CHAPTER IV
A STUDY OF SELECT ASPECTS OF FEMALE ALIENATION IN
ANITA DESAI AND TONI MORRISON

The experiences of two women writers writing across the continents and who belong to differing social backgrounds and cultures cannot be equated and reduced to a parallel study of one matching the literary production of another. Each of the writers would have to be analyzed in a specific socio-cultural context which has moulded and shaped their imagination and creativity. Anita Desai and Toni Morrison both born in the thirties, with roughly a marginal six years separating them, focus on a uniform subject-Woman. The range of women they realize in their fiction is attributed to their authenticating experiences which are mostly their own. Like their characters who drift in a world with no moorings, the writers lives have taken several shifts and turns before they have secured themselves amidst an alien culture and social mores.

Anita Desai, a distinguished, second generation, Indo-Anglican, writer has undoubtedly carved for herself, a distinct niche in the contemporary fictional world. For the first time perhaps, a writer opens to the hidden vistas, to the inner reality of women psyche, laying bear the complex working of a feminine mind, its senses and sensibility sweeping through the unconscious, exploring the known and hidden. Being a woman, Anita Desai’s fiction undertakes to do exactly what Helene Cixous….. says in The Laugh of the Medusa, “...fly the coop, take pleasure in jumbling the order of space, in disorienting it, in changing around the furniture dislocating things and values, breaking them all up, emptying structures, and turning propriety upside down” (54).
Anita Desai's fiction explores the inner realms of the female psyche which is the most controversial aspect of feminist fictions. A common notion is that through the decades the male constructing the female psyche has infused it with their own structured patriarchal views about women, with women characters largely evolving out of their conception of women. For the first time, a writer explodes the Indian women’s psyche to unveil some of the prejudices in the traditional approach to the understanding of gender oppression and psyche of female folk.

Anita Desai was one writer who was a class apart, whose novels defy any kind of compartmentalization or categorization as women centered novels. They probe with a scalpel like intensity into matters that constitute daily life. The kind and manner of alienation these women sink into will be the subject of this study. Agreeably alienation is a condition that is more of a human predicament, but the alienation experienced by women needs to be addressed, as Indian women living in a highly organized patriarchal society, encounter a different set of concerns and issues that is not similar to the alienation experienced by the male. Alienation takes the form of “the alienation from oneself, from one’s fellow men and from nature the awareness that life runs out of one’s hand like sand, and that one will die without having lived, that one lives in the midst of plenty and joyless” (Fromm 1970:86). Living in a patriarchal society, women are pushed deep into a private sphere, or living in an unequal society, they have to fight for a ‘space’, for their rights to be assertive, independent and have control over their lives. It has rightly been pointed out that, when women move out of their traditional roles of mother and wife, they are obliged to enter the space, “already occupied by the male sex” (quoted R.S.Pathak, 92).
Anita Desai’s novels have been selected for this study research as her main force is the deep exploration of sense and sensibility, grappling with the inner realities, an innate perception of the psychic reverberation of her women characters. Her writings are a result of her dissatisfaction with novelists who took interest in the ‘outer’ rather than the ‘inner’ world preferring the social to the psychological novels. Instead she expresses her own desire for wanting to write:

My writing is an effort to discover underline and convey the significance of things. I must seize upon that incomplete and seemingly meaningless mass of reality around one and try and discover its significance by plunging below the surface and plumbing the depths, then illuminating those depths till they become more lucid brilliant and explicable reflection of the outside world. (quoted in Shyam M. Astani 78)

She reveals frequently that her novels be described as ‘purely subjective’ and containing a personal vision compared to the observation of social happenings. As she expressed to an interviewer that “every human being’s territory is very very small and all that a writer can do is to explore a very tiny section of this territory” (Jain 14).

Anita Desai's novels succeed in the minute depiction of female psyche, detailing womanly aspects accurately. Instead of the historical or social aspects or giving mere statistical details, Desai is fully absorbed with eliciting the humane heart with all its internal dilemmas, conflicts and confrontation with itself. Anita Desai today has emerged as one of the prominent writers, and she is one of the favored authors among researchers, whose novels have been subject of research. Among the many themes that underlie her fictions, alienation has been identified as a central motif that informs most of her
fictions. The subject of alienation in Desai’s novels is also a much researched topic, however a comparative aspect of the female alienation present in her novels with another black writer, Toni Morrison who presents a similar female predicament in her novels would throw more insights into the two writers both, wrestling with a same dilemma across continental cultures.

In dealing with the problem of Black invisibility and namelessness, the Black alienation suffered by the Black women is brought out by Toni Morrison in her novels. The three novels taken for analysis reveal three factors of alienation which self-divides the characters, these female characters namely Pecola, Sula and Sethe provide examples of the fractured and amputated psyche, with its ideology and yearnings. Morrison’s first novel, *The Bluest-Eye* (1970) tells of "a little black girl who wanted to rise up and of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes" (Linda, 138). The novel reveals the tragic effect of racial prejudice on the black girl, Pecola Breedlove who longs recognition for as ‘somebody’ in this arid world of nothingness. Tragically Pecola is considered a natural black outcast and as Trudier Harris points out, “Pecola seems doomed whatever she does resort to, she is considered crazy and if she chooses to live in the real world, there is no place for her....”(BE 78).The opening of the novel with its, Dick and Jane-situation foreshadows Pecola’s devastating alienation. The acute psychological and social effects of the white standards of what most of her friends, family and neighbors believe that “white is right” leaves Pecola with the haunting passions for the blue eyed beauty of Shirley temple, in fact she lives the blues twenty-four hours a day, through each of the long minutes drawn out in each of those hours. Pauline and Cholly Breedlove are familiar with the forms of caring and sharing implicit in the Afro-American culture, but their move to the North also subscribes them to manners and behaviour alien to their nature, the binding chains of continuity is broken in this unseeming world of chaos and insecurity.
Pecola and Cholly must therefore exist in a world of fragmentation, in a world where Mrs MacTeer and Poland might show signs of the more sustaining Southern black culture, but which they cannot effectively transmit to the Breedlove children. They, like other characters in their isolated existences in the novel are led together by cultural forces stronger than all of them, but the strands of that cultural net keep breaking away from Pecola to slip her back unto a sea of confusion about herself and about her place in the world of Loraine, Ohio.

Pecola’s tragedy is her absolute alienation from the family friends and the black community of Lorain. The small black town can only make Pecola a butt of its joke and derive sadistic pleasure seeing her ruined by her own family. Even her friends Cluadia and Frieda distance themselves from the ruin that befalls Pecola, As the two recount “own astonishment was short lived...only veils” (BE 149).

