

VOICE OF THE VOICELESS IN TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED*

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the ill treatment of Black Women in the African Society in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*. The novelist acts as a mouthpiece to tell about the tyrannies of racism. She depicts how black woman are doubly victimized. '*Beloved*' provides scope to analyze the effects of slavery on women. It is the sustained effort of the novelist to bring out the dark side of the oppressed lot to the open ground.

Key words : Black Women Slavery Racism victimized oppressed

Introduction

Toni Morrison is a great woman writer who voices forth the ill treatment of Black Women in the African society. Her novel *Beloved* portrays the issues of slavery with a special focus on the effects of racism, gender bias, class and power. Her novels centre around how these black women are entrapped in a white patriarchal society and a culturally racialized and gendered biased community.

Toni Morrison acts as a mouthpiece to tell about the tyrannies of racism. She clearly depicts how black woman are doubly victimized. They are to perform different roles as mother, wife and daughter in their homes and to satisfy the needs of their employers who are White. Woman is the central part of her family. The Black Woman are compelled to occupy the marginal position in the American urban life.

Trauma of Oppression

Sethe, a slave, resides in Cincinnati with her daughter Denver. For keeping her children away from slavery, she happened to kill her infants. Of them, the youngest died and three children were raised up by her. Sethe secured a good job as a cook and lived with her daughter. To avoid the memory of her unhappy past, she engages herself in work. She doesn't want to recollect her enslaved life in the Southern Plantation Sweet-Home. Morrison uses the technique stream-of-consciousness in marking the boundary between the past and the present. To show the seriousness of the events, the novelist often switches from the past to the present events. The novel throws light with a deep psychological study on the traumatic mind of black women.

In all races, woman is given importance for her role as a mother. The mother has to cope up with the pain rather than the privileges of performing different roles as a daughter, wife and a sister in a male dominated patriarchal society. To an African-American slave, all privileges are denied and she has to fight for her existence in the society. She is abused sexually and suffers the pains of slavery. Physically and mentally, she experiences double marginalization. '*Beloved*', the best novel of Toni Morrison's provides scope to analyze the effects of slavery on women.

It is a detailed portraiture of women slavery both in home and in workplace. Sethe escapes from the slavery home with her kids. The wounds of slavery still linger in her mind always. She narrates the story to Paul D, who is also a slave. The whole novel narrates the incidents of trauma slavery. Women feel inferior before the white race. In Toni Morrison's words, we understand the alienation of the character Denver in her own society.

Nobody could make it alone...You could be lost forever (159).

Quest for Freedom

The novel *Beloved* depicts the cruelty and insults of Sethe. She is not treated as 'human' but like an 'animal'. This animal characteristic of this protagonist is dominant till the end of the story. She is alienated by the community because of the infanticide. In Sweet Home, the nephews of the school teacher harassed her as told by her own words,

These boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it (19).

Sethe suffers from exploitation syndrome. Toni Morrison narrates the pathetic story of Baby Suggs who is the mother-in-law of Sethe. Baby Suggs was set free by the efforts of her son, who worked on Sundays for five years. She was freed from the drudgery of slavery. But the evil treatment prolonged for Sethe. Toni reveals the painful days of Sethe not to pay attention towards her children as a mother. She escapes from there and reaches 124 bluestone. She is awakened and realizes her self-identity. By escaping, she thinks she can extricate her children from the bondage of slavery. She says with a sigh of relief:

They ain't at Sweet Home
School Teacher ain't got home (246)

The spirit of her dead child haunts the home. Through the spirit of 'beloved', the novelist makes the Western world to realize their misanthropic attitude towards the marginalized black community. Toni Morrison raises her voice against this oppression. The unpleasant predicament of Black women as in Morrison's words.

'She had nothing to fall back on not maleness, not whiteness,
not ladyhood, not anything.
And out of the profound dissolution of her reality.
She may very well have invented herself (217)'.
'

Conclusion

Thus the novelist Toni Morrison has contributed significantly for the upliftment and empowerment of Black women in the Afro-American society. She had a dream of enhancing the status of marginalized Black Women in the modern scenario. Her novels especially 'Beloved' have changed the course of history. It is the sustained effort of the novelist to bring out the dark side of the oppressed lot to the open ground. The protagonist Sethe is the best example of a woman who fought against the injustice, the odds and vanquished her deformity. Besides freeing her ownself, she frees her children too. In summary, Beloved is the story of Black Women's experiences of oppression in the hands of White. The journey to seek self identity of these Black Women is endless and a very hard reality to cherish

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