

## CHAPTER-II

### What Shaped Her and What She Shaped?

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Toni Morrison is unanimously regarded by readers, critics and scholars as the torchbearer and vanguard of Afro-American literature. Indubitably, such paeans of praise and eulogistic words are no exaggeration for a monumental figure like Toni Morrison who is the eighth woman and the first black woman to win the most coveted the Noble Prize for Literature in the year 1993 for her unprecedented and outstanding contribution to the world of letters which fetched her two standing ovations ever in the history of Nobel Prize Ceremony during her speech.

The great chronicler of Afro-American experiences came to this world on 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1931 when America was going through the phase of Great Depression. The real name of Toni Morrison was Chloe Anthony Wofford. She was the second of four issues of Ramah and George Wofford. Her father, George Wofford was a hard working man who did three jobs simultaneously, primary among them being the work of a shipyard welder. Her father was a hardcore or we can say staunch racist as he believed that there could never be harmony between blacks and whites because whites were a snobbish group of people who could never overcome their racial bigotry. He even resorted to violent practices in order to give an outlet to his anger towards whites. All this had a deep impact on the psyche of Morrison. Toni was not at all happy with his racist attitude.

On the other hand, her mother carried a totally different outlook towards racism. Her mother, Ramah Wofford came from Alabama and was a homemaker. She was a religious lady and believed a lot in the power of education. Ramah's parents

were cheated by whites out of their lands. So, they moved to north Ohio. In comparison to her father, Morrison's mother is strong and didn't carry pugnacious attitude towards whites. She accepted that racism was a reality and education of blacks was the only solution which could give them freedom from the fetters of racism. In fact, she taught her children how to heal the wounds of racism. Once when they were unable to pay the rent of house, their white landlord set ablaze their house. Toni's parents laughed off the matter in spite of going to a melancholic state. Such a reaction from her parents taught Morrison how to maintain integrity in tough circumstances which is reflected in most of her novels.

Morrison's grandparents too played an important role in her life. Her grandparents worked as share croppers in Alabama. When lynching of blacks increased to an alarming rate, the family decided to move to Lorain, Ohio in order to ensure better survival for their family. Morrison's grandparents and her parents have been victims of racism and slavery in the South. Though they moved to North for better life, their life even in Ohio was full of racial and economic hardships. Though Morrison was not a direct victim of slavery and racism down South, she had heard enough of those barbarities from her parents and grandparents which played an important role in developing her perceptions which then in turn contributed a lot in shaping her as a creative writer.

In fact, storytelling was an important part of Morrison's childhood. Her parents used to narrate their children Afro-American folk tales, ghost stories, myths and songs which incorporated in them a sense of Afro-American history and improved their language part which again helped a lot in shaping Morrison as a writer. Even as a child, Toni was an avid reader of European and Russian masterpieces. She loved to read great writers like Leo Tolstoy, Jane Austen and Dostoevsky. Their influence on

her critical output is clearly perceptible in her works. Apart from literature, music too flowed in the family which contributed to the musical quality of her prose. Ramah's father was a violinist; Ramah herself played piano and could sing anything like opera, blues, pop and jazz. In fact, there was a song 'Green the only son of solomon' which had been used by Morrison as the turning point in many of her novels was basically a song which her mother's family used to sing. The influence of the family in developing her sense of history, music, language, culture is thus undoubtedly there which moulded her identity as well as her abilities as an author.

Her experiences in Lorain were also significant as these experiences helped her in understanding the overlapping phenomenon of racism. As a child, when she was a first grade student, she was the only black child in the class. She was not made to feel inferior by white children, as for children such racial boundaries never existed. They were away from political inclinations. Many white girls were friends of Toni. But, later on as they become adults, the lines separating blacks and whites became quite obvious. Moreover in Lorain, there was no separate black neighbourhood. They lived happily with Greek family on the one side and Italian family on the other side of their house. Thus in the background of racial hatred, Morrison had seen the assimilation of different cultures, viz. blacks and whites in a peaceful and cordial way. Despite all this, Lorain was not some imaginative American melting pot which was bereft of racism. In Lorain, she became witness to both these aspects of racism which bred hatred and love at the same time. But, it made her somehow hopeful that all whites were not perpetrators of violence and racial discrimination which emerged as one of the major arguments in most of her creative writings.