Strangely it is after Pecola slips into total madness, she finds for herself a friend who believes in her and gives her the security and safety that she had never known before. She loves this newly won friend who assures her that she has the bluest eyes in the world. As a little Black girl, all the odds are against her, as girl she is unable to protect herself against her father who uses her “as a buffer for venting and all his hatred for the white men” (118). Her racial colour Black does the rest, as Shelly Steel puts it “to be Black was to be a victim; therefore not a victim was not to be a Black” (Morrison, 1969).

Toni Morrison undoubtedly is a black woman writer and a woman of multiple talents but is decidedly a monoculturalist of international standing, determined to depict the trauma of the Black community who migrated to the North in a bid to escape the oppression of the south. Unfortunately there too,
they are subjected to an existence of mistrust and alienation. Battered, bruised and beaten beyond what they can actually tolerate strangely some of the complex difficulties the Blacks have to confront emerge from the repressed psychic dislocation of their slavish existence. Their intense emotional hatred of their white oppressors, along with their inherited sense of failure, as the incident during which Cholly is bullied by the two white men during his sexual act;

Sullen, irritable, he cultivated his hatred of Darlene. Never did he once consider directing his hatred toward the hunters. Such an emotion would have destroyed him. They were big, white, armed men. He was small, Black, helpless. His subconscious knew what his conscious mind did not guess-that hating them would have consumed him, burned him up like a piece of soft coal, leaving only flakes of ash and a question mark of smoke. He was, in time to discover that hatred of white men—but not now. Not in impotence but later, when the hatred would find sweet expression. For now, he hated the one who had created the situation, the one who bore witness to his failure, his impotence. (BE 118)

Later in the novel, in a pathetic retaliation, in a spillover of his repressed anger he confuses the same guilt and impotence rises within him in a sequence of revulsion, guilt, pity and then love. “The hauntedness would irritate him the love would move him to fury”(127) and in a confused state of anger guilt and tenderness, he rapes his own daughter, in a gesture painful to him and her. While on one hand, it can be argued as Nillie of Mckay says:
The Bluest Eye makes a powerful attack on the relationship between western standards of female beauty and the psychological oppression of Black women, and that Pecola Breedlove’s Blackness condemns her to ugliness and lovelessness of Morrison provides an expose of the ‘ugliness of Black poverty, powerlessness and loss of positive self concept. (3)

Nothing prepares the readers for the rash, ruthless act of a father abusing his own helpless, passive daughter of eleven. Pecola is driven into madness, when she feels her mother’s rejection of her Black daughter, for the white little girl in pink. Lacking her manners love and concern, Pecola is a much deprived child. Her father is a person she can hardly relate to, as he is a man entangled in a "myraid other humiliation, defeats and emasculations"(BE 32), and unable to negotiate his own shortcomings, he is trapped passively in a inferiority complex, fretted over by his innate impotence and guilt of not being able to act. Her brother Sammy distances himself from Pecola, like her being ignored or despised by school, her teachers and classmates alike. "She was the only member of her class who sat alone at double desk" (BE 34).

Morrison herself had come from a long line of hard working, industrious black people who had actively engaged themselves in fighting against racial oppression and inferior social and economic status. Born on Feb 18\textsuperscript{th} 1931 as chloe Anthony Woford, and changing it to Toni while studying at Howard university, a series of stress filled happenings like a marriage, two sons, a divorce, an eighteen month return to Lorraine were aspects that eventually pushed her unto writing. In a situation very much like Sylvia Plath Morrison took to writing and she chose to write her novels as soon her the children were put to sleep. With the publication of her first novel The Bluest Eye in 1970 to
Love in 2003, Morrison has explored that "Neither race, class, or gender, precluded opposition to inhumane conditions" (Nellie McKay 3)

Harris Trudies interprets Pecola’s state in The Bluest Eye to the inversion of the classic to that of 'Cinderella' 'sleeping beauty' and "The ugly Duckling in review of Harris's Fiction and Folklore: the novels of Toni Morrison, Barbara Witcats mentions that “comparing Pecola’s state to the orphan tales of West Africa would have resumed in a more holistic exploration”, for The Bluest Eye revalues aloud the psychic trauma experienced by many black girls who grow up in a culture where blue eyes and blonde hair are viewed as the culmination of beauty. Pecola longs for Blue eyes but ends in visible madness which becomes an impossible longing.

Toni Morrison aimed to capture the relationship that black women have historically shared with one another. In Afro-American culture and in the black church, ‘sisterhood’ held a larger meaning. In Toni Morrison’s novels, we find her characters sharing their exploitation, despair, anger hatred and sexual harassment openly. Poverty and discrimination in employment have led many Black women into prostitution. The three prostitutes in The Bluest Eye, protect themselves magnificently by their hatred of all white women. Pecola loves them, visits them and runs their errands. We find Claudia as a spiritual cousin of Pecola.

Fiction by women writers constitutes a major segment of the Contemporary Writing in English. Instinctively endowed with a rich tapestry of creative imagination and interpretation, women have been skilled in storytelling for generations. As a perennial mine of churning out tales of folklore, myths and Purana stories, women have inherited the art of storytelling. When the mantle of being the mother of the novel; fell on her, the elements of the
novel were exploited to their fullest capacity. Coming on the scene, the woman novelist Vineta Colly says, “Really neither single nor anomalous”, but she was also more “than a register and a spokesman for her age” (11). It is a fact that she was part of a tradition that originated before her age and has carried on through her own. Patricia Meyer Spacks, in *The Female Imagination* points out that “the difference between traditional female preoccupations and roles of male ones make a difference in female writing” (7).

Anita Desai, an Indian woman writer with a difference appeared on the literary horizon with a distinctive manner of storytelling. Her novels came in a line of continuities. Even before Desai, in the fifties, women writers have been writing for quite a while, like Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawar, Jhahbwala and Attia Hosain. From Ismat Chagtaï, Krishna Sabti, Kusum Ansal, Kamala Das, Mahasweta Devi, Nabaneeta DevSen, Indian Writers have been writing for decades.

