

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 5. Issue.1., 2018 (Jan-Mar)

ISSN
INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
IN DIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

VANITY, LOVELESSNESS ARE DEFEATED BY SELF REALIZATION WITH RACIAL
IDENTITY IN TONI MORRISON'S NOVEL "SONG OF SOLOMON"

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ABSTRACT

Song of Solomon is a novel of identity. But it is not only the identity of Milkman that is in question. It is the identity of the African - American community that must be determined. When Milkman travels south, he travels the reverse route that his father and grandfather travelled towards North for material success. He travels to South to slough off his vanity and his material things and to find out his ancestral roots. Ultimately he brings unity and he becomes a full-fledged man by knowing the realities of life and hardships of his black community.

In *Song of Solomon*, Toni Morrison portrays for the first time Black characters who have achieved the upper - middle - class life style and achieved a token of success within the black community. The novel presents the effects of middle-class values on black families as well as an expliation of Afro-American culture and myths that depicts the conceptual motion of the ethnic experience. Morrison projects the effects of black liberation in the United States by employing the classical literary motif of an epic hero who takes a long journey to home and identity. In the novel, milkman Dead, an African American male, is represented as a heroic character that takes a journey from his urban bourgeois family to the ancestral rural community in search of his authentic identity. Which reverses the classic American initiation story (Hero moves from the rural south to Urban, the industrial North). The central narrative is Milkman's journey to his ancestral home, Milkman is not the typical protagonist of western literature. His journey works as a necessary tool to examine the ways of African Americans dealing with the sense of homelessness and the issue of a truly post-colonial blackness. Morrison brings to our notice especially through milkman's cross cultural journey from the North to the South, she brings two emanipatory visions for black people, which are shown through the economically secured Northern black borigeois patriachies and the culture bearing / spiritual / ancestral Southern black community.

In the first part of the novel, Morrison picturizes the Northern authority and Material wealth or power. The black figures of Northern such as Macon Dead and Dr. Foster believe that freedom can be achieved through material wealth which the black of Northern believe that material wealth would bleach their blackness. Macon Dead as a businessman, and Dr Foster as a black doctor believe that material things bring economic success and they are domestically patriarchal. They claim that material wealth and patriarchal authority can be the ultimate bench mark of the true emancipation and civilization.

The son of Macon Dead and Ruth (dugther of Dr. Foster), Milkman Dead is expected to embody the emancptory vision bright by the middle class patriarchal power. But the bourgeois patriarchal home does not provide Milkman any sense f home and identity. Later on he realizes his own responsibility, which motivates Milkman to take a journey for authentic identity in the second part of the novel. By taking a journey to his

ancestral home Shalimar, Virginia, Milkman decodes the song of Solomon and finds the roots of his lost family line, which is the achievement of milkman's authentic black identity.

Macon Dead I and Macon Dead II they try to cover their black colour with white Man's life style with the brush of material wealth. They fail to understand that whiteness and blackness are not solely determined by economic condition. For the black people, the material success is like a fragile fence which can be shattered anytime by the by the white racism and discrimination. The middle class blacks display their material success and domestic authority as a symbol of liberation. But, the black patriarchs fail to keep themselves and their families from the physical and ideological violence of racist society. Macon dead II tells his son Milkman that money is freedom. He tells Milkman to "Own things and tells that it will ultimately help black people to "Own yourself and other people too". Like Dr. Foster and his father, Macon II fail to understand that political condition of black people after declaration of Emancipation and optimistically believes that true freedom would be brought by class uplift. Their consciousness pertain only to segregated black town. Macon II and his family only feel and show their superiority over the other black people in the segregated black town. But this kind of economic upliftment does not liberate himself and his children in the American society.

Milkman never finds an evidence of love morals in his own family. His journey revolves not only around learning his history but also vomiting the weight of materialism. His journey brings him a freedom from his ties of material possessions and return to simplicity of nature. Milkman is able to free the self that has been imprisoned by his material possessions and aimless feelings of anger and resentment.

When Milkman comes to shalimar he accepts that he is responsible for Hagar's death. His new found sense of 'self' urges him to slough off his vanity and alienation. He does not fly back to Shalimar to leave the body of Hagar behind, as his ancestor Solomon has done, but to compensate for his mistake and to take her hair with him to bury. By hearing pilate's final words, Milkman realizes that it is the desire to love and strength to open oneself to such love that allows an individual to fly.

By shedding his bourgeois mentality and ignorance towards societal love, his reckless behaviour towards women, milkman becomes a full-fledged man of universal love. It takes Milkman a long journey to understand the significance of his life - its shallowness, artificiality and false values. In the jungles of shalimar, Milkman engages in bob-cat's hunting and strips off his finery. He observes the emptiness of his past life that was filled with lovelessness the Shalimar experience teaches him the strength of human relationships. Ourness overcomes me-ness Always unity gets victory over isolation ad on me-ness.

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