



## **Violent Treatment Of Women In Toni Morrison's Beloved**

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### **Abstract**

African- American authors contributions significant one in American Literature. Their writings mainly focused on oppression and liberation, family and community. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* presented realistic pictures of African- American society. This paper deals with the women suffering, past memories and destroyed mother-daughter relationship. Slavery life not only affected individual person's life but also its impact reflected their behavior in mentally and physically in addition how affected their family relationship. Slavery life expropriation everything including their individuality also and it gave only dehumanizing. Even though slave people got free from slavery, the scars followed their present day life which means past life memories influenced present day life because it's hard to overcome the past life to them. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* clearly portrays the brutality of slavery life. Black Men have experienced a lot of suffering in slavery life but women's faced this brutality in extreme level compared to men. They have faced sexual oppression, loss of motherhood, and abandon by own community. They are suffered physically and emotionally by whites. Toni Morrison reveals the physical and psychological damage inflicted African-American people.

**Key words: Dehumanizing, Expropriation, Slavery, Brutality, Past life and Black People**

### **Introduction**

African-American literature is written by African descents those are settled in America. One of the eminent writer Toni Morrison who was a award winning writer she got Nobel Prize for her master piece *Beloved* through it she portrays African- American people. They have faced lots of struggles in their life who were treated as like as animals by white people. They were discriminated and marginalized in American society. Slavery is a most arrogant of violence in the American slave's life. Slavery stands for a state of individual person positions controlled by others because slave people don't have any rights to take any decision. They were exploited working as indentured servants. They were getting severe punishment like as whippings while made mistakes. In African American history has several pages can see impact of slavery. There lots of slaves that meet poor working and had to experienced painful living conditions of their actual life. In many ways whites hurt blacks by whipping, sexually



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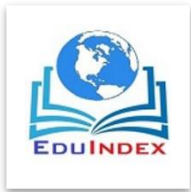


oppression and separated from the members of their own family often. So the blacks are harmed physically, sexually and psychologically by the white masters. Europeans forcefully seized blacks from their own land to work for cheap labor the days pass on continuously treat them with cruelty.

In the novel *Beloved* describes the violence imposed on the blacks by white people as well as Morrison gave some reference that some white people also dominated by their own community members due to poverty line crossed their life. For instances, the character of Amy Denver and her mother belonged from white community both are worked under white master as a indentured women. No more freedom in working place to them. It's clearly shows the blacks and some whites people sufferings due to slave life and poverty. Women central role in *Beloved*. Sethe is a central character in the novel of *Beloved*. She past memories gives to her great depression including as a mother who has some guiltiness which has happened to her life the impact of slavery. Because slavery expropriates from her family, children and her own community except her Denver who is a last daughter of Sethe. Slavery not only devastated Sethe's family but other women also had to faced coldness of slavery. Morrison Clearly exposed African-American's black women agony and dehumanizing through her women characters. The black people were handled like an object, in the real truth is enslaved black people were treated worse than animals. In *Beloved* has one of the best example is the character of Paul D got punishment for his attempt to escape from Sweet Home plantation and harnessed on him like a farm animal and sold to work on a chain gang. After the Schoolteacher imposed him to wear an iron bit in his mouth. Another instances whenever slave is not obedient, even got severe punishment that is penalty of death. For example, Sixo is a one of Sweet Home man tied to a tree and shot and burnt later. Paul A is also hanged on a tree with his upper body. Similarly, Sethe, is flogged merciless by School Teacher's nephews because she complains against them to Mrs. Garner, who is Sweet Home owner, about the stealing of her milk.

In the novel past memories has important role, it has some horrible memories capture attention to the psychic damage to happen ex-slaves. In their present life also can't remove their past horrible memory almost past bitterness wholly occupied their present life which is happened to Sethe's life whenever the way of her reaction to the momentary sight of school Teacher's hat that always remind her indelible scars in her mind and on her body. When she faced difficult situation birth of Denver on the way of run away from Sweet Home.

