

The Discovery of Self and The Quest for Freedom in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Toni Morrison's *Sula* and *Tar Baby*

Accolade Raju
Amity University,
Noida

Abstract:- Black women faces the wind of oppression from all side, be it physical, emotional, mental. Until and unless when a person realises the sense of self, this sense of self leads to a sense of power on oneself which leads to the quest for freedom. The dissertation overshadows upon the suffering of a black woman and how the realization of self and the development of self takes place which triggers to break-free from the clutches of all societal bonds as well as patriarchy. The paper argues that through the discovery of self and through the trials and tribulations, tracing the oppression of black women and through the acceptance of one's self leads to the transformation. Through the exploration of oppression, subjugation and discovery of various self leads to the hidden path of freedom. This liberation and quest for freedom is gained through recognizing one's own potentialities and being aware and taking small rebellious steps to take a stand for oneself leads towards empowerment of oneself and gaining confidence and embarks towards the quest for freedom.

I. INTRODUCTION

A woman in general is considered to be an object, as someone who remains in their domestic circle. The common ideology that a woman is someone who comes out of man thereby named woman, so a woman is supposed to hear, listen and obey and be submissive and not indulge in any of sort of manly actions or attain men's attributes. The idea of Republican Motherhood emanates different set ups for women and segregates their life from public to domestic in case of white women. However, if we look at black women, in every culture black women are mainly oppressed due to their colour, race and gender. It is not a matter of how a woman is instead a black woman is threatened by both black and white men. She is considered as less than a substance for man's sexual gratification. Woman is not considered as an individual, not even as a human being, even though being married they are treated as the other.

The term womanism is unfolded from Alice Walker and separates itself from feminism. It demonstrates the idea of black women, how they deal with life's struggles, the racial stereotypes and prejudices they face, their conditions and experiences. It's about promoting womanhood and recognizing one's own self worth. Their self incorporates their womanhood, femininity and their culture in order to attain freedom and their rights as an individual, as a separate

being. It is also about critically examining white feminism and examines black women's aspirations and love for everything and for oneself. This recognition of self is the self-awareness. 'Self' is a term that is used for an individual, it is for oneself. Self germinates with various concepts of selfhood, self-concept, self-knowledge, self-reflection and self-identity. All these are in relation to one self and the others.

Self, the term is psychological in nature which can be both personal as well as social. Self-concept is about how one perceives about oneself, self-knowledge is the awareness of an individual's surroundings, self-reflection is the knowing on one's own behaviours and actions and self-identity when comes in terms of social factors leads to different roles of the society. This sense of self leads to a sense of power on oneself. "The idea of self becomes a force within public life, almost taking on institutional shape..."(Howe 57).

The term 'Oppression' is the subjugation of an individual or a clan or class or section of society over the weaker one. A sense of supremacy and domination of male can be seen. This oppression can be traced in relationships between white and blacks, men and women and within the same clan in the selected primary texts. This oppression leads to the suppression of women and results in the loss of their identity and self and gets trapped. This oppression comes in various forms be it physical, verbal, mental, emotional, race, gender, sex. Black women face oppression from the beginning of slavery till date and they face this oppression of rape, lynching, verbal assault leads to be the victims of sexist or racist. Barbara Smith calls it as "geometric oppression" (Chapagain 114). According to Roby Ward and Diane Price Herndl asserts that a black woman is doubly marginalized that they face both sexism and racism simultaneously (Chapagain 116) and from this oppression one needs to attain freedom. Freedom is the emancipation from all the struggles and chains from all constraints of an individual. Freedom is being unrestrained from all the clutches of the society and paradigms and social and traditional conventions. Freedom is knowing oneself, knowing others, one's struggle, motivating oneself. The desire for freedom burns the light of self-determination and creating and establishing an identity and being an independent individual. This burning flame and the desire for freedom is attained through one's own experience, struggles, the relationships one forms and how those

relationships motivates and supports the character, the bonding of sisterhood and so on. The liberation is all about break through from all the oppression, subjugation, assaults, triple oppression, and patriarchal, male domination from the whites or within one's own community. It is all about taking minute steps throughout the struggle like showing resistance, confronting the other individual, being rebellious, standing for oneself and making the person realize their mistakes and can also be attained through death and separation. All these experience and struggles is also a factor for the quest for freedom and all these factors contribute to the emancipation of the individual.

