

**My World, My Space:  
Characterisation and Narration in  
Select Postcolonial Fiction**

**Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut  
for the award of the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
English Language and Literature**

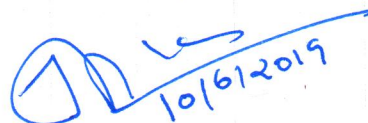
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**2018**

## CERTIFICATE

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## **Declaration**

I, Divya N, hereby declare that the dissertation titled **My World, My Space: Characterisation and Narration in Select Postcolonial Fiction** submitted to the University of Calicut for the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature**, is an original bonafide work of research carried out by me under the supervision of **Dr.V.Prathiba**, Associate Professor, Department of English, University of Calicut and that it has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, or similar title.

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## **Certificate**

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **My World, My Space: Characterisation and Narration in Select Postcolonial Fictions** submitted to the University of Calicut for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature**, is an original bonafide work of research carried out by **Divya N** at the Department of English, University of Calicut under my supervision and that it has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, or similar title.

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## **Introduction**

Postcolonial studies in general maybe characterized broadly and simply in terms of an attention to the history of colonialism/imperialism and its aftermath, and may in many instances be distinguished from traditional, historical or political writing on the colonial or post-independence era by the particular attention that is paid to the role within that history of 'representation or discourse' (Harrison, 9).

Postcolonialism is rooted in the history of colonialism and imperialism. Imperialism means extending the reign and power of a state by expanding its borders and imprinting its control over other states and its people not only politically but economically too. It was mainly done with the help of military force. Colonialism, on the other hand is the dominance upon the cultural aspect of a nation and inculcating an inferior notion about the racial and ethnic beliefs along with the superiority of western culture and civilization. Colonialism went through different phases with the expansion of vast empires in both East and West.

Colonialism aimed at the exploitation of the resources and the inhabitants of the occupied lands. The main emphasis of British Empire was the settlement over land through power. Therefore, as reciprocation, there were acts of resistance from the outset by the indigenous inhabitants of those lands. Even though British became a vast empire during colonial period, they had to be in constant fight with the colonized people, who fought for their independence. By late eighteenth century onwards decolonization process started, with the loss of American colonies and

declaration of American independence. Later, by the first decade of twentieth century, the nations like Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa got political autonomy, even though they considered Britain as the “mother country”. They all faced the problem of being ‘settler nations’. The fight for power among the colonial powers ended immediately after the Second World War. It was the result of anti-colonial consciousness and feeling of patriotism that spread far and wide throughout these exploited nations.

Postcolonialism is not only used to define the conditions of nations after the colonial period, but an interdisciplinary term used to address the issues of social, political, economic, cultural, literal and many other related areas. Therefore, postcolonialism is considered an umbrella word that includes broader areas from different aspects of a nation. There also developed a culture of questioning and resistance, which later became the main features of postcolonial literature.

The history of colonialism also reveals the importance of literary works during that time. i.e. how they came up with the themes of patriotism, resistance or protest against colonial rule, assertion of native identity, celebration of aboriginal culture etc. So, after decolonization, literatures from the former ‘settled’ and ‘settler’ nations came up with the label of postcolonial literature. Postcolonialism developed as a literary concept, influenced from the theories of colonial discourses. The colonial discourses dealt mainly with the (mis)representation of colonized people from the perspective of colonizers. They were represented as uncivilized, rude and inferior creatures, who were always prone to unlawful deeds. Their culture and language were belittled and the characters in the works of colonial discourses were

treated subservient to the white colonizers. So, it is clear from those narratives that the main aim of colonizers was to create a notion of inferior feeling about themselves in the mind of the colonized people and thereby making it easier to impose power over them. Negative characteristics were ascribed to the colonized people or aboriginals in most of the literary works. So, the postcolonial discourses came up reacting against these misrepresentations.

