

Chapter Five

Conclusion

I hope that people will finally come to realize that there is only one 'race' - the human race - and that we are all members of it.

-Margaret Atwood

Racism is one of the predominant issues in Toni Morrison's novels *Beloved*, *The Bluest Eye*, *A Mercy*, *Home*, and *Song of Solomon*, and in the novels of Alice Walker like *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, *The Color Purple*. The issues of racism are explored under the specifications of the general victimhood of Black males, the destruction of culture and traditions of Black families, and the devalued Black families. The usage of 'rememory' technique in bringing out past racial issues and attainment of selfhood is explored. Then the victimhood of Black females, the victimhood of Black children in the form of internalised racism, the intra-racial racism, and the lack of emotional and psychological support for the children from the parents in a racial milieu are analysed. The novels of both the authors have plenty of incidents in them to express these terms of racism.

Toni Morrison has chosen the novel, *Beloved* as a dedication to the racial violence cast upon the Black race. Alice Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, is a similar novel of a sharecropper who lives a life full of poverty, confusion and oppression. But the protagonist is able to break out the routine of a socially and personally accepted oppression in order to enhance the condition of his later life. The Blacks are reduced to a status of a commodity, animals, and sub humans due to the doctrine of racism. The feeling of inferiority, inability and inadequacy of the slave male turns out as a rage over his family, who dominates his wife and children to submission. They become receptacles for the evils due to lack of

manhood of the Black men. The authors discuss such oppressive nature and superiority in the White characters like Schoolteacher in *Beloved*, Shipley in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, etc., which typically characterises this concept of White superiority. Many White characters in the novels of both the authors speak about racism in their words and deeds.

The novels show the destruction of culture and identity of Black family by the institution of slavery. Many characters of both the sexes lack their own culture as the slaves were forced to adapt to the dominant culture, imposed by their masters. This cultural disruption also came after the emancipation and with the great migrations to northern cities. In Alice Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, the protagonist faces similar cultural disruptions when he faces his three lives and finally regains his life. Racism intermingled inseparably in the lives of the characters of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, *The Bluest Eye*, etc. Although their culture is destroyed, the Afro-Americans develop a will power to change like Grange and succeed like him in lifting themselves out of the depth of racial oppression. This cultural disruption and disorganised Black families are seen in almost all the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker.

In the era of segregation, the Black families are considered to have single mothers, males who abandon the family, and have one or more illegitimate children. This belief of degradation is manifested in the single mother, Sethe in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. The abandonment of the family by the male is seen as a result of her missing husband and sons, and the notions of illegitimate child are shown in the mysterious daughter character, Beloved. This low belief of the Whites which they had on the Black families is expressed in all the novels of both the authors. But they try to give a reason, circumstances and the realistic situations that give rise to such an

environment. The reflection of a broken Black family is seen in the novels of both the authors.

In Beloved, the technique of 'rememory' used by Toni Morrison in brings out the pains deeply buried in one's conscience. The modern day readers do not spend much time in understanding the core things of the racial issues. So Morrison tries to illustrate this idea through the recurring appearance of the baby ghost, Beloved. The novel instigates the rememory in almost all the characters like Sethe, Paul D, Denver, Stamp Paid, etc., bringing out their suppressed feelings and their emotions. This helps the reader to comprehend the racial issues that were prevalent in the past. Morrison also speaks about this rememory in her novel, *Home* where she gives a detailed narration on the African American suppression through the memories of Frank Money. In this novel an apparently defeated man finds his manhood and his homeland by remembering his past. A similar technique of rememory, but exactly not the same, is applied by Alice Walker in a different manner to understand racism. In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, the protagonist speaks to his grand - daughter, Ruth, about his past life, his vision about the society, his mistakes, his fear, how he overcame the fear over the Whites and enlightens his grand - daughter about racism. Through these words of Grange, Walker also enlightens the readers to understand the core issues of racism.