Anita's Desai's women are victims of gender, class and sex, while Toni Morrison focuses on aspects of race, color, class, gender and sex. In her own microscopic manner, Anita Desai invades into the unconscious realm of her women tracing their sense and sensitivity, their emotional swings, and taking extreme decisions. Her Fiction rules a small world, women trapped in domesticity, longing for love and affection and yearning for unconditional support and sustenance in relationships. Much like Jane Austen's *Storms in Teacups*, Anita Desai creates an assembly of women-Mayas, Monisha, Sita, Sarah, Nanda, Raka and Uma - and each of them is caught in a most testing and climatic moment of their lives, more intent in depicting the inner realities, the psychic crises and conflicts, the ambition of dealing with any social, political and cultural issue or concern is almost absent in Anita Desai.
Toni Morrison’s fiction on the other hand, deals with macroscopic issues, such as racial identity, obsession with colour the pain of blackness the low class morality and sense of inferiority the marginalization of the black women and the sexual abuse and harassment meted out on them. Anita Desai’s women do not find a supporting or continuing relationship in other women, but Toni Morrison depicts a unique understanding existing among the black women, of course the relationships among the women are not always perfected.

Anita Desai's novels steer clear off the politics of caste or race. Unlike writers like Arundathi Roy or Mahaswetha Devi, Anita Desai stays content within the search of the ‘private sphere’ of the home, the housewife's syndrome, the elements of maladjustment in familial relationships and the related conflicts, as S.P Swain in Indian Women Novelists says:

The house is a recurring image that resonated in the novels of Anita Desai… the house stands for the individual, self divided from within. It is the symbol of despair and desolation. The house image in Desai evokes a sense of desertion and in clear creation, it throws light on the musings of the lacerated self's immune existence. (31)

Monisha in Voices In The City finds her house a virtual prison and an intimidating object Sita, in Where Shall We Go This Summer? finds “the house repulsive, exposing the battered and fractured self of Sita” (WSGS 32). Sita finds the magical island and house built are isolated and illusionary objects that she must finally abandon.

Toni Morrison’s characters occupy a large canvas, where racial tensions simmer to a hating point and impact the characters. As a victim of racism
herself, Toni Morrison novels focus on race relations and the effects of racism
the explorative nature of relationships living in a white society. In her novel
*The Bluest Eye* (1970). Toni Morrion graphically depicts the effects of the
legacy of nineteenth century classical racism for poor black people in the
United States. The novel is a statement on the aspects of class, colour and
racism. The daughter of a poor black family, Pecola Breedlove, internalizes
the white standards of beauty. Her obsession for a pair of blue eyes comes to
manifest her wish to escape from the poor unloving, racist environment in
which she lives. It has to be noted that the mainstream of white western
feminism paid scant attention to the question of race. It has been aptly pointed
out by Sinha.

Racism was seen as secondary to patriarchy and at best, the
problem of non-white women. Many white women took a
liberal, colour blind position which claimed not to see
difference or act upon it. It took a long, hard struggle by
black women to have racism included on the feminist agenda
of Post-colonial women writers. (9)

The white women had a strong tendency to regard racism as an effect of
white privilege. As claimed by some,

...we clearly have a different relationship to racism than white
women but all of us are born into an environment where
racism exists. Racism affects all of our lives, but it is only
white women who can ‘afford’ to remain oblivious to theses
effects. The rest of us have had it breathing or bleeding down
our necks. (9)
Race is often conceived by Toni Morrison as a factor which isolates humans from each other, Morrison writes her novels with the consciousness of living in a “wholly racialized world” (Interview Los Angeles Times October 8th, 1993). She records the Trauma of living a marginalized existence among the dominant Whites. Moreover she explores the experiences and roles of black women in a racist and male dominated society. A reading of her novels is equal to reading the history of racism in America and the oppression of the Black women.

As a literary chronicle and of her race, Morrison has vividly and graphically captured the agonized pain and sufferings of the black women. Regarding the history of the black women, it has aptly been pointed out by Rosenberg:

The Black woman has emerged out of a history of oppression. She survived the long middle passage from Africa to America, bringing with her many of the diverse characteristics of her African mothers—not only did she bring with her the ability to raise strong sons and daughters, but she also brought with her a sense of independence, a knowledge of warfare, and a commitment to the survival of her race. (438)

As the black woman lived and survived in a white society that abused and enslaved her, there existed a certain stereotype of her as a being “matriarchal, domineering, aggressive, permissive superstore overly religious” (439). It is in the black women writers and in the works of others like Bell and Parker, Bellingsley, Cade, Scrutenfield, Davis, Gutlman, Harley and Terbong Penn Hill and Walker that we get a balanced picture of the Black woman.
Writers like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Zora Neale Hursten, and Terry McMillan wrote about the black women's experiences. When Toni Morrison, was awarded the Pulitzer prize for her novel ‘Beloved’, she was asked why she portrayed harsh confrontation between black and white she said:

I feel personally sorrowful about black-white relations- a lot of the time because black people have always been used as a buffer in this country between powers to prevent class war, to prevent other kinds of real conflagrations.... But in becoming an American from Europe, what one has in common with that other immigrant is contempt for me...it’s nothing else but color. Wherever they were from they would be together. They could all say, ‘I am not that. So in that sense, becoming an American is based on an attitude; an exclusion of me and cultural isolation. (Interview with Bonnie Angelo 124)

The social exclusion and cultural isolation from the white community was something the blacks found hard to bear. The physiological and psychological alienation that shrouds them is complete. This segregation is extended to even small gestures, “Black people were not allowed in the Park and so it filled our dreams” (BE 82). Virginia Woolf in ‘A Room Of One's Own’ frets and fumes against the preferential treatment meted out to the women.

Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf, there was the path, only the fellows and scholars are allowed here, the gravel is the place for me. (29)
Women were not admitted to the library unless accompanied by a fellow of the college. Sparse Spartan diet was given to women, the fate of Shakespeare's sister Judith was pathetic, women denied access to writing as a profession, were a few aspects that made Woolf rage against the 'intellectual alienation' that was forced on women. If in the 1880's a white woman was to suffer an oppression of this kind, for the black woman who was a triple victim of race, colour and sex, the many years of suffering and endurance had been long and arduous, the climb to freedom, challenging and formidable.

Writing serves as a therapeutic function for both the writers, Anita Desai shakes the lid off the female protagonists in her novels to map the “unexplored realm of the female psyche, the poignant evocation of human predicament and the sensitive apprehension of the existentialist vision of "anguish, abandonment and despair” (Sartre, 57). Her novels are peopled with anglicized middle class women in contemporary India, as they are alienated from mainstream existence in a tradition bound patriarchal culture. This study focuses on her early novels such as *Cry, The Peacock, Voices In The City, Where Shall We Go This Summer*, as these three successive novels which depict the women characters facing an acute dilemma of self-alienation, self-denial, and self-annihilation.

