Chapter - IV

Fractured Black Female Psyche
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4.1 Introduction

The literal meaning of fractured psyche, is a rift, a rupture, a crack in human soul, mind or spirit. In this chapter I shall attempt to understand and analyze the condition that lead to the development of fractured psyche of black females as depicted by Paul Marshal in her works. The psyche will also be understood on the basis of the particular behavioural trends that the women showed due to long and sustained pitiable conditions that they had to endure. Paule Marshall’s novel revolves around the women. She shows her deep concern for them, which gets reflected in her works. Her personal experience about the African – American females, facilitate her to plunge deep into their psyche and study the inner climate of their soul, mind and spirit. Marshall herself writes about women in her fiction:

Women do figure prominently in my books … and I’m concerned about lifting them speak their piece; lifting them be central figure, action, activists in fiction rather than just backdrop or background figure. I want them to be central character, women in fiction seldom are. Traditionally in most fiction men are the wheelers and dealers. They are the ones, in whom power is invested. I wanted to turn that around. I wanted women to be the centre of power … women are central for me…(242)

Marshall hailed from a Caribbean background, with a history; a history of slavery and colonialism. They suffered oppression, as everywhere the black person was owned, but emotionally disowned, divested of all freedom and personal rights, and were made the subjects to the will of another person. The female suffered double conflict, the conflict related
to the black community and secondly the conflict of being a woman; the black dark skinned woman. Thus the women struggled with community identity and also for their individual identity. The black community made a long journey, passing through the thorns of humiliation, hardship, slavery and torture and now ultimately reached a status, where the second generation immigrants Paul Marshall, Michelle Obama, Tony Morrison, Alice Walker and the like are being honourably recognized. The African – American community and even the American President Barack Obama in his Presidential note acknowledged the influence of Paule Marshall’s writings with great pride. Marshall stands as a voice of the immigrant Black Community. She specially focuses on the black women’s struggle, their migration, and their situation in the new land of the colonized. She has reflected in her works, the black immigrant females, struggling worldwide to find their identities to survive in poverty, and at the same time maintaining their native cultural identities. The black female immigrants faced powerlessness, because of white superiority and secondly due to male dominance. Marshall wrote how the black women survived in spite of racial, gender and economic discrimination. Her fiction presents the dual cultural heritage where the Black women were compelled to accept the ideological value system of Whites and thus causing serious self about and self hatred within their mind.

Marshall has been praised by critics for exploring the psychological trails of African – American women. Her experience and background facilitated her to draw the true picture of black female striving amidst different situations. Let’s look upon her principal works for the study of the fractured psyche of the female characters.

4.2 The fractured psyche in the protagonists.

*Brown Girl, Brown Stones,* Marshall’s first novel is set in Brooklyn, New York. It was the time after the First World War that many West Indians were seeking refuge in their
homeland, having experienced disillusionment from British Colonizers. Thus the scenario was set when the people were in conflict with their community identity and individual identity. In this fused environment, Selina Boyce attempts to find a self identity that would set her apart from her ambitious mother Silla. Selina’s mother wants to stay in Brooklyn and earn enough money to buy a brown stone raw house, but her father dreams only of returning to his island home. Torn between a romantic nostalgia for the past and a driving ambition for the future, Selina also faces the everyday burdens of poverty and racism. Moreover she is sandwiched between her mother’s ambitions and her own desires. This internal conflict becomes painful for Selina as she is unable to decide where her real home is, the place she has been brought up in or the country that she has never visited yet is her homeland. The inability to belong and other such conflicts create the foundation for the fractured psyche.

Racism, chauvinism, discrimination, or hostility towards other races, can have a very adverse effect on the person who suffered from it. The effect of their social bigotry, can affect the mind, soul and heart of an individual. It can also be one of the reasons of fractured psyche among the African – American immigrant as depicted in the novels of Marshall. Due to their immigrant colonial status and colour the immigrants had to suffer racial discrimination. Paule Marshall, in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* describes some harsh truths about the way how the blackness of the skin of the African – American immigrant fails to give Barbadian people their identity in Newland. They are addressed as ‘Black’ meaning something that is dark, that has to be neglected, as it is not associated with beauty. Black, is something that people look down upon, they try to avoid, as it is synonymous with ugliness. The skin colour, i.e. Black, is taken as a symbol of inferiority. Selina, in the novel experiences racism when she joins a dance ensemble at her college. She does this against the wishes of her mother’s prohibition, as she seeks to discover her ‘self’. Though Selina rebels against Silla’s culture, the Baijan culture, but she is unable to get rid of it. After her successful performance, as the
lead role in the dance trap, they are called up by Margret’s mother, a white member of the group, to her house to celebrate the occasion. Selina, has to suffer humiliation due to Margret’s mother’s comment, who compares her with a servant, as they had a servant who was black negro. Margaret’s mother tells her that though she (Selina) may be successful, but she will not be accepted by the white community as she is black. Selina is forced to realize her Baijan background, blackness, the African roots are part of her identity. Margaret’s mother tells Selina;