Morrison attempts to give a similar conception of rememory, when Milkman strives to know about his own family lineage in *Song of Solomon*. This search of his past gives him a better understanding about the problems of today and acquires a new sense of selfhood. The rememory or the rediscovery of one's heritage intermixed with racial oppression becomes the starting point of one's search of mind. The rethinking of those issues which the characters hate to remember leads to heal of their scars of

enslavement or oppression. Similar painful past always looms in the memories of many characters of both the authors. They come to tell us that the harder we suppress these memories the faster they will return. The authors prescribe a remedy for the Afro-Americans to heal themselves through remembering their past. The universal characteristics of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker have been the depiction of the journey of their protagonists to selfhood in this racially charged milieu.

The females as racial victims are seen in the novels of both the authors. In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the characters like Baby Suggs, Sethe, and Sethe's mother are directly victimised due to racism. The women characters of Alice Walker like Sophia and Squeak of *The Color Purple*, Margret of *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, etc., are also directly victimised due to racism. Female victimhood is also shown through physical tortures like rape and other psychological oppressions. The female characters in the novels of both the authors are directly affected by the Whites and indirectly affected by Black males. The Black male characters pass on their pains and frustrations to the weaker sex.

The emancipation which resulted from the victory of the Civil War hardly changed the life of the Blacks. The lynching, rape, burning and destroying the properties of the Blacks by members of Ku Klux Klan continued in reality. Such murders are seen in the novels of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, when Celie's father is murdered by the Whites during the period of segregation and in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* during the period of post slavery era. In *Sula*, Toni Morrison shows the day to day racial tensions during the Segregation period. The train incident and the humiliation that Helene faced are normal situations that the Blacks faced. Both the males and females, who are equally subjected to racial tortures, are vividly pictured in the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker.

Education is found unnecessary for Black males and females. The main reason is that Blacks are not considered to be human beings. Actually for the characters like Schoolteacher in *Beloved*, the Blacks are a combination of human and animal characteristics. The Black males like Paul D doubted the appropriateness in calling them 'men' because the slavery had stripped off them out of their manhood. Racism has similarly stripped off the manliness in many of the male characters like Brownfield and Grange of Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Cholly Breedlove of Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Halle of *Beloved*, etc. The novels of both the authors show that the doctrine of racism has stripped off the manliness in many of their male characters.

Racism had taught the Blacks, a new religion, 'the hate philosophy'. In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* during the second life, Grange is transformed into a fearless individual who hates and picks up fight with every White due to this new philosophy. He understands that he had no love for himself, and his anger for his children and wife is because of the frustration that developed due to racism. The same hate principle is seen in Morrison's *Beloved* through the character Sethe. Her hate over Schoolteacher and his two nephews leads to the murder of her children. After emancipation the Blacks who were afraid of the White masters, developed this form of new hostility over the Whites. But this philosophy is gradually changed in many of the characters after they evolve in their lives to understand the root cause of racism.

The issues of internalised racism have been prevalent even in contemporary American children and young adults. They are frequently seen in the Afro-American Literatures. The difficulties of the marginalised individuals who have suffered from it are seen in the novels of both the authors. In Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola Breedlove is such an individual who is socially and psychologically programmed to

perceive herself as being 'lower' and often wished to look, more like the dominant group. This female character equates 'black' with inferiority and 'white' with beauty, happiness and superiority. She is socially programmed to feel as a worthless weed because she does not symbolise western standard of beauty. The effects of internalised racism on the marginalised female characters, the role of patriarchal ideology, and the way to claim their identity are vividly pictured by Toni Morrison. This issue of internal racism is seen not only in Pecola but in the other female characters like Pauline Breedlove, Cholly Breedlove, Geraldine, the neighborhood Black boys, etc. The doctrine of internalised racism is seen in the character Celie of Walker's *The Color Purple*. She describes Celie as a physically unattractive woman and says that Celie considers herself as nothing. African Americans support the repressive efforts of the dominant culture by burying their self-identities and follow an unhealthy path of self-hatred by supporting to a false standard of beauty.