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston is an enduring text of the survival of black woman from the oppression of society and the male counterparts. It deals with the testimony of Janie, her childhood days and how some characters becomes her support. It discovers the racial discrimination she faces, the thought processes engraved in the mind of society, exploration of womanly manners, the subjugation of female and the want to be free from the tightening clutches of the community and the quest for independence. In the novel *Sula* by Toni Morrison, deals with the two tale lives of girls and their journey of life by the decisions they make in their life. It delves into the lives of black, the oppression they faces, the constant fear and struggle, marriage , violence so on and so forth. It's about the in time realization, confrontation about the lies and the truth and the journey to being independent. *Tar Baby* by Toni Morrison deals with the arguments, violence, betrayal, love in the lives of white and blacks, men and women. It traverse into the lives of Jadine and Son, Valerian and Margaret, the relationship between black and white masters, a black women trying to establishing her identity, the quest for freedom.

The objective of this dissertation is to critically analyze and understand the protagonists and the characters from the chosen three primary texts and support it with the selected secondary articles and book in order to find out the discovery of self of the characters and how they achieve freedom through the oppression. The dissertation mainly focuses on women's subjugation and oppression with respect to their race and how whites establishes an authority over the blacks and examines the way of establishing an identity and the search for independence. The dissertation overshadows upon the suffering of a woman and how the realization of self takes place and breaks-free from the clutches. The dissertation would deal with the issues regarding domesticity, violence, race, gender roles, patriarchy, subjugation and quest for freedom, self discovery and cult of true womanhood. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Sula* and *Tar Baby* will be taken up for study and examining over the stated objectives.

The issues that is investigated upon would be the discovery of self through the trials and tribulations, tracing black women used as an object, the subjugation faced by women through various factors- be it internal or external, the search for identity and attaining freedom through the self. The dissertation hypothesize that the search for self, being

and playing different roles, the formation of invisible bonds between the character's leads to the attainment of freedom and escape from the grasp of men, society. The self can be searched through fitting into different roles and testing of this hypothesis will be done through close reading of primary texts and the usage of relevant criticism.

In the journal *Gender Identity in Toni Morrison's Tar Baby* by Ahmed Seif Eddine Nefnouf highlights the gender identity issues by amalgamating different feminist theories and ideologies and pinpoints the oppression against the black women. The article emanates the role of African American and how women is subjugated and strives to find her identity amidst all these trials. Through the article it is illuminated that there is a relation between the gender identity and races and presents different arguments in order to prove and finds out the reasons behind characters issue in the novel.

In the article *Feminists Fantasies: Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Jennifer Jordan deals with different ideologies on the life and character of Zora Neale and on the novel their eyes were watching God. This article deals with information regarding black feminism. This deals with the trapped minds of people and their delineation and their stark realities and aloofness of life.

In the critique *Finding the Door: Vision/Revision and Stereotype in Toni Morrison's Tar Baby* by Letitia L. Moffitt puts impression on the visioning of the stereotypes imposed on character. The article reflects how few characters represent the African American ideals whereas the rest just abandons it. Different critics states different opinions regarding the novel *Tar Baby* and this critique assimilates different opinions and portrays how materialism overpowers ones values. It put forth the idea of how characters perceive different interpretation of other characters. It also deals with different perceptions and alters themselves and the plurality in visions.

In the article *Why don't he like my hair? Constructing African-American standards of beauty in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon and Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Bertram D.A illuminates different standards of beauty set by African-American ideals. This article put forth the idea of different expectation that men set standards for the women's beauty, be it white or black race and how females due to the set standards of beauty, they are positioned in the society. One can see that how hair is being symbolized and is taken as a subject to define beauty and how this beauty actually led to development in relationship between Joe and Janie. It exhibits beauty of different characters which led to their downfall and also led to racial discrimination.

In the article *Women's Relationships: Friendship in Toni Morrison's Sula and Love , Mariama Ba's So Long a letter and Sefti Atta's Everything good will come* by Kadidia Sy demonstrates the racial segregation, gender roles and their impacts in the novel. It focuses on different constraints

set by the society for the subjugation of opposite sex. It pours light upon black women's oppression and their realization of comfort through the different bonds they develop in the novel in order to come out from the trapped chains of the system. A sense of security, bond is created through this which actually becomes a major factor to deal with the circumstances.

In the journal *Ruthless Individuality and the Other(ed)* *Black Women in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God* by David Ikard deals with individualism of Janie supporting it with the autobiographical elements of Hurston. The article ruthlessly scrutinizes the black women and black men and the cultural pressures they deal with. In the article *The Self in Literature* by Irvine Howe deals with the discussion on self and different opinions of self by different thinkers and how it is influenced by various factors. The review entitled *Toni Morrison's Sula: A Black Woman Epic* by Karen F. Stein expresses about black woman, and in-copulates different viewpoints on whites and blacks. It reiterates how the novel is interwoven with reality and appearances and how all of these are amalgamated.

