

**A Psychoanalytical Study of the Select Novels of Toni
Morrison and Alice Walker**

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
award of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

**In
English**

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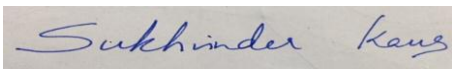
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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled, “*A Psychoanalytical Study of the Select Novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker*” submitted for Ph.D. English, degree to the Department of English, Lovely Professional University is entirely original work and all ideas and references have been duly acknowledged. The research work has not been formed the basis for the award of any other degree.



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Certificate

This is to certify that **Mrs. Sukhvinder Kaur** has completed the Ph.D. English titled *“A Psychoanalytical Study of the Select Novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker”* under my guidance and supervision. To the best of my knowledge, the present work is the result of his original investigation and study. No part of this thesis has ever been submitted for any other degree or diploma. The thesis is fit for the submission for the partial fulfillment of the condition for the award of degree of Ph.D. in English.

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(Ms. Sukhvinder Kaur)

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Introduction

In the contemporary American society there is growing interest in the American scholars to study the traumatic life of the blacks. Toni Morrison got Nobel Prize in literature and excited the critics and the reviewers who took keen interest in the black fiction. The thesis entitled, “*A Psychoanalytical Study of the select novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker*” gives a psychological exploration of the texts of both the novelists. The psychoanalytical theories of the loss of self and dissociation of sensibility; the growth of depression and neurosis are applied on the texts. The psychological diseases are found in abundance in the characters of both the novelists, who created sensation in the Afro- American fiction by publishing novels to depict the cries of the American blacks. The critics of past and present have expressed their divergent views on the themes of survival and black consciousness in the fiction of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. Interestingly, most of the research papers and critical books are devoted to the exploration of the themes and other issues. Kathryn Hume (1984) discusses the techniques of subversion and fantasy of Toni Morrison. Jane S. Bakerman (1981) discusses the theme of love dominating the novels of Toni Morrison; Marilyn Sander Mobley (2001) focuses on the ritualistic patterns used by Toni Morrison in her novels. Brooks J. Bouson (2000) avers that Morrison deals with the themes of subversion in her novels particularly in *Sula* (1983). In this study it is explored that Morrison’s main focus is to depict the inner turbulent world of the characters. Alice Walker is also a great American novelist who wrote more than half a dozen novels but in her famous novel, *The Color Purple* (1982), Walker mirrors her anxiety for racial, sexual, and political issues, especially with the struggles of the blacks and their inevitable gloom and dissatisfaction. Black men and women in

Americans live a discriminated life as they suffer from dissociation of self since the white men deny them the right to live. Alice Walker believes that a black character is doubly marginalized and victimized since he confronts the problems of defining his selfhood and overcoming alienation in the community. Black women of Alice Walker struggle through their life in confronting the gender barriers and cultural taboos. In this process the depression and neurosis is inevitable. Alice Walker wrote four major novels namely, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, *The Color Purple*, *The Temple of Familiar* and *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*. In all these novels, Alice Walker has depicted the traumatic experiences of black characters who struggle to survive in the harsh white society and experience racial and gender oppression.

Alice Walker documents the struggles of the black people; their sufferings; alienation; trauma and psychological oppression. Alice herself experienced the disgust, contempt and hatred; she took up her mission to depict the miserable condition of the blacks in her novels. She was the first black woman of the world who got Pulitzer Prize for her commitment and dedication to the cause of her black community. The *Times* acclaimed her as —the brightest star in a galaxy of black women writer. In all her novels Walker revives the history of the black people; their culture; rituals; taboos and traditions. Gloria Wade Gayles in her book *Black, Southern, Womanist* comments thus: “The distinctive voice in Walker’s works is the voice of a woman deeply immersed in her blackness, her womanness, and her Southernness. It is a clear voice neither muted nor strident, and always resonant with Walker’s belief in redemption” (302). The Harlem Renaissance gave birth to many poets and novelists appeared who recapitulated the American experience and wrote on the themes of racism; slavery, equality; gender discrimination and sexual

oppression. The writers like W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Richard Wright focused on the themes of racism; violence and sexuality of women but the publication of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* gave a new direction as the Americans recognized the cosmic ideas of both the writers and acclaimed them as the part of American fiction and culture. No wonder Emma J. Waters Dawson highly appreciated Alice Walker as the realistic artist of the 20th century:

“By weaving taboo subjects and life styles, such as incest and lesbianism, into a creative literary pattern, Walker not only points out black women's physical and psychological abuse and black women torn by contrary instincts, she also affirms, like Hurston, her belief in personal, spiritual redemption that may evolve through the self” (Dawson 77).

The blacks are hated and derided as the racist attitude brings depression in their life. Most of the blacks are unemployed and they are compelled to do the menial jobs to survive. Poverty is also a major cause of their frustrations and psychological ailments. In fact, the class exploitation is the important basis for victimization of black people. It is found that sexism paralyzed and infected the mind and sensibility of black women. Their female body is oppressed by the whites. Brenda Eichelberger is world famous woman who organized black struggle in the world and explored the causes of the psychological traumas of black people. She observes thus: “Black women can visualize superficial sex barriers on the larger society going away before race barriers. When we are viewed by the larger culture, we are not looked on in terms of our class sex first, but in terms of our black skin” (16-28).

There are a lot of research papers and books on Toni Morrison and Alice Walker however a large portion of the examination work is focused on the subjects of expansionism, social hostility and ethnic brutality. The present study adds new measurements to the exploration area; the primary purpose is to dig out the interior landscape of characters who have an awful existence in the white dominated society. The main aim of this study is on the dilemmas, anxieties, and neurotic life of men and women of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. They believe that “dehumanization and repression are the chief forces that lead to the loss of self of the individuals in the white dominated society” (Laing, 13). In *Song of Solomon* (1977) Milkman Dead feels frustrated because he is treated like garbage: “He felt like a garbage pail for the actions and hatreds of other people. He himself did nothing” (Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* 120). Ruth’s expresses her traumatic isolation thus: “I lived in a great big house that pressed me into a small package” (124). Morrison comments:

“She was a strange child. When she was a baby she would keep things in her mouth to the horrors of others. She would eat straw from brooms, gristle, buttons, seeds, leaves, string, and her favorite... rubber bands and India rubber erasers” (30).

Cholly Breedlove rapes Pecola under a fit of severe traumatic stress as Freud observes: “In a fit of severe depression or repression the individual behaves in an unprecedented deviant manner and resorts into an action unconventional and unacceptable by the society” (Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* 123).

Pecola is a mighty creation of Toni Morrison; she is ambitious to have the bluest eyes in her passionate desire to become popular like the white girls. She lives

in the world of illusion and fantasy and her hysteria is “caused by the sexual repression” (Bakerman 544). Toni Morrison has depicted her shattering dreams and the disintegration of herself in the novel. She represents all the repressed black girls of Afro-American society becoming the victims of physical and psychological tortures of the white dominated society.

In the following chapters, the psychological ailments of the characters of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are explored and examined applying the theories of Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth and Karen Horney. The textual analysis of the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker highlights the plight of blacks in America and their struggle for survival, their victimization and sexual oppression.

Chapter I

Brief Candle: Psychoanalytical Issues and Perceptions

The Psychological study started in the early 19th century with the discovery of unconscious. Most of the critics believe that Sigmund Freud is the father of the discovery of unconscious of human mind but Freud denied it in one of his lectures and stated that in the early Greek literature there is significant discussion of the psychoanalytical elements. Shakespeare depicted the psychological diseases of his characters. Macbeth begins his life as a reputed army general of the army but soon becomes a criminal who goes on killing people to safeguard his throne. In fact, he suffers from psychological madness and behaves like an abnormal person. He is sick, wounded and remains sleepless throughout the drama. Hamlet too is victim of psychological ailments. There are many characters in literature that are sick and mentally retarded. Sigmund Freud set up a private clinic and contended many experiments on brain disorder and psyche of human beings. No wonder, soon Freud wrote many books such as *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and *Pleasure Principle*. He gave many theories on trauma, libido, depression and hysteria. The psychological theories of Freud encouraged many psychologists such as Adler, Lacan, Karen Horney, R. D. Laing, Sypher Wylie and Cathy Caruth. This study is primarily focused on the dilemmas, anxieties and neurotic life of the blacks of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. Lacan wrote *Mirror Stage* (1949) and examined psychic pressures and tensions resulting into neurosis. R. D Laing wrote *The Divided Self* (1961) giving an account of schizoid and symptoms of schizophrenia. Karen Horney focused on human psychology and explored the causes of neurosis in *Our Inner*

Conflicts (1966). Ihab Hassan's *In Quest of Nothing: Selected Essays, 1998-2008* (2010) and *Radical Innocence* (1961) discusses the growth of trauma and the impact of fractured identities on the mind and sensibility of the individuals. Cathy Caruth (1996) explored all the causes and symptoms of trauma. Jean Martin Charcot was the first French physician who explored the connection between trauma and mental illness. He conducted many experiments on the traumatized women in Paris. His main "focus was hysteria —a disorder" (Ringel and Brandell 1) commonly found in women. Freud borrowed many ideas from Jean-Martin Charcot and made further observations on hysteria. Freud wrote his essay *On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: A Preliminary Communication—A lecture*, and explored all the main elements and symptoms of hysteria. Freud opines that "every case of hysteria can be looked upon as traumatic hysteria in the sense of implying a psychological trauma" (Freud 34). Freud wrote *Studies on Hysteria* (1893) commented thus:

"We must point out that we consider it essential for the explanation of hysterical phenomena to assume the presence of dissociation, a splitting of the content of consciousness. The regular and essential content of a hysterical attack is the recurrence of a physical state which the patient has experience earlier" (Freud 30).

Freud and Breuer joined together in their investigation of traumatic dissociation and used the term — hynoid hysteria. Freud contended in 1896 that "a precocious experience of sexual relations...resulting from sexual or person is the specific cause of hysteria not merely an agent provocateur" (Freud 54). Freud, Breuer and Janet joined together and made experiments to explore the causes of

hysteria. They came to the conclusion that the traumatic experiences produced an altered state of consciousness. Judith Herman (1992) stated that “dissociation manifested in hysterical symptoms (45). But soon Freud shifted from Janet and Breuer, relied on his conflict theory. Freud suggested that the memories of the past become the main cause of hysterical trauma. Fereczi (1995) advocated the child abuse and its memories become the main cause of trauma. Herman points out that during World War 1 the soldiers often exhibited the symptoms of trauma; their uncontrollable weeping, screaming, memory loss, physical paralysis. This was the beginning of psychological therapy. Abram Kardiner further investigated the symptoms of hysteria and trauma in his study and argued that “the subject acts as if the original traumatic situation were still in existence and engages in protective devices which failed on the original occasion” (Kardiner 82).

The blacks undergo traumatic experiences in the white dominated society of America. There is a long history of centuries of the struggles of the blacks in their quest for identity and to overthrow the chains of slavery. The blacks were subjected to all forms of oppression and violence. The simple reading of Toni Morrison’s novel, *Beloved* is an evidence of plight and traumatic experiences of the black characters. At the very outset of the chapter it is appropriate to briefly narrate the history of African-American culture. The Harlem Renaissance of 1920s brought a turning point in the Afro-American literature. Free blacks of the North wrote against slavery and racial injustices and put faith in God. But the slave narratives lacked coherence; well defined imagery and coherent style. However Richard Wright and Gwendoly Brooks made new innovations in fiction and wrote on the themes of racism and Black Nationalism. Richard Wright wrote *Native Son* (1940), *Black Boy* (1945) and *The Outsider* (1951) under the influence of Sartre. His main focus is on

the sufferings of the African -American who suffered discrimination and violence. Many other great black writers such as James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, Le Roi Jones, Alex Hailey brought revolution in black literature. W. B. Dubois wrote *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903) depicting the fractured identities of the blacks and the harsh attitude of the whites. This collection of essays depicted the moods and conscience of the blacks and their fiery ideas. Du Bois wrote that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line” (10). Booker T. Washington rejected the ideas of Du Bois and took up a confrontational stance to end slavery and racism from America. He added a new spirit in the Afro American literature as he wrote *Up From Slavery* (1901), *The Future of the American Negro* (1899) *Tuskegee and its People* 1905), and *My Larger Education* (1911). Washington contended that the blacks should rise against slavery and end it with force. Harlem Renaissance gave the slogan that black is beautiful and a flood of writers wrote on the themes of slavery; injustice; racism and violence. Zora Neale Hurston published her novel *Their Eyes were Watching God* (1937). She also wrote *How it Feels to Be Colored Me* in which she expressed the anguish and personal traumatic experiences to be black in America: “I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow damned up in my soul, nor lurking my eyes. I do not mind at all...I do not weep at the world. I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife” (Hurston 23). James Baldwin, Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison were three powerful voices of 1960s who contributed a lot to raise the cries of the blacks in America. James Baldwin wrote nearly twenty books articulating his black consciousness. He wrote *Another Country*, *The Fire Next Time*, and *Go Tell it on the Mountain*. The assassination of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X in 1960s changed the mood of the blacks. The themes of alienation, anger and rage were depicted in the fiction of James Baldwin and Richard Wright.

The Harlem Renaissance: The Black is Beautiful

The wave of Black feminism also became very powerful in the 1960s and many women writers appeared on the literary scene. The women writers wrote on the themes of black pride, black culture and black sexuality. Afro-American women writers took keen interest in Pop Culture, Jazz and made inroads into the mainstream of American culture for the first time. Harriet Jacob and Harriet E. Wilson wrote *Our Neg* in 1959 depicting the plight of Frado. Lousie Meriwether wrote *Daddy was a Numbers Runner*. Mary Helen Washington edited *Midnight Birds in 1980*. Jeanne Nobles wrote *Beautiful, Also* and *Are the Souls of My Black Sisters* in 1978. The Harlem Renaissance marked a pivoting role in the history of American literature. The American people recognized their talent and their works became the part of American culture. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker were two luminaries of black fiction, were acclaimed as the trend setters.

Toni Morrison gained the attention of both critics and a wider audience for her epic power. She has been awarded a number of literary distinctions, among them the Pulitzer Prize in 1988 including Nobel Prize for literature for Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* portrays the inner trauma of black characters as they are pacified to oppression and persecution, as they are physically and sexually tortured in the harsh patriarchal society.

In *Escape from Freedom*, (1941) Erich Fromm sees that man will encounter himself as subject to the risks that compromise his body. Freud adopted an alternate strategy in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1915) since he explored that man is embroiled in real want, the satisfactions and disappointments of the body. *The Bluest*

Eye is the introduction novel of Toni Morrison distributed in 1970 which set in Lorain, Ohio. Claudia is a young child living in white-dominated society. Morrison uses the metaphor of “bluest eye” in this novel to expose and ridicule the beauty mania among the American black girls. The plot of the novel is narrated by Claudia whose simple and touching narration touches the minds of the readers and critics. Morrison writes about the oppression done on black characters in the Afro-American society. The motivating force is the pure and simple voice of Claudia that carries the readers. Morrison focuses on the gender politics and is seriously concerned about the themes of sexuality, rapes and gender discrimination. The patriarchal institutions are powerful and oppressive in the American society. The white society is presented as brutal and oppressive that dehumanizes the black girls; rapes and sexual molestation are common occurrences. The black girls are subjected to all forms of oppression making them morbid, sick and decadent. The incestuous rape of Pecola has raised many questions among the critics and the reviewers of Toni Morrison expressed their divergent views about this monstrous episode. Pecola represents all the black women symbolizing the tyranny of the Whites. She is highly ambitious, restless and the victim of slavery and repression. She is on the verge of insanity as she loses herself being lost in obsession of the beauty mania. Morrison has dramatized the psyche of the black girls who are leading the life of the —Other as the whites hate them and consider them as their fodder. The main focus of Morrison is the concept of beauty. Gurleen Grewal also argues that merely reversing perceived ugliness‘ to beautiful blackness —is not enough, but Pecola is obsessed with the beauty syndrome. Freud observes that obsession of any thing in life results into psychic pressures. Obsession results into disorientation of mind. The textual analysis reveals the real mind, ideas of Pecola who emerges as an abnormal woman character. Pecola

Breedlove thinks of beauty of the white child actress, Shirley Temple, feels depressed and disgusted.

Not only women but men also suffer depression and the loss of self. The rape of Pecola by Cholly has raised many voices and his conduct and deviant behavior is investigated through the lens of Freudian and Lacanian lens. It is averred that Cholly was burdened by poverty, injustice and marginalization. He lost his self and was a neurotic being who could do anything under stress and alcohol. Cholly is another neurotic character, his mind and sensibility is shattered by abject poverty; injustice of the whites. His slavish life and the eternal humiliation by the whites make him sick and abnormal. He loses his sense of right and wrong since he is reduced to an animal. Cholly's rape of his daughter symbolizes the destructive power structure of the whites. Cholly suffers from mental disorder. Freud theory of hysteria is based on the fact that hysteria emerges from sexual problems. He rapes his daughter in state of intoxication. In *The Feminist Reader*, Morrison contends that "fetishization is a strategy often used to assert the categorical absolutism of civilization and savagery" (*The Feminist Reader* 39). Karen Horney in her *Our Inner Conflict and Neurosis and Human growth* observes that anxiety and restless of mind results into the loss of rational thinking. It is fact that every human being has a conscious as well as an unconscious life. While the conscious aspect of man's life is that which he has absolute knowledge and possible control of, the unconscious aspect controls him without his consent or even knowledge. Sometimes, the activity of the unconscious finds expressions through dreams and moments of inactivity, like during sleep. Disorientation emerges as characters struggle to overcome the problems of life and as they experience the vicissitudes of life. Both male and female characters do feel

“out of sort” with themselves in their societies. Man loses interest in life and starts behaving like an irrational being.

Freud observes thus: “in neurosis the ego suppresses part of the id out of allegiance to reality, whereas in psychosis it lets itself be carried away by the id and detached from a part of reality” (Freud 202). Toni Morrison’s Pecola is a victim of anxiety, beauty phobia and other psychic syndromes. She looks at the mirror and compares herself with the girls around her who are blessed with blue eyes. Her rape is the outcome of her psychological pressures. Cholly, her father is depressed and abnormal because of alcohol, poverty and injustice. In this study the theories of Horney are applied to explore the behavior of Morrison’s characters. Cynthia Davis wrote *Self, Society and Myth in Toni Morrison’s Fiction* and comments thus: “All of Morrison’s characters exist in a world defined by its blackness and by the surrounding white society that both violates and denies it” (Davis 27).

Morrison in her novel *Song of Solomon* explores the alienation of Milkman Dead. He lives in isolation and hopes to come to understand the true value of life. Herman Lee also investigated the significance of Milkman’s journey and “found that he explores his self and confronts the existential reality honestly. He digs out his heritage, identity and feels his responsibility to his family and race” (*Solomon* 353). *The Washington Post* commented that Toni Morrison has written “a novel that will endure on black culture and history” His life becomes meaningless and worried about his family, who lives in false illusions. Morrison uses techniques of grotesque, images of perversion and erotic to depict the inner turbulent world of Milkman Dead, Pilate, Sethe, Pauline Breedlove and Cholly Breedlove. Kathryn Hume (1984) described the significance of the techniques of subversion and fantasy in visualizing

the total reality. She opines that “successful fantasy persuades us to consider the situation as it was Possible” (*Fantasy and Mimesis* 167). Morrison’s use of grotesque is very effective in weaving the complex plots of her novels as she blurs realism. Morrison has depicted the physical and mental deformity of her characters to intensify the sufferings of the blacks. Morrison ironically comments that “this saved Pauline Williams from total anonymity” (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 88). Cholly shows his perversion when he kisses her leg in sexual frenzy. Morrison focuses on the plight of Pauline depicting the cruelty of the unkind world. Freud insisted that “our civilization is a repressive one. There is a conflict between the demands of conformity and the demands of our instinctive energies, explicitly sexual” (Quoted in R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self* 13).

In the very first chapter of the novel Morrison lashes at the American society that is heading towards total annihilation. The decay of the American society seems imminent as the oppression cannot be a permanent feature in a society. Nature is also against the growth of American society. Morrison uses the image of “marigolds that are not blooming. Pecola is pregnant and carrying the baby of her father in her womb and this is why —the marigolds did not grow” (Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 5).

Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) evokes the images of anxiety, fear and psychological pain. Morrison’s vision is cosmic as she doesn’t talk about individual trauma but dramatizes the collective sufferings of black community. Sethe is a black woman representing all the black women who get crushed. Their one point programme is to break the chains of slavery forever. Sethe dreams of a future for the black children of a happy and prosperous life but all her dreams are shattered as she raped repeatedly and chased like wild hounds in the forest. She is mercilessly beaten;

raped and sexually molested. She can never forget the mark put on her left breast. The mark on her breast symbolized her eternal humiliation and slavish indignity. The harrowing memories of her rape and milking of the breasts constantly haunt her and she suffers depression and loss of self. She looks like a living human being but in reality she is leading a life in death. Sethe had been an eye witness of the killings of the blacks by the white boys. She had seen the brutalities of the whites. They had treated women and the black girls as their own property. The whites were free to play with their bodies for their sexual pleasures.

Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* (2015) depicts the childhood trauma in a lyrical language. The plot of the novel evokes the past experiences of the characters; their distress, anguish and their psychological burden. The plot mainly concentrates on the psychology of characters oppressed and molested sexually. Morrison's *God Help the Child* dramatizes the physical and emotional oppression of children that bring about their loss of self. In this study the theories of Judith Herman are relied to get an insight into the trauma focusing on the borderline personality disorder ensuing from traumatic experiences. R.M. Prabha (216) observes that "Morrison portrays many child victims to intensify the gloomy mood in *God Help the Child* (201). The plot revolves around the character of Lula Ann Bridewell born to the parents Louis and Sweetness. Lula Ann is a dark black girl; her black father and mother hated her because of her black epidermal signs. Her mother tried to kill her by pressing a blanket on her face. Lula's mother withholds love and affection and she lives like an alien in her own home. The child's story is told and retold in many voices and there are so many touching scenes of sexual abuse and molestation driving them into neurotic characters. Bride and Booker are the main characters who "go through a journey full of trials and tribulations; sexual abuse and molestation

experiencing bewilderment, purgation, atonement and hoping to survive in the cruel world with a promise of a Child. New Life Immune to evil or illness, protected from kidnap, beatings, rape, racism, insult, hurt, self loathing, Abandonment” (Toni Morrison, *God Help the Child* 175). The sufferings of Bride are intense as she “was neglected by her mother; she grows up craving for love, affection and acceptance. Distaste was all over her face when I was little and she had to bathe me” (14). Another traumatic character is Adam sexually abused and killed by a man. He was Booker’s brother and he was deeply touched by his death. He turned neurotic being obsessed by the death of his brother. Rain is another girl who is homeless but thrown into prostitution by her cruel mother. The Bride loses herself and behaves like a neurotic as Judith Herman observes:

“Fragmentation in consciousness prevents the ordinary integration of knowledge, memory, emotional states, and bodily experience. Fragmentation in the inner representations of the self prevents the integration of identity. Fragmentation in the inner representations of others prevents the development of a reliable sense of independence within connection” (Herman 78).

The consequences of child maltreatment can be long lasting and broader. The child’s psychological and social development is negatively impacted as survivors often suffer difficulties in forming intimate relationships with others and a complete representation of self. The main plot of *God Help the Child* is structured around the theme of neglect and child abuse and both these episodes become the main cause of their psychological trauma. All the major characters Bride, Hannah, Rain and Brooklyn suffer traumatic experiences and become sick in life.

For Adler, not only sexual harassment or unfulfilled sexual desires are responsible for trauma, but also inferiority complex. Unlike Freud, Adler documents that “all forms of neurosis and developmental failure are expressions of inferiority and disappointment” (Adler VI). But like Freud, Adler also talks about the aftermath of a traumatic incident when he states that the neurotic “feels himself a criminal . . . all the time his attitude is determined by the fiction that he is really wicked, dominated by uncontrollable sex desire, given over to unlimited self-indulgence, capable of any crime or license” (86). To Žižek, “the unconscious is not only the Freudian sexual unconscious (300) but also the —cerebral unconscious” (300) because the victim of trauma loses its mental and intellectual powers along with its physical and emotional activities. Sethe experiences the disorientation of mind because of sexual oppression of the whites and indignities heaped on her. She emerges as an epic character symbolizing the traumatic experiences of the blacks.

The novels of Toni Morrison depict the trapped and depressed characters that are fear ridden because of the dehumanizing tendencies of the whites. Sethe’s relationship with Paul D re-establishes the oppression of the whites. Sethe kills her daughter so that no “gang of whites [would invade] her daughter’s private parts, [soil] her daughter’s thighs” (251). Sethe believes that “anybody white could take your whole self . . . [and] dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn’t like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn’t think it up” (251).

Alice Walker is a famous black writer of international fame who dramatized the traumatic experiences of the blacks in her novels. She was born on February 9, 1944, and worked as a social worker and won the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Alice Walker in her works deals with the suffering and the downtrodden, the

oppressed. Walker has depicted the plight of black character who are oppressed and tortured by the white dominated society. Black people suffered due to poverty and racial discrimination that lead to their self - esteem.

Alice Walker wrote *The Color Purple* (1982), *Meridian* (1976) and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) to depict the traumatic experiences of Black women. All characters of Walker are — suspended characters they are sick, harassed, oppressed and mutilated bodies. Walker has used the images of death and decay to depict the disoriented mind of her characters. Meridian is the main heroine of her novel Meridian pitted against the oppressive circumstances. She is considered as an outcast and is forced to live with tensions and worries of life for the survival in the white society. She suffers from the loss of identity and feels traumatic in the oppressive white culture.

Celie is a young girl of 14 living in the American South. She is raped by her step father Alphonso who beats her mercilessly out of depression. He is a neurotic character like Cholly; he impregnated Celie twice. The plot of *Color Purple* is a heart-rending tale of the black characters who struggle to survive in the white-dominated society. Celie writes letters to God articulating her inexpressible plight and the novel is a collection of eighty letters. The epistolary technique helped Walker to establish a link between man and the divine powers that are mute and silent when crimes are committed on poor and innocent blacks. Celie and Sofia are two important women in *The Color Purple*. Sofia Butler expresses her anguish thus: “All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers; I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child isn’t safe in a family of men” (Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* 38)

Besides Alphonso, there are other male characters such as Master and Harpo who are oppressive and merciless like Cholly. They live under stress and beat women to give vent to depression. Celie explains “I say I’m a fool, I say it cause I’m jealous of you. I say it cause you do what I can’t” (38). Meridian, Sofia, Celie are stressed women of Alice Walker; the victims of psychological ailments.

Alice Walker’s novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) is about female genital mutilation; an inhuman tribal ritual going in the African countries since centuries. Tashi is the main character, who becomes the victim of this religious ritual and the entire plot of the novel is devoted to dramatize the struggles in search of healing for her physical and psychological ailments. Female circumcision is done to lessen the sexual urge of women and this horrific act leads to multiple complications in the physical and psychological life of women. This cultural practice is banned by the U.N.O but is continuing in many parts of Africa. In this novel, Walker took up this issue seriously and lashed at this cultural practice depicting the agony of the black women in the world. Tashi undergoes this circumcision and loses her vulva opposing the colonial imperialism. She learns through her painful psychological experience that “White is not the culprit this time” (Alice Walker, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* 106) but the real culprits are African tribalism and sexism. Tashi’s sufferings begin with the death of her sister Dora who bleeds to death because of female circumcision. Tashi can never forget the screams of her sister who suffered regular bleeding after the operation. She struggles against his inhuman practice and says: “All I care about now is the struggle for our people... You are black, but you are not like us. We look at you and your people with pity for you barely possess your

own black skin” (22). Tashi gives consent to the horrific operation as a symbol of unity to her tribe as she says: “I am willing to give up sexual pleasure in order to be accepted as a real woman...to stop the jeering” (120). Female genital mutilation is regarded as “a cruel symbol of oppression of women and the hegemony of the patriarchy to control productivity of women” (120). The novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is packed with the gruesome scenes of psychological tortures that a woman suffer after genital mutilation. Walker uses the metaphor of “psychic mutilation” to describe the plight of the black characters who suffer in the hands of their male oppressors. In this study a detailed analysis is done in the subsequent chapter to highlight the inhuman cultural practice and the psychological aftermath. In this study the inner turbulent world of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker will be explored from the psychological perspective relying on the theories of Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth and Karen Horney.

Negative Aspects of Life and Traumatic Experiences Depicted in the Novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker

The textual analysis of the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker reveal that their novels do not discuss the positive aspects of life. Their main focus is to highlight the physical and psychological oppression of the blacks perpetrated by the white dominated society. Each novel of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker is a chronicle of history of the Afro-American society ruled by slavery, racism, Jim Crow Laws. The main purpose of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker is to depict the sexual oppression and traumatic experiences of the blacks. Sethe of *Beloved* kills her daughter since she had been repeatedly raped by the whites. Pecola is raped by her

own father who becomes a neurotic self-oppressed by segregation and humiliation of the whites. Milkman begins his journey to explore his African roots. His quest for identity leads to his alienation and eventual suicide; the flying metaphor is used by Toni Morrison to depict the plight of the blacks. Celie in *The Color Purple* of Alice Walker is repeatedly raped by her own father; she writes letters to God to express her psychological anguish but she gets no peace and rest. She is married to Albert who turns to be a monster beating her mercilessly. Tashi of *Possessing the Secret of Joy* suffers because of the ritual of female circumcision of the Olinka community. Judith Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery* talks about the possibility of recovery of trauma but Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are chronicling the plight of the blacks suffered under the Jim Crow Laws in the 19th century. The novels of both the writers dramatize the historical events of segregation, alienation, racism and sexual oppression of the blacks. Toni Morrison got Nobel Prize for she successfully brought to the world the real picture of the blacks. In the forth coming chapters, the researcher has explored the sufferings of the blacks while doing the textual analysis.

Objectives of the Research

In this thesis, the psychological diseases such as depression, anxiety, neurosis and schizophrenia suffered by the characters of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are explored. The contemporary American valueless society puts heavy pressure on the life of the characters; they are forced to suffer the traumatic experiences of life. In the present study, the major novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are analyzed and investigated to dig out the inner world of characters. Precisely, the present research study will have the following objectives:

- 1) To trace out the socio – political forces that led to the traumatic discrimination of the Afro- American blacks in America.
- 2) To examine the causes, symptoms and the growth of psychological ailments in the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker.
- 3) To apply the theories of anxiety, neurosis and depression propounded by Sigmund Freud, Karen Horney, and Cathy Caruth in the characters of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker.
- 4) To explore the loss of self of the characters of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker.
- 5) To analyze the ritual of female circumcision and its impact on the psyche of the women of Alice Walker.

There are many books and critical research papers on Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, but there is no full length and comprehensive study on the themes of oppression, victimization, psychological disorientation and marginalization.

This chapter depicts how Freud developed his concept of the unconscious under the influence of Charles Darwin, Jean Martin Charcot, Josef Breuer, and Friedrich Nietzsche and how the Freudian concept of the unconscious has been further interpreted by Alfred W. Adler, Carl Gustav Jung, Anna Freud, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Slavoj Zizek. Darwin *On the Origin of Species* (1859) propounded the theory that Darwin exemplifies that instinct is a desire that “impels the cuckoo to migrate and to lay her eggs in other birds’ nests” (185). Freud accepts that he has “nothing to do with the origin of the primary mental powers” (185) of birds, animals, and human beings. But Freud especially talks about the mental powers of humans and categorizes their instincts into life instincts and death

instincts. In life instincts, Freud includes the Ego (self-preservation) and the Id (instincts and drive) whereas in death instincts he includes human aggressive tendencies (Abel 1989). Freud proposes that the beauty, mental order, and regularity of scheduled actions of a subject get affected when it's attacked externally. The subject becomes unconscious though—it also remains unconsciously active (Freud, *The Unconscious* 47). Freud studied the —psychical traits and behavioral dispositions (128) of the patients of hysteria and trauma in his works. Following psychological ailments are found in the characters of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker.

Anxiety Disorders: Freud observes that feelings of anxiety and fear disturb the normal working of mind. C.S. Hall (1954) in his *A Primer of Freudian Psychology* observes that anxiety refers to the fear of danger that seems impending. Freud outlined three types of anxiety; the Objective Anxiety; Neurotic Anxiety and Moral Anxiety. Sethe, Pocola are the victims of objective anxiety but Cholly suffers from neurotic anxiety.

Depression and Intrusive Memories: Cathy Caruth has discussed in detail the psychological ailments in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996). She contends that the horrifying old memories can occur as a nightmare, flashback or intrusive memory. In a flashback man loses his touch with his current situation. With intrusive memories man knows where and when his old memories keep intruding and disturbing his mind. Morrison's Sethe in *Beloved* suffers from depression as she is all the time haunted by the nightmarish memories of her past.

Death Consciousness: Freud observes thus on suicide ideation. Death is the great Unknown and the —gravest of all misfortunes as Freud observes. He further argues that death is the —main aim of all life (Freud 123). Vickroy (2002) defines "trauma narratives" as "fictional narratives that help readers to access traumatic experience" (Vickroy 1). Ironically Freud called death —the aim life and it is found that many psychologists have expressed their views on death which is —the gravest of all misfortunes. In the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker there are many situations where the characters want to end their life because they are terrified by the sufferings of life. Sethe in *Beloved* thinks of death when she is chased in the forest and is milked. Cholly is so much depressed and sick of life that he wants to embrace death. Freud in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) observes that the death is just an opposite of Eros that is man's struggle to survive in the world. Man wants to enjoy sex and other pleasures of life and death consciousness emerges out of fear such as a abandonment. There are many unresolved conflicts which urge man to end his life; often death may be the outcome of guile consciousness.

Hysteria: The connection between trauma and mental illness was first examined by the neurologist Jean Martin Charcot (1825-1893) The main focus of Charcot's study was "hysteria – a disorder" (Ringel and Brandell 1) commonly detected in women. Freud was actually influenced by Jean-Martin Charcot's research that if a patient is not convinced to release his/her repressed emotions or he/she is not hypnotized, hysteria turns into the psychological trauma. The term hysteria denotes an extreme fear or anxiety that can't be controlled. In his essay entitled *On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: A Preliminary Communication—A*

lecture, Freud considers hysteria as a branch of psychological trauma (Freud, *The Standard Edition* 365). Freud further adds that “every case of hysteria can be looked upon as traumatic hysteria in the sense of implying a psychical trauma” (*Freud – Complete Works* 34).

Neurosis: Dr. Karen Horney is a famous American Psychologist who propounded new theories of neurosis. She wrote *Our Inner Conflicts; Neurotic Personality of our Time; Neurosis and Human Growth* and explores the various causes and symptoms of neurosis found in human beings. According to Dr. Horney neurosis is the product of chronic distress. Neurosis is not in any way a form of psychosis but it implies the loss of touch with reality of life. The majority of characters of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are the victims of neurosis.

Review of Literature Present and Past

David Attwell in *Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African Literary History* discusses the evolution of the Black culture in America and the folk lore and legends used by Toni Morrison in her novels. Alex La Guma took up the historical perspective and traced the causes of the frustrations and deprivations of the Afro -American women of Toni Morrison. Nancy J. Peterson in her book *Toni Morrison: Critical and Theoretical Approaches* (1997) call attention to the cultural and political dimensions of her work. Her main focus is on issues about race and gender divisions depicted in the novels of Toni Morrison. Scott, Jr., Nathan (1993) discusses in details the scenes of rape in the novels of Toni Morrison and observes that “they expose the darker system of —racial othering that is woven into the fabric of American life” (Nathan 87). Philip Page in his book: *Dangerous Freedom* :

Fusion and Fragmentation in Toni Morrison's Novels (1995) Vashti Crutcher Lewis in "African Tradition in Toni Morrison's *Sula*". She has used the Babangi language giving directions to the African women to be afraid, to run away, to be paralyzed with fear. There is no hope for the African people as the whites are committed to dehumanize them. Kimberly Chabot Davis (1998) in "Postmodern Blackness": Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and the End of History" observes that Toni Morrison enacts a hybrid vision of history and time. Jameson and Hutcheon have talked of the "fictionality" of history, the blurring of past and present, and the questioning of grand historical meta-narratives. In *Beloved*, Morrison has deconstructed history. Carl Plasa (1998) *Toni Morrison Beloved* reviewed the novels of Toni Morrison from the perspective of a historian. Morrison is discussed as a critic and cultural commentator in the book. Nellie Y. McKay published *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison* (1988) discussing the different approaches on the novels of Toni Morrison. Henry Louis Gates (1993) published *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*. Both the books documented the views of various critics on the themes and problems of the Blacks discussed in the novels of Toni Morrison. Harold Bloom's *Modern Critical Views on Toni Morrison*, (1990), Henry Louis Gates's *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present* (1993), David Middleton's *Toni Morrison's Fiction: Contemporary Criticism* (1997) examine the themes and issues of Toni Morrison.

Lindon Peach published two books on Toni Morrison, *New Casebooks Toni Morrison* (1998) and *The Aesthetics of Toni Morrison: Speaking the Unspeakable* (2000). Bell Hooks (1990) published *Reading Black, Reading Feminist* in which he took up the themes of oppression of racism and sexism in the novels of Alice

Walker. Ikenna Dieke (1999) in *Critical Essays on Alice Walker* discusses the theme of celebration of self in the novels of Alice Walker. Donnelly, Mary Donnelly in *Alice Walker: The Color Purple and Other Works* (2010) discusses the identity crisis in the women of Alice Walker. Maria Lauret (2000) in *Alice Walker* discusses the themes of oppression, abusive relationship, racial segregation. All these critical books, and articles discuss the black consciousness of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker; their use of folklore, legends and new interpretation of history and sexuality but no full length study in past and present is available on the psychoanalytical reading of the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. In this study the main focus has been to cognize the inner world of the characters of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker relying on the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth and Karen Horney.