Internalised racism may also result in intra-racial racism, the discrimination within the Black community against those with darker skin and more African features. Claudia's resentment towards light colour skinned Maureen Peal is apparent in *The Bluest Eye*. Another character Geraldine shows this intra - racial racism by calling the protagonist, Pecola a 'bitch'. This shows that the Blacks faced two conflicting cultures. The African culture, which grew from their African heredity and which was transformed by its own unique history on American soil, and the European culture imposed on them by White Americans. For many Black Americans, like the characters in the novels of Morrison and Walker this means that having one cultural self at home and another cultural self in the White dominated working place. The Breedlove's family in *The Bluest Eye* ultimately becomes a scale against which the Black neighbourhood measures their ugliness, the victims of intra-racial racism. Toni

Morrison also gives an opposite concept of internal racism in the evolving world in, *Tar Baby*. Morrison creates a well educated, Paris model, supposed to be a very beautiful Black girl called Jadine, who becomes a cover model for a fashion magazine, *Elle*. In Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Ruth faces such intra-racial racism in her school life.

In *The Bluest Eye*, apart from the internalised racism, the racial experiences of the Black children especially girls are seen in the lives of Pecola, Frieda, and Claudia. Pecola is innocent but she is tragically abused by her father, shunned by her mother, ignored by her peers, unacknowledged by her teachers, and simply victimised by both White and Black communities. She is also an easy victim to racial insults and is in Showalter's first phase of 'imitation' or 'internalisation', responding with tears rather than swearing at people who insult her like Claudia. But Claudia is in Showalter's second phase of 'protest' when she shows a child's aggression against another light skinned girl or towards the white dolls. Although Claudia is the junior most in the group, she is the most matured girl of all in resisting the White culture. So Claudia remains sane in contrast to the submissive natured Pecola who becomes insane. Claudia's reflection at the end of the book on the inability of some seeds to grow and bear fruit in the soil of her community really suggests how hostile both Black and White communities are towards girls like Pecola Breedlove. Morrison gives an ideal girl and an unfortunate girl for the young readers to decide the best mindset to face this form of racism.

In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Alice Walker shows the effects of racism on young boys like the young Brownfield. His fear over his father and lack of intimate connection with him leads to lack of communication and emotionless environment. The children learn from the silent adults, that speech is of minimal

necessity for self-identity. Morrison gives the childhood notion of the girls on racism in *The Bluest Eye*. Alice Walker gives a deeper look into the male child, Brownfield and female child Ruth's psychology and development which is influenced by their parents' mind which is further shaped by the racist society in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*.

The childhood experience in facing racism is relatively more agonising because of their inability to reevaluate the same in an adult way. The children seek some solace from motherhood and family. In *The Bluest Eye*, girls like Claudia and Frieda escape to some degree from this racist culture due to their family support but girls like Pecola succumb to the racist oppression due to the lack of support from her failed Black family and her mother who herself is a victim of internalised racism, female oppression and general racism. The deranged Brownfield of *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* becomes a remote victim of fear and inferiority complex due to his oppressive father, who is further influenced racially. In *The Bluest Eye*, Cholly Breedlove who faces a complex sexually and racially degrading experience in his childhood develops a bad attitude towards love, sex, hate, and physical aggression. Both the authors give a similar picture about the childhood environment in a Black family and the effects of oppression which lies underneath all these childhood psychological traumas. Brownfield or Pecola, a male child or a female child experiences the same amount of trauma from their parents' life. The racial oppressions met by the parents are in turn pent up as frustrations over their children. The voiceless parents are seen in both the authors' novels. The voiceless parents in turn try to silence their children. They instill their sense of fear and insecurity into their children.