We once had a girl who did our cleaning who was from there (the West Indies)… there was something different about her- about Negroes from the West Indies… Selina truly saw – with a sharp and shattering clarity – the full meaning of her black skin…(289)

These comments shatter Selina and she is outraged. She is hurt in knowing the fact that in spite of her courageous and rebellious act to secure a position for herself, which she ultimately does; she does not get self recognition and acceptance as she belongs to the black community. It makes her feel that her Baijon background, blackness and African roots are part of her identity that she can never erase.

In the novel we get many instances that suggest the impact of racism and its adverse effect on the black community. The lines “Lord, Lemme to better than this, lemme rise! No power is a thing that don really have nothing to do with skin colour…(224), reveals the cry of an aching heart, who suffered the humiliation of racism, just because their skin colour was black. Mary Helen Washington statement supports the point alone, when she says;

By skin colour, by African origin, by their colonized status, the west Indians of Paul Marshall’s novel are inexorably connected to all black American

(Afterward, Brown Girl, Brown Stones, 311)
Marshall beautifully illustrates the racial impact on the black, it was such a web, in spite of their continuous effort to free themselves; they were quite unable, as it has entangled all over them, and its influence was rotting their life. The characters Silla and Selina were aware of the racial presence, but Silla on one hand, had developed a mentality that she had to live with it, but it does not mean that she had stagnated her rise. She wanted to rise, in spite of the constrains, not only due to her blackness and racial impact but also due to the constraints she was facing due to her Barbarian and colonial status. She faces the situation with a cry in her heart, Lord: lemme rise! lemme do better that this. This shows the clef that had developed in her heart and mind. Perhaps due to his ruptured mental status she makes a sincere aching prayer to Lord. It is an appeal of a frustrated mind; an cry of a fractured heart and soul, who has to live on and also denies to stand out in spite of the experience of racism; the blackness which was quite biological, given by Lord.

Selina, belonged to the new generation. She wanted to have a self identity, apart from the ancestral recognition of her Barbarian and colonial status. She shows her rebellious nature of very corner to stand up with her own recognition. But Marshall shows that Selina in spite of her strive, may have acquired the self status at times, but ultimately she also recognizes, that her past, her status are a part of her life, her colour is a permanent fixture of her body that she cannot ever wipe off, and has to accept and live with it. We see that Selina wanders through her mother’s rented house and can still feel the presence of the long deported white tenants, their ethnicity of whiteness, present with the physical spaces of the house. These lines from the novel Brown Stones, gives an accurate representation of how Selina after enduring racism, specially due to her black colour, found herself a developing a complex, a type of fissure in her psyche.
…she rose her arms lifted in welcome…the white family who had lived there before… their white hands trailed the barrister, their mild voices implored her to give them a little life. The floor – to – ceiling, mirror retained their faces as did their voices …(5)

Indeed, Selina felt that whiteness is a part of the décor and the ambience and she felt that though she may be present in the room, she was not a part of it. Her body’s description is not as elegant or as eerie as the whites. She was wearing:

…a torn middy blouse, dirty shorts, and socks that always worked down into the heal of her sneckers. That was all she was… she was something vulgar in a holy place … (6).

Marshall draws our attention to the museum like holy quality of the place that does not match Selina’s body, which is not frozen and timeless as the whites. Her torn and dirty tolling with blackness peeing out of it, indicates movement and decomposition. Her body’s vulgarity, its blackness is foreign to white presence that still haunts the home even after they were not actually present. The description of whiteness present in the room is actually the influence of racial discrimination that Selina had endured throughout, so much so that even when the whites were not actually present, Selina was afraid to occupy the room, as it was once possessed by the Whites. Her dark colour finds itself in an uneasy relationship in the white space and she voices her brown body and indeed her black voice does not belong to the brown stone. (CBB. Michael L. University of Toranto Quarterly 638). Selina seems to be hanging between white ideology and self-hatredness. A vacuum develops in her due to racial discrimination and all these are enough reasons for her to develop a fractured psyche. Thus her racial identity lay muffled in the miasma of internalized white illusions, white ideals, value system are open Mrs. Benton’s voice, face and her venomous behavior has deeply
scarred Selina’s mind. Selina is a split identity “a divided self” (R.D. Lang). “She is a person with fractured psyche” (Pettis, Towards wholeness in Paule Marshal, 177) and impaired perception. She, due to her peculiar environment suffers a physical and mental battle. Her battle is also to find a place for herself in the space which is already filled with whites. The struggle for physical space in the western society, amongst the colonizers, fills the life of the colonized with suffocation, leading them to their doom.

