.

^x *Ibid*.

^x *Ibid*.

Female Victims of Racial Prejudice

Morrison as a female writer focuses her attention on black women in order to capture the attention and response of the reader towards the most socially neglected beings; "Morrison writes as a black women with the experience of black women in mind",^xsays Peach. Being a black woman Morrison feels the burden of double standard that is being given to women in society, especially when they are black. She herself has the knowledge of female psychology, behaviour, attitudes,

mother love, sex and most of all about the injustices and inhumanities of racism whose victim she herself was. In an interview, on radio in 1983, she said: "I am valuable as a writer because I am a woman, because women, it seems to me, have some special knowledge about certain things."^x In an interview with Sandi Russell she echoes the same point of view in these words:

I write for black women. We are not addressing the men, as some white female writers do. We are not attacking each other, as both black and white men do. Black women writers look at things in an unforgiving/loving way. They are writing to repossess, re-name, re-own.^x

Morrison's mastery to texture the issue of racial discrimination from feministic point of views is apparent from her novels that mostly revolve round female characters, that is, female protagonists. The male characters go into the background in order to give full space to women to present female perspective and ideologies. In 'Sula' Eva's children Hannah, Pearl and Ralph are presented before the reader in relation to their mother and grand mother but not in relation to their father BoyBoy. In 'The Bluest Eye' Pauline's relation with Pecola and Mrs. MacTeer's association with her daughters Claudia and Frieda are presented from a feministic point of view. In 'Beloved' Sethe's relation with Baby Suggs and Denver and Beloved's relation with Sethe also unearth the victimized life in feministic but realistic way. It seems that female characters are shadowing the male characters. The world depicted by Morrison changes the concept and perspective about women. First this world was male dominated but now feminist movements compel the reader to give attention to females.

Morrison deals with female characters in different ways, that is, according to their age and characteristics in her novels. If we divide female character according to their age groups and characteristics than Baby Suggs in "Beloved" and Eva in 'The Bluest Eye' stand apart as a figure of unconventional womanhood. Both are the true victims of racial prejudices and on the basis of color and social status. Baby Suggs spent her life as a slave at Sweet Home run by Mr. Lillian Garner. Those were Baby Suggs sweet days and good day in her life. She was ...never pushed, hit or called her mean names. Even when she slipped in cow dung and broke every egg in her apron, nobody said you-black-bitch-what's-the-matter-with-you and nobody knocked her down.^x

It seems that black woman slaves were used to such phrases like 'you-black-bitch-what's-the-matter-with-you'. Here Morrison uses the techniques of suggestiveness to convey her message and opinion and to present the condition and picture of black woman in American society. Baby Suggs recalls her past— her slaved life— that is full of bitter experience and her victimization at the hands of whites. Slavery at that time was the only profession for blacks. Negroes were treated brutally and were not considered even human beings. They

were exploited, brutalized and killed by whites to gratify their primitive instincts. Baby Suggs' says: "Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief".^x She herself was the victim of racism and of gender as well. She knows the pain of being a black slave mother.

Being a mother she always thinks about her children that have been taken away from her. "I had eight. Every one of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased'. Baby Suggs rubbed her eyebrows... 'Eight children and that's all I remember.'"^x Only her last son, Halle, who was being left with her also chased or probably killed later on. But she was so obsessed with the fear of being taken her last son that she even did not look at the features of her son completely when he was born.

The last of her children, whom she barely glanced at when he was born because it wasn't worth the trouble to try to learn the features you would never see change into adulthood anyway... All seven were gone or dead. What would be the point of looking too hard at that youngest one? But for some reason they let her keep him. He was with her— everywhere.^x

Baby Suggs has been deprived of her strength and all good has been taken out of her. Slaved "life had 'busted her legs, back, head, eyes hands, kidneys, womb and tongue,' she had nothing left to make a living with but her heart – which she put to work at once"^x. With her good heart she started preaching in black community. She preaches for the unity and love with each other especially the organs that has been given to blacks. She preaches that only black person can understand another black person's love, feelings, emotions, and sacrifices which are incomprehensible to the whites. The ideology she preches before the black community reflects her past and brutal experience as a black women slave, who has been exploited and victimized by whites for their purposes. She says:

Here in this here place, we flesh, flesh that weeks, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in gross. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they'd just as soon pick – em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they fly it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face 'cause they don't love that either.^x

Life closes in on her due to the atrocities that have been committed against her. "Her faith, her love, her imagination and her great big old heart began to collapse"^x because of the attitude and behaviour of whites. There is a sense of loss in her— an irretrievable loss— loss of her motherhood, her children, her love, her youth, and even her life as well. This sense of loss is very strong in her at older age when she says about white folks that "those white things have taken all I had or dreamed and broke my heartstrings too. There is no bad luck in the world but white folks."^x

Just like Baby Suggs, Eva Peace in 'Sula' also spent a very bitter life due to racial discrimination and gender. Eva Peace, another female victim, is the grandmother of Sula. Her husband, BoyBoy, does not care about her and indulges in drinking and sex. "He liked womanizing best, drinking second, and abusing Eva third"^x says Morrison. He leaves Eva, who spends a solitary life to bring up her children. "May be that's why the women were sad: the men left before they could make a baby"^x. It is very difficult for a black woman to bring up her children in a white society. Without her husband "the children needed her; she needed money, and needed to get on with her life"^x. Eva not getting enough opportunity to work in male centered society, moves towards earning her living by means of her sex for her survival. Hannah, her daughter, takes after her. "The Peace women simply loved maleness"^x. Black women have no option to survive in society except to use their sex to earn their livelihood for bringing up their children. She loves her children very much but does not want to see them completely dependent in a white dominating society. It is because of this reason that her mother love takes a new shape.