The parents being the first persons who are responsible for the cultural transmission, cannot play their role properly in shaping up the children's 'self' in this racially suppressive milieu. It is not the same condition in all the novels, for instance in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Ruth acquires a positive psychological, racial view and helps herself in the emotional healing, due to the positive reinforcement of her grandfather. She is able to form an individual identity of her own. She is able to comprehend the issues of racism and form her own sense of 'self'. But Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* is driven into insanity for wanting the 'Blue Eyes'. Pecola becomes a failure because of her unsupportive family and the unsupportive Black society which is not able to transmit the culture to her. The novels by the authors of interest have lot of similarities and some variations in expressing the attitudes and themes regarding racism.

The effects of racism on the familial relationships between husbands and wives in Black families are seen in the novels of both the authors. The intimacy between the husband and wife in many novels become questionable due to penetrations of the racial tensions into the Black families. The lives and relationship of characters of both the authors like Grange-Margaret, Brownfield-Mem, Pauline-Cholly Breedlove, Celie-Albert, and Sophia-Harpo, etc., are directly or indirectly influenced by the racial tensions present in the outer society which extends as violence into the family, which in turn affects their children. In *Beloved*, Paul D recollects his past and remembers the day he learns of his true worth. He understands that the commodity value of Black males is lesser than Black females because she has the power to reproduce new slaves for the future. The psychological rift created by the racial oppression upon the male-female relationship of African Americans are seen in

Morrison's *Beloved*, *The Bluest Eye* and Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, *The Color Purple*, etc.

These discourses help us to arrive at a result that, the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker have many characters of all ages and sex with various direct and indirect experiences on racism. The effective method to break this so called racial curse would be to address issues of race more openly during childhood days in educational institutions. It is safe to expose children of both the dominating and suppressed race to racism at a young age. We should help them understand this problem that comes along with them all through the life and influence the amicable way of thinking. If we are able to eradicate the problem at a young age, it is more probable that we can eliminate a good majority of racist thinking within a single generation. If more people put the effort into doing something like that, we would be able to curtail some of the racial problems of today and weed out much of the racial oppression that we experience in the modern world. This initiative of speaking about various racial issues is taken up by Toni Morrison and Alice Walker in their novels. Racism is one of the underlying themes in the novels and the other one being feminism. The novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker speak lots of racial issues and we are able to interpret plenty of information regarding the same by dissecting all these novels.

Feministic concept is the other important theme present in the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. Their characters have suffered racism and hardships of feministic oppression, equally. The novels of both the authors have major themes related to feminism like love, sex, motherhood, womanhood, sisterhood, gender oppression, psychology of a female child, general sufferings of the women, etc. Their

novels focus on the relationships between Blacks and Whites, Blacks and Blacks, men and women, adult and children in a White and a male dominated oppressive society.

The psychologies of the Black girls are shown in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, through the characters of young Claudia, Frieda and Pecola. Claudia narrates the complex and dreadful story of Pecola Breedlove. After being raped by her own father, Pecola is silenced into consolation due to madness. Claudia blames the whole community, including herself for her friend's tragic fate. Pauline Breedlove who is to have consoled her daughter and who is to have punished her husband is shocked by her husband's violence. She is not able to overcome the physical authority of her husband and bear the shock of a father raping his own daughter. Due to the depression that results, she is silenced and becomes an ideal domestic help to the satisfaction of her White employer. Pauline can call her employer's daughter by sweet names, but cannot support her own daughter's wishes. Through this particular character, Morrison has illustrated the day to day life of an oppressed Black women and children in a sexist White American society.

In Alice Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* and *The Color purple*, Josie and Celie are respectively raped by their fathers. Although, Josie is tormented by her father's oppression this does not cause her to stop loving her father. In Toni Morrison's *Love, Heed, Christine and May*, the wife, granddaughter and daughter-in-law of Bill Cosey respectively, are in years of misunderstanding between them. They compete endlessly for Cosey's love and affection which continues even after his death, and ultimately develop a deep hatred for one another. There is only a thin line between love and hate and eventually after years of full hatred, their conflicts are finally settled. This shows that the Black woman has no other solace except her own men. She returns to his male even when he represses her.

Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* has been praised as one of the greatest female literature of its time and been criticised for themes that include a negative portrayal of Black men. In the deeper level of understanding, her novels represent the displacement of women in real life. The protagonist, Celie is a young woman who is submissive to all men around her. Her interaction with the other women expresses the concept of sisterhood of feminism in assembling her own feminine identity within a largely male dominated world. Walker exposes the disgusting existence of male chauvinism. In *Sula* Toni Morrison shows the evolution of sisterhood in the Black women in her characters Sula and Nel till the end despite some frictions between them. It was during this period when the feminist discourses that encouraged women to come together were in vogue. The Black women were expected to develop sisterhood feeling instead of developing hostile attitudes between themselves.

Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Sethe prefers to terminate her female offspring's life, and attempts to kill the other children rather than let them live in the violence of enslavement and male chauvinism. A similar stubborn character that is able to withstand the tyranny of racial and feministic oppression is also seen in Walker's Sophia in *The Color Purple*. Sophia is exactly the opposite of Celie who represents the beaten down woman of the world. She makes a bold statement and resorts in a physical action if opportunity strikes. The declaration of her character is that she had to fight, all her life, against all males, even the ones inside the family and says that the Black girls are not safe in any place. These words of Walker present the real feministic thoughts that are necessary for the Black women in a nut shell.

Shug Avery is another character who demonstrates a free-will that is uncommon in the Black women. Unlike the Black females who attempted to confine such free-will, Shug speaks out her mind, enjoys the pleasures of passion and sexual

relations. Shug is one of the strong voices of Walker which puts forth her feministic ideals of sexual and psychological freedom. In the novel *By the Light of My Father's Smile*, Alice Walker, explores the need for patriarchal support and the comprehension of the female sexuality of the daughters by the fathers. Robinson's notion that 'orgasmic freedom' was only a male privilege is shattered after witnessing his first daughter's sexual pleasures with both men and women. Through this novel Walker demands the liberation of women from all forms of oppression and sexuality. Further, Walker challenges the fathers to assume a prominent role in the development of their daughter's sexuality, supporting their feministic ideologies. The character, Robinson asserts this by calling himself an idiot because of not understanding his daughters when alive. In *Sula*, Morrison shows Sula to live a life against the stereotypic life of Black females. She was considered as a devil by the neighbourhood females, who would sexually seduce their husbands. In fear of Sula, all the Black women in the neighbourhood started to love one another. Sula was the common enemy for the Black women to confront they got together nurturing sisterhood.

Walker also describes the suspended state of suppressed Black women in her novels who are placed in an idle state to obey every one, their movements being dictated mainly by the man and the society. In a post slavery setting, the men of colour have found some new freedom but they deny this freedom to women. In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Walker's real narratives revolve around women and their battle against sexism. She reveals specifically the stress of racism on Black men, and its greater effects on Black women. The characters Ruth, Margaret, Mem, and Josie indicate a weaker sex in the society. Thus the entire women exist below both the White men and her fellow Black men. When the Black man feels that he is powerless, he acquires some form of power by suppressing his females. The rational character

Mem represents the entire Black woman, who is a potential threat to her fellow Black man because of her great knowledge. The other character like Margaret was loyal to her husband Grange until she could no longer bear his physical abuse. She is ultimately destroyed by the assault of neglect from her husband, with no other alternative, becomes a whore. In a world that is unable to understand the core issues of the problems for these women, the characters like Shug Avery, Celie, Sophia, Squeak, Margaret, Mem, Joshi etc., of Alice Walker are standard literary characters that express the problems. They play the role of a mule that is loaded with the loads of the male like his frustration, fear, worthlessness, rage, etc. Both the novelists have stuck their major works within the daily life of such Black women. They follow their respective styles to support or accuse women's victimhood in the male chauvinistic society.