Anita Desai has presented in a lively manner a sense of alienation in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Sita’s condition is an example of the loneliness of a woman, a wife, a mother – a loneliness conditioned by family and society. Great disaster inclines from the very beginning of her marriage. Sita’s marriage to Raman unsteadily moves to the point of collapse. It actually collapses when Sita goes away to Monari Islands, hoping that she could be saved through some sort of a miracle from giving birth to a fifth child in this hateful and obnoxious world around her. Sita’s mental disturbances are the direct result of a clash between the hypocritical world and her inherent honesty.
that resists any such compromise. Marital disharmony clearly strikes us in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Sita is changed from an ordinary wife and mother into a creature who has “lost all feminine, all maternal belief in childbirth, all faith in it and began to fear it as yet one more act of violence and murder in a world that had more of them in it than she could take”. (WSGS 32)

The most precious mother-child-relationship is transformed here into one of the cruelest forms of persecution. Sita’s marriage to Raman does never get settled through proper understanding and love between them. Her marriage was settled “and finally out of pit, out of lust, out of sudden will for adventure and because it was inevitable, he married her.” (36) Sita is highly sensitive, emotional and touchy. Carelessness on Maneka’s part in breaking all the buds unconsciously rocks her mental peace. Her sons on the other hand used to play roughly. They used to throw their bodies at each other playfully. It was an act of violence and destruction to mentally disturbed Sita. She is so sensitive and emotional that the sights of such unthinking destruction are unbearable to her. She finds herself an alien, who is unable to adjust with Raman and his relatives.

Raman as a businessman, is very true to his business. His busy life ignores Sita. He has some business-minded friends, “They used to visit Raman’s house and talk about business only. Sita did not like their business-mindedness. She once said about his friends. “They frighten me-appall me”. (38) Raman is, “Not an introvert, not an extrovert—a middling kind of man, he was dedicated unconsciously to the middle way” (43). He never ever makes an attempt to understand Sita. Though they live together as man and wife, he is quiet unaware of her feelings, or even understand the basic fact of her existence that she was bored, dull, unhappy and frantic. Sita asserts, “They are nothing-
nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter, Animals” (52). Sexual harassment is clearly visible here.

During the first few years of their married life, they live with his parents and other relatives in their age-rotted flat of Queens Road. Sita never becomes friendly with anyone. She revolts against their subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness. The layers of experience, melancholy and boredom make Sita wait for something;

She was always waiting for an answer a solution. Physically so resigned, she could not inwardly accept that this was all there was to life, that life would continue thus, “inside this small, enclosed area, with these few characters churning around and then past her, leaving her always lon… dull lit, empty shell. I am waiting, she agreed-although for what, she could not tell” (102).

Days roll, she is to expect her fifth baby, but she is not happy. She rebels. She would not wait for it to come, for anything to happen-for happenings were always violent. Sita was in need of the solidity of streets, the security of houses. She never thought of the life she was required to live after her marriage- a life of dullness, hopelessness, boredom and disappointments:

It was as though he had been expressly sent by providence to close the theatrical era of her life, her strange career had lead her out of the ruined theatre into thin sunlight of the ordinary, the everyday, the empty and the meaningless. (128)

She could not accept the real happenings of the ordinary life, the everyday world had grown so insufferable to her that she could think only of
the magic Island Manori, a place again as of release. If reality were not to be borne, then illusion was the only alternative for her.

Anita Desai has made Sita courageous to murmur, “Put up with it? It would be cowardly to put up with it” (201). Sita has realized that marriage and all human relationships are farce. Sita talks about the Muslim woman who was deeply loved by a man in the Hanging Gardens. She deeply perceives the truth of her life “they made me see my own life like a shadow, absolutely flat, uncoloured,’(202). Sita makes compromises for years together, “It all became harder than ever before for me. Very hard this making of compromises when one didn’t want to compromise, when one wanted to revolt” (92). Women who feel isolated revolt. Sita who is a mother revolts against the male smugness and philistinism trampling all finer values in marital life.

Women when they feel alienated, wish to flee from the place they hate. A similarity between the unhappy married lives of Maya’s father and Sita’s father is suggested when Sita refers to her mother who had run away and was considered dead by her father and relatives. Sita’s mother goes to Benares due to the scant attention and negligence of her husband. Maya’s mother has also undergone a painful tragic life. There are also prominent illustrations of maladjustment in marital life and forced women to say “Great No” in their lives.

For Toni Morrison writing about both the black and black women's tradition, “her novels are a rejection of white patriarchal modernism and are radical revisions of the race and male centered Afro-American, literary tradition and aim to liberate the latter from the social realism unto which it has long been mused” (Nillie Y. Mckay, 2). As a victim of racial prejudice and class consciousness in Pecola Breedlove we encounter “a young black on the
verge of madness seeks beauty and happiness in a wish for white girls eyes”, and through this character “the author makes the most telling statement on the tragic effect of race prejudice on children” (Frankel, 20). However Russell opines that through her novel *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison has expressed what can happen to a person alienated from positive black traditions. Pauline apes the white culture, she wants to look like Jean Harlem, her daughter Pecola is further removed from the black community by longing for the ‘bluest-eyes’, which would gain her entry into a world which does not want her.

Explaining their purpose in writing novels, Anita Desai claims that she found in the contemporary fiction writers, "a lack of imagination, courage, nerve or gusto- the satirical edge, the ironic tone, the inspired criticism, or the pyrrhic response that alone might have been content to record and document” (Quest 65, April-June 1970, P.43). Toni Morrison confesses that she had felt a sense of loss, a void. She filled this vacuum so that the women she knew, as well as herself, could speak, take their place in the telling, “there were no books about me, I didn't exist in all the literature I had read this person, this female, this black did not exist -center-self” (Russell 45). Both the writers wrote obviously to get out of the social box as isolated individuals, wanting to connect with other women comprehending their difficulties as women and depicting and creating the real, genuine authentic next door woman, who would serve as a role model to the readers both positive and negative.

The paradigm of white vs. black is an essential conflict that courses through the novels of Toni Morrison. As Cynthia Davis, points out:

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. The destructive effect of the white society can take
the form of outright physical violence but oppression in Toni Morrison’s world is more often psychic violence. She rarely depicts white character, for the brutality here is less a single act than the systematic denial of the reality of black lives. (323-24)

Toni Morrison's novels are replete with themes of sexism and racism which as system of societal and psychological restrictions have critically affected the lives of Afro- American women. The interrelated terms sex and race have so ingrained themselves in the consciousness and history by America that all black women, centered novels lend to address these two vital factors without fail. Alongside the concept of class, has emerged as a major factor for the suppression of the blacks, who were relegated to an underclass in America by virtue of their race, worse so, for the women who were relegated to a separate cast by virtue of their sex, the novels of the black women novelists from 1892 to the present have continued to analyze the relationship between class, race and gender.