In the book *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* by Bell Hooks draws attention to the silence of the oppressed and is due to their acceptance of the subjugation. All of this subjugation has conditioned a black woman to accept her fate and the derogation and devaluation of femaleness. Women in general or be it any race specifically we talk here about black race are generally considered and taught to be submissive and accept her sexual inferiority. According to Anna Cooper civilization occurs only when the generations grows through pain. It's the gray period of the black women's life whose fears and odds leads to demise (Hooks 2). It demonstrates about the boundaries set up for men and women. According to Toni Cade's discussion an attitude that prevailed in the society is that the womanhood is for defining the manhood (Hooks 5). There is no identity for black women and when talking about strength it deals not with the liberation from the struggle but in enduring it with dignity and accepting the way things are.

The book explores that both racism and sexism is interlinked and ignorance of one leads to the questioning of existence of black women. All the selected secondary sources explores about issues as stated above and would help in this dissertation and would contribute in supporting to the points that would be made in the successive proceedings. These resources help in understanding various issues such as gender identity, the complexity, maltreatment caused by various factors and people and situations, be it internal or external issues, and the nature of self. These would help to understand and provide insight towards the traditions of African American culture, the personal elements and personal life anecdotes which would be beneficial to the study and the background study for the dissertation and points to be made in further reports.

This dissertation would be divided into introduction, two chapters with a conclusion. The chapter one would be

entitled 'Exploring the Oppression in *Their Eyes Were Watching God, Sula and Tar Baby*'. This chapter pinpoints the subjugation, oppression be it physical or verbal or any other aspect, the value system upheld by the society, societal expectations from a woman and the mindset of the people. The chapter two would be entitled 'Self-Discovery and Freedom in *Their Eyes Were Watching God, Sula and Tar Baby*'. This chapter would analyze the discovery of self of the characters and their search for freedom by taking up different roles and through self-determination and the supporting characters and how self-awareness and the desire for one's own voice leads to attain freedom. The dissertation would conclude with a conclusion.

II. EXPLORING THE OPPRESSION IN THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD, SULA AND TAR BABY

A sense of supremacy and predominance of male is a form of oppression. This oppression can be traced in relationships between white and blacks, men and women and within the same clan. Women are considered to be the other and have always bore the concept of being submissive, gentle, meek and a vessel and we come to know the oppression and torturous atrocities done to the black women was beyond one's own imagination. In the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* highlights upon the subjugation of woman Janie and her struggle for self-liberation. African women, be it a slave was expected and schooled in obedience. If any of the women resist and goes against the patriarchal setups they are bound to be sold. However, we can see Nanny of Janie was a former slave, who knows the deep holes and dark sides of slavery and she wanted her granddaughter not to withstand this oppression instead she wanted her to sit on a high chair and enjoy the life like white ladies.

According to Bell Hooks the terrorizing method leads to repression of one's own self (Hooks 19) and the denial and decline of self awareness leads to remains submissive and endure all the atrocities done by the men. Men love to tame or break a woman which could also be seen in Eatonville where during the conversation among men they confront the situation that it's considered normal to beat their woman to attain obedience but its fun for men to break them for their resistance. Sam waiting for Pheoby for supper denotes women's role as a server and man's incapability to serve himself and considers it an obligation for women to do so.

Society expects black women to behave in a certain way. Initially we can see the woman who is Janie comes from a burial and the people "...their eyes flung wide open in judgement" (Hurston 9) is judging her appearances and behaviour. It was the time where people talk and the words they spoke are the greatest weapon as they passed nations through it. The people as in society had problem with everything be it her appearances or her age or her personal life, running after a young boy. The society always indulges and questions her life, of the reason of coming back, her hair being up and swinging it away. They just want a name to

gnaw upon and are careless about how it might affect the person or whether the statement does upholds any truth. Society is one foundation of evil and oppresses women.