Eva presents a strange kind of mother love by burning alive her son, Plum, in fire. She kills her son because she does not want to see her son becoming addicted and turn into a dependent creature. She presents a new shape of mother love. Morrison's breath taking new concept of mother love shocks the reader. It does not mean that Eva is a stone hearted woman but circumstances which have made her a victim of racism and society's double standards, compel her to act in such a brutal manner killing her own son. When Hannah asks her mother that "why she didn't play with her"^x, the reply of Eva reflects the bitter experiences of racial prejudices and cruelties which blacks suffered in 1895. "1895 was a killer, girl. Things were bad. Niggers were dying like flies"^x. It is the because of the bad experience that Eva faced during 1895 which affected Eva completely and transformed her into a brave and strong woman. The effect of blacks killing has so much over powered her senses that she only thinks about the voices of dying blacks that continuously echo in her memories. But when Hannah asks about the death of Plum she says that "I had room enough in my heard but not in my womb, not no more... [I] would have let him if I'd've had the room"^x. Eva's remarks show her tiredness that it is due to her victimization at the hands of whites. She is now no longer capable to act as a protecting shield for her children.

After Baby Suggs and Eva Peace who face the victimization and brutalization at older stage there is another age group of female victims that set themselves apart. It is that of Helene in 'Sula', Sethe in 'Beloved', and Pauline in 'The Bluest Eye'. They suffer from the hands of white folks, society and from their own family. Helene, mother of Nel, is a conventional woman who brought up Nel on conventional ways. She suffers a bitter sort of racism for being a black woman. Morrison projects the deep feelings of hatred that are directed against blacks especially black women who are facing the double burden of racism and gender prejudice, in American

society. In order to avoid extreme form of racism Helene moves to the South with her daughter Nel. But this trip towards South is another experience of facing and bearing the hatred of white men. When she 'got in the wrong car'^x the ticket checker's humiliating remarks show the attitude of whites towards black female. Helene justifies it when she says "We make a mistake, sir. You see, there wasn't no sign. We just got in the wrong car, that's all. Sir."^x But the ticket checker's reply shows the attitude of white men towards blacks especially the black women. He replies, "We don't 'low no mistakes on this train. Now get your butt on in here"^x. This humiliating treatment with black female is the core issue in Morrison's novels.

Morrison expresses the feelings of hatred that are directed against black woman not only through words but also through gestures. When the train's ticket checker stares at them, Helene

...pressed herself and her daughter into the foot space in front of a wooden seat. Then, for no earthly reason, at least no reason that everybody could understand... Like a street pup that wags its tail at the very door jamb of the butcher shop he has been kicked away from only moments before, Helene smiled. Smiled dazzlingly and coquettishly at the salmon-colored face of the conductor.^x

Here Morrison juxtaposes Helene with a street pup which intensifies the effect of the victimization of black woman at the hands of whites. Just like a street pup, Helene has a little hope from the ticket checker's behaviour but also aware of the fear of being kicked.

Sethe in 'Beloved' also reflects the brutalization and humiliation of white people against black women. She being the central character of the novel presents a victimized life at the hands of whites in America. Sethe came at Sweet Home as a black slave girl who has been deprived of mother love and family bonds and affection. Her early days at Mr. Garner's home were good but after Mr. Garner's death, she becomes the victim of Schoolteacher's hatred and his nephew's exploitation. This brutality and exploitation reaches to its extreme when the Schoolteacher's nephew took her milk which she had for her baby and particularly at that time when she was pregnant. Sethe expresses her feelings before Paul D when she meets him after eighteen years of that bitter experience; she says:

After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Then boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still.^x

This experience with Sethe is so brutalizing that it overpowers her and her thoughts and she couldn't forget it even after a span of eighteen years. Her repetition of the phrase "And they took my milk"^x echoes her bitter experience and her victimized post. The Schoolteacher represents the capitalistic

forces at work. He is capitalism personified and acts like a machine to crush and brutalize black slaved people especially women.

Abdullatif Khayati expresses his feelings about Schoolteacher in these words: "Through the portrayal of Schoolteacher, Morrison indirectly voices her critique of modernity and enlightenment thinking."^x

Schoolteacher represents the scientific experiments and "rationalistic thinking"^x at work when he asks her students to bring out Sethe's human and animalistic characteristics. He says "No, no. That's not the way. I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up."^x It seems as if the Schoolteacher is experimenting not on a human being but on a thing. His dealing of Sethe as a slave is so brutalizing and humiliating that Sethe finds no way out except to escape from the iron clutches of the Schoolteacher.

Sethe wants to break away from her slaved and brutally victimized life. She fled away but she has the fear to be caught and punished by the Schoolteacher. Morrison expresses Sethe's feelings of fear which she had while escaping from Sweet Home to avoid further brutality of the new employees.

In her words:

She is tired, scared may be, and may be even lost. Most of all she is by herself and inside her is another baby she has to think about too. Behind her dogs, perhaps; guns probably; and certainly mossy teeth. She is not so afraid at night because she is the color of it, but in the day every sound is a shot or a tracker's quiet step.^x

Night was not safe for Sethe rather Morrison seems using irony to intensifying the effect of the fear that Sethe was feeling. Sethe's apparent blackness is correlating with night's blackness which in effect pointing out the inward blackness of whites. On her way to escape Sethe met Ella who is a black agent at on Underground Railroad. Ella, expresses Sethe's victimized condition, who has just given birth to a baby, in a moving way, but which is 'hard to say'. She says "if anybody was to ask me I'd say, 'Don't love anything'."^x Ella's remarks at Sethe's condition echoes her own bitter experience of life. She is the victim of the people of her own race and who are close to her – her father and son.

Nobody loved her and she wouldn't have killed it if they had, for she considered loved a serious disability. Her puberty was spent in a house where she was shared by father and son, whom she called "the lowest yet". It was "the lowest yet" who gave her a disgust for sex and against whom she measured all atrocities. A killing, a kidnap, a rape – whatever, she listened and nodded. Nothing compared to "the lowest yet".^x

The bitterest experience of Sethe's life is her brutally killing her own daughter. This act of infanticide is the consequence and aftermath of slavery on black women which "enable Morrison to pursue the consequences of the destruction of the mother-child bond on female identity."^x Sethe's killing of her own daughter seems at first a brutalized and stone-hearted

aspect of mother love but if deeply scrutinized then this act appears as an aspect of strong mother love who wanted to live and give her child "any life but not that one"^x, that is, slaved. Keizer justifies Sethe's act of infanticide in following words: Sethe's murder of her daughter is an abbreviated suicide; she has to kill her children before she kills herself to be sure that they will not live to be brutalized as she has been.^x

Killing of Beloved is for Sethe the killing of her own self. She does not want to live her baby a life that she herself lived.