Pecola Breedlove- the black girl who desires for the bluest eyes, belongs to a family that is poor and virtually cut off from the normal life of a community. The Breedloves strongly believe in their own worthlessness typified by their condition full of violence, ugliness and poverty of their front house. Pauline simply hates the sordid surrounding that envelops her. The ugliness of her house, her daughter, her family, herself inclusive and blames her blackness and poverty for the sense of their unworthiness. She aims to reject her blackness and poverty through rejection of her daughter, instead.

She aspires to the polished copper and sheen of the kitchen she works in where everyone is clean, well-behaved and pretty. For her any violation of that paradise by anyone, even her daughter,
is paramount to a crime. The Mother’s own internalization of the desirable woman as beautiful, well-taken-care of cudded, results in her hatred of her own daughter, who by virtue by her blackness and her poverty cannot possibly obtain such a standard. (Black Feminist Criticism 74)

Freida and Claudia MC Teer’s Mother is just one level above the Breedloves economically. She manages to retain her self-respect despite her love of Shirly Temple doll’s ‘good hair’ and bright skill. She together with her women friends form their own community, “as they are precariously on the edge between Mrs Breedlove’s total alienation from any community and their desire not to work and to own a neat home like Geraldine” (75).

Morrison depicts women positioned in a hierarchy according to the order of their homes and their skin colour. Maureen Peal with her light skin is a dream girl, lives in a fine house and is viewed as a Princess. Geraldine is slightly darker than Maureen. She hates anything associated with blackness, she maintains a rigid home and she “expels Pecola from her house, for this black girl with a nappy hair represents to Geraldine racial and class delineation” (74).

Pecola’s descend into madness is a result of the racial rejection, sexual exploitation and class depression, factors that enforce her state as a pariah, forced to the edge of the town, where she goes,

Walking up and down, up and down… Elbows bent hands on shoulders, she… She is last seen searching the garbage, the childhood betrayed, “much, much, much too late for anything. (BE 164)
Morrison’s Second novel *Sula*, depicts a woman completely alienated, pushing the idea of the black woman as a pariah even further while Nel settles to a life of marriage with Jude, Sula chooses the ‘rebel way’, a ‘willing pariah’ Sula refuses the traditional role and “she steps outside the cast of woman, beyond and class, definition within that cast when she insists on making herself” (S 76). Further "she defines herself outside of the sex, class, race definitions of the society, that she becomes a pariah in her community has mind to do with her resistance to any clearly recognizable definition of a woman that the Bottom can tolerate” (S 76). Sula defies the normal, and asserts the deviant, fragmented and is severed from the ‘self’ ‘the center’, she drifts in a limbo, with no social security of the black community of which she is a member or the cultural moorings of the traditional model of the woman as helpmate, mother and housekeeper. “Sula could signal her ‘rebellion’ by going to bed with men as frequently as she could”, (122), exiled from her community for her evil; Sula explodes the silence leaped on her through her sexuality:

There in the center of that silence was not eternity but the death of time and a loneliness so profound the word itself had no meaning for loneliness assumed the absence of other people and the solitude she found in that desperate terrain had never admitted the possibility of other people. (123)

Sula in particular is upset by what Nel had become, now, ‘Nel belonged to the town and all of its ways’ (120), the notion that Nel too behaved the way, others do both surprise and saddens her for “Nel was one of the reasons she had drifted back to medallion” (120). Despite her heroic defiance about “whatever burning in me is mine” and “I’ll split this town in two and everything in it before I’ll let you put it out” (93). As Robert Grant aptly points
out the “Sisyphean estrangements sound the extremes of existential anguish” (93) and these rebellious identities emerge from unfathomable psyche.

Many Black feminists point to specific differences in the history of Black and White women's experiences. Singular difference is that the black women have never been denied the access to productive labour as with the leisure class white women. To effect, black women have laboured strenuously to feed their families in cases of the black man abandoning the family, the black women look on the entire burden of their family. Nel exemplifies this spirit of the hard working who slave for the welfare of the family on the contrary Sula chooses to defy the normal, Nel’s and Sula’s similarity come to an end there, the “space, a separateness, between them widens (S 64) and while Nel, the “stronger and more consistent than Sula,”(53), chooses the hard way, “works good for you, it doesn’t do nothing for me”(142). Carolyn Denard rightly points out:

Too much of their time has historically been given owes to the domestic work of making life comfortable for others, resulting on few chances for them to think about or to realize their own self –fulfillment. (173)

Sula identifies her own state with her race. On the death bed she tells Nel, “I know what every colored woman in this country is doing”, Dying, just like me” (S 143). Sula strikes at the enveloping loneness, “by drawing men to her, not to make somebody else, but to make herself” (92). Her act condemns her to becoming a pariah knowing well the entire community despised her and “believed that they framed their hatred as disgust for the easy way she lay with men” (122). She thrives in the misery and deep sorrow, a sadness that she
yearned for.., when she went to bed with men as frequently as she could” (122). Nel accuses her,

“You laying there in that bed without a time or a friend to your name having done all the dirt you did in this town and you still expect folks to love you?” (145).

The hoarded up window with four wooden planks with the steel rod slanting across them becomes symbolic of the self-abstinence that Sula puts between herself and the outer world. She fiercely asserts to Nel “Yes. But my lonely is mine” (143). She willingly and uncomprisingly accepts her isolation, she wills to face the loneness, and refuses to turn her face away from this stubborn attitude.

The sealed window soothed her with its sturdy lamination its unassailable finality. It was as though for the first time she was completely alone-where she had always wanted to be… free of the possibility of distraction. (148-149)

For Sula, her alienation from self, family, society and the coming is a self derived one, and her forced and voluntary love of her isolated state strengthens her resolve to turn her back on the human barriers of color, class and sex.