Chapter II

Psychological Plight of Pecola and Cholly in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

Judith Herman (1992) in her book *Trauma and Recovery* observes that the physical wounds are curable but the wounds on the psyche remain incurable and give endless torments to man. In this chapter the inner world of Pecola and Cholly is explored who are the main characters of the novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970) of Toni Morrison. The intensive study of the modern sociology and psychology has brought new ideas and thoughts enabling the people to know the influence of external social forces on the human psyche. It is needless to say that human psyche governs and regulates the behavior of human beings. Erich Fromm aptly observes thus: "the understanding of man's psyche must be based on the analysis of man's needs stemming from the conditions of his existence" (From 34). Toni Morrison has depicted the wounded psyche in all her novels. She shows the way the black people feel psychologically injured. The novels are replete with the episodes of the wounded psyche of the blacks. Pecola becomes insane; Cholly rapes his daughter, Guitar becomes a terrorist and Sethe kills her own daughter. All these sensational events are the result of the wounded psyche of the blacks. These episodes reveal their predicament in the white-dominated society. The blacks like Pecola, Cholly and Sethe are the wounded characters. Toni Morrison has depicted the troubled psyche of the blacks in the context of the oppression and slavery of the whites. Terry Otten (1989) contends that "in Toni Morrison's fiction characters one way or another enact the historical plight of blacks in American history" (Otten 95).

In the Psychoanalytical terminology trauma means “wound” but in medical science it implies “external injury” or a “psychic injury”. Freud and Adler have given their divergent ideas about trauma. It may be the outcome of some repressed memory or the result of an emotional shock. Martin Charcot was the French neurologist, who investigated the relationship between trauma and mental illness. Martin Charcot explored the symptoms of paralysis, amnesia and sensory loss in the patients suffering from hysteria. Women who were raped or mercilessly beaten often experienced trauma. Black characters of Toni Morrison are often marginalized by the whites and slavery is the main cause of trauma. Human relations and social structure lose their meaning and women are dehumanized and degraded. Freud followed Charcot and wrote his famous essay *Studies on Hysteria* (1893). Freud made the following observations on hysteria:

“We must point that we consider it essential for the explanation of hysterical phenomena to assume the presence of dissociation, a splitting of the content of consciousness. The regular and essential content of a hysterical attack is the recourse of a physical state which the patient has experience earlier” (Freud 30).

The plot of the novel depicts the damaging effect of the white standards of beauty on the lives of the black people. Pecola, Cholly, Pauline and others suffer from the wounded psyche because of the white hegemony and the victimization of the blacks.

Toni Morrison *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is the outcome of her personal experiences when she was in an —elementary school when one of her friends

wanted blue eyes. Toni Morrison's first novel created sensation in the world as her novel was "a tragic bleak narrative of psychological murder, the main character could not stand alone her passivity made her a narrative void" (Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* viii). The publication of the novel evoked great interest among the critics and reviewers of Toni Morrison particularly the incestuous rape of the heroine and her eventual traumatic experience. L. E. Sissman on 23 January 1971 wrote in *The New Yorker* thus: "Toni Morrison gives us a fresh, close look at the lives of terror and decorum of those Negroes who want to get on in a white man's world" (2). Keith E. Bayerman (1985) observes that "in *The Bluest Eye* the destructiveness of control rather than the creativity of negation predominate. Pecola Breedlove, a black girl thought by everyone to be ugly finds herself enthralled by the blue eyes of Shirley Temple; everywhere in her world where skin and blue eyes are taken as signs of beauty" (184). Morrison has divided the plot of the novel in four important sections; Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer and the main narrator of the plot is Claudia. She narrates about the plight of her friend. In the *Prologue* Morrison honestly states that she used the —primer story to depict the comfortable life of the white people and the ugly and dirty life of the blacks. Morrison averred thus in an interview: "I used the primer story, with its picture of a happy family, as a frame acknowledging the outer civilization. The primer with the white children was the way life was presented to the black people" (Shute 10). Interestingly, Morrison uses red, green and white colors several times to highlight the comparative study of the whites and the blacks. The white color is used to describe the happy life of the white family's house. The Breedlove family lives in an abandoned storefront lacking green, beauty and comfort of MacTeers's house. Pecola and her family were known

in the locality as the dirty and ugly people, Pecola's family didn't enjoy much respect in the society: "No one could have convinced them that they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly" (38). Ironically the parents of Pecola never tried seriously to bring transformation in their style of living. Instead they wasted their energy in battling with each other: "it was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question...And they took the ugliness in their hands threw it as a mantle over them, and went about the world with it" (39). Pecola was a school going girl and she seriously observed the life style of living of her friends and classmates at the school. She was often upset when she thought of her mother, father and brother who would run away from home regularly to escape the stifling environment of home. Pecola is plagued by her self-loathing as she is sick of her physical appearance:

"The rest of the family- Mrs. Breedlove, Sammy Breedlove, and Pecola Breedlove wore their ugliness...The eyes, the small eyes set closely together under narrow foreheads. The low irregular hairlines, which seemed even more irregular in contrast to the straight heavy eyebrows which nearly met. Keen but crooked noses with insolent nostrils. They had high cheekbones, and their ears turned forward. Shapely lips which called attention not to themselves but to the rest of the face. You looked at them and wondered why they were ugly" (38-30).

Sammy cursed his parents and his house and left home for twenty seven times to have fun away from home. But poor Pecola was "helpless being a girl and

was restrained by youth, sex, experimented with methods of endurance” (43). Claudia uses the symbolical language in the opening of the novel thus: “Quiet as it is kept were no marigolds in the Fall of 1941...Our seeds were not the only ones that didn’t sprout, nobody’s did” (5). Pecola’s interaction with MacTeers also leads her to depression. Pecola begins living with MacTeers and she gets her first menarche. She is insulted by MacTeers for her habit of drinking a lot of milk. Morrison depicts Pecola as innocent as she doesn’t know anything about menstruation. However, Maureen tells her that: “Babies need blood when they are inside you, and if you are having a baby, then you don’t menstruate” (70). The red color symbolizes death and danger. “Maureen tries to be personal and sexual but Claudia defends Pecola and calls Maureen —dog tooth” (71). In reaction Maureen calls her black niggard: “I am cute! And you ugly! I am cute!” Pecola was virtually hurt as she felt humiliated by Maureen. The main focus of interest is Pecola Breedlove who is crazy to have blue eyes living in the world of fantasy and believing that all would love her if she had blue eyes. Pecola lives in the world of fantasy falsely believing that she would be loved by both the blacks and the whites. She is spoiled by the seductive tug of the white standards and suffers the psychological trauma. She believes that the blacks are damaged and devalued people.

Pecola’s father is drunkard. She occupies a centre stage to Frieda and Claudia. Like Pecola, Claudia MacTeer is also a black girl disregarded in society. Unlike, Pecola, Claudia survives the damaging and destructive environment of racism because of her family support but Pecola suffers neglect; alienation and humiliation from her mother, friends and teachers. She begins to pray for blue eyes: “Thrown, in this way, into the binding conviction that only a miracle could relieve

her, she would never know her beauty. She would see only what there was to see the eyes of other people” (40). Pecola suffers from the sense of ugliness and this consciousness brings the psychic disorder in her personality. Sigmund Freud observes that obsession of something is the main cause of anxiety and depression. Morrison describes the obsession of Pecola in a lyrical language thus: “Long hours she sat looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored to discover despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike” (43).

Parents are a source of strength to their children but Pecola was very unlucky; her mother Pauline was always quarreling with her father and she was sick of their cat and dog life. Cholly Breedlove is drunkard and her mother Pauline is crippled. They are always found quarreling and the scenes of domestic violence are a routine occurrence. Pecola lives in household in which both husband and wife frequently engage in physical altercations. Pecola experienced repeated rejection, brutalization and excoriation. There are many events in the novel which hurt her into a feeling of isolation and pain. Her encounter with an old white shopkeeper makes her aware that she doesn't exist at all in the society as she is marginalized: “Outside, Pecola feels the inexplicable shame ebb” (43). Pauline doesn't limit her abuses to her husband: “Into her son she beat a loud desire to run away, and into her daughter she beat a fear of growing up, fear of another people, and fear of life” (129).

Pecola never enjoyed peace and comfort at home. She had no grudge against poverty but she was virtually fed up with the recurrent scenes of domestic violence and the abuses hurled on her mother by her drunkard father. Pecola is jealous of Shirley Temple who has the desired blue eyes. She keenly observes Dick and Jane

and their lovely parents living in a comfortable house withal the amenities of life like lovely cat and a dog. Donald B. Gibson (1989) argues that “Dick and Jane text implies the most insidious ways that the dominant culture exercises its hegemony, through the educational system”(Gibson 20). All the black characters of the novel Pauline, Geraldine, Maureen Peal and Pecola struggle to conform an imposed ideal of femininity. Gibson further reiterates that the black characters are marginalized by “the cultural icons portraying physical beauty: movies, billboards, magazines, books, newspapers, window signs, dolls, and drinking cups” (20). Pecola “lives in the world of fantasy, she sees herself being —ignored or despised at school, by her teachers and classmates alike” (45). Pecola firmly believes that she need blue eyes to change her present situation because everyone in the society views her and her family as ugly and dirty. Morrison depicts her dream thus:

“It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sight if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say beautiful, she herself would be different” (46).

Pauline learns the ideal of physical beauty from the movies as Morrison observes thus:

“She was introduced to another physical beauty. Probably the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought. Both originated in envy thrived in insecurity, and ended in disillusion” (95). Morrison traces the history of the sufferings and sexual oppression of the black characters. Pecola strives “to get rid of the funkiness” (64).

Geraldine rejects Pecola because she is a typical black girl:

“She looked at Pecola. Saw the dirty torn dress, the plaits sticking out on her head, hair matted where the plaits had come undone, the muddy shoes with the wad of gum peeping out from between the cheap soles, the soiled socks, one of which had been walked down into the heel on the shoe...She had seen this little girl all of her life. Hanging out of windows over saloons in mobile, crawling over the porches of shotgun houses on the edges of the town, sitting in bus stations holding paper bags and crying to mother who kept saying ‘Shet up!’” (71-72).

Pecola virtually lived in hell the domestic violence and dirty environment at home made her restless and depressed. Pecola was so sick of the disturbing environment at home that she expressed her longing to be invisible. She prays seriously thus:

“Please God...Please make me disappear...Little parts of her body faded away...Only her tight, tight eyes were left. They were always left. Try as she might she could never get her eyes to disappear. So what was the point? They were everything. Everything was there in them. All those pictures, all those facts” (45).

The blacks have wounded psyche because of self-hatred. At the school the black boys taunt her and Pecola becomes a scapegoat of their own humiliation and psychological pain. The blacks harass other blacks out of self-hatred. Otten (1980) further avers that —the whiteness Morrison “castigates represents the dehumanizing

cultural values of society given over to profit, possession and dominance. It is a whiteness worn by blacks as well as whites” (96). Geraldine shouts “You nasty little black bitch, Get out of my house” (75).

Fantasy of Pecola: Her Self-loathing

Pecola’s traumatic journey begins with her dreams and fantasy. Tennessee Williams; Blanche weaves false illusions and fantasies as she was raped by Stanley at the end of the drama. Pecola uses her fantasy to solve all the domestic problems of her family. She falsely imagines that her blue eyes will end the domestic violence of her parents fantasizing that they will respond, “Why, look at pretty eyed Pecola? We mustn’t do bad things in front of those pretty blue eyes” (46). She imagines that the aggression of her parents will mitigate with her blue eyes. Her fantasy brings about her loss of self; sexual oppression, rape and insanity. Her father Cholly Breedlove had “catapulted himself beyond the reaches of human consideration. He had joined the animals; was, indeed, an old dog, snake, a ratty nigger” (16). Morrison uses the imagery of animals and reptiles to depict the degradation of Cholly who was a chronic drunkard with horrible past. Her mother was always lost in the world of movies and had no sensitivity about her growing daughters. Morrison narrates Cholly’s early life typical of black American experience. Cholly’s early life had been traumatic as he had never enjoyed the love and care of his parents. He was thrown in a junk heap as a baby. He grew aggressive, pessimistic and a neurotic guy. He led the life a bonded slave; he was denied freedom to enjoy or to lead an independent life. He was brought up in a dirty environment and learnt only to have sex and kill others. Cholly’s father impregnated Cholly’s mother and deserted her. Cholly was “thrown into garbage as a child. Great Aunt Jimmy saved his life from —down in

the rim of a tire under soft black Georgia sky” (133). Aunt Jimmy says that “his mama didn’t name [him] nothing. That nine days wasn’t up before she throwed [him] on the junk heap” (133). Cholly felt guilty and “didn’t ask anything else” (133). There was always confusion in the mind of Cholly. He never regarded her as his real parent since he never enjoyed the warmth of his Aunt Jimmy. Cholly does not know the meaning of human relationship. Bakerman describes Cholly as being “set adrift by the death of his guardian, taunted and humiliated by white men during his first sexual encounter, [...Because he] does not know about nurturing love, and feeling love, he is incapable of expressing it healthfully” (544).

Cholly never learned to become a real parent. He never tried to know the meaning of love because nobody loved him. He was like a stone statue and a heartless person. Vickroy observes that “because Pecola is like Cholly once was, small and impotent. He begins to question that —if he looked her in the face, he would see those haunted, loving eyes. The haunted memories of the past would irritate him; the love would move him to fury” (161). Aunt Jimmy died when Cholly was fourteen years old. Cholly represents evil forces in the novel and this is symbolized by the black sky by Morrison. After the funeral of Aunt Jimmy it was a chance that Cholly and Darlene passed through the woods. He used this as an opportunity to enjoy the first sexual experience with Darlene. But unfortunately he was encountered with two white hunters who force Cholly and Darlene to continue their sexual intercourse. Morrison describes the situation thus: “His mouth was full of the taste of muscadine made him giddy” (146).

Morrison dramatizes the rape of Pecola in the most lyrical language and in a scene that horrifies all the readers. Cholly comes back home drunk and watches

Pecola washing dishes. Pecola represents the physical qualities that evoke in Cholly a sense of love and repulsion. Pecola embodies in her all the darkest elements which Cholly hate since his childhood. He hates the presence of a woman and particularly when she appears ugly to him: “She hides behind it – peeping out from behind the shroud very seldom” (39). Pecola frequently struggles to escape from the world of reality and when she tries to do this “little parts of her body faded away. Now slowly, now with a rush...only her tight eyes were left. They were always left” (45). Freud especially talks about the mental powers of humans and categorizes their instincts into life instincts and death instincts. In life instincts, Freud includes the Ego (self-preservation) and the Id (instincts and drive) whereas in death instincts he includes human aggressive tendencies (Abel 1989). If Friedel Weinert advocates Darwin stating that “only an intelligent designer” (Weinert 102) could have “created the world” (102) and its “beauty, order, and regularity” (102). Freud proposes that the beauty, mental order, and regularity of scheduled actions of a subject get affected when it’s attacked externally. The subject becomes unconscious though “it also remains unconsciously active” (Sigmund Freud, *The Unconscious* 4). Cholly’s brutal results into his wounded psyche; he is the main factor of his loss of self.

Like Pecola, Cholly tries to “run away from the real world because his father would surely emerge and see him and laugh. Oh, Lord. He would laugh...there was only one thing to do” (157). Cholly is too weak to “confront reality so he runs away under a pier and he crouches in the fetal position, paralyzed, his fists covering his eyes for a long time. No sound, no sight, only darkness” (157). Pecola is presented as the derivative, the other, and subliminal who is mostly marginalized and “defined in terms of a lack” (32). Sexual abuse has been considered as the main reason for the

exploitation and relegation of women. Asma Amanant and Ihtasham-ur-Rehman also discover that “there are various ways by which the men marginalize women and sexuality is one of them”(Amanant and Rehman 25)

Cholly is a hopeless person suffering from the psychological trauma; mentally sick and in a state of intoxication. Freud observes that in a drunkard state the rational thinking of an individual vanishes; he also suffers from dementia in intoxication. Bjelic Dusan in his latest book *Freud's Industrial Unconscious, Benjamin's Hashish Mimesis* (2016) depicts the Freudian theories on “libido and —unconscious.” Freud observes that in intoxication an individual loses his balance of mind. Dr. Karen Horney observes that alcoholism brings conflicts in the mind of an individual and leads to an adult neurosis. Vickroy avers that Pecola and Cholly are sailing in the same boat; both are neglected by society and both lead an alienated life. Cholly considers that “if he looked her in the face, he would see those haunted, loving eyes. The hauntedness would irritate him; the love would move him to fury” (161). The incestuous rape is the soul product of Cholly’s hatred of women, Pecola represents black girls subjected to rape and sexual oppression and Cholly represents a depressed neurotic who is so much stressed and he hardly knows the meaning of human relationship. He suffered from poverty, fear and oppression. Cholly’s first reaction to her is —revulsion which is “a reaction to her young, helpless, hopeless presence” (11).

The rape scene of Pecola is controversial. Jones and Vinson observe that “Cholly —loved Pecola even though his touch was fatal for the love of a free man is never safe” (206). For Holloway “Cholly’s rape is a —tremendous and overwhelming act of paternal violence, the rape of Pecola by her father indeed is

diabolical” (44) Bayerman in his *Beyond Racism* observes that “Cholly had been socially conditioned to view himself as an object of disgust; he could do nothing other than objectify Pecola, he exploits his daughter because his own exploitation makes it impossible to do otherwise” (59). Carmean says: “At least he wanted to touch his daughter.

Pauline Breedlove responds to the rape by beating Pecola’s rape is an act not less brutal than Cholly’s” (24) Otten observes that the rape of Pecola is an expression of love, power and freedom. It is a “protest against an unjust and repressive culture” (24). In this chapter all aspects and the consequences, the causes and detrimental effects of the rape have been explored. Vickroy (1996) argues that Pecola represents “the neglect, exploitation, disempowerment and disavowal of her African American community and that the novel is the story of the oppressive social and familial forces” (91). The “rape scene of Pecola is a case study of racial discrimination, that subject is racial self-loathing” (84). Scott observes that the incest theme is unique in the novels of Toni Morrison. She has given a true insight to the forces of sexual oppression and marginalization of the blacks. Morrison has realistically exposed the “darker system of racial Othering”. Cholly fails to “fulfill the role of father as a result of this system of racial othering” (87). Toni Morrison dramatizes the scenes of “immorality, ugliness, and blackness” (90). Pecola feels that nobody loves her; her longing for love is fulfilled by her father through rape. Morrison depicts Cholly’s savage nature thus:

“Guilt and impotence rose in a bilious duet. What could he do for her-ever? What give her? What say to her? What could a burned out

black man say to the hunched back of the eleven year –old daughter”
(161).

Pecola slips into a psychosis, and becomes totally self-consumed. Freud in 1896 investigated that: “a precocious experience of sexual relations resulting from sexual abuse committed by another person...is the specific cause of hysteria...not merely an agent provocateur” (Freud 195). Guilt-ridden Cholly despises her as he broods over the rape of Pecola. He tries to handle the situation and there are two emotions in his heart; to please her or to kill her. Cholly knows only two actions; to enjoy sex of a woman or to kill. He knows that he has done a horrible deed but he shows no sign of repentance after the rape scene. He finds her fainted and in a fit of alcohol, he looks at the grayish panties of Pecola. Morrison uses the gray color to dramatize the rape scene effectively. In Morrison’s fiction the gray color is a sign of death and decay. Johnson observes that it symbolizes the —loss of Pecola’s innocence (2). When Pecola comes to her senses she finds her mother standing over her. Pauline instead of sympathizing with her begins thrashing her out of depression and helplessness. This occurs in the —Summer part of the novel which is often considered a time of birth. The —Summer brings for Pecola death and the loss of innocence. She becomes pregnant with her father’s child and this leads to her mental derangement. Claudia states,

“I even think now that the soil of the entire country was hostile to marigolds that year (Morrison 206). Claudia is able to look —among the garbage [...] of [her] town and focus, in the novel’s final line, on beauty sunflowers” (206). Claudia links “strawberries and summer to dust and lowering skies” (Morrison 187).

Claudia expresses the feelings of guilt talks of Pecola's insanity. "Claudia feels that the fact that the seeds they planted do not grow somehow implicates her in the death of the child. She and her sister, like the other members of the community, do not do enough to save Pecola" (Mayo 233). Cholly's rape of Pecola is described "as pathetic attempt to return to the heady days of first love when his very presence essentially created another human being" (Heinze, 74).

Bartky (1988) observes that the "bodies of women are deficient" (71). The traumatic life of Pecola can be conveniently investigated relying on the psycho-analytical theories of Freud and Jung. Freudian psychology explores the inner motivation of Pecola's desires and behavior in the society. Relying on Freudian theory of Id, Ego and Super Ego the unconventional desires of Pecola and her dreams and fantasies are investigated through the various episodes of the novel. Pecola's conscious and sub conscious mind is conditioned by her desires; ideals of beauty and dreams and fantasies. Jung observes that man often comes in conflict between his mental energy and outside environment. Pecola's personality is conditioned by the external forces; the attitude of her mother, the neglect of her father and indifference of her friends and teachers. She never got the real love and affection from her parents; humiliations from her friends. Bouson (2000) observes that the real cause of the psychological trauma of Pecola is rooted in the tradition of slavery. Morrison has depicted the cynical version of slavery concentrated form of racism. Dr Karen Horney observes that neurosis leads to the deflation of self. Horney observes that the psychology is linked with the cultural and the social value. She observes that "personal conflicts don't arise internally but are the products of cultural determinants" (Karen Horney, *Inner Conflicts* 123). Claudia is a strong

character and embodies the strength to fight with the odds of life. On the other hand, Pecola is fragile and vulnerable; Claudia's view of love has become twisted due to her experiences as a child: "Love is never any better than the over. Wicked people love wickedly, violent people love violently, weak people love weakly, stupid people love stupidly, but the love of a free man is never safe" (142). Claudia comments thus referring to Cholly and Pecola "He at any rate, was the one who loved her enough to touch her, envelop her, give something of himself to her" (206). Denise (1993) contends that culture plays vital role in shaping the identity of the black people; "culture has the power to disfranchise a child of mother love, to psychically splinter an entire race identity, and to imprison all human beings in static and stagnant relationships" (15).

Morrison lashes at the idealized standards of white beauty through the character of Pecola in this novel. This consciousness of white beauty lands Pecola in troubles and shatters herself at the end of the novel. The ideal of the white beauty results into her degradation; psychological trauma and insanity. Morrison's thesis in this novel is that the black women are basically ugly, dirty, poor and segregated. The black woman is ugly and marginalized in the society; she ever eager to satisfy the sexual hunger of the whites. Morrison discussed the theme of the psychological devastation of the blacks thus in an Interview:

"It wasn't that easy being a little black girl in the country-it was rough. The psychological tricks you have to play in order to get through and nobody said how it felt to be that. You knew that you were not the person they were looking at" (Toni Morrison 199).

Denitz Heinz further observes that the despised black girl exemplifies efforts at confronting the family trauma in vain. Judith Herman observes that this kind of disassociation is a common strategy used by the victim of child abuse: “Unable to escape or alter the unbearable reality in fact, the child alters it in her mind” (Herman 102). The traumatic journey of Pecola begins from this section of the novel as Pecola sees herself for the first time as ugly, as an object possessing an abject body. The main theme of the novel is the trauma of Pecola who becomes a victim of patriarchal hegemony, societal indifference and racism. Trauma is an “event of an individual’s life that is defined by its intensity and by the upheaval experienced by the individual” (Laplanche and Pontalis 465). Mark Twain explored the interaction between imagination and childhood trauma.

William Faulkner was influenced by Mark Twain creating the character of Joe Christmas in *The Light in August* (1932) and exposed the detrimental impact of childhood trauma on adulthood. Pecola of Morrison belongs to the tradition of Huck Finn and Joe Christmas depicting the sufferings of the sexually traumatized Southern girl. Tennessee Williams wrote *A Street car Named Desire* (1947) in which he dramatized the rape of his heroine Blanche Du Bois who is traumatized and is removed to an asylum at the end. Morrison seriously considered the works of Mark Twain and William Faulkner and observed that both the writers of America have defined white identity through black characters. When Toni Morrison submitted her Master’s thesis —Virginia Woolf’s and William Faulkner’s “Treatment of the Alienated” she expressed her indebtedness to William Faulkner in shaping her ideas about the black identity. Harold Bloom openly contends that Faulkner’s *Light in August* definitely impacted mind and sensibility of Toni Morrison in her portrayal of

childhood trauma in Pecola. Laurie Vickroy identifies Pecola as “a subaltern girl not previously represented in the Western literary tradition and a concrete example of the neglect, exploitation, disempowerment, and disavowal of communities and even entire culture” (81). Pecola’s neglect “becomes evident with the introduction of her character; Mama had told us two days earlier that a case was coming a girl who had no place to go” (16). Her family is “festering together in the debris of a realtor’s whim” (34). Vickroy contends that the “main source of the trauma of Pecola is not her deeds but rather the entire black community that has been oppressed and traumatized by a white race” (Vickroy 86). Pecola has undergone all the traumatic experiences as she becomes a neurotic self at the end of the novel losing her balance of mind. Davis (1982) observes thus: “Pecola is the epitome of the victim in a world that reduces persons to objects and then makes them feel inferior as objects” (330). Morrison depicts the fantastic vision of Pecola thus: “Pecola is a little black girl who wanted to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes” (137). But Pecola’s house of card collapses. Morrison has summed up the wounded psyche of Pecola thus in lyrical words highlighting her psychological disorientation of mind:

“The damage done was total. She spent her days, her tendrils, sap-green days, walking up and down, up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear” (158).

At the end of the novel, Pecola is confronted with reality and she appears too fragile to face the real world. She believes that “Soaphead Church gave blue eyes: I know. He really did a good job. Everybody’s jealous. Every time I look at somebody, they look off” (195). The fate of Cholly and Joe of Faulkner is the same;

Joe kills Jonna in desperation and Cholly rapes Pecola in love and frustration. George Savage (1881) analyzed the causes and symptoms of trauma resulting from child's fantasy as an indicator of "moral insanity" (61). Morrison uses Freudian ideas of repression in depicting the flashbacks of Cholly's trauma: "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 coal, leaving only flakes of ash and question mark of smoke" (151). Pecola's rape is the result of her false illusions, fantasies and dreams resulting from her "inborn psychic conflicts" (Reyes 317). Vickroy observes that Morrison highlights the theme of deficient of black community in responding to the trauma in *The Bluest Eye*. (88). Morrison expresses her concern for Pecola's trauma and observes that in spite of the progress made in the field of psychology the black community of Lorrain failed to address the trauma of a young black girl. Soaphead Williams observes that the family of Pecola was very indifferent to the growing demands of Pecola who was entering into the womanhood and they did nothing to alleviate her trauma.

The real identity of Pecola can be explored only through a psychoanalytic lens. Lacan's theory of the Mirror Stage is quite helpful to examine Pecola's desire for beauty and the events that led up to her mental breakdown. Lacan's theory of identity formation is accepted by the majority of thinkers and philosophers. Lacan's "mirror stage" explains different stages of real, imaginary, and symbolic. Pecola is in desperate need of love and affection from her parents but Mrs. Breedlove creates a negative sense of self for Pecola. Mrs. Breedlove is certainly not a loving maternal figure in Pecola's life. Her pitiful desire for love remains unfulfilled and she has to live with a void. Shirley Temple is "the epitome of beauty and everyone loves her,

because of this Pecola believes in order to be loved she needs to look like Shirley Temple. She desires some milk in blue-and-white Shirley Temple cup. Pecola was a long time with the milk and gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple's dimpled face" (19). Morrison emphasizes Pecola's lack of love in the beginning of the novel: "How do you do that? I mean, how do you get somebody to love you?" (32) This question occurs to Pecola after she looks at herself in the mirror. Pecola's finds love in beauty of the eyes. "It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different" To apply the mirror stage to Pecola's desire for blue eyes is to say that she is always looking in the mirror, and that mirror is upheld by white society standards.

Alfred W. Adler (1870-1937) observed that not only sexual harassment or unfulfilled sexual desires are responsible for trauma, but also inferiority complex. Unlike Freud, Adler documents that "all forms of neurosis and developmental failure are expressions of inferiority and disappointment . . ." (Adler VI). Firstly, Adler differentiates himself from Freud on the formation of the unconscious due to 'inferiority complex'. Secondly, Adler also argues in his theory of "Individual psychology" (23) that an individual alone isn't accountable for becoming a victim or a perpetrator. Adler focuses not only on an individual but also on the entire environment and the people who create disorder in the life of an individual. Unlike Freud, Adler considers an individual as a whole when he states that "we may regard the demand for a complete and unified understanding of man for a comprehension of his (undivided) individuality . . ." (24). But like Freud, Adler also talks about the aftermath of a traumatic incident when he states that the neurotic "feels himself a

criminal . . . all the time his attitude is determined by the fiction that he is really wicked, dominated by uncontrollable sex desire, given over to unlimited self-indulgence, capable of any crime or license” (86). Pecola suffers from the inferiority complex as she is always haunted by the railings and battering of her friends and the consciousness of being ugly. The image of what is beautiful is socially constructed. “Adults, old girls, shops, magazines...all the world has agreed that a blue eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll were that every girl treasured” (20). Unlike Pecola, Claudia is aware of the identity of herself and the other. She takes “pride in her self-image and is comfortable in her own skin, however she is the exact opposite of Pecola. Claudia learns to accept that the image of a pale skinned, blue eyed girl is worshiped, but she can differentiate from the other” (204). Claudia describes her as “a winged but grounded bird, intent on the blue void it could not reach” (204). For Freud, “the unconscious‘ is a systematic part of mind like the other “psychic co-systems” (114) “the conscious‘ and the preconscious”. The unconscious mind holds repressed feelings, hidden perceptions, concealed phobias, automatic reactions, blocked memories, thoughts, and desires that impact human behavior.

Dr Karen Horney in her book *Our Inner Conflicts* observes that anxiety leads to mental breakdown of an individual. Pecola is never at rest; she is always tense and her life is full of anxiety as she continues her struggle against her black community; her black friends and the parents. Horney stresses anxiety springing from the sense of insecurity and fear. In Pecola’s case fear and insecurity of the future haunt her day and night. Morrison has depicted the neurotic behavior of Pecola in her relationship with her parents, teachers and friends. Her socio-cultural environment has an insidious and detrimental impact on her sensitive mind and psyche. There are

moments when she doesn't want to live and expresses her desire to disappear. Pecola struggles to get peace at home and with a view to relieve her anxiety she longs for love and admiration... Pecola drives herself into conflict by her consuming obsession for blue eyes, the bluest ones. The conflict makes Pecola neurotic and she relapses into an imaginary world.

Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, takes up the issue of black Americans psychology. The Freudian personality structure theory gives a perfect explanation of the roots for the conducts of Pecola's behavior. The trajectory of Pecola's psychological evolutions is very interesting in the novel. Pecola loses her rational approach to life because of her obsession to be white and of her jealousy of Shirley Temple's cuteness. Claudia felt alienated by the doll because she was black and the baby doll was white. She felt it was unrealistic for her to pretend to be the baby's mother since they did not look alike. Claudia begins to realize that the image of blonde hair and blue eyes is supposed to be the standard of beauty, but she is offended by that idea because it does not represent her appearance. When Claudia states that she likes Jane Withers, instead of Shirley Temple, Frieda and Pecola thinks she is —incomprehensible. Jane Withers' character represents one who does not like Shirley Temple in the TV show. Claudia did not accept the beauty standards of her society because it was exclusively attributed to one race. Morrison digs out the negative impacts of racism on the black people in *The Bluest Eye*. The Breedloves live in the world of fantasy and builds an ideal ego to struggle and survive in the white -dominated society. The hostile environment doesn't allow them to freely grow and prosper and Pecola is aware about her limitations. She cannot run away like her brother Sammy and there is a conflict between the ideal ego and the real life.

This conflict shatters all her dreams and brings untold sufferings. Claudia states, “We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father’s baby that the Marigolds did not grow” (Morrison 5).

The rape of Cholly has social relevance as the episode is a warning to the poor and segregated people. The rape is devastating and traumatic experiences in the life of a woman. It shatters the life of a woman as it leads to psychological ailments. Morrison has dramatized this scene to give the answer of why the rape occurred “since the why is too difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how” (6). Freud’s seduction theory is relied to explore Pecola’s psychological distress. Toni Morrison depicted the psychological plight of all the important characters that are sick and wounded because of the social and political forces operating in the Afro-American society. Pecola lives in a world of illusions and Cholly exhibits his deviant behavior appearing like tribal savage. He was thrown into the gutter and led a lonely and alienated life. Judith Herman believes that the conflict in the soul of man shatters him. Cholly doesn’t know the meaning of human relations; he lives in abject poverty and knows only quarreling and eating like an animal. His rape of his daughter symbolizes human degradation and an expression of acute trauma. Herman aptly suggested that “The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma” (Herman1). The novel *The Bluest Eye* is a study of trauma of the neurotic black characters. Breuer argues that acute trauma leads to madness and Cholly behaves like a mad person. Morrison’s novel is a warning to all the political leaders of the world to protect the lives of women from the rapists.

Chapter III

Alienation and Depression of Milkman Dead and Guitar in Toni

Morrison's *Song of Solomon*

Laurie Vickroy in her book *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (2002) observes that alienation is the main cause of depression and trauma. Alienation is a common factor in the hectic life of modern man; the anxieties and stress often compels a man to withdraw from his environment. People who withdraw from life often reject their loved ones or society. In the alienated state, man shows feelings and emotions of distance and estrangement. Vickroy argues that alienation is a complex condition that often affects the mental health of a person. The main symptoms are nihilism, pessimism; feelings of insecurity and belief in the futility of life. Depression is an illness and this has been recognized in medicine since the days of Hippocrate. Singer (1974) investigated the causes of Depression and concluded that “it is a —core illness found in human beings” Kleinmann (1977) argues that Depression is culturally and biologically determined. Marella (1978) claims that Depression is a mental disorder in the “psychic framework. The experience is a psychological disturbance. In China Depression is called “Neuralthenia” and in America it is called “Depressive disorder” Kleinmnn (1982) identifies it as the product of culture and biology. Brown and Harris in their book *Social Origins of Depression* (1978) argue that Depression differs from society to society, it is the result of racism and white domination. The main causes of Depression are the sense of failure; the loss of identity; helplessness and low self-esteem in the people.

The publication of the novel *Song of Solomon* (1977) excited great interest among the reviewers and the critics of Toni Morrison. The layers of images and symbols in the plot attracted the attention of many critics. The critics reviewed *Song of Solomon* applying the theory of “defamiliarization” of the Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovesky to understand the plot of the novel. The plot structure of the novel *Song of Solomon* is built around many metaphors, symbolism and much of criticism of Morrison focuses on issues such as blackness, race, gender, and history of the blacks. In this chapter the main focus is on the analysis of Milkman dead from the psychological perspective relying on the theories of trauma. The identity formation of Milkman Dead is the nucleus of the novel. It impacts his mind and sensibility is the main concerns in this chapter. The time line of the main story is over thirty years and the plot is divided into two sections. First section is set in Michigan and some details of the birth of Milkman are provided. This section of the novel highlights his moral and spiritual crisis and his alienation from the family, neighbors and purposeless life. He is caught between the aristocratic life style of his father and the traditional values of his aunt. The critics and reviewers of Toni Morrison have followed different routes to investigate the stages of development of Milkman Dead. Some scholars have explored the value of bones as a connection to history of Milkman. Minakawa refers to Milkman’s father Macon who “loses his touch with sweetness and humanity (Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* 48).

Guitar who is the close friend of Milkman and member of violent gang avenging murderers has generated hatred only in the community but Pilate; the aunt of Milkman emerges as a spiritual tutor in the novel “loves natural fruit and sings or hums of sugar man all the time” (48). Milkman does “feel a loving relationship with

a woman called Sweet; sweetness equals empathy and caring for family the sweetness of the character is a measure of his capability for loving” (47). This is another aspect of the personality of Milkman which cannot be ignored (48).

Critics have also investigated the significance of Milkman’s dream of smothering tulips. He presents it to Guitar as a dream and tells him that he “had really seen it” (104) in his dream “the flowers were smothering Milkman’s mother, taking away her breath with their soft jagged lips” (105). The hero thinks it “symbolizes the —excessive seriousness of his mother” (105). And in the language of Toni Morrison “seriousness means, miserable” (104). Guitar is correct when he says: “Why didn’t you go help her?” (105). Morrison has introduced the ghost elements of African folklore in the plot and Milkman’s psyche is impacted by the uncanny ghostly elements. The symbolical eggs represent the rebirth of Milkman. Their family name is “Dead.” At the outset of the chapter it is stated that the folklore elements; dream and apparitions confuse and baffle as many interpretations can be put forward understanding the identity of Milkman Dead. The critics have also explored the symbolical significance of the hunting scene where Milkman is stripped of his “whiteness” Krumholz observes that this is a “tribal tripartite structure” (599). Milkman’s knife fight arriving at Shalimar represents his “rite of separation, the rites meant to divest the initiate of status and to separate him from the usual social order” (Krumholz 559). The right analysis of the process of identity formation and the traumatic experiences of Milkman Dead cannot be done without understanding the mythical and symbolical rites and rituals described by Toni Morrison. The novelist has used the elements of folklore, superstitions, the games of children, songs, traditions and rituals of the old tribal culture and their symbolical significance cannot be underestimated in any study of Milkman Dead. Through the tribal culture of the

Afro-American blacks Morrison intensifies the black consciousness and the search for ancestral roots of Milkman finds meaning in tribal blue songs and especially in *The Song of Solomon*. Morrison observes in an interview that “there’s a great deal of obfuscation and distortion and erasure, so that the presence of the heartbeat of black people has been systematically annihilated in many ways and the job of recovery is ours” (Morrison 224). Indeed, her novel *Song of Solomon* is reclamation of the history of African Americans. Morrison believes that the oral tradition of the folk culture can convey more meaning and reality than the analytical descriptions based on the western logic. She extensively used the elements of magic because for the blacks magic is a part of their culture. Morrison uses the flying as the central metaphor in the novel. This metaphor is also used to tell the readers how Afro-American women pass on their legends to their posterities. Vickroy argues that “trauma narratives are personalized response to this country’s emerging awareness of the catastrophic effects of wars, poverty, colonization, and domestic abuse on the individual psyche” (x)

In this chapter, the main focus is the exploration of the traumatic experiences of Milkman Dead. The hero of the novel Milkman Dead suffers from serious psychological ailments such as depression, alienation and trauma. The main focus of Toni Morrison in the novel is the search for identity of the main character of the novel. The major portion of the novel is the search for identity of Milkman Dead who rejected his father’s —white property based value system. Milkman Dead begins his journey in his quest for the roots of his family. As the plot progresses, Morrison gives an analysis of the progression of his trauma depicting all the causes, symptoms and the stages of his trauma. Interestingly, the enslavement of Milkman is not physical or political but spiritual and private. The approach of Morrison is

psychological; racism is a main factor giving psychological anguish to Milkman Dead. She has clearly stated that human psyche is subjected to pressure and trauma in every instance of the character's evolution. Milkman faces challenges of slavery and sexism are the chief factors bringing disintegration in the life of Milkman Dead. Slavery implies complex psychological phenomena as regards the brutality of hundreds of years of slave domination. From a social perspective, it is also the epitomes of a man's lust for power and domination. Slavery was the product of industrialization in America and the hunger of power of American man's need for cheap labor force. America was a growing economy and demanded the colonization of the new labor force. In her novel, Morrison used slavery and racism for the broad psychological spectrum of emotions experienced by the blacks.

