Chapter – II

The Schizophrenia of a Displaced Community
Chapter – II

The Schizophrenia of a Displaced Community

2.1 Introduction

The African Black women in pre slavery conditions enjoyed a distinct human status. Africa was a land where the ebony sons and daughter were in paradise. Colour stigma and gender inequality was not in their way of life. In the pre-slavery condition the black people were proud of the darkness of their skin. W.E.B. Dubois, black writer and father of black power movement express his views on the skin colour. “How beautiful he was with his olive-tinted flesh and dark gold ringlets, his eyes of mingled blue and brown.” (91)

But the existent peace and harmony was violated and their paradise was lost when the European traders and American merchants invaded the African island. They robbed the men and women, captured and drove them from their home land. The black slaves were transported to the New Land. Thus the history of Black man and woman changed, shattering their happiness and innocence by bringing in the hell of American chattel slavery. The journey from Africa to America and Europe known as the Middle Passage was horrible, treacherous and dreadful. The enslaved Black male and female were not treated as human beings but as objects. Black slave women were treated inhumanly and were brutalized. The White masters whom Toni Morrison calls ‘man without skin’, maltreated, raped and even forced the Black women to give birth to babies in the ship where they were stacked in a small space. Many Black women instead of giving birth killed themselves. The Black woman was denuded of her African culture, language and family system. She was reduced to a ‘chattel object’ to be used by the White masters.
In a patriarchal society women is a big ‘Other’. Even though she is exploited by the man, she is thought to be an immoral woman. Her own existence in the society is not for herself but to fulfill needs of men. She is made to feel inadequate, if she fails to appease the man. In a patriarchal racist society the Black woman is doubly oppressed; one, because she is a woman, the other, because of her colour. She faces suppression not only from her own men folk but also from the Whites, both men and women.

2.2 Victimization of Black Women

The brutal treatment that the Black women received had painful effect on her psyche. Both the physical tortures and mental pressure kept her in psychic bondage. It was observed that the Black woman fell victim to both the White masters and to the Black man’s “domi-abra thinking”. It meant that Black woman should adopt feminine mystique by surrendering feminine sensibilities and become psychologically dependent on males whether it was White or Black. She was forced to surrender her ego. Thus she remained absent minded, silent and marginalized herself. Survival in the present conditions was the only thought which kept her alive. The identity of Black female was dependent and repressed like an oblivion person without any consciousness. The Black woman was mentally ill and the victim of schizophrenia. Under the influence of slavery and colonialism the Black woman was like a zombie; body without soul.

The process of socialization in America during slavery and colonialism deeply affected the personality of both Black men and women. The condition of Black females was more pathetic, she was socialized by the racist and patriarchal system. In fact Black female sustained pain and found herself in a vulnerable condition as she was not supported by her own men who were powerless in the American Society. Gloria Wade – Gayles marks out an identical thought when she says:
“There are three major circles of reality in American Society, which reflects degrees of power and powerless. There is a large circle in which white people, most of them men, experience influence and power. Far away from it there is a smaller circle, a narrow space in which black people, regardless of sex, experience uncertainty, exploitation and powerlessness. Hidden in this second circle is a third, a small, dark enclosure in which black women experience pain, isolation and vulnerability. (3-4)

The Black woman was victim of racism, sexism and classism. Her life was endangered by the various external forces that acted upon her. No other human being has been agonized so intensely as Black women. Under the influence of slavery the Black woman was in an unsafe situation and her condition was very peculiar. She was exploited both for her colour and her gender. The White masters asked the Black woman to act like a nigger and do menial jobs and as woman she was asked to do productive work. The ill fated Black women reproduced children for the will and pleasure of their White masters. She bred and brought up her own blood to be whipped and lynched by the slave owner. In contrast to pre-slavery status in Africa, the Black woman in America was reduced to Chattel Object. She suffered the desolating circumstances of violence and objectification without any basic human dignity. The intention behind the brutal treatment was to make the victim accept White ideology creating self-skepticism and self negation. Thus the planters were victorious in imposing their will upon their victims. As a result the enslaved person was forced to surrender his consciousness and obey his master. The White masters dehumanized the blacks in every possible way. The Black woman was terrorized even through sexual abuses and rape by the planters. The condition of Black males was even worse. They felt dejected and demoralized to witness their own women in the painful psychic bondage. Thus the Black women experienced dependency, repression and alienation. The intention of internalization of White
system was that she should undergo marginalization and subjugation in the phallocratic White society. It adversely affected black female’s psyche. The black woman was a ‘divided soul’. According to Lang such people, under so much of stress and tension are unable to find a balance between their inner self and outer self. The inner self cracks, gives them a “split identity”. Fanon says, “That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question”. (Frantz Fanon, 1967b 117)

