Chapter – 3

Use of Colours
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3.1. SECTION OVERVIEW

The black women, who are trying to define themselves on their own terms, often have to struggle with the “triple-headed hydra” (Marshall, 1985a: 21) of racism, sexism and class bias. Race plays an important role in class determination. One’s colour, often determines one’s mobility in the society. Sexism cuts across all classes and colour lines. In such a situation, the black women find themselves at the bottom of the heap. To boost their morale in particular, and that of the black people in general, and to show them all, their self-worth, Marshall and her contemporaries have created positive images of black people in their works. To this end, Marshall uses diverse techniques; one among them is her use of colours, black and white. She reverses the traditional connotations assigned to these colours, to highlight the lasting values found in African culture.

Section 3.2. points out that the relationship of the West to the rest is vitiated by the colour line. Section 3.2.1. traces how bad connotations have got attached to black colour in the dualistic Western World view. Section 3.2.2. shows how the discourse of ‘race’ has helped in painting black as evil. Section 3.2.3. talks about the role played by Jim Crow Law in perpetrating and intensifying the oppression of the black people. Section 3.3. points out that the blacks, put to shame by the colonizers’ social
practices, have tried to pass for whites; but it does not provide them true sense of identity. Section 3.4. shows that at the centre of Marshall’s re-vision of the world lies the nurturing strength of African culture. Section 3.4.1. describes how Marshall uses colours, such as brown and pink and red, for various purposes, in her novels. Section 3.4.2. points out that Marshall has reversed the connotations given by Conrad, to the black and white colours. Section 3.4.2.1. analyses Marshall’s novels, with a view to find out how she has portrayed Western values, the values of white people. It is brought to notice that excessive materialism of the dominant class, when adopted by the blacks, destroys human relationships and values; that technology, the pride of Western World, is mostly destructive by nature; that racism plays havoc with the lives of the black people, irrespective of the place they hold. Section 3.4.2.2. analyses Marshall’s novels and shows that Marshall has portrayed African culture, the culture of the blacks, in a favourable light. She is found to be speaking in praise of the resilient spirit, an offshoot of their diasporic experiences, found among people of African descent; to be talking fervently about how the black people have grown resistant to oppression, and have raised their voices against injustice in any form; and to be highlighting the nurturing capacity of the community and the ambivalent attitude of the characters towards their communities. Thus, Marshall has divested blackness of badness and invested it with whiteness. She has painted black white and white black.

3.2. COLOUR LINE

Marshall, in an interview, quotes Du Bois, in connection with the relationship of the West to the rest: “The problem of the twentieth century
is the problem of the colourline” (Pettis 1991:123-24). Her novels examine it in all its ramifications; they portray what is happening to the diasporic blacks in their encounter with the racist metropolitan powers. Racism is a wilful state of mind and the racist mind believes that blackness is bad. Negative ideas about blackness have been existing among the whites long before they came to know people who are black. After the enslavement of blacks, “The negative images of blackness were created in an effort to rationalize the destruction of a group of people who had all other human attributes except white skin” (Exum 1974: 12). Jill LeBihan’s reference to the remarks made by bell hooks and Spivak testifies to the existence of the colourline, even today: “...critics such as bell hooks and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak agree that often they are allowed to speak only when it suits a white audience, and only when what they say is what a white audience is prepared to hear” (2001: 138).

3.2.1. Occidental World View

The idea that blackness is bad came into existence only after the reform of Zoroaster, the Persian Prophet (C. 600 B.C). Before him, in the metaphysically oriented tradition, the cyclic view of the universe held sway; the daily round of the sun, the waxing and waning of the moon, the cycle of the year and the rhythm of birth, death, and new birth in the organic world represented a principle of continuous creation. In this tradition, light and darkness alternated and danced together in a world-creating cosmic shadow play. The reform of Zoroaster broke the dream-like spell of this contemplative tradition with its radical separation of light and darkness, together with its assignment to each of an ethical value, the
light being pure and good, the darkness foul and evil. Occidental world view was founded on the reforms of Zoroaster. It believes in the fundamental progressive concept of history; it summons man to an assumption of responsibility for the reform of the Universe in God’s name (Campbell 1960: 24-25). Another dualistic religion, Manichaeism, was founded by Mani or Manes or Manichaeus in Persia in the third century A.D. It holds that the world is a fusion of spirit and matter, the original principles of good and evil; it uses such pairs of irreducible, mutually heterogeneous principles to explain all reality. Manichaen dualism sees matter, flesh and the body as inherently evil (Pappas 2005b: 160). Such a dualistic vision of the world has helped the white people to readily associate blackness with evil.

3.2.2. The discourse of ‘race’

Another factor that worked against the blacks was the discourse of ‘race’, a product of Western science in the eighteenth century. It was debated for centuries within Europe whether blackness was a product of climate and environment, or it was a God-ordained sign of sinfulness. Scientific discourse suggested that it was a biological and natural difference, since, the skin colour of the people of specific races did not change, when they moved to a new location. So, the races were understood to be the expression of a biological hierarchy. Science did not help to shed any of the earlier notions about inferior races. ‘Race’ meant not only people’s skin colour, but also their civilizational and cultural attributes. Black skin was linked with a small brain and savagery (Loomba 1998: 62-63). Writings on African psychology and psychiatry served the need to
define the ‘other’ as firmly other. Psychoanalytic discourse viewed anti-colonial resistance as madness; it pathologized difference. Landrine and Klonoff (1996) say that psychology as a whole has erroneously assumed that African-Americans have little or no culture because it was destroyed during slavery; that psychology has conceptualized African-Americans as a race and not as an ethnic or cultural group like other minorities:

... since its inception, psychology has played a leading role in denying the existence of African American culture; in defining African Americans as a race and nurturing the concept of race; and in attempting to demonstrate that African Americans are intellectually inferior to whites.(7)

Psychology has been terribly consistent in denigrating and degrading African-Americans. Language and literature also have played their part in constructing the binary of a European self and a non-European other.

Addison Gayle, Jr. traces the origin of the connotations of the white and black colours back to Plato. He writes that

the distinction between whiteness as beautiful (good) and blackness as ugly (evil) appears early in the literature of the middle ages – in the Morality Plays of England. Heavily influenced by both Platonism and Christianity, these plays set forth the distinctions which exist today. To be white was to be pure, good, universal, and
beautiful; to be black was to be impure, evil, parochial, and ugly. (1971:41)

Religious, scientific, historical, anatomical, anthropological and psychological myths have been created to justify the colonizer's acquisitiveness and social injustice. In the United States, laws also have been enacted to serve the same end.

3.2.3. Jim Crow Law

Jim Crow Law enforced Racial Segregation in the Unite States South between 1877 and the 1950s. The term was taken from a minstrel-show routine; it became a derogatory epithet for African-Americans. Southern legislations passed laws requiring segregation of whites and "persons of colour" (Pappas 2005a: 185), first on public transportation and later, in schools, restaurants and other public places. Herbert Apthekar points out that

The man-made and ruling-class-made structure of the American system of Jim Crow is indubitable. Segregation, far from being the result of instinctual or natural tendency, clearly is the product of an economic system of special oppression, bulwarked with a complex legal, social, ideological system which justifies such terrible oppression. (1971: 35)

In the United States, "the Black is paid least, fired first, hired last, most poorly housed, least educated, most often ill, most often jailed, and...
he dies earliest” (39). Explanation given for such a condition of blacks in the United States is that it is either a curse of God or a curse of Nature or a curse of Nurture. But, it is not so; it is the terrible consequence of the system of Jim Crow. According to Aptheker, this system of black oppression has been “the greatest single stain” (28) upon the honour of the United States. It is

the greatest single source of human suffering; the greatest single bulwark of political reaction; the greatest single root of spreading moral decay; and the greatest single force producing division and disorganization and ideological weakness in the working class.(Ibid.)