The History of Trauma Theories

In the earlier times the word trauma was a medical term and according to *The Oxford Dictionary* the trauma means "a wound or an external bodily injury." It also indicates "a psychic injury; an emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed. In the 19th century Michael observes that the concept of trauma gained wide interest and it gets new place in the history of psychoanalysis. During World War 11 trauma meant "shell shock" but after the war it was given the name of "battle fatigue." But after the Vietnam war trauma was regarded as —post "traumatic stress disorder" It was in 1980 the PTSD recognized trauma as "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) and in the words of Cathy Caruth including "the symptoms of what had previously been called shell shock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome. The traumatic neurosis is referred to responses to both human and natural catastrophes" (Caruth 3). Trauma certainly involves some type of danger; it

is a situation where the victim is helpless and powerless. They suffer an un-repairable wound on the psyche. In the modern times Cathy Caruth observes that the word trauma is being used in a number of disciplines: “The phenomenon of trauma has seemed to become all-inclusive, but it has done so precisely because it brings us to the limits of our understanding: if psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology, and even literature are being to hear each other a new in the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience” (4).

Jenny Edkins (2003) in her book, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* observes that the trauma “shatters the harmoniously synchronized illusions that support our self – entered view of the world and gloss over the gaps and fissures of our fabric” (Edkins 214). With the rise of science and technology and with the changing life-style, the social conditions of the victims of trauma are increasing. Cathy Caruth and Jenny Edkins have made intensive studies on the psychological ailment of trauma. Edkins further observes thus: “Trauma is what happens when what is normally hidden by the social reality in which we live our daily lives, is revealed” (114). The prominent critic Slavoz Zizek in his book *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989) connected trauma to “a grain of sand preventing the smooth functioning for it ruins the balance of the symbolic universe of the subject” (171). Interestingly, Julia Kristeva’s in her book *Strangers to Ourselves* (1983) gives her own theory of abjection linked with the trauma. Kristeva argues “Abjection is something rejected from which one doesn’t part and abjection disturbs identity, system, order for it is the in-between, the ambiguities, the composite” (183). Laplanche and Pontalis in their book *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* observe that “trauma is mainly characterized by its intensity, by the subject’s incapacity to

respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychological organization” (Laplanche 465). Sigmund Freud wrote his famous essay *Studies on Hysteria*. Freud approached trauma “in terms of quantities of excitation too large to deal with the normal way. Hysteria is a considerable part of this sum of excitation of trauma is transformed into purely somatic symptoms” (86). Elizabeth A. Waites spent many years to explore the nature and symptoms of trauma. She has published her book *Trauma and Survival: Post Traumatic and Dissociative Disorders in Women* (1993). She observes that the “role in psychological development and psychopathology has remained in the background of psychoanalytic theory and treatment” (4). Freud wrote his *Pleasure Principle* and asserted that “it seems to me that the concept necessarily implies connection...with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli” (123). Judith Herman in her books *Father-Daughter Incest*, *Trauma and Recovery* gave her own views of trauma. In this chapter, the novel of *Song of Solomon* of Toni Morrison is investigated as a case study of Trauma of the hero Milkman Dead. Morrison has depicted the traumatic wounds of Milkman Dead caused by his black status in the white dominated society. Barbara Hill Rigney in her book *The Voices of Toni Morrison* (1991) aptly observes thus: “Her characters are both subjects of and subject to history, events in real time, that succession of antagonistic movements that includes slavery, reconstruction, depression, and war” (61).

As a child, Milkman Dead, the hero of *Song of Solomon* was of different nature and temperament. When he was four years of age he lost interest in himself and others and started remaining aloof though he was attached to his mother and his aunt Pilate. His sisters also took care of him; Corinthians and Lena loved him and his

cousin Hagar was very fond of him. Interestingly, Milkman doesn't reciprocate their love and affection rather feels bored in their company. This whimsical nature is the root cause of his alienation and depression which ultimately leads to his traumatic experience. Milkman resembles his father Macon Dead II who was a ruthless rich landlord who threw all the moral values in the winds in his mad rat race of making money. Besides this, Milkman is afflicted with a genetic psychological ailment which is rooted old age oppressions of the blacks by the white dominated society. In his early life he is conscious of profound loss as he is marked with trauma: "By the time Milkman was fourteen he had noticed that one of his legs was shorter than the other...and he never told anybody about it ever. It bothered him and he acquired movements and habits to disguise what to him was a burning defect" (62). Symbolically his physical defect reflects his tainted nature of inheritance. Morrison argues that the history of the Afro-American blacks is a sensational history of slavery, oppression and sexual subjugation. Slavery and racism are two great themes in Morrison's fiction. Every scene, every life and death situation of the novel is linked with traditional slavery, violence, hatred and racism. Hill Rigney argues that the traumatized Milkman Dead is a victim of an old established order which is out of his control and power. Trauma is a psychic condition that passes from one generation to the other. Hortense Spillers remarked thus in this connection: "In some ways I don't believe in the collective unconscious, or racial unconscious, because if that were true then that means that will all do anything but haunted, each generation" (Spillers 28).

Macon was killed mercilessly when he dared to defend his land. Macon Jr. and Pilate were terrified they suffered poverty, privation and lived under threat of the whites. When Milkman reached at the age thirty-two he feels suffocated living with

his parents. He is also crazy to make millions of dollars. His journey is also a unique quest to find out his original home. Marc C. Conner aptly observes that “his quest for home is not his obsession for space and certainly it is not a matter of geographical location. His chief concern is his quest for his Negro identity confronting the harsh environment. Trauma of Milkman Dead is hereditary” (123).

Milkman is the symbol of search for the roots of the blacks. He begins his quest to explore his roots and to forge his identity challenging all the norms of the black society. He has experienced psychological pain before he “comes to know from where he has come from” (Toni Morrison, *The Song of Solomon* 60). J. Brooks Bouson “opines that Milkman’s rejection of his name has symbolical significance. It symbolizes his outright rejection of his race gender and old heritage since he looks confused and bewildered all the time” (Bouson 123). Toni Morrison observes that “Milkman is always shame ridden since he carries with him the —shit of his family. He is always burdened with the false class vanity of his family who lives in illusions and delusions. Milkman is feeling guilty for his racial shame” (75). Dorothy H. Lee also investigated “the significance of Milkman’s journey and found that he travels from his innocence to awareness since he explores his self and confronts the existential reality honestly. He digs out his heritage, identity and feels his responsibility to his family and race” (353). *The Washington Post* commented that Toni Morrison has written “a novel that will endure, In this novel, she places emphasis on black culture and black history. The plot of the novel is loaded with allusions, symbols, songs and folktales of ancient black history and culture” Milkman is the main character and his exploration of self is dramatized vividly by Toni Morrison. Milkman Dead lives in darkness as he is constantly burdened with

void. As Joyce Wegs observes in her study: “Morrison as a novelist takes on the role of a blues singer in order to explore how folk values buried in the past may contribute to a better future for all her people” (166). Patrick Bryce in his book *The Novels of Toni Morrison: The Search for Self and Place Within the Community* observes that “Milkman seeks freedom from all those whom he believes have treated him like a garbage pail...But while Milkman wishes to deny the obvious, those characters surrounding him reveal to him and the reader just how detached and distorted Milkman has become” (99). Milkman hears the voices of his mother, father and aunt and in this state of alienation he becomes crazy to find who he is. Milkman in the beginning shows no interest in his family history: “His life was pointless, aimless, and it was true that he didn’t concern himself an awful lot about other people. There was nothing he wanted had enough to risk anything for, inconvenience himself for” (107). He is practically cut off from all and she finds no value in himself. He does everything to avoid the traumatic memories of the past and to circumvent the horrific history of his parents:

“He just wanted to beat a path away from his parent’s past, which was also their present and which was threatening to become his present as well. He hated the acridness in his mother’s and father’s relationship, the conviction of righteousness they each held on to with both hands” (180).

Morrison employs the “flying motif to place events within a context of cyclical history”. Milkman uses the powerful metaphor of flying to start his journey of self-exploration. Symbolically the act of flight symbolizes escape from cruelty, subjugation and oppression. Flight represents a response to traumatic slavery. As

Carl Jung argues in his *Man and His Symbols* that “flight represents Man’s need for liberation from any state of being which is too immature, too fixed or final” (146). The metaphor of flight is linked with the traumatic history of the family of Milkman. Slavery in fact had been the main cause of flight which resulted in poverty and chaos of the family. The critics describe it communal trauma since he abandoned his family causing overwhelming loss to all the members of the family. Communal trauma is exhibited as an indirect form of racism and the absence of Solomon has been seriously highlighted by Morrison. Marilyn Sander Mobley observes in her article *Myth as Usable Past* that “the novel is a harrowing tale of Milkman who lives with a void and who struggles to explore the real meaning of his life” (97).

All the characters in *Song of Solomon* experience trauma that is detrimental to the growth of their life. Trauma may be personal, communal, generational or collective; Morrison has depicted all forms of traumatic experiences in her novel. They destroy the happiness of the characters and lead them to alienation, depression and paralysis. Guitar Bains is a major character in the novel; he is a friend of Milkman who experiences personal trauma because of the death of his father. The haunting memories of his father and mother made him sick, lonely and aggressive in temperament. Guitar could never forget the humiliation when his mother got only forty dollars as insurance money after the death of his father by the white insurance agent. It is devastating for a son like Guitar to lose his father in such an undignified manner simply because he was powerless and helpless being black. The sweet memory of his father is reduced to a few dollars. Racism mentally and psychologically tortures him and exacerbates his trauma he feels that a black man has no value in the white society. He cannot forget and forgive her mother who

accepted what the sawmill owner offered her in a gentile way. He hates the white candy representing the superiority of the white on African- American lives. When his mother leaves him after the death of his father he feels abandoned: “She just ran away. My aunt took care of us...it was hard for me to latch on to a woman. Because I thought if I loved anything it would die” (311). Guitar experiences the worst form of personal trauma which wrecks his life and ruins all his relationships in the society. Schreiber observes thus: “Deserting the family in a time of grief, Guitar’s mother increases the family’s stress by disrupting a secure attachment for her children, and the movement from caretaker to caretaker compounds Guitar’s trauma of loss” (96). This personal trauma is further intensified with the death of Emmitt Till’s death. Guitar now summons up the courage and decides to fight against the supremacy of the White but in this journey he is disconnected from his friends and relatives. Guitar has realized that non-violence will not solve the problems of the blacks so he joins the militant organization called Seven Days “trying to make a world where one day white people will think before they lynch” (161). Guitar has got a purpose as he tries to bring order in his chaotic existence. He has seen in his black society where life is insignificant and a woman can be killed just as whistling at a white woman. The climax comes when Guitar decides to kill his best friend Milkman who has discovered a stash of gold but not willing to share with him. He is consumed by hatred and selfish passion and is a victim of dynamic trauma unable to move beyond the trauma of race. In this paralytic situation he remembers his father: “In some intertextual moments, the past flickers forth, as in traumatic flashbacks. But such flashbacks are also always moments of risk, as traumatized memory threatens to override or displace historical occurrence” (Rothberg 506). Guitar’s trauma is again visible when he looks at the face of his mother after the mill owner gives her forty

dollars as compensation for the accidental death of his father. Guitar goes in trance as he is talking to Milkman: "Once. Just once cried Guitar. His heart was broken when he saw the smiling face of his mother. "Her husband was sliced in half and boxed backward" (226). He goes on repeating the words in his trance: "Once, Just once" (227). He is unable to express his thoughts through words, a common symptom of trauma; his trauma is not only psychological but physiological as well. He thinks of the candy and expresses his nausea; "he felt the nausea all over again" (226). His mind and brain is afflicted with the traumatic sensations. He feels that in the African -American society his life is worthless. Now racial trauma drives him and he fails to balance the meaning of life and death. The effects of trauma are so severe on him that he loses his self-control; it invades his mind and body, rendering him mentally and emotionally paralyzed. He is unable to feel either for himself or for others. Guitar discovers a dangerous prescription to heal the trauma. Guitar explores the real cause of his traumatic existence:

"Listen, baby people do funny things. Specially us. The cards are stacked against us and just trying to stay in the game, stay alive and in the game, make us do funny things. Things we can't help" (88).

Guitar realizes that the people have to find strange ways to survive. He feels that the survival mechanisms used by his ancestors to overcome trauma shouldn't be used by the present generation. Milkman argues with him that past memory can be used to overcome the trauma but Guitar doesn't agree because he feels that past is tormenting. Not only men, even women in *Song of Solomon* are afflicted with traumatic experiences. Ruth, the mother of Milkman also suffers from trauma. When Ruth dies, she looks to her father for love and affection. She tries her level best to

cement the relations between father and daughter. The critics observe that they had incestuous relationships:

“Fond as he was for his only child, useful as she was in house since his wife had died, lately he had begun to chafe under her devotion. Her steady beam of love was unsettling, and she had never dropped those expressions of affection that had been lovable in her childhood. The good-night kiss was itself a masterpiece of slow wittedness on her part and discomfort on his. At sixteen, she still insisted on having him come to her at night, sit on her bed, exchange a few pleasantries, and plant a kiss on her lips....More probably it was the ecstasy that always seemed to be shining in Ruth’s face when he bent to kiss her—an ecstasy he felt inappropriate to the occasion” (23).

Morrison refers to Freudian theory of “Oedipus Complex” describing the relationship of Ruth with her father. After the death of her mother she finds her father lonely and desperate. She transfers her affection to her father and a physical, emotional and sexual bond is formed making her father uncomfortable and guilty. Ruth’s relationship with her father becomes problematic to Macon Dead Jr. as he refuses to have sexual relationship with Ruth. He withdraws from Ruth, this detachment traumatizes Ruth; she lost her mother, her father and now her husband. She longs for love as she cries out like a wounded tigress: “I thought I’d really die if I had to live this way. With nobody touching me, or even looking as though they’d like to touch me” (125). She shared her thoughts with Pilate and expresses her wounded heart as she is living in a world without love. The rejection by her husband Macon Jr. is a traumatic loss for Ruth. This lack of love and intimacy with her

husband contributes to her breast feeding to Milkman who is beyond nursing age. Being emotionally disconnected, Ruth establishes a perverse connection with Milkman: “She felt him. His restraint, his courtesy, his indifference, all of which pushed her into fantasy. She had the distinct impression that his lips were pulling from her a thread of light. It was as though she was a cauldron spinning gold” (13). Ruth developed an unhealthy affection for her son Milkman out of profound sense of loss. Ruth develops unhealthy attitude and her breastfeeding continues until Freddie nicknames her son Milkman. Macon puts her pressure to abort her son and this frightens her:

“Then the baby became the nausea caused by the half ounce of castor oil Macon made her drink, then a hot pot recently emptied of scalding water on which she sat, then a soapy enema, a knitting needle she inserted only the tip, squatting in the bathroom, crying, afraid of the man who paced outside the door), and finally, when he punched her stomach and punched it), she ran to Southside looking for Pilate” (131).

When Hagar attempts to kill her son, Ruth recollects this traumatic episode. Pilate helps her in saving Milkman from the murderous intentions of Macon. Ruth doesn't trust her husband and believes that he had killed his own father by throwing away his medicines. Ruth is in conflict and is trapped between the feelings of love and hatred for Macon. She is strangled led by loneliness and longing for intimacy of her husband. Trauma adversely affects her mental and physical state.

Ruth's traumatic sense of loss multiplies, impairing her wisdom and ruining all her relationships. Ruth hates her husband who tried to kill her father. Ruth in

most of her daily life is haunted by the old memories that shape her traumatic identity. Judith Herman observes thus: “This imaginary of these events often crystallizes around a moment of betrayal, and it is this breach of trust which gives the intrusive images their intense emotional power” (55). Ruth tries to fill the traumatic void within her by having a child. She develops incestuous love relationship with her own father to fulfill her sexual needs. She derives sexual pleasures from her breast-feeding. She is so much obsessed with her past memories that she never moves beyond her loss and recreates trauma in her own son. In her desperate mood she says “I am a small woman...I don't mean little; I mean small, and am small because I was pressed small” (124). Ruth is unable to enter the world as she is always moving in her past and the present. She suffers from the loss of self as the story progresses and the trauma consumes her existence. Morrison has exhibited generational trauma of the Dead family; it begins with Solomon and is transmitted to his son Jake who then transmits it to Macon Jr. who transmits it to Milkman. Slavery compels Solomon to take flight and in his flight with Jake, he drops him and he gets killed. The separation of “father and son plants the seed for a profound sense of loss and trauma in the novel —neither one of them knew their own father, Jake nor Sing” (323). A drunken clerk gives Jake new surname Dead: “Mama like it liked the name. Said it was new and would wipe out the past. Wipe it all out” (54). Judith Herman further observes thus: “The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma” (18). Morrison uses the word “dead” to describe the transmission of traumatic history of the blacks from generation to generation:

“A literal slip of the pen handed to his father on a piece of paper and which he handed to his only son, and his son likewise handed on to his; Macon dead who begat a second Macon Dead who married Ruth Foster” (18).

This passage reveals how whole community experiences generational trauma as all members of the Dead family suffer from trauma of loss and abandonment. Jake grows up never knowing his father Solomon and is renamed Macon Dead by a drunken clerk. His illiteracy leads to his traumatic experiences as Schreiber points out: —Despite his freedom, hard work, physical stamina, and profitable farm, Macon Dead Sr. fails to escape the cycle of racial abuse founded in slavery. Because of his inability to read, “Macon signs his land over to a devious white family” (Schreiber 98). Macon commits the same mistake when he names his daughter Pilate. He cannot read properly and continues the cycle of misnaming and declares “That’s where my finger went down” (19). He has no sense to identify anything because of his traumatic sensibility: “Everything bad that ever happened to him happened because he couldn’t read” (53). The trauma of racism and the tribal history of slavery of the blacks prove that how unimportant the names of African Americans were. He loses connect with the self and the world because he was unable to read. The land that belonged to Pilate and Macon Jr’s went to the white because of his illiteracy. Macon Dead changes his life style and becomes crazy to make money and his concept of ownership is an act of rebellion and survival. He starts aping the white and thinks that money and wealth can allow him to overpower the whites. In his confrontation with Milkman Dead Macon makes no mention of emotional love and says: “Let me tell you right now the one important thing you’ll ever need to know: Own things.

And let the things you own other things. Then you'll own yourself and other people too" (55). Macon develops aggression and hate because of the trauma. His home is a hellish place of trauma where there is no love:

"Macon kept each member of his family awkward with fear. His hatred of his wife glittered and sparked in every word he spoke to her. The disappointment he felt in his daughters sifted down on them like ash...The way he mangled their grace, wit, and self-esteem was the single excitement of their days" (10).

Macon Jr. transmits to his family the trauma of emotional abandonment and loss which inherited from the murder of his father. He is completely detached and stunted and is on the verge of psychological collapse. He avoids the gullibility of his father and becomes a cold mirror image of him. The problem with Macon like Ruth, he is unable to forget the past as he vacillates between being in the moment and reliving the past. He reflects his past experiences while talking to his son:

"He (Macon Dead Jr.) was momentarily confused. His son's question had shifted the scenery. He was seeing himself at twelve, standing in Milkman's shoes and feeling what he himself had felt for his own father. The numbness that had settled on him when he saw the man he loved and admired fall off the fence; something wild ran through him when he watched the body twitching in the dirt...Was that what this boy felt for him? Maybe it was time to tell things" (51).

Macon is obviously caught between the past of witnessing the murder of his father and his present feelings for his son. His consciousness is sick as he feels

disturbed all the time: “Funny how things get away from you. For years you can’t remember nothing. Then just like that it all comes back to you” (52). When he watches Pilate singing from the window, he recollects the time when he loved her; “As Macon felt himself softening under the weight of memory and music, the song died down” (30).

Pilate is another victim of traumatic experiences in the novel. The death of her father is her ulcer and she can never forget it. Schreiber points out that both children suffer trauma: —As witnesses to this father’s death traumatic event, Macon Dead Jr. and Pilate will harbor this burden forever, their father’s death leaves Macon and Pilate —homeless. Pilate tries her level best to come out of the feelings of trauma by reaching to others. She is rejected by her brother and feels lonely as she too is haunted by the past all the time. Pilate establishes her connection with her father as she tells Ruth: “He’s helpful to me, real helpful. Tells me things I need to know...It’s a good feeling to know he’s around. I tell you he’s a person I can always rely on” (141). The ear infection symbolizes her physical and psychological anguish because of her traumatic experiences. Morrison writes thus:

“Pilate rubbed her ear until it was numb, burned the end of the wire, and punched it through her earlobe. Macon fastened the wire ends into a knot, but the lobe was swollen and running pus. At Circe’s instruction she put cobwebs on it to draw pus out and stop the bleeding” (167).

Pilate experiences hallucinations about the presence of her father being lost in a traumatic trance. She tries to reconnect with him in her memories: “After their

mother died, she had come struggling out of the womb without the help of muscles or the pressure of swift womb water. As a result, for all the years he knew her, her stomach was as smooth and as sturdy as her back, at no place interrupted by a navel” (28). Pilate suffers as an outcast in the community having no parents and being the victim of traumatic existence. Schreiber opines that: “Bereft of parents and her brother, rejected by each community she settles into, Pilate can rely on no one but herself” (100). In her traumatic trance, she is connected with her father, talks to her father and is adversely impacted by the ghostly presence of her father: “We both seen him. I see him still. He’s helpful to me, real helpful. Tell things I need to know” (141).

Hagar is another traumatic woman in the *Song of Solomon* of Morrison. She is all the time longing for the love and affection of men. Her psychological obsession mirrors Pilate’s craving for love from her father and brother. Hagar has no significant relationship with men and her life is empty and meaningless. Hagar feels lonely and traumatized when Milkman, her lover and cousin whom he loves rejects her and breaks with her. She feel shattered as her speech becomes fragmented and she feels paralyzed by the emotions of love and hatred for Milkman: “Hagar raised the knife again, this time with both the hands, but found she could not get her arms down...The paralyzed women and the frozen man” (130). Her aggression and anger grows as she loses her balance of mind vowing to kill Milkman in desperation. She is overwhelmed by a sense of emptiness and lifelessness because of the rejection of Milkman. Hagar feels alienated, depressed and unloved. Pilate also fails to understand her trauma:

“Neither Pilate nor Reba knew that Hagar was not like them. Not strong enough, like Pilate, nor simple enough like Reba to make up her life as they had. She needed what most colored girl needed: a chorus of mamas, grand mamas, aunts, sisters, neighbors. Sunday school teachers, best girlfriends and what all to give her the strength life demanded of her-and the humor with which to live it” (311).

Hagar suffers from the beauty complex and tries her level best to look beautiful to please Milkman. The support of her mother and grandmother is insufficient. She tries to conform to the white standard of beauty but fails to woo Milkman. She tries to put on various garments and the salesman tells her she doesn't meet the traditional standard of beauty: “Oh my, she said, and reached for the tag hanging from the skirt's waist. This is five. Don't force it. You need, oh, a nine or eleven. I should think. Please don't force it” (315). Guitar tries to console her: “You're turning over your whole life to him. Your whole life, girl. And if it means so little to you that you can give it away; hand it to him, then why should it mean any more to him? He can't value you more than you value yourself” (319).

Milkman Dead continues his journey from Michigan to Pennsylvania in search of gold but gold remains elusive and he loses peace of mind. Soon his quest becomes meaningful and significant. He realizes that gold will not give him peace of mind and home. Milkman's search changes the course of his life. He is not interested in gold but to find out his roots of his ancestors. In *Song of Solomon*, Toni Morrison has used history and historical myths in structuring the plot of *Song of Solomon*. Morrison focuses on the historical significance of Booker Taliaferro Washington

who laid down his life for the Black identity. Booker T. Washington gave the slogan that “Black is beautiful” and inspired the blacks to root out the domination of the whites. He taught the ideals of hard work, perseverance and honesty. Morrison gives a detailed analysis of the life of Macon; his greed and degradation. Macon was a nice, amiable and loving boy when his father was the owner of an independent land. Macon’s mother died “At one time she had been the dearest thing in the world to him” (20). Macon thought of “her as —his own child” (27). As Pilate tells Milkman, “Macon was a nice boy and awful good to me. Be nice if you could have known him then. He would have been a good friend to you too, like he was to me” (40).

Macon Dead turns out to be a reckless and cruel money hound. He changes from “a nice boy to a stern, greedy and unloving man. He becomes a stereotypical landlord who buys and rents houses to poor blacks. He has no love and sympathy for the poor blacks of his community” (40). He “waved illusions about wealth and linked it to his identity. He believed that acquisition of wealth will put him on par with the white race. No wonder, he behaves like a white man, thinks like a white man” (223). His lust for money, land and wealth dehumanizes him. When Macon Dead reminisces about his childhood in the farm, his stony heart softens. Morrison depicts that his voices become less hard, and his speech was “more southern and comfortable and soft. Here, Morrison emphasizes the importance of the past and the black heritage” (40).

He has forgotten his past and his black heritage and accumulated a lot of money to compete with the whites. He teaches Milkman, “Money is freedom, the only real freedom there is” (163). Macon’s lust for money made Milkman depressed

He realized that materialism “blocks his path of self –discovery” (40). Macon is concerted into a savage; he becomes the “tyrant-monster” in the plot of the novel. Macon is Morrison’s “modern” man, materialistic, alienated lustful, greedy, selfish and mean belonging to Hobbesian primitive society. Macon tells his son thus: “Let me tell you right now the one important thing you’ll ever need to know: Own things. And let the things you own other things. Then you will own yourself and other people to” (55). Macon dissuades him to follow the philosophy of Pilate.

Eleanor Branch in her article “Through the Maze of the Oedipal: Milkman’s Search of Self in *Song of Solomon*” takes note of how Morrison resorts to “an appropriation and critique of both African and Western mythologies.... Morrison’s task in the novel is reparation of the old mythological aesthetic and the production of a new one” (55). Morrison has used the fairy tale symbolizing her sexual repression. The imagery of flight expresses the untold miseries of the black women. Valerie Smith observes (1987) that the “real message of the novel is expressed in the beginning of the novel. Toni Morrison begins the plot with the birth of Milkman. His mother had even tried for abortion but Milkman’s birth was a natural and inescapable event” (152). Pilate says: “A little bird’ll be here with the morning” (9). Four years later, however, “when the little boy discovered [...] the same thing Mr. Smith had learned earlier – that only birds and airplanes could fly he lost all interest in himself. To have to live without that single gift saddened him” (9). Milkman can never forget the obsession of his father with material goods:

“Macon Dead Jr. paid homage to his own father’s life and death by loving what that father had loved: property, good solid property, the bountifulness of life. He loved these things to excess” (304).

Milkman clearly knows the mind set and philosophy of his father and his materiality is an actual homage to his father's memory. He tries to connect with the material philosophy of his father. His quest for gold is in keeping with the materiality of his father. In a mood of satisfaction Milkman sings his own folklore history: "But I can play it now. It's my game now" (331). He believes that past can be used as an effective tool to shape his future. He must go beyond the past to overcome the trauma. He must establish meaningful relationships with his community to survive in life. Trudier Harris in his book *Fiction and Folklore: The Novels of Toni Morrison* observes thus: "The journey cannot work for Milkman unless some reversal occurs; flight itself must be made secondary to commitment. If he merely celebrates flight then he runs the risk of separation and of continuing to follow his great-grandfather's flight pattern" (Harris 201).

Philip M. Royster observes that his journey "is depicted by a series of episodes during which he discovers his relationship to his family" (Royster 419). As Mobley argues in *Politics of Representation* that "*Song of Solomon* invites us to remember the expensive price of freedom and the struggle the descendants of enslaved Africans had to wage to obtain what racial identity once denied" (Morrison 212). Milkman comes in "contact of Guitar who is a young boy. He becomes the best friend of Milkman. Guitar's father was killed in a terrible industrial accident, "got sliced up in a saw mill" (Morrison 61). Guitar "expresses his firm belief for his activities and tells Milkman that —there are no innocent white people, because every one of them is a potential nigger-killer, if not an actual one" (Morrison 155). To him whites are "unnatural people" (Morrison 156). Milkman however points out that "none of the murder are going to change how the Negro lives. He condemns Guitar's murderous activities that are —crazy that they will become a —habit" (61).

Milkman warns Guitar thus: “If you do it enough, you can do it to anybody. You know what I mean? A torpedo is a torpedo, I don’t care what his reasons. You can off anybody you don’t like. You can off me” (Morrison 162). Toni Morrison depicts the changed behavior of Milkman thus: “Now he was behaving with this strange woman as though having the name was a matter of deep personal pride, as though she has tried to expel him from a very special group, in which he not only belonged, but had exclusive rights” (39). Pilate begins his education and observes:

“You all must be the dumbest unsung Negroes on earth. What they telling you in them schools? You say Hi‘ to pigs and sheep when you want me to move. When you tell a human being Hi,‘ he ought to get up and knock you down” (Morrison 37).

Pilate is a woman who understands and accepts her black heritage. His attitude to his sister and mother had been selfish and unethical. He spied over his mother Morrison depicts the alienation of Ruth thus: “I lived in a great big house that pressed me into a small package” (Morrison 124). She further asserts, “I am not a strange woman but a small one!” (Morrison 124). Guitar decides to kill Milkman who has betrayed him. He dislikes his father Macon for his lust for money. Guitar entraps Milkman as he expresses his resentment at Pilate and expresses his resentment at Pilate for her —aunt Jemima act before the police. He plans to kill Milkman; “he had snatched the first straw, limp and wet as it was, to prove to himself the need to kill Milkman” (Morrison 331). In desperation, Guitar shoots Pilate as he mistakes her for Milkman. Pilate’s dying words move Milkman : “I wish I’d a knowed more people. I would have loved them all. If I’d a knowed more, I would a loved more” (Morrison 336). Milkman finds himself alone without Pilate and feels

depressed. “There was nothing here to help him—not his money, his car, his father’s reputation, his suit, or his shoes. In fact, they hampered him” (Morrison 277). He narrates the whole episode thus:

“He’d never played like that as a child. As soon as he got up off his knees at the window sill, grieving because he could not fly, and went off to school, his velvet suit separated him from all the other children” (Morrison 264).

Morrison gives a pattern of images and symbols to depict the traumatic experiences of Milkman. There are sensational symbols of flight, the suicidal flight of Robert Smith symbolizes the mythical flight of Solomon back to Africa. The images of eagle, airplane and a white peacock are quite effective in conveying the tribal history of Milkman Dead. Susan tells him that Solomon, one of the legendary flying Africans who, flew back to Africa to escape slavery. Milkman confesses that “I am not responsible for your pain; share your happiness with me but not your unhappiness” (Morrison 277). He feels guilty: “Hagar was dead and he had not loved her one bit” (Morrison 335). Toni Morrison narrates the journey of Milkman’s spiritual sublimation. Milkman feels “a sudden rush of affection for them all” (278).

When Milkman is on a hunting trip he is stripped of his suit and is given the dress of an army. During his hunting expedition he is cut off from the rest of the hunters and in isolation he thinks of the people who love him for his own identity. The hunting episode is symbolical in the novel as it connects him with the past: “He did feel connected, as though there was some cord or pulse or information they shared. Back home he had never felt that way, as though he belonged to any place or anybody. He’d always considered himself the outsider in his family” (296). Being

connected with the past for the first time Milkman understands the traumatic existence of his mother and to express his sympathy with her: “And suppose he were married and his wife refused him for fifteen years. His mother had been able to live through that by a long nursing of her son, some occasional visit to a graveyard. What might she have been like had her husband loved her?” (Morrison 304).

Milkman’s brief relationship with Sweet teaches him the real meaning of love. He comes to embrace the reality and knows: “what I am? He looks at his mother and sees how sexual deprivation —would affect her, hurt her in precisely the same way it would affect and hurt him”(Morrison 300). He sees how Macon Dead loves what Solomon had loved: “That he distorted life, beat it, for the sake of gain, was a measure of his loss at his father’s death” (Morrison 300). He looks at things with new enlightenment. He confesses everything with courage thus: “he had stopped evading things, sliding through, over and around difficulties” (Morrison 271).

Milkman’s exploration of self is indeed metaphysical on the line of Thoreau who explored his self in the Walden Pond. Milkman’s inner blackness is gone and he emerges as a new man with new identity and perceptions of life. He shouts to him, “You want my life? You need it? He leaps toward Guitar saying that —if you surrendered to the air, you could *ride* it” (Morrison 337). Certainly, Milkman Dead explores his self; his heritage and his black consciousness. Barbara E. Cooper makes a historical observation about the journey of Milkman thus:

“On Solomon’s Leap, he understands how little value there is in property and how priceless are family relationships and connections. By losing everything in search of gold, Milkman is released from the

burden of his self-indulgence. Like the peacock, he was weighed down by his vanity and greed. However, when he sets aside this deadening weight, he finds a life-giving treasure in family history and remembrance” (Morrison 156).

Milkman’s epical journey brings new awareness in him; he confronts his own heart and learns the value of family ties through song and old family tales. “As long as he casts off family responsibility he is truly dead but when he sings the songs and learns the stories, he is alive” (Morrison 156). Milkman emerges as a new man at the end of the novel. He is now free from all the dilemmas and absurdities of life. He comes to the conclusion that money, gold, violence do not solve the problems of life. The journey of his life has been meaningful, he finally flies, ”without ever leaving the ground” (336) Milkman is portrayed as a cultural icon in the novel. He represents black heroism since he digs up the genesis of black culture and history. He is elevated at the end of the novel as he gains moral and spiritual grandeur identifying with the black community. They “looked at his skin and saw it was as black as theirs, but they knew he had the heart of the white men who came to pick them up in the trucks when they needed anonymous faceless laborers” (Morrison 269).

Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* is an interesting study of psychological trauma as all the characters in one way or the other are adversely impacted by the trauma syndrome. People who live with fractured identity have to experience trauma of life and they cannot lead a smooth life in the society. They experience this trauma due to their harrowing memories of the past; slavery, oppression of the whites and their human degradation are some of the causes that put psychological pressures on their psyche. Toni Morrison has depicted the sense of loss from the characters of the

novel. The journey of Milkman Dead is symbolical and his alienation brings him heart-rending sufferings and psychic tensions. In the Afro-American society, the blacks were marginalized and psychologically oppressed. In her novel *The Song of Solomon*, Morrison has used the images of folklore, old fables and legends to depict the African culture and the metaphor of flying is conspicuous on the plot of the novel. Milkman Dead is restless to go back to Africa like his father because he believes that he can have his real identity only in Africa and not in Afro- American society. The novel is a realistic study of alienation and trauma.

Chapter IV

Anxiety Disorder in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and *God Help the Child*

In Latin language the word “anxietas” means —to choke or throttle and is directly linked with the behavior of man. Anxiety disorder is an emotion that predates the evolution of man. The anxiety disorder excited great interest among the psychologists who explored the causes and symptoms of anxiety syndrome. Anxiety is a normal human emotion it often stimulates an adaptive response to stressful events. In excess, anxiety leads to the loss of balanced thinking in an individual and it becomes dysfunctional. Anxiety is considered pathological when it arises in the absence of challenge or stress. The stress of anxiety impairs the rational thinking as it results in depression. In the middle ages, the word anxiety was used for danger and uneasiness of mind. The word anxiety is taken from Latin and it means —anguish, solicitude. In 1660, anxiety was considered a pathological condition. The phrase “Age of Anxiety” was used by John Auden in his poem written in 1947. In the modern times, the term anxiety means —distress and mental instability. Freud observes that feelings of anxiety and fear disturb the normal working of mind.

C.S. Hall (1954) in *A Primer of Freudian Psychology* observes that anxiety refers to the fear of danger that seems impending. Freud outlined three types of anxiety; the —Objective Anxiety, —Neurotic Anxiety and “Moral Anxiety” Marian Forrester is the victim of “Objective Anxiety” but Niel Herbert suffers from “Neurotic Anxiety”. In the modern times, a lot of research has been done to explore the gradual decline of rationality in a neurotic person. Neurotic disorders are related

to stress and the poor response of the individuals. In the novel *A Lost Lady*, Willa Cather depicts the light of the characters as they are bound by the wheel of time. Culture also plays vital role in treating anxiety disorders. The famous *American Psychiatric Association* (DSM 1V) has given out four major types of anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social phobia, stress disorder and obsessive disorder. Each type of disorder is detrimental to mental health of the individual.

Toni Morrison became famous with the publication of her fifth novel *Beloved* which got her the prestigious Pulitzer Prize. The novel is a poignant study of the anxiety disorder of the blacks who were considered as animals by the whites during the regime of slavery. Morrison explored in this novel how trauma damages the psyche of the characters resulting in disconnection and paralysis in the community. -winning fifth novel, *Beloved*, is arguably the most. In her “Forward” to the novel Morrison explains the circumstances that led to the creation of this novel. The idea was sparked by a newspaper clipping in *The Black Book* and she read a story of Margaret Garner who was a runaway slave mother and who was “arrested for killing one of her own children” (xvii). Morrison used this episode to “rediscover history of the blacks”.(xvii)

The plot of the novel *Beloved* is about Sethe who is the enslaved woman living in Sweet Home Plantation owned by Mr. Garner and his wife. She marries Halle and gives birth to three children. But after the death of Mr. Garner the plantation is given to Schoolteacher who is abusive, malevolent and monstrous. Many of the slaves including Paul D, Paul A. and Six O run away to escape the terror of the school teacher. School teacher uses all powers to oppress the blacks. His nephews sexually assault Sethe in the barn while Halle and Paul D watch the scene

in horror. Sethe is further assaulted and physically beaten when she reports to Mrs. Garner. The whipping of her back results in scarring which resembles an oak tree. Sethe runs away from the plantation and she meets Amy Denver in the forest where she gives birth to a daughter Denver. Sethe crosses the Ohio River with the help of ferryman. She is reunited with her family but soon the slave catcher finds her. Sethe once again runs away to the barn where she kills her own daughter with a saw. This act of infanticide spreads in the black community but Sethe becomes a traumatic woman; an outcast in the community.