The primary concern of postcolonial narratives was to explain the identity of natives in the colonized nations. Even before the independence, writers of the then-colonized nations began to record their resistance against the colonizers. Literatures of African countries, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan and many such countries are all considered postcolonial literatures. Even the writings of Native Americans can be placed among this category, which is detailed in the later part of the thesis. Bill Ashcroft and his co-authors, in their introduction to *The Empire Writes Back* say:

What each of these literatures has in common beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics is that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumption of the imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial (2).

Apart from the common factor that they are ruled by colonizers, the postcolonial nations differ from each other on many other aspects. Even the gravity of exploitation on each nation varied. Therefore, postcolonialism was not an easy term

to put into a literary context or theory. Each text varies according to the literary and cultural traditions of the writers. Moving away from the broad perspective of Postcolonialism, some postcolonial writers dealt with the problems of racism and class conflicts. Another issue they explored was the psychological damage caused by colonialism on the natives. It was considered far beyond repair as it devoured the culture and also the psyche of inhabitants. Many postcolonial works depict the characters that undergo psychological trauma as an aftermath of colonialism. In this regard, Postcolonialism can be considered a multidisciplinary word that moves far and wide across the life and culture of the once colonized people.

These interdisciplinary characteristics of postcolonialism can be traced in the postcolonial literary works also. There are different models of theories for this single notion as they emerged from different nations having distinct cultural and literary traditions.

As writers and critics became aware of the special character of post-colonial texts, they saw the need to develop an adequate model to account for them. Four major models have emerged to date: First, 'national' or regional models, which emphasize the distinctive features of the particular national or regional culture; second, race-based models which identify certain shared characteristics across various national literatures, such as the common racial inheritance in literatures of the African Diaspora addressed by the 'Black Writing' model; third, comparative models of varying complexity which seek to account for particular linguistic, historical and cultural features

across two or more post-colonial literatures; fourth, more comprehensive comparative models which argue for features such as hybridity and syncreticity as constitute elements of all post-colonial literatures(Ashcroft, 14).

There is no authentic periodic division for postcolonial works. The main reason is that it varied according to the literary history of each nation. So, unlike other theories and discourses, postcolonialism has no unique qualities to ascribe. The nationality of the writers is one of the major factors for this difference. Most of the writers gave importance to deconstruct the picture of inferior and subservient colonized people and to assert the identity and self of these people. Some tried to explain their experience under the brutality of colonial rule. These writings gained great acclaim and readability. The internalization of colonial sets of value was one of the reasons for the trauma of the colonized people. The Westerners considered them as inferior creatures and treated them as non-humans, who were destined to be the sufferers at all ends. They themselves underestimated the value of native people because of this negative internalization of native identity. Majority of the aboriginal works tried to establish an identity of their own. Analyzing many important works in postcolonial literature, we can find this identity crisis as their major theme. The colonized people were represented as stereotypes on the basis of their class, race and caste. They were considered 'the other', marginalized and uncivilized often with wild characteristics. They were addressed with taboo words, which were considered a great insult to their individuality. They were discriminated in the society and were given no space in a public sphere. The aboriginal men were treated as barbarous and

often rapists and drunkards. The postcolonial writers portrayed the native people with positive qualities and gave the hope for an optimistic life ahead through these characters, thereby debunking the negative stereotypes.

One factor that creates identity crisis is the dual/ double consciousness created in the inner self of the postcolonial people as an impact of colonial rule. They strive between two different cultures. Double consciousness is defined as “the term used to describe the world view of people who simultaneously hold two apparently inconsistent sets of belief”(http/wikipedia.org/).This concept gained its importance during the postcolonial period. Most of the theories in postcolonial discourse deal with this complex phenomenon of the human mind.

The concept of “double consciousness” was originally used by W.E.B.Du Bois in his work *The Souls of Black Folk*. (1903). He said:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, - world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (1-2).

Du Bois, who was considered the father of Black Soul Movement, argued that Black people were judged by the colour of their skins, not by their souls. He used these ideas to address the problems of race and the victims of racism.