The system of Jim Crow brainwashed the blacks into believing that their lives and culture were nothing, unless they measured up to the standards of white society.

3.3. CHASING THE MIRAGE

Jim Crow system of segregation in the United States made the black people to be ashamed of their difference, the difference in colour. So, most of the coloured people who were light enough to pass for white people and wished to pass, did so. They could get away with it without any complications. There were black people who passed, also by saying that they were born in other places, or of half this or that origin, hiding, trying to free themselves from bondage. They adopted the new false identities and used them as a pass to get admitted into the world of white man’s power and status. Exum recognizes “this clamoring after ‘whiteness’ as a
social disease” and “neurosis” (1974:15). Imitation is no good and the chasing of the mirage does not give them a true sense of identity. In the writings of Marshall and her contemporaries, concern about the problem of ‘passing’ and its complication has extended into a concern for black survival and black unity.

3.4. RE-VISION OF MARSHALL

In Marshall’s novels, two kinds of journey, in different directions, are present; one is, the “journey of ascent to freedom and literacy in the dominant culture’s term” and the other is the “journey of immersion in Afro-American community and tribal literacy” (Kubitschek 1987: 43). The first journey results in social and spiritual emptiness; the second connects the black people with natural or mystical sources of energy that names the self anew. This nurturing strength of African culture is at the centre of Marshall’s re-vision of the world. One of the many sources used by Marshall to express her message is the use of colours.

3.4.1. Use of Colours

3.4.1.1. Uniting Brown

Marshall uses colours for different purposes, in her novels. For example, in Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), the social context is a pre-Civil Rights Movement America of legal segregation based on absolute definitions of “blackness” and “whiteness”. Marshall’s choice of “brown” revises this categorization. The notion of “brownness” links the “brown” peoples of Barbados and New York and all the scattered peoples of African
diaspora (Jones 1998: 597-98). The brown colour signifies other things also; it stands for the acquisitive nature of the West Indian immigrants in the United States; it symbolizes fortification against white racism.

3.4.1.2. Female Pink

Pink colour symbolizes femaleness and self-expression in Praisesong for the Widow (1983b), which is mainly about what happens to Avey’s body as well as her spirit. In the African concept, the spirit and the body are one. Marshall has chosen Avey’s lip as a recurring physical trait. When she describes Avey’s lip, she speaks of “the spillover of raw pink” (10), “the menacing sliver of pink” (14), the “Knife edge of raw pink” (24) and “the no-nonsense edging of pink” (62). According to Jane Olmsted, in Praisesong for the Widow, “the line between pink and black... is the site... for a black woman’s self-expression” (1997: 264). In Brown girl, Brown Stones (1959), Marshall creates an atmosphere of femaleness, by using pink colour to describe Selina and her friends, her friends’ invitation to her, and Beryl’s bedroom in Book IV, “Selina” (160-63).

3.4.1.3. Restrictive Red

Red colour stands for danger and restriction in Marshall’s novels. For example, in The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969), Vere’s car, which kills him in Whitmonday race, is painted red. Leesy disapproves of the car and whenever Allen looks at it, he feels “an apprehension, an undefined dread” (238). In Daughters (1991), Ursa’s abortion, which is largely symbolic, suggests her attempt to cut away from
the restrictive red rock of paternal authority; Ursa attempts, in Marshall’a words, “to come out from under the shadow of that red rock” (Baer 1992: 254-55).

3.4.2. Reversal of Connotations

One of the writers admired by Marshall is Conrad, an accomplished craftsman. For Conrad, whiteness means good and darkness represents evil. But they have different connotations in Marshall’s works. She sees the first as bad and the second as good. She builds upon Conrad’s Eurocentric world-vision and transforms it, to give a re-vision of black culture that can become the basis of strong black pride (Konan 1995). Marshall’s handling of black and white colours shows that she is writing from the Afro-centric point of view. Amani Konan quotes R.G. Billingsley to point out the difficulty of the task faced by the black writers in America:

When one considers that blacks in the United States are imposed upon by a linguistic system which consistently defines them negatively, it becomes clear just how totally necessary it is to seek control over this system of symbols and definitions and yet how difficult it is to attain this control.(3)

Marshall seeks this control; she reworks Conrad and inverts the meaning of whiteness and darkness.
3.4.2.1. Withering White

3.4.2.1.1. Mauling Materialism

In a panel discussion on *The Chosen Place. The Timeless People* (1969), Marshall speaks about her dual vision of the world:

I see on one hand the demise of the West, a demise brought about at their hand.... You almost see a civilization committed in some weird, irrational way to its own end.... On the other, I... see the possibility of a third world... as a kind of phoenix that will emerge from ruins. (Haydn 1970: 24)

Marshall’s works are the expression of her dual vision of the world. Her first book, *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959) is one of the first books written from a black perspective, with a notion that embracing Western values will not lead to self-actualization. As Geta Leseur remarks, “America’s legacy to its people in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* seems to be a mechanized existence in which love is given second place to the almighty dollar” (1995: 50). The Boyces and the other West Indians in Brooklyn have fallen victim to this legacy; it is clearly seen in Silla’s willingness to do whatever is necessary to buy a brownstone house; Deighton’s move from one plan for success to another and the Association motto on the banner of the Association of Barbadian Home Owners and Businessmen which reminds the members that what matters is not the depths from which they come but the heights to which they ascend. As Deighton remarks, “money does talk sweet enough in this man country…” (BGBS : 105). That is why
Silla seems to prefer dollars to love; and that explains the forced marriage of Agatha Steed’s daughter.

The obsession of owning a house makes the Bajans in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* do all sorts of things: “Some working morning, noon and night for this big war money. Some going to the loan shark out there on Fulton Street. Some hitting the number for good money. Some working strong-strong obeah. Some even picking fares…” (64). But, to Marshall’s characters, the big house, a sign of success, rarely brings pleasure. In the case of Silla, the price she has to pay for the ownership of a house is her happy family life. In *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969), both Merle Kinbona and Lyle Hutson own large houses, but, they are not happy. Lyle’s imposing whitestone house is a failure, because “The designer, in trying to blend the old and the new, had failed to select the best from each... it ... could not rise above the profound error and confusion of its design” (54). It’s a mixture of the worst of both Georgian and modern architectural styles. Lyle’s personal life, as his house, is full of confused views. He is a leading black barrister, a senator; is successful, popular and influential in his island’s government. He loves Bourne Island, but he sells it to foreign trade for a pittance. In his personal life also, the same pattern is seen; he is not faithful to his white-skinned wife, Enid; he has a white, married mistress.

Merle’s house, known as “Cassia House”, is “Rambling, run-down, bleak...” (107). She has inherited it from her white father, whom she does not love. She tells Vere about herself and her old car: “We’re both still here, only living ‘cause we ain’t dead, as the old people say” (109). She is
living in that house as a kind of penance for the decadent life she led in England under the patronage of a white woman, the life which brought about her separation from her husband and daughter. So, the mere possession of property does not give her any satisfaction.