Sethe is a ex-slave woman who lives at 124 Bluestone Road with her daughter Denver. This house was haunted by a ghost which is later known as named of Beloved Sethe's dead daughter. Eighteen years ago she worked on sweet Home Plantation in Kentucky. She escaped from that place to Cincinnati where lives with her mother -in -law Baby Suggs and her children. Twenty eight days only she got freedom. School Teacher who have responsibility look after Sweet Home, capture her Before capture her Sethe decided to kill her own children to want to be save from their life horror face of slave life. She even doesn't



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want to kill her children but her situation made her done this cruelty there is no way to save them from slave. She attempts to kill her all four children but in her attempt, she partially succeeded because three children rescued from this brutality attempt and other one baby girl killed by Sethe. This is the most difficult situation to Sethe's life to kill her own Daughter, in the truth that no one cannot run away from slavery despite being free. The main reason for run away from Sweet Home is not only Sethe faced atrocities and brutalities of slavery but also she over hears Schoolteacher conversation about he want to sell her children when they grow up. School teacher asks his nephew to "put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right."(228)

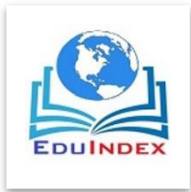
Sethe's scars on her back is a sign of the brutality of slavery in physically. Sethe's Scars on her back serves as another dehumanizing as a slave. Morison used metaphor to indicate past tragedies of haunting and scaring which affects psychologically. The tree shape scars it might indicate Sethe's incomplete family life. Amy's explanation when see Sethe's scars mass of ugly scars as a chokecherry tree which gives a story of pain and oppression.

Sethe indicates to having a tree on her back to Paul D. She explains what happened to her at Sweet Home when she was pregnant with younger daughter Denver as well as she nurses her infant .School teacher's nephew two boys held her down in a barn in addition to breast milk stolen from her just treated as like as animal. She told Mrs. Garner what happened to her when the boys found out complaint against them so they whipped her without mercilessly, leaving a tree-shaped scar on her back. A white woman Amy helped her when saw the scar and told her that looks like as a chokecherry tree on her back.

Baby Suggs has to experienced painful life in slavery. In past, she worked as a slave until she was bought out by Halle who is son of Baby Suggs and husband of Sethe. Baby Suggs has to faced difficult situation as a female slave responsibility of servicing her masters sexually and as a mother lost her most of her children except Halle.

I had eight. Every one of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil. "My first-born. All I can remember of her is how she loved the burnt bottom of bread. Can you beat that? Eight children and that's all I remember."(B,6)

Her eight children were fathered by six different men. They were all moved around as checkers-her children bought and sold as their fathers except Halle.. She remembers, of all her children one of them loved the burnt bottom of bread. She recalls that her first two babies both were girls, who were sold away from her during their infancy. Sethe is abnormal behavior expressed after saw that School Teacher who is a brutal master of slaves. He wants to capture Sethe and her children again leads the slave life when Sethe killed her two years baby girl in Suggs's shed for rescue from slave life and try to attempt to kill other children also after that incident . Baby Suggs loses her hope and she stops her preaching and retreats to a sickbed to die after a few years her grandchildren Howard and Buglar left her alone



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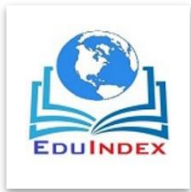
because of frighten of baby ghost, she couldn't tolerate ran away them from house. So she believed that death gave anything but it offered forgetfulness in her life because she didn't like to leaving life or living it, after a few days left she died. "She couldn't get interested in leaving life or living it, let alone the fright of creeping-off boys."(4) In the story of Baby Sugg's life that her life has been destroyed by slavery even though she attained physical freedom.