The Black woman under the most hostile and traumatic condition was in a “neurotic orientation” (Fanon). She was psychologically crippled and was in mental disarray. She was not her true self. The fearful image of the master that she had captured in her mind created fear of freedom for herself. Thus separating herself from her own individuality and consciousness, the intention of the master was to paralyse the victim even psychologically’ (Mary Daly). The pathetic condition, in which she survived, created gaps between her own people and culture. She was left to choose the white bourgeois and renounce her value system. The Black women were like the ‘cultural limbo’ unaware of self consciousness (Lawrence W Levine). Dr. Kulkarni writes:

When alienation is connected to deliberate renunciation or relinquishment, it becomes closer to the historic, Marxian meaning of alienation as the action of transferring or expropriating of property or of rights belonging to an individual, which are either renounced or given over to other. (Kulkarni, 25)

Self alienation and transferring of the innate qualities to others is a dependent and powerless condition. Thus self alienated and psychologically damaged Black woman was like an infant; she was in a mirror stage (Lacan) depending on external sources for survival.

Afro-American literature has characters that renounce their cultural milieu and adopt upper class western ideology. This too is a method of survival in hostile environment. But
this causes an internal rift that does not allow the person to completely adapt the new culture and adopt the new ideology. This leads to a psychological displacement and the person succumbs to the social pressures that come from a hostile environment. They have the tendency to become a schizophrenic; the notion of home and identity both being fractured. The black female novelists like Jessie Fanset, Nella Larsen and Dorothy West do reflect such existential conditions in their characters. Paule Marshall also deals with such problematic issues of margins. In her short novel Barbados Watford is an alienated person who denies life and prefers to remain in darkness. Similar situation is relevant in her novel, Praisesong for the Widow in which the protagonist Avey Johnson is ambitious and White bourgeois idealist and also in a total psychic dislocation and mental disarray. In Brown Girl, Brownstones, Selina, Deighton and Silla are tormented souls in the novel. Merle Kinbona is a diasporic woman who needs to have peace within herself. Rejected by the past and not accepted by the present, she is an impaired personality. Marshall portrays a similar character in Daughters. Ursa Beatrice was in a critical mental state, stumped by the betrayal by her lover Lowel and her politician father.

This chapter deals with melancholic condition of all the character caught in the crossfire of racism, sexism and patriarchy.

2.3 Displaced Community in the novel of Paule Marshall

In the novel Brown Girl, Brownstones, Marshall has shown how a Black family struggles not only for an identity but at times also does not know what their real identity is. They have over the years squashed their own power, desires and needs and now they think that going back to their native land or flowing the ways of the White master could give them all that they crave for. The inner vacuum that comes from years of suppression makes them resort to behaviours that are meant to fulfill their vacuum. Not knowing what it feels like to
be in power and do things that you like to do, the characters in the novel project their inner confusion on to others. Set at the backdrop of the world war Marshall brings into focus the struggle between Deighton and Silla, Selina’s parents, over the future of their family. Brownstones was the house where the Barbadian family were residing after era of Great Depression. Silla Boyce wanted to possess Brownstones and live there in the midst of racism. Selina their daughter initially prefers to be known as by her father Deighton who seems like God to her, rather than as Silla’s daughter. Set in three parts, each part of the novel deals with the confusion and trauma of a Black family trying to find their power.