The same sense of dissatisfaction is experienced by Avey in Praisesong for the Window (1983), even though her dead husband, Jay, has left her with “the house in North White Plains and the large corner lot on which it stood, and the insurance policies, annuities, trusts and bank accounts... the small sheaf of government bonds and other securities... and most of all the part interest guaranteed her for life...” (88). When alive, Jerome Johnson (Jay) was too intent on the search for wealth and lost all his humanity in the end. Avey, too, has invested so much in material wealth and superficial status that she has lost her connection with blackness. Alerted to what is missing in her life by a dream, while on a Caribbean cruise, Avey abruptly leaves the ship, Bianca Pride (White Pride), to return to her home in North White Plains. While waiting for a plane, she stays in a white hotel. An unexpected journey of grieving and discovery reconnects her with her people and history. The pervasive white colour in Praisesong for the Widow, as in “Barbados”, one of the novellas in Soul Clap Hands and Sing (1961), has a negative connotation. It symbolizes “the artificiality and the spiritual poverty” (Konan 1995: 3) of Avey’s life.

In Daughters (1991), Primus Mackenzie’s material acquisitions – an imported Buick, a palatial home in the best part of town and an imported middle-class American, fair-skinned wife–preclude close identification with ordinary islanders. Primus Mackenzie, the leader of Parliamentary
opposition in Triunion, turns from a radical to a conservative politician, when he accepts the offer of the conservative party, to participate as a token opposition board member on a joint public and private venture for planning and development. The P and D Board comes out with a resort scheme in Government Lands beach. Primus Mackenzie is involved in this sell out; in addition to that, he decides to sell *Mile Trees* and invest it in the scheme. This makes him lose not only his seat in the elections but also his hold over his daughter; makes his wife and daughter his real opponents, from familial and community stand-point.

When it is the loss of a daughter’s respect and regards for her father in *Daughters*, it is the loss of a son for a mother, in *The Fisher King* (2000). Ulene, a member of the upwardly-mobile West Indian Community in Brooklyn, does not have any patience with her son, Everett (Sonny-Rett) who chooses to be a Jazz musician. She wants him to continue with piano lessons, because she associates material security with middle-class acceptability. Her insistence on her son wearing the white mask of customs and values drives away her son forever. It should not be mistaken that Marshall is against material advancement; she is against it, only when it exists at the expense of cultural identity. The same view is held by Kamau Daa’ood, the founder of the *World Stage*, a workshop for the writers, in Los Angeles. He says: “In the U.S. the raw pursuit of materialism overtakes all spiritual sensibilities” (Siddhartha 2001: XII).

### 3.4.2.1.2. Destructive Technology

In Marshall’s novels, the impact of white men’s imperialism and its accompanying technology on the Third World, on nature and on human
beings is portrayed as destructive, just like white world's legacy of mauling materialism. To illustrate this point, Marshall pictures in Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), Selina’s visit to her mother at the war munitions factory where she works. The factories are in a row; the place is a cold, barren wasteland. Her mother works in a “bleak building leaning black against the black sky” (84); she works in a polluted atmosphere where everything and everyone smells of oil. The noise inside the factory, making stuff for the war, is “a controlled mechanical hysteria, welling up like a seething volcano to the point of eruption, only to veer off at the climax and start again” (Ibid.). Even though the new creative machine force has grandeur, it is ugly. The people working there seem to perform a pantomime role in a drama in which only the machines have a voice. Selina feels that “Only the mother’s own formidable force could match that of the machines; only the mother could remain indifferent to the brutal noise” (85). But it is to be remembered that Silla’s formidable force is born out of the trying circumstances she finds herself in, the circumstances which have erased the shy and hopeful girl that Silla once had been. When such a strong-willed woman as Silla is worn down by the factory work, the weak Deighton, who is unable to withstand life’s harshness, is literally devoured by the factory’s machine. Deighton, to make his unpractical vision of a big white house in Barbados a reality, works in a mattress factory. When he tends to the machine absently, it clamps down on his arm, sucks it in and spews it out crushed. The machine does not spare the man who is already crushed inside. It is impersonal in its brutality. The loss of arm destroys Deighton’s dream of a house and eventually his life.
In *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969), again the machines seem to have a life of their own, “destroying human life as impersonally and unpityingly as dropped bombs” (LeSeur 1995: 51). The main industry of Bourne Island is the sugar refinery, owned by Kingsley’s and Company, an English firm. It holds the islanders in serfdom. The canes are “plant representatives of historical forces” (Japtok 2000:5) in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969), as in “To Da-duh, in Memoriam”, one of the short stories in *Reena and Other Stories* (1983c), they are “historically linked to exploitation, death and economic dependency” (Japtok 2000:5), since sugarcane brought in its wake, the Middle Passage. The description of the factory reminds one of the hold of a ship. The workers slave for Kingsley and Sons. One of the workers, Ferguson, is worried over the rollers of the factory, as they are overworked and old and they need replacing, like all the equipment in the factory. But no one bothers about it, except Ferguson, who is helpless. One day the rollers break down and the Cane Vale factory is closed, to the consternation of the poor farmers with canes to be cropped. Both the men (the representatives of colonizers) and the machines have failed them miserably. The rollers of the factory have already taken a toll; when the old Leesy’s husband slipped into the roller’s pit, he was crushed to death.

Leesy associates the factory’s rollers with the Opel Kapitan, Vere’s car. It is an American-German cross breed. She views it with “the most deep-seated distrust, enmity and fear…” (CPTP: 185). To Leesy, all machines have “human properties, minds and wills of their own…” (Ibid.) and they are constantly plotting against those whom they serve. They are for her “the new gods who, in a far more tyrannical fashion than the old”
(Ibid.) demand their sacrifices. She fears and detests the Opel as she does the rollers at Cane Vale. She frowns upon her nephew wasting good money on some old thing the white people in town do not want any more. She thinks: “… from the looks of the thing it don’t mean the boy no good” (186). Others in the island also agree with her view. The car does seem to have a malevolent spirit, like all of Marshall’s mechanical creations: it destroys Vere at the end. During the Whit-Monday race, the Opel self-destructs:

The collapse was so total it seemed deliberate, planned, personally intended. It was as if the Opel, though only a machine, had possessed a mind, an intelligence, that for some reason had remained unalterably opposed to Vere… conspiring against him and waiting coolly for this moment to show its hand. Or perhaps it had nothing to do with Vere. The collapse taking place around him… flowed perhaps out of a profoundly self-destructive impulse within the machine itself, and Vere… was simply a hapless victim.(366-67)

Another victim is Allen Fuso. He “represents an effete civilization that has pledged its soul to the gods of technology” (Bone 1984: 309).

The Opel, with its self-destructive impulse reminds one of the Bomb, the ultimate machine of self destruction. Throughout the novel, in Harriet’s dream appears the bomb’s threat. Though she supports her first husband’s research of the atom bomb, she is haunted by the dream of the mushroom cloud. She often dreams of putting “her hand on top of his on the lever and
together the two of them, perversely, as if driven by an excess of power, committing the monstrous act that could only bring about their own end” (CPTP: 458). So, she divorces Andrew, to wash her hands off from all responsibility.

Another person who dreams of a bomb threat is Avey Johnson, in Praisesong for the Widow (1983b). In the past, Avey used to take all the nightmarish images from the evening news into her sleep with her; her dreams were a rerun of it all. For example, she dreamt of the bomb that exploded in the Sunday school quiet of Birmingham in 1963; amid the debris, she found the strewn limbs of her three daughters, Sis, Annawilda and Marion. After that nightmare, Avey stopped dreaming.