The doomed life or the tragic end was the overall consequence of the characters in Brown Girl, where the father Deighton Boyce is dead by suicide, the oldest daughter Iva has a dull marriage, Silla is alone and Selina is left wandering trying to make sense out of her world and her history. Though Silla Boyce stands alone, exhausted, screaming at the invisible roomies, she also stands as a strong, mature, hard working woman. She represents the women of African community, whom the western world has humiliated and despised. Silla and Selina are the consequence of the history and the causes and represent the sorrow of their entire race who had suffered racism, which created rift in their psyche, ruptured their souls and fractured their minds. These lines from the novel shows the humiliation that the African women had to endure:

… oh … poor things ! You can’t help you color. It’s just a lack of proper training and education… held down by her hand, drawing in the delay of her voice, Selina felt a coldness ring her heart… she wondered, even as she drowned that she is simply a girl of twenty with a slender body and no power with words… who had tried foolishly perhaps to reach beyond herself ? … Selina truly saw - with a sharp and shattering clarity – the full meaning of her black skin. (249 – 250).
She, the black skinned woman, was made to feel that her black skin would bring them humiliation and hatred, how much so ever, she may strive to rise. Each time, she protected herself, she had to face disgrace, due to the skin color stigma. By being reminded her of her skin factor. She at stances, due to humiliation that she achieved, beloved insanely, which shared her ruptured psyche… The abuses the back woman received, was responsible for the rift in their mental balance, which they showed in their behavior. These lines from the novel showing Selina’s violent behavior and mental imbalance

… leaping up, Selina savagely flung off the woman’s hand; the woman fell back… “Get out of my way!” she struck brutally at the soft white arm reaching for her … (250-251)

The Black woman, broken by disgrace and abuses that she faced each day; made her unstable and confused,

… her dark face must be confused in their mind with what they feared most; with the night, symbols of their ancient faces, which seethed with sin and harbored violence… The women, confronted by her breast face, had sensed the arid place within herself and had sought absolution of in cruelty. Like the night she was to be feared, spurred purified – and always reminded of her darkness … (251)

In Praise Song for the Widow, Marshall tells the story of the Afro-American widow on a Caribbean cruise. The novel focuses on Avatar “Avey” Johnson who has embraced the materialistic American culture completely and she has abandoned her African heritage. While on a cruise on the Caribbean, Avey is seized by uneasiness when she begins to dream about her ancestors. This mystifying dream holds her mind. To distance herself from this emotional discomfort, which she associated with the island, Avey disembarks at Genada, intending to
fly home. When she misses her flight and becomes stranded on the island, the natives welcome her into their community, inviting her to participate in their activities. Avey complies and accompanies them to Carriacou, an island associated with the middle passage – the shipping route used to transport slaves from Africa to America. Guided by the elderly Lebert Joseph, the embodiment of the African God of the Cross roads, Avey begins to remember the oral narratives and folk tales she heard as a child, and she joins the inlanders in their dance and celebration. Her participation prompts a spiritual journey, that indicates self-discovery. Before achieving self discovery; one has to pass through deep crisis, sometimes has to oscillate between cultural, ancestral values, roots and economic imbalance. Avey the protagonist has to face this turmoil in the novel *Praise Song for the Widow*, that left her shattered at times leading to her fractured psyche.

Avey Johnson is bombarded with the questions by old, Lebert Joseph, “And what is you ? What’s your nation ? (167) Both the questions throws her into confusion. These are the central question on which Marshall has based this novel. These are the questions that leaves Avey in a psychic bondage, when she could not understand where she actually stands, where she actually belongs. In the novel, Marshall shows the journey of a Black widow Avey, to find out the answers to these questions.

The novel opens with an incident, when Avey Johnson, going on a luxury cruise through the Caribbean Island starts dreaming of her past. Though this journey, Marshall’s concern is to take us through a journey of self recognition and healing. Avey represents the Black women, who had been through the trauma of slavery and oppression. The trauma that is constantly faced by the African people. The scattered lives of the African people, the condition under which the Afro-Americans have to live, the sacrifices they made or must make to succeed in the terms of the American society. These conditions also invariably mean
a severing from their emotional roots. Avey learns that this is a repetition of that historical separation, that was happening in her private life too. It needs a strong will power, patience and sacrifice to tolerate and face the situations, which only Marshall’s heroin can endure.