Racism and sexism are the two vicious aspects of colonialism according to the postcolonial writers, which made the life of colonized people tragic and pitiful. Racism, a common issue addressed in the postcolonial literatures, was almost same for all colonized people. The society marginalized the people of Black and other Native races and treated them with aversion. It affected the whole race regardless of their gender. Both men and women faced harassment from the Whites. If native men felt discrimination mainly in the public sphere, the conflict that women of these colonized nations underwent was in all the spheres of society. They are not only suppressed by the whites, but by their own patriarchal society. They are discriminated on the basis of gender and they confronted more physical and mental oppression than their counterparts. So theirs is not just double oppression, but multiple oppression based on caste, class, race, colour, gender etc.

The women writers of the postcolonial nations, therefore, addressed plethora of issues that they faced in their society. The postcolonial feminism has importance while considering these problems prevailing in the society. Black feminist movement emerged along with the Black Arts movement that geared up as a result of Harlem Renaissance. Though feminism and feminist literary movement started many decades before, the blacks thought of having a movement of their own to address their issues. They argued that the discrimination faced by the black women or the women of postcolonial nations are different from the mainstream

Whitewomen in the society. Feminisms that are prevalent in the literary field addressed the common issues that a female faced in the society. It was only a platform to write against the patriarchal social construct where the women are placed secondary and inferior. They revolted against these issues and raised their protest to have an equal status in the social and literary fields. They opposed the notion that only the male authors have the potential to be regarded as canons and insisted that the female writers too are equally skilled.

The Black feminist writers disagreed with the white feminist writers on the fact that they addressed only the basic issues faced by the middle class white women. But there are so many other serious issues that the postcolonial native women face and the writers could never portray it because of the lack of first-hand experience. Therefore it was vital to have someone to register their problems. This necessity led to the rise of black feminist writers and their movement. Their primary concern was to deconstruct the stereotyped images of black women as untidy, hypersexual, prostitutes etc. The women writers of postcolonial third world countries tried to do away with this age-old typecast and claimed their identity and individuality through their works.

The black women were treated uncivilized and represented as mere childbearing characters destined to undergo the suppression from male counterparts and the white people of the society. Along with the East- West conflict, the postcolonial women writers discussed the issues like gender conflict, identity crisis, psychological trauma etc. Even though their works had many typical characters, they struggled hard to gain an identity of their own. Many female characters were self-



esteemed individuals who always fought against the suppression they confronted in the society. Thus, black feminist movement sets a new wave in the field of postcolonialism.

Postcolonialism and feminism always followed a similar path in their movements, as both considered their main aim as resistance against the mainstream/powerful majority that imposed control over them. The discourses defended the marginalized 'others' struggling under the dominant white patriarchal rule. "Feminist and postcolonial theory alike began within an attempt to simply invert prevailing hierarchies of gender/ culture/ race, and they have each progressively welcomed the poststructuralist invasion to refuse the binary oppositions upon which patriarchal/colonial authority constructs itself" (Gandhi, 83).

Binaries are to be considered with equality. But many times either of it claims an upper hand and give rise to the unequal distribution of it. The distribution of binaries depends upon the persons handling it. That is the reason why postcolonial and feminist discourses opposed the notion of binaries. They needed to create a common platform to fight for equality and freedom. They were fighting to get into the mainstream, crossing all limitations and suppressions justifying their protest as a kind of self-defense.

Another aspect of the discourse was the language and narrative styles of postcolonial writers. Beyond the basic concept as a means of communication, language is considered the carrier of culture. It is the tool that connects one to the entire world. The language of a literary work is equally important like the theme or

character of that work. The postcolonial works gave due importance to the linguistic features which developed with the concept of the 'Empire writing back'. The writers incorporated their native language in their texts. They deconstructed the elite concept about English and appropriated it according to their cultural context. These concepts spread like an epidemic in all postcolonial nations and the result was the birth of 'englishes' in place of the grammatically structured traditional English. This process of restructuring language was done through different strategies. In *The Empire Writes Back*, it is said: "The first, the abrogation or denial of the privilege of 'English' involves a rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication. The second, the appropriation and reconstitution of language of the centre, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages, marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege" (Ashcroft, 37).