The women seek solace in motherhood in an oppressive milieu. But for a slave Black woman it is another source of great sorrow. Black womanhood was awkwardly perceived during slavery in the United States. In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison discusses about the African American motherhood. Although giving birth is a noble act, for Blacks it is just to bring another innocent human being into an oppressive world. Morrison has given Sethe as an ideal mother who is able to escape from slavery, bear rape, sustain with the hardships but could not neglect the responsibility of her motherhood. Sethe is a desperate victim of violence of both slavery and female oppression. Sethe has conserved some of the traits of her original traditional African culture, which highly values motherhood. A normal family life is deprived in her youth which she wants to give her children as a mother, at any cost. She will not let the white men blemish her children like they have already done with her. Sethe's elevated motherly love alone leads her to kill her daughter, as a mother she takes the

womanhood to a new level. It is the reason why she has agreed to let the engraver use her sexually to carve the word 'Beloved' on the headstone of her child and her lamenting over the lost breast milk. Sethe is a Morrison's paradoxical character who has a lot of motherly love towards her children, loyalty to her White masters and at the same time ferocity towards her oppressors.

The other slave Black woman characters in this novel had experienced the most painful motherhood like Baby Suggs whose eight children are fathered by six different men. Demetrekopoulos has found that in putting forward the motherhood which has been so much reduced into commonplace in the modern world, Morrison has felt the need to beautify it once more. The Black women's colour classifies them within the inferior race and their biological sex confines them in the lowest status.

The power of the women in acting as a community to meet their feministic ideals is seen in *Beloved*. Sethe who is isolated from the community is drowned into the depth of insanity due to the guilt of the murder. In the end Paul D and Denver join with the community to exorcise the ghost, Beloved. The community of women also organises themselves in the case of an adversity. The feministic ideal of the strength of women in a group, to fight such adversities and oppression is seen in this incident. Denver, despite turning physically into a full grown woman still acts girlish because of her confinement inside the house for many years. Sethe's psychological oppression forced Denver to set out and seek help from the society and from the womanhood.

Sethe's womanhood is also violated by the rape and her husband, observing this heinous act had done nothing to stop it. Halle as a responsible husband did nothing to save his wife's womanhood. The male was more afraid of the master to resist the atrocities caused by him. The slavery has not only stripped off the male of his manhood but stripped off the black women of their femininity. Through their

writings, Morrison and Walker have shown the woman's triple oppression. Although both Black men and Black women suffer from racial prejudice, the Black women undergo sexist victimisation in addition.

Most women, in one way or another, are subject to patriarchal oppression. Each woman's specific needs, desires, and problems are greatly shaped by her race, socioeconomic status, class, sexual orientation, educational experience, religion and nationality. Hence the experiences shared by white, middle-class, heterosexual feminists, are not the same with those experienced by Black women, lesbians, and poor, under educated women. As a result, various other factors need to be taken into account when dealing with the problems of African American females. The male chauvinism is seen Walker's novel, *Meridian*. In this novel the Black males like Truman, Tommy Odds and their friends sexually exploit both the Black and White females. The rape which was used as a tool for oppressing the Black women by the White masters in the past is used once again against the White women by the Black males in the modern societies. In *Meridian*, Alice Walker exposes the fact that the sexual exploitation seems to be a universal phenomenon for all the females irrespective of their colour.

The identical attitude of male dominated traditional systems oppressing the native African girls is shown in Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. The novel takes the issues of female circumcision to symbolise male's brutality in the native African tribal culture. The protagonist, Tashi observes how the ritual strengthens the patriarchal dominance in the name of tribal tradition.