In this novel Marshall focuses how, one passes through rift or rupture in one’s spirit mind and soul, when one leads towards a journey of identity achievement. Avey in her journey to find her self-identity, moves from one identity status to another as her commitment to life’s choices. Her roles change based on the different periods of crisis in her life and so does her search. The first time we meet Avey Johnson, she is in the midst of identity crisis. She was on a cruise with her friends, when an indefinable urge mounted on her to return home and consequently she decides to disembark the ship in Grenada. She was aware that it was only a few days since she had started her fifteen day cruise with her two closest friends. Avey is torn between her friend’s reaction to her decision and her yearning to return home. So

... There had been the dream three nights ago... she had gone to bed early that evening, only to find herself confronted the moment she dropped off to sleep by her great – aunt Cuney...she had scarcely thought of her in year. Yet she had been in her sleep, standing waiting for her on the road that led over to the landing...she was motioning for her to came on the well that had been a ritual with them during the August. She had spent as a girl on Tatem island, just across from Beaufort, on the South Carolina Tide water ... (32).

Avey’s ancestral home, her ancestral land, was calling her in her dream she experiences a terrifying condition she was in total mental disarray. She got connected to her past, her roots through the dream. The memories of her home, her roots were always there in her heart and mind. The fact was that she had curtained those memories to adjust herself to
the American way of living. Her memory of her great – aunt and her stories create an immediate desire to leave the ship. It was just like that the mythical hand of Aunt Cuney was pulling her to her roots through her dream and planning a stage, Carriacau, to reveal to Avey her cultural identity she was trying to search that was lost. At this point Avey’s psyche shows its deep seated fractures when she almost involuntarily leaves her friend and the cruise. She even does not question the thoughts that drive her to act, just as a person with rift psyche may behave peculiarly without understanding.

Avey had known about her ancestors through Aunt Cuney’s stories. She had grown up with the history of Ibos. As she grew up, she had to perform the relevant roles of a wife and mother, pursue her plans, values and goals for the future. In her heart and mind she still cherished the values of her great aunt, the Ibos, and the African who came to the southern shore of the United States.

Later, when Avey experiences economic problems, she becomes distracted by a desire for economic upliftment, and that distracts her from maintaining connection with her roots. She gets distracted, as she gets influenced by the western ideologies. She follows the American ideology that the American society mandates. As a wife and mother Avey pursues the American Dream, which slowly holds her, drifting her from her cultural practices that are stifled because of her changed values. Thus she diffuses from her identity, by abandoning the cultural practices she pursued to attain the American dream. But Avey is unable to retain her African identity in her life. She is unable to wholly connect to the American idea. The Blacks who pursue the American Dream by sacrificing family values and ignoring cultural practices thus loose their black identity. Thus as the year passes, Avey find herself in another crisis, because she is unable to find an identity for herself.
…Hadn’t she found at increasingly difficult as the years passed to think a herself as Avey or even “Avatara”? The woman to whom those name belonged had gave away, had been banished along with her feelings and passions to some far-off place …(141).

It is a sad to know that Avey’s quest for materialistic gain results in disconnecting her from roots, creating for her a confused moment. She feels as if caught between two poles. She was being pulled apart mentally between her ancestral roots and her present American livelihood. The pull, created a rift in her personality, an impaired personality her peculiar and psychotic behavior in the cruise is the outcome of the mental disturbances. She would see islands in the dining tables; she could feel the pressure of her Aunt’s grip on her left wrist, even amidst all other in the cruise.

…That evening as the main course were being cleared away, Avey let her gaze drift out across … she has sensed her great aunt still struggling to haul her up the road. Even now her left wrist retained something of the pressure of the old woman’s grip…Absently her eyes wandered over the fifty odd tables, each it appeared … they were like island, it suddenly occurred to her…each table an island separate from the others on the sea of Persian carpet…(43)

Marshall portrays the troubled spirit of Avey through her flashing memories as she had unwillingly distanced herself from her roots, to pursue her dreams. Though they are no longer a living aspect of her life, but exist only as treasured memories, when she recollects them they become lively. They symbolize those incidents that have long disappeared, yet the memory of it urges her to connect to her roots. The reconnection brings about a change in her abnormal behavior, as if the fracture has healed. Marshall in a way affirms the importance of collective community and staying connected to one’s root. Avey rises from her crisis, from
her turmoil, when she reconnects with her African past through her interactions with the Carriacau people. Thus Marshall insists on reconnection of diasporic blacks with their African past, not only to erase a sense of ‘rootlessness’ but also in order to heal the ‘fractured psyche’ that had arisen due to the identity crisis of the Caribbean immigrant.

