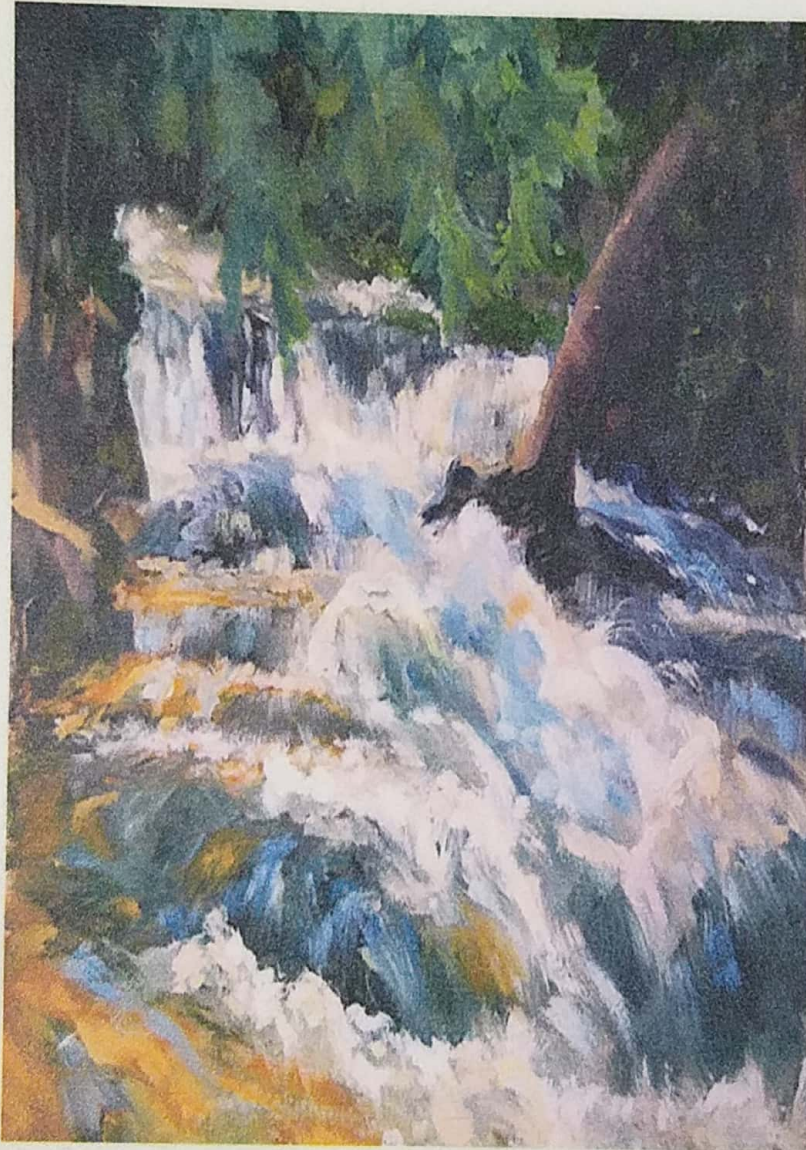


ECHOING CASCADES

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REBEL AGAINST TRADITION AND CONVENTION IN TONI MORRISON'S *SULA*

Dr.J.PREETHI

It is often said that the racial atmosphere has produced the greatest rebels, particularly for not adjusting themselves to oppression and servitude. In spite of that, Morrison's women are in search of identity. They resent their oppression by virtue of which they rebel beings, thwarting the protest spirit they cannot handle at a time. But they start to protest against subjugation, oppression, or identification.

It is remarked that "contemporary Black Women writers have placed the black woman at the center of human experience, art and consciousness", envisages the true characteristics of Toni Morrison. In Morrison's writings, the thematic emphasis is laid upon reproducing many of the dominant establishments' values., such that appropriation of a system, congenial to the 'blacks' is channelized down these. Morrison's *Sula* is more of the expression of a black feminist identity under racial suppression than a female consciousness in an ordinary way.

It is about a colonial country is that the racial, as well as the societal restrictions and also the African-American women indirectly. Morrison designs the fate of a 'black woman' in terms of her relation with class, and also the race belongs to. It reveals the fate of a 'black woman' not only against the oppression but also the Black ones. She presents woman as an oppressed creature, needing a humanistic approach. Sula's grudge is not against racial discrimination but reflects dialectal relationship with African males, for the exploitation of African women. At least Sula establishes that the real racial axe is brought upon the black male by the 'white regime' through whom the evils of exploitation reach to her door. It is insisted that the real exploiter of 'black woman' is the 'black' tradition itself. Morrison's approach in *Sula* has been to delineate a trend in the life of 'black' women, which describes the 'black' chauvinistic atmosphere as an equal devil to the 'white' excess.