The last group of female victims is that of young black girls, Nel, Sula and Pecola, who also suffered a lot at the hands of white folks in colonized black America. 'The Bluest Eye' is Morrison's first fictional work which revolves around one single dominant black girl, Pecola, who is neglected by her mother, raped by her father and brutally victimized by the higher social class of her own race and white folks. She is "restricted by youth and sex, experienced with methods of endurance."^x Her greatest tragedy is due to her gender and age because of which she could not move and escape into the world unknown from known world. She makes a wish to God to "make me disappear"^x as she cannot face the brutalities and victimization at the hands of whites.

Pecola is greatly victimized by her fellows and school teachers. She tried "to discover the secrets of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at School, by teachers and classmates alike". Morrison expresses and explains the deep rooted discrimination on the basis of race and gender. She explains teacher's attitude towards Pecola as "Her teachers had always treated her this way. They tried never to glance at her, and called on her only when everyone was required to respond."^x

Pecola's wish to have blue eyes is due to the inferiority complex that she feels when she is made to ridiculed due to her blackness. She wants to have blue eyes, and blond hairs to look beautiful and attractive and to be cared. Shopkeeper's attitude toward Pecola makes her believe about the extreme of hatred and disgust that white people have for them. The shopkeeper even doesn't want to look at her "because for him there is nothing to see".^x Pecola "sees the vacuum"^x that is there due to only skin colour. Their feelings and hearts are same, the colour of tears are same but then for what this 'vacuum' is. But Pecola knows about this vacuum which is not new to her.

It [vacuum] has an edge; somewhere in the bottom lid is the distaste. She had seen it lurking in the eyes of all white people. So. The distaste must be for her, her blackness. All things in her are flux and anticipation. But her blackness is static and dread. And it is the blackness that accounts for, that creates, the vacuum edge with distaste in white eyes.^x

Pecola is not only victimized by elders but by the boys of her own age. One her way back to home from school, Pecola was encircled by a group of boys who held her as a victim. Pecola was like a captive in their custody and they started playing with and teasing her. Those boys danced around Pecola

shouting and repeating “Black e mo. Black e mo. Ya daddy sleeps nekked.”^x Morrison explains that they ...have taken all of their smoothly cultivated ignorance, their exquisitely learned self-hatred, their elaborately designed hopelessness and sucked it all up into a fiery one of scorn that had burned for ages in the hollows of their minds – cooled – and spilled over lips of outrage, consuming whatever was in its path.^x

Morrison as a black women writer explains and expresses her own feelings and emotions and the experiences which a black woman feels from a feministic point of view. Nothing in the world is that seems to sympathize with black feelings and emotions. The hierarchical patterns of social power place black women only a step ahead from lower level.

Everybody in the world was in a position to give them orders. White women said, “Do this”. White children said, “Give me that”. White men said, “Come here”. Black men said, “Lay down”. The only people they need not take orders from were black children and each other.^x

It is this hierarchical pattern which has been created due to the socially acknowledged place and laws for women especially black women. Pecola suffers from these laws and standards that place her at the bottom of human hierarchy.

Pecola being raped by her own father, Cholly, gives birth to a child who dies due to immature birth. Society’s attitude towards her is as if she is evil personified. Nobody loves her, nobody gives attention to her. When she goes to Soaphead to ask for blue eyes, he uses her for his own purpose – kill a dog that he does not like. She goes insane due to the hatred, which she receives from society. Morrison’s aspect of female victimization is reflected in the personality of Pecola. Kuenz says that: “Morrison seems to move her examination of Pecola’s life back and forth from the axis of race to that of gender.”^x

Similarly, Sula in ‘Sula’ also presents a picture of female victim that Morrison reflects in quite a different way. Sula, a black girl, breaks away from society due to conventionality of the life that people of that society are living. She is presented as an evil personified who completely indulges herself in sex in order to keep aside the hatred and victimization of white folks. White people’s hatred and brutalization has so much overpowered the personality of Sula that she finds no way out to get rid of this situation and dilemma except sex. Momentary pleasure gives her relief and a form of forgetfulness of her past. Her actions show her bold and unbridled way of life which mostly conventional people neglect. On Eva’s objection on Sula’s unbridled and rampant life makes Sula uneasy. Eva says “You need to have some babies. It’ll settle you”.^x Sula replies that “I don’t want to make somebody else. I want to make myself”.^x Her pride in herself makes her stand before society and enable her to continue living in an unconventional way of life. As Morrison explains:

She was distinctly different. Eva’s arrogance and Hannah’s self-indulgence merged in her and, with a twist that was all her own imagination, she lived out her days exploring her own thoughts and emotions, giving them full reign, feeling no obligation to please anybody unless their pleasure pleased her.^x

Sula’s talk with Nel expresses her real nature. She knows the victimization of black women not only at the hands of whites but also from black folks. “Every colored woman” she says is “dying like me but the difference is they dying like a stump. Me, I’m going down like one of those redwoods. I sure did live in this world.”^x

Sula’s life “was an experimental life”^x which she spent in order to explore herself and her identity. “For that reason she felt no compulsion to verify herself— be consistent with herself.”^x Sula’s new way of life is due to the exploitation and brutalization that she feels at the hands of whites. Her victimization at the hands of whites transforms her into a new Sula that is completely different from the previous one. Her experimental life sets the new concept of female power and determination to get rid of the exploitation and victimization on the basis of race.

Female victimization at the hands of whites occupies an important place in Morrison’s works. All her novels deal with the issue of racism at different levels. It is not only black women who become the victim of racism but also black men and children that suffer at the hands of whites due to their skin colour. The next chapter deals with this issue of racial discrimination from men and children’s perspectives.

Men and Children as Victims of Racial Discrimination

Morrison’s main concern is to reflect feministic point of view from a feminist perspective. Therefore, male figures get limited space in her writings. But in sketching Paul D in her novel ‘Beloved’, Morrison puts her great effort to bring him to the stature of her favourite characters. Most of her male characters are overshadowed by her female characters— Cholly in ‘The Bluest Eye’, Plum in ‘Sula’ and so on. However, male figures are not completely out from her frame of novel rather they often act as a foil to give more prominence to females. Morrison’s dealing of children in her novels is not without cause for she gives a complete picture of black exploited family at the hands of whites. Children come at the lower level of hierarchical pattern and thus are exploited and victimized by every one. For instance Pecola and Sammy in ‘The Bluest Eye’, Nel and Sula in ‘Sula’, Beloved in ‘Beloved’ and so on.