Society considers the ultimate goal of women and a black is to marry and run a family. “..she found herself at the kitchen door and stumbled inside. In the air of the room were flies tumbling and singing, marrying and giving in marriage” (Hurston 19) depicts how suffocating it is the idea of kitchen door and marriage. The kissing scene of Janie and Johnny Taylor for Nanny was a like a tree hit by storm. A woman is considered to be pure in every aspect and the concept of love after marriage can be seen when “ ...she would love Logan after they were married”(Hurston 28). When society gives a chance for women to come forward and present their thoughts then it’s their partners who hold them back and lessens their value and dignity and thoughts without considering their feelings and opinions. Society expects black women to keep mum when generally men are supposed to be free in their conversation. Men cannot see women to rest in peace in a sense that whenever Janie tries to struck a conversation Joe asks her to do the chores of the stores, or to look after Mrs Bogle. We can see how society expects black women to behave and dress in a certain manner. Joe wants Janie to dress up like an old woman rather than a young girl. Society expects a black woman to be dependent, be it a girl, woman or a widow. Society thinks a black woman cannot carry herself alone therefore needs a partner in her life in order to maintain and look after the property. Janie’s widowhood and property was challenge for the society and for herself. Society expects women to look after the house-hold chores and kitchen therefore Joe never allowed Janie neither to play nor teach her to do so.

It is the expectation of the society that when marrying the male should be older to the woman whereas here we can see Janie was double the age of Tea Cake, Janie was forty and Tea Cake was twenty-five. Society expects women to mourn the death of her husband for a life-time and if she moves on from the grief she is at fault and considered to be sashaying and considers her to be showing disrespect to her dead husband. This same society is hypocritical in nature when after few days of the death of her husband, the men of the towns approached her then this society had nothing to point out towards the older men. But when she is approached by the younger one yet the most caring and affectionate one, society still considers black women at fault. Janie is ridiculed for being with Tea Cake, her dressing of pink linen and looking like a young girl. The society seems like a beast with its mouth wide open and ready to swallow Janie. Society also ridicules Miss Annie Tayler who was fifty had been left for money by a young man. Society expects black women to be in a domestic circle.

The men sexualise women and objectify them with fruits. “.....noticed her firm buttocks like she had grapefruits...her waist unravelling in the wind like plume” (Hurston 10). The behaviour of men is as derogatory as they were lost in their wild imagination to what they have unseen through their eyes. The men consider black women to be as

worthless as that of a “booger”. They are a spect in the eyes of the men. Nanny believes men consider women’s body to wipe their feet. Women are called “nigger” and “mule” and considered as animals. Janie’s mother being raped by the school teacher and is used for men’s pleasure itself is the evidence. Logan Killicks after the marriage with Janie used her for sexual gratification. “..Ah’d would ruther be shot wid tacks than tuh turn over in de bed and stir up de air whilst he is in dere. He won’t even never mention nothin’ pretty” (Hurston 31). The stopping/ ceasing of wonder at her hair and finger demonstrates his loss of love. The idea of women being weak like a doll and to be made to sit in front of the house and rocking and fanning oneself rather than any hard labour demonstrates women being dependent and proves to the idea just for beauty and child- bearing which can be seen through Joe Starks views. According to Bertram D. Ashe notes that hair is the symbol of her freedom and her self-esteem (581). Walter’s approach of touching the hair of Janie without her knowledge is an invasion to her privacy which demonstrates men using women for gratifying their pleasures, their wants and needs. Joe’s statement of caring women and children is like chickens and cows leads to objectifying women to animals.

The racial discrimination can be seen when a small child is labelled as dark little girl and being called her Alphabet which leads to no sense of individuality. Janie being bullied by Mayrella for being dark skinned and Mayrella getting mad and asking others to do so, pushing her away from ring plays, and reminding Janie about her dad being chased around by bloodhounds all indicates to the emotional assault to the minds of the kid. White tries to crumple the feathers of the blacks. Nanny believed that white holds the power and is the ruler of everything but a black man is not the same and dances according to the whims and fancies to the whites. The coloured race is considered to be the rootless branches. Blacks being oppressed by white could be seen through the violence radiated on a kid, labelling her nigger and tying her to the whipping post for lashes till the blood drops down which demonstrates racism and discrimination amongst the coloured folks itself.

The blacks are themselves envious of each other and bring each other down. The painting and the construction of the house leads to segregation in thoughts. The house painted as sparkling white was different as the rest of the houses looked like servant quarters. The nanny was a former slave and born in slavery time. However she escaped from the slavery and wanted her granddaughter to sit on a porch like the white lady and enjoy her life leisurely. We can see the desire of nanny to make her sit on the high chair leads to Janie’s fall and unhappiness. Mrs. Turner is the epitome of racism. She dislikes Negroes. She feels suffocated with black men and disapproves of the idea of a colour woman marrying a black man. She calls them as black “niggers” which objectifies black race. She is pissed off with their habits of laughing too loud and singing and according to her the blacks should not exist. She was cruel and brutal to the Negros and the idea of Negroness.