As far as her education is concerned, she attended Lorain High School and was an all-rounder. She excelled not only in studies but also left her mark as an active

participant in debate team and the drama club of the school. During her schooling, she also took a part time job of cleaning people's houses. In spite of all this, Toni Morrison enrolled herself in Howard University in 1949 and it was here she got her nick name Toni which she got from her middle name Anthony. She got this middle name at the age of 12 when she became a Catholic. But, it was a place where she got to learn the real meaning of racism as she saw segregated restaurants, schools, clubhouses and buses through her own eyes and got her graduation degree of B.A. in English in the year 1953. It was followed by M.A. in English from Cornell University in the year 1955. Her Master's thesis was based on the theme of suicide and alienation in the novels of Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner whose works too delineated the life of South America.

Her stay in Howard was very crucial for engendering and developing her black literary consciousness. At Howard, Toni joined the theatrical company of the university, i.e. the Howard Players. As a part of the company, she came to know that black literary conscious was under wraps till 1940s and no great Afro-American writer like Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston were included in the curriculum of any university. With her company, Toni went on a tour to South, i.e. to the place where her ancestors belonged. There in the South, Howard Players performed only for black audience. While interacting with blacks there, she came to know about the hellish life of blacks. This tour made her realize the extent of brutal and undiluted racism which her ancestors and parents had to bear.

After completing her education, she joined Texas Southern University as English teacher in Houston where she stayed for two years. Later in 1957, she joined Howard University where she offered her services for seven years. These two universities where she worked as English teacher proved to be a landmark in her

literary career. It was here only that she started studying black culture as an academic discipline. Moreover, it was here only that she met various people like Amiri Barka, Andrew Young and Stokely Carmichael who were actively involved in the struggle for Afro-American equality. Howard University was also important for her because she met Harold Morrison here, whom she later married. Harold Morrison was an architect from Jamaica. They got married in 1958 and Toni bore their first child, Harold Ford in 1961. Then in 1964, Toni became pregnant again and she left her job in the university. After that she went for a Europe tour. But as she returned from there, she got herself divorced from Harold Morrison in 1964 due to cultural differences.

After her divorce, she joined Random House in 1965 as an editor for L.W. Singer which was a text book division of the publishing house. From here, she went to New York's office of Random House. As an editor of Random House, she played a key role in reviving black literature and brought it back to the mainstream literature. Her first achievement at Random House was her book *Contemporary African Literature* (1972) which incorporated works by writers like Chinua Achebe, Athold Fugard and Wole Soyinka. She even helped writers in improving their manuscripts and became a foster mother for a host of Afro-American writers like Toni Cade Bambara, Gayl Jones. Not only this, during her twelve year stay at Random House, she edited books by black Americans like Angela Davis, Muhammad Ali and Andrew Young to name only a few. She also penned the autobiography of Muhammad Ali titled *The Greatest*. The most significant work was her edited work *The Black Book* which appeared on the literary scene in 1974. This book included an anthology of essays, articles, photographs and studies of black life from the time of slavery to the times this book got published.

Thus through her work at Random House, she was successful in bringing a lot of black female authors on the centre stage. In fact, she had great regard for the significant work by female authors. In her interview with Times magazine, she accepts this fact that her achievements might propel women round the world to come up with their works and voice their creativity which has been silenced since millennia.