Toni Morrison first Novel. The Bluest Eye (1969) pictures the abusive life suffered by a young, innocent African – American girl. Pecola Breedlove. The novel is the story of three black girls – claudia and Friend Mac Teer who are sisters and their friend Pecola Breedlove. Toni Morrison in 1983 told claudia Tate:
I’ve said I wrote *The Bluest Eye* after a period of depression, but the words “lonely, depressed, melancholy” don’t really mean the obvious. They simply represent a different state. The best words for making that state clear to other people are those words. It is not necessarily an unhappy feeling; it is just a different one. “It happened after my father died. It happened after my divorce. It has happened other times, but not so much because I was unhappy or happy. It was that I was unengaged and in that situation of disengagement with day–to–day rush. something positive happened. When you release all the suit then you can fly. (203)

*The Bluest Eye* also examines child abuse in terms of the violence that some African American parents subconsciously inflict on their children by forcing them to weigh their self-worth against white cultural standards. Cholly’s rape of Pecola in effect culminates the psychological, social, and personal depreciation by white society. As his surname implies, Cholly can only breed, not love, and his brutal act against his daughter produces a child who cannot live. Finally, Pecola’s longing for blue eyes speaks to the connection between how one is seen and how one sees. Pecola believes that if she had beautiful eyes, people would not be able to torment her mind or body. Her wish for blue eyes rather than lighter skin transcends racism, with its suggestion that Pecola wants to see things differently as much as to be seen differently, but the price for Pecola’s wish ultimately is her sanity, as she loses sight of both herself and the world she inhabits.

*The Bluest Eye alludes* to earlier black writings in order to express the traditionally silenced female point of view and uses conventional grotesque imagery as a vehicle for social protest. Scholars also have been attracted to
The Bluest Eye by its deconstruction of “Whiteness” along racial, gender, and economic lines, while feminists have equated the violence of the narrative with self-hatred wrought by a wide range of illusions about white American society and African American woman’s place in it. In addition, some have examined the influence of environment on the novel’s characters, identifying stylistic affinities with literary naturalism. Others have offered Marxist interpretations of the novel’s formal aspects in terms of the ideological content of its representation of African American life. Acknowledging Morrison’s achievement in the novel, critics have generally acclaimed The Bluest Eye for deconstructing a number of literary taboos with its honest portrayals of American girlhood, its frank descriptions of intraracial racism or Colorism in the African American community, and its thoughtful treatment of the emotional precocity of prepubescent girls. At the end of Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye, the little black girl Pecola, a victim of incest, is pictured talking to herself in a mirror about her imaginary blue eyes. Pecola epitomizes the American obsession with whiteness.

What we learn is that the father himself has been victimized, in terms of sexuality, by the same whiteness that destroyed his daughter. Abandoned by his father and mother, Cholly has had no opportunity to develop any self-esteem. What little might have existed was destroyed when his first attempt at lovemaking, was interrupted by white men who ridiculed him of his manhood, both physically and psychologically. He turns his anger against himself and the black girl with him since there is nothing he can do to the men who caused the trauma. Such a feeling of powerlessness only reinforces his self-hatred.

His rage eventually turns into alcoholism and repeated conflict with his wife, who seems to him, simply by being his wife, to be a constant reminder of
his ineffectiveness. He would love her, but because love imposes responsibility, he tries to hate her.

This same love – hate complex applies to his children. Moments before the incest, he sits watching Pecola:

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 this eleven – year – old daughter? If he looked into her face, he would see those haunted, loving eyes. The hauntedness would irritate him – the love would move him to fury. How dare she love him? Hand’t she any sense at all? (BE 127)

Somehow he wants her to be responsible for the misery of his life. He expects her to reinforce his self – hatred by despising him. The fact that she loves him only intensifies his despair. Such a reaction is to be expected from what we know of him. But what follows is not. In the midst of this emotional confusion, he sees Pecola make a slight gesture that reminds him of her mother in better days. A surge of tenderness causes him to move nearer his child. This protective gesture then is confused by his hatred, and he sexually assaults her. When she becomes pregnant, he abandons the family.

_The Bluest-Eye_ (1970) tells of "a little black girl who wanted to rise up and of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes" (Linda, 1887, 138). The novel reveals the girl, Pecola Breedlove who longs for as ‘somebody’ in this arid world of nothingness. Tragically Pecola is considered a natural black outcast and as Trudies Harris points out, “Pecola seems
doomed whatever she does if she resorts to, she is considered crazy and if she chooses to live in the real world, there is no place for her…”(78).

The opening of the novel with its, Dick and Jane-situation foreshadows Pecola’s devastating alienation. The acute psychological and social effects of the white standards of what most of her friends, family and daughters believe that “white is right” leaves Pecola with the haunting passions for the blue eyed beauty of Shirley temple, in fact she lives the blues twenty-four hours a day, through each of the long minutes drawn out in each of those hours… Pauline and Cholly Breedlove are familiar with the forms of caring and sharing of African American culture, but their move to the north also subjects them to manners and behaviour alien to their nature, the binding chains of continuity is broken and in this unseen world of chaos and insecurity,

Pecola and Cholly must therefore exist in a world of fragmentation, in a world where Mrs Mac Teers and Poland might show signs of the mere sustaining Southern Black culture, but which they cannot effectively transmit to the Breedlove children. They, like other characters in their isolated existences in the novel are led together by cultural forces stronger than all of them, but the strands of that culture net prevents Pecola and pushes her back into a sea of confusion about herself and about her place in the world of Loraine, Ohio.

Toni Morrison highlights the harsh confrontation between the black and white. She feels personally sorry about the Black-white relationship. Black people have always been used as a buffer in the country. She was annoyed to see the Blacks bearing the brunt of everybody’s contempt. That is why she has dedicated Beloved to 60 million people. Indeed, Beloved is her prolonged meditation on the travel accounts of her people in The Congo-a wide river
which served as a watery grave. Slaves struggled under white masters who treated them as animals. There is a description of a woman who had to wear a bell contraption so that she could be heard when she moved. Slaves those who worked in sugar cane fields were forced to wear masks with holes for eyes. It was so burning to them that when they took them off, the skin would peel off. Presumably, these things were to keep them from eating sugarcane. Such incidents could be also considered as a key to Toni Morrison to write *Beloved* which was published in 1987 – it was the best seller and in 1988 it won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

Toni Morrison became the first black woman writer to hold a named Chair at an Ivy League University. She received the Noble Prize for Literature in 1993. She was the eighth woman and the first Black woman writer to receive the prize. The Black American Women’s struggle for survival and liberation has been won against the dual tradition of racism and sexism in America. Shirley Chisholm, the first black American Congresswoman, while recognizing the power of both tradition asserts that “of my two handicaps” being female put many more obstacles in my path than being black.” (Unbought and unbossed 12)

Toni Morrison wrote *Sula* in 1973, when great activism informed the lives of African Americans who were involved in the equal civil rights and opportunities. The novel addressed issues of racism, colour and class struggle of the oppressed African Americans. Morrison depicts how people faced with racist situations have to somehow survive, even grovel to the whites as Helene does on the train heading through the south. When American sociologists started exploring the theme of alienation systematically in the 1950s and 1960s, they discovered that those, the highest alienated were precisely, aliens, immigrants or members of minority groups who were marginal to the mainstream of American life. This lead to the formulation of a new
“postmodern” body of alienation theory at the individual level, alienation is said to occur where there is a clash between one’s own self-definition and the identity assigned to one by a larger society. The victim experiences and internalizes the various oppressions heaped on them as a result of racism, sexism and ageism. Female alienation in particularly in *Sula* is due to the reason that Sula alienates herself from her own culture brought about by the rejection of people of her own race who abide by different cultural standards.