Fear is the most refined emotion that pregnates wisdom. She hated Tea Cake for his color and his mockery. The conversation and bond with Janie was to transmute herself to become whiter. It's commonly seen that to make one superior, one need to stand with an inferior. Mrs. Turner although considers Janie to be a friend but her superiority complex takes it over. Here we can see when the hurricane brushed off everyone, how white authorities treat the black ones. The dead bodies of whites were put in coffins whereas for blacks was cheap pine. According to David Ikard black women helps the white men to decrease their competition and power over them and are not punished but rewarded (20). Here we can also see when she was accused as a murderer and judging her, it was the white women who cried and supported her after listening to whole story and stood like a concrete wall for her whereas her own race just shuffled and walked away. This demonstrates that all white flocks are not bad but it's just the few good ones in the bad.

In *Sula* and *Tar Baby* respectively we can see how Helene as a woman after marriage loses her identity. From Helene she becomes Helen Wright just as in Bible we can see how Sarai name changed to Sarah. It demonstrates the limitations a woman has and the confinement by the patriarchy and the society. The house was empty with no life and the long absences of Wiley made it unbearable. It is the sisterhood that brought them together. Both Nel and Sula were lonely and embrace each other's company. There is a stark contrast in the livelihood of Nel and Sula. Nel's place is neat, calm and in order but Sula's place is full of noise and disorder and we can see the contrast in her name Sula Peace. We can see how both the girls feels relieved with each other and completes each other and this friendship and sisterhood was intense. The labelling of black women as nigger is atrocious and considers their value and worth to be less. Women is regarded and denoted only for sex and pleasure. We can see the male gaze here how men sees a black woman whether be it a child, girl or a grown up. When a woman approaches the men one can see the changes in their behaviour and appearances. Men start to tip their hats and open and closes their thighs and watches the view with their interest and demonstrates the lusts of men. Here in the novel we can see Nel and Sula becomes the victim of the gaze. The idea of being formless and unshaped labelled name to black women or girls is the objectification of women. Women are like innocent lamb ready to be victimized and be pounced upon by men be it black men or white men. Abusing Eva and womanizing is the other way to show men their power. The physical scars may leave soon but the mental and emotional scars stay longer.

It's easy for the society to make fun of individual and sees what the eye believes but none sees the wetness behind those eyes, the pain behind those smiles, pains that rested under the eyelids. Society expects women to stay home behind the closed walls. Here we can see Helene Sabat as a strong woman in some aspects. Society expects women to behave in a certain manner therefore we can see how Helene teaches Nel to be obedient and polite and any sort of enthusiasm or curioseness were calmed by Helene. The idea of doesn't talk symbolizes the limitations and the restrictions

of opinions in say in any matter. The idea of beauty can be seen when Mrs. Wright forces Nel to behave and do certain things for beauty. The need of pulling her nose, the session of hot comb etc. in order to look beautiful and get married to a man is the sole purpose of women according to the society. Blacks are discriminated from whites in every aspect. We can see there are two towns one is entitled Bottom given for blacks up in the hills where the land is hilly and it's hard for the people to plant anything. It's a place where the soil washes away the seed and wind lingers throughout representing the dormant state of their plight and condition.

The white lived in Ohio a place of richness and abundance. The distinction of the land purposely given to them demonstrates the fact the whites wanted to look down on them and believe that although they are up in the hills but through God's vision they are at the bottom and the very fact they named it as Bottom refers to the idea of their status and reputation in the society and the mindset of the people. Bottom is heaven for blacks it's just like hell is heaven. We can see racism and discrimination when Helene leaves the town to meet her sick grandmother, the labelling of names such as 'gal' terrifies her. The conversation and investigation of her by a white conductor and the abandonment of her own race leads to racism. No compassion is seen in any of the eyes. One can see this racism through the eyes of four white boys who harassed Nel and Sula and wanted to dominate and entertain themselves. It was a mere act of pleasure and happiness for them to see the helpless conditions of girls. We also come to know that niggers kill each other unlike the mules.

In conclusion, we can see how all the characters are oppressed through different aspects of sex, race, gender, society, patriarchy and all. We can see how black woman are confined to the domesticity and how society projects objections and how society is keen and wears a microscopic glass to notice the behaviour, actions, attitudes, the role a black woman does. No matter what somehow through this oppression one attains self and discovers freedom which could be seen in the next chapter.