After her tenure of twelve years at Random House, Morrison directed her attention towards the world of creative writing. In fact, she was the first successful female Afro-American author in the otherwise male-dominated world. The world of Afro-American literature produced great male writers like Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright and James Baldwin. She made her official entry into the territory of creative writing with her novel *The Bluest Eye* which appeared in 1970 when she was in her 30s. *The Bluest Eye* is about a black girl who wants to have blue eyes. The story is told from the perspective of two adolescent sisters, Claudia and Frieda Mac Teer and digs out the horrible effects of racism and the consequent framing of white standards of beauty which demolishes the self-identity of a little black girl, Pecola Breedlove. The protagonist of the novel has internalised this fact that only people with blue eyes and white skin are loved by others, and people like her i.e. blacks are not meant to be loved. She thus secretly harbours a desire to have blue eyes which ultimately descended her into madness as the novelist traces her life across four seasons. Pecola reels under serious identity crisis which was further worsened by her father who rapes her and makes her pregnant. Community at large doesn't support her. Rather, they tortures her by segregating her which lands her in the island of madness. *The Bluest Eye* emerges as a forceful voice on the literary scene which portrayed, slammed and challenged the Western parameters of beauty which had instilled the seeds of inferiority in blacks. Though the novel got mixed reactions, it burrowed into the

issues of self identity and self-esteem and weaved them with the racial and gender discrimination of the times to create an impact upon the readers.

In 1973, Morrison came up with her second novel *Sula* which was about the friendship of two black girls. This novel gained more popularity than *The Bluest Eye* and was also nominated for National Book Award in 1975. The story of *Sula* is set in a small town of Ohio and traces the events between 1919 and 1965. The story revolves around two black girls, Nel and Sula. Both these girls meet at the age of twelve and share a dream to explore the whole world. Sula leaves the town and goes on to explore the world around her. On the other hand, Nel marries Jude and turns house wife. But, the break in friendship comes when Sula returned to the town after ten years. She is so much attracted to Nel's husband that she starts an affair with Jude. The story ends with the death of Sula and realisation on the part of Nel that it is her friendship with Sula which transcends everything for her in this brutal world full of complexities.

After the publication of *Sula*, Morrison faced a lot of personal problems like economic constraints, adolescence period of her son and death of her father. The death of her father gave a serious jolt to her and she kept on thinking about her father. As she started working on her third novel, she used to have long imaginative conversations with her father as she needed his inputs in the novel which talked about the attitude and perceptions of men. And, finally she came up with one of the most astonishing creations from her pen, *The Song of Solomon*. She even won National Book Critics Circle Award for this masterpiece. The story of the novel traces the four generations of blacks, starting with Macon Dead Jr. who is also referred to as Milkman in the novel. Milkman travels to South in search of a family's hidden treasures of gold. But in the process he traces his roots and searches his true identity.

Through his hunt to the South, Morrison traces the history of black immigration from male perspective.

*Tar Baby* is another feather in the cap of Morrison. With this novel which got published in the year 1981, Morrison achieved an even higher stature in the literary arena. The story weaves a romantic tale to communicate Morrison's idea of racial exploitation. The protagonist of the novel is Jadine who is a jet set fashion model and falls in love with a boy, Son. But their relationship doesn't materialize. He doesn't feel discouraged and goes after her with a hope that she will soon reconcile with her. Morrison restricts herself to depict only the relationship between black man and black woman to show how reconciliation between both of them is vital for the growth of black community. According to Morrison, this kind of reconciliation can only happen if both of them try to comprehend that identities of both of them are shaped by racial exploitation as both are the victims of this horror of slavery. Son, here emerges as a revolutionary hero who realizes the importance of knowing one's relationship with other people and commits himself to share his experience with other blacks as this is the only way to heal the wounds of racial exploitation.

After *Tar Baby*, the literary world feasted on Morrison's most celebrated novel *Beloved* which changed the whole face of Afro-American literature when it got published in the year 1987. The book got wide critical acclaim and remained the best seller continuously for twenty-five weeks. She even won Pulitzer Prize for this novel in 1988. In 1970s, while collecting material for her ambitious work *The Black Book*, Morrison came across an article which tells the real event of 1851 in which a slave named Margret Garner killed her own children so that her children might not face the horrors and exploitation of slavery. This incident left a huge impact on Morrison's mind and she used it as the foundation of her epic saga on slavery. Apart from that,



*Beloved* was also the first part of Morrison's dreams trilogy on slavery followed by *Jazz* and *Paradise*. The plot of the novel centres round Sethe who kills her own daughter to prevent her from enslavement. After many years the ghost of her daughter Beloved appears and it starts dominating Sethe and her house. When the horror of ghost reaches to the level of destruction, Sethe's second daughter calls the community to throw the ghost out of the house. The ghost here in the novel is symbolic of black's past memories of the horrors of slavery. The novel gained so much popularity that it was adapted as a movie which was directed by Jonathan Demme where the role of the protagonist was performed by Oprah Winfrey.