Morrison’s favourite male figure that she presented with great effort and verve in Beloved is that of Paul D. Paul D is a figure of black male victim who is suffering in the hands of white folks. He presents a true picture of black victimized male figure. Morrison presents him as a victim who has been exploited to the very end of his strength, power and

endurance. His slaved life is a continuous struggle to break away from the chains of slavery and a victimized life that is replete with “unspeakable thoughts”.^x Morrison takes great pains in sketching Paul D on paper as a living victimized black persona that captures readers’ attention throughout the course of the novel. Morrison says about Paul D that “Paul D was a favourite character of mine because he was complicated, vulnerable, strong and he evolved.”^x

Paul D’s complicated and bitter life make his personality complicated as well. Being a slave, he spends a very bitter and deplorable life. All his feelings senses and emotions have been taken in order to make him only a senseless slave who only acts at his master’s command. When he was taken as a slave and made to travel in an inhuman way— full of pains and hardships and chained in a row— he even lost the feelings of pain and forgot to weep. The only sense that was left was that he could only think. He thought about his pains, his feelings, his emotions welled up inside him but could not give concrete form to his thoughts by speaking out:

Paul D thought he was screaming; his mouth was open and there was this loud throat— splitting sound— but it may have been somebody else. Then he thought he was crying. Something was running down his cheeks. He lifted his hands to wipe away the tears and saw dark brown slime.^x

Here the only possession that Paul D has is that of ‘thought’— that too is an abstract one. This abstract phenomenon is the only thing that whites cannot take, cannot extract and cannot stop Paul D to have a relation with it.

Paul D is victimized so brutally that he lost the significance of life and its meaning. For him the purpose of life has lost. He “had no idea of what to do and knew less than anybody, it seemed”.^x Twenty eight days of enslaved travel makes him dead tired. For him “life was dead”.^x It seemed as if “life rotted over dead”.^x When Paul D was taken as a slave, he was little aware of the atrocities and cruelties of white folks. He didn’t know the real nature of whites which was completely deep rooted in corruption and exploitation. The band of forty six slaves were completely exploited and humiliated to death. Paul D was one of them. He did not find any way out to escape the atrocities and victimization of whites due to his place that had been created between them only due to skin colour and then due to the social status that they have. Morrison explains it in these words:

The disease they suffered now was a more inconvenience compared to the devastation they remembered. Still, they protected each other as best they could. The healthy were sent some miles away; the sick stayed behind with the dead— survive or join them.^x

Recalling his past, Paul D’s talk shows and reflects the bitter experiences he had in his life. Talking with Sethe, eighteen years after the enslaved life he says, “If a Negro got legs he ought to use them. Sit down too long, somebody will figure out a way to tie them up”.^x

At Sweet Home he serves as a slave and bears bravely the cruelties and atrocities of the Schoolteacher. But the Civil War brings an end, although not completely, to this double standard— one for blacks and other for whites. Horrible consequences and effects of the Civil War were inevitable because of the humiliating and victimizing attitude of whites towards blacks that make their life unbearable in America. Revolt never comes until and until life itself becomes unbearable. The Civil War, broke in the Southern part of America, was the result of the atrocities and cruelties of whites that became unbearable for blacks.

Through Paul D’s thought, Morrison describes the impact of the Civil War that affected both whites and blacks, “when he and his group combed the battlefields, their job was to pull the Confederate wounded away from the Confederate dead... Coloredmen and white, their faces wrapped to their eyes, picked their way through the meadows with lamps, listening in the dark for groans of life in the different silence of the dead”.^x Paul D’s victimized life was declared free at Alabama as the result of that war. He could not stay there to be caught. “Alone, undisguised, with visible skin, memorable hair and no whiteman to protect him, he never stayed uncaught”^x, thought Paul D. it is not only Paul D who suffered at the hands of whites because of enslaved life but also other slaves at Sweet Home.

Sixo, one of the slaves at Sweet Home, is brutalized and victimized by the Schoolteacher. Sixo represents a true picture of victimized figure. He works there as a slave but his earlier time with Mr. Garner, was good. But soon after the death of Mr. Garner, Sixo’s hard days start and he is mercilessly beaten by the Schoolteacher even for minor mistakes. At Sweet Home all his feelings, aspirations and emotions are neglected because he belongs to a lower race. His desires regarding love and sex are neglected. It seems as if he is not a living being but a mechanical instrument that requires nothing but only instructions from masters.

Sixo’s craving for ‘Thirty-Miles Woman’ shows her real passion for love that is being neglected by whites. “He arranged a meeting with Patsy the Thirty-Mile Woman. It took three months and two thirty-four mile round trips to do it.”^x Sixo arranged his meeting in secret “since neither could go nowhere on business of their own”.^x It seems as if Sixo is neither a human being nor an animal because even animals can also make love and show sympathy to each others but Sixo could not. Sixo and Thirty-Miles Woman arranged a meeting there in woods in order to avoid whites’ hatred and brutalities. This sort of treatment from whites creates deep seated hatred against them in blacks— particularly the black slaves.

Sixo’s stealing of shoat at Sweet Home infuriates the Schoolteacher. He investigates the whole incident from Sixo. But Sixo’s reply that “He did not steal it” rather it is “improving your property”^x, surprises the schoolteacher. On Schoolteacher’s asking how it is so, Sixo replies:

Sixo plant rye to give the higher piece a better chance. Sixo takes and feed the soil, give you more crop. Sixo take and feed Sixo give you more work.^x

But Sixo's logical and clever remarks infuriates the Schoolteacher and he "beats him anyway to show him that definitions belonged to the definers— not the defined".^x Blacks in colonized black America are 'defined' for their life is not free. They cannot move and act in a way they want. Rather they are subjected to a race which claims their superiority only due to colour. This maltreated treatment is not only directed toward slaves but ex-slaves as well who suffer because of colour differences and racial prejudices. Even blacks as free men face the hardships of life which are unknown to white people. Cholly is an example of such victims.