As with *Sula* Toni Morrison sets here novel *Beloved* in an alienated world of slavery. Here again the characters share alienation and exile either psychologically or physically amidst a race of whites who secure or enjoy a sense of belonging. Sethe is isolated by her own community who cannot comprehend her committing the act of infanticide. Sethe is forced to endure the hostility of the Black community which completely ostracizes her. Like Sethe, Paul D undergoes torturous experiences, the oppression and torment from the whites which lead to his alienation from his community. However in their state of oppressed alienation Sethe and Paul D launch on several mechanisms to deal with their alienated state. Sethe does her utmost to bury her past into the deep unconsciousness, while Paul D locks away his memories and seared emotions in his imagined “tobacco tin” and both find in each other, a comradeship and a togetherness which help them to sustain and support each other in a kind of unique kinship. Denver for her part attempts to rescue her mother from self-disintegration. She understands that she has to leave the house and get a job, to save her mother from death. Her establishment in the community helps Denver mature into an independent adult and she redisCOVERs what is perhaps the most successful strategy for adult development. She replaces the solitary maternal bond with a larger community of adults and opens herself to an empathetic network of fellows. Denver is eventually a survivor as she learns to differentiate herself from her mother and to counteract sethe’s disintegration.
Toni Morrison’s novels emerge from a larger canvas of experiential dilemma, first of all her Black characters are primarily victims of race, the Black versus the whites, while the whites remain the dominant ones, the Blacks were subject to untold cruelties and violence which prevented them from aligning with the mainstream of American socio-cultural mores. Their colour being Black has further alienated them from the western standards of lifestyle. Being a dormant class, the Blacks were the ‘mules’ of the white world, subject to sexual abuse and exploitation. Hence Morrison’s novels deal with authenticating the history of the blacks, particularly the Black women thrice victims of a social system.

Toni Morrison working on Black Book was obsessed with the brutality faced by Black Americans under slavery. She was found seated in Spike Harris’ apartment, with a heavy and melting heart, reading newspaper stories two or three hundred years old. It is said that Morrison found in an article of 1856 the story of a runaway slave Margaret Garner, who cut the throat of her own daughter rather than see her go into the caverns of slavery. This true life episode inspired Toni Morrison pour out her heart which was filled with sorrow for her enslaved race. Toni Morrison throws light on the brutality and injustice of the white masters. While doing research for the Black Book, Toni Morrison was very much drawn towards Margaret Garner who escaped with her four children from her master in Kentucky to Cincinnati, Ohio.

But when she was tracked down by the slave catchers sent by her masters, Margaret Garner tried to kill her children whom she believed could escape the humiliating chains of slavery. Brooding over this true story, Toni Morrison decided to write a novel of life. Her heroine Sethe reflects Margaret Garner. She runs away from her cruel masters. She kills her baby, she does not
want her child to become a slave in future. She tries to hit Denver against a wall when Stamp Paid runs in and saves the infant from Death.

On the other hand, from an Indian context, Anita Desai creates a spread of characters like Maya, Monisha, Sita Nanda kaul and Bim who are alienated characters and who as Tate points out, “fail to transcend their self-evolved roles” (73). She points out that “the problems these heroines confront are not totally the creation of the masculine world but outcome of their deepest probing of the feminine consciousness: the conflict between attachment and detachment …” (127). As with Toni Morrison the most significant social aspect that Anita Desai focuses is on human relationships, particularly the institution of marriage -in the novels where woman is the protagonist. Marriage emerges as a patriarchal institution to trap women, from which she has to recover but to languish in misery. In both Toni Morrison and Anita Desai, the men are irresponsible giving into easily abandoning their women and children in crucial crisis, either physically or emotionally with the women bearing the entire burden of the family. In the three select novels of Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye, Sula and Beloved, the women are left with no sustaining support from their men, in certain situations, the men tend to be above the women and children harassed sexually, to the crude fact of fathers raping their own children. Anita Desai projects no such themes of incest in her novels, but depicts a range of men who are withdrawn, introverts, who pay no heed to the demanding relationships of their counterparts as Dr.C.V.George says “Every attempt the woman makes to redefine herself inevitably ends up in lack of communication” (160) This leads to an alienation of sorts, with the women finally succumbing to it, or simply compromising to the situation, as there are no other means out of the marital trap. As rightly pointed out by Agarwal:
Most of the women created by Anita Desai have some or the other trait which psychologists would love to analyze. They strikingly appear as individuals and gradually get subsumed as types of women in conflict with their environment… Anita Desai thus has not simply created situations and characters to populate her pages but is seriously concerned with the predicament of an individual woman in each of her novels trying to explore here inner self for realization. (112)

As Toni Morrison’s novel *Love* paraphrases, most of Anita Desai’s women yearn for love, understanding, care and concern from their men, but in a society in which men dominate, women are either driven mad or compelled to commit suicide. The husband – wife, alienation engendered by the temperamental incompatibility between the two which is an important existentialist theme that repeats itself very prominently in Anita Desai’s fiction particularly her fourth novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*. This marital divide is witnessed between Maya and Gauthama in *Cry, The Peacock* and Raman and Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*.

In her novels, Anita Desai portrays the social and cultural habits and taboos which underline the life of Indian marriage is an inevitable trap for Indian women, which involves the intimate and extended members of the family and the issue of divorce, practically remaining non-existent, the demented Maya has her own logic in resorting to kill her husband as a man who does not care for life, who dreaded passion and who was detached would not miss life. Sita too in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* feels as sort of resentment. As Mani Meiter points out:
The identity clash between Sita and Raman centres around the theme of tradition. VersModernism. While the first is represented by her father and the Manori island, and the latter by Raman and Bombay. What emerges from this absurd context is “confusion, frustration, disintegration, disillusionment, meaninglessness and rootlessness as R.S.Pathak suggests in his study of “The Alienated protagonist in the Indo-English Novel. (115)

In feminist literature, a vital distinction is made between sex and gender while the term ‘sexuality’ refers to the realm of sexual experience and desire – referring to a person’s sexual orientation (as heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual). Gender refers to:

Ways of seeing and representing people and literature based on sex difference While sex itself is a biological category, female or male, gender is a social or cultural category influenced by stereotypes, what female and male behaviour that exist in our attitudes and beliefs. (Amanuddin 217)

In all cultures around the globe women are shrouded in stereotypes which are gendered. Generally as women share a biological and emotional bonding with their children, they have been forced to confine themselves to the ‘private sphere’ of the domestic and household regions. Violence or crime are frequently gender – based and used by the patriarchy to repress the woman and keep her in her place. Both the fiction by Toni Morrison and Anita Desai are replete with gender ascription of the woman which severely confines her potential to be creative. Women never necessarily transcend their immanent state but usually end up on a note of compromise, adjustment and flexibility,
despite the concepts of gender, class, colour, or race, certain experiential aspects combine to subjugate women which is also a current predicament women are unable to surmount.