*Jazz* (1992) is the sixth novel which came from the creative pen of Toni Morrison. The story of *Jazz* is set in the Harlem of 1930s. The plot revolves around a childless African couple, Joe and Violet Trace who have come to city in the North from countryside of South with many hopes and aspiration. But, the monotony and loneliness of city life mocks at all their hopes and frustrates them. The novel offers a disturbing psychological study of the characters who get entangled in the city life and desperately try to adjust with their frustration and isolation. Joe and Violet's life has become fragmented and directionless which further push them to do things which are dangerous and absurd. Under this directionless mindset, Joe initiates an affair with Dorcas and ultimately murders her. Violet too turns dangerous as she attacked the corpse of Dorcas at her funeral. The novel, however, ends with a note of hope as Felice enters as a symbol of happiness in their life by sharing their joys and sorrows.

*Paradise* (1998) is an attempt by Morrison to express those aspects of Afro-American history which had been ignored by mainstream literature till then. The novel is basically a compilation of two books which come together in the end. One book narrates the story of a black town named Ruby and shows how its inhabitants

are finding it hard to maintain their self identity. The second book tells the story of five women who meet at a place called Convent and die there. Through the intermingling of these two plots, Morrison shows why males fear that their paradise faces threat from women. The novel was an attempt on her part to fill the missing gaps of Afro-American history. The novel finally ends with the images of fantastical world and gives the message that in order to gain paradise one has to fight for it and once it is gained, it requires further fighting for its protection.

*Love* (2003) is the first product of her 21<sup>st</sup> century creative output. It is the story of a dead hotelier Bill Cosey and people around him. After his death, Cosey has left Heed, his widow and Christine, her granddaughter in the family. Both of them are of same age, and hence become friends after his death. But after forty years, these two become enemies and fight over Cosey's will. Despite these differences, the two women share the mansion of Cosey. Though the novel seems to be the story of a family which is involved in personal disputes, Morrison has addressed bigger issues with this personal history. The issue of US history segregation and its movement towards desegregation is the main highlight of the novel which is discussed under the shroud of Cosey's family history.

*A Mercy* is another significant creation of Morrison which enticed the readers with its publication in the year 2008. It is the tale of a girl named Florens who works in D'Ortega's plantation. Jacob Vaark visits D'Ortega to take payment of his loan. But D'Ortega offered one of his servants, i.e. Florens as a payment to the debt. During this visit, Vaark gets so much impressed by the grandeur of Ortega's mansion that he decides to create one for himself. In frenzy of this house, he involved himself in slave trade. But, before the completion of the house Vaark dies and his wife falls ill. Florens falls in love with Blacksmith who come to fence the house. When

Rebekke falls ill, she sends Florens to trace Blacksmith who has got healing powers. Florens too see it as an opportunity to meet his love. But, her hope are not fulfilled as Blacksmith preferred Michael to Florens. Florens turns wild and writes her own story on the walls of Vaark's dream mansion which according to Morrison is the assertion of black identity in the world created by whites.

*Home* (2012) and *God Help the Child* (2015) are latest additions to the great corpus of fictional writing by Toni Morrison. *Home* is a story of Frank Money who is a veteran of Korean War. The novel traces his journey from the place he is discharged from army and to the place which is his homeland. In the novel, after witnessing the death of his two friends, Frank suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder due to which he roams on the streets idly and doesn't clean himself. He is sent to hospital. But, he escapes from hospital to help his sister who is suffering from illness. And, then he goes back to Lotus Georgia. Later in the novel, Frank saves the life of Lee and realizes that though they earlier hated their real home town, but Lotus Georgia is indeed their real home.