Cholly, a black figure, is represented as a morally spoiled male figure in 'The Bluest Eye'. He beats his wife physically, neglects his children, drinks and even rapes his own daughter, Pecola. This makes him a completely negative figure. But this negative personality of Cholly is the product of several factors. He was completely neglected by society and his own family. "When Cholly was four days old, his mother wrapped him in two blankets and one newspaper and placed him on a junk heap by railroad."^x Completely neglected from family bonds and relations he was also fired by his father, when he said "I'm your boy". His reply "something wrong with your head? Who told you to come after me?"^x, makes him free. "Dangerously free. Free to feel whatever he felt— fear, guilt, shame, love, grief, pity. Free to be tender or violent, to whistle or weep".^x Cholly is humiliated by whites at every time and place. The ticket giver's attitude with Cholly makes him realize that for blacks "insults were part of the nuisances of life, like lice".^x It is this attitude of whites that makes Cholly feel free from every relation and association with somebody else even from his own family.

In his youth Cholly is greatly victimized and humiliated by the hunters who are also white men. He feels a sense of helplessness when he was making love with Darlene and two white hunters came there and asked him to perform sex before them just to give them entertainment. Being helpless by the power and attitude of hunters that they enjoy, Cholly feels a sense of humiliation and disgust. But after the hunters' departure he could not control his feelings of hatred welling up against them that take place in his heart.

Never did he once consider directing his hatred toward the hunters. Such an emotion would have destroyed him. They were big, white, armed men. He was small, black, helpless. His subconscious knew what his conscious mind did not guess— that hating them would have consumed him, burned him up like a piece of soft and a question mark of smoke.^x

Since Cholly's hatred towards white hunters remained suppressed in his heart because of his inferior position he directed his anger towards Darlene who was as helpless as he was but being a woman she could be victimized. Therefore

Cholly directed his anger towards her and "he hated the one who had created the situation, the one who bore witness to his failure, his impotence, the one whom he had not been able to protect, to spare, to cover from the round moon glow of the flashlight".^x This condition of Cholly is due to the hatred and humiliation that he had received from white folks. But they were out of his reach. So his hatred took a direction towards his own family, and to take refuge from his mental agony he began drinking. Excessive alcohol gave his senses momentary relief from his dilemma. Cholly's rape of his own daughter is also an action which he performed when he was overwhelmed by "the hatred mixed with tenderness".^x This hatred he must ventilate but it takes its expression in a horrible way and brings devastating consequences.

It is not only black grown men figures but also black children who are victimized by white folks and people of their own race and they also suffered. Pecola, a young teenager, is completely neglected and victimized by society and her own family. The researcher has already discussed the personality of Pecola as a female victim but there is another dimension of her personality, that is, as a child. Pecola is an innocent black little girl who craves for blue eyes and blond hairs because she thinks that if she has blue eyes then the world will treat her differently and not with hatred and disgust. At school her fellows and teacher's attitude make her realize that she is ugly. Her mother's negligence makes her realize that she is not loved by anyone not even by her mother whose all love is directed towards Fisher's family whom she serves as a maidservant. Her father rapes her instead of protecting her from others and consequently she got pregnant, a town fortuneteller pedophile— Soaphead's exploitation; all this contribute a lot in contriving Pecola's tragedy. She is in the real sense a victim.

Junior, the son of a wealthy black family who despises poor blacks, exercises the same power on Pecola as whites exercise on blacks. The killing of the cat incident infuriates Junior's mother who orders Pecola in a violent voice "Get out. You nasty little black bitch. Get out of my house".^x This victimization of this little black girl reflects some unseen powers at work. A power that has been taken as a force to exploit black children. It moves in a hierarchical order— white people exploits blacks, black men exploit black women, black women and boys exploit and victimize little black girls. Pecola suffers from the hands of all unseen powers that work collectively in order to exploit and victimize her.

Children are at the lower level of hierarchical pattern. Boys in Morrison's novels are usually in a habit of runaway from their homes. What then, makes them run away time and again is the power and attitude of white folks and their own family members. Sammy is young and unhappy boy who watches his own father and mother fighting with each other. It makes him ...cursed for a while, or left the house, or threw himself into the fray. He was known by the time he was fourteen, to have run away from home no less than twenty seven times. His returns, whether by force or circumstances, were sullen.^x

This condition of Sammy is due to the disintegration of his family which is the result of racism that blacks were facing at the hands of whites. So indirectly Sammy is affected and victimized due to the long lasting and deep rooted effects of racism. His remarks at his parent's fight "Kill him! Kill him!"^x echoes the whites' attitude and treatment that they have towards blacks. It shows that he is so much affected by this that the phrase 'Kill him! Kill him!' overcomes him and gives stimuli place to his primitive instinct to kill.

Similarly Howard and Buglar, two young boys of Sethe, are also in a habit of running away. Their flight is not due to their instinct to be free but it is because of the fear created by their mother who tries but fails to kill them when the Schoolteacher comes to claim for his possession. It seems that both Howard and Buglar fled due to their mother's fear but actually the motive behind her attempt to kill them was to save them from something worse – that is, slavery. The victimization of Sethe's sons is not due to their mother but due to Schoolteacher who is exploiting them to the very last and who is representing white's power at work. In 'Sula', Plum was burnt alive by his mother not due to his mother's hatred but because she did not want him to see as a helplessly victimized black man.

So men and children although get little space in Morrison's works but they act as vehicles to project the theme and issue of racism, exploitation, and victimization. In the presence of men, female get more prominence and place in Morrison's novels. It is due the strong cause of racism that affects the lives and behaviours of blacks. It is due to the dehumanization and victimization of blacks at the hands of whites. These blacks have no where to escape and that is why they suffer from the eldest to the youngest regardless of their gender. It is the unspeakable inhumanities and injustices which whites exercise against blacks not even considering them as human beings at all. These are the unspeakable injustices and inhumanities that the researcher is going to deal in the next chapter.

Injustice and Inhumanity

Morrison is one of the greatest black African American writers who give voice to the cruelties, brutalities and inhuman behaviour of whites against blacks. Behaviour of whites against blacks is so inhuman that one feels shame to speak it out in order to express the real nature of man. These are the unspeakable thoughts that have never been spoken by any writer except Morrison with such verve and vitality. She gives voice to the unspeakable thoughts in order to draw man's attention towards the most horrible and devastating aspect of his nature— lust for power and desire to rule. It is this lust for power and desire to rule that finds its way in different directions in order to gratify whites' instincts through the exploitation of blacks.