The modern critics and reviewers have expressed their interest in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987) which is rated as one of the best traumatic fiction. The plot of *Beloved* mirrors the neurosis of traumatic experience of the characters. Morrison has employed new techniques to depict the trauma such as repetition, gaps, pause, broken communication and fragmentation. Morrison's *Beloved* explores the problems of amnesia and memory. Morrison has given many songs in the plot which have historical and cultural significance. The white culture is contemptuous of the black experience and this mutual hatred and aversion brings trauma in the life of the blacks. Morrison uses the traumatic fiction to access the past and rewrite the narrative of slavery. Morrison has depicted the traumatic and harrowing experiences of a slave mother Sethe in *Beloved* who is compelled to kill her own daughter. The horrifying episode is the scene of the appearance of the dead body of Beloved as a ghost who comes back for revenge. She represents Denver's damaged psyche and the legacy of slavery. Morrison contends that the blacks were subjected to all forms of oppression; deportation and enslavement. The critics have relied on Freud's notion of trauma while analyzing the plot of *Beloved*. Morrison's *Beloved* depicts

various characteristics of trauma including fragmentation, blending of the past, the present and repetition. The characteristics of trauma are found in individuals, generations and communities. Morrison's trauma narrative contains many traumatic characteristics but the predominant feature is the unspeakable nature of overwhelming events. Michelle Balaev published an article "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory" in which he asserts that Morrison introduced the silence of the characters:

"The rhetorical use of silence in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* underscores the dehumanizing and torturous effects of slavery on the human body and psyche, yet emphasizes the inner strength and resiliency of African and African-American slaves in North America which is a perspective articulated in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" (162).

The characters of Toni Morrison attempt to verbalize their stories for the first time. Morrison has dramatized the scene of the execution of Sethe's mother and her sense of revulsion and horror. She begins to stutter. It is too terrible for her to express her traumatic experience in words. Sethe tells her daughter Denver that she has not told the story of the execution of her mother to anyone. Sethe has experienced many phases of her life; she faced unspeakable events in her life; the execution of her mother; the stealing of her milk; the lynching of her mother; rape and physical torture and the divorce of her husband Halle. The worst experience was her killing of her own daughter in desperation. Her identity becomes consumed with the pain of dynamic trauma. Sethe is consumed by the traumatic experiences too terrible to relate. She started her life as a slave girl and the memories inflict the mental physical wounds that bring chaos in her life. She had been an eye-witness of

the tragic hanging of her mother but the scene was so horrible she couldn't dare to verbalize it fully. She never told the story to her daughter Denver. When she was a child she was not closely connected with her mother and she saw her only in the fields. She rarely slept in her mother's room. Nan and her mother were slave women who led a horrible life; they never enjoyed happiness and all the time lived in terror of physical and mental torture. The whites had been very cruel and they just survived. There was a particular mark of slavery on her body; Sethe also wanted to have a mark of slavery so that she might be identified:

—Yes, Ma'am Sethe said.

“But how will you know m Sethe?”

“Mark me too! I said. “Mark the mark on me too” Sethe chuckled.

(Morrison 73).

Sethe wants a mark on her body like her mother to connect with her. She realizes that the mark is a way for her to shape her identity in the black community. The mark is a source of perpetual mental and psychological pain to the slaves but they have no choice; it is also a source of traumatic sufferings. Sethe was sold to the Sweet Home Plantation and here she experienced that the Garners don't abuse her and treat their slaves with a certain level of respect. Sethe tries her best to win the confidence of Garners and Baby Suggs but she remains an unlucky mother and a traumatized slave woman. Morrison comments thus:

“Sethe had the amazing luck of six whole years of marriage to that somebody's son who had fathered every one of her children. A blessing was reckless enough to take for granted, lean on, as though

Sweet Home really was one. A bigger fool never lived” (Morrison 29).

Sethe lives in false illusion that in Sweet Home she has some freedom and has some liberty in her life. She tries to forget that she is a slave but all her illusions are shattered when she becomes the victim of sexual oppression of the School teacher and his cousins. In this chapter, the historical forces that brought about the traumatic experiences of the blacks and the dominant nature of the white culture is investigated. Morrison narrates the stories of “the denied, the repressed, and the forgotten and reshapes cultural memory through personal contexts, adopting testimonial traits to prevent and bear witness against such repetitive horrors” (Whitehead 82). Morrison’s *Beloved* mirrors the neurosis of traumatic experience of the characters. Vickroy observes that “trauma can be a powerful indicator of oppressive cultural institutions and practices” (4). Sigmund Freud defines trauma as a “wound that cries out” (Caruth 40). The blacks according to Morrison were muzzled “for popular taste discouraged the writers from dwelling too long for too carefully on the more sordid details of their experience. Over and over, the writers pull the narrative up short with a phrase such as but let us drop a veil over these proceedings to terrible to relate” (*Site of Memory* 110). The depressed blacks are not allowed to speak; they “feel helpless and exhibit a general closing off of the spirit, as the mind tries to insulate itself from further harm” (Caruth 184). In the plot of Morrison’s *Beloved*, every black character suffers sexual oppression, rape, physical beatings and death. The whites would kill any black as they considered them as their slaves and they had no voice. Morrison believes that every slave character has symptoms of trauma. Paul D feels dehumanized and this experience makes him a crazy person. “Wildness shot up into the eye the moment the lips were yanked back.

Days after it was taken out, goose fat was rubbed one of the corners of taken out, of taken out, goose fat was rubbed one the corners of the mouth but nothing to soothe the tongue or take the wildness of the eye” (Toni Morrison, *Beloved* 84). Denver turns deaf and at last becomes a hermit being compelled by the legacy of slavery. But the eyes of Sethe are empty and “did not pick up a flicker of light” (10) because her schoolteacher “punched the glittering iron out of Sethe’s eyes, leaving two open well that did not reflect firelight” (Morrison 11). Sethe is so much depressed and traumatized that she expresses her death wish: “she secretly longed to die” (Morrison 20). Caruth observes that “survival itself can be a crisis for the victims of trauma and they exhibit an apparent struggle to die” (Caruth 63). In *Beloved* Baby Suggs is another traumatic black character that is “suspended between the nastiness of life and the meanness of death (4). Baby Suggs realizes that “being live was the hard part” (Morrison 8). She simply climbs into her bed and dies slowly because “her past had been like her present-intolerable” (Morrison 4). Morrison clearly reveals that slavery has the power to crush the individuality of the black people.

Morrison has exposed the double standard of the morality of the white who projected their own colonial views about the blacks. The black slaves were not given a fair opportunity to express their problems and anguish. Their stories had “to be authenticated by white patrons, so they couldn’t say everything they wanted to say” (Toni Morrison, *Art* 75). The whites used all fair and foul means to oppress the blacks. School teacher of Sethe dehumanizes slaves by recording the animalistic traits of the blacks. He believes that “God had given white people the responsibility of caring for the inferior race” (Morrison 150). He compares the process of “education and training the blacks and raising horses. Even the preachers and the speakers who are sympathetic to Sethe have —revulsion in their eyes” (Morrison

14). Mr. Garner is a white slave-owner; he is a fair man but believes that the whites are superior and are born to rule the savages.

Toni Morrison has depicted the plight of the blacks suffering from double-consciousness. Paul D. observes that there is “nothing in the world more dangerous than a white teacher” (Morrison 266). Paul D recognizes the power of the white in deforming and torturing the black psyche because “Schoolteacher changed me. I was something else and that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub” (Morrison 72). The white people call “Baby Suggs Jenny because that what’s on your sales ticket which prevents Baby Suggs defining herself from discovering what she was like” (Morrison 140). Baby Suggs is sick of the white people and says: “don’t call myself nothing” (Morrison 142). J. Brooks Bousan observes that the blacks suffer from “the psyche scars inscribed in the souls of black folks” (Morrison 122). Sethe watched struggling with her shame and self-disgust. The schoolteacher regards her as an animal and this dehumanizes her. Sethe suffers her psychological torture and believes “anybody white could take your whole elf for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn’t think it up” (Morrison 251). The blacks have to pocket all this; they have to conform to the white view of slavery and black identity. Sethe states that “I see select or make up details to add to the fixed idea of me they came in the door with the thing or person they want me to be” (Morrison 215).

The critics of Toni Morrison observe that Sethe of *Beloved* suffers from the insidious effects of trauma identified by the PTSD. Sethe is always haunted by the intrusive memories of her past harrowing experiences as a slave who gave her psychological pain. She struggles to escape from the traumatic memories of the past

but she remains engulfed in her memories. The pervasive vogue of trauma in the plot of the novel is heart-rending and the effects of trauma are transmitted to the next generation of people. Sethe's daughter Denver is fear-ridden because of the presence of the mysterious unknown. She tries her best to survive and struggles to re-connect with the black community but she is forced to confront the banishment. She realizes the reason of killing her daughter by her mother.

In the 1980's, the theory of traumatic amnesia became popular. Alice Miller reinterpreted Freud's seduction theory "in terms of the repression of childhood sexual abuse and developed a therapeutic technique based on the notion that traumatic experiences in childhood are stored up in the body and, although remaining unconscious, exert their influence even in adulthood" (McNally 5). The prominent cause of trauma is "the reclamation of black history by Toni Morrison. The history of the black people should be written by the blacks only and the responsibility to reclaim the old history is —ours." In an "Interview" Morrison observed thus: "You have to stake it out and identify those who have preceded you for re-summoning them, acknowledging them is just one step in that process of reclamation" (Morrison 225). She reclaims black history from the black perspective. Morrison opines that the reclamation of the historical narrative of the blacks is difficult because it is traumatic. The characters of *Beloved* fear psychological pain associated with their traumatic memories. Sethe is reluctant to recollect the horrible past episodes that shattered his mind and sensibility and forced her to endure the shame for being a slave. When Paul D tries to open her wounds of the past she cryptically says that "they took my milk and that she had a tree on her back" (Morrison 17). The legacy slavery of Denver depresses her. She recollects the

actions of her mother in the slavery system, “she went deaf and silent for two years” (105). Judith Herman argues that “victims cannot face trauma alone and the recovery is possible only within the context of relationship” (Morrison 22). Morrison contends that the trauma victims need sympathetic listeners so that their pain is lessened. Judith Herman also argues that the listeners act like a shield giving them psychological support. Herman argues that a “witness acts as a blank screen providing much needed distance for the victims to safely examine their traumas”. Morrison highlights the importance of the listener in relieving the psychological pain of the traumatized individual. Denver as listener gets courage to reflect and retell her birth story. Denver is able “to see what she was saying and not just to hear it. Denver was sing it now and feeling it –through Beloved...Their monologue because, in fact, a duet as they lay together...for Denver spoke, Beloved listened, and the two did the best they could do create what really happened, how it really was” (Morrison 92). Paul D tries to understand the trauma of Sethe because “now there was someone share it, and he had beat the spirit away the very day he entered her house and no sign of another kind of haunting: Halle’s face smeared with butter and the clabber too” (Morrison 113). Paul D is psychologically weak character; he cannot testify to the infanticide because he has no power to remember the act. He can only judge her: “What you did was wrong, Sethe...You got two feet, Sethe, not four” (Morrison 194).

Morrison employs gaps in her novel *Beloved* and the gaps transform readers into listeners. The technique of fragmentation is quite visible in the infanticide story. Critics observe that murder is “morally reprehensible and monstrous” (Otten 86). Harris observes that “we cannot condemn Sethe’s action” (Harris 171). Jean Wyatt

argues that “the plot of the novel *Beloved*—withholds judgment on Sethe’s act and persuades readers to the same” (Morrison 476). Bouson remarks that “the infanticide shows the power of Morrison’s narrative to “involve readers in the shame-and – blame drama that it stages” (Bouson134). Denver fears her mother because “I know she killed one of her own daughters, and tender as she is with me, I’m scared of her because of it” (Morrison 242). Denver for the first time reveals her inner turbulent heart. She tells: “whatever forced Sethe to kill her one daughter is out there, so I never leave this house and I watch over the yard, so I can’t happen again and my mother won’t have to kill me” (Morrison 242). *Beloved* talks of devastation, death and remembers of the piles of dead bodies. Paul D comes to know his worth when the schoolteacher and his cousins shoot Sixo. He tells that his value as a person is merely “a slave” (Morrison 267).

Sethe is so much stressed and traumatized that she is not interested in the future. She had “lost all powers of imagination, it left no room to imagine, let alone plan for, the next day” (Morrison 83). Sethe loses her emotional control when she smells the scent of burnt hair because “she had to do something with her hands because she was remembering something she had forgotten she knew. Something privately shameful that had seeped into a slit in her mind” (Morrison 73). Sethe finds time “so hard for me to believe in it because some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay...Some things you forget. Other things you never do” (Morrison 43). Whitehead argues “that a person does not control traumatic event but he is haunted by the past events” (Whitehead 123). Caruth argues that “the modern critics reconfigure the ghost story to examine trauma as psychological possession for it to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event” (Caruth 5). Sethe’s

past is “extremely painful. It is a sad ghost, so sad that —walking through it, a wave of grief soaked so thoroughly he wanted to cry” (9). Sethe calls Beloved and the ghost appears fully clothed out of the water. The ghost of Beloved constantly reminds of her past. Denver drinks the “bloody milk from her mother’s breast, so she shares in her mother’s sham from slavery” (Morrison 23). “For Denver, the job Sethe had of keeping her from the past that was still waiting for her was all that mattered” (Morrison 51).

Sethe’s daughter Denver feels the weight of trauma on her psyche as she becomes obsessed with the ghost of Beloved. She is unable to comprehend the cause of murder of Beloved. The ghost “held for her all the anger, love, and fear she didn’t know what to do with” (Morrison 121). Morrison conveys the message that all the blacks are haunted by the harrowing memories of their past and the past makes them sick and despondent. The blacks have to work through their ghosts, Baby Suggs asks: “What’d be the point for not a house in the country ain’t packed to it refers with some dead Negro’s grief?” (6). Morrison uses repetition and the images of the ghost to depict the traumatic status of the blacks. Trauma is described as the tyranny of the past and the whites never tried to address the problem of the blacks. The ghosts always haunt the blacks and it represents the legacy of slavery of the blacks.

Fragmentation and Alienation

Morrison narrates the violent death of Beloved from multiple perspectives in a non-linear style. Sethe becomes a representative of the communal trauma as the plot progresses. The fragmented account of Beloved in the slave ship is narrated by Morrison:

“All of it is always now there will never be a time when I am not crouching and watching others who are crouching too. I am always crouching the man on my face is dead his face is not mine his mouth smells sweet but his eyes are locked some who eat nasty themselves I do not at the men without skin bring us their morning water to drink we have none at night I cannot see the dead man on my face a day light comes through the cracks and I can see his locked eyes I am not big small rats do not wait for us to sleep someone is thrashing but there is no room to do it if we had more to drink we could make tears we cannot make sweat or morning water so the men without skin bring us theirs in the beginning the women are away from the men and the men are away from the women storms rock us and mix into the women and the women into the men” (Morrison 210).

This illustrates the scattered, fragmented, and chaotic pattern of trauma that Morrison would like readers to experience. *Beloved*'s language is fragmented and, at times confusing, without punctuation. Morrison employs this fragmented style to emphasize the traumatic experience not only for *Beloved* but also for readers. Sethe's sense of self is violently fragmented and disordered because of the trauma she experiences, and she never seems to recover. Sethe is essentially a character in pieces: “her [Sethe's] safe and happy life will shatter after *Beloved*'s murder...Sethe's killing of her daughter ruptures her ties with her community, which abandons her. Severed from any ideal self, she experiences isolation and vulnerability” (Schreiber 42). Thus, she has little agency in the world and barely exists in her present time. Morrison employs the technique of fragmentation to depict

the alienation of the blacks of Afro-American community. The technique of fragmentation helps the novelist to shatter the chronology of events and linear storytelling. As the plot progresses the narrative virtually disintegrates as the story breaks into pieces and at the end there is no completed story but a collage of events. The incoherent structure of *Beloved* is expressed in the phrase “You are mine as the plot of the novel emerges as a collection of fragments scattered here and there. The positional story line is Sethe’s murder of her daughter and then begins the chain of incoherent stories and the record of the various reactions of the characters. Sethe’s tragic story begins in the present as Sethe recollects her love and attachment for her daughter. The story takes back “eighteen years in time when Sethe showed her love by procuring a tombstone in exchange for sex ten minutes for seven letters on the tombstone” (Morrison 5). The memory is very painful as she finds that “those ten minutes she spent pressed up against dawn-colored stone studded with star chips, her knees that soaked her fingers like oil” (Morrison 6). Paul D thinks over the emptiness of Sethe’s eyes. When that memory becomes painful, Morrison again shifts the plot and describes about Sethe’s hair. Morrison’s *Beloved* doesn’t follow the traditional story line; there is no coherent plot structure but the novel is a collection of fragments depicting the plight and helplessness of the blacks. John Ambrosia in his article “Toni Morrison and Re-imaging History” discusses the narrative style of Morrison to depict fragmentation and alienation:

“Morrison is able to dislodge and destabilize dominant meanings. This is why, by destabilize dominant meanings. That is placing in different interpretive contexts, shifting recursively through time and space, and by signifying inter-textuality, she opens their semantic

possibilities and makes it possible for readers to hear new meanings”
(Morrison 111).

The ghost of past still haunts them as they feel alienated from the main stream of their community. The plot reveals the fragmentation of families and shows how painful the legacy of slavery is still to them. In the very opening of the novel Morrison refers to the empty space and the inability of the blacks who are unable to narrate their stories. Vickroy argues that Morrison shows silence, the repression of trauma depicted through incoherent scenes. Morrison describes the disappearance of Beloved who waited to be loved: “then she abruptly stops, skips a line, leaving space, to simply say it was not a story to pass on” (Morrison 322). The characters are so much stressed that they aren’t relate their experiences. Sethe says: “I drank your blood and —you hurt me. Every black character hesitates to tell the truth. Sethe has “no words...no words at all after she kills her daughter” (Morrison 179). Sethe is quiet about her past because each episode of the past gives her psychological pain. She would “blink her eyes, slide her bottom lip over her top, flare her nostrils signs that Sethe had reached the point beyond which she would not go” (Morrison 45). Denver knows that “her mother had secrets-things she wouldn’t tell; things she halfway told” (Morrison 45). Denver raises many question but Sethe “gave short replies or rambling incomplete reveries” (Morrison 69). Sethe tells Paul D that “I wasn’t going back there. I don’t care who found who. Any life but that I went to jail instead” (Morrison 50). The words of Sethe are a few and she doesn’t go into the details and she doesn’t mention why she remained outside the community for eighteen years. She remains disconnected with the community but she doesn’t defend herself. She brings up the pink headstone she “bought for her dad body”.

Sethe is silent about the fate of her baby. “one more preacher, one more abolitionist and a town full of disgust, Morrison narrates the scenes of trauma of Sethe: “Sethe knew the grief at started when she jumped down the wagon, her newborn tied to her chest in the underwear of a white girl looking for Boston” (105). Sethe is very particular in narrating her trauma; she can only circle around the subject. She simply tells that she “had kept them in a place where they would be safe” (Morrison 192). Morrison uses the technique of silence to mirror the “national amnesia” about slavery. It helps the readers to listen to those silenced voices which remain unheard. It is no possible for Morrison to tell the slave story of each character. The Chapter1 ends with Denver “slowly, methodically, miserably eating bread covered with jelly” (Morrison 23).Her sense of self is fragmented because of the harrowing memories of the past. She is never able to recover from the shocking experiences and it is found that she is essentially a character in pieces. Her identity as a is shattered. Schrieber comments thus: “Sethe’s safe and happy life will shatter about Beloved’s murder...Sethe’s killing of her daughter ruptures her ties with her community, which abandons her. Severed from any ideal self, she experiences isolation and vulnerability” (Schrieber 42) Thus she barely exists in her present time.

Morrison has blended past with the present in her novel *Beloved* to intensify the traumatic experiences of Sethe. Her disordered experiences are a source of intense psychological anguish. Time is not fixed; it is relative in Sethe’s case. Sethe’s past experiences look more relevant and significant than the present life. She has no pleasant future as past continually intrudes in her life making her sick and despondent. In his article —Beloved, Space, Architecture, Trauma Andrew Hock makes the following observation:

“Sethe’s refusal to face her past renders that traumatic moment a non-event, and by extension, Sethe’s eventual non-existence as well. That she is trapped in trauma and cannot escape is due, ironically, her repudiation of that trauma by avoiding any discussion of it” (Morrison 237).

The experiences of the past are cyclical in nature forcing her to relive the horrible past in the present. Beloved’s ghost robs her present and future. Sethe struggles to escape slavery even after eighteen years as the past continues to disrupt her life. Paul D asks her “Is that you?” (Morrison 7) All the old memories become fresh and the wounds of the past become fresh again. She doesn’t want to discuss her life with Paul D. Forgetting the past is her main concern and the future lies in it. When Denver wants to put off getting her hair combed, Sethe says: “Today is always here....Tomorrow never” (Morrison 72). She struggles to dissociate with her past to live in future. But the irony is she cannot forget the past as it is always there and she revisits it in the form of flashbacks. “But her brain was not interested in the future. Loaded with the past and hungry for more, it left her no room to imagine, let alone plan for, the next day” (Morrison 83). Sethe sees Denver as an image of her past: “Excuse me, but I can’t hear a word against her. I’ll chastise her. You have her alone” (Morrison 54). Sethe performs the role of an ideal mother and struggle to protect her from the cruel world she was not protected. She tries to unload the guilt, shame and psychological pain conversing with her daughter Denver: “No matter how much I wanted to. I couldn’t lay down nowhere in peace, back then. Now I can sleep like the drowned, have mercy. She come back to me, my daughter, and she is mine” (Morrison 241). She is guilt-ridden for she knows that she has lost her daughter

forever and she has no plan for the future. She loses her job and tries her best to compensate Beloved with things once could not provide. She hopes Beloved will understand her compulsion in killing her. But Beloved torments her day and night: “Beloved accused her of leaving behind....how could she have left her....Sethe pleaded for forgiveness, counting, listing again and again her reasons; that Beloved was more important, meant to her than her own life” (Morrison 284). She saw Sethe’s eyes “bright but dead, alert but vacant, paying attention to everything about Beloved; her lineless palms, her forehead, the smile under her jaw, crooked and much too long; everything except her basket fat stomach” (285). Morrison has used the technique of repetition in the novel to depict the intensity of Sethe’s trauma. Sheldon George in his article: “Approaching the Thing Slavery: A Lacanian Analysis of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*”

“Repetition is a significant symptom of trauma that disrupts time; What is most compelling about *Beloved* is its articulation of a psychoanalytic conception of the role that repetition plays in the lives of its African American characters” (Morrison 115).

Morrison’s *Beloved* is the famous novel in which the novelist focuses on the continuing effects of slavery. The novel *Beloved* narrates the history of slavery and its impact on the life of the blacks. Morrison examines the continuing effects of slavery on the blacks. Morrison employs the traditional and tribal language in the novel. Three important characters, Sethe, Denver and her lover Paul D give different interpretations of their view of life and slavery. The plot of *Beloved* is structured into three main parts. In the first part, Morrison describes the trauma of Sethe and her miserable life. Sethe spent the best days of her life with her husband Halle and Paul

D, Mr. and Mrs. Garner. The episodes are described in fragments and not in regular manner. The schoolteacher had oppressed the blacks and had denied them the fundamental rights. Men are crazy to kill Sethe but she escaped the wrath of the community. Sethe is the only character who escapes as the men are killed or captured like animals. Her escape leads to the birth of Denver. Sethe begins her life-threatening journey to Halle's mother's house. Halle's mother Baby Suggs takes care of Sethe. She understands the burden of Sethe who is burdened to nurture her four children. But the schoolteacher tracks her down and in desperation tries to kill all her children to save them from oppression of the whites. She manages to kill her daughter as the other escape death. The infanticide is narrated like a traditional story but is described through repeated images "something that happened". Sethe is a bold lady, she refuses to accept the implications of her crime. Her alienation has an adverse impact on the growth of her daughter Denver. In the prison Denver becomes deaf; she repeats the inability of her mother to bear witness to the past. There is a mysterious gap between Sethe and Denver's relationship. As the plot progresses, Sethe and Denver are found entrapped in their house confronting the mysterious ghost. The main motive of Morrison's *Beloved* is to assume "responsibility for people no one's ever assumed responsibility for and thus attempt to undo the attitude of national amnesia toward the millions that lost their lives during slavery" (Darling 247). Morrison remarks thus: "The comfort in knowing whatever it is has already happened so you don't have to be too frightened. You're going to find out about it, but it's not going to be big surprise, even though it might be awful" (123).

Morrison has used real images to describe the scene of infanticide. The intensity of the person trauma increases with the real action of the infanticide. The

ghost stories of the beheaded woman follows and the atmosphere of horror and terror is created as found in the gruesome tales of Edgar Allan Poe. Santner argues that the “dreams of Sethe and her haunted fears create a feeling of anxiety which was absent during the initial shock and until such anxiety has been recuperated and worked through, the loss will continue to represent a past that refuses to go away” (Santner 147). The repetition of the images of the past intensifies the traumatic emotions. This process is not healing but more destructive and painful. A critical investigation of the actions, deeds and behavior of Sethe and Denver show that both the characters suffer from intense traumatic pressures and loss of self. Morrison creates Sethe’s story as a trace of the past; it is not an actual event as she was inspired by the story of Margaret Garner published in the newspaper; the novel is the imaginative creation of an important episode symbolizing the traumatic life of the blacks who endured all forms of oppression and marginalization. Sethe represents the spirit of the blacks and her sufferings of the generations of blacks. Morrison observes that the trauma of slavery is very powerful. Morrison dramatizes a touching scene of sexual molestation of Sethe. She is a slave woman living in Cincinnati after Civil War. Sethe was subjected to all forms of atrocities; she suffered from displacement, isolation, oppression, physical and sexual molestation. All these memories wounded her psyche and became a constant source of re-injury and psychological pain. The ghost of her daughter Beloved tormented her day and night subjecting to her eternal perdition.

Morrison’s *Beloved* from her four earlier novels as its plot charts the long journey back to wholeness. In her previous novels Cholly, Polly and Sula become the victims of physical violence. According to Philip Page “the emphasis shifts from

external factors that create fragmentation toward internal healing processes that allow for psychic integration” (Philips 133). Sethe, Paul D, Baby Suggs bear witness to the psychological devastation of Sethe. Morrison has used the slave narrative to give voice to those experiences which remained unspoken and unacknowledged for many years. In an interview of 1994 with Angles Carabi published in *Belle Letters* Morrison observed thus:

“With *Beloved*, I am trying to insert this memory that was unbearable and unspeakable into the literature....There are certain things that are repressed because they are unthinkable and the only way to come free of that is to go back and deal with them....So it’s kind of a healing experience” (Carabi 1).

Sethe’s exile is self-imposed; she hopes that her daughter Denver will not experience the traumatic experiences she faced. Sethe believes that telling her story of her past is a daring act of courage. But her subjective story is a necessary step in the reclamation. Morrison uses multiple perspectives in this novel to depict the traumatic experiences. Page observes thus: “In *Beloved* the narration is frequently subdivided among several points of view so that.... While maintaining its unity, also projects a collection of perspectives” (Morrison 4). The main aim of Morrison is to give the impact of slavery on the whole black community. Slavery is linked with violence and all the slave characters of *Beloved* suffer deprivation, cultural suppression, physical beating and sexual oppression. They lead a horrible and wretched life and the novel *Beloved* is packed with such horrifying events. Morrison observes that the traumas of slavery are dehumanizing as the victim feels alienated. The slaves are degraded and dehumanized and are tortured in a routine manner.

Sigmund Freud investigated the psychological phenomena famous as hysteria in those days. Morrison argues that the process of healing and reconciliation is not possible if the traumatized individual doesn't break the silence. The slave narrative of *Beloved* deals with the healing process of the traumatized individuals. Judith Herman comments thus:

“Folk wisdom is filled with ghosts who refuse to rest in their graves until their stories are told....Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of social order and the healing of individual victim” (Herman 1).

Morrison uses the enslavement narrative to highlight the intense psychological pain experienced by Sethe, Paul D and Denver. The conflict between the black slaves and the whites is realistically dramatized. The School teacher and his cousins transcend all barriers of humanity and civilization and use all strategies, moral and immoral, primitive tribal and inhuman to wound the soul of the blacks and dehumanize them. Sethe raises Denver by “keeping her from the past” (Moblely 194). She is so much stressed that she gives only “short replies or rambling incomplete reveries” (58). Sethe expresses her wounded heart thus in simple words:

“Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away. Even if the whole farm-every tree and grass blade of it dies. The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there-you who was never there-if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again, it will be there for you, waiting for you” (Morrison 36).

Sethe and Paul D are disinterested to discuss the past and abstain from discussing their traumatic experiences. When Paul D arrives both avoid direct contact; they don't like to confront the truth about Sethe's husband Halle. Paul D avoids the discussion: "I'd tell you. Sure I'd tell you. I don't know any more now that I did then, Except the churn, he thought, and you don't know to know that" (Morrison 8). Paul D tells about Halle's breakdown. The whole traumatic scene is depicted thus:

"They used cowhide on you"

"And they took my milk"

"They beat you and you was pregnant?"

"And they took my milk!" (Morrison 17).

Sethe gives an analysis of two forms of punishment; one the physical punishment and the other psychological and mental. She was physically assaulted; whipped by the schoolteacher and she bore that physical beating. The other was having the milk stolen and this act was far more traumatic than being whipped. She could never forget the psychological torture of the white perpetrated on her. Paul D tries to console her but Sethe reacts thus: "Your consoling action is like kneading bread in the half-light of the restaurant kitchen....Working dough. Working, working dough. Nothing better than that to start the day's serious work of beating back the past" (Morrison 73). Human beings were objectified and tortured in a routine manner in the white society. Sethe's aggregate of traumas eroded her sense of self. Sethe herself describes it:

“...anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you didn’t like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn’t think it up no more” (Morrison 251).

The appearance of Beloved is also a source of trauma for Sethe and Denver. The actions of Beloved are contradictory; the ghost acts as a character in the novel because its presence is felt by everyone. She walks Sethe’s house “through the woods past a giant temple of boxwood to the field and then the yard of the state-gray house” (50). Beloved feels “exhausted again, she sat down on the first handy place—a stump not far from the steps” (50). Sethe recollects the death of her mother and is in trance:

“Sethe walked over to a chair, lifted a sheet and stretched it as wide as her arms would go. Then she folded, refolded and double-folded it. She took another. Neither was completely dry but the folding felt too fine to stop. She had to do something with her because she was remembering something she had forgotten she knew. Something privately shameful that had seeped into slit in her mind right behind the circled cross” (Morrison 61).

Denver is shocked to know the tragic death of Sethe’s mother who was hanged by the whites. She asks her mother: “Why they hang your ma’am?” (Morrison 61). Denver knows this tragic act refer to —privately shamefull but she comes to know her mother doesn’t want to remember this episode. Denver wants to know the details of her birth. Morrison depicts the severed mother-daughter relationship to dramatize the trauma. Sethe quickly dismisses the traumatic memory:

“It was her alright, but for a long time I didn’t believe it. I looked everywhere for that hat. Stuttered after that. Didn’t stop it till I saw Halle. Oh, but that’s all over now. I’m here I lasted. And my girl come home” (Morrison 201). Sethe recollects the scene of her death and this gave her psychological torture.

“I wonder what they was doing when they was caught. Running you think? No. Not that. Because she was my ma’am and nobody’s ma’am would run off and leave her daughter, Would she, now?” (Morrison 302).

Sethe thinks over the intense relationship with her mother but the memory of her dead mother is only a source of her intensive trauma. Morrison depicts the whole episode in heart rending lyrical language:

“She cried saying that she had to get them out, away, that she had the milk all the time and had the money too for the stone but not enough. That her plan was always that they would be together on the other side, forever. Beloved wasn’t interested. She said when she cried there was no one. That dead man lay on top of her. That she had nothing to eat” (Morrison 241).

Paul D acknowledges the power of the white in destroying the identity of the blacks; the white used power to deform the black psyche. He says: “Schoolteacher changed me. I was something else and that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub” (Morrison 72). The novel *Beloved* is about the life and tragic experiences of a mother who under the fit of hysteria kills her own baby. The issue of infanticide is a source of suffering to both the child and the mother. The mother

becomes traumatic and the daughter becomes a ghost. Freud has given a detailed analysis of hysteria. The ambivalent nature of Sethe is clearly analyzed by Toni Morrison in the novel. Sethe is not a martyr but a criminal and her ruthless murder leads her to suffer in the jail. The atrocities of Sethe are uncommon and are a gross violation of human rights she is the victim of racial discrimination and slavery. Morrison suggests a common thread of trauma in the lives of millions of African-American. Harriet Jacob published incidents in the *Life of a Slave Girl* depicting the muted expression of sexual violence perpetrated on Sethe. Her identity is of an enslaved African woman suffering from psychological trauma.

The atrocities of Sethe are uncommon and atrocities experienced by her are a result of slavery, racial discrimination, physical and sexual violence. Morrison's novel *Beloved* suggests a common thread of trauma in the lives of many African-Americans. The blacks are at the center of the plot. Morrison brings to the light all the traumatic experiences of the black people. The fact that Morrison describes the horrors of slavery as —too terrible to relate points to the premise of this study. Cathy Caruth, Brooks Bouson and Allan Young have examined the existence of traumatic existence in the plot. Cathy Caruth wrote *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma Narrative and History* arguing that there is no systematic relationship between historical narrative and experiences of trauma. In *Beloved* of Toni Morrison the detachment of Sethe and Paul D is the main cause of trauma. Sethe is viewed as an outsider in the black community. Sethe experiences the paralytic psyche when she fails to move outside the world. She is beyond the traumatic experience and is stuck in the horrifying experience. Judith Herman investigates the effects of the traumatizing force on the victim thus:

“When neither resistance nor escape is possible, the human system of self- defense becomes overwhelmed and disorganized. Traumatic events produce profound and lasting changes in psychological arousal, emotion, cognition and memory. Moreover, traumatic events can sever these normally integrated functions from each other” (Herman 34).

Judith Herman observes that trauma is not simply an outcome of fear, pain but it is the process of damage. Judith Herman further argues that “the dialectic of trauma gives rise to complicated often uncanny, alterations in consciousness, which George Orwell called double think and which mental health professionals, searching for a calm, precise language, call dissociation” (1). Sethe is not a sane personality as she is neurotic, depressed and her behavior is unpredictable Wilson says: “The cognitive responses that occur in the immediate and long term aftermath of a trauma refer to ways of understanding the event that has occurred” (Wilson 13). She suffers from bouts of rage, anger, and despair in her routine life. Her psyche is wounded and her pain is indescribable. The main focus is on the sexual violence of the whites. Sethe is historically silent bearing the physical and psychological anguish silently. The blacks sing and dance before the whites just to win their favor. Morrison ridicules this slavish and mean mentality of the whites. These isolated characters behave in a unique manner; their individuality is crushed and their individuality is bulldozed. The critics of New Historicism argue that the traumatic experiences are transmitted to the next generation mentally, physically and psychologically.

Toni Morrison’s novel *God Help the Child* (2015) deals with the theme of anxiety disorder of the characters. In this chapter the mother-daughter relationship

depicted in the novel *God Help the Child* is investigated through the lens of psychoanalytical theories. Morrison has described the possible effects of mothers on forming the future lives of their daughters. But the racial segregation and patriarchal ideologies also impact the growth of children. The history is full of the examples of the tortures of the blacks treated as slaves. Describing the ways the slave overseer Mr. Covey tormented him, Fredrick Douglas expresses his harrowing experiences thus:

“I was broken in body, soul and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died, the dark night of slavery closed in upon me, and behold a man transformed to a brute”
(Douglas 55).

Black women were the worst sufferers as they were sexually and physically abused. Black children were deprived from their natural rights including mother tenderness and education. Black children were given to an old black woman to raise them from their early ages while their mothers were sent away to plantations to work the land. The Jim Crow law was very severe and Lula Ann became the victim of all these inhuman forces causing her anxiety disorder. Morrison depicts the theme of child abuse to black history of slavery and racism in *God Help the Child*. Sweetness stands for the trauma the blacks endured during the racial segregation era of the Jim Crow Laws of 1877. Bride symbolizes the definition of contemporary black beauty as “the hottest commodity in the civilized world” (Morrison 67). To this end the theories of psychoanalysis are used to analyze the female characters who suffer from anxiety disorder and trauma. In this chapter the childhood trauma of Ann Lula

Bridewell becomes the main cause of her anxiety disorder. She experiences distress and anguish because the scene of childhood abuse haunted her day and night. Manuela Lopez Ramirez (2015) analyzed the novel investigating the abusive mothering impact upon children. Sweetness Lula's mother failed in her task to nurture Lula Ann and her neglect adversely impacted the growth of Lula Ann. In simple words Lula Ann Bridewell develops an unstable identity in the society; she is hated; neglected and ignored by everyone including her father and mother. Judith Herman observes thus:

“Under conditions of chaotic childhood abuse, fragmentation becomes the central principle of personality organization. Fragmentation in consciousness prevents the ordinary integration of knowledge, memory, emotional states, and bodily experience. Fragmentation in the inner representations of the self prevents the integration of identity. Fragmentation in the inner representations of others prevents the development of a reliable sense of indispensable within connection” (Herman 78).

Toni Morrison has depicted the traumatic experiences of Rain who is a symbol of purity and innocence. Rain narrates her sexual assault experience before the hippy couple Steve and Evelyn. Rain confides in Bride that her body was sold to different men for money. Once she opposed this act, her mother threw her out of the house. Rain is a child of six years who confronts homelessness, starvation and fear that is why she runs away when Steve touched her shoulder asking her name when he first met her. Rain expresses her inner turbulent mind thus:

“You had to find out where the public toilets were...how to avoid children’s services, police, how to escape drunks, dope heads. But knowing where sleep was safe was the most important thing. It took time and she had to learn what kinds people would give you money and what for, and remember the backdoors of which food pantries or restaurants had kind and generous servers. The biggest problem was finding food and storing it for later” (Rain 174).