War, the third part of the novel is actually the conflict between the husband and wife. Marshall had set this part of the book parallel to outside World War II, echoing the rise of power. Both Hitler and Silla rise to power in their own field. Inside or outside, war definitely affects Selina’s psyche. Selina is influenced by her father’s nostalgic desire to return to Barbados. Marshall reminds that the novel has a setting when the Great Depression Era was going on and the Blacks were forced to be auctioned as slave. Silla, Selina’s mother was an understanding and hard working Black woman who wanted to possess Brownstone in New York in order to have foothold against the White society in America. She was concerned to provide space and safety to all residents of Brownstones, where the Black immigrants resided. The Brownstones is not only a geographical location but a metaphor of the Barbadian community. Silla is torn between her own desire to stay with the Whites and protect the Blacks. It is observed that Deighton, Silla and Selina were the victims of the family war. To resolve their internal war each individual should act according to the circumstances they are placed. Silla is torn between her own desire to stay within the White imperialistic structure where she had made her home and Deighton’s desire to move back to Barbados in an attempt to reclaim their original identity by setting down in their homeland.
Silla’s agony at her own inability to find an identity in either of the two places can be seen in her anguished cry:

Silla wandered how to the table and groping for the chair, sank down and hid her face in her arms. She uttered in sound which beat through the stillroom-disembodied wail, a howl of outrage “Oh, Lord-God… I was gone by them things”

Silla is a monumental tragic figure (Washington, 313) where predicaments are never understood. She wanted Deighton to be strong and responsible husband and father and play important role in negotiating family and social problems. Her need for a man who would stand by her side is evident when she says to Deighton:

You want to see yourself improve. Isn’t that why people does come to this place? She put the question to his blank stare. When he said nothing she stated simply, “You don belong here mahn. (174)

Deighton is a person who can hardly take care of his ownself but is always looking for something big and praying hard not to find it” (174)

Deighton becomes furious listening his own failures, and turns emotionally disgusted and outraged. He squanders the money Silla had saved after selling the plot of land that belonged to Deighton in Barbados. Over the time Silla’s desire to own Brownstone gets stronger even if it meant damaging some nearer to her. She put in all types of efforts to own Brownstones. Mary Helen Washington writes that Silla is ‘forging a path through unfamiliar territory, cutting the bush for those behind her, crushing whatever is in her way. (313) Silla is willing to own Brownstone not for herself or her daughter Ina and Selina but for entire Barbadian community in American. Factors leading to Schizophrenia.
Selina is pathetically trapped conflicts between Delighton and Silla. In order to emerge from these conflicts between her parents Selina should be able to emerge from their ruins like a ebony phoenix. She is at once too mature and too innocent to combat the people and surroundings. She starts to fall prey to the schizophrenic state. The discord and disharmony which keeps Selina’s mind in a chaotic and confused state had to be removed from her surroundings. Armed with new a sense of consciousness she removes the humiliation and alienation and emerges faithful and loving. Marshall supports Selina’s new beginning:

“Spread wide beyond were the ravaged Brownstones, and she wandered there, remembering how the past, those houses would have been drawn within the darkness of themselves by this time, and the streets empty and echoing like streets at down. Now, the roomers’ tangled lives spilled out the opener windows, and the staccato beat of Spanish voices, the frenzied sensuous music joined the warm canorous Negro sounds to greet the air.” (309)

About Selina’s growth Dr. Kulkarni put his views

“Selina’s stifled, infantile consciousness is also replaced by more illuminated and mature understanding. The womb is hatched and Selina’s freedom is fully assured. (124)

Selina wants to look back at the place from where she originated and strengthen the umbilical cord with the place and people and move towards Barbados. By returning to Barbados, Selina finds a resolution to her problematic identity which was in crisis. She accepts the darkness of her skin; her existence as a woman and awakens herself, oblivious of culturalism and racism. Selina’s awakens her mother’s consciousness by accepting the Barbadian heritage.
Merle Kinbona, the protagonist, of the novel, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* is a victim of psychic disorder Bournehills is a metaphor of self for Merle, and a place where the past, present and future of Africa and other parts of the Diaspora come together.

Merle is a muddled and bewildered person unbalanced, ruined and devastated by her substance, being stripped away from her culture without any stabilized past. Merle is a psychotic personality with bitter memories.