Avey, at the end finds the answers to the question that was asked by Lebert Joseph, which she was unable to answer initially but by going back to her roots is answerable. The dream of Aunt Cuney, brought back her memories alive. Avey’s dream and her behavior suggest that she was suffering from a ‘fractured psyche’, as she was sleep walking and could fantasize her ancestral land even in the dining room of the cruise. Jennifer Thoringtan in her thesis *Black Diasporic Connection in Paule Marshall’s Fiction*, expounds the same vein and supports our point, when she writes:

...Marshall in warning diasporic blacks not to reject their ancestry for the ‘Almighty Dollah’. For her African rituals and practices can sustain blacks who struggle with the overlapping of race, class, gender in western societies... Also for those blacks who psyches have been fractured by western values, Marshall suggests reclaiming African history and cultural practices as a cure.

(95)

The novel *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* explores the means through which and individual comes to identify with a group. The novel aims at examining the problems faced by many third world countries, in their struggle to establish a national identity.

In the novel, Saul Amran is an aging but still active Jewish American anthropologist, who with his Philadelphia wife Harriet (a research associate) goes out to Bournehills, on a big “Multimillion – Dollar Development Scheme”, on behalf of one of the great U.S. Foundations. He is a committed intellectual who has worked all his life in underdeveloped
countries and has acquired a pragmatic confidence in his ability to understand and improve them. He is also sincere, honest and hard working and has real sympathy for people and their problems. He also has some personal problems. Early in his career, he deserted a preunion public health nurse who had become his mistress. His first wife, a survivor of the Nazi concentration camp, died of a miscarriage while working on field. His self – assessment and resultant guilt of this incident had taken him out of the field work altogether until he met Harriet, who had just divorced from a nuclear scientist husband.

Harriet recognizes his talents and deep desire to return to the field, and arranges for him to be offered the directorship of the Bournhills project. They marry but after sometime Merle Kinbona, comes back to Saul’s life. Merle and Harriet then pass through a rivalry stage. As the chapter deals with the fractured psyche of the women, let us study the causes and symptoms of fractured psyche of the women character normally Harriet Amran and Merle Kinbona.

The richness of *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, lies precisely in its female characters, who are strong as individuals in their contribution to the people of Bourhills, but as a women they are weaker, with their emotional out breaks, that lead to their downfall or deterioration. Harriet Amran a mainline Philadelphian family fortune. Saul Amran is her second husband. She had been previously married to a nuclear scientist whom she has divorced. She always felt the need for power and position. She marries Saul Amran. She persuades Saul to herd the project to uplift the poverty of the Bournhills people. It was presumed that the project will receive most of its funds from her family fortunes. It was a contradictory fact that her family had made its fortune in shipping and slave trade. Ironically they were responsible for the misery of the people of Bournhills; and she is now making an effort to wipe their woes through the project of her husband. Harriet a white Anglo – Saxon
Protestant, wants to woo power and control in everything, including the lives of the people. She truly dominated the white community, who tends to rule and possess power. She had decided to marry Saul and she had succeeded. She had determined that Saul would be the head of the development project and she had succeeded. Without even questioning herself, she tried to run everybody’s lives. Then came a phase in her life, when she started realizing that everyone and every circumstance in her life was just out of control.

At first Harriet appears to be sympathetic to the Bournhills people. She moves about freely amongst them and is accepted as one of them. However, a crisis during the carnival, distances her from the Bournhills people. She finds that she cannot control the black women anymore and that leads her to shut herself off. Her tendency to dominate and control others, forcibly, even irritated her husband, who angrily remarks at her attitude;

...What is it with you and your kind anyway? ... It you can’t have things your own way, if you can’t run the show, there’s be no show, is that it? ...

Saul, sarcastically points to the attitude of the white’s to rule; to rule with force. Later her personal life, her marriage, falls into stake. She learns about the affair of her husband with Merle. She immediately tries to approach Merle and tries to buy but fails. She tries all her ways to create a gap between the two. She accuses Saul over the affair, and refuses to listen when he tries to explain that although her affair with Merle is not a permanent one, it is not a casual one either.