Rain opens her wounded heart to Bride narrating all her traumatic experiences. Bride becomes her protector who saved her from a gunshot. My heart was beating fast. Rain recalls after Bride had left, because “nobody had done that before. I mean Steve and Evelyn took me in an all but nobody put their own self in danger to save me. But that what my black lady did” (180). Hannah is another character the victim of trauma; she is Pecola of *The Bluest Eye* as she was raped by her father at the age of eight. Both Pecola and Hannah were neglected by their mothers who refused to support them to overcome trauma. Pecola’s mother indulged in movies but Hannah’s mother Queen dismissed the complains of her daughter about rape as she says: “Rumor in the family was that Queen ignored or dismissed the girl’s complaint about her father” (381). Sofia Huxley is another traumatic woman who had to bear the physical torture of her mother and had to spend fifteen years in the jail confronting misery, torture and silence. When she was released she poured her captivated terrors on Bride. Morrison raises the cries of the blacks who are leading a traumatic existence. As Morrison writes: “Now five people know. The boy, the freak, your mother, you and now me. Five is better than two but it should be five thousand” (Morrison 98).

Judith Herman observes that in her book *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) that the role of anxiety disorder suffered during childhood is very crucial in structuring adult life. In this chapter the growth of Lula Ann is traced to investigate the impact of anxiety disorder on the psyche of Lula Ann; her adulthood choices and the building of her identity. Bride grows poisoned by the neglect of her mother who refuses to hug her like other mothers. She has no compassion for Bride and expresses her loathing for her through shouting, screaming and locking her in a lonely room for petty offences. Morrison has given a detailed analysis of mother – daughter relationship that eventually becomes a major cause of her anxiety disorder. Judith Herman has given a detailed analysis of children who enjoy love, tenderness and care of mothers and are fully developed human beings. Herman compares a healthy childhood to an abused one that in the former a child builds a good image of him and acquires self-confidence. Herman argues that:

“In the course of normal development, a child achieves a secure sense of autonomy by forming inner representations of trustworthy and dependable caretakers; representations that can be evoked mentally in moments of distress. Adult prisoners rely heavily on these internalized images to preserve their sense of independence” (Herman 78).

The plot of the novel foregrounds two important phases of history; the first concerns the inter-racism feature of America in times of slavery and Sweetness is the victim of this trauma. The second is the modern American society where blackness represents beauty and Lula Ann Bride struggles to forge her identity in the contemporary America. Morrison also refers to Jim Crow law issues by the whites to

restrict the black freedom. Jim Crow Law “prohibited interracial marriages, deprived black from their right to vote, and it granted the whites all the power to beat, fire, hang any black tries to answer back to the segregation” (Tischauer 2). The family of Sweetness is the best example of the transmission of racial ideologies. Sweetness hates the black standards because she knows enough what means to have “Negro blood running in the veins” (Morrison 13) under the racial Jim Crow policies when African American were defined according to the amount of the black blood they had. Sweetness says “Some of you probably think it’s a bad thing to group ourselves according to skin color-the lighter the better in social clubs, neighborhood, churches, sororities, even colored schools. But how else can we hold on to little dignity” (Morrison 14). In her school, Bride has to bear the disgraceful remarks of her classmates because her mother had warned her not to react. Bride doesn’t tell anyone the address of her apartment, who raped her fearing that under the Jim Crow Law she will be thrown out of her apartment; Being black she “needed to learn how to behave and keep her head down and not to make trouble” (Morrison 19). Sweetness confesses that colorism and racism are the main reasons for her harshness with her black child: “But I may have done some hurtful things to my only child because I had to protect her. Had to. All because of skin privileges” (Morrison 78).Lula Ann needs her mother’s love and care only got an opportunity to grab it when she accused Sofia Huxley of child sexual abuse in the courtroom.

The plot of the novel is structured around the life and struggles of Lula Ann; the black- skinned daughter of Sweetness who hates her and forbids her to call her “Mama”. Her father Louis deserted her mother and Sweetness alone who nurtured her. Lula is born “Midnight black” forever. Her father assumes that she is not her

daughter; he never touches her; he left her mother after three years of marriage to raise Lula Ann on her own. Sweetness considers Ann as unlucky child treats her harshly and doesn't want to touch her baby and this feeling of neglect is the main cause of anxiety disorder in Lula Ann. Her mother Sweetness rejects Lula Ann Bride and hates her from her birth expressing her compulsion:

“It's not my fault. So you can't blame me. I didn't do it and have no idea how it happened. It didn't take more than an hour after they pulled her out from between my legs to realize something was wrong. Really wrong. She was so black she scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black. I'm light-skinned, with good hair, what we call high yellow black. I'm right-skinned with good hair, what we call high yellow, and so is Lula Ann's father” (Morrison 12).

It is admitted that the black complexion is not the mistake of Bride but blackness is blackness, as Booker suggests is “just a color...a genetic trait not a flow not a curse not a blessing nor a sin” (Morrison 235). Sweetness had grown in a world of racism and discrimination under the white hegemony and Jim Crow law as she explains about Lula Ann:

“You could be sent to a juvenile lockup for talking back or fighting in school, a world where you'd be the last one hired and first one fired. She couldn't know any of that or how her black skin would scare white people or make them laugh and trick her” (Morrison 75).

Sweetness justifies her treatment to help the child, to toughen her up so that she will not fall prey to bullies and discrimination. After her high school, Lula Ann

Bridewell took a harsh decision; she dropped her first name and finally settled on the last name and she introduced her friends as Bride only. During these formative years she came in contact with a boy Booker Starbern and started living with him without marriage. She never bothered to know about his job, his family and became pregnant. He remained a mystery to her but she continues her living relationship with Booker. One day there is a minor difference of opinion and Booker leaves her and doesn't look back or even return to collect his belongings from the apartment. Bride is really devastated by the shock since she becomes lonely and helpless. The disappearance of Booker gives her anxiety and before she begins her journey to find out Booker she decides to visit a prisoner Sofia Huxley who is being released from the prison after fifteen years. Huxley was sent to the jail because of her testimony of Bride; she had helped put Sofia in the jail by testifying at her trial in the famous child molestation case. Bride had been planning to help Sophia to do a good deed and help her financially to overcome her guilt of the past. She took 5000 dollars; a three thousand dollars gift certificate and a promotional box of cosmetics of her company and an expensive shopping bag. But when she encountered Mrs. Huxley she was brow beaten and is thrown into the roadside out of rage. She didn't call the police but called her friend Brooklyn for help. When Brooklyn arrived on the spot she told a lie and was admitted to the hospital for the plastic surgery. This incident was a bolt from the blue for her since she was already feeling a sense anxiety and depression because of the loss of Booker. Lula Ann's woeful tale is full of incidents of neglect; humiliation; fear; trauma since she is in the abyss of darkness. She doesn't belong to anywhere as nobody likes her because of her black epidermal signs. Jihan Zayad (2016) in "Polyphony of Morrison's *God Help the Child*" observes that the novel is multi-voiced and Morrison has "woven in one tale of the

protagonist, Bride, many other stories that are reverberating with too much human life. The characters in Bride's life have their own pain, trauma, death, cheat, love and losses" (Zayad 37). Bakhtin says that "Trauma can be overcome, scars can mutate into beauty spots, life can be remade" (Bakhtin 41). Morrison's portrays the character of Lula Ann Bride who struggles to turn her blackness as an image of beauty and attraction in America. Toni Morrison gives reference to another child character's story of molestation named Adam who is Booker's closest brother. When he was a child he had been sexually abused, then killed by a man who is ironically mentioned as "the nicest man in the world." Booker was deeply hurt by this tragic incident and is always haunted by the death of his brother. The ghosts of Bride and Booker are very powerful in the novel intensifying the theme of psychological trauma.

The second section of the novel is devoted to describe Lula Ann's search for Booker who impregnated her. Feeling the absence of Booker, Bride sets out on a journey in search of Booker which takes her from California to a remote village in a forest. The long journey gives her physical pain, psychological anguish and emotional hardships. In her long journey she broke her leg and had to take refuge in a house owned by Steve and Evelyn. But she continues her search in spite of so many challenges and hardships. At last she meets him in Whisky valley and together they rescued Booker's aunt Olive from fire. Bride and Booker reconcile but Bride has to confess that Huxley was innocent and she lied to get her punished just to please her mother Sweetness and to win her love. Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton point out that the "isolation of black Americans was achieved by a conjunction of racist attitudes, private behaviors and instinctual practices which

created an underclass in the black community and exacerbated poverty” (Denton 83). The novel *God Help the Child* is set in contemporary America and examines whether the black female condition has improved. Massey and Denton argue that “skin color remains a powerful basis of stratification in the United States” (Denton 85). The black skin is the main source of tension and anxieties of the female characters in the novel. Women in the novel *God Help the Child* are doubly marginalized by sexist and racist views. Morrison has depicted the future of the black women in her new novel dramatizing her vision of black beauty in the context of the 21st century. She argues that the main cause of the stress disorder and anxiety disorder of the black women is their psychological consciousness of the black skin. Lula Ann struggles to embrace the white ideals; transforms her appearance to attract the love and admiration of people as she says:

“I built up immunity so tough that only not being a —nigger girl was all I needed to win. I became a dark beauty who doesn’t need Botox for kissable lips or tanning spas to hide a deathlike pallor. And I don’t need silicon in my butt. I sold my elegant blackness to all those childhood ghosts and now they pay me for it” (Morrison 101).

It is surprising that Sweetness behaved in a brutal manner detesting Lula Ann for her black epidermal signs. Ann turns to be, saying, “Each time she came I forgot just how black she really was because she was using it to her advantage in beautiful white clothes” (Morrison 79). In the postmodern America there are avenues for the black girls to market their dark-skinned beauty as a commodity. Lula Ann is the main heroine of the novel; a modern black beauty and her journey is a long struggles of traumatic experiences in the white dominated society. She becomes pregnant and

has no choice but to give birth to a baby in the desperate hope to start new life with a mother and father. Lula Ann lives in the world of illusions and delusions hoping against hopes. Her mother Sweetness punctures her false morality and makes her to confront reality that the time and the ideas of people have not changed much. Sweetness and father have a hard time to accept the dark skinned child of Lula Ann. Lula suffers the racial discrimination and her psyche is damaged by the awareness of racism and sexism. Lula Ann Bridewell experiences the “prejudices of racism and colorism from a very young age since her black skin would scare white people or make them laugh and trick her” (Toni Morrison, *God Help the Child* 41). The first stroke of psychological shock Ann gets when she finds that her white landlord Mr. Leigh regards her as a —little nigger cunt (55). Lula’s starting point of her awareness gives her depression. She experiences a —shock, as though she had three eyes (81). The abusive and humiliating behavior of her class mates escalates to “ape sounds and scratching of the sides, imitating zoo monkeys as well as heaping a bunch of bananas on her desk” (Morrison 56). The verbal hatred is intolerable and this is the starting point of their growth of trauma and anxiety disorder. Cathy Caruth observes that in the black society the episodes of the verbal abuse and racial contempt cause damage to the psyche: “the color-obsessed American society, the dominant whites try to maintain their hegemony through their choice of words and feel privileged about their superiority” (Caruth135), No wonder, Lula is shattered and feels “like a freak, strange, soiling like spill of ink on white paper” (Morrison 56).

The consciousness of the black-skin is a major factor in the life of Lula Ann leading to her disorientation of mind. Sofia Huxley beats her: “a white girl with

blond dreads” (Morrison 23). Beauty of Lula Ann is ruined as Brooklyn says: “there isn’t enough You, GIRL, foundation in the world to hide eye scars, a broken nose and facial skin scraped down to pink hypodermis” (Morrison 26). The contact with the white is destructive for them because the sensitive children experience trauma and wounded soul. In the beginning of the novel, Morrison introduces the white standards of beauty and the traumatic experience of the blacks. Lula Ann experiences describe a tale of psychological pain and the fracture of identity. Her mother wetness describes her skin as “midnight black” (Morrison 3). Sweetness is a light-skinned woman with “good hair” (Morrison 3) and she compares her daughter’s “physical appearance and concludes that her baby resembles those naked tribes in Australia because Lula Ann has straight but curly hair” (Morrison 3). Sweetness believes that the blacks can never enjoy peace and happiness as whites avoid: “being spit in a drugstore shoving elbows at the bus stop, walking in the gutter to let whites have the whole sidewalk, charged a nickel at the grocer’s for a paper bag that’s free to white shoppers” (Morrison 4). Sweetness is so depressed that she plans to kill her black-skinned child by holding “a blanket over her face and pressing” (Morrison 5). She even thinks of “giving her away to an orphanage someplace” (Morrison 5). Morrison Sweetness tries her best to confront the reality and her vision and view of life is shaped by racism and “skin privileges” (Morrison 43). She tries to protect “the child because the child didn’t know the world” (Morrison 41). But she knows that “color of Ann is a cross she will always carry” (Morrison 7). Lula continues her fight with the white dominated society; she accuses a whole American teacher of child abuse to win her mother’s love and gain her acceptance. The dark skin prevents the mulatto mother to love and kiss her daughter. She creates illusions of her black beauty as she reinvents herself to escape from her

traumatic past. She “would grow up to be hot. Or this successful” (Morrison 11). She became “a deep dark beauty who doesn’t need Botox for kissable lips or tanning spas to hide a deathlike pallor” (Morrison 57). The adult Ann says that her “elegant blackness to all those childhood ghosts who now “pay her for it” (Morrison 57). Lula struggles to rise on the wave of American Dream but all hopes and dreams are shattered when she feels the weight of white supremacy. Lula Ann learns to look beautiful “how beautiful, how pretty, so hot, so lovely” (Morrison 51)

Lula Ann thinks that she can overcome the trauma of her black skin and her black color through her mania to live up to the beauty standard of industry. In order to incarnate the “panther of snow” (Morrison 50), Anna dresses in white clothes and she is fascinated by shades of ivory, oyster and paper white available in the stores. She spends money to paint her face to look exotic black beauty. Her mother Sweetness admits a change in the appearance of her daughter: “just now black Ann is using the white clothes to hide her black-skin with white clothes” (Morrison 43). Lula Ann imitates the image of the exotic, luscious clothes of the celebrities. She maintains her status and popularity in the beauty business. But all her efforts prove counter-productive because she cannot hide her black identity Lula becomes Bridewell and distorts her real identity. She becomes a marketable commodity in the beauty world of America falling into the trap of capitalism. She comes in contact with Jerry who is a modern designer who exhorts her insisting that “black is the new black” (Morrison 33). He tells “Bride to wear white and all white all the time” (Morrison 33) in order to accentuate her “licorice skin and her —wolverine eyes” (Morrison 34). Lula Ann is trapped in the abyss of falsehood and appearances. All her efforts to look beautiful and to forge a new identity in the society result into her

frustration and depression. Black cannot be beautiful and her white clothes work only for short time; her make up culture is a short time solution as she experiences psychological anguish and has to live with a void. She feels disappointed and her collapse is unbearable. She feels guilty soon and realizes that she has been turned into “the hottest commodity in the civilized world” (Morrison 36). Mass media and the fashion industry kill her spirit and she fails to get the real happiness and inner peace of mind. She just degenerates into a sex bomb. Lula Ann confronts reality and confesses that when men “leaped and she let herself —be caught, she soon ended up being treated by her casual boyfriend like a medal, a shiny quiet testimony of their prowess” (Morrison 36). Morrison has depicted the fall of Lula Ann in the most touching words thus: “Her fairy –tale collapsed into the mud and sand on which its vanity was built” (Morrison 135). Lula Ann takes revenge from the whites and files a suit against Sofia who had been her teacher. She believes that “a little Botox and some Tango, Matte, not glitter, would have softened her lips and may be influenced the jury in her favor” (Morrison 16). Ann depends on the myth of beauty because she had suffered injuries in childhood because of her black color. Her puffs, powders and patches provide her with security, confidence and reassurance. She thinks that she has assumed a mesmerizing black looks and the white world will recognize her. Her face is scraped of skin: “her right eye is a mushroom” (Morrison 21). In the early part of the novel, Morrison portrays her as a traumatized, nigger girl trapped in her mother’s home. She discovers that she has under gone a “crazed transformation back into a scared little black girl” (Morrison 142). Her physical transformation symbolizes “the pleasure of shedding self consciousness and narcissism and guilt like a chainmail gown, the pleasure of the freedom to forget all about it” (Wolf 151). She soon realizes that she “had counted on her looks for so long” (Morrison 151)

and her artificial beauty is a mask to cover her shallowness and cowardice. She is totally shattered at the end as all her beauty phobia collapses. Morrison has excavated the layers of psychical rupture of Lula Ann in *God Help the Child*, her lover Booker is a realist believer that “there’s no such thing as race” (Morrison 143). Through Booker, Morrison gives the message that the black women will break the chains of white beauty and will accept their original identity. As Lula unborn child symbolizes “New life immune to evil or illness, protected from the kidnap, beatings, rape, racism, insult, hurt, self-loathing and abandonment” (Morrison 175).

Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* has modern relevance as the plot of the novel deals with the plight of a mother who kills her daughter in frustration. The novel is a historical document as it chronicles the traumatic experiences of the Afro-American community represented by Sethe in the novel. The life and struggles and the traumatic experience of Sethe; her sexual oppression, subjugation is dramatized by Toni Morrison employing the lyrical literary techniques. The sufferings; the turbulent inner world of Sethe is portrayed in a heart-rending style. The novel *God Help the Child* depicts the black consciousness of black women and their traumatic experiences being black-skinned women. The blacks have to accept the reality as all their struggles to look beautiful are useless and only a source of psychological anxieties. Sethe expresses her deviant behavior while killing her own daughter. Her brutal action symbolizes the acute depressive disorder of a black mother who is mentally and sexually oppressed by the whites. She wants to end the story of sexual oppression of the blacks because she has experienced repeated rapes by the whites. She doesn’t want her daughter Beloved to be the fodder of the whites and for her the only option left is the death of her daughter. The appearance of the Beloved in the

form of the ghost in the novel is on the tradition of the Gothic novels. Toni Morrison has incorporated the images of folklore, fables and old rituals of Africa in the plot of the novel *Beloved*. In her novel, *God Help the Child* Toni Morrison depicts the alienation and depressive mood of Ann who is sick of her black skin and unfortunately her mother also hates her and even doesn't allow her touch her body. Ann struggles to forge her identity and becomes a beauty model in the white world selling her body as a commodity. The traumatic experiences of Sethe and Ann are unique features of the novels *Beloved* and *God Help the Child*.

Chapter V

Child Abuse and Trauma in the Characters of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

The theory of trauma became very popular after the World War. Sigmund Freud had shown his interest on trauma and gave his theory in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Freud explained trauma and the death consciousness in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and he observed thus: "Trauma is a result of —an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli" (Freud 35). Thousands of soldiers were the victims of war trauma and were —shell shocked during the World War 1. The soldiers suffered physical and psychological ailments and showed the symptoms of trauma in their life. *Oxford Dictionary* defines trauma thus: "Trauma is a personal trauma like the death of a child; soldiers who come after the war also suffer from trauma; emotional shock following a stressful event or a physical injury, which may lead to long-term neurosis" (112) War results into moral, psychological and paralysis of thoughts. Simone Weil observes thus: "The mind ought to find a way out, but the mind has lost all capacity to as much as look outward." Cathy Caruth has investigated trauma and she writes: "In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the events occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomenal" (Caruth1). Trauma is also found in survivors of sexual abuse, torture and genocide. It often leads to depression, aggression or suicide. William Halse Rivers (1922) conducted psychotherapy of the soldiers who were war victims of World War 1. In Greek language the word trauma means "wound" and it "became used for psychological injury by the end of the 19th

century” (Brueur and Freud). Trauma is a “major stressor which overwhelms a person, threatens his life and leaves no escape” (Herman, 1992; Joseph, Williams and Yule 1997).

The Symptoms of War Trauma

Sigmund Freud, William Rivers and Cathy Caruth found the following symptoms in the soldiers who were shell shocked and suffered from many psychological ailments: (1) Insomnia (2) Dementia (3) Nervousness (4) Depression (5) Repetitiveness (6) Nightmares (7) Hallucinations (8) Loss of interest in life (9) Death consciousness. Alice Walker excited great interest among the critics when her third novel *The Color Purple* was published in 1982. Steven Spielberg made the novel into a film in 1985 and Walker was flayed for negative portrayal of her male characters and eulogized by her powerful portraits of female characters. In this chapter the main focus is to depict the psychological and traumatic trajectory of the heroine of the novel *The Color Purple* (1982) of Alice Walker. This chapter traces the thorny and cathartic journey of Celie who becomes a victim of child abuse and even thinks of committing suicide. The novel depicts the turmoil of Celie living in a society dominated by the whites and suffering under slavery. Celie and Nettie are the main characters of the novel and all lead a traumatic life. In this chapter the framework of trauma given by Atkinson (2008) is used to analyze the thorny journey of Celie. Atkinson observes that trauma is the product of “any safety- threatening event that is uncontrollable”. When an individual is unable to cope with the unexpected event he suffers from mental and emotional breakdown. Alphonso’s repeated rape of Celie is unexceptional and she is never prepared for this horrible sexual act. She is threatened and physically beaten both by Alphonso and Albert.

These experiences give her traumatic shocks in the novel. Atkinson observes that such “unexpected events disrupt the mental and emotional functioning of an individual” (Atkinson 21). Felski observes thus “Her writing helped her to overcome the pain and begins to unearth a talent that would allow others the chance to heal” (Felski 123). In *The Color Purple*, Celie is the main heroine of the novel. She bears up with the decay as she is treated like a domesticated slave.

The critical analysis of the text relying on the theories of Cathy Caruth reveals that there is internal conflict in the lives of women characters that are wounded psychologically because of violence and racial discrimination. Jeffrey Alexander in his book *Trauma: A Social Theory* observes that “security, order, love and connection are important for a healthy development of an individual and the absence of these factors inevitably lead to stress disorder and trauma” (Alexander 8). Nettie and Celie are the victims of injustice resulting from patriarchal domination of Alphonso and Albert. They are lonely characters; depressed and alienated. They experience —despair and depression and their letter writings exercise can be considered as —self-torturing ruminations (Robin 15). Celie and Nettie are the victims of oppressive experiences.

Celie is a young girl of fourteen years in the Jazz Age south; spunky, vulnerable and uneducated. She is robbed of the two children and her sister Nettie also runs away to escape the sexual oppression of her step father. Celie has no choice but she picks up a pen and pours her wounded heart to God. Half of the novel *The Color Purple* is about her complaints to God. She writes letters to God because her step father had threatened her: “You better not ever tell anybody but god. It’ll kill you many” (23) is what her father says to her before he rapes her. Helpless and alone, she looks to God for guidance and support.

“Dear God”

“I am fourteen years old. I...have always been a good girl. May be you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me” (4).

Celie is unable to narrate her shameful experiences to anyone, writes letters addressed to God. She tells her: “You better never tell anybody but God. It’d kill your many” (Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* 1). Celia, Sofia, and Squeak endure the physical and sexual oppression silently. Judith Herman states: “in most instances of rape, for example, the offender is known to the victim...the rapist often enjoys higher status than his victim within their shared community” (62). Celie is raped by her father but she silently bears the trauma. Cathy Caruth observes that the traumatic memories always haunt the patients and Brett is no exception. Celia struggles to fight back for self-recognition. She symbolizes every black woman who is raped and tortured psychologically. Her father is virile, tough and strongman; oppressive and callous. When he finds out that Celie’s mother doesn’t allow him to have sex, he finds Celie as her substitute and tells her: “You better shut up and get used to it” (1). Celie is subjected to regular rape. She is impregnated by her own father: “I’m big. I can’t move fast enough. By time I git back from the well, the water be warm. By time, I git the tray ready the food be cold. By time, I git all the children ready for school it be dinner time” (3).

Celie is guilty of her sexual experiences and child abuse; she doesn’t blame her father but thinks that all this is happening to her because she is a bad girl. Her mother is helpless and is unaware of the guile of her father. “My mama dead. She die screaming and cussing. She scream at me. She cuses me” (3). Celie is an unlucky

woman denied for the love of mother. Her father has taken away her children and she is not allowed to meet them. The letters of Celie and Nettie reveal the male characters of the novel. They are “men as being morally bankrupt, cold-hearted, deplorably ungrateful, and sexually exploitative” (Kamara 221). Kamara further observes that men are villainous as they hinder the growth of all women in the novel. They are the manifestation of individualism and exhibit their inhuman cruelty. All the three narrators consider men as strange beings. Celie is scared of her father: “Most times Mems look pretty much alike to me” (15). She further remarks: “Men look like frogs” (254). George Stade observes thus:

“As for the men, with a few telling exceptions, they are brutal in the flesh because they are impoverished of spirit. They are pitiless when they are not self-pitying. They are misogynist and they are pedophobic. They are pretty, spiteful, lustful, lustful and treacherous. They are also arrogant, complacent. Lazy, insensitive, incompetent, vain, inartistic, contemptuous of women, but quick to take credit for their work. Above all they are lechers mechanical monsters of sexual appetite” (Stade 266).

Women don't call their husbands by their names and use derogatory language to describe them. Nafi dreamed of a modern marriage when she was in a school and had high expectations. She wanted to migrate to Paris and die there but all her dreams were shattered after her marriage and she became a neurotic woman; her dreams of France turned into the worst nightmares. She wrote to her friend after six months of marriage thus: “Don't tell me time passes quickly. Half a year in hell would have been sweeter” (57). She expresses her psychological anguish thus: “His

job is being out of work. That's lasted five years. He is more often in the room, with the foul smell, than out in the street. His mere presence fills me with disgust, more and more so. All his kindness and fond attention irritates me" (60). Nafi finds herself trapped as she can't afford a divorce. This makes her helpless and she cries thus: —The swine, they've really got me" (75). She is upset to see the howling baby and the damp nappies as she cries out in despair: "It'll be the death of me! No, I can't stay here; they can think what they like. Stay and wait for him to get better? He never will get better. He wanted a young wife to end his days with. I don't want to die; not here" (75).

In *The Color Purple*, Walker's male characters mutilate and silence all women and the scenes of domestic violence and rapes are portrayed in a heartrending language. Albert often beats Celie for petty matters and justifies his beatings thus: "Wives are like children. You have to let them know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating" (35). Hamilton (1988) observes thus: "Walker takes back into the black psyche, a return visit to the cultural poverty, where families pass on the pathologies of life to successive generations" (Hamilton 380). No wonder, Celie loses her loving father, loses her mother. With the severance of the bond between Celie and her mother, she is affected by "a psychotic episode and later through her mother's sickness and depression" (Alexander 8). Celie is subjected to physical assault and psychic oppression on a regular basis and these bring her traumatic sufferings and the loss of individuality. The concept of oppression entails "any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time one group denies another group access to the resources of society" (Collins 4). In feminist contexts, —sexuality represents a

central site of the oppression of women; “rape and the rape trial are its dominant narrative trope” (Hammonds 134). Rubin (1998) observes that “ her letter writing process can be considered as self-torturing ruminations of Celie psychologically beating unmercifully” (Rubin 15). Celie expresses her anguish thus: “I’m pore. I’m black, I may be ugly and can’t cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I’m here” (207). Celie seeks guidance from God because she also feels guilty of sexual pleasures. She is helpless as there is no escape for her. Doquetet Leblay (2014) observes thus: “Indeed, what could be more destructive to a woman’s body than rape” (Leblay 40).

Celie’s husband too is violent in the entire plot of the novel; Celie becomes a victim of patriarchal oppression. Celie suffers from trauma and her poignant condition is portrayed by Alice Walker in lyrical style. Cathy Caruth defines trauma as “direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury or other threat to one’s physical integrity or witnessing an event that involves death injury or a threat to the physical integrity of another person or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat” (Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experiences* 31). Celie is called ugly and worthless by her husband and by her Pa. She wants to survive in society but all are cruel to her. Celie outpours her traumatic anguish thus in the presence of Sofia:

“I can’t ever remember the last time I felt mad I say, I used to get mad at my mammy cause she put a lot of work on me. Then I see how sick she is, I couldn’t stay mad at her. Couldn’t be mad my daddy cause he my daddy. Bible says Honor father and mother no matter

what....Sometimes Mr....get on me pretty hard....But he my husband, I shurg my shoulder. This life soon be over. I say. Heaven last all ways” (47).

Celie is subjected to psychological oppression and this makes her pessimistic in her life. She loses the purpose of her life as Betty Friedan observes that when a woman loses her purpose of life this generates a void in her life and the real cause of her emptiness in such a situation is trauma. Walker has dramatized the various forms of brutal violence like incest and rape in the novel indicating that all relationships in the black community are chaotic. Celie is constantly in limbo between men who want to control her. Celie resents her husband and doesn't enjoy the sexual intercourse with him because she thinks it to be a mental torture. She develops physical intimacy with Shug and in this part of the novel, Walker dramatizes the scenes of lesbianism. Celie thinks that all men are cruel so she hates to sleep with men and develops intimacy with Shug in desperation. Celie hates her husband and describes his sexual relation false and brutal. Celie is a rape victim who feels her life is “scarred for life, worthless, damaged filthy unknowable” (14). Celie is a barren woman with no hope for the future. Her hard experiences of life sap all her energies as she loses her charm in life. She is terrorized and traumatized in her girlhood and her personal development is blocked and her deterioration is the result. Being timid, fearful and docile, she is suppressed and dominated by all males. She expresses her psychological anguish thus: “I shrug my shoulders. This life soon be over, I say. Heaven last all ways” (42). Kali Tai is of the opinion that “traumatic events are written and rewritten until they become codified and narrative form gradually replaces content as the focus of attention” (Tai 6). She is the “nexus of

all...oppressions and sexual, physical, social and economic” (42). She is cool and passive. Celie gets frustrated because of her inner traumatic life and says:

“What God do for me?He give me a lynched daddy, a crazy mama, a lowdown dog of a step Pa...The God I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other men I know. Triffling, forgetful and lowdown” (216).

Alice Walker’s novel *The Color Purple* is packed with the countless episodes highlighting the undeserved sufferings of Celie. Her life has been an index of exploitations and her vulnerability. Nietzsche says: “God is dead and Celie lives in Nietzsche’s world. Shug tries her best to rejuvenate her life instilling in her the purpose to live but sufferings and trauma grips her psyche as she lost her faith in family, society, parents and God. Celie’s Pa is a —walking phallus” (Badode). When her mother doesn’t respond to his sexual advances he gets hold Celia for sexual satisfaction. Damage is done to the psyche of Celie and Karen Horney calls it “traumatic stress disorder.” Celie suffers physical damage inside her brain because of physical violence and psychological consciousness which changes her response to the future activities of life. The emotional scars on her mind are very deep and she writes letters to God and to Nettie to forget the tormenting memories. Celie is often lost in her thoughts but the pressure of trauma deflates her sensibility. Cathy Caruth observes that “trauma is not simply...the literal threatening of bodily life, but the fact that the threat is recognized as such by the mind one moment too late” (Caruth 62).

Griffin observes thus: “We can see that the body constitutes the site of oppression and become the source of permanent anxiety. The body dominates the

novel...The central character has no control over her body and her physical environment. Victimized from an early age she is the object of perpetual abuse” (Griffin 21). A similar comment is voiced by Deborah McDowell in her essay “Regarding Family Matters” stating those women’s bodies are meant for colonization.

As a catalyst for targeted violence the working of the internal world of the female characters are explored. The text of *The Color Purple* is investigated from the perspective of character delineation; literary techniques, narrative structures and the use of lyrical language depicting the traumatic experiences of the female characters. The notion of double discrimination is the main focus of Alice Walker throughout the plot of the novel. The novelist points out that gender of a woman is very important in defining her identify in a society and at the same time race is also a major social force discriminating her from other people. The plot of the novel *The Color Purple* is structured around gender, race and the eventual crisis of identity leading the characters into a traumatic state of mind. Walker has depicted many heartrending scenes of violence and discrimination exhibited against female Black characters. Alice Walker is seriously concerned with the liberation of all women kids from the psychology of oppression and sexual molestation. Alice Walker made her historical declaration thus: “I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival of whole of my people Rosenbum and Travis observe that —Categories like race, sex, class, and sexual orientation may be described as —master statuses” (Travis 1). The blacks have been experiencing double discrimination since centuries; Rosenblum and Travis further observe that “individuals are not pigeonholed to only one socially status, but instead occupy multiple” (Travis 1). The categories of race

and gender in society create specific type of stereotype, discrimination and oppression. Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) has given the theory of intersectionality in article: “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity, Politics and Violence against Women of Color” published in *Stanford Law Review*. Crenshaw analyzes the double discrimination in terms of women of color. She opines that “gender, race, and other identity categories are treated as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works or marginalize those who are different” (Crenshaw 124). Identity “categories have a profound impact on the life of the individuals; the concept of political intersectionality highlights the fact women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas” (Crenshaw 125).

Traumatic events shatter the confidence of the individuals, both men and women are exposed to traumatic events, women are “more likely to be exposed to chronic high-impact traumas such as childhood sexual abuse and rape” (Tackett 78). Tackett says “high risk factors contributed to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder” (Tackett 77). Charney and Mellman found that “African Americans were more likely to be exposed to violent traumas such as homicide, physical assaults, and rape than Whites” (84). The black women accepted their lot in life without organized protest, without collective anger. They bore all their humiliations silently and suffered trauma.

The traumatic life of Sofia is harrowing in the novel. Sofia is an interesting black woman in the novel and Walker describes her as “a big strong girl” Sofia is not only physically strong but she has dominating personality. She believes in true love based on mutuality. Harpo leaves her because there is no emotional understanding

between Harpo and Sofia and her estrangement gives her psychic depression. She is sick of Harpo's mechanical unfeeling love; and her frank behavior is a new experience for Celie. She finds Sofia as a strong woman who doesn't depend on a man for maintaining her existence in the world. Celie also follows double standard of morality as she asks Harpo to beat Sofia to domesticate her but Sofia is strong and Harpo is hit hard. She expresses her courage thus: "I love Harpo...but I'd kill him dead before I let him beat me" (Walker 40). Sofia returns home to find Harpo flirting with other woman Mary Agnes, called Squeak. She fights and Sofia breaks two teeth of Squeak. She replies : "Hell No" (Walker 85). He slaps Mayor's face and Mayor also slaps Sofia. Walker depicts the barbarity of the white Mayor and the Police thus:

"They crack her skull. They crack her ribs. They treat her nose loose on one side. They blind her in one eye. She swole from head to foot. Her tongue the size of my arm, it stick out between her teeth like a piece of rubber. She cannot talk. And she just about the color a eggplant" (Walker 86-87).

Barbara Smith eulogizes Walker in depicting the worst results of racism in the Black community: "I believe that the worst results of racism in this country have been to subvert the most basic human relationships among black men, women and children and to destroy their individual psyches. It is on this level of interpersonal experience that Walker succeeds in illuminating black women's lives" (Smith 339). Sofia is almost beaten to death and dragged off to jail. Celie is shocked to witness the brutality of the white men expresses her goodness: "Angels strikes—they cymbals. One of the blow his horn, God knows out a big breath of fire and

suddenly Sofia is free” (Walker 91). Squeak looks after her children and goes to the prison to meet her. Nettie writes to Celie in her journey to New York about the effect of racism in the Black Community.

Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* dramatizes man-woman relationship based on love. The plot depicts Harpo-Sofia relationship, Celie-Albert relationship and Nettie-Alphonso relationship. In all familiar relationships women are battered and subjected to sexual oppression and humiliations and are made to suffer trauma. Sofia’s actions reveal her strong mind that expresses her independence and resists the male brutality. Sofia doesn’t like Celie’s attitude to life: “This life soon be over, I say” (Walker 42). She befriends Celie and instills some of her spirit into Celie. Walker has portrayed the defeatist and depressed attitude of Celie thus: “Well, sometimes git on me pretty hard I have to talk to Old Maker. But he my husband. I shrug my shoulders. This life soon be over. I say. Heaven lasts always” (Walker 42). Sexism oppress women as in the black community men are considered important than women because man is the “bread winner of the family” He enjoys superiority in the family and is allowed to handle his wife the way he likes. Freeman says: “The first core concept of sexist though than is that men do the important work in the world and the work done by men is what is important” (Freeman 570). But soon she overcomes her jealousy and develops friendship with Celie. Sofia and Celia realize that they can heal: “each other’s hurts by acknowledging each other’s plights and then finding a reason for laughter in the midst of their pain” (Peterson 54}. Claudia Tate observes thus: “Women must assume responsibility for strengthening their self-esteem by learning to love and appreciate themselves in short, to celebrate their womanhood” (Tate xxiii) They enter into lesbian relationship to seek liberation from the male hegemony. Sofia and Celie enter a lesbian relationship:

“I love you. Miss Celie; she hauls off and kiss me on the mouth. Um. She say, like she surprise. I kiss her back, say, um, too. Us kiss and kiss till us can’t hardly kiss no more. Then us touch each other. I don’t know nothing about it, I say to Shug. I don’t know much. She say. Then I feel something real soft and wet on y breast, feel like one of my little lost baby’s mouth. Way after a while, I act like a little lost baby too” (Walker 113).

Shug guards the door, while Celie explores a new experience of her life:

“I lie back on the bed and haul up my dress. Yank down my bloomers. Stick the looking glass between my legs. Ugh. All! That hair. Then my pussy lips be black. Then inside look like a wet rose....I look at her and touch it with my finger. A little shiver go through me” (Walker 78).

Sigmund Freud observes in his *The Pleasure Principle* that sexual therapy is a way to escape from the worries, tensions and depression of life. Sofia and Celie are psychologically wounded people and they seek peace and comfort of mind through the sexual therapy and this time they perform lesbianism as they fail to get love in the company of men. Walker believes that Black lesbianism is a natural phenomenon and she defends it by saying: “We are lesbian” (Walker 289). Shug teaches love to Shug who teaches her to love her body giving her practical instructions:

“Listen, she say, right down there in your pussy is a little button that gits real hot when you do you know what with somebody. It gir hotter and hotter and then it melt. That the good part. But other part good

too, she say. Lot of sucking go on, here and there, she ay. Lot of finger and tongue work” (Walker 77).