III. SELF-DISCOVERY AND FREEDOM IN THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD, SULA AND TAR BABY

The discovery of self is attained through self-knowledge, self-awareness, recognition and fitting into different identities of a child, daughter, mother, wife and an individual. Identity is a sense of belongings and a sense of being. It is a sense of becoming. It is recognized as social relationships. It is an entity in terms of relationship to others and enriches social relationships. Society plays an important role in this social identity as this society holds everything together. The act of self-determination and the burning flame of release lead to freedom. According to Irvine Howe, self is the attainment of dignity and authority (57). Janie is gradually becoming a woman who breaks the traditional norms of the society, by learning to play chess and trying hold on to the patriarchal hands. However, here Janie is seen to step towards learning, towards knowledge. Society labels

black woman to be the bearers of child or seen as a tool whereas we can see a breakthrough of all traditions and old beliefs through Janie.

Janie as a human or as an individual shows no emotions to the societal comments. The fact that she has money in bank shows her independency. Pheoby is a strong and head-but woman who stands for her friend when a group of women verbally assaults Janie. Janie as a kid withstood all the trials and tribulations. Nanny's escaping is the first touch to freedom; her desire to see her child to stand high on grounds led her to first step. Janie as a daughter tried to comfort herself when her marriage was fixed with Logan by her Nanny which was totally out of her love. The thought of lonely and mouldiness which would leads to destruction could be seen. Her dream of happy marriage with love shattered thereby herself dying. Dying can give birth to re-birth. Re-birth as in strong person. "...Janie's first dream was dead, so she became a woman" (Hurston 32). The looking up to road leads to uncertainty of her life. But Janie as an individual breaks the norms of society can be seen. Joe for her was a change and chance. Janie attains a self given by Joe initially as we can see in the beginning Logan used to never ask her for her opinions. There was no talking to the wife regarding work matters but here we can see Janie attaining a self of individuality as a wife which is short-lived due to the dream of being a voice. The task of responsibility of holding the committee till the time Joe returns demonstrates his faith on her and giving a sense of individuality and responsibility. Janie's role as a mayor's wife was suffocating for her. She slept with the authority and could not lead a normal life and was kept aloof from the spirits. Janie started to hate the store and developed an inside and outside of her. According to Jennifer Jordan, Barbara sees the black woman's focus on individual realization as an integral part (107). The small silent rebellions and understanding her hating of the store is the self-awareness. Janie as wife understands and develops courage to ask questions to him.

We can see for the first time Janie as an individual mustering her courage and confronting to the point to Joe in front of the town people. She is taking stand for herself. Her statement of realization and awareness that's she is not an old woman instead she being a woman and her body projecting every inch of a woman is the development of self. The awareness of being a mature woman, the formation of new thoughts and minds and words led to the development of self. The development of self is when she wants to hurt him by not making him realize that she is hurt yet she tries to make him understand himself and what all atrocities he has done to her. Janie never wanted the power but when she tasted the sitting of ruling chair although she never held the power but she got the position of being labelled as the 'Mayors wife' is something which was hard for her. Evolution of self is seen when Janie tears the kerchief from her hair and letting down of her hair and combing and decorating it symbolizes the breaking off from the clutches of her husband. Janie as the owner is taking up the role of Joe. We can see although she is kind and humble woman yet she tries to gather herself and struggles to build her own

identity. She became a self who doesn't care about what society speaks.

Janie's self is acknowledged firstly by her lover Tea Cake when he says she is her own woman and should know what she desires. Here we can see a male understanding woman and giving her the opportunity to explore herself, her wants and desires. Janie's self is created when she develops the knowledge of educated woman. Sitting down reiterates various aspects of the person, firstly one could be the reason that a woman who is educated would have lot of things to sit and consider whereas secondly the other is being forced to sit up which also means the denial of her presence in any action, the denial of her freedom of speech, movement and the domination of her life by the other male half. She is developed when she wants to utilize herself. The self is created when she reflects her life and self-awareness takes place, when she confronts herself that she wants to live her own life not the way of her nanny's. Janie's self is created when she confronts to Phoeby that the experiences of sitting on a high chair is suffocating and is like an object doing nothing and is equal to death. Janie's self is created when she sits and talks with the audience and creates a step towards vocalizing her own opinions in public. All this confidence is gradually developed. The self-knowledge is seen when she learns about dice. Self is created through knowledge and learning and analyzing different circumstances and putting things into action. Janie's self is established through grief when she loses Tea Cake but this time she actually feels the pain of love and loss which was not seen in Joe Stark's case.