Marshall informs that Merle “looked shorter than she was”. (4) in a suspended condition, both physically and culturally. She remains isolated. Her own community never accepted her due to the illegitimate origin that she had. Her present surrounding; her appearance; the American style shoes, the West Indian bracelets, put her in a colonial alienation. Merle was torn between her own culture and the culture of Whites. Barbara Christian expounds, “Merle is split … and she cannot achieve harmony as an individual for her fragmentation is the fragmentation of the society itself.” (Barbara Christian 1990 : 21)

Merle’s indulgence in a lesbian relationship, her illegitimate origin puts her in suspended and unconscious condition. Past memories and lesbian relationship broke her marriage with Ketu. Merle’s daughter was also snatched and was kept away from her. Merle was in the dismal abyss of mental gloom and alienation. Merle speaks:

> I’ve stopped dead in my tacks. Paralyzed… I’m like someone betwitched, turned foolish. It’s like my very will’s gone. And nothing short of a miracle will bring it back. (230)

Another important character who is mentally affected due to various prevailing situations is Avey Johnson in *Praisesong for the Widow.*
Marshall asserts that without cultural consciousness of the heritage and cultural identity, one cannot remain connected with the heritage.

In her novel, *Praisesong for the Widow*, Marshall reveals that the source of Avey’s torment, anguish and anxiety is a dream. Anxiety–ridden Avey gropes for something that is not visible to her. She is in a total psychic dislocation and mental disarray is due to the dream that was in her subconscious.

Through Marshall’s narrative technique the reader is bound to believe that Avey has been taken to her childhood when she is talking about her dream. Avey, through her dreams reintegrated back into the society, from where she was separated. She recalled through her dream, how in her childhood days aunt Cuney used to recount the story of Ibo Landing. She decided to give up her house in New York and renovate the old house at Tatem, South Carolina, the spiritual place of Ibo Landing. Like Morrison, Marshall has also portrayed the myth about African people escaping from slavery through their supernatural powers.

The protagonist, Avey Johnson made a successful return and self recovery. Avey successfully emerged as the Black female who dared to go beyond the societal restraints. She led this journey, by transforming her traumatic condition into an authentic self.

Marshall focuses on the cultural awareness within the characters. Culture, rituals and heritage are the psychological strength which helps an alienated person to gain spiritual wholeness. Marshall expounds these ideas in the novels.

In the third novel, *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), Marshall uses myth, ritual, and folklore even more deliberately than her other works. Specifically, *Praisesong* follows the steps of the protagonist’s ancestral Gullah “seeker’s” initiation rite. This is a metaphysical practice of the Africans who were transported to America during slavery. Marshall’s novel
not only offers a uniquely Afrocentric viewpoint but also an insight into post Civil Rights-era literature by African American women.

The protagonist in *Praisesong* underwent a spiritual metamorphosis, symbolic - death, and rebirth that developed raw souls through the metaphysical striving. The character’s spiritual maturation includes the resolution/integration of grief resulting from the death of a loved one, resurrection / reclamation of self after the character’s own metaphysical death, and / or reunification with others after estrangement from the Black community.

Marshall’s Avatara “Avey” Johnson must revive her relationship to herself and to the Black community. She must move towards renewing her relationship with life and make peace with the past. Marshall’s *Praisesong for the Widow* is Gullah initiation journey. The Seeker’s journey exactly correlates to the phases of Avey Johnson’s metaphysical transformation from a deadened, materialistic individual to a mature self realizing individual in dynamic relation to community. Set mainly in the Caribbean, perhaps to enact the protagonist’s journey in the context of a vivid contemporary African-based ritualistic culture.

As the novel opens, Avey, middle-aged and recently widowed, is compelled to leave her Caribbean cruise after a disturbing dream about her deceased great-aunt. The dream reminds Avey of a forgotten ancestral story that her aunt had made clear was Avey’s “mission” to retain and share (42).