Ross observes that Walker has dramatized an awakening process of the battered and harassed women through the famous mirror scene of the novel. He postulates that “after her initial revulsion Celie sees in succession three things: the hair, that shielded her vagina from view, her black lips, and finally, her feminine beauty symbolized as a rose” (Ross71) Alice Walker has “portrayed the gradual process of Celie’s identity formation. She develops a network of sex relations with Shug, Nettie, Sofia and Mary Agnes” (Walker 71) to escape from the routine tortures of life. Lesbian relationship is expressed as a metaphor of nature in the black community; the only way left for the battered and tortured women to enjoy the fruits of real love and understanding. Bernard Bell in his *The Afro-American Novel and its Traditions* observes that “lesbianism is the rite of passage of selfhood, sisterhood and brotherhood for Celie” (Bell 263). Celie is a victim of sexual rape, molestation from the first chapter of the novel. She has to endure the guilt of incest and she is psychologically tortured. The harrowing scenes of rape and sexual oppression haunt her day and night and she has become a traumatic self. She has lost her sense of rationality and looks like a dead statue. She suffers what is called “sexual neurosis.” Celie symbolically mirrors every woman in the Black society. Her lesbian relations with Sofia and Shug lead to her realization that sex is pleasurable. Her lesbianism is “rooted in her search for a role model, a kind of alternative reality rather than any trans-sexual neurosis symptomatic of past trauma or inner imbalance” (Christopher 287). Nettie is shocked to see a woman making a disgraceful remark: “Niggers going to Africal Walker has depicted the plight of the blacks who are subjected to all forms

of indignities while living in the community and also outside the world. The colored people have to lead a disgraceful life everywhere and women are subjected all forms of oppression and humiliations and this is the main cause of their depression and trauma.

Harpo is another young boy representing his chauvinist attitude. After he gets married he behaves in the same cruel manner the way other men of the black community behaves. Celie is concerned about his relationship with his wife Sofia. She exhorts Harpo thus: “Sofia love you, she is good wife. Good to the children and good looking. Hardworking and God fearing and clean” (Walker 2). But Harpo finds Sofia —strong-headed and wants her to be docile like Celie. He wants to follow male chauvinism of the traditional society. When Celie is married to Albert, he looks at Celie as if he is a slave trader. He tells her that “she is docile, passive and clean, hardworking and she loves children” (Walker 8). Alphonso is a hypocrite who complains thus; “Young women no good these days. Got they legs open to every Tom, Dick and Harry” (Walker 31).

Alphonso treats Celie as discarded furniture. Her cruel father sold her as commodity to Albert. She becomes —strong by meeting and learning to love Shug Avery, who is Albert’s mistress. Celie “becomes awakened when Shug packs in to live with her and Albert. This is when for the first time in her life; Celie experiences love” (Taylor, 1992). Celie sacrifices herself for the future and welfare of her sister Nettie saving her from the sexual advances of her stepfather. She is treated as a beast of burden. Being victimized and tortured, Celie submits to the oppression of her step father. She also submits to the cruelty of her husband as she has no choice in her life. Albert is so cruel that he evicts younger sister of Celie with a motive to give her

psychological torture. Deprived of everything Celie becomes dumb. She suffers at the hands of her husband and her children. In the Afro-American society a wife is supposed to be submissive, and a subordinate to her husband; she is supposed to be obedient and a punch bag for the men. Albert beats her mercilessly. Alice Walker dramatizes the gender conflict between Harpo and Sofia. In Black community “Wives is like children. You have to let them know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating” (Walker 37). Celie learns the art of resistance from Sofia; her aggression is an outcome of her traumatic experiences. Sofia is a free spirited young woman, she is role model of resistance as she tells Celie: “But I never thought I’d have to fight in my own house. She let out eath. I loves Harpo, she say, God knows I do. But I’ll kill him dead before I let him beat me” (Walker 42).

With the teaching and guidance of Sofia, Celie struggles to fight with the male world in vain. Sofia does confront the Mayor; slaps him on the face but is arrested. The conflict between the black and the white is depicted through the confrontation of Sofia with the Mayor’s wife. Sofia retaliates and slaps the Mayor; he orders the police to arrest Sofia and the third degree is used to torture Sofia. Walker shows the racial discrimination as the main cause of trauma in the life of the blacks. Mayor and his men are very powerful in the society and Sofia is defeated at the end. Her struggle for dignity goes futile because she is powerless to fight with the white hegemony. Celie realizes that black women suffer not because of their inbuilt disabilities but because of their sex and race. Celie has to struggle against power structure of the black and the whites, so she is doubly marginalized and this is the root cause of her traumatic life. Shug’s presence generates an erotic feeling and

develops a spiritual bond between them: “I wash her body it feels like I’m praying” (Walker 53). She expresses her determination to fight with Albert as she writes to Nettie: “You’ve got to fight and get away from Albert. He ain’t no good” (Walker 131). Celie’s traumatic journey depicted in the novel by Alice Walker is heartrending: “You a low down dog is what’s wrong. I say. It’s time to leave you and enter into the creation. And your dead body just the welcome ma I need” (Walker 207).

Celie had been absorbing all the invectives but she is fed up with the dog’s life. She expresses her identity and potential thus: “I’m pore. I’m black. I may be ugly and can’t cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I’m here” (Walker 214). She tells her own abuse and bears the psychological pain silently in order to save her mother and Nettie from the cruelty from Alphonso. She marries Albert so that Nettie is not forced to marry him. Beating and torture are regular features in her life but she learns to become acclimatized to her anguish. Nettie exhorts her to fight back but she can’t. She passively submits to his beating expressing her helplessness in a poignant language: “I don’t fight; I stay where I’m told. But I’m alive” (Walker 24).

Herman backs the plausible relationship between violence and trauma: “The malignant effects of rape are not surprising given the particular nature of the trauma. The essential element of rape is physical and psychological; a moral violation of the person” (Walker 57). Celie demonstrates the link between violence and trauma in her experiences and states: “I look at women, though, cause I’m scared of them” (Walker 5). Celie endures the violence not fitting into her “inner schemata of self in relation to the world” (Herman 51). Walker has depicted the naked and rambling confessions of Celie representing the black women of the South. Her portrayal is

painfully vivid narrated in the lyrical language. Men are cruel; they hunt game, and trade women like draft horses when the spirit moves them. Celie and Nettie are cynical and bewildered and take solace in each other. Celie's Pa tosses her like misgotten Cinderella's helpless Celie submits to the desires of her father Albert. In her letters written to God, she never mentions her father's name and calls him Mr.

Walker has dramatized the theme of female friendship in the novel *The Color Purple*. The black women are beaten and raped and they bear up each other's life. Several women come into the life of Celie and among them Shug who is called "sweet as sugar." Avery is a whore with a heart-of-gold. Celie is so kind and nice that she brings the former liver of Albert back to the house one day. She is sick as a dog and no one else will take her in. Celie nurses her Shug back to health, admires her with a consuming passion becomes Shug's lover. Alice Walker depicts the humiliation, exploitation and marginalization of the black people. Walker depicts the ugliest form of male patriarchy in the Afro-American society where the daughter is raped and physically beaten. Celie helps her sister Nettie to run away to save herself from the clutches of her cruel step father and Albert. There is no end to her sufferings as she cries out expressing her despondency to God: "Dear god, my daddy tynch. My mama crazy. All my little half-brothers and sisters no kind to me. My children not my sister and brother, Pa not Pa. You must be sleep" (Walker 198).

Judith Herman observes that Celie "offers herself like a sacrificial lamb" (Herman 249). Nettie lives far away from her but they share their feelings through letters. On one of her letter Nettie writes: "meant to write you in time for Easter but it was not a good time for Mr. and I did not want to burden you with any distressing news" (Walker 152). Celie is also very much attached with her sister Nettie as she

writes: "Nettie I am making some pants for you to beat the heat in Africa. Soft, white, thin. Drawstring waist. You won't ever have to feel..." (Walker 193). Nettie and Celie's relationship is ideal in the novel; Nettie misses Celie every time: "But I miss you so much. Please write to me as you have a chance. Every day I think about you. Every minute...I love you with all my heart." (Walker 115).

Celie's God doesn't answer her letters. Shug argues that traditional divine image epitomizes male dominance: "Man corrupts everything. He is on your box of grills...in your head, and all over the radio. He try to make you think he everywhere. Soon as you think he everywhere. You think he God" (Walker 179). In the beginning of her struggle, Celie continues putting her faith in God and accepts the status quo: "This life soon be over; Heaven lasts all ways" (Walker 47). But her mother doubts the supporting nature of God and questions the very existence of God: "I say God took it. He took it while I was sleeping. Kill it out there when in the woods" (Walker 12). She is narrating the tragic death of Alphonos's child. Shug argues that the traditional divine image. Celie says God is a wrathful being: "He threaten lightening, floods and earthquakes" (Walker 179). Though writing to God is her only emotional outlet at the beginning, she writes with restraint. Celie is fed up with the conservative nature of her black community. The local preacher condemns Shug and casts aspersions on her behavior: "He talk about a strumpet in short skirts...slut, hussy, heifer and street cleaner" Somebody "got to stood for Shug I think (Walker 49). Celie alters the moral perspective in retelling her story. Celie expresses her anger and confronts Albert: "You better stop talking all I'm telling you ain't just from me. Look like when I open my mouth the air rush in and shape words" (Walker 167). Celie tries to overcome her trauma and for the first time she tries to gain

freedom of speech in dealing with Albert. She feels inspired by forces outside herself. Her words flow in torrent; her stepfather and her husband had been very cruel to her. Alphonso inflicts indignities on her as he tells her that she is “You ugly. You skinny. You shape funny. You too scared to open your mouth to people....You black, you pore....You a woman. Goddam....You nothing at all” (Walker 187).

Celie had been enduring all these invectives for long. She is stress-ridden as she is subjected to regular beating and humiliations. Celie’s trauma is the product of her husband’s regular mental tortures and abuses. She is dubbed as —nothing and this derogatory remark gives her psychological anguish. In desperation and frustration she heaps curses on Albert:

“Whoever heard such a thing, say Mr...I probably didn’t whup your ass enough. Every lick you hit me you will suffer twice. Shit, he say. I should have look you up. Just let you out to work. The jail you plan for me is the one in which you will not rot. I say” (Walker 167).

Freud observes that the derogatory and insulting remarks injure the psyche of an individual and becomes the cause of depression and trauma. Albert’s scathing remarks give psychological torture to Celie who is mentally disturbed and uses her potency to curse him. Celie has a “mouth just pack with claws” and she looks like a wounded tigress in the novel. Fiery and visibly upset Celie feels a compulsive urge to slit Albert’s throat with his razor. Eric Erikson observes that “a traumatic character loses his balance of mind; his deviant behavior is quite apparent in dealing with people around him” (Erickson 123). Celie’s violent behavior is the outcome of her mental breakdown. Fed up with a silent and unresponsive god, Celie tries to

confront men; she learns to transcend her disgust with men and to love even Albert. Her discussion with Albert reveals her inner turbulent mind:

“Mr. think all this is stuff men do. But Harpo not like this. I tell him. You not like this. What Shug got is womanly it seem like to me. Specially since she and Sofia the ones got it. Sofia and Shug not like men, he say, but they not like women either. You mean not like you or me. They hold they own, he say. And it’s different” (Walker 236).

The dialogue with Albert reveals tensions; aggressiveness and mental instability of Celie. She stops writing to God who is “big and old and gray bearded and white” (Walker 176). She begins writing to her sister Nettie to get moral and emotional satisfaction. Her letters to God express her helplessness registering her oppressor’s voices, but her letter written to Nettie express her emotional recovery as she says: “Nettie, I am making some pants for you....I plan to make them by hand. Every stitch I sew will be a kiss” (Walker 192). Celie and Nettie are coerced by Alphonso and Albert who act as their aggressors in the novel. Nettie writes to Celie: “He said because of what I’d done I’d never hear from you again, and you would never hear from me” (Walker 119). The threat proves real as Albert hides letters from Celie. Both the women are denied communication and are forced to remain silent. Freud and Cathy Caruth observe that silence and speechlessness lead to trauma as the pent up feelings don’t come on the surface. Alphonso has used every strategy to silence Celie short of cutting her tongue. She is intimidated, deprived of all the basic rights and even is accused falsely by Alphonso to humiliate her. He snaps her at his first rape when she cries out: “You better get used to it” she is made dumb forcefully by Alphonso. He deprives her of schooling as he says: “You too

dumb to keep going to school, Pa Say” (Walker 19). He poisons the ears of her husband Albert: “she tells lies” (Walker 18). She is prevented from speaking and is made dumb. Being terrorized, she accepts domestic violence without a whimper. She is repeatedly told that she is ugly, stupid and this gives her inferiority complex. She is not allowed good education so she remains backward with limited knowledge. Being flustered constantly, Celie has no option but write letters to give vent to her pent up feelings and to escape from mental contortions and assuage loneliness and pain. The more she is suppressed and threatened to keep silent the more irrepensible her urge to cry out. Celie writes to God: “May be you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me” (Walker 11). Nettie later recalls “I remember he ashamed you couldn’t even talk about it to God, you had to write it, bad as you thought your writing was” (Walker 123). Celie is forced not to unburden her grief and in such circumstances her mind gets distracted and she experiences trauma. She is treated like a dowry cow and that her stepson split her head upon with a rock. She survives by thinking “long as I can spell G-o-d I got somebody along” (Walker 26). Nettie also experiences the trauma when she says: “When I don’t write to you I feel as bad as I do when I don’t pray, locked up in myself and choking on my own heart. I am so lonely” (Walker 122). Celie is so much disgusted and traumatized that she thinks of committing suicide. Cathy Caruth argues in *Unclaimed Experience* that “the shock of the mind’s relation to the threat of death...not the direct experience of the threat, but precisely the missing of this experience, the fact that, not being experienced in time, it has not yet been fully known” (Caruth 62). Celie says: “I pray to die just so I don’t have to speak” (Walker 220). Celie is friendless and lonely. Life for Celie is a process of coming into her own true voice, of saying no to the corrupt and violent world thrust upon her by the fathers. Her most potent weapon in this is

the power to rename, a power her sister Nettie had conferred upon her when they were school girls. "The way you know who discover America, Nettie say, is think about cucumbers. That what Columbus sound like" (Walker 123). When Celia discovers halfway through the novel that Nettie is still alive, that Nettie has been writing letters to her for twenty-five years and that Albert has kept those letters from her out of spite, her calloused heart breaks open and her rage pours out. "The God I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other men I know. Trifling, forgetful, and lowdown." She refuses to call God's name again and begins instead to write to her new-found sister.

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* has modern relevance for the black women of the world as the plot of the novel is a harrowing tale of the sexual and psychological oppression of the black women. The black women in the world are threatened by the domination and male oppression. Walker has used her lyrical style to depict the man woman relationships in the black community. The women characters experience traumatic experiences as they don't enjoy identity and individuality as men use all strategies to crush their individuality. The chapter investigates their plight relying on the trauma theories of Freud and Cathy Caruth. Toni Morrison gives a heart-rending tale of a young girl of fourteen years old who is repeatedly raped by her own father Alphonso. She is impregnated by her own father twice and he is so cruel that he sells the children of Celie. In frustration and an acute depression, she writes letters to God who doesn't reply and the result is her traumatic experience. Her sister Netie is also a depressed woman who is married off to a cruel husband who beats her mercilessly. She is repeatedly told that she is ugly, stupid and this gives her inferiority complex. She is not allowed good education so she remains

backward with limited knowledge. Walker has dramatized the theme of female friendship in the novel *The Color Purple*. The black women are beaten and raped and they bear up each other's life. Several women come into the life of Celie and among them Shug who is called "sweet as sugar." Avery is a whore with a heart-of-gold. Celie is so kind and nice that she brings the former liver of Albert back to the house one day. She is sick as a dog and no one else will take her in. Walker comes to the conclusion that real love is not available in the male world. They get love in the female world and lesbianism is the alternative to traditional man woman love. In the Afro-American society there is no love, no happiness and no spiritual glory; men are monstrous, corrupt and savage. Women are subjected to oppression and humiliation. Alice Walker has dramatized the reality of the black culture and human degradation of the blacks in this novel.

Chapter VI

Female Circumcision and Dissolution of Self of Black Women in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* of Alice Walker

The traumatic experiences often lead to the dissolution of self of the characters as they experience the loss of boundaries between self and the world. Sense of loss often results into acute psychosis resulting into dissolution of self. R. D; Laing in his book *The Divided Self* and Sypher Wylie in *The Loss of Self* discuss in detail the symptoms of the loss of self. Both the writers argue that the main causes of the loss of self are the loss of identity, haunting memories of the past, the loss of a beloved one and the images of the horrible scenes of killings and brutality. Laing comments thus:

“Man’s whole life has been between his desire to reveal himself and his desire to conceal himself. We all share this problem with him and we have all arrived at a more or less satisfactory solution. We have our secrets and our needs to confess” (Laing 39).

Dissolution of self is considered as a mental process of disconnection from thoughts and feelings of an individual. Dissociative disorders lead to amnesia and identity disorder leading to the loss of self of the individuals. The main symptoms of dissociation of self is the loss of identity; child abuse, rape, depression and anxiety disorders. Physical injury and the war memories also lead to the dissociation of self. The characters of Alice Walker often suffer from dissolution of self.

Alice Walker became a popular novelist in the world because she had the creative talent to read the pulse of the blacks. She had deep interest in the history of the Afro-American people. She was quite disturbed to know about the depressing tradition of the Olinka community of female circumcision which brought untold miseries to the black women. The protest against this disgusting tradition was raised even in the U.N.O. and Walker took the responsibility to highlight the oppressive nature of this African ritual. The latest novel of Alice Walker *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) excited great interest among the reviewers and the critics of Alice Walker. The plot of the novel is about the condemnation of the tribal tradition of female circumcision of black women. Alice Walker launches a powerful attack on this inhuman ritual in lyrical language in this novel. The main emphasis of the novel is not just on the physical deterioration but also on the psychological destruction of mutilated black women. According to Irwin, Alice Walker's narration shows the "bipolarity typical of both compulsion neurosis and schizophrenia" (Irwin 29). Walker had firsthand experience of this during her trip to Kenya in 1966 when she was twenty years old. She was on a mission of building school; she writes: "nothing in my own experience had prepared me to understand female genital mutilation. It took me years, I say, just to gather my nerve to attempt to talk to an African woman, whose African self is Tashi and American self is Evelyn" (Walker 39). Tashi's circumcision brings multiple psychological problems for Tashi who experiences trauma till her death. She becomes a victim of humiliation and neglect from her husband upholding the tradition of Olinka culture. She has to pay a very heavy price for her genital mutilation; her sister Dura bleeds to death. The journey of Tashi from childhood to her execution is replete with the traumatic episodes; her loss of female identity and the physical and psychological pain shatters her sensibility and people

begin to think her insane. As a young girl Tashi was ambitious and wild but her ritual circumcision during adolescence brought untold miseries to her. Tashi's life has been explored as a case study in this chapter relying on the theories of trauma of Cathy Caruth and Sigmund Freud. Tashi was inspired by the political leaders who exhorted Tashi to follow the tribal tradition to undergo the circumcision ritual binding herself with the Olinka tribe. But this decision totally transformed her life giving her physical and psychological pain ruining her family life. Freud says —trauma means a wound on the body and soul. Trauma is, therefore, a close and personal experience of a lethal event which can lead to the death of a victim or the death of its loved one. Trauma is something beyond the expectation and the acceptance of a subject. It comes immediately to an individual but exists in its psyche forever. Its frequency fluctuates within the mind and the body of its victim but it never leaves the casualty.

Trauma studies have become significant in literary criticism with the contribution of Cathy Caruth who is a professor of Humane Letters at Cornell University, Ithaca (New York) who suggests that “in a catastrophic age, that is, trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves” (Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 11). Caruth interprets trauma in the context of cultural clash between different cultures that create psychic anguishes for traumatized victims. Tashi becomes physically and psychologically a wounded self. In America she begins her psychological journey to investigate what it is she has lost and what motivated her to be circumcised. Tashi goes to Switzerland

where she meets Mtzee who is an old doctor; a famous psychiatrist. In his home, Tashi begins to uncover repressed memories that are traumatic. She recollects the poignant scenes of the death of her sister Dura. In America she works with Raye another famous psychiatrist who asks her why she has submitted to the ritual of circumcision.

Thiam argues that women often are subjected to sexual oppression because of a dominant patriarchy. Thiam observes that there is a common denominator in the lives of women. He talks of “phallocratic violence” (Thiam 124). She urges women to resist the male supremacy and appreciates that all —women must bind together in order to break the cycle of dominance. Thiam contends that women must defy and rebel against the societal patriarchy. Walker also urges women to fight together: “It will take all of us working together to turn things around” (Walker X). Thiam expands the arguments of Walker and observes that —The common condition of all women is one of “exploitation and oppression by the same phallocratic system, whether the Black, White or Yellow (Thiam 53). Thiam further argues that men are the main oppressors of women:

“As far as we are concerned, this human race consists of social classes and two categories of individuals: men and women, whose relationship to each other is that of dominating and dominated” (Thiam 13). Thiam identifies Female gentile circumcision as the main form of physical subservience in dominant patriarchy. She writes: “It constitutes the most eloquent expression of the control exercised by the phallocratic system over female sexuality” (Thiam 60). Tashi becomes a victim of the social and cultural pressure as Thiam says: “As long as the female is under the domination of the colonial, her relationship to him will always be that of victim to

victimizer” (Thiam 116). Tashi and Dura are depicted as victims of the tribal culture of Olinka. Gerri Baes (2005) observes that this ritual is dramatized in the novel as a way of

“Resistance to the colonizer’s influence...Tashi make the decision to embrace the tribal practice of scarification...initiation ceremony of female genital circumcision as an additional external identification of tribal unity” (Bates 120).

It is expected from mothers living in Olinka that they should teach their daughters to be prepared for cultural genital circumcision. Maria Lauret (2011) observes thus: “In Olinka culture mothers tell their daughter that they should comply with the tradition, that to be bathed as the euphemism goes; will make them more valuable to their families, their future husbands and their people” (Lauret 157).

Clitoridectomy or female circumcision is a religious ritual in Africa. It is the painful process of the excision of the clitoris and other parts of the female genitalia. It is considered essential for a girl’s virginity and is practiced in most of the families to maintain their cultural sanctity. In Olinka, it is a process of cleaning of private parts of a girl to diminish her sexual urges. Alice Walker (2008) justifies her behavior contending that: “We had been stripped of everything but our black skins. Here and there a defiant cheek bore the marks of our withered tribe. These marks gave me courage. I wanted such a mark for myself” (Walker 24). Tashi’s allegiance to the Olinka’s culture destroys her sexuality and womanhood. This is the major cause of trauma and loss of herself. Her husband has developed sexual relation with other French woman because she fails to satisfy Adam sexually for more than three months. Tashi is guilt- ridden as she expresses her grief and helplessness. “Each time

he touched me I bleed. Each time he moved against me I winced. There was nothing he could do to me that did not hurt” (Walker 59). Tashi gives birth to a son Benny in an American hospital. The doctors try to save the child but couldn’t rather suffer from excessive pain and loss of blood. Crippled by surgery, Tashi gives birth to an abnormal child. Tashi expresses her shocking psychological anguish thus:

“The obstetrician broke two instruments trying to make an opening large enough for Benny’s head. Then used a scalpel. Then a pair of scissors used ordinarily to sever cartilage from bone. His head was yellow and blue and badly misshapen” (Walker 57).

The doctors remark that they have never seen such a delivery case. Benny is born mentally retarded because of bleeding of Tashi and her mental sickness causing her trauma. Her child suffocated during the birth leading to several defects. Tashi feels guilty due to injustice with her child. She tries to compensate by fostering him in her arms delicately and tenderly. She uses her tongue to give shape to his head. She reminisces further her bitter African traumatic experience that shattered her life and ruined her domestic happiness. Benny craves for mother’s soft warmth. Walker has expressed Benny’s feelings for the touch of his mother in a poetic language thus:

“I felt connected to her scent, which was warm, lovely, soft. I felt I could quite happily have spent my lifetime under one of her arms...I like to struggle her, though contorting my lanky body into a shape that fits cuddly under her neck is something of a feat. She barely tolerates it, though and immediately moves away” (Walker 190).

Alice Walker has narrated the scene of Lisette's delivery who gave birth to Pierre; Adam's son. The comparison of both the deliveries is narrated in a lyrical style to intensify the theme highlighting the deep anguish of Tashi. Adam "Impregnated Lisette who enjoys child birth as a heavenly bliss. Her radical aunt suggests that —child birth above all should feel sexy" (Walker 94). Lisette becomes an epitome of spiritual entity during her pregnancy. She listens to the holy song to bring forth a new baby in the world considering it a gift and blessing of God unlike Tashi who endures endless pain. Lisette explains thus:

"I listened to nothing but gospel music during my pregnancy, a music quite new to me and to Franc, and it's High Way to heaven was playing on the stereo during the birth....Pierre practically slid into the world at the height of my amazement smiling serenely even before he opened his eyes" (Walker 95).

Tashi feels mentally tortured as she has lost the very purpose of life. During her second pregnancy, there was an acute pain in her body; she aborts the child as she feels weak and nervous fearing that she might give birth to a retarded child. Tashi fails at all levels of life; she loses her interest in life and feels that her life is completely ruined. This consciousness makes her neurotic and traumatic. Cathy Caruth published *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) and in this book, she explored all the causes and symptoms of trauma. Sigmund Freud became an international celebrity and his theory about libido, depression and hysteria became very popular among the critics. Physical illness of Tashi grows and her deterioration of health was a matter of concern for her husband Adam. She realized that she is being deprived of her husband's love and this feeling affected her psychologically. She gets mentally ill as she lies on the bed most of her time feels

restless and alienated. Tashi suffers of some dreams and psychological problems. An African female analyst Raye investigates her psychological problems. Sigmund Freud discusses the theory of displacement of self in *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). Jacques Lacan's *Mirror Stage* (1949) examined psychic pressures and tensions resulting into neurosis. She is taken to a Jungian analyst, Mzee also. In her discussion with Mzee, Ray and Olivia she comes to the conclusion that M'Lissa is the real culprit who ruined her life and made her a traumatic figure. Tashi is aware of her trauma and sums up the nature of her struggle: "My struggle was always against the inner darkness. I carry within myself the only known keys to my death to unlock life, or close it shut forever" (Walker 270). To Freud, when a subject is attacked externally, it becomes unconscious, but "it also remains unconsciously active" (Freud, *The Unconscious* 47). Freud further states that the "repressed does not constitute the whole of the unconscious. The unconscious is the more extensive; the repressed is part of the unconscious" (47). Tashi curses herself: "How had I entrusted my body to this madwoman" (160). Olivia expresses the traumatic condition of Tashi thus:

"There were premenstrual cramps: cramps caused by the near impossibility of flow passing through so tiny an aperture M'Lissa had left. After fastening together the raw sides of Tashi's vagina with a couple of thorns and inserting a straw so that in healing, the traumatized flesh might not grow together, shutting the opening completely; cramps caused by the residual flow that could not find its way, was not reabsorbed into her body, and had nowhere to go. There was the odor, too, of soured blood, which no amount of scrubbing" (Walker 33).

There are two forms of damages suffered by Tashi: physical damage and mental damage. Tina Meelroy Ansa observes that the mental damage suffered by Tashi is unspeakable. In fact her whole life was ruined; she lost her husband Adam who developed illicit relations with a French woman neglecting Tashi and impregnated her to the chagrin and humiliation of Tashi. Ansa comments thus:

“Tashi’s wound is not as deep in her leg as is on her psyche. The circumcision has not only cut away her clitoris and the possibility of lovemaking that is not painful and humiliation. It has also eradicated her sense of self and her ability to feel” (Ansa 36).

Tashi is taken to Switzerland for treatment. She remains under the care of Carl’s therapy for a long time. Tashi realizes for the first time that the “boulder blocking her throat” (Walker 81) is the repressed memory of her being mute and silence. She articulated her inner wounded soul through the painting of a huge peacock on the wall. She is helpless as she cannot verbalize her pain and goes to her subconscious state of dream and imagination and loses her consciousness. LaCapra writes, “The unconscious and the drives might be apprehended as active or generative absences They may not be recovered as if they were losses or lacks . . .”(LaCapra 58).

Alice Walker has depicted her strange dreams and nightmares indicating her extreme frustration as a woman trapped in a colossal tower. The image of enslavement reveals the subjugation of all the black women. Her attempt to preserve the sanctity of Olinkan culture has impaired her sexually so her fear of the Phallus is described in poetical style thus: “and they’ve broken my wings! I see them flying in a corner like discarded oars. Oh, and they’re forcing something in one end of me,

and from the other are busy pulling something out” (Walker 25). Walker delves deep into the psyche of Tashi to depict the pangs and pains lying dormant ruining her health and balance of mind. Her cure and rehabilitation is a process to give her a new life but the experiment fails as Tashi is unresponsive. “I knew what the boulder was: that it was a word; and that behind that word I would find my earliest emotions” (Walker 81). By chance Carl Jung dies and Tashi is put under the care of Raye. She wants to be treated by Carl Jung but he is evasive. She considers Tashi as a “witch, not the warty kind of American children imitate on Halloween but a spiritual descendent of the ancient healers (Walker 234). Soon her process of psychic transformation has positive impact on the mind and soul of Tashi. She opened the heart of Raye with whom she is confidant and she feels emotionally attached. Zizek opines that in the unconscious, the Self loses its “substantial character” (Zizek 5) and the unconscious transform the Self into “a fragile inconsistent field over determined” (Zizek 5) by internal and external struggles. For Zizek, the unconscious is not only the “Freudian sexual unconscious” (300) but also the —cerebral unconscious (Zizek 300). Tashi recollects all the traumatic events of her past and soon comes to the conclusion that M’Lissa destroyed her happiness and she begins thinking of taking revenge from her. She considers her miserable condition thus:

“I said. Good instructions. Sensible, correct. From Our Leader that —we must remember who we were. That we must fight the white oppressors without ceasing, without, even, the contemplation of ceasing;” (Walker109).

Tashi unravels her dark mind getting awareness of truth about the black women suffering in the world because of cultural imperialism. Lisette and Pierre

open her eyes and give her an insight into the savage Olinka culture which ruined her life and she became an easy prey to the dogmatic society. They disclose the unbelievable facts regarding sex. She talks of the fear lurking in the unconscious mind of backward black woman. Pierre brings awareness in Tashi and tries to heal her wounded soul. Pierre is a learned guy believing in modern ideas and spreading the message of equality among the ignorant soul. He has great awareness of Langston Hughes “the laughing spellbinder, of Baldwin’s —the guerrilla homosexual genius” and the ideology of Richard Wright to bring awareness in the black women. Pierre feels great sympathy to her and to heal her wounds he becomes anthropologist to bring positivity and deep confidence in her. As the plot progresses Tashi move towards self-correction and self-transformation like Celie of *The Color Purple*. Tashi reviews her life and the mistakes that she committed and decides to make her position amidst all tragedies and disasters. She is not in a mood to bear social injustice any longer. She has made up her mind to punish the evil doers at the cost of her own life. Tashi moves out of the shell of Africa and migrates to America for a fresh beginning of her life. Tashi lives in the intellectual environment in America and compares her dismal states with the other American women enjoying wonderful married life. Her awakened soul directs her to reach against all that is wrong and goes to Olinka to take revenge from M‘Lissa. She talks about the experience of excision thus: “She is still crying she’s been crying since I left. No wonder I haven’t been able to. She has been crying all our tears” (Walker 209).

In America, Tashi undergoes sexual therapy, rediscovers herself and looks back to clitoridectomy as a male practice meant to control women’s sexuality. This moment of revelation engages Tashi mentally to a level where she becomes a new woman in search of sexual liberation. Towards this end she kills her initiator as a

symbol of the death of those who cruelly mutilate and enslave women's sexuality to men. Simultaneously however she feels freed as a born again woman able to appreciate and enjoy her sexuality. She is unable to have any fulfilled relationship with Adam, her husband because he is unable to penetrate her for three months because of the effect of clitoridectomy. She says "each time he touched me I bleed - there is nothing he could do to me that did not hurt" (Walker 60). This is the extension of the pain alluded to. Tashi ends up experiencing a very difficult pregnancy having an equally difficult delivery. The novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* depicts the psychological trauma of Tashi in heart-rending language who rushes to the West to escape the orthodox circumcisers. The plot of the novel is focused on the struggle of the characters; a victim of psychological trauma in search of healing her sickness of the soul. In an interview with Paul Giddings, (1992) Walker admitted that being a black woman she has ancestral relationship to African women. She is seriously concerned about slavery of the African people and she has used her poetic powers to highlight the inhuman aspect of slavery in the world. She expresses her point of view of "speaking for my great-great-great grandmother who came here with all this pain in her body" (Walker 60). Walker writes for the black people of Africa and particularly for black women subjected to multiple forms of oppression and exploitation leading a traumatic life. Walker comments in her interview with Paul Giddings thus:

"The other answer is when Africans get in trouble, whom do they call? Everybody, they call on people they shouldn't even talk to- trying to raise money, appealing to people to fight their battles, buying guns from Russia and the United States. So they can accept what I; someone who loves my former home' am saying. They don't

have a leg to stand on so they better not start hopping around me !
Female circumcision is described as —a blatant symbol of the oppression of women and the patriarchy’s determination to control women’s productivity and their sexuality” (Walker 60).

Frank Hosken (1981) contends that circumcision is “genital mutilation and the action is a gross violation of human rights” (Hosken 10). Gloria Steinem (1992) has expressed her condemnation in other words: “genital mutilation is a metaphor for the psychic mutilation that women suffer everywhere at the hands of their male oppressors” (Steinem 49). Mary Daly (1978) has expressed her passionate outcry and calls “unspeakable atrocities on women; female’s gentile mutilation is a barbaric and demonic ritual” (Daly 154). The plight of Tashi is inexpressible who chooses to undergo a wounding gentile circumcision leading to her eternal psychic pain. Alice Walker has taken a very challenging theme dealing with a demonic issue; a crime against the black women. Tashi represents all the black women of the world and the metaphor of gentile circumcision is for the oppression of women. Freud notes:

“During the interval between the experiences of those impressions and their reproduction (or rather, the reinforcement of the libidinal impulses which proceed from them), not only the somatic sexual apparatus but the psychical apparatus as well has undergone an important development; and thus it is that the influence of these earlier sexual experiences now leads to an abnormal psychical reaction, and psychopathological structures come into existence” (472).

The subject is very complicated and delicate which has a long history reaching far back in the misty tribal past. Walker claims, more than one hundred million women in the world have been subjected to gentile circumcision. It is ironical to note that many girls and women often desire to observe this traditional ritual and follow the will of their mothers and willingly undergo gentile circumcision. Tashi is one of them who willingly choose to undergo the painful process. The tribal ritual is the main forces in motivating her to undergo the process. In some tribal societies if a woman doesn't undergo this gentile circumcision process she doesn't enjoy the identity; she becomes a laughing stock as the other women ridicule her in the public. She is considered ignoble and a rebel against the old tribal values. Tashi wanted to be accepted as a real woman by the Olinka people. Her Christian friend pleads with her not to undergo the painful process but Tashi is adamant. For Tashi the force of religion and culture is very powerful and she is too fragile to violate it. Tashi justifies her choice thus: "who are you and your people never to accept us as we are? Never to imitate any of our ways? It is always we who have to change" (Alice Walker, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* 21). Oliva begs her not to undergo the process for Adam who loves her. But Tashi throws away her advice and expresses her choice of undergoing the mutilation: "It is the way Olivia that Olinka can show they still have their own ways, even though the white man has taken everything else; she didn't want to do it, but to make her people feel better, she's instigated" (123). Oliva feels that Tashi should have done it at the age eleven but at this age gentile circumcision is suicidal. Walker uses Tashi to offer arguments for tribal customs and uses the modern enlightened American Evelyn as her voice in the novel. Walker launches a vigorous attack on the anti-human ritual performed on

women. Tashi chooses to get herself circumcised; her choice is driven by emotion rather than intellect. She values her identity, wishes to be honored and recognized in society for the people. She doesn't want to be rebellious women in Olinka. She says:

“The operation she'd done to herself joined her, she felt, to these women, whom she envisioned as strong, invincible completely woman. Completely woman, completely African. Completely Olinka. In her impanation on her long journey to the camp, they had seemed terribly bold, terribly revolutionary” (Walker 195).

Tashi even feels proud of her culture. She has some marks on her body but she considers these marks as signs of her cultural identity. Tashi says: “These marks gave me courage I wanted such mark myself” (23). When Tashi arrives in the United States, she begins feeling guilty fearing that Adam may not marry her. She doesn't want to cheat Adam and is ready to tell him the whole truth about her gentile circumcision. He convinces M'Lissa and brings Tashi to his home and marries her in spite of her protests that he would feel ashamed to notice the scars on her face. But Adam is a true lover; he also carves the same Olinka tribal markings into his own cheeks in order to save Tashi from feeling guilty and embarrassed of her scars on the face. But the hidden scars between the thin legs of Tashi changed her completely in America. She was no longer cheerful as her movements had become slow and passive. Her inner wounds had become painful and a look in her eyes revealed that her soul had been dealt a mortal blow. Her marriage to Adam changes the life of Tashi as she looks critically at her culture. She realizes that the practice of gentile mutilation their ancestors were following was nothing, but a barbaric practice. It was a ritual giving psychological trauma as the woman on whom the circumcision is

performed can never forget the event and its memory haunts her throughout her life. Mary Daly mentions an elderly woman who is involved in their painful; process conducting gentile circumcision and mutilating the bodies of young girls a “pawns, mentally castrated participants in the destruction of their own kind; the female token torturers” (Dally 165). Awa Thiam wrote her book *Black Sisters, Speak Out* (1986) in which she raised the issue of preservation of Black Culture. She defended the ritual of gentile circumcision thus:

“But it was women in particular who took it upon themselves to preserve certain customs. We should pay them tribute. It is because our mothers, our elders had the charge of children that they were and remain responsible for training them, for transmitting certain myths and beliefs and instilling in them a spirit of submission to custom. In refusing to allow Black African civilization to be destroyed, our mothers were revolutionary. Yet some people describe this attitude as conservative” (Thiam 122).

The Doctor who takes up the case of Tashi in the novel remarks that Negro women “can never be analyzed effectively, because they can never bring themselves to blame their mothers” (Walker 17). Thiam points out that this job is done by the mothers in Africa and they are in no way under stress; it is done with enthusiasm in the mood of celebration. But in the case of Tashi things were different because her mother had become Christian and she had turned a deaf ear to M'Lissa who had argued with her to have the genital circumcision done for Tashi at the proper age. M'Lissa discloses to Tashi that her mother is guilty of killing her sister Dura and feels that if Dura is not bathed no one will marry her. Tashi is horrified to know the

truth and feels sorry for her mother. She expresses her psychological anguish to Lisette thus:

“In truth, my mother was not equipped, there was not enough of herself left to her, to think about me or about my sister Dura, who bled to death after a botched circumcision, or about any of her other children. She had just sunk into her role of She Who Prepares the Lambs for Slaughter” (Walker 259).