In *Paradise*, Toni Morrison explores the themes of racism, fear, guilt, religion, feminism, ageism, mysticism and misogynistic thoughts to create a vision and to view the reality. Every new girl and a woman who are oppressed run away from atrocities,

death of children, rape, pregnancy, abuse etc into the nearby asylum, Convent. These atrocities and a murder of a woman are caused by the young men of Ruby. Although the men of Ruby recognise their guilt, blame, fear, lies, and finally the change required in the town, in reality the oppressed women are shown to be peaceful only after death. Morrison has symbolised this fact by disappearance of bodies and from the murder of a woman.

‘Intersectionality’ is one of the concepts that tell that the race intersects with class, sex, sexual orientation, political orientation, and personal history in forming each person’s complex identity. The Black women could expect neither gender solidarity from White women nor racial solidarity from Black men, the only two groups to whom they could seek help from. Thus, when dealing with female African American experiences one needs to keep in mind not only the feminist principles of general feminists but also the womanist principles of Alice Walker.

In Morrison’s *Beloved*, Paul D’s authority over the family becomes questionable when Beloved acquires power in the home. Paul D blames the past actions of Sethe (murder) as an inexcusable fault for his exit from that place. This discussion gives the feeble, unstable nature of the Black male. The insecurity of the Morrison’s Black male characters like Paul D, Stamp Paid, Cholly Breedlove, etc., and Walker’s characters Albert, Pa, Grange, Brownfield, etc., in front of their women makes them inexpressive and they resort to a physical or an emotional abuse. The males like Pa and Cholly even resort to extent of raping their daughters as their mode of overpowering females due to their insecurities. The female rights of an independent, free, safe life from rape are questioned by these authors. The slavery has stripped off the dignity and authority of the slaves. The sense of helplessness and powerlessness creates widespread fear among the slaves, fear against their oppressors,

which eventually turns upon their females. They show the method of overcoming male dominance by showing some repressed female characters that are not to be followed and by showing some rebellious female characters as examples to be followed.

In Morrison's *Beloved*, Sethe's husband, Halle had fallen into a state of insanity which might provide him protection but paradoxically Sethe's insanity does not provide her any protection. She must take difficult decisions under the scrutinising eyes of the whole world. Thus even in this moribund state of mind male is given an excuse and females were not allowed the same excuses. The above discussion helps us for a better understanding of gender inequality and the double standard in assessing the male and female responsibilities.

The slave girl is seen as one of the birth rights of slave owners in the novels of Morrison and Walker. The oppressor's authority to control slave men also extends to his slave women. They are his property to be used at his discretion. The roles of slave women varied as domestic and farm help, procreating slave children, and even used up for the recreational purposes of their master. The helplessness and the unsupportive nature of the Black women may be the reason for the increasing crime on the Black women.

The girls in *The Bluest Eye* find that their identity is shaped by the imposed worldly views. The girls recognise themselves in a completely negative sense due to their suppressed identities. This suppression of the girls begins at their homes. At home they are children who should be seen and not heard. Claudia explains that adults never spoke to her and they simply gave them directions. At home no one listens or trusts them because they are children after all. The obstacles which present in front of them are their own families, their communities and the whole world. Thus the

children, especially the females are suppressed into a state of turning inward and then take revenge upon themselves.

Although the characters such as Pauline are older and expected to be mature, the novel reveals that their maturing process has been stopped at some point and they remain as children. It seems that they have come to terms with their life as racially Black women. They find it difficult to refuse what has been subconsciously inserted into their minds. Pauline and Geraldine find comfort in having order, structure, and cleanliness in their lives as of the Whites. Pauline also desires a good relationship with her husband like that between a White man and a White woman and the beauty in whiteness. This type of self righteousness in the female characters is seen in Walker's characters like Church, the mother of Meridian in the novel *Meridian*. These females compensate for the pitfalls of their husbands by they themselves becoming perfect humans. Thus the crux of Morrison's work in *The Bluest Eye* is the psychological destruction of the Black female's mind by both the majority White community and by the African American males. The female characters strive hard to overcome the hardships brought in by their frustrated husbands.