Again, Harriet, as an individual personality, desires total control, but with the responsibility of the power levied on her. When she finds herself in a crisis, that she has lost her hold on her husband she tries to buy back her control and acts like a woman possessed. Her past history, her inner need to belong and her intense desire to possess are all shattered when she realizes that her husband for whom she had worked so hard was does not belong to
her anymore. She fails to recognize her control and power needs and is psychologically broken. Previously she had tried to uplift Saul’s project CASR, (Center for Applied Social Research) for the betterment of Bournehills people. Harriet’s attitude towards Bournehills is fraught and ambivalent. She has unconscious desire to conquer Bournehill. She manages to cancel the grant which supports Saul’s work. Thus she targets the emotional and economic needs of others to fulfill her own desire. Harriet turns out to be an insecure wife. She, without finding out the factors that made Saul to turn his affections towards Merle, without introspecting of the consequence, uses her approaches and power to drive the situation according to her wish. She truly represents the contemporary paternalistic American racist and a reincarnation of the widowship, whose family made a fortune in the slave trade. She is egoistic enough to perceive herself as the savior. Harriet behaves in a very selfish way and shows the nature of an imperialist. Later all her efforts turn out to be in vain, and she finds everything out of her control. Her ruptured psyche is clearly echoed in her behavior in which she acts without giving thought at the consequences. When Harriet learns the truth, that she can’t control everything according to her will, she had tries to set others and situations according to her will, irrespective of the disturbance it will cause them. Finally when she fails to conquer her unconscious desire, detaches developmental scheme for Bournehill and she commits suicide.

On the other hand, Merle Kinbona, in the novel is the daughter of a mulatto and a black woman. She is the spokesperson of the island’s self-respect. She had the shameful memories of a lesbian relationship in London and her African husband on coming to her about it. He then deserted her taking the child, they had out of their marriage.

Paule Marshall had very lavishly and painstakingly taken care to caricature the character of Merle Kubona. She had been given focus in the novel. Through her we are able
to enter the west Indian consciousness. Through her, Marshal has represented the west Indian woman’s predicament. Merle, after being discarded by her African husband returns to Bournhills, the true voice of the people. Saul, in the party thrown at Bournhills, interacts with Merle. Here he understands that to know the Bournehills people he should know Merle. When Merle, a garrulous black women turns up the party, Saul reacted as such:

Saul studies her face; he listened to the desperate voice… and it struck him that this women who shrugged like a Jew and insisted whenever she lanced his way that … had brought the entire spurred and shameless lot with her into the veranda. (67)

So Saul, who received a flame of protest at the party, came to know that the whole lot of people actually were overtime of Merle, and thus he should make himself come closer to her to be in Bourne island. Merle is black and makes no attempt, unlike others to present herself, as anything other than black. Despite her education in England, she identifies herself with the people of Bournehill. Saul recognizes her position the way the Bourenhill people do and so he knows that he should embrace Merle in order to embrace the Bournehill people.

Merle, an open hearted, fierce, outspoken, sincere and dedicated spokeswoman of the Bourne island, had to suffer from the patriarchal norms of the back society. In other words she had been first of all discarded by her African husband though they had a child from their marriage. She is a mother, but has to live alone because of the lesbian relationship that she had before her marriage. Again Saul, when he comes to know the story and the position and affinity of the islanders for Merle, he uses it as a medium to survive in the place. Saul, a white man, shows selfish attitude and uses Merle. When the roller of the sugar machinery breaks down and they decide to close the factory it is a great break down period for the people of Bournhills, as the little they had were being taken away from them. At this point
Merle, accuses Saul for creating the situation and threatens him to mend it. Merle, truly represents Paule Marshall’s woman, who inspite of undergoing all the trauma in the initial period of her life that could have led to a fractured psyche, emerges as a strong woman who boldly confronts the white man for the black community. Merle, who was a poor student in England had been sucked into a lesbian relationship with a rich English women. Later she feels ashamed of the relationship and brakes away from it by marrying an African man. The English woman takes revenge by informing Merle’s husband of the affair, who turns cold towards her and leaves her one day. She suffers psychologically due to this situation, as she was forced into the relationship due to her financial position, but at the same time, she regrets what she had been into. She receives no understanding from her husband who leaves her without even informing her. Merle’s ruptured psyche can be understood by the reaction she had towards the situation when her husband leaves her:

…Brute ! Has could he have just walked out like that ? without a word … she was as much mine as his. I was still her mother, no matter what I had done or how I had lived, and that gave me some say in what was to happen to her… was he God? … or was I the only person who ever lied to someone they loved, or tried to cover up the past ? I only did it because I didn’t want to risk losing him. I could not bear to have him know what a botch I had made of everything before meeting him. I wanted him to think well of me. Is that so terrible ? Does that make me the worst person in the world ? Oh, damn him ! (468)

Merle comes to the conclusion that she should not be condemned for what she had done when she was much younger. She suffers from a rift psyche, when her husband without proper understanding or talking with her, moves away with the child when she felt that earlier her husband Kete, really loved her. The incident, for Merle was a heavy setback, emotionally,
and even eight years later, she still feels emotionally paralysed by Kete’s behavior. She admits that she will not be able to ‘get moving again’ (468) until she visits Africa.