Carl, an old man takes up the case of Tashi who is suffering from psycho-traumatic ailments. He is a psychiatrist by profession and uncle to Lisette. Tashi reveals her deep hidden thoughts to him in the form of paintings. She paints the picture of fearsome fighting cock and gradually her memories are brought out one by one. She draws a foot which grows in size along with the cock. Tashi feels depressed and wounded; she feels sick, nauseous and perspires profusely and often she shivers when she works on her painting. She feels that every cell of her brain is becoming dead, and every organs of her body is becoming numb. She is busy in painting during her work, she hears the howling cries of pain coming from an isolated hut far away. Tashi recollects her old memories in a poignant mood:

“Underneath a tree, on the bare ground outside the hut, lay a dazed row of little girls, though to me they seemed not so little. They were all a few years older than me. Dura’s age. Dura, however, was not among them; and I knew instinctively that it was Dura being held down and tortured inside the hut. Dura who made those inhuman shrieks that rent the air and chilled my heart. Abruptly, inside, there was silence. And then I saw M’Lissa shuffle out dragging her lame

leg, and at first I didn't realize she was carrying anything, for it was so insignificant and unclean that she carried it not in her fingers but between her toes. A chicken-a hen, not a cock was scratching futility in dirt between the hut and the tree where the other girls, their own ordeal over, lay. M'Lissa lifted her foot and flung this small object in the direction of the hen, and she, as if waiting for this moment, rushed toward M'Lissa's spurned foot, located the flung object in the air and then on the ground, and in one quick movement of beak and neck, gobbled down" (Walker 70-71).

In this long paragraph Walker gives them, "images of —isolated hut, shrieks of girls of cock, hen, crow and of dirt to depict the alienation and traumatic anguish of Tashi. She painted the foot on the wall, which is lame and quite disconnected with the body belonged to M'Lissa who is an elderly woman circumciser called the *tsunga*. Alice has used the cultural word *tsunga* in the novel used for the circumciser. Walker discusses in detail about the tradition of *tsunga* thus:

"Like many of my words —Tsunga is made up....I don't know from what part of African ancestors came, and so I claim the continent. I suppose I have created the Olinka as my village and the Olinkas as one of my ancient, ancestral tribal people. Certainly I recognize Tashi as my sister" (Walker 267).

In her life, Tashi is haunted by the tragic death of her sister Dura who bleed and bleed and then died. She believes that no one was responsible for her death as she still remembers the cries and shrieks of Dura. The tragedy of Dura has adverse effect on her mind. She recollects that when she gave birth to her son Bentu, the cells

of his brain were crushed during delivery because she was feeling mentally sick all the time because of her memories of Dura. When she was in the hospital she was treated like a special case. She was a creature for the hospital employees, doctors and the students. Adam saved her putting a stop to the shadow of her body. During her stay in the hospital, Olinka Adam came in contact with a French girl Lisette and soon became fast friends. They would sit for hours together. Lisette accompanied him to the hut of Torable, an old Olinkan deserted woman deserted by her wife. Adam assigned to feed, wash and dress the old man's sores. He used to feel relieved by chatting Lisette. Adam's friendship with Lisette continued even after her marriage. Her company provided much relief and satisfaction to Adam. He wrote letters to her and discussed many issues with her regarding Tashi. Adam's familiarity and intimacy with Lisette is disliked by Tashi as she avoids her during her visit to California. The consternation fell on Tashi when she comes to know that Lisette has been impregnated by Adam and she is the mother of his son Pierre. She attempts suicide, tries to kill herself and her son. In extreme frustration, she drives Pierre out pelting stones at him when he arrives in America to meet his father Adam. But later on she realizes with a view to atone for her sin she stops hating him and accepts him. She admires Pierre for his knowledge and marvels at his explanations:

“Pierre has been such a gift to me. You would be proud of him. He has promised to continue to look after Benny when I am gone. Already he has taught him more than any of his teachers ever taught and he could learn. I wish you could see Pierre and perhaps you can, through one of the windows of heaven that looks exactly like a blade of grass, or a rose, or a grain of wheat as he continues to untangle the threads of mystery that kept me enmeshed” (Walker 260).

Pierre unravels certain facts about the dark tower which was haunting Tashi in her dreams. He tells her about the termite hill and helps her shed her fears. He tells her that most of the African houses resembled those termites and he surprised her by telling that the termites taught early humans about natural air-conditioning with their long passageways and doomed storage rooms. The Africans developed a strong identification with the termites over a period of time. Their religious symbology also reflected the termite behavior. Pierre tells Tashi:

“This Madame Johnson, is your dark tower. You are the queen who loses her wings. It is you lying the dark with millions of worker termites who are busy, by the way, maintaining mushroom farms from which they feed you buzzing about. You being stuffed with food at one end; a boring diet of mushrooms and having your eggs, millions of them, constantly removed at the other” (Walker 216).

Tashi becomes so fond of Pierre that she writes a letter to Lisette after her death saying that “it is that you are in the land of death that makes friendship with you so appealing” (Walker 258). She has won great appreciation by the government of Olinka. She is shifted from her filthy hut and brought to a spacious cottage on the outskirts of a nearby town. A remarkable change came in her life; she stopped showing signs of death, stopped aging and the local nurses attended her. The government provided her a cook, a nurse and a gardener for her care. Tashi now realize that circumcision is the real source of her own madness and in desperation she plans to mutilate M'Lissa as she had mutilated her. She visits her pretending that she wants to serve her being her daughter. She pretends to love her immensely. She dismisses Mbatu, the maid servant. In the ancient tradition, it is always appreciated if

a woman serves the elders. Tashi decides to take revenge on M'Lissa who had been the cause of all her sufferings and psychological pain. She deceitfully plans to kill her; she swears to mutilate the wrinkled body of M'Lissa. She keeps fingering the razors kept secretly stuffed under her pillow and fantasizes the murder of M'Lissa:

“Each night I fingered the razors I kept concealed in the stuffing of my pillow, fantasizing her bloody demise. I swore I would mutilate her wrinkled body so much her own God wouldn't recognize her”
(Walker 195).

Tashi went on postponing the murder of M'Lissa to know the whole truth about the culture of gentile circumcision. Being trapped she keeps listening to her stories: “Since the People of Olinka became a people there has always been a *tsunga*. It was hereditary, like the priests. Before the people became a tribe they lived too...from the time of memory, always, in my family, the women were *tsungas*” (Walker 204). M'Lissa was famous as *tsunga* had circumcised many young girls. She couldn't bear to do it on her own daughter. But M'Lissa was not spared; her body was bucked under the razor sharp stone he was cutting with and there formed a deep gash which travelled right through her right thigh. M'Lissa explained with anguish that it was a mark on her body of her own mother's disobedience. M'Lissa expresses her pain to Tashi thus:

“I could never see myself for the child that finally rose from the mat three months later, and dragged herself out of the initiation hut and finally home, was not the child who had been taken there. I was never to see that child again” (Walker 206).

M'Lissa could not walk properly as the lower part of her body is severely damaged. She had to drag her foot and looked deformed permanently because of her traditional gentile circumcision. She tells Tashi:

“I have never cried after that...I knew in the moment when the pain was greatest, when it reached a crescendo, as when a loud metal drum is struck with a corresponding metal sick”(Walker 207).

M'Lissa for the first time tells the truth to Tashi that she was the biggest fool for having undergone the painful process. She feels bitter about the tradition. She tells her “Even the sweetest mango in my mouth is bitter to me...women are too cowardly to look behind a smiling face. A man smiles and tells them they will look beautiful weeping, and they send for the knife” (Walker 228). Walker gives an insight into the heart of M'Lissa who dares to tell the truth to Tashi who served as a representative of Olinkan tribal culture and tradition. M'Lissa feels guilty as she shares the fact that this ritual ruins her personal life also. She reveals herself as “worshipper of women's sexual pleasure for whom religious faith consists in the belief that the God of woman is autonomy” (Walker 207). She attacks the negligence of the government for not maintaining hygiene which causes health-hazard. She also talks of the unhygienic way of operation of female gentile circumcision leading to infectious diseases like AIDS:

“Genital mutilation is a mental and physical health hazard that directly affects some one hundred million women and girls worldwide, alive today, to whom it has been done. Because of increased risk of during delivery, it affects the children to whom they give birth. Indirectly, because of its linkage to the spread of Aids” (Walker 191).

M'Lissa hated herself being a *tsunga* in Olinka and feels guilty for having inflicted pain on the bodies of many young girls. Since she was born in the *tusunga* family she had to perform the gentile circumcision on the girls to continue the culture of Olinka. He remembers the scene of circumcision she performed on a girl who continues crying and bleeding on the floor in the initiation but she couldn't think any more and limped away and just left her there. She feels the pain and torture that she inflicted on young girls to carry out the tradition and cultural practices. She confesses: "In service to tradition, to what makes us people. In service to the country and what makes us who we are. But who are we but torturers of children" (Walker 210). M'Lissa sees her death in the eyes of Tashi; when she looks at the mirror she is horrified.

"I know what young people can't even imagine or guess. That when one has seen too much of life, one understands it is a good think to die. The very first day she came I could see my death in Tashi's eyes as clearly as if I were looking into a mirror" (Walker 197).

M'Lissa had real experience of the mad people living in ram shackled huts when she was a young girl. She had learned not to fear for she knew how to divert their attention. Now she was trying to divert the attention of Tashi by posing some questions to her. She tells Tashi: "It was only the *tsunga*, the circumciser, by one of those whom she has circumcised that proves her value to her tribe. She talks of her own death and declares that it had been ordained. It would elevate her to the position of a saint" (Walker 196). She goes on telling lies to keep Tashi at bay because Tashi is lost in listening to the stories and after some days she dismisses the idea of

slashing her with the razors she had brought to kill her. She kills her by placing a pillow over her face and laying across it for an hour. “I placed a pillow over her face and lay across it for an hour. Her ad stories about her life caused me to lose my taste for slashing her” (Walker 260). Tashi tells the secret of her murder to Olivia justifying her murder. She reveals that it is done according to the Olinka’s tradition. Tashi cannot understand the mystery of *tsunga* culture and how people appreciate their heinous deeds. She regards the *tsunga* women as witches living in the Olinka tribe and she feels that she has done well to kill a witch. Tashi realizes that little girls are dying and the women are infected by the “unwashed, unsterilized sharp stones, tin tops, bits of glass, rusty razors and grungy knives used by the *tsunga* who might mutilate twenty children without cleaning her instrument” (Walker 235). Tashi goes to the Church to reveal her traumatic pain during the sermon. She expressed her wounded soul thus:

“I know I wanted my own suffering, the suffering of women and little girls, sill cringing before the overpowering might and weapons of the torturers, to be the subject of a sermon. Was woman herself not the tree of life” (Walker 259).

Tashi feels much relieved at the death of her oppressor M’Lissa and her death marked the end of her power and the circumciser. She was growing in power with her recognition and popularity, she was an evil power and Tashi doesn’t feel guilty at all killing her. Tashi needs to tell the world that women are not cowards and they can go any extent for their honor and survival. Tashi is suffering an endless psychological pain as her harrowing memories torment her day and night. Tashi is

arrested and is put under trial for murdering M'Lissa. Her husband Adam defends her saying that Tashi was only hurt physically and psychologically but she was not insane. He describes her as a tortured woman whose whole life was destroyed by the tribal ritual of gentile circumcision. Adam keeps repeating: "My wife is hurt. Wounded. Broken. Not mad" (Walker 157). Adam pleads with the Jury to understand the psychological pain of Tashi and her traumatic existence. At the end of the novel, Tashi gives an expression of her feelings before execution full of sarcasm and bitterness. She writes to Lisette: "I will face the firing squad for killing someone who, many years ago, killed me" (Walker 274). She is unhappy over Adam's continuous sermon on suffering of God's son Jesus. She says: "For a long time my agitation confused me. I am a great lover of Jesus, and always have been still; I began to see how the constant focus on the suffering of Jesus, alone excludes the suffering of others" (Walker 259). In all her novels, Walker takes up the theme of depression and of suicide. Walker observes thus: "I knew I wanted my own suffering, suffering of women and little girls, still clinging before the overpowering might and weapons of the tortures, to be the subject of sermons" (Walker 259).

The Jury didn't listen to his pleadings and instead they hiss him at him saying: "M'Lissa was a monument! Your wife has murdered a monument. The grandmother of the race!" (Walker 153). Tashi is put into the prison for her murder and in the prison. The court orders death sentence to Tashi; she is to be hanged to death for her heinous murder. She refuses to be blindfolded during her execution so that she can see far in all directions and concentrate on the beauty of one blue hill in the distance. Tashi leaves a message to Lisette that:

“On the day of my execution he says (Pierre) he will rededicate himself to his life’s work; destroying for other women and their menthe terrors of dark tower....Because through your son, to whom my suffering became a mystery into which he submerged himself, we have already met on earth” (Walker 262).

Walker characterizes Tashi as a martyr for the black women cause. Mbat unfurls a banner before she is hanged clearing all doubts about the martyrdom of Tashi. The banner says: “RESISTANCE IS THE SECRET OF JOY” (Walker 264). Alice Walker states that:

Like *The Temple of My Familiar*, it is a return to the original world of “*The Color Purple* to pick up those characters and events that refused to leave my mind. Or my spirit. Tashi, who appears briefly in *The Color Purple* and again in *The Temple of my Familiar*, stayed with me. Uncommonly tenacious, through the writing of both books, and led me finally to conclude she needed, and deserved, a book of her own” (Walker 267).

Alice Walker wrote her novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* to celebrate the glorious martyrdom of Tashi who sacrificed her life to end the inhuman ritual of genital circumcision prevalent in Africa. Tashi was first introduced in the novel *The Color Purple* when Nettie gives a detailed description of the customs and traditions of the Olinka people. She also writes about the facial scarification ceremony performed by the Olinka people. Tashi also undergoes facial scarification. The novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is summing up of the incidents narrated by the characters. Each character narrates his or her part which makes up the whole story.

Walker doesn't name the separate chapters but are titled after the names of characters. Her novel has complex character as the personal histories of Oliva, Adam, Lisette, Pierre and M'Lissa are interspersed with the past and present of Tashi's life. Each character gives his own picture of life and experiences thereby enabling the readers to view the novel from a different perspective. Tashi's present is interwoven with her past and often Tashi unfolds her story in frequent flashbacks. The court scene and her interview with the Doctor bring back the haunting memories of the past.

Alice Walker's novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* Has modern relevance and the issues raised in the novel have been supported by the U.N.O also. The W.H.O has recognized female genital circumcision as a crime against women. Walker's novel is a virulent attack on the cultural imperialism of Olinka society. Tashi represents all the black women who suffer from the hegemony of cultural imperialism. The tradition of female genital circumcision is the main focus of Walker and the traumatic experiences of Tashi her loss of identity; the destruction of her married life, depression and her murder of her oppressor symbolize the need for liberation of the black women. Alice Walker gives an insight into the old traditional culture of Olinka society in which people are lost in the mist of superstition and old beliefs. The female genital circumcision is a sin against god and humanity and even U.N.O has banned it. Alice Walker took up the latest issue in this novel and dramatized the spirit of revolt of women who are subjected to the cruelty of the imperialism of the Olinka culture since ages. Walker has dramatized the old rituals and traditions of Olinka culture in oppressing and giving the young women traumatic experiences. The tradition of female genital circumcision is oppressive and Tashi

raises the cries of the black girls of Africa inspiring them to rise and fight against the injustices perpetrated on them. The killing of M'Lissa by Tashi symbolizes the emergence of new culture and the emergence of revolution in Africa. Walker argues that women need to be educated so that they protest against the centuries old injustices done on the women of Africa.

Chapter VII

Psychic Wounds in Toni Morrison and Alice Walker: A Comparative Study

In this chapter a comparative study is conducted between Toni Morrison and Alice Walker on the parameters of anxiety disorder, depression, alienation and neurosis which cause psychic wounds. Interestingly both the black writers depict the wounds of the psyche experienced of the blacks living in Afro-American society. Toni Morrison is an American novelist who got Noble Prize in literature in 1993 for her *Beloved*. She had written *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973) and *Song of Solomon* depicting the psychological trauma of black people. Morrison came into the limelight for her interest in the plight of the blacks. Lawrence W. Levine states that culture is “not fixed condition but a process: the product of interaction between the past and the present” (5). Toni Morrison and Alice Walker were great black novelists who explored and investigated the various phases of the Afro-American culture and its impact on the mind and sensibility of the blacks. The novels of Toni Morrison engage a wide range of readers all over the world as her novels deal with the compelling themes of love, equality, community survival, racial and sexual politics. The critics and the reviewers of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker have concentrated on these themes but in this chapter efforts are made to explore the psychological growth of the characters trapped in racism, sexism and slavery. This study examines trauma from a psychosocial perspective with focus on racial oppression, disempowerment and sexual oppression of the blacks. Trauma is an eternal source of psychological pain that leads to the deflation of self and victimization of neurosis.

The comparative study of the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker is done to explore the relationship between trauma, identity and deflation of self. Toni Morrison has depicted the impact of racism on Afro-Americans. Toni Morrison was a simple lecturer but her publication of first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) acclaimed her as one of the greatest American novelist. Morrison explores the psyche of a black woman; she tries to understand what a black child desires most. The plot recounts the adventure of three girls, Pecola Breedlove, Claudia and Frieda Mc Teer. The novel examines the issues of racism and sexuality. Claudia recollects her past as a child and her environment. In her novels *The Bluest Eye* to *Song of Solomon*. disintegration of family becomes the main cause of the psychological neurosis of the characters. The disruption of family leads to the loss of self of the characters. E.H. Erikson (1950) observes that for more than fifty years of psychological literature it has been established that identity development is the primary function of family. Erikson posits that “parents play vital role in bringing happiness to the children and contribute to the development of identity of the adolescence” (Steinberg 211). But in the fiction of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker family is disrupted and the male partners don't perform their family obligations. In the context of the family, Morrison describes results from a historical situation where men are denied access to jobs and the unemployment becomes the main cause of the neurotic anxieties of the characters of Morrison and Alice Walker. In *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon* the families are so dysfunctional that they cease to exist. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker deal with the themes of domestic violence; high level of anger; sexual abuse; neglect; emotional and psychological abuse in their fiction. Alice Walker there is an undercurrent of sexuality that shapes the personality of the characters and often

become the major cause of traumatic life. The novels *The color Purple* of Alice Walker; *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved* of Toni Morrison deal with the theme of sexuality and oppression.

The characters suffer from mental health problems because of domestic violence and deviant behavior of the adults in the family. D.E. B Dubois in his essay "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" gives the concept of double-consciousness. The blacks had to face prejudice that they were ugly and inferior to whites and this led to self-questioning and reappraisal of their values. The term double-consciousness is related to the social stereotype. Dubois states that "One ever feels his two-ness- an American, a Negro; two souls; two thoughts, two reconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body" (Dubois 8). Toni Morrison's first novel *The Bluest Eye* deals with the psychological problem of double consciousness. Pecola is the central character of the novel *The Bluest Eye*.

The novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are replete with the scenes of physical violence which become a major cause of the psychological trauma of the characters. The blacks were excluded from the main stream and they felt castrated at the physical oppression and subjugation of the white masters. Morrison has depicted a scene of violence in *The Bluest Eye* depicting the humiliation of Cholly. They flash light on Cholly's back passed a derogatory remark calling him a niggard. This incident gives psychological pain to Cholly and damages his rational thinking. It leaves a lifelong scar on his mind and makes him realize that he is powerless in the society. Wifred D. Samuels remarks thus: "Cholly, too is bruised in a visual confrontation that involves the negating glance of the other." Pauline is also subjected to racial violence while she works as a maid in the house of a white

woman. Drunken Cholly misbehaves and the white woman threatens to call the police. She denies Pauline her eleven dollars which she owes to her. Pauline has to leave the job, heartbroken and without her salary. The white woman gives economic injury to Pauline. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker have created scenes to highlight the process of subjugation of the blacks.

Table of comparative study of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker

Toni Morrison	Alice Walker
<p>1) She won Nobel Prize.</p> <p>2) She digs up the Afro-American culture to dramatize the oppressive policies of the whites.</p> <p>3) She deals with the depressive moods of the characters of Sethe and Milkman Dead.</p> <p>4) Morrison uses folklore, old African rituals to depict the anxiety disorders of her characters. The metaphor of flying is the best example used in the <i>Song of Solomon</i>.</p>	<p>1) She is a prominent black writer and won Pulitzer.</p> <p>2) She also takes up the issues of the blacks living in Afro-American society.</p> <p>3) She deals with the traumatic experiences of the black girls subjected to all forms of sexual oppression. Celie and Nettie are the best examples.</p> <p>4) Alice Walker takes up the issue of domestic violence and the brutality of the black males; Alphonso and Albert mercilessly beat Celie and Netti and Sofia.</p>

5) Toni Morrison digs up the inner turbulent world of the black characters in all her novels.	5) Alice Walker's perspective is also psychological. Her interest is in the psychic pressures and in the psychological diseases of her characters.
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The white propagated their own stereotypes concerning beauty. They hurt the feelings of the blacks in a subtle psychological way. Their myth regarding beauty includes "blue eyes, blonde hair and white skin" (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 3). Pecola and others are constantly haunted by their own ugliness and long to be beautiful. They crave for acknowledgement and acceptance by the white and fail because they are not biologically white and beautiful. This mania of having the blue eyes proves devastating for Pecola. She prays God every night for the blue eyes. She lives in the world of illusions and believes that only blue eyes can give her identity and happiness. She is considered ugly by everyone she encounters and this consciousness makes her psychologically sick. Breuer developed his theory of *depression* in the essay *The Psychotherapy of Hysteria* in which Breuer and Freud claim the successful treatment of their patients having hysterical symptoms. The psychoanalysts state as:

"In our 'Preliminary Communication' we reported how, in the course of our investigation into the aetiology of hysterical symptoms, we also came upon a therapeutic method which seemed to us of practical importance. For 'we found, to our great surprise at first, that each individual hysterical symptom immediately and permanently

disappeared when we had succeeded in bringing clearly to light the memory of the event by which it was provoked and in arousing its accompanying affect, and when the patient had described that event in the greatest possible detail and had put the affect into words” (Freud, *Freud – Complete Works* 227).

Her mother also thinks her to be an ugly child at her birth. These entire incidents combine together to give psychological trauma to Pecola. She thinks that she is an outcast and is convinced that her black skin is the main cause of her problems. When Cholly sets the house on fire, she is taken in by Mc Teers and there she gulps down three mugs of milk to look beautiful like Shirley Temple whose image is carved inside the mug. Morrison comments thus: “she eats the candy, and its sweetness is good. To eat the candy is “somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane (38). Wilfred D. Samuels (1990) also comments thus:

“Set in a small Midwestern town in Lorrain, Ohio, during Depression, *The Bluest Eye*, tells the story of Pecola Breedlove, who, hating her black self, yearns for blue eyes, she believes will make her white, extinguish her position as pariah, and give her the love and security that are desperately missing from her life” (Samuels 11).

Haskel Frankel (1993) states thus: “In this scene, in which a young black on the verge of madness seeks beauty and happiness in a wish for white girls “eyes, the author makes her most telling statement on the tragic effect of race prejudice on children” (Frankel 3). Not only Pecola, the entire family of Breedlove considers themselves to be ugly. Morrison states:

“You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question” (Morrison 28).

The characters in *The Bluest Eye* have internalized ugliness as they hate themselves. They imitate the manners and style of living of the white community. Geraldine is a black woman but she teaches her son about the differences between the colored and the niggers. Pauline; “Pecola’s mother dresses and combs like the white Hollywood actress. Black women started reading the magazines of fashion” (24). The blacks accept their fate silently and have no power to react. However, Claudia and Frieda express their resentment and struggle but suffer psychological torture. Rose Mary shouts Mrs. Mac Teer complaining against the girls. Claudia gets angry and in desperation scratches the nose of Mary. Claudia sets the example of revolt when she is given the white baby dolls as Christmas presents. She tears away the dolls in order to find the beauty of the white dolls. Being excluded from the community, the blacks experience a feeling of helplessness and frustration. Nellie Mackay aptly argues thus:

“Within the novel Morrison demonstrates that even with the best intentions, people hurt each other when they are chained to circumstances of poverty and low status” (Mackay 197).

The scenes of domestic violence are common in the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. In *The Bluest Eye*, and Walker’s *The Color Purple* there are many

scenes of domestic violence describing the disintegration of families. For example, Cholly Breedlove and Pauline daily quarrel with each other and Pecola is sick of the hellish environment of her home. Cholly often comes home drunk to fight with his wife. One day, Mrs. Breedlove asks Cholly to fetch some coal. In anger, Both of them fell on the ground and Cholly put his leg on her breast and even slapped her many times. Mrs., Breedlove grabbed a stove lid top and hurled on Cholly to knock him down. Sammy also joined and he gave blows to his father to help his mother.

Pecola in the novel, *The Bluest Eye* expresses her two desires; she wants all to love her and she wants her parents to stop fighting and restore the orderly atmosphere. She doesn't want to live in a house where there is chaos and parents are fighting with each other. She silently bears the sexual abuse. Lenore Terr (1990) gave her own theory of childhood trauma. She concluded that "childhood trauma has four characteristics; visualized memories, repetitive behaviors, trauma-specific fears and changed attitudes about people and the future" (Terr 203). Pecola and Celie are victims of child abuse and Toni Morrison and Alice Walker depicts the plight of black women in their novels *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple*.

Cholly rapes Pecola in depression and "frustration as he experienced neglect and alienation. She is ugly and —hides behind it —peeping out from behind the shroud very seldom" (Morrison 39). Pecola tries to do this: "little parts of her body faded away. Now slowly, now with a rush...only her tight yes were left. They were always left" (Morrison 45). Pecola is a rejected child and this rejection and indifference is the main cause of her trauma. He is so devastated that he tries to run away because his —father would surely emerge and see him and laugh. "Oh, Lord. He would laugh...there was only one thing to do" (Morrison 157). Cholly crouches

“in the fetal position, paralyzed, his fists covering his eyes, for a long time. No sound, no sight, only darkness” (Morrison 157). Dr. Terr points out that the rejection and indifference seriously devastate the personality of characters in the family. Terr (2003) stated that studies of “adults in mental hospitals suffering from multiple and borderline personality disorders and adolescents who commit murder show that these adults very often were abused in their childhoods” (Terr 322). Dr Terr observes that the main factors that cause trauma are poverty, substance abuse, anxiety or depression, marital problems, childhood abuse and unemployment and domestic violence. Celie and Nettie in *The Color Purple* of Alice Walker are subjected to sexual oppression and physical beating. Alphonso rapes and beats Celie. She bears the psychological pain silently to save her mother and Nettie from cruelty from Alphonso. She marries Albert so that Nettie is not forced to marry him. Albert also turns out to be monster that constantly beats and tortures Celie. Judith Herman backs the plausible relationship between violence and trauma: “The malignant effects of rape are not surprising given the particular nature of the trauma. The essential element of rape is physical and psychological; a moral violation of the person” (57). Celie demonstrates the link between violence and trauma in her experiences and states: “I look at women, the, cause I’m scared of them” (5). Celie endures the violence not fitting into her “inner schemata” of self in relation to the world” (Herman 51). Walker has depicted the naked and rambling confessions of Celie representing the black women of the South.

Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* depicts the heart-rending tale a slave mother. Sethe is so much depressed and is in a state of neurotic shock that she kills her own daughter to save her from the sexual oppression of the whites. Dr Terr observes that

slavery is a conspicuous factor leading to borderline self; the slavery is a curse and a source of depression and neurosis. Toni Morrison's main purpose in *Beloved* is to depict the devastating effects of slavery through the traumatic experiences of Sethe, the slave woman. Morrison also performs an inter-textual study of *Beloved* and *Black Book* and the slave narratives of Douglas and Jacobs. Morrison has explored the inner traumatic life of Sethe who was subjected to all forms of physical and sexual oppression by the whites. In the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, sexual violence is present in abundance. In *Beloved*, Ella was confined in a room for several days. She was sexually exploited by the father and the son. She became pregnant and gave birth to a child who was disowned by the rapist Alphonso impregnated his own daughter Celie twice and used physical and psychological power to torture her. She is so scared and neglected that she expresses her agony to God in the form of letters which are never responded by the external agency. In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison depicts a scene of sexual assault in heart-rending language. Henry is a new paying guest in Mac Teer's house. Mr. Henry "came to her, went down on his knees, touched her arms and then pinched her tiny breast" (123). After that he takes her and her daughter to a carnival and sexually assaults her, even asks her to be pregnant for him. When everything is moving well, "he jilts her comparing her with an animal with the words that she two legs not four" (Morrison 50).

In this study the concept of trauma has been constructed through its definition in terms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Morrison gives in detail the causes and symptoms of trauma developing in the characters of her novel. The various incidents described in the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker reflects

traumatic amnesia and intrusion. Memories are a major source of the trauma of the characters. All the time they are haunted by the heart-rending memories of domestic violence; humiliation; marginalization and denial of freedom. They are subjugated, oppressed physically and sexually by the whites. No wonder, in *The Bluest Eye*, *Beloved*, *The Color Purple*, *Song of Solomon*, *God Help the Child* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* the scenes of trauma are heart-rending as the characters suffer from acute psychological pain. Morrison and Walker depict the scenes of broken families; indifference of the male partners; loss of identity; alienation, poverty and the use of the power structure by the white to dominate and subjugate the blacks.

Sethe in *Beloved* is suffering from the symptoms of PTSD. She experiences intrusive memories which become a source of constant psychological anguish. She runs away but the harrowing memories don't allow her sleep and rest. She is physically possessed by her traumatic past. Her house is haunted by the ghost of her daughter. She had killed her daughter in a fit of neurosis. In *Beloved* the effects of trauma are shown in the present generation and in terms of later generations. Denver has never experienced slavery but she becomes traumatized witnessing the sufferings of her mother. In *Beloved* the destructive effects of past become the cause of present sufferings for Sethe and her daughter Denver. Trauma and intrusive memories are transferred to the coming generations. The presence of the ghost of *Beloved* forces Denver to listen to the story of Sethe for the first time. Jenny Edkins argues that "rather than being a natural reaction, trauma is a socially constructed theory that is shaped by the discursive practices of the historical moment" (Edkins 123) Young suggests that "the notion of trauma is glued together by the practices, technologies, and narratives with which it is diagnosed, studied, treated and represented" (qtd. in Leys 6). Jenny Edkins comments thus:

“Traumatic stress is a possible diagnosis, as something people can be seen and see themselves as suffering from, has become current in a particular time period. Trauma was not something that was discovered—it is a manmade object that originates in the scientific and clinical discourses of the nineteenth century. In other words, it is neither —natural nor universal. It is a social practice” (Edkins 43).

Jenny Edkins further argues that traumatic incidents are —overwhelming but they are also a revelation. Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* deals with the struggle of Milkman Dead to explore his cultural identity and to discover —ancient properties, a bag of gold. Morrison blends songs, poetry, folk tale to reveal the story of past generations. The key characters in the novel are Milkman Dead, Pilate, Ruth and Hagar who played a pivotal role in freeing themselves from the net of slavery by running back to Africa. The flying metaphor is pivotal in connecting all the themes of the novel. Eilfred D. Samuels and Clenora Hudson Weems (1984) opine that “To Morrison, the worst thing is not being irresponsible to others, but daring not to fly.” The blacks do not pay any attention to the potential risk and tragedy in flight. Zhang Ying in her paper: “The Story of Flight in *Song of Solomon* (2001) discusses “the myth of flying arguing that black people fled back to seek for their root, especially in their mental changes about the future and past” (Ying 35). The act of flight signifies escape from oppression, from slavery. Flight represents a response to traumatic occurrence. As Carl Jung states in *Man and His Symbols* that flight represents “man’s need for liberation from any state of being too immature, too fixed or final” (Jung 146). Sun Ye (2005) observes that “Morrison has used black folktales and names from Bible to make her works full of mystery flavor especially the names which have built the black images successfully and implied their personality and

fate” (Ye 40). Chen Quan (1980) observed that “Magic realism has been widely used to analyze the postmodern novels. There is no doubt that Morrison is a “master for fully using this skill in *Song of Solomon*. She has given particular names to show the future of the images” (Quan 42). Toni Morrison makes it clear in her writings that she is giving accounts of African-American lives that have been often untold. She places the African American characters at the center of her novels and thus she unveils the traumatic past of the blacks. Morrison depicts the interior lives of the blacks within a historical context narrating the horrors of slavery as “too terrible to relate.” The traumatic effect of racism and the loss of cultural roots is the main focus of her novel *Song of Solomon*. The untold story of Milkman Dead, Pilate and Hagar reveal pathological trauma accepted as normal in the Afro-American community. The normalization of psychological trauma often leads to psychological disorder, neurosis and anxiety disorder. The common symptoms are dementia, depression, amnesia and aggression leading to loss of self. Dr. Karen Horney wrote four important books *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (1937), *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (1939), *Self-Analysis* (1942) and *Our Inner conflicts* (1945) and in all these books she explored the causes and symptoms of neurosis and loss of self. The normalization of psychological trauma often leads to psychological paralysis and detachment. Cathy Caruth, J. Brooks Bouson, Allen Young have examined the existence of trauma. Caruth underscores the importance of the relationship between historical narrative and experiences of trauma. Young believes that memories cause trauma and Bouson discusses the existence of communal trauma and its effect. In *Song of Solomon*, Macon Dead Jr. has difficulty moving beyond his father’s murder which renders him psychologically paralyzed and stuck in his particular experience, doomed to repeat the traumas of his father’s experience. In *Song of Solomon*,

detachment and alienation are the key factors disconnecting Milkman Dead from the community. He is viewed as being outside of the community. Paralysis occurs in Milkman Dead when he is unable to move beyond the traumatic experience. The Dead family exhibits symptoms of trauma that are passed from one generation to the next. Ruth repeatedly lies with the body of her dead father, paralyzed by the profound loss of the only man who has ever loved her. Milkman has sexual relationship with his cousin, and Macon Dead is emotionally unstable.

The events of the novel *Song of Solomon* take place over thirty years. Part one of the novel ends with Milkman's decision to leave Michigan in search of Pilate's secret gold. His flight becomes the major cause of chaos and disorder in the family. Morrison has depicted the overwhelming sense of loss of the characters in the novel as the disruption of the families bring trauma in their life. Communal trauma is exhibited as an indirect result of racism and a direct result of the absence of Solomon. The death of Guitar's father is another example of family disruption. The whites are so cruel that they forfeit the insurance money of his father's death and give only forty dollars to his mother. The loss of his father and the insurance money is devastating to Guitar. The memory of his father is reduced just to forty dollars. Racism intensifies his trauma because he feels that the value of a black man's life is nothing. Life seems to Guitar meaningless and his quest begins when he joins a militant organization and turns on his best friend Milkman and plans to kill him. He comes to know that Milkman has discovered a stash of gold which he will not share. Guitar's trauma is not only psychological, but physiological as well. As Guitar relives "the death of his father, he has a bodily reaction and becomes nauseated. Thinking of the candy, he felt —the nausea all over again" (Morrison

226). He associates sweets, like the peppermint his mother gives him on the day of his father's funeral, to look on his mother's face: "his mother had smiled and shown that willingness to love the man who was responsible for providing his father up throughout eternity" (Morrison 226). Pilate is another traumatic character in the novel. She suffers as an outcast having no parents and being marked with trauma which forces her to connect to her past. Schreiber observes that —Bereft of parents and her brother, rejected by each community she settles into. Pilate can rely on no one but herself (Schreiber 100). Even after the death of her father, she continues to connect to her father, to talk to her father who guides her and has an impact on her thoughts and feelings: "We both seen him. I see him still. He's helpful to me, real helpful. Tells me things I need to know" (Morrison141)

The novel *God Help the Child* (2015) of Toni Morrison is split into a series of short monologues depicting the plight of a child who leads a traumatic life. The main character is Bride called "a midnight black" rejected by her mother because of her ugly skin. She is a true example of childhood trauma and when she becomes an adult she works to repair her relationship with her lover Booker. The novel is filled with many scenes of sexuality, betrayal, racism and sexism. There are several scenes of violence. The main focus of Morrison in the novel is mirror the predicament of being born black in America and the attendant emotional strains spurred by this cultural tradition. Morrison conjures up stories of racial prejudices in her novel *God Help the Child* dramatizing its impact on the psyche of black women. The plot of the novel *God Help the Child* opens the Pandora box of black mother hood and attending trauma. The experience of Ann Bridewell reveals that childhood trauma returns like lingering ghosts to visit and haunt the subjects in adult life. The novel

depicts the “pain of being black” (Angelo 1998) in a white society. The novel is set in 1990s and the plot conjures the ghost of color prejudice and stereotype highlighting the traumatic impact on the psyche of black children. Sweetness Bridewell is haunted by the terror of blackness and she deprives love and affection to her daughter to conform the white culture. Being “light skinned, with good hair, what we call high yellow” (Morrison 3). Sweetness is unwilling to accept her “ugly, too-black little girl” (144) because “ain’t nobody in my family anywhere near that color” (3). She maintains the iron curtain of racial divide and rejects her own daughter.

Indeed, *God Help the Child* dramatizes shame and trauma of the “is allowing which made the inhabitants of Ruby suspicious of outsiders and tenuous about racial purity. It is said that —all of them were handsomecoal black, athletic, with noncommittal eyes” (160). Proud of their blackness, their horror of whiteness becomes “convulsive as they save the clarity of their hatred for the [light-skinned] men who had insulted them in ways too confounding for language” (189). The novel *God Help the Child* depicts the plight of Sweetness who belongs to the light-skinned black people. She is conscious that “the line between colored and nigger was not always clear; subtle and telltale signs threatened to erode it, and the watch had to be constant” (87). She describes her racial nightmare thus:

“It is not my fault. So you can’t blame me. She was so black, she scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black....Tar is the closet I can think of yet her hair don’t go with the skin” (Morrison 3).

For Sweetness, her daughter is a —throwback symbolizing her repressed self. Morrison gives the image of a tar woman to describe the blackness of her daughter.