Along with this, many postcolonial writers revived the oral and folklore tradition of their indigenous culture and incorporated it into their narrative modes. Simple, conversational style was its important feature. They used the vernacular words, phrases and proverbs from their native language without translating it into English. Not only that these transliterated words were not given any endnotes or explanations. It was a new kind of resistance through literature. Majority of writers used English as their medium of writing, but this method of transliteration, appropriation and abrogation were used to register their protest. The writers were inspired by the oral traditions, myths and legends of their aboriginal culture and these were celebrated in their works.

The presence or absence of writing is possibly the most important element in colonial situation. Writing does not merely introduce a communicative instrument, but also involves an entirely different and intrusive (invasive) orientation to knowledge and interpretation. In many post-colonial societies, it was not the English language which had the greatest effect, but writing itself. In this respect, although oral culture is by no means the universal model of post-colonial societies, the invasion of the ordered, cyclic and 'paradigmatic' oral world by the unpredictable and 'syntagmatic' world of the written world stands as a useful model for the beginnings of post-colonial discourse. The seizing of the means of communication and the liberation of post-colonial writing by the appropriation of the written word become crucial features of the process of self-assertion and of the ability to reconstruct the world as an unfolding historical process (Ashcroft, 81).

*The Empire Writes Back* clearly describes the role of writing in the postcolonial discourse as a method of resistance against the canonical Western writings and also as an affirmation of the native culture. It is criticized over many years that the history of the colonized nations were written from the viewpoint of the colonizers that they always belittled the history and culture of the colonized societies. In colonial discourses, as stated by the critics, power is always in relation with language.

The internalization of colonial sets of value was one of the reasons for the trauma of colonized people. The Westerners considered them as inferior creatures and treated them as sub-humans, who were destined to be sufferers at all ends.

The colonized themselves underestimated their value because of this negative internalization of native identity. Majority of the aboriginal works tried to reveal this trauma within them and to find a way to establish an identity of their own.

Analyzing many important works in postcolonial literature, we can come across this identity crisis as a major issue to deal with.

The search for identity or double consciousness is one of the major themes in postcolonial literature. The main reason is the influence of Western culture and the desire to go back to the aboriginal culture, which was revived with all due importance. The glorification of native identity and culture became a new light in the field of postcolonial literary field. The leading figures of the postcolonial scenario were mainly the spokespersons of the aboriginal culture, which each of them represented. They went through the dilemma of identity crisis, that is, where they should belong. Many revolted against westernization and stood for their native identity. Many succeeded in this struggle, but there were many others who failed in their effort to be one among the natives. They couldn't place themselves anywhere in the society because of the influence of Western culture with all its intensity. Such characters are very common in postcolonial literature.

This thesis is an attempt to study the characterisation and narration employed by the writers in their works, in a postcolonial literary scenario. The question of identity is always in a flux while considering postcolonial works. The characterisation part of this thesis deals with the identity or existential crisis faced by the selected characters in the selected fiction. The authors selected for this, represents different postcolonial nations, where the strugglers under and after

colonization differed in many ways. It cannot be claimed that these writers are the real representatives of their nations, but they addressed many common problems that existed in their societies, which matched with issues that posed before the whole nations.

Did colonization affect the character formation of an individual? The whole idea of this work starts from this basic question. There are many instances from postcolonial nations, which reinforce the answer to this question as “Yes”. Along with the economic capitalization, “the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb” (Ngugi, 3). This cultural bomb destroyed the cultural identity of many people; putting them into many a crisis. Ngugi, in the introduction to his famous work *Decolonizing the Mind* describes the condition as:

The effect of cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland [...] Possibilities of triumph or victory are seen as remote, ridiculous dreams. The intended results are despair, despondency and a collective death-wish (3).