Helene as a woman after marriage loses her identity and self is attained when she decides that not be treated and looked down upon her by anyone. Nel as a child during her trip out of town led to a lot of experiences and gave birth to lots of desires in her mind. The idea of calling 'Me' and realizing that she herself as an identity is a first step of self-awareness. "I don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself" (Morrison, *Sula* 92). The idea that I am a separate individual, not anyone's daughter and neither a name could define oneself. The repetition of mumbling of 'Me' is a power and strengthen herself and her determination and of joy and of fear. This strength actually gave her to be friend with Sula despite of the rejection by her mother. Sula as a girl could be seen for the first time standing up for herself against the harassment by the white boys and holds up the knife against them and retaliates against them. That sort of determination and self-recognition and awareness is the step to her independence. It's the sisterhood that helped the girls to concentrate on their own ways rather than thinking about the perception of others or the concerns about other people. According to Kadidia Sy the development of self-centeredness brought to their breakdown in their bond (133). Sula as a woman is different; she is independent to her own feelings and decision. She is a similar portrayal of her mother. The conversation of her and her grandmother reveals her need to establish her identity as she wants to make herself. Sula was a comfort to Nel's loneliness; she was someone who made her laugh and helped her to perceive things in a different way.

The new eyes can be interpreted as a new identity in which was bold and clever. She lived and explored her own thoughts and never had any centre to support her and tell her what is right or wrong. She was free from all materialism. Her sisterhood and friendship with Nel and the idea that they are one identical reveals the self and the other. According to Karen F. Stein Nel and Sula attain self-knowledge through their link with each other (149). Jude was the one person with whom Sula felt comfort and opened up and was possessive about. She without an ambition is like no form of art and is directionless makes her more dangerous. Sula questioning Nel that why a woman can't be a man and do everything reveals her need to establish herself. "Why? I can't do it all, why can't I have it all?" (Morrison, *Sula* 141). Her idea is to live the world and getting oneself and all the emotions and feelings and loneliness is hers not anyone else. Sula was initially afraid of change but the word always reveals the idea of permanency, assurance, stability. According to Ahmed Seif Eddine Nefnouf states that Jadine's realization of her ambitions led her to not accept the kind of life because she wants to be a real woman (68).

Freedom is emancipation. Her thoughts were the only way to escape the moment, the thoughts that are untouched by any words. Her freedom started when she starts to being rebellious not in physical sense but through her words. Janie's thought of leaving Logan and running away with Joe is the first step to freedom from Logan and his oppression. Her words against Logan and confronting him of his attitude and treatment towards his wife as in herself shouts out her disagreement with him and shows him his place as if he is pretending to be a white folk. Eloping with Joe led to a new path in her life, a life of newness and a sudden change led to the freedom. When woman is able to hold a war of defence for herself is the minute steps taken by the individual for the freedom.

This small step of questions and awareness and determination leads her to success. She being an innocent girl is getting transformed to a mature person with the attainment of self-knowledge and self-awareness. Janie confronting Joe is a step to liberation. She states she isn't talking out of her mind but instead it is Joe who talks under people's clothes and does not have courage to confront his own insecurities. Janie robs his male ego of manliness in front of the whole men. Thinking of Death is the liberation. Death is a separation and liberation from all kinds of constraints. The death of her husband led to do whatever she pleased and the lonesome was a change for her. The freedom let her to do fishing and whatever she likes and to whoever she wishes to be, all led to the basking of freedom without a mere thought. Tea Cake was a source of light in her life. He was a candle to her and she was the key to his kingdom. He is one of the male characters for her freedom and discovering her own identity. Pheoby was a support to her and was understanding person who would stand for her against the society which can be seen when she was ridiculed by the society for her actions and behaviours. Tea Cake is a source of knowledge to her. He is the teacher, mentor, and guide in her life and teaches her all the worldly aspects.

Even in *Sula* and *Tar Baby* respectively, we can see how Nel and Sula were forbidden from freedom. They were neither male nor white but just black girls who were restrained from the flight. Nel was the one bright source who pulled Sula away from her dull, monotonous and dark thoughts. Nel's laughter can be interpreted as her relief from sorrow, something to which was holding on or keeping it to herself. The idea of laughter can be a sense of breakthrough of the content which she had with the matters, breakthrough from the idea of being satisfied to whatever happens and it's the job of women to be so without any questioning. Sula attained freedom through death from all her responsibilities, pain, worries but its Nel in the end who remains in the state of sorrow. According to Letitia L. Moffitt, Jadine's quoted conclusion reveals her merging within herself (23).