When the destructive nature of technology is symbolized by the bomb in The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969) and Praisesong for the Widow (1983b), it is presented in the form of a ship with its aircraft carrier in Daughters (1991). In Triunion, when the ruling party, the conservative DNP, realizes that the opposite party, the radical NPP, has more chances of winning the elections, it brings in the American battleship Woody Wilson, as a strong-arm tactics. Its presence reminds the islanders of a similar incident in the past:

...we woke up one morning to find the Gray Eminence sitting out in the harbor with its sixteen-inch guns aimed straight at us. It had stopped by at the invitation of the government. And it had brought along a friend. Sitting next to it was this aircraft carrier the size of a football
field. Enough shells and bombs ...to wipe little Triunion from the face of the planet in a matter of minutes.(221)

The Triunion people also remember what happened to their neighbour just a couple of islands away, when the same two friends paid it a visit a few years ago, for the same purpose. That time the guns actually went off and the marines landed to remain there. Following the battleship incident, Mackenzie agrees to serve on the P and D Board of the conservative party and he allows himself to be co-opted by the United States corporate interests. Consequently, he is defeated in the elections.

In *The Fisher King* (2000), references to the destructive tendency of the white people are made, when Ulene Payne reminisces over her past. Ulene and her friend Alva had to wait for the First World War to be over, to leave “the little miserable two-by-four island for big America...” (99). The white people at that time were “gassing and killing each other and calling it a world war never mind is only them fighting” (Ibid.). Thus, Marshall tries to show in her novels that the white man’s civilization has pledged its soul to the gods of technology and the impulse of the Western psyche is destructive and suicidal in nature.

3.4.2.1.3. Discriminating Racism

Paule Marshall dramatizes in her works, the idea that racism is insidious and makes the white racists look bad. What Derrida says about racism is seen practised by the colonizers and their representatives in the fictional world of Marshall. Derrida writes: “Racism always betrays the perversion of a man.... It institutes, declares, writes, inscribes, prescribes.
A system of marks, it outlines space in order to assign forced residence or to close off borders. It does not discern, it discriminates" (1985: 290). This discriminating racist attitude of white America looms large in the background in Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959). In the beginning, Selina does not identify herself with the blacks in the United States and their problems. Only when she is humiliated by a white friend’s mother, she realizes that she too may suffer by being black. This revelation comes through Mrs. Benton. She tells Selina that she had been very generous to a West Indian girl, Ettie, who was her servant. Mrs. Benton insists that West Indians are somehow different from African-Americans. She compliments Selina, saying that she does not even “act colored”; she speaks so well and has “such poise” (237). Further, she adds that “it’s just wonderful how you’ve taken your race’s natural talent for dancing and music and developed it. Your race needs more smart young people like you” (Ibid.). Mrs. Benton sees Selina only as a traditional black entertainer and requests her to say something in her delightful West Indian accent. This first exposure to racist attitude forces Selina to see the life around her in a new light. As Opal Palmer Adisa says “Racism in the US is as prevalent as before, only more subtle; it has, in fact, gone underground, hence it is more lethal, harder to detect and smoke out” (1995 : 35). For the first time, Selina truly sees the full meaning of her black skin. Selina is reminded that after all, she is a black West Indian immigrant girl.

The black woman is not permitted the devious distinction of being feminine, like the white woman. She is not protected or sheltered from hard work. She toils beside her man in the struggle for existence. Only menial jobs are offered to them. Silla and her friends scrub the floors of whites.
Lucky ones have their steady madams. The others wander around the neat blocks or wait in corners for the white housewives to come along and hire them for a half day's work of cleaning their houses. The other jobs that are at their disposal are nursing and factory work. Even the educated black women are not in a better condition. Only very limited number of jobs, such as teaching and social work are available to them. Take the example of Marshall herself. Even though she was a *Phi Beta Kappa* from a fairly competitive school, it took her two years to find an entry-level job on a magazine. It was because she was black, and the kind of job she was looking for was reserved for white girls (Rushin 1985: 16). Not only in the job-front but also in other areas, the discrimination is made to be felt. The idea of beauty as defined by white America is an assault on the personhood of the black woman. The colour and hair problem has cut deep into the psyche of the black woman. Selina is rudely brought back to face reality, from her day-dream of being a beautiful and gentle white girl.

Silla has accepted the conditions of the new land, harsh though they are. But, Deighton refuses to realize his place in the world. Silla talks about how Deighton's mother has educated him in a place-conscious Barbadian society. In that society, place is also determined by caste, and Deighton is black. In the refusal to give him the clerk's job he is educated for, the British have unmanned him even before he is a man. He has to sacrifice so much of himself to succeed in America, but, he is not willing to compromise. Yet, he desires the norm of manhood that America upholds. Even more than Silla, Deighton covets status, prestige, money and some acknowledgement of his manhood. After studying an accounting course for two years, he looks for a job in vain. The stark reality is that
“You can know all the accounting there is, these people still not gon have you up in their fancy office and pulling down the same money as them…” (BGBS : 37). Deighton realizes that everywhere the whites are the same. He tells Selina : “They’s all the same, lady-folks. Here and in Bimshire they’s the same. They does scorn yuh ‘cause yuh skin black…” (71). When he does not get the job, Deighton’s anger gives way to fear and acceptance. Silla scorns Deighton for imitating the ways of the whites. Deighton is a failure not in his own terms, but in the terms of the whites.

The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969) weaves-in the race issue subtly in the entire story. In Bourne Island, the imperial plantation masters, sugar estates owners, newspaper reporters, white, brown and black-faced professionals are on one side and the great mass of the ex-African population, on the other. Most of the people belonging to the second group are stunned into acceptance of the inferiority-superiority principle handed down from the slave plantation. In the folklore of Bournehills, Percy Bryam, the planter, stands for the oppressors and Cuffee Ned, the slave leader who murders him, for the oppressed. Kingsley, the absentee boss, Lyle Hurtson, the black lawyer and Harriet, the white woman represent the continuation of superiority-exploitation principle.

Harriet symbolizes the spirit of the white world. But she denies and refuses to recognize her own racism. For instance, on Harriet’s first evening in Bourne Island, when Lyle touches her arm to detain her after she has decided to retire, she has a strange and fleeting impression that it is not his hand resting on her “but rather some dark and unknown part of herself which had suddenly, for the first time ever, surfaced, appearing like
stigmata or an ugly black-and-blue mark at the place he had touched" (97). She equates black with evil, and fears that she herself is black within. Another instance in which her carefully masked disgust for black skin is revealed is, when she suddenly remembers Alberta, her mother’s black maid. Alberta has stayed with Harriet’s mother, till her death. Now, she is past eighty, living off a liberal pension given by Harriet, through Chester Heald. Once a year she and her brothers used to send Alberta’s young relatives clothes and toys. This gesture of Harriet, like her marrying Saul, a Jewesh social scientist who is working to aid under-developed lands, is another step taken towards disavowal of responsibility for her family’s part in historic slave-trade and their current economic exploitation of Third-World nations. But, as Geta LeSeur remarks, “the historical patterns of racism, privilege, and paternalism are too strong for her to overcome” (2000: 99).