This was the condition of almost all the colonized nations once. They were in great despair, feeling themselves removed from the outer world, thinking of this cultural inferiority. Thus, the cultural bomb, a well-planned agenda of imperialists managed to find its destiny. The paradoxical thing that followed this was the emergence of the

western imperialists as saviors to help the colonized to come out of this pathetic condition. They promised a healing touch and gained the confidence of the people, thereby gradually controlling them culturally too. Later, after independence, many nations tried to get over this cultural imperialism. Many political, social and cultural activists and writers came forward to save their culture from the clutches of imperialism. But a complete return to their original culture was impossible as there were many hybrid/mixed culture formed by that time. The off-springs of that mixed culture enjoyed the qualities of both native and western culture. Though they had many advantages, the crucial issue faced by these people was the identity crisis, especially, for the generations that proceeded in the later years. They could not find a space of their own in either of the worlds. They were haunted by the memories of the past, as they could not carry over its heritage. Neither, could they find space in the western culture, as it was very far from the conscience of the native to adapt fully into an alien culture.

This thesis aims to bring out the different facets of identity crisis confronted by different people. *My World, My Space*, speaks of the dilemma faced by many natives in the postcolonial nations. They had the feeling of “Out of Space” in their own native world, because of the colonial experience of Western civilization. These people are caught in the dilemma of “double consciousness” that make them uncomfortable in the place they live in. They fail to fit themselves into a particular space, since they dreamt of an ideal world, neither native nor western. But, the problem was that they could not get away from the world of dilemma.

This dilemma is addressed in this study, from different points of view. The four writers chosen for study are from four different native identities. One is an Afro-American, other a Nigerian, next a Canadian and finally a Native-American. Afro-American writer, Toni Morrison deals with the basic issue of an American born African person's dilemma. Though their ancestral past is African, they grew up in a white society, learning all western culture. They suffer a lot to find a space in their tradition, which is completely alien to them.

Canada, being a multicultural nation, faces problem connected with its hybrid culture. The whites, either English or French settlers, marrying the Natives, formed a different cultural practice. This led to the dilemma, which passed to their successive generations. Beatrice Culleton Mosionier's work deals with the problem of one such native community, Métis, which feels alienated from the mainstream Canadian society. Racism is the main antagonist in her work.

Kiowa, one of the Native-American communities is given a secondary citizenship in America. Though the real inhabitants, they were treated as under-developed people with no progressive outlook. The main reason was their inclination to their traditional and cultural past. The Westerners viewed it as their ignorance; but for the Kiowa, culture was their life. The influence of Western culture along with the disillusionment caused by the two World Wars had a negative impact on the younger Kiowa generation. N Scott Momaday's works dealt with these issues.

Gabriel Okara wrote poems addressing the common issues of African people. He celebrated the African culture for its diversity and condemned Western culture

for its rigid and arrogant approach, which oppressed the native people of Africa. His poems used much African cultural imagery to explain its richness. But, the novel by Okara is a totally different picture of Africa, which is under the clutches of corruption and immorality. The younger generation is let down by the anarchic rule and goes in search of an ideal society.

The first chapter of the thesis titled “*Tar Baby: An African-American Discourse on Identity*” is about the identities in flux in Toni Morrison’s *Tar Baby*. This chapter details the different faces of identity crisis. The novels of Toni Morrison are widely read and had been analyzed from different perspectives in an academic scenario. This novel, *Tar Baby* has also been considered for studies earlier by many critics and scholars. The identity crisis of Jadine is discussed like all other female protagonists of Toni Morrison. She talked of this theme in almost all her novels, as it was a common issue for African Americans, especially of women characters. Many dissertations and scholarly articles have been published widely on the search for identity of characters in the novels of Toni Morrison. In such works, *Tar Baby* consumes only a chapter or a portion of some chapters. Apart from identity crisis, the themes of resistance, violence, race and gender in *Tar Baby* had undergone critical examination by the scholars.