*God Help the Child* spins a story around the problems and sufferings of children and unravels how they can mould and break the life of adults around them. It narrates the story of a blue-black skin girl named Lula Ann Bridwell who is ignored, hated and abused by her light skinned parents Bride is punished by her mother Sweetness for being dark. Her father had left her mother as he could not bear the sight of a dark child and blamed Sweetness for it. Sweetness acts in this way as she wants to protect her child from the outside world, which is bound to punish Bride much more because of her blackness. Sweetness's choice becomes debatable but brings out the essence of the novel which shows how a mother's choice is moulded by the situation of blacks in a world dominated by whites.

Apart from that, Morrison tried her hands at children literature along with Slade Morrison. Her major works in this genre are *The Big Box* (1999), *Penny Butter Fudge* (2009), *Please, Louise* (2014). Theatre too gets taste of Morrison's art through her plays like *Dreaming Emmet* which was performed in 1986 and *Desdemona* which was first enacted in the year 2011. Even her non-fictional creations garnered the eyeballs of readers and critics all over the world. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* was one of her significant writings which left a mark in the non-fictional world in 1992. Other significant non-fictional works are *Racing Justice*, *Engendering power*, *Birth of a Nationhood*, *Burn This Book*, etc.

Wide popularity of Morrison's fiction has invited critics and scholars to invest their critical acumen in her writings which has resulted in a vast corpus of critical literature available on Morrison. In fact, as one goes through the works of Toni Morrison, several themes and inclinations emerge out of her fictional world. Themes related to racial discrimination, motherhood, sisterhood, alienation, identity, gender surface every now and then in her novels in a novel way. The myriad aspects dealt in her novels have invited a host of critics and readers who have used their critical mind to explore the thematic concerns and other facets delineated in her novels.

Several trends immediately become perceptible as one reads the existing critical material. A huge number of critical essays and articles by critics all over the world illustrate the scope of different psychoanalytic approaches in relation to Morrison's works. Critics like J. Fitzgerald, D. Heinze, P. Nicholls, J. Wyatt, Barbara Schapiro, Hortense J. Spillens, Richard K Barksdale, Ashraf H.A Rushdy and Alisha R. Coleman have offered psychoanalytic readings of Toni Morrison's fiction from myriad angles. Barbara Christian was the first one who used historical approach to study Morrison. Others who followed her in re-revising Morrison's work through

historical lens are Gabriel P. Forman, Houston A. Baker, Cynthia S. Hamilton. James Phelan makes an attempt to approach Morrison's work using Reader-Response theory. Postmodern approach is also used by many critics like Patricia Clough, April Lindinsky.

Apart from that, there are many critical books on the writings of Toni Morrison. Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu has compiled and edited the encyclopaedia of Toni Morrison titled *The Toni Morrison Encyclopaedia*. In this book, Elizabeth has tried to locate and interpret various themes delineated in the novel. It is not only a catalogue of Morrison's work. Rather it unravels post-modern concerns implicit in the novel thereby providing significant and foundational knowledge related to Morrison's works. The *Encyclopaedia* has also focused on all the seven novels of Morrison which were written till then and introduced the readers to various approaches which can be used to study Morrison from various angles thereby adding different layers of meanings to her fictional output.

Highlighting the literary art of Morrison, Marc Conner edited a book titled *The Aesthetics of Toni Morrison: Speaking the Unspeakable*. In this book, Conner shows how Morrison conversed forcefully to the Western tradition of aesthetics through her fictional works. The book emphasises how Morrison's art is influenced by her knowledge of classics and how she owes a lot to Western and non-Afro-American writers. The essays from Barbara Johnson and Cheryle Leater, Susan Lorey, Marc.C.Conner, Katherine Stern and Michael Wood makes a emotive and intellectual reading of the aesthetics in Morrison's works and are very significant for study by future scholars.

In her work, *Producing American Races: Henry James, William Faulkner, Toni Morrison*, Patricia McKee discusses the works of these three writers as a racial discourse. She focuses on the conceptualization process of identity which is determined by our race. She states that all these writers have produced various discourses but on racial identity. But all these discourses portray the common identity crisis of black Americans which depends upon the general public attitude and political inclination and individual consciousness. She also focuses on the different cultural backgrounds which shape the identities of individuals.