Alienation, whatever gender connotations may be assigned, it is also that we alienate ourselves from the “Species life” by which … we deny the sociability that is the essential characteristic of the human species. Alienation should therefore be understood as an active process engaged in by us all, irrespective of class, gender ‘race’, sexual orientation” (International sociology’s Association, 1998). As much as we can argue, alienation sans sex, gender or other, ideological associations, a concept on female alienation is emerging to reveal that the male and female species of the human sexes experience certain emotions quite differently. Anita Desai has claimed in an interview that she portrays her characters as individuals, “facing single handed, the precious assaults of existence” (The Times Of India) kaskari points out:

Tension, worries, depression, disappointment anxiety, and fear become their lot and they lose their sense of sanity and mental poise for example Maya in *Cry, The Peacock*, Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* and Monisha in *Voices In The City*... Some characters like Monsiha and Maya are unable to reconcile with alienation and meet with a tragic end. (3)

As a graduate student at Cornell in 1955, Chloe Wofford who later became Toni Morrison had worked for her master’s thesis, on exploring manifestations of alienation in the works of William Faulker and Virginia Woolf, Morrison defines alienation with its attendant isolation as the defining
literary theme of the twentieth century and explores the two authors’ differing treatments of it. Morrison, writes that Alienation is not Faulkner’s answer to the problems of modern life and it hardly seems to be hers either. Toni Morrison has doubtlessly expressed many opinions in her thesis. She continues to focus the dangers of isolation. However Toni Morrison challenged the inevitability of alienation in several ways, but She defies it most dramatically through her revision of the figure of the veteran suffering from post – traumatic stress. With reference to one of Morrison’s alienated character Sula, Patricia argues that the people of Medallion do not ostracize her because of her difference, but rather integrate her as a necessary communal figure, one that “occupies the place of absences people cannot afford to miss” (40).

As an Indian novelist and short story writer, especially noted for her sensitive portrayal of the inner life of her female characters, several of Desai’s novels explore tensions between family members and the alienation of middle class women. From Maya to Monisha, Amla or Sita, all undergo the state of ‘mental or spiritual agony’ caused by the parallel existence of two or more centres of consciousness in each one of them. Anita Desai is herself as she admits interested in characters “who…. have retreated or been driven into some extremity of despair and so turned against or made to stand against the general current” (The Times Of India.)

Anita Desai once told an interviewer that women novelists’ way of looking at things is “special” and “necessarily so” – because they have a very different sense of values” and are “more concerned with thought, emotion and sensation” (Ram, 32) and the nature of alienation she projects is a very differential one. In another interview with Florence Libert, she had admitted that “its really the solitary individual who has interested me”. (57) The present times have seen the dissolution of old certainties and as Paul Brunton points
out, “never before were so many people plunged in so much uncertainty so much perplexity and unsettlement” (7).

Anita Desai and Toni Morrison have charted a range of female characters caught in the very crisis of the torment of a sensitive soul. Their approach to writing their novels in terms of the locale they belong to, might be conditioned by their perspective, but more than Indian diasporic writers, for the Black women writers, by virtue of their race and gender, their journey to freedom was an heart wrenching ordeal, as they found themselves at two points of intersection with the western culture cutting across the vestiges of African heritage and the other where male-female attitudes are in violent collision. Toni Morrison’s Beloved is a strong indictment of the sense of alienation and race discrimination which the Afro-American women were subject to. As slave mothers, they had little control over either children or the destiny of their family. It was the owners who commonly decide if a slave woman could marry and how long. Sethe, the protagonist of the novel reveals clearly about the long rooted brutality of whites over the blacks. Her daughters, sons and other characters also represent about how they were alienated from their family and became the victims of the racial discrimination of the African race. Sethe’s alienation is not simply the result of a black woman’s separation from her family or her culture centre but also the result of her murdering her own daughter to protect her from living an abject life of a slave. Like Sula, Sethe too is an outlaw. In the character of Denver, Toni Morrison creates the ideal role model of a woman who simply refuses to be cowed down by the weight of racial history, or colour discrimination, she is an intelligent and sensitive girl who could not grow up by years of isolation. Beloved’s increasing malevolence forces Denver to overcome her fear of the world beyond 124 and seek assistance from the community. Her stubborn choice of going out into the town and her attempts to find permanent work and possibly attend college mark the beginning of her fight for independence, self-possession and maturity.
However in the novel *Beloved*, Toni Morrison, unconsciously employs the techniques of existentialism so that her novel *Beloved* conveys the meaninglessness of life and the characters different choices when facing nothingness. Sethe and Paul D are two characters from different time periods, races and classes who suffer vastly different forms of alienation and estrangement from society, but through a series of choices they confront their absurd past, try to connect with the present, regain their lives and build up their identities, thereby making their life meaningful.

As the old adage goes, literature is a reflection of life and women writers strive to create characters whom to emulate and whom not to. Motherhood has been projected as a very important part of the race image of many Black women. They grow up with models of mothers, grandmothers and aunts who have played this role. It is said that the Black mother’s knowledge and endurance of America’s racial hostility and violence are envisioned as strengthening and motivating tools with which she prepares others in her race for self-sufficient and productive lives. Toni Morrison gives two sides of the ‘mothering’ aspects. She does not blindly endorse the scared experience of mother-children relationship. In *The Bluest Eye* she depicts the mother Mrs Breedlove as being repulsive and hateful of her Black daughter Pecola, in preference to the white lovely white children of her employers. On the other hand in *Sula*, there is Eva, who deliberately put her leg under the train to claim insurance to raise and protect her children. Contrarily Anita Desai’s women are at times motherless, and mothers like Sita or Nanda kaul, cannot empathize with the demands of their children. It has been rightly said that Anita Desai creates characters who feel a terrible isolation in the suffocating darkness of their life in which no deep communication is possible like Kafkaesque characters who suffer from the oppressive walls of sounds from which there is no release.