Another woman Sethe's mother who has faced difficult situation. Beloved asks her about Sethe's mother, when she thinks about her mother its give pain and suffering because she lost her mother affection during childhood days. Sethe doesn't experience to enjoy motherhood, because she was a slave woman. She rarely saw her. She remembers that her mother showed a circle around a cross- over her rip of her skin and it had been burned which is became mark, her mother said to her use these marks to identify her body if she died. It has bad memories to her. This scene haunted her memory. Suddenly she recalled a lady whose name Nan pulled her away from the dead, hanged bodies at the time Sethe tired to find out her mother. Nan... taken up many times by the crew. "She threw away them all away but you. The one from the crew she threw away on the island.....black man." (74)

Nan told her that she and Sethe's mother were both traveled together on the boat from Africa when that time Sethe's mother had been raped lots of times by white men but always threw away infants because their fathers white men but at last kept Sethe with her the reason for black men that was her father. The story of her mother's painful journey from Africa reveals the cruelty of slavery. As a Baby, Sethe was nursed with milk not from her own mother but it got from another slave. Afterwards Sethe was a mother; she was violated for her milk stolen by Schoolteacher's nephews. This kind of symbols acts to break the nurturing tie of mothers and children relationship. Sethe and Beloved who were both give up children who shed tears for the pain of missing ties with their mothers, which is represents all slave mothers and their children. It is not only talks about for Sethe and Beloved but also longing of many African Americans for the missing ties with their cultural heritage in Africa.

Ella another woman, who has faced lots of aggression in her life that now she believes that one should not love anything. Ella was no fewer victims of shame and humiliation than her. She was an ex-slave who was a friend of Sethe and she gave up her when Sethe killed her own daughter. She also had to face slavery life harm. She was similarly kept in a room and was maltreated by the white father and the son for several days which means happen to face sexual brutality. Beloved starts to drain Sethe's life risk because Beloved's tormenting presence as a fair punishment is right, because she believes that past sin should stay in the past so she organizes the group of women to exorcise ghost and to rescue Sethe from Beloved.

The white community not only demoralized the black, but they exploited white people of their own race as well. For example Amy Denver, white woman of Boston can be cited as a picture of white suffering. She represented as a European slave being a white woman due to her poverty pushes her oppression struggle. Amy helps to Sethe while the difficult situation



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and both has some similarities. Both are escapee slaves, motherless, not having education, tired, un-neat, untidy and barefoot. Both of them had a bit in common that means work without basic freedoms. Amy's mother was a slave who worked on the plantation as an indentured servant after her death her daughter Amy became as an indentured servant because serve out her mother's time. Amy, like Sethe, has faced physical whipping from her master Mr. Buddy. Even an enslaved person can't dream freely because of overwhelming system of oppression.

The character of Beloved project not as a ghost made flesh, but to show a way to tell the story of the slave body of pain. The image of Beloved reflects the haunting of Sethe, Denver, Paul D and the community as well as reclaiming the eternal the eternal relationship between African American people. It has the hysterical imagination to embody the pains of mistreatment which must be stirred healing the race and allow it to move on. Paul D came to the house 124, she takes shape as a human being for want to live with her mother as well as want take vengeance against her mother because of Sethe killed her. Sometime she shows to love towards her as well as shows hating also. Beloved monologues divulge the reminiscence and desires of one who is at once in and out of time, alive and dead containing past and present to defy explanation.

Denver who is second daughter of Sethe lives her life isolation due to have some bitterness on her mother. Her brothers left her alone, loss of her grandmother affection, longing for her father, and no more friends moreover the house 124 is her world because not go anywhere after Paul D came at her home, she went Carnival along with her mother and Paul D.

### **conclusion**

Thus Morrison clearly state each and every event not only happens to Sethe and other women in this novel portrayed the African American society ,which reflects women suffering under the slavery and white people mistreatment which is stayed as scars in their mind. In Beloved physical and mental pain gives a lot suffering to women and also faced its consequences. Especially Sethe suffered a lot as a slave and mother .Though Baby Suggs overcome her past life and make her present life but her past life continuity continuous through her daughter -in-law Sethe's infanticide. Though Amy Denver being a white woman she was also suffered by Mr. Buddy. Sethe's mother and Ella have to face different experienced of brutality that were mistreated by white men and sexually met depression. Beloved dead daughter of Sethe. She didn't make any mistakes as a child but her life taken away by her own mother because of some compulsion for save her life from slavery. So as a Beloved longing for her mother affection but as a ghost she has some vengeance against her mother. Denver indirectly affected slavery because loss of siblings and father's affection. Here Morrison clearly shows through her characters to portrait African American society women condition in America during the slave time era.

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