The biographical details of Morrison's life which contributed in her world of creation are very critically discussed by Ron David in his book *Toni Morrison Explained: A Reader's Roadmap to the Novels*. As the name suggests, while giving a commentary on the life of Morrison, he traces all the novels of Morrison and highlights the formative experience as well as subtexts and language used in the novel. His purpose in this book is not to represent or analyse the overt elements. Rather he penetrates deep and integrates his own experiences with the experiences shared by Morrison through her creative output. Thus the book strives to make readers read Morrison's book and rethink over the standard and interpretations which have been made earlier by various critics.

The concept of motherhood which is too obvious and prominent in the novels of Morrison is further critically pondered over and analysed by Andrea O'Reilly in her highly acclaimed work, *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart*. This work critically analyses the complexities of motherhood which has been variously depicted in the novels of Morrison. The work studies the concept of motherhood from Morrison's first novel *The Bluest Eye* till *Paradise* and later gives an epilogue referring to her novel *Love* which appeared in 2003. She dwells not only on the novels

of Morrison but also scrutinizes and analyse all texts, interviews and articles to theorize the concept of motherhood in relation to Afro-American women which has so far been neglected by white American feminists. He has made an exhaustive study of critics like Patricia Hill Collins and Bell Hooks to show how there is a huge difference between European American and Afro-American concepts of motherhood. The work advocates the need to frame an Afro-American female discourse in order to fully comprehend Afro-American concept of motherhood.

Morrison is also seen as a historiographer by Gurleen Grewal in her book *Circles of Sorrow, Lives of Struggle: The Novels of Toni Morrison*. The writer wears the shroud of a postcolonial critic and tries to reconcile between the emerging middle class of American State and their subaltern roots. The healing power and therapeutic effect of Morrison's novels in this context comes to the fore in this exhaustive study of Toni Morrison. According to Grewal, the narratives of Toni Morrison invite the readers to realise the significance of collective struggle in the history of mankind. Moreover, she further explains the real connotation of the term postcolonial. It should not be seen as something which comes after the end of colonialism rather should be treated as its legacy. This conceptualisation towards post-colonialism makes Grewal's study quite novel in the sense that it shows readers that the boundaries of the self are conditioned by history.

Similar endeavours in establishing the relationship between individual and community are made by Patrick Bryce Bjork in his work *The Novels of Toni Morrison: The Search for Self and Place within the Community*, which appeared before the literary world in the year 1996. The book offers a small historical background of African-American novel and the critical material related to it. The book then gives a detailed analysis of the communication and regenerative roles

which are performed by black women in the society and attempts to show how these roles can be effectively portrayed in Afro-American fiction. She further moves to the study of Morrison's novels in the light of the studies and observations which she has made earlier in the analysis of Morrison's work to demonstrate how the self is always and forever inextricably linked to the community in Morrison's works who weaves her complex narrative to underscore her belief that without that presence and recognition of community, there is no life.

Linden Peach who has edited the New Case Book series on Morrison titled *Toni Morrison: Contemporary Critical Essays* offers a thorough analysis of Morrison's work by discussing each novel from myriad angles. The Marxist perspective is elaborated by two writers Madhu Dubey and Doreatha Drummond Mbalia. Attention has also been paid to the psychoanalytical inclinations of the novel which add a lot of value to her works. The essay of Houston A. Baker makes a psychoanalytical study of *Sula* in relation to the place. Jennifer Fitzgerald too makes a psychological dig as he studied in *Beloved* in relation to the association between individual and community. Cynthia A. Davis too makes a similar kind of study.

K. Sumana's book *The Novels of Toni Morrison: A Study in Race, Gender and Class* is another illuminating study on the author. Divided into eight chapters, the book offers deep and illuminating analysis of the contemporary issues of gender and class. Moreover, she relates how these three issues of race, gender and class are interlinked in the novels of Morrison in various ways and how an evolutionary pattern emerges out of her works which shows a higher commitment and even more heightened consciousness towards these triple issues addressed in her novels. In the introduction to the book K. Sumana sums up the importance of Morrison's works by saying that Morrison's commitment to struggle for African people resulted in



developing such theme as racism, gender oppression, identity crisis, class contradictions and class exploitation within the African race.