After leaving the ship, Avey spends the night in a Grenadian hotel, when she is confronted by the ghost of her dead husband and is finally able to grieve the fact that their financial gains cost them their passion for life. Next morning, Avey encounters the old man Lebert Joseph, an embodiment of the West African/Caribbean trickster figure Legba, guardian of the crossroads, mediator of human communication with the gods and ancestors, and the initiating god in Voodoo ceremony. After Lebert triggers more of Avey’s memories,
he convinces her to accompany him to the annual ritual celebration on his home island of Carriacou, where she is once again able to perceive her connections to self and community. As a result of her spiritual rebirth, Avey recognizes the importance of carrying on inherited traditions; at the end of the novel, she flies back to the US with a storytelling mission.

Before Avey embarked on the Caribbean cruise, her daughter Marion attempted to pressurize her into taking a more “imaginative” journey more culturally and spiritually edifying than the vacation Avey planned, which Marion disparaged as a “meaningless cruise with a bunch of white folks” (13). Marion wanted her mother to take a trip that would allow Avey to appreciate her African heritage which is ultimately what Avey’s cruise leads her to do. Actually, Avey’s spiritual imagination already is at work while Marion critiques the idea of the luxury cruise as “banal” (14). While Marion scolds her mother, Avey remembers the voyages up the Hudson River with Harlem during her childhood that were certainly not banal, but, rather “were always about something [spiritually] momentous and global” (192). Marshall clearly wants her readers to view her insistence on Afrocentric thinking as momentous, diasporic, and liberatory.

Avey’s initial resistance can also be viewed as loss of consciousness and alienation and keeping her in psychic dislocation. Avey’s resistance to an African heritage experience such as that which empowered Marion earlier is part of Avey’s blind adherence to a protective assimilationist shell; only a powerful awakening is needed which can help her release the shield behind which she has hidden all these years like cultural limbo.

Black novelist, Morrison notes that in African American literature “[t]here is always an elder there. And these ancestors are not just parents, they are ... timeless people whose relationships to the characters are benevolent, instructive, and protective, and they provide a certain kind of wisdom. In Praisesong, Avey’s spiritual parent during her childhood was her
great-aunt Cuney, with whom she had spent summers in the Gullah community of Tatem in the South Carolina Sea Islands. The long-deceased Cuney confronts Avey in the dream when Avey was boarding the cruise ship. She who has not remembered her dreams since the horrible nightmares she experienced during the Civil Rights Movement, is deeply disturbed by the visitation. Dream is an important element. The dream suggests that Avey is in the process of seeking ancestral support, albeit subconsciously Avey’s resulting in her frantic behavior.

Avey is confronted by Ghede (In Haitian Vodou, the Ghede embody the powers of death and fertility). figure in a brief. They are repository of all the knowledge of the dead” and “wise beyond all the others’ (37) Over the course of her spiritual initiation, Avey, experiences a renewal of her life. The Ghede’s presence is a signal to the protagonist and reader of the luminal (threshold) possibilities of ritual transformation. The ritual transformation is the same way that aunt Cuney has learnt from her grandmother whose name was Avey.

Avey’s transformation into the world of the ancestors (i.e., death) and subsequent return represented an end of individualistic tendencies which are inimical (harmful). After the frightening dream of her great-aunt and the equally disconcerting meeting with the Ghede figure, the normally conservative Avey, feels possessed by a “rebel spirit” that emboldens her to leave the cruise and her traveling companions (83). From there, she begins the test of her worth that comprises the remainder of the novel. Avey disembarks and checks into the Grenadian hotel, where she confronts yet another ghost—that of her husband Jerome “Jay” Johnson. Enraged when the ghost chides her for wasting money by leaving the cruise early she shouts at him and punches the air; finally she grieves his death and the fact that the need to escape poverty eclipsed their happy early years together. Their pursuit of financial
prosperity resulted in a denial of self and community that lasted through the remaining decades of their marriage. Jerome (no longer “Jay”) spoke of black people “in the harsh voice that treated them as a race apart” (140), insisting that they needed to “Cut out all the good-timing and get down to some hard work” (135). Avey and her husband stopped treasuring Cuney’s Gullah tale of Ibo Landing, and turned away even from the sustaining daily rituals and pleasures of music, dance, poetry, sensuality, and humor, all of which Marshall depicts as essential Black/African-centered ways of being.