Inhuman but unspeakable behaviour is familiar to blacks because of the attitude and behaviour of whites towards them is based on colour differences and racial prejudices. Racism takes its roots when people of different ideologies, colour,

religion, culture come into contact with each other. But in this case one race is dominant due to social, economic and political power. This dominant race exercises unlimited power to gratify its inner most primitive instinct by exploiting the dominated that belong to the lower race. The effect of this phenomenon does not remain restricted only to the grown up people but it also poisons the lower level – the young ones – which imitate and exercise the same power of exploitation and inhumanity. Racial prejudice mostly evolves due to the geographical demarcation and differences in physical features which vary from place to place and person to person. In Morrison's words:

There are racial differences among us. Exaggerated and exploited for political and economic purposes. And we have a great deal of baggage, personal feelings about other races because the society has been constructed along racial division. But in fact, when we meet another person one on one, and we know or recognize their race, we pull from that large suitcase of stereotypical information, of learned responses, of habitual reaction, which is the easiest and the laziest way to evaluate other people. The difficult thing and the important thing is to know people as individuals. So knowing that an individual is Asian or white or black is knowing next to nothing. It's knowing some cultural information which one can assume, but one must be wrong. But one must know much more than simply a racial marker. Knowing another person's race is like knowing their height or some other almost irrelevant piece of biological information... Race is the least important piece of information we have about another person. Forcing people to react racially to another person is to miss the whole point of humanity.^x

This 'racial division' is mostly based on geographical demarcation— Asian, American, European, African. It is the demarcation that one can avoid but the demarcation on the basis of colour cannot be avoided and erased so easily. These 'racial markers' become the key factors for dehumanization and exploitation.

Morrison's works are replete with the inhuman behaviour of whites towards blacks due to the power that they enjoy in their country. The Schoolteacher exercises the unlimited power and authority to exploit blacks. His behaviour with slaves is completely inhuman and brutal. His nephew's taking of milk from Sethe's breast shows the inhuman behaviour. No person can visualize such behaviour, to be done against any human being especially a woman when she is pregnant. This inhuman behaviour is due to power and position that whites are enjoying in America on the basis of racism. The Schoolteacher's attitude towards the slaves is monopolistic. He enjoys unlimited and unchecked power to exploit and brutalize blacks. He feels pleasure at the helplessness and powerlessness of blacks and their complete dependence on white's will and wishes. He wants to see them paralyzed and incapacitated so that his authority and power would exist in a white privileged society. Khayati remarks about the Schoolteacher:

With his monopolistic learning, his ruthless will to mute the suffering of others, and his arrogant rationalism, Schoolteacher seeks to fix others into inferiority and helplessness, to use their bodies as a free labour force, in order to preserve his privileged.^x

The Schoolteacher exercises his power only to get his benefits and good out of black slaves. His nephew's beating of Sethe 'beyond the point of education' makes his capitalistic interests at stake. His chastising of his nephew, when they catch the fugitive Sethe, is not for sympathizing with Sethe but at the loss of his capitalistic interest. Morrison says about this condition of the Schoolteacher that:

Right off it was clear, to schoolteacher especially, that there was nothing there to claim. The three (now four – because she'd had the one coming when she cut) pickaninnies they had hoped were alive and well enough to take back to Kentucky, take back and raise to do the work Sweet Home desperately needed, were not. Two were lying open – eyed in sawdust; a third pumped blood down the dress of the main one – the woman schoolteacher bragged about, the one he said made fine ink, damn good soup, pressed his collars the way he liked besides having at least ten breeding years left. But now she'd gone wild, due to the mishandling of the nephew who'd overbeat her and made her cut and run. Schoolteacher had chastised that nephew, telling him to thing – just think – what would his own horse do if you beat it beyond the point of education.^x

The Schoolteacher's loss of interest in Sethe is because "there was nothing there to claim" as he has sucked all good out of her and thrown her like a banana skin. This dehumanizing attitude of the Schoolteacher represents the capitalistic force at work which always try to crush poor. Khayati says about the Schoolteacher's attitude that:

Words like pickaninnies, cut, gone wild, and horse, spoken in relation to Sethe, reveal Schoolteachers sense of superiority and arrogance. In representing this scene through Schoolteacher's eye, Morrison calls attention to how white imperialistic discourse has persistently posited the English language itself as racist.^x

This capitalistic and monopolistic power is at work due to the unlimited and unchecked power and authority that whites are enjoying in their homeland. No one can challenge their absolute power and authority. It is because of the exploitation and injustice and inhuman attitude against that Sethe revolts and takes a bold and courageous step, first by escaping from the Sweet Home and then by killing her own daughter. Her remark to Paul D, when he asks that why the Schoolteacher "didn't take you back"^x, shows the revolting nature of Sethe against the capitalistic nature and inhuman behaviour of whites. She says "I wasn't going back there. I don't care who found who. Any life but not that one".^x Sethe's revolt against the capitalistic and monopolistic nature and power of whites, which they exercise in order to dehumanize the blacks shows

the consequences of that unchecked power which leads to injustice and inhumanity.

In 'The Bluest Eye' this unlimited power and authority has been shown in the shape of the hunter's arrival when Cholly is making love to a girl – Darlene. This unchecked power has so much overpowered white men's senses that they see nothing about blacks' emotions, feelings, passion fails to see blacks as human beings. Treating blacks as animals and even worse than animal, whites order them to perform unspeakable acts only to get pleasure and entertainment. The white hunters ordered Cholly to perform the act of love with the black girl Darlene. One of the whites ordered: "Get on with it, nigger"^x. On Cholly's reluctance the white hunter threatens him with his gun. Morrison describes this feeling of helplessness of Cholly in these words:

There was no place for Cholly's eyes to go. They slid about furtively searching for shelter, while his body remained paralyzed. The flashlight man lifted his gun down from his shoulder, and Cholly heard the cllop of metal. He dropped back to his knees. Darlene had her head averted, her eyes staring out of the lamplight into the surrounding darkness and looking almost unconcerned, as though they had no part in the drama taking place around them.^x

Cholly's helplessness at the hands of whites infuriates him. Whites have treated him even worse than animals as if he has no emotions, feelings and sense of self-respect. This injustice and inhuman attitude of whites towards blacks is due to the differences of power, authority and on the basis of race. The feelings of belonging to the higher race produce a psychological impact on the minds and perceptions of whites about the superiority that they are enjoying through the exploitation and dehumanizing behaviour with blacks. Whites even don't consider them as animals rather worse than animals. This dehumanizing attitude of whites towards blacks is mostly directed against black women as they are the easy victims at the hands of whites.