Thus it is clear that Morrison works have drawn global attention and elicited a plethora of critical output. Despite the wide ranging criticism, critics have missed ecocritical implication of Morrison's fictional works which is one of the most significant aspects of the texts of Toni Morrison. Critics have touched upon these aspects but in a rather passing manner. For instance, in her work *Narrating other Natures: A Third Wave Eco-critical Approach to Toni Morrison Ruth Ozeki, and Octavia Butler*, Andrea Kate Campbell has made an ecocritical evaluation of Toni Morrison. In this work Campbell has tried to show that how forces of nature are conditioned by dominant class to construct environmental narrative which gives an official right to the dominant group to naturalise this hierarchal set up. The work also focuses upon women and portrays how black women use creative writings as a tool to challenge the dominant narratives by displaying multiple counter narratives that question the whole set up and relationship between man and environment. But in her study, focus is largely on Ozeki. In other words, she doesn't deal with the ecocritical concept in Toni Morrison's fiction in detail in her research. Similarly, Morrison's *Tar Baby* is also subjected to ecocritical reading which got published in China Papers. The main concern of the author is to show how man's greed to exploit the nature and hierarchical system is at the root of the ecological problems. Again, this merely makes a surface level study and that too of a single text of Morrison.

Besides that, Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu who edited Toni Morrison Encyclopaedia also discusses Morrison's works from an ecocritical perspective. But, here the approach is dealt in a passing manner. It doesn't offer a full length ecocritical evaluation of Morrison's fiction. The eco-critical approach is merely discussed as one

of the many approaches to Toni Morrison's fiction. Then, there is another study by Shirley, A. Stove and Justine Tally. In their study, One chapter discusses the ecocritical points of this novel of Toni Morrison. But, this study is also limited because it is based on only one novel. Thus there are critics who have discussed Toni Morrison's fiction from an eco-critical perspective.

But what emerges out from the above analysis is that either critics have neglected the environmental concerns in their studies altogether or if they have touched it they have focused their study on either one novel or two novels. It can't be said that critics haven't touched this matter; they have done it in a rather passing manner. And therein lies the relevance of the present research because there are still many aspects which have been ignored by the critics either completely or in parts relating to the ecocritical evaluation of Morrison's fiction.

The present study thus will make an endeavour to fill in the gaps in the ecocritical study of Morrison's fiction. Firstly, it will try to study Toni Morrison's fiction purely from an ecocritical perspective. Secondly, it will trace Morrison's growth as a literary environmentalist from the publication of her debut novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) till *A Mercy* (2008). Thirdly, it attempts to unravel how the influences of her race and gender are inextricably linked with the influences of nature. Moreover, it will enlist those shaping influences that have enabled the entry of eco-critical vision in her works. Last but not the least, the research will aim to make readers more conscious about their non-human surroundings.

As far as methodology adopted in the research is concerned, it will be of interdisciplinary nature because the texts of literature and nature will be read simultaneously. Moreover, a deductive method of reading is used to construe certain

conclusions. In order to reach the conclusions, argumentative and comparative methods of study are applied. Theoretical framework of the present research will be provided by the notions of capitalism versus nature, consumerism, and materialism leading to self-centeredness and how it is detrimental to the existence of Mother Nature.

Thus with the aim to evoke the ecological consciousness of people, thesis will be divided into seven chapters. The first chapter will include the analysis of the existing critical material along with the history and background of the theory taken into consideration. The second chapter entitled ‘What Shaped Her and What She Shaped?’ will provide necessary biographical details that might have made possible the entry of green world in Morrison's fiction. The chapter will provide a brief survey of her creative output and locate the research gaps and objectives of the present study. The third and the fourth chapters will focus on the analysis of the novel which appeared in the 70s and 80s respectively. The fifth and the sixth chapters will be a detailed analysis of the novels that appeared in the 90s and the first decade of the 21st century. The last and the seventh chapter will be the summing up of the whole argument which will be followed by a list of select bibliography.

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