Toni Morrison relates that even as children the little Black boys in *The Bluest Eye* out of self hatred express their hatred upon Black girls as a method for showing their self dissatisfaction, by calling the girls as 'black e'mo'. When the boys change into men in future their teasing may shift to that of an abuse of their females due to their own worthlessness. The boys are representative of what one grows into an adult Black man like Cholly Breedlove, Brownfield, Grange, etc. Cholly's inability to hate the White men who humiliated him while having sex with a black girl when he was a boy surfaces as a hatred upon the woman. He thinks that the woman was responsible

for the humiliation. The extension of this thought surfaces later in his life the beatings of his wife and the eventual rape of his daughter.

In Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Celie is under the pressure of having to follow traditional responsibilities of the Black women. She is required to take care of her family after the death of her mother, caring for her siblings and her stepfather. This imposed responsibilities forces Celie out of school and education. But her emotional maturity grows during the course of the novel showing that the Black women had to learn a lot out of their schools in order to attain selfhood. Celie has been controlled by some or other male and is not able to think independently. As a Black woman her position was not to have her own opinions, but to keep the household together and to be at her husband's disposal. In Morrison's *Beloved*, Grandma Suggs, takes up a position as the unchurched preacher for the Black people. She instructs them to love themselves, as no one else will, especially not the 'white folks'. In Walker's *The Colour Purple*, Sofia is also a character that rejects the typical roles the Black women who were supposed to suffer, following the demands of their husbands. She fights for her own identity and to improve her status in life. Sofia does not bow down to her husband and does not certainly depend on anybody, an attitude extremely uncommon during the nineteenth Century. Black women living during this time were almost beaten to death by their males for refusing to do these unskilled jobs. As seen in *The Color Purple*, Albert beats Celie for no reason to simply enforce his power over her and ensure she is in control. Both the novelists were provoked into writing such literature because of the effects of the past. It was during the feminism era that women were beginning to demand for equal rights, and many women organisations all over the world were starting to fight for their own voices.

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* also contains references to the inner strength of women. Motivated by the pent up anger towards Albert for hiding her sister's letters, Celie eventually finds the courage to face him and declare her intentions of leaving for Memphis with Shug Avery. Jadine seen in Morrison's *Tar Baby* is a Black female who shows her strength to choose her own partner. The women shown in the novels of Morrison and Walker display the strength required to face the oppressive society.

After reading all these novels, the greatest relief is that the women in these novels manage to resist the inescapable positions which they once barred. However, all the Black women of the early nineteenth century could not have met a fairy tale ending but they have been strongly enduring the ill treatment for years. Even if forced into hopeless marriages or kept working until death they endured them silently. Black women did not runaway their responsibility in society. The history of the Black Women is regularly one of the quarrel and of extreme torments. Through the centuries there has been a struggle for women to find their self-identity and to remove themselves from the forced identity by both the Black men and the White people. In all the novels we see such strong demanding roles to fall upon the main protagonists. Almost all the novels that are taken into the study have been claimed to be 'women's novels', following certain ideals associated with the genre of Women's Literature. This is not to say that they are centered only on women and dismissing men altogether, but that they display the struggle of a Black woman to attain a decent position in history. All these novels address the positions of the Black women with such passion and absolute clarity, that one feels that he or she is a part of the struggle these novels represent.

After reading the novels readers get a thorough knowledge of the past African American women and their condition when forced into enslavement a century ago. They also show the necessity that these oppressions should never be repeated in our lifetime. The constant struggle for equality of man and woman should be the message to be passed on to the future generations.

After an extensive analysis of the novels of both the authors, the study arrives at the conclusion that their novels, even if they seem to travel in various themes, have racism and feminism as the main undercurrent message. This thematic analysis of racism and feminism in the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker may be a starting point for the future researchers. They can further analyse these factors by applying various forms of literary critical theories like the feministic literary critical theories, psycho analytic critical theories, etc., in the novels of Afro-American writers.