Marshall’s next well known novel is Daughters. The story of Cudjoe and Jane resounds in Daughters. Cudjoe ad Jane are a model couple, an ideal collective black community.

Ursa Mekenzie, the protagonist of the novel, struggles for a liberating identity, the self identity that is not overshadowed by the identity of his father Primus Mekenzie the Prime Minister of Triunion. The novel traces the life of Ursa, whose dependent relationship with her father, stifles her individuality and shows the pendulum position of Marshall’s women who often finds herself dwelling between two situations or two conditions or may be two states of mind. These two contradictory positions or situations lead to an endless struggle and turmoil on her life with ends up in a fractional psyche. Daughters reveals an antagonistic relationship, between Ursa and her father. Usra’s faces conflicts in her life because she at one hand wants to please Primus, who is the Prime Minister of Triunion and simultaneously she wants to break free. As Marshall herself says:

…This novel is about the subtle deferring to men that was so much a part of my childhood and the childhood of many women… How long it took me to move away from that and to recover, to insist upon autonomy (Marshall’s interview with Slyvia …255)

The autonomy, the individuality was the factor that was secretly flaming in Ursa’s heart all the time at the same time she was eclipsed by her father’s personality and position. She thus found herself conflicting between these two contradictory situations. Ursa had a stunted personality because of her relationship with her father. In this novel, the fractured psyche in Ursa is due to her quest for identity, similar to that of Selina Boyce in Brown Girl Brown
Ursa’s stunted growth is not because of her cultural roots, but because of her connection with her father. It is his influence that stifles her personal development.

Ursa has very close relationship with her father. During her childhood and adolescence, she does not follow her own wishes, or have some steady commitment towards future values or goals. Her identity is fully defined by her parents and specially by her father. Moreover Ursa was born after her mother Estille had undergone several miscarriages. Thus she was a prized possession of her parents. Primus tries to give her everything in order to make Ursa feel special. He was dedicated to her. He would, in spite of his busy life and other appointments, reach home in time, to have dinner with Ursa. His mistress Astral would sometimes sarcastically remark:

… he’s not gone let might catch him here. It’s home in time to have supper will the great Mistress Ursa and the life from big America. He gets on like everybody put on this earth to wait on her Highness. (215)

Her father’s attention created a web around Ursa, designing her development and closing opportunities for her to experience her own life. As Ursa grew up, she developed her personal identity and orientation. Ursa has the habit of exclusive life style provided by her father and her demands and needs grew more with time. At this stage, when she starts feeling the need of her own identity, her father’s overpowering presence makes her feel burdened, but she feels obliged to please him because of his deep affection of her. Ursa is now in conflict between her own identity search and her father’s overwhelming presence and care. This contradictory situation often creates rift in the psyche and may cripple one’s personality. Heather Hathway’s comment supports our point, when she says:
Ursa’s conflicting relationship with her father starts her from fully entering into new relationships because it is rooted, in a dependency that is crippling. (134)s

Primus not only cripples Ursa’s personality but also her relationship with other men. Each time Ursa meets Lowell, her lover, she is more anxious to tell him about her father. Lowell feels uneasy and irritated in the unwanted presence of a father in the conversation between two lovers. This situation stirs Lowell’s antagonism and fiercely reacts to it and shouts:

…First comes him, then little island in the sun… oh sure, you’re body’s around… He alone comes in for at least ninety-five percent of your thoughts…Everything’s about him !... (265)

At this juncture, Ursa faces another crisis in her life. Her relationship with her father, and her father’s expectation from her, prevents her from having a conjugal relationship with her lover, Lowell. She is not able to maintain a balance, between her relationships. Ursa, becomes much ‘fathercentric’ in her relationship. Individual relationships demand their own space and Ursa wants her love to be equally distributed amongst all her relationships. Her primary relationship is one and that is with her father. In doing so she estranges herself from her community, values, self goals, identity and also her boyfriend. There is a self realization in her about the imbalance that is going on in her life, and she too wants to search her own place, and have a very intimate relationship with her lover. But her father’s expectation, care, and her own obligation towards her father prevent her from establishing a balance. Instead it creates a rift and frustration at her own inability to listen to her inner self and thus building a fracture psyche.
Ursa, starts questioning herself. Her mother Estella helps her to find a way out of the crisis. She ensured that Ursa, goes to school in America, to broaden her worldview that is restricted to Triunion by Primus influences.