She lays the full blame on the American history of slavery and racism for her trauma. She justifies her isolation and callousness observing thus:

“I wasn’t a bad mother, you have to know that, but may have done some hurtful things to my only child because I had to protect her. Had to. All because of skin privileges. At first I couldn’t see past all that black people to know who she was and just plain love her. But I do. I really do. I think she understands now” (43).

Ironically, Sweetness belongs to the —devouring mother. She doesn’t kill her daughter like Sethe but throws her out in the harsh world to struggle in life to forge her identity. Ann Bride well is the daughter of the history of white supremacy. Sweetness advises Bride to call her by her real name instead of calling her Mama or Mother because it “was safer. Being that black and having that I think are too-thick lips calling me —Mama would confuse people” (6). Indeed the loss of maternal love coupled with the loss of affection of Booker results into trauma of Bride. Being abandoned by a mother and a boyfriend, Bride realizes that “She had been scorned and rejected by everyday all her life. Booker was the one person she was able to confront” (98). She is so much depressed that she sleeps with men whose names she doesn’t remember to escape her trauma. She wonders:

“What’s going on? I’m young; I’m successful and pretty....So there! Sweetness, so why am I miserable” (53). He had “a small rose tattooed on his left shoulder to keep alive the memory of his deceased brother. The color of Bride inspires terror, embarrassment and revulsion because her birth skin was pale like all babies” (5). Louis leaves the family and abandons Sweetness and this leads to the disruption of the family. She used to “pray she would slap my face or spank me just

to feel her touch. I made little mistakes deliberately but she had to punish me without touching the skin she hated” (31). Bride has “funny-colored eyes, crow-black person with a blue tint, something witchy about them too (6). Pauline compares Pecola’s eyes to that of a Puppy, Sweetness compares her daughter’s to that of a witch. She is considered as a fearful object. Kristeva (1982) observes that the abject is what is “jettisoned—radically excluded and which bring the self to a place where meaning collapses” (Kristeva 2). Morrison has deconstructed the myth in *God Help the Child*. Bride becomes the inventor of “YOU, GIRL, the new producer of cosmetics” (50) and begins wearing white dresses to keep her blackness natural because “Black sells” It is the hottest commodity in the civilized world. The Black woman’s body is depicted as a salable commodity in the novel highlighting the degradation of black culture.

Alice Walker is perhaps at her best in her third novel *The Color Purple* published in 1985. The critics and the reviewers of Walker praised the content of the novel and she bagged Pulitzer Prize for literature and an American Book Award. In 1985, a film was made and Walker was acclaimed as one of the prominent American novelists who dared to depict the plight of the black Americans; the scenes of domestic violence and sexuality. Walker was an active social reformer and a radical thinker fighting out against injustice during Civil Rights Movement and raising the cries of the black women. Walker was greatly impacted by the black consciousness of Hurston. Like Hurston Walker expressed her deep interest in the folklore and religious themes. Walker focuses more upon the relationships between man and woman. Her vision is broader as she takes up the issue of child abuse. The novel narrates the growth and development of trauma in the life of a young girl Celie. She

has no option but to be quiet and submissive. All major characters, Celie and Nettie experience trauma with childhood abuse and which breed the atmosphere of gloom and grief in the novel. Child abuse in Walker's novel becomes dangerous as it devastates the self of the characters. Alice Walker represents the evils of African culture. The story of *The Color Purple* centers on the sufferings and traumatic experiences of Celie. The text also discusses the themes of incest, subjugation of women, mysticism, lesbianism and socio-cultural limitations. Celie is so much stressed that she begins writing letters to God to express her emotional crisis. Her letters express her inner thoughts and inner reality. She collects her thoughts in an incoherent style which confounds past with the present. She says:

“My mama dead. She dies screaming and cursing. She screams at me. She curses at me. I'm big. I can't move fast enough. By time I get back from the well, the water be warm. By time I git tray ready the food be cold” (Walker 5).

These lines of Celie reveal her inner turbulent mind as she reflects her psychic pressures on the paper. She repeats the words “by time I get represent the inner stream of Celie's mind”. Celie further expresses her psychological pain thus: “When I start to hurt and then my stomach start moving and then that little baby come out my pussy chewing on it first you would have knock me with a feather” (Walker 5).

These lines of Celie highlight the mentally disturbed state of mind of Celie as there is a conflict in her soul. The clash between her outer personality and inner personality is quite apparent. She tells her mother that her baby belongs to God and

she doesn't know the man at all. She doesn't dare to tell the name of her father who impregnated her. Her narration turns towards the thoughts of the delivery of her second baby as "what I start to hurt...little baby came out my pussy..." This line expresses her inner traumatic mind. Celie mixes past with the present as her mind is not stable. The major cause of her trauma is domestic violence. Walker depicts the male domination and the plight of women. Beating and hitting was a common feature in the black community. Celie is also a victim of physical violence:

"He beat me today cause he ay I winked at a boy in church. I may have got something in my eye but I didn't wink. I don't even look at men. That's the truth I look at women, the cause I'm not scared of them. Maybe cause my mama cuss me you think I kept made at her. But I ain't. I felt sorry for mama. Trying to believe his story kilt her"
(7).

Celie innocently believes in the world of appearances. She considers that Alphonso is her real father. He compels Celie to commit incest. Alphonso says to her that —you gonna do what your mammy wouldn't —and "better get used to it. He warns her that —You better not never tell nobody but God. I'd kill your mammy"
(4). She never considers the depth of these cruelties and gives birth two of his illegitimate children. Her father killed both of them one by one. Her father does not merely destroy her virginity but also damages her health. He makes her a psychopatient and keeps her children away from her. She lives a destructed life at her home and becomes the center of cursing of her mother as she speaks of her mother that "She die screaming and cussing and asking who it is, and Where it is? (123).

Celie is subjected to all forms of cruelties of her father and she becomes a slave of her husband. She dreams to live a happy married life is shattered into darkness. Her husband comes to Alphonso in hope to marry Nettie but Alphonso offers him Celie. He says: "I can let you have Celie....She ain't fresh the....She spoiled Twice. But you don't need a fresh woman" (9). Celie is sold like a goat to Albert who marries her for she would take care of his children. Celie leads a miserable life with Albert and her home becomes a hell for her. Freud further mentions that a traumatized victim can't be treated through psycho-analytic therapy because this technique doesn't work effectively in the cases of hysterical confusion or acute crises in which a casualty loses his/her normal psychological state. At the first day of her marriage, the son of Albert breaks the head of Celie by throwing a big stone. Albert beats her daily and at last Celie leaves the house of her husband and decides to live with Shug Avery. She is a blues singer and model for strong black female sexuality. Celie knows her husband's mistress and when they meet for the first time she is ill and cruel to Celie who nurses her and restores her health. Shug and Celie become lovers and Celie finds real love in the company of Shug. She gives Celie different ways of understanding herself, her sexuality, her spirituality and the world. But in the house of Shug also she doesn't get peace of mind as Shug is interested in someone else. The dream of happy life soon turns into disillusionment. She loses her balance of mind and begins behaving like a borderline personality. The novel *The Color Purple* presents the modern waste land of Afro-American culture and the black people are represented as images without life. Incest is the common evil in this black society as Celie gives birth to two illegitimate babies. Alphonso is a monster who destroys the happiness of innocent girls like Nettie and Celie. He is the

main source of their devastation. When his wife refuses to provide him sexual pleasures, he turns to his daughters for sexual pleasures and give them trauma. Finally, he marries a young girl as his daughter just for lust. Celia speaks about her new young mother as “she be of my age...he be on her all the time. She walk round like she don’t know what hit her. I think she thought she love him. But he got so many of us”(45). The traumatic sufferings of Celie and Nettie are harrowing and Walker has depicted the plight of the black women in a lyrical style. Like Toni Morrison, Walker gives an insight into the emotional crisis of Celie and Nettie.

Alice Walker’s second novel *Meridian* (1976) also deals with the theme of psychological schizophrenia of the black characters. Schizophrenia is a mental disorder and the victim of. Schizophrenia views reality abnormally. He experiences hallucinations and create delusion. His thinking is normal but disordered and chaotic. The victim struggles for the whole life to overcome Schizophrenia. Freud (1972) in his book *Pleasure Principle* has laid down the following symptoms of Schizophrenia:

- 1) A victim of Schizophrenia has to depend on others because they cannot work independently.
- 2) Some patients seek regular monitoring to come out of Schizophrenia.
- 3) The effects of Schizophrenia reach far beyond the families and friends.

Following are the symptoms of Schizophrenia:

- a) Positive Symptoms: Delusions and hallucinations are the positive symptoms of Schizophrenia
- b) Negative Symptoms: The victim of Schizophrenia lack motivation
- c) Emotional breakdown

The plot of the novel *Meridian* focuses on the life of a black woman unfolding her quest for freedom and self-realization. The plot of the novel is organized in three parts. The first part focuses on adulthood of Meridian Hill and preparation of her journey to explore the world. The third part —Ending concentrates on the theme of atonement and release. The novel opens with Meridian's encounter with trauma and her confrontation with her old friend active in Civil Rights Movement. Meridian narrates a traumatic experience of the loss of her mother. When she was thirteen, she lost the love of her mother. Here begins the real journey of her trauma as she led a lonely and neglected life. She began a search for freedom knowing that she was premature and had no knowledge of the world. She loves revolution but she opposes violence: "she thinks of the old black men in the South...and the sight of the young girls singing in the country choir, their voices of angels" (Alice Walker, *Meridian* 38). She is in search of genuine values as Walker comments: "So she had left North and come back South...remaining close to the people—to see them, to be with them, to understand them and herself" (31). Tate (1983) says that Walker arranges the material of the novel in "a crazy-quilt story" (176) form.

The chapter "Indian and Ecstasy" focuses on loving relationship of Meridian with her father and her spiritual communion with him. Like Toni Morrison, Walker brings the image of flying as Meridian wishes to go to the past. (88). Meridian tries to come out of the trauma and seeks spiritual enlightenment with the help of her father but her struggles are painful and traumatic. Meridian had no knowledge of the adult life and sexuality. She becomes the victim of sexual abuse of when she was only twelve. Meridian falls in love with Eddie and marries him. Once in the

sanctuary Meridian “wonders if she could look out at the male world with something approaching equanimity, even charity; even friendship” (62). Her trauma begins with the dissolution of her marriage as she feels that as a wife her life will always be empty and she cannot diminish her —self. She puts her concentration on her motherhood. He tries to improve upon the family life and wishes to perform the role of true motherhood. She feels that motherhood is “being buried alive, walked her mother’s emerging self” (51). But in this stage of her pregnancy she would feel like a “ball and chain after the birth of baby” (69). Meridian wants to “fly but the birth of the baby is going to block her progress and conscript her freedom. She believed that tending the needs of the child was slavery” (72). She longed for freedom and felt that there was an urge in her mind to fly and so she doesn’t want to raise “her child in a society where children are not particularly valued” (124). But all hopes and aspirations of Meridian are shattered as the society imposes a mythic image of motherhood on her.

The chapter “Battle Fatigue” analyzes Meridian’s inner conflict leading to her depression and neurosis. At the age of sixteen, Meridian becomes a deserted wife. She is guilt ridden as she could not live up to “the standard-of —motherhood that had gone before” (91) results in her mental illness and the “spiritual degeneration in herself” (92). Meridian waits her mental healing so that she can join Saxon college for studies and participate in the Civil Right Movement actively. Her recurring dream haunts her day and night and —primeval guilt —is heavy on her heart as in a dream she whispers: “Mama, I love you. Let me go” (125). Miss Winter helps her to encounter the hostile world. The problem with Meridian is her unconventional ideas about motherhood and marriage and these become the major

cause of her trauma and psychic depression. Her journey through myth and legend is dramatized by Alice Walker. The college was a training ground for “capitalists and for ladies.” Meridian. Meridian and Anne Marian decided that they have two enemies: “Saxon, which wanted them to become something-ladies that was obsolete, and the larger, more deadly enemy, white racist society” (95). Meridian despises capitalism and she joins the Civil Rights Movement and Atlanta Movement to seek justice honor and dignity. Meridian meets Truman Held who was the “vain and pretentious” (99). She struggled and was arrested along with Truman Held and soon she realized that she loves Truman Held and that they were “at a time and place in History that forced the trivial to fall away and they were absolutely together” (84). But her love and passions with Truman Held gave her further traumatic experiences. Cathy Caruth suggests that “in a catastrophic age, that is, trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves” (Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 11). She conceived a child but had to get the baby aborted since she found that Truman was involved with a white exchange student, Lynne Rabinowitz. To Meridian “it seemed doubly unfair that after all her sexual experience and after one baby and one abortion she had not once been completely fulfilled sex” (115). The trauma of Meridian is further intensified by her abortion and sterilization symbolizing her anger and aggression against Truman Held. The plot reveals the destructive role of racial oppression and gender bias found in the life of the black women. Often the symptoms of Schizophrenia are so severe that lead to madness. The novel *Meridian* depicts the involvement of the blacks in activism; their

struggle to forge an identity in an oppressive society. Walker's *Meridian* depicts the traumatic experiences of the black women suffering from racial discrimination. Their personal growth is blocked. The novelist describes the plight of the black women who are denied social justice. Neurosis means a functional disorder and the victim of Schizophrenia suffers from anxiety, phobia, hysteria and hysteria. Meridian Hill struggles to achieve personal and economic independence. Meridian fights against color, race and gender and she abandons her husband for a noble cause of liberation. She had been the victim of child abuse and physically and psychologically she is a battered woman. Hunger and starvation; domestic violence disintegrate herself. She becomes a victim of schizophrenia as there is a heavy pressure on his soul. Soshana Felman in her article: "Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy" (1975) observes that "madness the impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived of the vey means of protest of self-affirmation" (10). Apu Chakarborty in the article: "Does Racial Discrimination Cause Mental Illness?" opines that "there is a link between racism and mental illness, "more heinously if the political struggle of the oppressed or discriminated group is medicalised" (Chakarborty 475). Meridian's soul journey for the quest of identity is for belongingness to a community. Walker describes the intensity of Meridian's quest for identity is a world fraught with racist and sexist obstacles. At the very outset of the novel, Meridian Hill is in a dilemma as she is caught between her choices to join the Civil Rights Movement and her choice of marriage, motherhood and activism. In this struggle she becomes a victim of schizophrenia. She resolves to fight for the rights of poor Southern American women and her own self gets disintegrated. In her college life she "was required to read to be sexist and racist and otherwise irrelevant to so many lives" (Walker 8). Meridian Hill

begins her mythical journey for the liberation and rights of poor black women but her activism brings traumatic experiences. She fails to define between marriage and activism and struggles to come out of the kitchen to bring a new social order. She suffers in silence being lonely and unloved; she gets away from the real purpose of life of being a mother and a wife. Walker has given a true picture of Meridian passing through physical, emotional and psychological stages and ultimately becoming an acute victim of schizophrenia. She lives in a state of fear of “becoming one’s mother.” She is so desperate that she even starts thinking of killing her baby in depression and to commit suicide. Her early marriage begins her process of Schizophrenia; “she is expelled from the school because of her pregnancy” (Walker 62). Meridian tries to solve the problem and marries but her problems do not end with marriages. Walker has given an insight into her mental disorder thus:

“She was so exhausted it was futile to attempt to think straight, or to even think at all. It took everything she had to tend to the child, and she had to do it, her body prompted not by her own desires, but by her son’s cries. So this, she mumbled, lurching toward his crib in the middle of the night, is what slavery is like” (Walker 69).

The conspicuous thing in the novel is her anger and suicidal depression. She is so much depressed and pessimistic that she resorts to criticism: “And she began to find fault with everything” (Walker 70). In desperation and under the stress of depression, she abandons her family and child to attend the college. She abandons the child thinking that it will be best for the child and for herself. She fabricates her own illusions about motherhood and goes against the wish of her mother and community. She expresses her passion to achieve certain goals and she is ready to

sacrifice anything for the fulfillment of her goals. She becomes alone and is separated from the black community and the world. The time comes when the cycle is complete and she breaks down. She becomes a social revolutionary; sits in demonstration and is beaten and arrested. She is in jail and all her ambitions and aspirations are shattered. She lives in constant threat of violence and death and she is haunted by the feeling that: “she has just been shot” (87). She realizes her folly but it is too late because she has lost everything; the child; mother; husband; community and peace of mind as she is on the verge of madness. Her activism is a mode to express her anger and aggression. Her emotional isolation shatters her spirit. Caruth proves that trauma doesn't lie in the first traumatic event but in the repetitive occurrence of identical upsetting events. The author records, “Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature . . . the way it was precisely not known in the first instance . . . returns to haunt the survivor later on” (4). There are three major factors of the traumatic life of Meridian, motherhood sexuality, betrayal in love and pregnancy. Her journey of self-exploration become chaotic and disorderly as he finds trapped in the abyss of darkness and despair. The triangular relationship between Meridian, Lynne and Truman intensify the frustration of Meridian. After three years Truman divorces Lynne and returns to Meridian confessing that loving Meridian makes him feel “healthy, purposeful” (140). Meridian's love for Truman is “purged, it was not sexual, it was forgiveness” (173). The traumatic tale of Meridian is packed with the scenes of sorrows, depression and frustration wrecking her psyche and leading her to the disorientation of mind at the end of the novel. Her final meeting with Truman is not a relief but a source of eternal psychological agony. She identifies her life with all blacks. “there is water in the world for us brought by our

friends though the rock of mother and god vanishes into sand and we, cast out alone to heal and re-create ourselves” (213).

The major cause of trauma of Meridian is her alienation as she lives on her own. She is cut off from her family and community that rejected her. Meridian stages protest against the local corporation carrying a drowned black child's corpse to the mayor's office. Meridian's struggles with his family history, personal history, racial history and sexuality are the main sources of her trauma and depression and alienation. Thus, in this chapter a comparative study of the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker is undertaken relying on the theories of trauma of Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth and Herman Lee. It is explored that both are the prominent novelists of America who depicted the traumatic existence of black women oppressed by the white community.

To conclude, in *Meridian* Alice Walker presents the journey of a physically and psychologically abused black girl, Meridian Hill. She is presented as a womanish character in the novel. She is also presented as a female with conflicts with external impediments as well as with herself. She suffers from an early marriage and divorce. As a womanish woman she gives up her child and husband for the reason of education. She attends college and also participates in the Civil Rights movements. This can be considered as the first stage of her journey towards wholeness. She struggles for herself and her community she dedicates her life to the Civil Rights movement and gets involved with the voter education campaign. In these activities she struggles for the sense of the self. She is presented as a strong woman to overcome the loss of her husband, child and her lover, Truman Held. This strength of Meridian is indicative of her courageous nature. She survives as an

individual aiming at her freedom and ability to make her own choices. She participates in the Civil Rights movement and makes her mind to die for it. She chooses to live among her people in the South like a servant and a saint. She is committed to survival and wholeness of entire people of her community. The comparative study of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker adds new dimensions in the study of both the black writers.

Conclusion

The outcome of the study is based on the intensive textual analysis of the fiction of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. The novels of both the authors deal with the psychological problems, such as anxiety disorder, depression, neurosis, and death consciousness. In the Psychoanalytical terminology trauma means “wound” but in medical science it implies “external injury, or a —psychic injury” Freud and Adler have given their divergent ideas about trauma. It may be the outcome of some repressed memory or the result of an emotional shock. Martin Charcot was a French physician and neurologist who investigated the symptoms of trauma and mental illness. The novels dramatize episodes of the wounded psyche of the blacks; Pecola becomes insane; Cholly rapes his daughter, Guitar becomes a terrorist and Sethe kills her own daughter. Both the writers have depicted the scenes of emotional and psychological break down of the characters. The main cause of trauma experienced by the characters of Toni Morrison is slavery. Cholly, Milkman are oppressed by slavery and they become abnormal human beings. The study of the fiction of both the novelist prove that a person who is subjected to inhuman treatment is bound to become abnormal. Very often the cultural and social issues lead to the depression and deflation of self. The case of Tashi in the novel *Possessing the secret of joy* is an example who is forced to undergo female circumcision, which ruins the married life. In *God help the child*, Lula Ann Bride well suffers from psychic impairment because of her black skin. Her mother hates her and she is forced to sell her body to forge her identity in the white society. This study investigates the causes and symptoms of psychological diseases suffered from the characters of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. This study also explores sexuality, rape and sexual oppression. Sethe in

Beloved is so much sexually oppressed that she kills her own daughter in desperation. From an ordinary woman she becomes a murderer of a girl child.

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* investigates the psychological plight of men and women of the novel. Pecola is raped by her own father Cholly under the stress of poverty and alienation. Toni Morrison introduces the incest theme in this novel describing the circumstances that led to the rape of Pecola to puncture her illusions about the blue eyes and the beauty fantasy. Toni Morrison has depicted the wounded psyche in all her novels. She shows the way the black people feel psychologically injured and her wounded psyche reacts in the society and in relation to the white people. Pecola's talk about blood, babies and pregnancy foreshadows the doom of Pecola and her eventual insanity. The red color symbolizes death and danger. Maureen tries to be personal and sexual but Claudia defends Pecola and calls Maureen "dog tooth" (71). In reaction Maureen calls them black niggard: —I am cute! And you ugly! I am cute! Pecola was virtually hurt as she felt humiliated by Maureen. Morrison has depicted the traumatic experiences of Pecola and Cholly in this novel highlighting the sexual oppression and emotional breakdown of her characters. Freud proposes —that the beauty, mental order, and regularity of scheduled actions of a subject get affected when it's attacked externally. The subject becomes unconscious though it also 'remains unconsciously active' (Sigmund Freud, *The Unconscious* 4). Pecola's fantasy brings about her loss of self; sexual oppression, rape and insanity. Freud especially talks about the mental powers of humans and categorizes their instincts into life instincts and death instincts. Otten observes avers that "the rape of Pecola is an expression of love, power and freedom. It is a protest against an unjust and repressive culture" (Otten 24). Vickroy (1996) argues that Pecola represents "the neglect, exploitation, disempowerment and

disavowal of her African American community. The novel is —the story of the oppressive social and familial forces” (91). The —rape scene of Pecola is a case study of racial discrimination, that “subject is racial self-loathing” (84).

Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* describes the alienation of Milkman Dead. The plot structure of the novel *Song of Solomon* is built around many metaphors and symbolism and much of criticism of Morrison focuses on issues such as blackness, race, gender, and history of the blacks. The hero Milkman Dead leads a life of isolation cut off from the roots of black society. The identity formation of Milkman Dead is the nucleus of the novel; his quest for his history, the roots of his family and how his quest for self and identity shapes his personality. Morrison has introduced the ghost elements of African folklore in the plot. The symbolical eggs represent the rebirth of Milkman and the flower metaphors such as the artificial velvet roses his sisters make intensify the atmosphere of death. Milkman Dead suffers from serious psychological diseases such as depression, alienation and trauma. The main focus of Toni Morrison in the novel is the search for identity. Milkman Dead rejected his father’s —white property based value system. Milkman Dead begins his journey in his quest for the roots of his family. Milkman faces challenges and slavery and sexism are the chief factors bringing disintegration in the life Milkman Dead. Slavery implies complex psychological phenomena as regards the brutality of hundreds of years of slave domination. From a social perspective, It is also the epitome’s of a man’s lust for power and domination. Jenny Edkins (2003) in her book *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* observes that “the trauma is so painful and hard to cope with has to do with the fact it shatters the harmoniously synchronized illusions that support our self – entered view of the world and gloss over the gaps and fissures of our fabric” (Edkins 214).

Morrison's *Beloved* and *God Help the Child* deal with anxiety disorder. The stress of anxiety impairs the rational thinking as it results in depression. In the middle ages, the word anxiety was used for danger and uneasiness of mind. The word anxiety is taken from Latin and it means —anguish, solicitude. In 1660, anxiety was considered a pathological condition. The phrase “Age of Anxiety” was used by John Auden in his poem written in 1947. Neurotic disorders are related to stress and the poor response of the individuals prone to neurotic disorders. The famous *American Psychiatric Association* (DSM 1V) has given out four major types of anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social phobia, stress disorder and obsessive disorder. Each type of disorder is detrimental to mental health of the individual. The plot of the novel *Beloved* is about Sethe who is the enslaved woman living in Sweet Home Plantation owned by Mr. Garner and his wife. She marries Halle and gives birth to three children. But after the death of Mr. Garner the plantation is given to School teacher who is abusive, malevolent and monstrous. School teacher uses all powers to oppress the blacks. His nephews sexually assault Sethe in the barn while Halle and Paul D watch the scene in horror. Sethe is further assaulted and physically beaten when she reports to Mrs. Garner. The whipping of her back results in scarring which resembles an oak tree. Sethe runs away from the plantation and she meets Amy Denver in the forest where she gives birth to a daughter Denver. Sethe crosses the Ohio River with the help of ferryman. She is reunited with her family but soon the slave catcher finds her. Sethe once again runs away to the barn where she kills her own daughter with a saw. This act of infanticide spreads in the black community but Sethe becomes a traumatic woman; an outcast in the community. The critics have relied on Freud's notion of trauma while analyzing the plot of *Beloved*. Morrison's *Beloved* depicts various characteristics of trauma including

fragmentation, blending of the past, the present and repletion. The characteristics of trauma are found in individuals, generations and communities. Sethe has experienced many phases of her life; she faced unspeakable events in her life; the execution of her mother; the stealing of her milk; the lynching of her mother; rape and physical torture and the divorce of her husband Halle. The worst experience was killing of her own daughter in desperation. Her identity becomes consumed with the pain of dynamic trauma. Sethe is consumed by the traumatic experiences too terrible to relate.

Toni Morrison's novel *God Help the Child* (2015) deals with the theme of anxiety disorder of the characters. In this chapter the mother-daughter relationship depicted in the novel *God Help the Child* is investigated through the lens of psychoanalytical theories. Morrison depicts the theme of child abuse to black history of slavery and racism in *God Help the Child*. Sweetness stands for the trauma the blacks endured during the racial segregation era of the Jim Crow Laws of 1877. Bride symbolizes the definition of contemporary black beauty as —the hottest commodity in the civilized world (67). To this end the theories of psychoanalysis are used to analyze the female characters who suffer from anxiety disorder and trauma. In simple words Lula Ann Bridewell develops an unstable identity in the society; she is hated; neglected and ignored by everyone including her father and mother.

Toni Morrison has depicted the traumatic experiences of Rain who is a symbol of purity and innocence. Rain narrates her sexual assault experience before the hippy couple Steve and Evelyn. Rain confides in Bride that her body was sold to different men for money. Once she opposed this act, her mother threw her out of the house. Rain is a child of six years who confronts homelessness, starvation and fear

that is why she runs away when Steve touched her shoulder asking her name when he first met her. In this chapter the growth of Lula Ann is traced to investigate the impact of anxiety disorder on the psyche of Lula Ann; her adulthood choices and the building of her identity. Bride grows poisoned by the neglect of her mother who refuses to hug her like other mothers. She has no compassion for Bride and expresses her loathing for her through shouting, screaming and locking her in a lonely room for petty offences. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* explores the turmoil of Celie. The plot of the novel deals with the role of male domination in crushing the identity and the individuality of the black women, Celie is the main heroine of the novel. She bears up with the decay as she is treated as commodity. She sees marriage as an avenue of escape but her vision of marriage collapses when Albert is cruel to her. Celie becomes a sexual servant to Albert: —an occasional sexual convenience (6). She symbolizes every black woman suffering the psychological tortures and mental trauma. Her father is virile, tough and strongman; oppressive and callous. Alphonso substitutes Celie for his wife and tells her: “You better shut up and get used to it” (1). Celie is subjected to psychological oppression and this makes her pessimistic in her life. She loses the purpose of her life as Betty Friedan observes that when a woman loses her purpose of life this generates a void in her life and the real cause of her emptiness in such a situation is trauma. There is chaos in family and society depicted by Walker. The scenes of fights, rape and incest are realistically reported in the novel.

Alice Walker's *Secret of Joy of Alice Walker* deals with the issue of female circumcision practiced by the Olinka community in Africa. Alice Walker launches a powerful attack on this inhuman ritual in lyrical language in this novel. The main

emphasis of the novel is not just on the physical deterioration but also on the psychological destruction of mutilated black women. According to Irwin, Alice Walker's narration "shows the —bipolarity typical of both compulsion neurosis and schizophrenia" (Irwin 29). Tashi's circumcision brings multiple psychological problems for Tashi who experiences trauma till her death. She becomes a victim of humiliation and neglect from her husband upholding the tradition of Olinka culture. She has to pay a very heavy price for her genital mutilation; her sister Dura bleeds to death. The journey of Tashi from childhood to her execution is replete with the traumatic episodes; her loss of female identity and the physical and psychological pain shatters her sensibility and people begin to think her inane. As a young girl Tashi was ambitious and wild but her ritual circumcision during adolescence brought untold miseries to her. Tashi's life has been explored as a case study. Physical illness of Tashi grows and her deterioration of health is a matter of concern for her husband Adam. Tashi's whole life was ruined; she lost her husband Adam who developed illicit relations with a French woman neglecting Tashi and impregnated her to the chagrin and humiliation of Tashi. Tashi lives in the intellectual environment in America and compares her dismal states with the other American women enjoying wonderful married life. Her awakened soul directs her to reach against all that is wrong and goes to Olinka to take revenge from M'Lissa. Tashi begins her life as an ordinary black woman but her female circumcision makes her a murderer at the end. She suffers trauma, depression and restlessness in her whole life because of the inhuman cultural practice of female circumcision.

The novels of Toni Morrison engage a wide range of readers all over the world as her novels deal with the compelling themes of love, equality, community

survival, racial and sexual politics. In this chapter efforts are made to explore the psychological growth of the characters trapped in racism, sexism and slavery. Trauma is an eternal source of psychological pain that leads to the deflation of self and victimization of neurosis. The comparative study of the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker is done to explore the relationship between trauma, identity and deflation of self. Toni Morrison has depicted the impact of racism on Afro-Americans by analyzing the deformation of love in *The Bluest Eye*. The novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker depict the wounded psyche of the black men and women and in this thesis, the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth, R.D. Laing and other prominent psychologists are applied to investigate the symptoms of trauma of the characters of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. This study has the following observation:

- 1) Psychic disturbance ruins the life of a man.
- 2) Psychic wounds are more dangerous than the physical wound.
- 3) Internal conflicts lead to abnormality and an abnormal person can commit any crime.
- 4) Positive environment, love, support of the family can change the behavior of the person and as Judith Herman observes that Trauma can be recovered.

Modern Relevance of the Study

In the Covid-19 period, this study has great relevance as it explores the significance of psychological defense mechanisms in the life of individuals. Human beings need positive attitude in the period of crisis, this study gives them the social and psychological awareness to keep balance in life. Toni Morrison has created very strong characters such as Pecola, Sethe and Milkman Dead who confront the odds of

life boldly and take life positively. They take up the challenge and makes efforts to bring order out of chaos. The characters of the novels of Alice Walker learn various coping strategies to survive in this harsh world. Freud advocates the idea that individual experiencing severe trauma may find it easier to dissociate and move away from self as a means of coping. Pecola and Sethe try these therapies to overcome their depression.

The relevance of this study is indubitable as millions of people are suffering from mental diseases all over the world. Life of a modern man is full of challenges; trials and tribulations are very common. The study inspires the youth in a positive manner by conveying a message that life is long and challenging but we should face the existentialist reality boldly and with courage and high spirit. The perception and the vision of two prominent novelists of the world are examined who give positive direction to humanity with power to confront the psychological ailments afflicting the humanity today.

The study has a positive impact on the society as it gives the youth a mental strength to face the difficulties of life. The characters of the selected novels have the capacity to wrestle with the existential concerns and improve their conditions. They suffered a lot in hands of destiny but did not lose hope rather involved in the never ending quest of survival. I. Ajzen in his article “Nature and Operation of Attitudes” is of view that positive attitude, positive thinking and optimism are now known to be a root cause of many positive life benefits. Milkman Dead and Celie struggle to survive in the American society.

The study also highlights the fact that the psychic anxiety can be controlled by developing positive attitude. R. Pettinger in his article “Developing a Positive

Mindset: Changing Your Attitude to Change Your Life” asserts that a positive attitude is a strategy to deal with problems and to move towards success. The research examines the fact that mental strength is an essential element, required to face the harsh realities of life.

It is pertinent to note that the study is concentrated on the psychic wounds of the characters of two black novelists, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. Trauma and its symptoms are found in many individuals today. The hospitals are full of patients as the modern life is full of challenges; those who work in the private sector, have to endure stress. Uncertainty of life, decline of moral values and the increasing trends of science and technology bring stress on the individuals. The study deals with the issues of anxiety disorder, trauma, fragmentation, loss of self and depression which are common symptoms found in the modern man. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are the modern black writers and whatever they have written is true and universal. Literature is a mirror of society and the findings of this study are applicable in all societies. The scenes of rape; sexual oppression, molestation, exploitation and slavery are the curses in society. Such situations ruin the life of the individuals and give them trauma. The thesis helps the readers to cope up with cancerous growth of trauma in the life of the individuals.

The Journey of the Struggle against the Oppression of the Blacks

It is interesting to note that the voice raised by Toni Morrison and Alice Walker is lost in the air as the events of dehumanization; violence and physical oppression of the whites are continuing even today. It is worthwhile to put on the record the latest event of hatred and killing of the whites in America that triggered

mass protests in America and Europe lasting for so many days. The brutal murder of George Floyd in America by police led to widespread outrage. The murder of George Floyd, a 46-year-old African-American man, by the police has ignited rage and disbelief across the US. On May 26, hundreds of protesters were attacked by police in the city of Minneapolis during a protest against the murder of George Floyd, an African-American man, by a police officer on Monday May 25. Protesters gathered at the intersection where Floyd was murdered on Tuesday May 26 after the news of his death spread over social media. A memorial for Floyd was organized and people chanted against the police and held up signs condemning institutionalized racism in the US. Protests were also held outside the Minneapolis Police Department's 3rd precinct office building, the circle to which the accused police officers belonged to. Eye witness accounts over social media alleged that police were found using tear gas, drones and riot gear to disperse the crowd, leading to a violent clash at the scene. According to reports, the murder of Floyd, which was aired live over social media by bystanders, happened in a violent attempt by the police to apprehend him for allegedly issuing a fake cheque. Floyd was sitting in the car when four white police officers approached him. The police alleged that Floyd tried to "resist arrest". However, eyewitness accounts from the day have accused the police of disproportionate violence. In the live video that went viral over social media, Floyd can be found pinned to ground by two police officers, with one of them kneeling on his neck for nearly five minutes. Passers-by and bystanders during the incident were seen pleading the police to release him from the stranglehold. Floyd himself could be heard pleading, telling the officers that he "can't breathe". Officers can be heard telling Floyd to "relax" even though he was rendered immobile. After over five minutes of kneeling on his neck, Floyd died from suffocation. The police

officers released his body after realizing he was dead, and threatened eyewitnesses who were approaching with pepper spray if they came closer. The live video that went viral prompted widespread outrage across the US against racial murders by the police, targeting black people. The four officers were fired from by the Minneapolis mayor, Jacob Frey on Tuesday and a federal investigation was initiated against them on the same day. But past experiences with such murders have almost always end up with very minor or no punishments imposed on the accused officers. Civil rights activist and lawyer, Benjamin Crump, who has represented similar cases of police violence, including Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and Martin Lee-Anderson, will be representing Floyd's family against the accused officers. Crump told the media, "this is abusive, excessive and inhumane use of force cost the life of a man who was being detained by the police for questioning about a non-violent charge." "How many 'while black' deaths will it take until the racial profiling and undervaluing of black lives by police finally ends?" Crump added. The Party for Socialism and Liberation released a statement on Tuesday condemning the murder and stated, "Firing the officers is not enough. Officer Derek Chauvin, and his three police accomplices, must be immediately arrested and charged. Justice can only begin with a conviction and sentencing of all involved!" They also highlighted that despite lockdown measures being in place across much of the country, "the oppression of Black people still remains and has in fact surged in the wake of one of the largest public health crises in recent history." The texts of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are not about negative aspects of life but teach people to come out of trauma. Both the novelists suggest the following strategies to bring harmony and peace in the world.

Determined Will to Fight

Sethe in *Beloved* is a determined and committed fighter. She suffers sexual oppression and hardships but she doesn't give in till the end of the novel. Celie in Walker's novel, *Possessing the Secrets of Joy* Alice Walker wrote her novel, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* to celebrate the glorious martyrdom of Tashi who sacrificed her life to end the inhuman ritual of genital circumcision prevalent in Africa. Tashi kills M'Lissa at the end and raises the slogan —RESISTANCE IS THE SECRET OF JOY (264). At the end she is hanged but her ant—imperialist spirit becomes a source of inspiration to the new generations of blacks.

Illusions and Fantasies

This study gives guidelines to the readers to come out of the world of illusion and fantasies to overcome trauma as pointed out in *The Bluest Eye* of Morrison. Pecola's fantasy brings about her loss of self; sexual oppression, rape and insanity. Freud especially talks about the mental powers of humans and categorizes their instincts into life instincts and death instincts. She lives in the world of fantasy falsely believing that she would be loved by both the blacks and the whites. She is spoiled by the seductive tug of the white standards and suffers the psychological trauma. It is always better to be realistic.

Getting Involved in Family

The novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker give the message of strength of family life. Lula Ann Bridewell took a harsh decision; she dropped her first name and finally settled on the last name and she introduced her friends as Bride only.

During these formative years she came in contact with a boy Booker Starbern who teaches her the practical view of life. She starts living with him as a wife. Bakhtin says that —Trauma can be overcome, scars can mutate into beauty spots, life can be remade (Bakhtin 41). Morrison's portrays the character of Lula Ann Bride who struggles to turn her blackness as an image of beauty and attraction in America. Lula Ann becomes a beauty model and begins her cosmetic business to cure the physical damages. She calls: —there isn't enough You, GIRL, foundation in the world to hide eye scars, a broken nose and facial skin scraped down to pink hypodermis (26).

Quest for Love

Celie in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* loses her loving father, loses her mother. Celie is subjected to physical assault. She comes out of the trauma by developing friendly relations with Shug. She rejuvenates her life instilling in her the purpose to live. Celie and Sofia realize that they can relate to each other and heal “each other's hurts by acknowledging each other's plights and then finding a reason for laughter in the midst of their pain” (Peterson 54). Sofia acts as a catalyst in Celie understands of her pain and her anguish. To conclude, this study will help the society to overcome trauma of life.

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