

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISINTEGRATION OF FEMALE IN THE NOVELS OF TONI MORRISON

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Abstract: This paper focuses on Morrison's female characters from a psychosocial or emotional perspective. Want to explore the female shattered self which cannot be understood without a patriarchal western society that makes women the victim of social oppression, disempowerment. Throughout all of Toni Morrison's novels focus is on the development of the female sense of self. Morrison constantly explores how female must battle the effects of racism and the brutal history of slavery that have had such a negative impact on the family. Each novel traces the psychological damage of female created by slavery and omnipresent racism. Beloved demonstrates the psychological disintegration of female and it reconstructs the intricate interplay of psychological and cultural forces that shape each character's sense of self. Social oppression is one of the factors in the impact of psychological trauma on selfhood. Trauma brings about exclusion and, finally, may lead to the destruction of the sense of self. Judith Herman writes, "The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others"; since times of slavery, black womanhood has been destroyed, dismantled and abused with racial, sexual and inhuman practices by black men and white men and women. In the process, they have lost their genuine "self", and have developed a complexity in themselves. This has been responsible for the destruction of their self-confidence and the feeling of being human which led to the psychological disintegration of women.

Keywords: psychological disintegration, trauma, self, social oppression, racism.

Introduction: Morrison tries her best to depict different women experience in her novels. Adolescent girls often appear as characters in Morrison's stories. Unlike common young people, those girls have no choice but to accept some trauma instead of possessing the happiness of their youth. One of the features of Morrison's adolescent girls is that they get hurt and enter the adult world early. Her first novel *The Bluest Eye* examines the consequences of black womanhood in an oppressive white world. Morrison states that the black females are only seen as housemaid or slaves at the hands of white race.

In The bluest eye Pecola psychologically affected because of her affectation for blue eyes, she wanted to escape from reality and the medium selected was illusion. All through the novel pecola searched for self-identify but lacked and was pushed to the state of isolation by the society. Pecola was molested by her own father and her feelings were shattered. The people around her treated her as an ugly animal. And Pecola became insane by the end. Toni Morrison skillfully portrayed the psychological suffering of the protagonist. At the end of the novel, Pecola, left as an insane woman, conversed with her imaginative friend about the beauty of her imaginative blue eyes. Novel deeply deals with the psychological problems of the protagonist. Pecola was made to believe that she was ugly and her skin colour and ugliness gave way for insults from others. All fair skinned men looked at Pecola with a kind of hatred and this increased her inferiority complex. Maureen, Junior Once, Junior Once's mother, Mrs. MacTeers and Yacobowski, all looked at Pecola with a hesitation. Automatically, it

created an inferiority complex in the mind of Pecola. Toni Morrison attracted the readers through her blend of realism and fantasy. Pecola's liking for blue eyes shows her psychological suffering. Pecola's mother Pauline is also a victim of internalized racism. She fantasizes about movie stars and works as a housekeeper (mammy) in the white household of the Fishers, lavishing all her love and affection on her employer's daughter.

Pecola's physical features ensure her to be a victim of classical racism; classical racism being the notion that the "physical ugliness of blackness is a sign of a deeper ugliness and depravity"

Pecola, the ugly black girl who does not meet society's standards is expunged from human society even before she has awakened to a consciousness of self. All black women in *The Bluest Eye* experience dependency, repression, internal racism and alienation. Pecola suffers not only because she is black and poor, but also because she is a female. The gender issue therefore becomes an important one in the novel. Morrison considers racism as the African-American's primary obstacle. *The Bluest Eye* makes one of the most powerful attacks on the relationship between white standards of female beauty and the mental, psychological oppression of black women.

Toni Morrison portrays her female protagonist, Sula, as an autonomous figure, possessing a mysterious power. Toni Morrison's *Sula* is a tale of a black woman's changing self-perception through her role in marriage and society. Sula and Nel become very attached to each other in their teenage years. After high school, Nel chooses to marry and settles into the

conventional role of wife and mother. During the ten years that Sula is away from Medallion she leads a truly experimental life and just does not conform to the conventional black women. In that period of her stay outside the town, she goes to college, sleeps with a variety of men, and clearly indicates that she will not shy away from the experience. By this and other peculiar ways of her life style, Sula cuts herself off from everyday patterns of living and pays a heavy price for her independence, which is loneliness.

Sula was psychologically affected due to her circumstances. At initial stage she suffered because of her childhood shock, which later developed into psychological disintegration. Sula in her girlhood stage enjoyed the company of her friend Nel; but to make the situation worse, one terrible incident happened which affected her psychologically. Sula, while playing with a little boy, Little Chicken, unexpectedly, threw the boy into the river and indirectly was the cause for his death. This incident psychologically affected the mind of Sula and the word "Always" said by Shadrack, whom she suspected to be the witness of the incident, followed her till her death.

Sula loved her friend Nel but she left her alone by marrying Jude. To crown the pain, her love towards Ajax was also rejected and he neglected her love. So, she was pushed to the state of alienation. Sula developed psychological disorders, which disintegrated their physic. Sula, suffered under terrible physical pain. Sula, being pained by the words of Nel collapsed physically and towards the end of the novel, she died. After Sula's death, Nel beings to reanalyze her past attitudes toward her friend, and realizes that she had treated Sula in an unfair manner. Moreover, she admits to herself that she had too quickly clung to social conventions in an effort to define herself as the good half in their relationship.

Morrison is not concerned with the trauma of any specific individual, but the collective suffering of the larger black community. In the novel *Beloved* the theme of rape is visualized as the ultimate signifier for the black people. Once Sethe encountered with her mother on her way to Sweet Home and showed her a mark under her left breast, a mark that would reminded her of the event when she was hanged and tortured. The mark symbolized her slavish indignity. he traces of rape in *Beloved* most often

appear in one or two sentences that reveal the existence of the trauma, Nan tells how she and Sethe's mother "were taken up many times by the crew" during their passage. *Beloved* is loaded with the images of rape, murder and sexual abuses. Morrison depicts the ideals of the white oppressor, murder, rape, sexual assaults were common incidents and all the Black women struggled to face the powerful forces. Sethe's husband suffers mental disintegration as he witnesses the rape of his wife notwithstanding the horror of the forced suckling. Sethe is often raped by the crew. Sethe, who suffered because of her bitter past, secluded herself from the rest of the world and lived a lonely life with her daughter Denver in the house 124; 124, is believed to be haunted by the ghost of Sethe's dead daughter, Beloved. Both their loneliness is self-made. Sethe who wanted to lead a secluded life is interrupted by the arrival of Paul D and he reminded her past and interrupted her lonely life. In the novel, *Beloved*, Sethe herself being a victim of molest, was affected psychologically and had murdered her own child in order to free her from slavery. Sethe's mother and the nun were often "taken off" by a gang of men and Sethe's milk was stolen by the two white boys. This shows the utmost pain of female suffering. The consequences of this physical damage end in psychological outburst.

Conclusion: Toni Morrison portrays the pathetic condition of their female characters. Their suffering is both physical and psychological. Psychological suffering is more than the physical suffering. Depression was another psychological problem for the protagonists. They used to suppress their feelings inside the heart and it paved way for their psychological depression. Toni Morrison explains the suffering of their female characters. Because of the male dominated society, the female suffer. The physical wound like the pain of beating, pain of molesting is the greatest suffering; a male could impose upon the female. The utmost painful suffering which a male could impose on a female is molesting of feminism. Because, the consequence of molest is both physical as well as mental, it leaves a permanent wound is the mind of the female. This psychological damage due to molest is skillfully handled. The female characters were tormented by the male, through physical abuses.

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