Ursa, recognizes the imbalance in her relationship, with her father, with Lowell, and also in her studies. She undergoes two abortions because of her union with Lowell. She finds her relationships quite dispersed, like the puzzle, which needed to be sorted out. Her thesis topic the misrepresentation of black women in the American literary canon too gets rejected by Professor Crowder. It was like the whites preventing the blacks from exploring the truth about their ancestors. Ursa’s life gets sucked in the whirlpool of crisis, with everything messed up. Her ruptured psyche pleads for a way out of the circumstances.

Like all other women of Marshall, Ursa too survives through a critical situation and inspite of feeling utterly broken at times, never loses hope. She finds a way out of the situation, so that she may not suffer from the ruptured psyche forever. Ursa, decides to commit herself to a separate life to gain self identity. She plans to usurp her father’s election by providing the opposing party with classified information about plans to relocate some of the people of Triunion. Ursa’s plan becomes successful as Primus loses his political seat and the respect of the people. Although Ursa’s method is not healthy, but it was the only way she could find to free herself from the tangled circumstances she was facing.

4.3 Conclusion

Probing into the fractured psyche in black female in Marshas novels, we come into the conclusion that the critical situations in the life of her protagonists is responsible for their fractured psyche. Paule Marshall, who herself belongs to the black community has experienced the trauma that black women have to endure. Thus she has voiced the muted voice of the black women, and provided centrality to women in her novels. Marshall’s
women are oppressed women. They had to face the reality of double discrimination, of both race and sex. She was a doubling burdened, doubly geo-paralized person. As Gloria Wade Gayles puts:

There are three major circles of reality in American Society, which reflects degree of power and powerlessness. There is a large circle in which white people, most of them men, experience influence and power. For 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. These are the distinguishing marks of black womanhood in white America (11)

These small groups of human beings with dark skins suffer, as they have been displaced from their roots, suffering by being colonized, due to lack of identity in the new displaced place, where they are looked down due to their skin colour.

Selina, the second generation immigrant, in *Brown Girl Brown Stones* is exposed to racism, sexism and lack of nationalism in America. After being exposed to all these factors, she suffers from fractured psyche and she finds relief in accepting Baijan roots and culture.

*Avey*, in *Praise Song for the Widow*, keeps her connection with her cultural roots, but at one particular period of her life, loses her cultural identity in pursuit of American dream. Here she loses her identity and her roots haunt her. Such a double exposed situation leads to fractured psyche. She behaves peculiarly by evacuating from the ship all of a sudden; she could fantasize her root’s island in the dinner table. But later she comes out of her ‘ruptured psyche’ state by going back to her roots.
In the *Chosen Place and Timeless People*, Merle, the black women, faces crisis in her life due to poverty and finds herself in a lesbian relationship. She tries to find a way out of it by marrying Ketes, an African boy. She was discarded by her husband, who took her child along with him, for a crime that she did due to circumstances, that too before her marriage. She suffers heavily and to find solace returns to Bournhills people. Here too she has an intimate relationship with Saul, who used her as a weapon to be close with the islanders. She faces humiliation from Saul’s wife, and at least Saul too lift her. In this novel too, we see that inspite of the contradictory circumstances that fracture Merle’s psyche, she too finds a way out of the circumstances, by going back to her husband.

In *Daughters*, Ursa is also in a quest to develop her identity. She loses her identity by being in her father’s grip. It puts her all other relationships i.e. with her boyfriend, culture, friends at a stake. She dwells in a dispersed life, from where she seeks freedom. Such a situation again leads to a fractured psyche as it stunts growth. But she too like all other women of Marshall found a way out of the situation, by plotting against her father so that he loses his power.

Thus all the protagonists, the black women in the novel of Paule Marshall, pass through crisis; they face humiliation, and insults, and oppression, and are caught in a dilemma which leads to fractured psyche. But passing through this psychological climax, they learn tolerance, patience and gain power to overcome the situation by themselves. Marshall herself says:

I am trying to trace… history… to take for example, the infamous triangle route of slavery and to reverse it so that we make the journey back from America to the west Indies to Africa… to make the back trip. I’m not talking about in actual terms. I’m talking about a psychological and spiritual journey
back in order to move forward. You have to psychologically to through chaos in order to overcome it. (Marshall, *Contemporary literary Criticism*, 245)

The Black Woman suffers more due to the patriarchal system. All these sufferings and crisis in her life leads to a rift in body and soul. The climax in her life breaks her internally and she suffers from the fractured psyche. She continues to exist, facing the trauma of racism, sexism, the patriarchal society of America, and above all she manages to survive being displaced from her historical background. But it definitely makes her fragile internally. Yet she carries on with a fractured psyche, because she is a black woman, who has the patience and power of tolerance.
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