In the dream Avey wins a fistfight with her great aunt, who tries to drag her up the road to the Tatem dock called Ibo Landing. Avey refuses to remember the story Cuney told her there many times about how the Ibos, arriving on a slave ship, rejected the condition of slavery, turned, and walked on the water back to Africa or even drowned themselves. Dreams, memories and hallucinations in Avey’s mind make her anxious and fearful “she’s done gone and lost her mind”(24). In Praisesong, Ibo’s landing tale was originally told by Cuney her grandmother. Avatara, who claimed to have witnessed the vent during slavery was powerfully affected by it. Avey was named after this ancestor. By handing down the Ibo story, Cuney “entrusted [Avey] with a mission she couldn’t even name yet had felt duty bound to fulfill and Avey spent years attempting to forget that familial obligation” (42). For Marshall and for other writers/storytellers, artists, and Gullah activists, the legendary Ibo Landing story is a touchstone but the novel is more about Avey and her awakening to the diasporic vision.

Ibo, Landing is more than a story; it is a folkloric resource exemplifying resistance to social factors that have denied self and community actualization.’ For Marshall, her character’s ritualistic shedding of individual and material values, which are associated in the novel with white America, echoes the Ibos’ self-preserving (and self-sacrificing) act.
It is believed in West Africa and New World African-based societies that a person born with a veil of the inner fetal membrane, or “caul,” over her/his face is gifted with the power of second sight; such a person can see duppies (ghosts) and is insightful spiritually in other ways. Marshall subtly notes her protagonist’s reawakening cultural awareness by placing the caul metaphor in Avey’s thoughts. Avey may well become effective in her griot role.

But her journey to this space was not easy. The torturous moments in her memory took her to that depressed state where she had to fight her own mental ghosts to become free. Avey learned to deny these essential emotional textures of her life, so Lebert begins to help her remember, reinscribing them on the now “empty state of her mind” (225) As a praisesinger or griot, Avey will be responsible for constructing the past “for audiences in the present, an interpretation that reflects a complex blend of both past and present values.

McDaniel asserts that the slave “danced to mediate the confusion he found in his new powerless position, to find solutions to the multiple layers of social conflict and to define his personal system of flight”—imaginative, spiritual flight, actual escape, or, like the Ibos in Avey’s ancestral story.

Re-experiencing communion with “the whole community.” which Marshall intimates is both familial and pan-African, guided by her spiritual parents in the forms of Lebert and her great-aunt Cuney’s ghost, Avey now has been to the other side - death, the world of the ancestors-and gained an understanding of “the myth of the race,” thus earning her the right to be newly named and “rejoiced in” as a full-fledged member of the group (Deren 23). As she dances with the confidence of renewed self-recognition, the aged Carriacouans, beginning with Lebert, bow to her in the dance circle. When one woman asks who she is, Avey finally understands her great-aunt’s insistence, decades earlier, upon the little girl’s introducing
herself as “‘Avey, short for Avatarara.” thereby claiming the Gullah/African lineage passed
down to her through her great-great-grandmother (251). As Christian observes, Avey’s
recognition of herself as Avatarara is essential in the ritual, “for in African cosmology it is
through nommo, through the correct naming of a thing, that it comes into existence. By
knowing her proper name, Avey becomes herself” (82-83). As Avey regains her identity and
vitality, the individualistic capitalist orientation of her marriage is replaced by communal
generosity (most evident in her acceptance of her griot role), an essential kinship
characteristic in New World African-based societies.

Avey’s healing of memory and liberation of imagination remind the reader that loss of
the ability to narrate one’s past is a sort of amnesia resulting in a diminished sense of self and
inability to play a leading role in one’s life. By ritually dramatizing her character’s personal
past and refiguring it in the context of folk practices developed as strategies of cultural
survival among the descendants of ex-slaves, Marshall relocates the reader in a larger, more
multifaceted conceptualization of history. The ritual structure of Praisesong is a literary
“emancipatory strategy” That also suggests the possibility of personal transformative thinking
and action that can positively affect the future of both the reader and the collective society.

Daughters is in continuation to short novel “The Valley Between”. Ursa Beatrice of
Daughters completes the task left uncompleted by the protagonist in The Valley Between.