The novel presents the oppression of African women in United States, especially in the first quarter of the 20th century. Traditionally, the African-women "suffer a triple oppression, if they are working women, as workers under capitalist-class oppression, national oppression and oppression because of their sex". The black women have an abject position of a second citizen by having really no legal rights in a family dominated by the males. The first oppression is in the hands of 'black' man that he permits her to be exploited in sex without any responsibility on the part of the exploiter. Once she is devoid of her rights and is let suffer her agony alone, her soul quivers for justice and comes out with reaction in rebellious mood.

Sula's rebelliousness is manifested in her estrangement from traditional family organization. Unlike other Medallion women, including Nel, she refuses to marry, settle down and raise a family. She feels that it is of no use of being the mother of many children and finally being kicked out. She should not feel any obligation to please some one unless she, in turn, gains pleasure. In spite of her non-conformist behavior she is tolerated until she commits the queer deed of putting her grandmother in an old-folk's home. She is an explorer, perfect and "freakish, repulsive or unattractive". Sula is laid away from the sterile soil of the Bottom, coupled with her need for independence and her desire to transcend herself above everything. After years of travelling and pursuing education, she returns having discovered that the Bottom and Medallion are microcosmic of the world at large.

Morrison explores the nature of the women's oppression is unique. Often she chooses two compatible characters, neither of whom is complete in herself. Sula struggles to enjoy herself as a human being against the Bottom community, and not capitalism. She is a rebel without giving a solution. Rebellious is her betrayal and also alienation from family, friends and neighbours, thereby causing her own death. Despite her deepest feelings, "deep enough to bring tears for the death of littlest things," she keeps her individualism supreme above all other things. It is the quality of a rebel, a suppressed self, in search of her own identity that she watches her mother burn to death and keeps her grandmother in a nursing home. She reacts to the place man has given to her in society that

she seduces her best friend's husband. She questions that why should she not exploit man according to her own need, while in other's families, women is exploited sexually in a society comprising her husband, children and laws. It is a reflection of female identity, the feminist consciousness that she aims at exploiting men sexually, taking him as "the means to her end".

It reveals the psychological motivation of the female. Sula has broken away from both the family and its tradition, and the other, it is Nel confined to a traditionally social life. She exerts the assumption that the black people are the humans of the globes. On the contrary, Nel sticks to the family traditions and shows how woman as helpmate, mother and house keeper is connected to the sense of failure black woman to whom meaning would be only herself and nothing beyond. Throughout her life, she is alienated from everyone and remains confined to Eva's boarded up room, symbolizing that a person is like a head cut off from a body. The female protagonist fights for her identity. Sula, whom the novel is named, fails to flourish without her community. She is searching for black identity with Nel, Shadrack, Eva, and the community itself. Her identity shines as it is the representative reflection of her community's identity, and when she is away from the society for ten years she does not exist at all even within the text. She is visited by none except Nel. After death, she is prepared for burial by 'white' folks, since no one in the community would do all this for her.

On the other hand, Nel values on duty and tradition more than self. She believes in the virtue of self-sacrifice. She becomes dependent of others for life's meaning and remains responsible for her loneliness. The contrast of the two is evident, one for alienation out of reaction and the other, out of submission. Sula is questing for her identity and Nel is negating her quest for identity. Sula is not ready to be dominated by any circumstances but she masters them. Nel is feminine in all activities. Her definition of 'Self' is not a part of collective consciousness and so her identity cannot be seen. Nel feels submission is a fulfillment whereas for Sula, reaction is a way of life. Nel wants to protect herself under the shade of Love. For Sula Love is synonym for freedom. Love is a security for Nel. Although the community does not approve her way of life and she,

as a rebel, is considered to be a threat to the traditional and the conventional community.

The relationship between men and women is vividly described by Morrison. The search for the 'self' forces her to make friends with a woman, instead of a man. Men might take care of her physical needs as masters, providers and lovers. She feels that they can cherish her emotions to an extent, but they could not present a solution for her inner tension, fears and depression. She does not give importance to beauty and body but she is searching for someone who has willing, loving curiosity to explore her thoughtful mind. .

"During the love making she found and needed to find the cutting edge. When she left off cooperating with her body and began to assert herself in the act.."

Morrison does not portray her women characters relationship as inherently lesbian, they nevertheless are so, not because women are lovers, but because they are central figures, they are positively portrayed and have relationship with one another. She has ease in bending out herself into the world of reality. The fact is shown in Morrison's *Sula*, in search of the identity crisis, that the rebel against tradition and convention becomes the prime weapon of the woman to overcome her condition.

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