IV. CONCLUSION

Through this dissertation, we discussed the oppression of black women and how society and men contrives to put black women in a difficult situation and how they become an object for sexual exploitation and secondly the discovery of self through taking up different roles of child, wife, individual explores herself through self-awareness, self-concept, self-recognition and how certain characters acts as relief to their pain and attains freedom. The punishment for the black male slaves to be rebellious leads to castration to set an example to others. They are ripped off their patriarchal status. The main difference between the black men and women could be seen since slavery in field work whereas men has to toil only in field and not expected to do or given feminine tasks whereas women have to labour, do domestic chores, a vessel and an object for exploitation in the hands of whites as well as to their own community could be also seen to the rape of Jadine. The domination of men is considered to have the power and the right over women despite of their class and race. The idea that Jadine being a successful person is not accepted by Son, the idea of independence and education led her to think and see and have an outlook in different perspective. The idea of black women neglecting or being forced to neglect their appearance paves to the loss of identity. Jadine's desire to see world is the step towards her freedom and her outlook that she doesn't want to be confined by the societal roles set up by the society for a black woman instead she paves to lead her own life.

The idea of individuality and the discovery of self are shunned by patriarchal mindset because of the fact that men are born and conditioned in such a way that they don't realize when they are wrong. Black women when open to express their likes and dislikes are neither appreciated by society nor patriarchy. Here through the dissertation we can see how the characters strive to and are extravagant with words while expressing emotions and leads to freedom towards life through a sense of superiority and independence. The black women characters are questioned in every walk of life but the black women celebrates her life and gains experience to look at one's life and becomes confidant while representing her voice. A woman who is independent is considered to be burden and a kind of threat

as in case of Janie to patriarchal norms and when they get independence then only they are given the right to question. The idea of age difference and how it is wrong and unacceptable if a man is younger to a black woman and is wooing her and the idea of survival of wife after husband's death becomes crucial could be seen. Patriarchy plays a crucial role in subjugation of women in society and the age factor also plays in it.

The liberation and quest for freedom is through recognizing one's own potentialities and being aware and taking small rebellious steps to take a stand for oneself. Black women are considered to be bankrupt of morality and their conducts are blackened socially and morally. The whole idea of morality is pushed against black women and men by nature are considered to be wild, mischievous and their sin is not offensive and inconsiderable as compared to black women. The characters are too much of women and want their need to be fulfilled and believe that their life is their own, not owned by any other individual and their will and choices cannot be killed by anyone.

REFERENCES

Primary Text

- [1]. Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 1st ed., General Press, 2019.
- [2]. Morrison, Toni. *Sula*, Penguin Random House, 2016.
- [3]. Morrison, Toni. *Tar Baby*, Penguin Random House, 2016.

Book from Online Service

- [4]. Hooks, Bell. *Ain't a woman? Black Women and Feminism*, London, Pluto Press, 1982.

Articles in Journals

- [5]. Ashe, Bertram D. "Why don't he like my hair? Constructing African-American standards of beauty in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes were Watching God*", African American Review, 29, No.4, 1995, pp 579-92.
- [6]. Chapagain, Rajendra Prasad. "African American Women, Racism and Triple Oppression", Interdisciplinary Journal of Management and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, pp 113-117.
- [7]. Howe, Irvine. "The Self in Literature", JSTOR, Salmagundi, No. 90/91, 1991, pp 56-77.
- [8]. Ikard, David. "Ruthless individuality and the other(ed) black women in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes were watching God*", CLA Journal, Vol.53, No.1, Sept 2009, pp 1-22.
- [9]. Jordan, Jennifer. "Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*", Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature, Vol.7, No.1, Spring 1998, pp 105-117.
- [10]. Moffitt, Letitia L. "Finding the Door: Vision/Revision and Stereotype in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*", Critique.
- [11]. Nefnouf, Ahmed Seif Eddine. "Gender Identity in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*", International Journal Online of Humanities, Vol.5, Issue 3, June 2019.
- [12]. Stein, Karen F. "Toni Morrison's *Sula*: A Black Woman's Epic", Black American Literature Forum, Vol.18, No.4, Winter 1984, pp 146-150.

- [13]. Sy, Kadidia. "Women's Relationships: Friendship in Toni Morrison's *Sula* and love , Mariama Ba's *So Long a letter* and Sefi Atta's *Everything good will come*", English Dissertations, Georgia State University, 2008.