When Pauline, mother of Pecola, is getting ready to give birth to her second child, she was placed in big room. Doctors came to check her, but after sometimes a doctor came with his student-doctors for learning. The elder doctor's attitude and remarks about Pauline's way of giving birth to a child, shows a completely dehumanized attitude of whites against blacks. Pauline expresses doctor's remarks and her helplessness in these words:

When he got to me he said now these here women you don't have any trouble with. They deliver right away and with no pain. Just like horses. The young ones smiled a little. They looked at my stomach and between my legs. They never said nothing to me. Only one looked at me. Looked at my face, I mean. I looked back right at him. He dropped his eyes and turned red. He knowed, I reckon, that may be I weren't no horse foaling.... The pain wasn't as bad as I let on, but I had to let them people know having a baby was more than a bowel movement. I hurt just like them white women... He must never seed no mare foal. Who say they don't have no pain?

Just 'cause she don't cry? 'Cause she can't say it, they think it ain't there? If they looks in her eyes and see them eyeballs lolling back, see the sorrowful look, they'd know.^x

The doctor's dehumanization of Pauline restrains him to look into her eyes for it means to understand Pauline's undeniable humanness and her status as a subject. This unjust and inhuman behaviour of whites towards blacks, places whites at the bottom of moral degradation. While Pauline's humanization of the horse reflects her association with other female victims through this common act of victimization and brutalization at the hands of whites. One can only understand the feelings of pains by looking into the eyes of a horse and that they are as real as that of humans – regardless of their species. And same is true for black and white women regardless of their skin colour.

Similarly, Eva, Sula's grandmother, faces same sort of dehumanizing attitude and behaviour from whites. When Hannah, mother of Sula, caught fire, Eva comes forward to save her daughter struggling with one leg but she makes herself injured and also burns her. She fails to save Hannah. Later "lying in the colored ward of the hospital",^x Eva experiences another act of dehumanization at the hands of white nurses because of racial prejudices and discrimination on the basis of social and political power. Morrison describes this as:

When Eva go to the hospital they put her stretcher on the floor, so preoccupied with the hot and bubbling flesh of the other (some of them had never seen so extreme a burn case before) they forgot Eva, who would have bled to death except Old Willy Fields, the orderly, saw blood staining his just-mopped floors and went to find out where it was coming from. Recognizing Eva at once he shouted to a nurse, who came to see if the bloody one-legged black woman was alive or dead.^x

This negligence and indifference of white doctors and nurses move Eva greatly to think about her life and her place in society where whites only get the privilege of being human. They are not even concerned with whether blacks are alive or dead. For whites blacks have nothing common with them except the shape to some extent.

This act of dehumanization also takes place at lower level. Children are innocent human beings but they are also corrupted and poisoned by the injustices and inhuman attitude of whites towards blacks. Net in 'Sula' and Pecola in 'The Blues Eye', both girls suffer and face extreme form of racial prejudices and gender discrimination at the hands of whites. Both, being girls, are victimized and brutalized by society and male figures. Boys stop them when they are on the way back to their home and play with them considering them as an object, not as human beings.

Morrison's first novel 'The Bluest Eye', investigates the injustices and inhuman behaviour of whites against blacks—particularly against black girls such as Pecola. Morrison questions about the injustices and inhuman practices when Pecola is being neglected by her teachers and classmates.

"What was the secret? What did we lack? Why was it important? And so what?"^x says Morrison about Pecola's feelings. Morrison's questions try to unfold the reason for the lack of the rights which every human being enjoys especially the white ones. The shopkeeper's attitude towards the black girl Pecola also highlights the brutalities and injustices that white people commit against blacks. Blacks are not given their due rights. They are neglected and even avoided to be touched. When Pecola pays the money for the sweet she has bought, Morrison describes the attitude of the shopkeeper and Pecola's feelings in these words:

She [Pecola] holds the money towards him [shopkeeper]. He hesitates, not wanting to touch her hand. She does not know how to move, the finger of her right hand from the display counter or to get the coins out of her left hands. Finally he reaches over and takes the pennies from her hand. His nails graze her damp palm.^x

This humiliating attitude of the shopkeeper is inhuman because he considers himself to be the only creature on earth who can rule depriving black people even from their basic rights of being as human beings. This inhuman behaviour of the shopkeeper produces a sense of shame in Pecola. Morrison describes it as: "Outside Pecola feels the inexplicable shame ebb".^x The same inhuman behaviour places Pecola at the bottom of human hierarchy, that is, at lower level from where she cannot be more degraded and devalued. "This is race talk, the explicit insertion into everyday life of racial signs and symbols that have no meaning other than pressing African Americans to the lowest level of the racial hierarchy",^x says Morrison.

These injustices and acts of inhuman attitude are not only committed against individuals but also against communal groups. The insanity of Pecola reflects the unjust and inhuman behaviour of whites; death of Sula personifies the dehumanization of blacks at work; Sethe, Eva and Pauline all represent the victimization and brutalization at the hands of whites; and young Denver and Beloved bear the consequences this clash of ideologies at physical and spiritual level – all represent and bear the inerasable effects on their personalities due to the causes of injustices and inhumanities whose victims they become.

Blacks have no place to go and protect themselves from the attacks of monopolistic and capitalistic forces which work only to crush them to death not leaving any other room for escape. Whites even want to take their memories which are the only things which they claim as their own. All of Morrison's characters are obsessed with past which is replete with the "unspeakable thoughts"^x and incidents of racial prejudice and colour differences. Morrison uses the technique of stream of consciousness, through which she gives the realistic picture of the atrocities and cruelties that have been committed against blacks in America from character's own perspectives.