Barbara Christian, in her book *Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writers*, wrote elaborately on the African and African American women writers. It was an anthology of her essays and articles published earlier, which was combined later, to form a book. In that she has written on *Tar Baby*, especially in the article “Testing the Strength of the Black Cultural Bond: Review of



Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*" published in 1981. It was one of the pioneering articles on *Tar Baby*. Following it came many articles and essays on the same work. In 1992, Patrick Bryce Bjork wrote on the topic *The Novels of Toni Morrison: The Search for Self and Place within the Community*, which was a study of the search for identity within the African American culture. Judylyn S. Ryan published an article in the journal *Modern Fiction Studies*, "Contested Visions/Double-Vision in *Tar Baby*" in 1993, which dealt with the social relations and the double vision of Jadine over her own ancestral community and White culture. In 1997, Anniina Jokien published a paper titled "The Inauthentic *Tar Baby*" which explained the character of Jadine as a racial traitor, who felt her native culture as something primitive and unsophisticated.

Dr. Binu. P. S has done her doctoral thesis in 2002 on "Protest and Resistance in the works of Morrison, Armstrong and Cullerton, in which she did a comparative study of the works and characters of these writers. The focus was the protest and the resistance adopted by the characters towards the cultural imperialism. In Chapter 5 of Dr. Suchibrata Goswami's *Archeology of Violence: The Novels of Toni Morrison*, published in 2012, she writes about the violence portrayed in the novel, through the different characters. She talks not only of physical violence, but also of the internal violence of these characters.

Majority of the studies focused only on the major characters, except the work of Dr. Suchibrata Goswami. She has written about the Black-White conflict along with the element of violence. Here, this thesis not only deals with the main characters, but the majority of characters, both Black and White, who are facing this dilemma.

Thus, this chapter addresses the contemporary question of racial fluidity. That is, about the freedom of an individual to choose their own race and the problems following the same. Jadine stands contradictory to all the other characters in the novel. She stands estranged from her native people, at the same time feels bad for discarding it. This dilemma along with the identity problem of other characters, even the white masters, Valerian and Margaret are addressed in this chapter. It also deals with the gender discrimination, which aggravates the issue of identity crisis, along with the style of narrative technique employed by Toni Morrison in this novel.

The Second chapter, “*In Search of April Raintree: Reinventing the Lost Self in Native Métis World*” examines the problems of two Métis sisters, who face the dilemma of identity crisis because of their birth into an Aboriginal culture. Their Métis identity creates many issues in their life. When April tries to get out of this dilemma, Cheryl travels into this world to conquer the native identity. Both travels in opposite paths to establish an identity of their own. They never thought of having a life together compromising each other on their identity. The impact of racism and the subsequent abuse and violence it deploys on April and Cheryl is discussed in the articles by Margery Fee, Helen Hoy, Agnes Grant and Janice Acoose. They are all scholars in postcolonial and feminist studies, focusing on the Native Canadian writers, especially women writers.

Agnes Grant, in her “Contemporary Native Women’s Voices in Literature” published in 1990, introduces Beatrice Culleton’s work *In Search of April Raintree* and why it is called a “Native literature” rather than Canadian literature. In the same year, Margery Fee wrote an article “Upsetting Fake Ideas: Jeannette Armstrong’s

*Slash* and Beatrice Culleton's *April Raintree*", which was a comparative study of both the novels. It exposes the fake ideas set by colonial or white people about the Native people in Canada and their struggle to get out of it. Helen Hoy's "'Nothing but the Truth': Discursive Transparency in Beatrice Culleton", speaks about the intense and trembling truth about the problems faced by Native girls in white Canadian society. She brings out the differences in *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) and *April Raintree* (a version published later with some differences in rape scene) published in 1984. Janice Acoose, a Métis inheritance from Saskatchewan, has published many articles on Native Canadian literary representation of Métis people. Her graduate thesis, which was later published as a book titled, *Iskwekwak-Kah' Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses Nor Easy Squaw*, published in 1995, deconstructs the stereotypical images of native women and acclaims the real identity of a Métis woman. She has taken Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* for this study. In her article "The Problem of "Searching" For April Raintree", she analyses the novel as something that educates the readers about Métis culture and history, rather than providing a positive narrative of Métis culture and history.

