

## **Quest for Racial Identity: A Study in Tony Morrison's *Song of Solomon***

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### **Abstract**

A study on Afro American literature gives a greater impact of the people culture and their sufferings many writers brings out the greater pain of the people how they have suffer in their life. Every human in the world seek for their own identity in their life like need to have a own space and own brand name for themselves. This study brings out the certain character of Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* especially the sufferings of black people in the hands of white people and also the growth of the black people as well as the steps to overcome the troubles, feelings, emotion faced by them. Whether Africans really fly or just escape a enormous trouble, perhaps only through death, is a decision Toni Morrison has actually left to her readers. Never the less, no matter what you believe, within *Song of Solomon*, the suggestion is that in order to "fly" you must go back to the beginning, back to your roots.

**Key Words:** Identity, Identity among Racism, Feelings and Emotions white Americans Black Americans

### **Quest for Racial Identity**

Literature means the written works of an author. The term literature is derived from a Latin word "literatura" which means writing. It refers to the writings as a form of art. Literature reflects the life. It has a more artistic and enthusiastic value. The concept of literature is to include the texts that can be spoken or sung and some art forms. But the development of printing technology has made a serious impact on the written format of literature and it made a conversion of the written works to printed works. The development of printers has also made the possibility of printing several copies of a book at a comparatively low price. The literary work is the best expression of the best thoughts. The literary works are somewhat different from the other forms.

Literature also reflects the culture and tradition of that particular place. It also provides some aspects and views about the society. It also makes us understand life in a different perspective. Authors often include their imaginative power and their way of writing in their works. Every author has his own style of writing. In early times the authors write about only philosophy, agriculture and science. In some countries literature has been originated from the orally transmitted stories.

The native English speaking countries are America, New Zealand and Canada etc. British Empire conquered many other countries and started to teach their own language in the nations they have made them under their control. Even though the countries got independence from the British Empire the language which they have taught remains there forever. So that people also started to produce literary works in their style in English language. It also comes under the category of English literature. They are categorized according to their country such as Indian Literature in English, Italian literature in English and French literature in English etc. These literatures also hold an important position in the English literature.

There are many African American authors who had written several works which have been considered most in the English literature. Some of the African American writers are Martin Luther King, Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Alice Walker, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Maya Angelou and Landston Hughes etc.

The novel *Song of Solomon* tells about the black family and their capitalist and racist strategies which display a marked interrelatedness in their attempts to culturally strengthen the subordinated groups. Guitar Bains, friend of the protagonist Milkman sums up the self destructive nature of this part of the black experience. Guitar tells to Milkman that being a black man is very difficult in the Afro – American society.

The protagonist's house hold is a model of black capitalism. Macon Dead II was the most affluent property owner in the city. He was obsessive in need for money and power. Guitar Bains was a member of the radical organization named "The Seven Days." The organization was in an inverted sense as much ruled by the racism of the whites. It is based on the fact that this terrorist group was governed in its reprisals on whites by the violence of whites towards blacks. Their motive is to maintain the balance of the population of the whites and the blacks. If a black person is murdered by the whites, they will kill one white victim and maintain the ratio of blacks and whites equal.

Toni Morrison also explores the oppression of the black woman suffering in the hands of men, both white and black. She says that Black's great quality of myth is their presence. She provides a vision of hope and an end to destruction through love. She illustrates that Black men are struggling for freedom and justice. Black women are searching for love and dignity. She deeply looks into the Black reality in her works particularly in this novel *Song of Solomon* where such actions are explored.

Guitar was completely committed to the race to the extent and he foregoes personal happiness to be a member of sacred society, The Seven Days. This secret society comprises of seven men who are Black American avengers. They derive their satisfaction from the fact that justice has been done. Guitar's justification for his own actions is that Whites are unnatural and they kill Blacks for fun. Milkman cannot accept Guitar's justification about The Seven Days but Guitar convinces Milkman.

Baldwin has also used the same ideological concept in his work *Go Tell It On the Mountain*. The two novels exhibit the sociological history of the Black America. The fifties was the rise of integration and the late seventies was a period of providing a life of dignity and freedom to the Black Americans. The only terms of solution are

religious than secular. Baldwin's first novel deals with the conversion of a Black adolescent and the racial history which assigns the Negro race. He silences the women characters in his works because he wants to illustrate the racial problems in the society. Meanwhile Toni Morrison has foregrounded the experience of the woman characters in order to bring out the socio – economic realities of Black America.

Toni Morrison has used the reality of violence in the life of black people and their treatment they have met at the hands of whites. In *Song of Solomon* Toni Morrison explores male characters and expands the theme of the Black man's search of identity with the quest of family roots. Through his journey Milkman comes to know about his family identity and emotional expansiveness. He feels closeness with the people and a sudden rush of affection for his family. He comes to know that his grandfather and great grandfather has faced problems regarding the racial inequality committed against his family. He comes to know that his grandfather was killed by the wealthy white butler family and his great grandfather has fled to his native because of the slavery in the African American society.

Toni Morrison's novels have a clear examination in the general socio – psychic interaction with the reality of blacks in America. The blacks who were wounded under the whites are one of the strongest themes in her fiction. She shows the way which the black people are physically injured on their behaviour in its various forms. She explains the complexity of how people behave under the pressure of white domination. She has gone through the most intense studies of madness inducing white society to put its black members in America.

White brutality and insensitivity are part of the environment the black characters must struggle with, but they are most often conditions, institutionalized and often anonymous, rather than events with ritualistic over – tones (Davis 1982:325).

The racial problems which consumed Guitar admired that his companions who socialized at a south side barbershop would do if they do not have black and white problems. Milkman know such self defeating racial determinism which troubles the current African American social milieu is an initial step in his search and assert a sense of identity. Milkman's individual self is with a racial heritage or communal past which delivers a meaning which is liberated in his life.

Toni Morrison has dealt with the theme of racism in her novel *Song of Solomon*. Racism is a belief in which the members of a race will possess some qualities and characteristics specified to that particular race which is distinguished as superior or inferior than the other races. People are distinguished and differentiated by their race, colour, religion and language. The division of the people based on races is a common one in all the countries but the way of treating the people is different everywhere.

This novel *Song of Solomon* clearly exhibits the problems related to the racial discrimination in the America where the white people dominated the blacks and made them under their control. The whites are the majority in America. Racism is present everywhere in the society.

According to the overall view, taking revenge won't solve the problem it can only increase their temper because whites consider them as superior than the blacks so they murder black people. If the blacks also murder them, they might have a thought that the people under their control started murdering us and they may get angry and started to commit more injustices to them and the level of racial discrimination will rise to an extent which the blacks did not even expect from them. Instead the blacks could have asked and demanded for their rights and if they would have started struggling in the form of non-violence, they could have been given freedom and their rights to be independent in the society.

Racial Discrimination could be solved if the White people think of the Blacks were also human beings and they too gave feelings and emotions. They should also need respect and dignity in the society. So Whites should change their views on the Blacks and treat them equal in the society. If they were also provided equal rights in the society they would have also got some respect in the society because they are also human beings and they also expect that they should also be treated well in the society like the Whites.

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