In Praisesong for the Widow (1983b), the racist attitude of white America is hinted at. For example, Jay is doing “Two jobs for the salary of one” (92). Jay’s moustache, modelled on his father’s, is his one show of vanity, his sole indulgence and a shield as well. It is a shield, because

planted in a thick bush above his mouth, it subtly drew
attention away from the intelligence of his gaze and the
assertive, even somewhat arrogant arch to his nostrils,
thus protecting him. And it also served to screen his
private self: the man he was away from the job.(93)

In the racist climate of America, revealing one’s own true black self is not to one’s advantage. It is Jay who actually runs the store and not the
Irishman, the store-keeper; but, Jay has to be careful not to make it appear so. The references to lynching (96), and Jim Crow-seats in the rear of buses (115) tell tales of racism, oppression and segregation.

The secondary status experienced by the black citizenry of Midland City, New Jersey, and Triunion, West Indies in *Daughters* (1991) speaks volumes about the racist attitude of the white leaders and their black clones. In both communities, problems such as poor housing, drugs, unemployment and poor healthcare afflict the black people. In both communities, the elected representatives of people in the government fail to enact any legislation that could benefit black citizens. In Triunion, proposals for economic relief are dismissed and the financial wizards from Britain, Canada, or the United States prefer to invest funds in tourism and its related infrastructure, such as marinas, deep-water ports, hotel chains, communication systems and airports, and not in the much needed cannery. The people’s representatives keep quiet in acquiescence, playing the game of “Statues” (241). In Midland City, a black Mayor, ignoring the needs of the blacks, is all set for building an express way that will bisect the inner city community, in order to accommodate those living beyond its borders.

In *Daughters*, a particular incident concerning the institutionalized violence of the police department directed towards the emasculation of black boys, in particular towards Viney’s son, Robeson, is described. One afternoon, when the nine-year-old Robeson is on his way home from day camp at school, he is arrested for attempting to break into a number of cars parked along Hicks Street in Brooklyn Heights. But, actually Robeson has been playing his “odometer game” which Viney calls “dawdling” (322).
This is what he does when he sees a car parked at the curb; he will try to guess how many miles the car has on it, from the condition it is in, and how recent or old a model it is. To find out whether he is right, he will look inside at the odometer. If the car has travelled far more miles than he has judged, he will make up the difference by imagining all the places the car has travelled to, on vacation. Robeson explains all this; but, the police man, Pirelli, does not believe him, because of his skin colour. He takes the boy handcuffed in a patrol car to the police station. Robeson is not allowed to call his mother, for over an hour and he is kept “sitting there in handcuffs like some hardened criminal!” (Ibid.). When Viney goes to the police station, she finds him terrified and shaking. She has never seen such terror in his eyes. When the precinct captain realizes that he has trouble on his hands, he changes the story and tells Viney that it is “Not really an arrest. No harm meant. No harm done. Just giving him a little scare” (325). But, it is a clear case of unlawful arrest, and abuse and intimidation of a minor.

Viney is afraid that the police man could have killed Robeson. She tells Urs a that Pirelli could have sworn that he saw Robeson “reaching for this knife he was supposed to be using to jimmy the locks or that he had started to run, resisting arrest, or he had tried grabbing his gun when he went to search him—anything—and blown him away!” (324). Viney emphatically tells Urs : “It happens, Urs!... You read about it, you see it on the news. It still happens in this city, in this country…. It could have happened!” (Ibid.). On reading this, the reader comes to understand that nothing much has changed regarding the plight of the blacks in the racist America.
Ulene Payne’s reminiscences over her past in *The Fisher King* (2000), takes the readers back to the racist Brooklyn of Silla in *Brown Girl, Browstones* (1959). Ulene tells Sonny that she came to America, “this man country with nothing but a gripsack and two willing hands” (*FK* : 99). She started working in a big ten-room house in Long Island. It was a sleep-in job. An old fretful grandmother in that house was “always acting like she smell something bad the minute you come near her when is she the one messing herself” (100). To buy a house, they had to pay interest to the loan sharks, three or four times higher than any bank’s, and the banks refused to give loans because “they was Colored” (Ibid.).

When the life was hard for the West Indian immigrants in America, it was harder during the Depression. But Ulene, knew how to “cut-and-contrive down to the very toilet paper” (102). At that time the Jews were “taking over Flatbush and the Gentile running from them out to Long Island. And all of them running from us” (101). To make matters worse, there was exploitation of black women by their white masters. For example, Ulene’s friend, Alva, who “was foolish enough to let the Madam husband have his way with her till she find herself making feet for stockings” (103) had lost the job.

When Ulene’s story speaks of racism in the North, Varina’s account of her past smacks of racism in the American South. Varina’s father, Mr. Gayton C. McGullum was one of the few who owned some land in Georgia. It was “the beginning of the Jim Crow time when they were getting back at the Colored all over the South for having been freed” (117). One night, when Gayton was away, his dogs were poisoned, his help ran
off the place, the curing shed for his tobacco was burnt to the ground and his wife and children were hiding for their lives, out in the woods. So, he was forced to leave Georgia; he came to Brooklyn, taking with him one right piece of fruit fallen from the Magnolia tree, to help him remember.

In Brooklyn, Varina, like Ulene, had undergone bitter experiences, working for the white people. She was made to wear a replica of the large pink hairbow of the dog she had to walk. Being the single earning member of her family, "Without a word, she accepted the pink thing, pinned it to the front of her pompadour, and took the leash..." (121). Not much has changed for the next generation blacks. For example, Sonny-Rett, even after becoming popular as a jazz player, has to face the racist attitude of the white Americans, on his tours. When he and his accompanists go to the Schrafft's restaurant, midtown Manhattan, hungry after a long session in the recording studio, they are refused a meal. A worse treatment awaits them, when they go to the South. There, what they come across are mainly "The No Colored restaurants and hotels. The Jim Crow, KKKlan towns and cities" (187). Because of this discriminating atmosphere in America, Sonny-Rett, the Jazz musician has left for Paris. But, in the mid nineteen sixties, France also has started showing its back to the black musicians.

What one comes to understand from the reading of Marshall's novels, in her own words, is that "no one is spared. No blacks are spared, not even those who have 'made it'. Racism reaches out and touches blacks no matter what their social and economic phase is" (Donna 1991: 410). Thus, Marshall reverses the connotations attached to the white colour and makes it look bad and evil, by equating unlimited and unquestioning
materialism with death, by highlighting the dangers behind technology and by crying out about the lurking wolf of racism outside, sometimes inside. These are the legacies of the white world to its people.

3.4.2.2. Vibrant Black

3.4.2.2.1. Resilience

Paule Marshall believes that the black people’s will to survive and overcome makes their experience in America positive and inspiring. She speaks about the strength that comes from suffering:

I have always felt that one of the reasons the white man in this country has been so hard on us is that he suspects we have something going for us that he doesn’t have any more, that he has lost. How shall I define it - an expressive quality, a strength that comes from suffering, a feel for life that hasn’t been leached out of us by a fat, complacent meaningless existence; a basic health in the midst of the sickness around us....(1974b: 40)

Out of the suffering have come the toughness of spirit and an understanding of life. Throughout the excruciating process of captivity, displacement and oppression, the resilience of the black people’s spirits and original cultures has come through. Marshall’s works teach and celebrate the role of black women in communal survival. They tell the readers how women have survived to become mistresses of their private and public worlds.
In *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959), Silla and her friends try their best to transcend race and to become mistresses of their private and public worlds. These “watchful, wrathful women whose eyes seared and searched and laid bare, whose tongues lashed the world in unremitting distrust” (14) face the hostile world of racist America, and stake out a claim to power, in spite of all the odds. Among the first generation West Indian immigrant women, Silla seems to be the most undaunted. She moves both the sky and the earth to buy a brownstone house and succeeds. At the end of the novel, she is thinking of buying a house in Crown Heights also. In her search for autonomous survival, Silla makes radical choices and proves that she is not a victim.