Stamp Paid, a black victimized figure reflects through his memories the painful but 'unspeakable thoughts' of past that

he has seen and that he is still unable to scratch from his memories. His memories are replete with the cruelties and brutalities that whites have committed against blacks. He thinks:

Eighteen seventy four and white folks are still on the loose. Whole towns wiped clean of Negroes; eighty-seven lynchings in one year alone in Kentucky; four colored schools burned to the ground; grown men whipped like children; children whipped like adults; black women raped by the crew; property taken, necks broken. He smelled skin, skin and hot blood. The skin was one thing, but human blood cooked in a lynch fire was a whole other thing.^x

Stamp Paid's past reflects the 'unspeakable thoughts unspoken'. Grown men and children were whipped and women were raped as if they were not human or perhaps their outward blackness restrained them to be considered as human. These ferocities and acts of savagery are only committed on the basis of racial prejudices. Morrison's remark that 'the skin was one thing, but human blood cooked in a lynch fire was a whole other thing', shows her dealing of the issue of racial prejudice at two levels – outer and inner. The skin which is the outer phenomena and factor is the only thing that is different between blacks and whites; it is the thing which makes them discriminate on the basis of colour. But 'human blood' is 'another thing'. The colour of blood of blacks is as red and same as that of whites, their passions and feelings are as sincere and true as that of whites but even then they are treated differently and almost always dehumanized. Are blacks not human being? Is their blood not as sacred as that of whites? Are their passions and feelings not as true as that of whites? These are the questions whose answers no one has or either no one wants to give because these are the unspeakable things and truths that are still unspoken and yet to be discovered.

Morrison's dedication of her novel 'Beloved' is to 'Sixty Millions and more' is not without reason. It is dedicated to those blacks who died because of the devastating and horrible effects of racial prejudices in America. The world weeps at the killing of Jews during Second World War and the figure that they got is sixty millions. But no one weeps for and pays attention to the killing of more than sixty million innocent blacks which become the victim of race and died unnoticed. Racial prejudices and discrimination on the basis of colour sprout when they get congenial environment for their existence and growth. Such prejudices convert the society into a jungle where everything grows in an untidy manner, without restraint and without any purpose and laws; where beasts live through their power and authority. But whites think that the same jungle grows 'under every dark skin' neglecting the causes of it. It is the jungle that they themselves have 'planted' in blacks. Stamp Paid thinks that very few people "died in bed like Baby Suggs", but no one "had lived a livable life".^x He thinks that:

Whitepeople believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging

screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood. In a way, he thought, they were right. The more colored people spent their strength trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, how human, the more they used themselves up to persuade whites of something Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and more tangled the jungle grew inside. But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle whitefolks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who made it. Touched them every one. Changed and altered them. Made them bloody, silly, worse than even they wanted to be, so scared were they of jungle they had made. The screaming baboon lived under their own white skin; the red gums were their own.^x

But this inward land of white and black folks is contrasted with the outer land of America which is not congenial for certain kinds of 'flowers', 'seeds' and 'fruit'. It is a land where only particular kind of flower, seed and fruit grow. Pecola, Sula, Sethe, and Beloved are certain kinds of seed and flowers that the infertile land of America does not nurture. The first narrator Claudia in 'The Bluest Eye' explains her futile effort to plant these certain kinds of seeds in these words:

I talk about how I did not plant the seeds too deeply, how it was the fault of the earth, the land, of our town. I even think now that the land of the entire country was hostile to marigolds that year. This soil is bad for certain kinds of flowers. Certain seeds it will not nurture, certain fruits it will not bear, and when the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and say the victim had no right to live. We are wrong, of course, but it doesn't matter. It's too late. At least on the edge of my town, among the garbage and the sunflowers of my town, it's much, much, much too late.^x

These certain kinds of flowers and seeds find no better place there in America due to the racial prejudices and colour differences. It is the land which 'kills of its own volition' and it is a land where 'the victim had no right to live' and prosper according to their own ideologies and culture. It is not the congenial environment and suitable time to sprout and to get nourishment from the soil which is there to give good roots for standing independently. For blacks it is not the suitable time to get rid of racism and to have equal rights but it is still 'much, much, much too late'.

Conclusion

Morrison, the first African American novelist who received the Nobel Prize for her writings, shines at the high pinnacle of success. Her writings bear the most sensitive but controversial issue of racism. Her novels explore the age old theme of racism in quite a different way. Within the limitation of space available, Morrison comes out as a first black African American female novelist who projected the issue of racism in a captivating manner. Her writings are of universal

import that gives voice to the flaring issue of racism on the basis of colour differences.

Being a female, Morrison presents the issue of racism from a feministic point of view. Her female characters mostly occupy more space in her writings and it seems they are shadowing the male figures. In Morrison's views females suffer the double burden of racism and of being a woman in a male determined white America. It is because of this reason that they are mostly victimized and brutalized with a larger group and scale of people. Morrison's dealing of the women perspective is not without reason. She gives the most realistic picture of the colonized America through the presentation and victimization of the black women as they are the most constructive and unifying force in any body of family. Women occupy a pivotal role around which the whole society revolves as she is the guiding, caring, mothering and unifying magnet which keeps the whole body as a whole. But through the exploitation and victimization of the black females, whites have completely disintegrated the complete structure of black family.

It is not only black females who are exploited but rather male victims who suffer the same hatred and exploitation at the hands of whites. Slave trade has caused the whole structure of black family to collapse. Black men were brutally victimized, badly treated, and morally degraded by whites. Nothing for them is as disturbing and pinching as the pain of being black. This effect of racism also affects the black children who come at the lower level of hierarchical pattern. Children are not cared and protected by their parents as they themselves are under the sky and in hot water. Children not only suffer the pain of being black from whites grown ups but also from young ones. They have no place to go, to escape and to protect themselves.

We deal the issue of racism as a political and social phenomenon which mostly gratifies our primitive instinct to get power and to rule. Unchecked power corrupts the man. Whites, who are in absolute power and authority, find no other way to express it except by exploiting, humiliating, mercilessly killing, and suppressing the emotions and feelings of the whole hierarchy of blacks. Their outer appearance is white but they are completely painted with blackness from inside. Morrison's novels explore this issue of racism with quite a different way, that is, from historical perspective which is replete with the horrifying aspects and unspeakable thoughts of blacks' exploitation, brutalization and victimization as slaves and ex-slaves at the hands of whites.

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