Marshall asserts that no gender can be viewed balanced and human relations are not
formed until the equality between both the sexes is established. In The Valley Between,
Cassie was aware of her predicament but she was unable to break the power erected by
masculine imperialism. She remains trapped in the cage of paternal institution.

In Daughters Marshall stresses upon the complex ideas of neo-colonialism, the Black
diaspora, family bonds and political corruption. Jane Smily writes that, “Paule Marshall
explores the nexus of self, success, politics and culture”. Ursa struggles to come to terms, not only with her father, a politician but with the two worlds, she resided; she grew up in the island, Triunion and in America where she lived at that time.

*Daughters* is story between the New York life of Ursa, a research scholar and about her family residing in fictional island of Triunion. She is imprisoned in the ‘psychic womb’ of her father Primus Mackenzie. From her childhood, Ursa is a possessed by her father, who occupied a distinctive status in Triunion. Primus Mackenzie popularly known as PM only dreams of the Prime Minister’s post in Triunion.

As novel opens Marshall discloses her protagonist, coming out of the abortion clinic, is ‘psychological paralysed’ (Mary Daly 1975: 51)

> Ursa stands gazing for a long time at the dying day and the darkness that follows it and then for an even longer time of the lights from condos reflected on the black and frozen river. (8)

Ursa is in complete disharmony and disoriented in her mind. The darkness of her room echoes the darkness of her mind. Unable to believe that abortion has taken really place, she does not reply phone calls and turns everyone out of her room. She is reluctant to speak to her lover Lowell, whose child she aborted. She is still waiting for him in the dark. Marshall writes, “With the lamp off, there’s only the ruby red glow of the clock in the room, jewel like the drops of blood that from when the tip of a finger is pricked.”(15)

Ursa aborted a real fetus and want to abort herself from patriarchal womb of her father. She is ‘repressed person’ excluded from her consciousness. Father’s influence and possessiveness reduced Ursa personality. His beaurocratic attitude controlled not only his wife Estella but Ursa too. Fed up with praises that Ursa made about her father, Lowell, Ursa’s lover says
Everything about him… I’m saying that not only does he come in for the lion’s share of your thought’s but that everything you do, everything you’ve ever done, is about him in one way or another. (266)

Ursa’s relation with Lowell worsened and further became stagnant. It seems that Primus Mackenzie over possessiveness has eclipsed Ursa’s life by. She must free herself from the patriarchal bondage by listening to her innerself.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the psyche of all the female character in the novel who were victim of patriarchy, racism and slavery. The characters were alienated from cultural milieu when their colonized mind adopted the Western idealism.

The brutal treatment that the Black women received had painful effect on her psyche. Both the physical tortures and mental pressure kept her in psychic bondage. Survival in the present conditions was the only thought which kept her alive. The identity of Black female was like that of a “dependent, repressed like an oblivion”. Under such extreme oppressive conditions the Black woman became mentally ill. She succumbed to the mental illness called schizophrenia.

Medically, Schizophrenia is a brain disorder that affects the way a person acts, thinks, and sees the world. People with schizophrenia have an altered perception of reality, often a significant loss of contact with reality. They may see or hear things that don’t exist, speak in strange or confusing ways, believe that others are trying to harm them, or feel like they’re being constantly watched. With such a blurred line between the real and the imaginary, schizophrenia makes it difficult—even frightening—to negotiate the activities of daily life. response, people with schizophrenia may withdraw from the outside world or act out in
confusion and fear. The protagonists of all the novels we see a refusal to initially acknowledge their mental depressions. Marsha through her protagonists talks about a larger frame work: that of the schizophrenic state of the diasporic community specially one that is distinguished by status and colour. Deeply affected by their black colour and ex-slave status, the diasporic community of the Afro- Americans could never merge with White Americans and this remained embedded in their subconscious psyche causing a rift. Reconciliation with their own past, homeland and history as the only way to regain the consciousness of self and identity which we find the protagonists of Marshall going through.

At the end whether it was Selina Boyce, Merle, Avey or Ursa, all them became good kin by seeking a remarkable unity. They gain self empowerment, independence and a triumphant self-recovery. Marshall makes them Female Black hero.
Work cited