Selina wants and does possess Silla’s passion for survival in the midst of racism. Wounded by the Benton incident, Selina is overwhelmed by an emotional crisis. She turns to Clive for solace, but he fails her. In frustration she shouts: “What am I supposed to do – Curl up and die because I’m Colored? Do nothing, try nothing because of it?” (208). Then she realizes that she must be independent and autonomous as a woman; that she must rely on her inner resilience. She asserts herself, saying: “I am not going to do that!... I don’t want to do that…” (Ibid.). The whites, probably, still see in each of the black people “Caliban. Hester’s Black Man in the woods. The Devil. Evil. Sin” (209). According to Clive, this is what the blacks have to do, to counter this false image: “… we have to disappoint them by confronting them always with the full and awesome weight of our humanity, until they begin to see us and not some unreal image they’ve superimposed…” (Ibid.). This job is unpleasant, perhaps impossible. But, Selina decides to do only that. At the end of the novel, not only Silla and
Selina have proved their power to bounce back, but also the entire community of Barbadian immigrants in Brooklyn. They firmly establish themselves by becoming homeowners, by giving their children better prospects through education and by running small businesses; as Miss. Thompson says, “they know how to get ahead” (178).

The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969) is not only about race, racism and slavery, but also about rebirth and rejuvenation of the collective black self. ‘The Chosen Place’, Bournehills, in The Chosen Place, The Timeless People has been “wantonly used, its substance stripped away, and then abandoned” (100). The Bournehills people are “malignèd, ignored, even hated…. They are supposed to be backward, selfish and lazy...” (Nazareth 1992 : 219). But Saul finds them to be warm-hearted and hard-working. They are exploited to the hilt, as in the days of slavery; they are the beasts of burden; and “Things are no different. The chains are still on” (CPTP : 210). But, they manage to keep their humanity intact. For example, Stinger and Gwen enjoy their work in the cane fields and define their humanity through their work. Even under trying circumstances, they never give up their attempt to salvage some human dignity out of all their sufferings. For instance, Cox has been, for years, accumulating money just to buy the lumber for an one-room-house. He has been going with a woman from Drake Hill; they have a couple of kids. Now that the house is ready, Cox is going to marry her. In Bournehills, a man does not believe in making his marriage legal “until he can at least offer his wife a house of her own no matter how small” (182).
Gwen’s very carefully worked out arrangement regarding eggs is another example. She sells the eggs to the postmaster. Out of the money, she buys the family’s weekly supply of staples and manages to feed her innumerable children. It is her simple tactic of survival, whereas, Merle’s tactic of survival rests on her endless talk, her cries, her screams, her jokes, her smiles and her laugh. Her childhood trauma and the traumatic experience of her relationship with a white woman in England and its consequences make Merle a muddled and confused person with a divided and fractured psyche. Only her innate strength keeps her going. After having triumphed over Harriet, Merle liberates herself. Harriet, whose family history is one of ruthless exploitation of others, especially black people, chooses death by water; but Merle’s history of suffering and trauma has given her the strength to fight back and she survives.

The story of the African slaves at Ibo Landing in Praisesong for the Widow (1983b) represents spiritual understanding, the will to survive and triumph. Even though Jay believes this story to be true, he and his wife move towards the material security they associate with white, middle-class acceptability; but it does not provide them with happiness. Later, the widow, on gaining knowledge of African culture, reconnects with different elements of her diasporic heritage; on inheriting the legacy of the Ibos, Avey finds a meaning to her own personal journey.

speaks volumes about the unyielding spirit of these women; they pit themselves against oppression, suppression and discrimination that are present in the post-colonial situation. In the end, the collective negotiations of these women undermine the authority of Primus Mackenzie. In The Fisher King (2000), the description of the past of the two grandmothers, Ulene and Varina, explains to the readers, with what grit and gumption the two old ladies have faced the problems in their lives. Again, suffering seems to have endowed these women with an extraordinary strength to pull on.

Thus, Marshall’s novels reveal the fact that the black people have somehow found out a way to survive and triumph, in spite of their untold sufferings, which are listed by Marshall: “...the horrendous severing that took place, the separation from the motherland, the source... the traumatic business of slavery and colonialism” (Ogundipe-Leslie 1977: 35), the insult of their colour making them a lesser people, and the notion of inferiority on them as a people. Her novels reflect the struggle of the black people to come into their own and to maintain a sense of humanity, in the face of an oppressive society.

3.4.2.2. Resistance

Where there is oppression, surely there will be resistance. There is no excuse for any form of oppression, and black literature can be read as a form of resistance to oppression. In Marshall’s novels, one can hear the protesting voices of black women, who are engaged in the rebellious process of self-definition and redefinition. Marshall’s very first novel, Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), introduces a resistant figure, in the
person of Selina. As Lisa D. McGill points out, “The mother / daughter conflict of Brown Girl, Brownstones revolves around Selina’s desire to escape her mother, Silla, who represents the Bajan-American enclave of New York” (2000: 35). The Bajan community is caught in the materialistic web of the capitalist America; its dream is to buy a house, at any human cost. Selina rebels against these values. Even though she is very much a child-product of America, her spiritual consciousness makes her a child of the Caribbean, of Africa. Selina attempts to escape from the maternal influence of Silla by striking relationships with other people, outside Silla’s space. One such relationship is her friendship with Suggie: the recognition of rebellion against cultural norms binds them together. Suggie gives Selina a glimpse of her Barbadian ancestry; she serves as a model of sexual nonconformity; her individual defiance becomes a critique of community; and she gives Selina a powerful warning about the impact of Barbadian Association on Selina’s autonomy.

Miss. Thompson is the only black American character, in the novel, Brown Girl, Brownstones. She helps Selina and tells her of her resistance to white racism in the American South. Selina cherishes her non-traditional relationships with Beryl, Suggie and Rachel Fine. But, as Shirley C.Parry rightly points out, “Each experience of intense intimacy that Selina has with another female is followed by a dramatic scene of rejection and separation from the group” (2000: 46). Selina protests against her own developing female sexuality; she resists becoming a member of the group of adult women; and she refuses the socially prescribed female role. Marshall portrays Selina to be in conflict with the community, and at the
same time, she is immersed in it. Selina resists middle-class ideology and it opens up new possibilities for her.

When Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959) tells the tale of individual rebels, The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969) describes the defiant spirit of a whole community, the black community of Bournehills. Bournehills, which has been wantonly used and abandoned by the colonizers, is the place of ancestral memory; it is the guardian of its annual Carnival re-enactment; and it stands in defiance of change, resisting the improvements introduced by outsiders and by assimilated locals alike. The half-hearted measures will not bring any real change, because they are only ceremonies of reconciliation; they don’t change the power structure. So, Marshall reminds the readers through Merle that the changes, to be effective, should be total and real:

Bournehills! Change Bournehills! Improve conditions!...
The only way you could may be change things around here would be to take one of Bryce – Parker’s bulldozers from the conservation scheme and lay the whole place flat flat flat and then start fresh.(142-43)

In this context only, the Bournehills people keep alive the memory of Cuffee Ned, as his deeds live in the present and offer a guide for the future.

Like Bournehills, Merle is also devastated and almost ruined at the psychic level. Marshall acknowledges Merle to be “the most passionate and political of my heroines. A Third World revolutionary spirit. And I love her” (1983c: 109). Wherever Merle goes, she condemns all forms of
exploitation and injustice; she instigates the oppressed to resist, to organize and to rise up against the conditions of their lives. She is against the carnivorous technology, greed and the arms race. Regarding her personal life, the negative side of her situation as a “victim of her father’s neo-colonial exploitation, her English friend’s emotional exploitation, her husband’s marital exploitation” (Skerrett 1983:72) makes her feel incomplete and inadequate; brings Merle to the brink of madness. She resists becoming mad by struggling fiercely against the depressions that result out of her series of confrontations with her past. The manipulating arrogance that marks Harriet’s efforts to buy her off, makes Merle more resistant. Angrily she tells Harriet:

I don’t like people ordering me about like I’m still the little colonial. I’ve had too much of that. So when they say gee now, I haw. When they say go, I stay. And stay I will. Right here in Bournehills where I belong. My mind’s made up. (CPTP : 442)

This spirit of resistance gives her great power and makes her feel proud; helps her to get rid of her sense of shame and guilt; and sets her on the path of recovery.

When Merle’s resistance to the abusive neo-colonial economic power is underscored by her triumph over Harriet, it is underlined by the annual excursion to Carriacou, undertaken by the Out-Islanders in Praisesong for the Widow (1983b). The oppressive society demands one’s identity as a price for success. The Out-islanders are successful in life, but on their own terms. They are
Serious people. Hardworking.... In no time they’re pulling down a good job, building themself a house – nothing big and outlandish: they don’ go in for a lot of show; buying themself a car – again is always a sensible car: You never see them overdoing things; starting up a business.(78)

The Out-islanders are able to resist the corroding influence of excessive materialism of the oppressors, because they keep in touch with their past and their ancestors through their annual trip to Carriacou. Avey comes into contact with them and begins to comprehend what both Jay and herself have lost as they moved into middle-class existence. Avey returns home with a greater awareness of her own life and begins to reconstruct her life.

In Daughters (1991), the spirit of resistance, symbolized by the reference to the rebel leaders of the island, Triunion, Congo Jane and Will Cudjoe, pervades the whole novel. To cite an example, Ursa resists her father’s possessive and overwhelming love for her. In her bid for freedom from paternal authority, she does not open the letters written by her father; she has stopped visiting her parents, even though her mother has been insisting on her visit to Triunion, especially before the elections there. At the end of the novel, Ursa does go to Triunion, but she successfully resists herself from becoming blind to her father’s corrupt practices. For the sake of the oppressed people of the island, Ursa steels herself, betrays her father and causes his dethronement from power.
Robeson’s and his mother, Viney’s responses to his unlawful arrest and the abuse and intimidation by police can be quoted as another example, where the resistant spirit of the black people come to the fore. When he is arrested, the nine-year old Robeson confronts the police man Pirelli, with the truth that he has been playing only his odometer-game and not trying to force open the cars. But, when the racist Pirelli does not listen to him and yells at him, calling him a thief, Robeson starts yelling too. Giving him word for word, Robeson tells Pirelli that it is a free country and there is no law against looking inside a car and that he has his constitutional rights. The angry police man (angry because a black boy has retorted him) takes Robeson to the station in handcuffs. Robeson’s mother, who goes to the station to bring him home, is greatly angered, on seeing him terrified. The defiant mother tells Ursa:

Pirelli is out of a job. If it’s the last thing I do I’m going to see to that. I’m not settling for him to be demoted or disciplined or transferred to Central Harlem as punishment. Or for him to undergo sensitivity training on how to deal with black folks. He’s to go to court, stand trial and lose his job. He’s to join our folks down at the unemployment insurance office and see what that feels like.(325)

Her anger at child abuse is so intense that she vows: “I’m going to pull every string, use every contact, spend every penny I’ve got to see to it that that animal never wears a policeman’s uniform in this city again!” (326).
Daughters projects the legacy of resistance to oppression that is embodied in Congo Jane and Will Cudjoe, the two island revolutionaries. Their monument reminds the black people that their heritage is a continuum of defiance. During election rallies, the community of blacks assembles at the Monument of Heroes, probably for getting their spirit of resistance reinvigorated.

In Daughters, the spirit of resistance against oppression is primarily seen present in women; whereas, in The Fisher King (2000), it is represented by a man, Sonny-Rett. When young, his love for black music, Jazz, makes him go against his mother's wish that he should get trained in the music of Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, et al. Ulene beats him for having "the brass-face" to come round her playing "the Sodom and Gomorrah music!" (22). But, he continues to play the forbidden music, with an understanding that "the strap in one form or another" (89) is the price that he might always have to pay for playing what he wants to. When he comes back from the war, his mother asks him whether he is still playing forbidden music. He answers in the positive and Ulene refuses to let him in. Neither his mother's rejection, nor America's racism can stop Sonny-Rett playing Jazz. Europe comes calling and he goes to Paris, never to return, with his new wife. Cherisse, his wife, has married him, "that no-count son of that W.I. woman across the street" (38), defying her mother, who has been dreaming of Cherisse's entry into Broadway and Hollywood. Hattie Carmichael joins Sonny-Rett and Cherisse, in Paris. Hattie visualizes "the three of them like the connected sides of the triangles she used to draw in geometry in high school, with her as the base, joining them
to herself' (143). They become "The Inseparable Three" (186). Rosamond S.King describes the relationship among the three:

Rather it is an unconventional relationship involving two women and one man, but instead of the woman feuding over the man or the man hiding his relationship with one woman from the other, the triangle is united, with all three partners knowing that each person loves the other. (2003 : 544)

Their love and behaviour is presented as natural, even though it does challenge a monogamous heterosexual model. The other characters in the novel disapprove of such unconventional relationships; but, the three concerned are comfortable with their love and desires.

Marshall’s novels reveal that resistance is at the centre of the history of black people. It can be said, in general, that resistance shown by characters to oppression in various guises, brings in freedom from the restricting rules and norms of community, for artistic souls, in Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959) and The Fisher King (2000); the promise of a New Order in developing societies, in The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1959) and Daughters (1991); and a re-vision of life in Praisesong for the Window (1983b).

3.4.2.2.3. Communal Bond

In the first half of the twentieth century, Garveyism gave rise to an important form of ethnic nationalism. Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican-born
black nationalist, in “African Fundamentalism” (1925), asks his readers to “remember always that the Jew in his political and economic urge is always first a Jew; the white man is first a white man under all circumstances, and you can do no less than being first and always a Negro, and then all else will take care of itself” (Qtd. in Clarke 1974: 158). Black nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Negritude speak of the racial solidarity of the black people. Shared heritage and colour bring about this solidarity. In its solidarity, “the community exudes wholeness, and in that wholeness strength” (LeSeur 1986: 119). Marshall’s novels present both the struggle between and the reconciliation of individualism and communalism.

In Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), Selina embraces individualism as an important value, but still feels that ethnicity is inescapable. Selina, as a young girl, comes to know of her communal values through the ‘kitchen talk’ of her mother and her friends. As in the case of Marshall, for Selina also, a nurturing female community has been crucial in her development as an individual and an artist. The community insists on the buying of a house, as a measure of respectability. When Deighton does not fall in line with this ideal of the community, it rejects him. Selina is against such materialism. Her views about the Barbadian Association reflect her views about her community: “I think it stinks.... It’s a band of small frightened people. Clannish. Narrow-minded. Selfish.... Prejudiced. Pitiful” (188). She calls her people a “Prim, pious, pretentious pack” and the girls and the young men “queers” (187). Selina finds the warmth, affection and sense of enjoyment of life, given to her by Deighton and Suggie, missing in her community, the community which revolves around work and acquisition.
Selina, however, realizes that she is very much like the mother, who is portrayed as an embodiment of the Barbadian community. She also realizes that her mother, a symbol of ethnic conformity, was once a young girl with individualistic traits. Selina’s personal and bitter experience of racism makes her change her views about her community and acknowledge unity through oppression: “... she was one with them: the mother and the Bajan women, who had lived each day what she had come to know” (240). She comes to understand that her mother too has experienced racism and realizes that she has no right to judge her mother or the community. She also understands that the community’s drive to possess property is to protect them from poverty, racism and failure; and that the pressure to conform arises out of the necessity to safeguard and shelter the younger generation against a hostile white world. But Selina does not share in their goals. She accepts, half-willingly, a tradition which holds ethnic solidarity as the highest duty. The bangle Selina throws, just before she leaves Brooklyn, amid the rubble of brownstones, links her with the past and the bangle she retains with her is a connecting link between the past and future. Thus, as Japtok says, “Selina accepts ethnic communalism while pursuing an individualist agenda, creating a new conceptualization of ethnicity in the process” (1998: 313-14). In the words of Washington, “Selina symbolizes the community’s need to reorder itself” (1984: 159).

In The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969), the story of Cuffee Ned illustrates how anything and everything is possible, when people of a community join together in an endeavour. Remembering the lessons from Cuffee Ned’s revolt, the Bournehills people are unanimous in their resistance to the cosmetic changes that are introduced in the island by
developed countries, in the name of ‘development’. But, the ex-colonial bourgeoisie of Bourne Island, who have cut themselves off from their roots, are desperately chasing after status; they look down upon the people of Bournehills. Merle, who moves freely between these two groups, is like a bridge between them. She works for the betterment of the downtrodden, who are waiting for their new Cuffee Ned. Marshall’s belief in the possibility of a Third World emerging from ruins, “is epitomized in the character of Merle, who does, despite the great abuse she’s been subjected to, still have a great vitality” (Haydn 1970: 24). Lyle Hutson could have been their new Cuffee Ned, because in his student days, he has been holding radical views about the changing of the whole economic system and introduction of socialism. But, once in power, he has joined hands with the exploiters, against the exploited, his own people. That is why the people of Bournehills perform the uprising of Cuffee Ned, with its message of co-operative and unselfish living, every year at the Carnival. For these people at the bottom of the heap, ‘developments’ means nothing, because whatever little they have is in danger of being lost, when there is an economic crisis. Delbert assesses the economic situation correctly: “...if things get any worse that’s just what they’re going to have to do, declare the whole place a disaster area and send for the Red Cross” (CPTP : 126). To escape from such a disaster, the whole system has to be changed; to meet and overcome the formidable obstacles on the way, all the exploited people can join together to form a solid front. It is implied by the relationship between Saul Amron, a Jew, and Merle Kinbona, a black woman. So, the communal bond in The Chosen Place, The Timeless People seems to bind all the suffering peoples of the world throughout history together. (Nazareth 1992 : 222-23).
In *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983b) also, as in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959), resistance to the bonds of community is present in the protagonist, Avey Johnson in the beginning. But, when she comes into contact with Lebert Joseph, things take a different turn. Community can be understood to represent the historical and cultural heritage of people of African descent. Passing on of that heritage is one of the very important tasks of a writer, according to Marshall. Lebert Joseph recognizes the importance of the Nation Dances and the songs associated with them, which carry history and meaning. He introduces Avey to these African traditions that reveal to her what her ‘nation’ is. The widow is reconnected with her diasporic heritage. She experiences anew, the same feelings of communal harmony she felt, as a child. The threads that have connected Avey to a localized community then, help her now to weave a web of relationships with all the diasporic people. Now, she understands the meaning of the story of Ibos, passed on to her as a legacy by her great aunt Cuney; it is about the indomitable will of the African slaves to survive and triumph. Finding a new meaning to her life, she becomes a *griot* for the collective whole, and recounts the story, to maintain the cultural continuum.

Though *Daughters* (1991) in many ways, is, perhaps, Marshall’s “most personal novel” (Dance 1992: 8), it is also a political novel. It portrays how the vagaries of political decisions disregard the physical and psychological unity necessary to the black community. It is highly unfortunate that the black people in power, such as Primus Mackenzie in Triunion and Sandy Lawson in New Jersey, do have a hand in taking the
political decisions that are detrimental to the welfare of the black community. Women are seen joining hands to put an end to such corrupt practices. Marshall has learned from her mother and her friends, about the importance of friendship and support among women. She portrays this female bonding in *Daughters* (1991), in the pivotal friendships between Ursa and Viney, Astral Forde and Malvern. Along with the women, black male counterparts also positively fight on against neo-colonialism. *Daughters* expresses the need for black men and women working together in wholeness and unity, as is exemplified in the story of Congo Jane and Will Cudjoe.

In *Daughters*, Ursa's presence links the black communities, both in the Caribbean and the United States; whereas, in *The Fisher King* (2000), Sonny, the eight-year-old grandson of Sonny-Rett, brings together four generations and three continents. In Sonny, one finds a combination of Caribbean, African and American bloodlines. For Marshall, he symbolizes the need for unity in the diaspora, a unity the black people must achieve, if they are ever going to wield significant power in the world (Doyle 2000:2). It is heartening to see the homecoming of Sonny, the grandson of Sonny-Rett and Cherisse, who had to leave the United States, because of their feuding West Indian and African-American families; Sonny seems to have the healing power. Edgar has been right in arranging for Sonny's trip to Brooklyn from Paris. Another right move he has made is to inaugurate the new neighbourhood music hall with a memorial concert in his dead brother's honour. The concert is "about making it up to him" (FK : 88) and also "about bringing him home in a manner of speaking and ending his anger with us and this place" (88-89). For the sake of the community, he
runs a neighbourhood reclamation agency, *The Three R's Group of Central Brooklyn*, the motto of which is *Reclamation, Restoration, Rebirth* (51). Edgar tells Sonny why he is doing all these things: "...let's hope you and my grandchildren won't have to do all the smiling and begging. That's what I'm trying my best to make happen" (57). He also tells him that his agency takes "the beat-up old houses you see around here that were once beautiful and make them as close to beautiful again as possible, so people like us will have some place nice to live" (Ibid.). Marshall voices forth her views against the waging of the American-West Indian war, through Edgar: "As if a people in our situation can afford that kind of divisive nonsense" (51). In *The Fisher King*, one finds black people coming to terms with their families, communities and their histories.

Marshall gives positive connotations to black colour by pointing out the positive traits in the people of African descent: resilience, the strength that comes from suffering; resistance, which is born out of the oppression they have been subjected to; and communal bond, a legacy from their African past. Thus, Marshall has successfully reversed the connotations given to colours, black and white; she has portrayed black to be beautiful and white to be ugly, in her novels. Her primary aim in doing so is, to convince the black people and the others that in no way African culture is inferior to Western culture; rather, it has a more positive outlook on life.

The next chapter analyses how in Marshall's novels, songs, music and dance are presented as the means of preservation of history and celebration of identity.