The second chapter of this thesis is also a study on the identity crisis of April, Cheryl and all the other minor characters. A novel comes to its fullness only if the minor characters also play their role. Therefore, they are also taken for analysis to illustrate the responsibilities of such characters in aggravating the dilemma of the protagonists either 'going native' or 'rejecting native'. Here, the focus is on the Métis culture in Canada, which is known as a melting pot of different cultures. The

people of Métis community face racial discrimination due to their Aboriginal identity. Culleton, being a Métis, could clearly portray the dilemma within the mind of this marginalized community and their struggle to get out of this crisis. Together with these matters, the problem reaches its fullness with the element of gender discrimination. The trauma faced by the women characters in the novel due to the abuse is also discussed. This chapter further moves on to the style of narration employed by the writer in the novel. Since it is written in the perspective of April, an innocent girl of six years old, the author has used the vocabulary and the narration in a very careful manner. The letters of Cheryl to April also reveals this conscious effort made by Culleton to construct a different narrative strategy to make the narration more original and truthful.

Third chapter is titled “A Return to Kiowa and Oral Tradition: A Native American Discourse on Identity and Narration in N Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn*”. This is about the predicament of a Kiowa man in the industrialized America. He is left in a world of disillusionment as he is reminded of his native Kiowa culture, though living in a developed country. Abel is a passive and silent person, who moves to alcoholism and depression. But, there are many other Native Kiowa characters in the novel, who either live satisfied in the native community or abandon this native identity and go for a different life in American culture. So, the theme of identity crisis is applicable to many characters in the work. The women characters do not receive much attention by the author, as the novel focuses more on the revival of oral tradition and culture, through the character of Abel. The

importance of narration in *House made of Dawn* is attempted to be explored with all its minute details.

*N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn: The Crucial Silencing in the Search for Identity* by Marlys Cervantes published in 1995 dealt with the silence that overruled Abel because of his identity crisis. It is done in comparison with many other Native American characters. Another thesis that came out on the novel is *Native American Literary Renaissance: A Fourth World Perspective of N Scott Momaday's Oeuvre*, a thesis by N Srinivasa Rao in 2011. All the novels written by Momaday are taken for his study. He writes about the renaissance of Native American literature and the contribution of Momaday to this revival. Besides the theme of identity crisis, Momaday's works are famous for its linguistic and narrative features. Guillermo Bartelt, in his book *N. Scott Momaday's Native American Ideology in House Made of Dawn: Stylolinguistic Analyses of Defamiliarization in Contemporary American Indian Literature*, published in 2010 speaks of the linguistic techniques employed by Momaday in *House Made of Dawn*.

The fourth chapter "An Unconventional Voice from the Voiceless: Thematic and Narrative Innovations in Gabriel Okara's *The Voice*" discusses a distinct facet of identity crisis. If all the other three novels had the white culture as the predominant reason for the identity crisis of the characters, here in *The Voice*, crisis is due to the problems within the African society. The quest is for the self that had lost spirituality, sincerity and truthfulness. The novel has been studied from the narrative, lexical and semantic perspective than its search for identity. The important scholar to study on this is EbiYeibo, who has published two articles on the linguistic

features of Okara's novel. Even in the work, *The Empire Writes Back*, in the chapter "Re-placing Language", Bill Ashcroft has dealt with the use of English adapting Ijaw syntax as a culturally relevant one in postcolonial literature.

An attempt is made here to deal with the dilemma of all characters, including the corrupted people, who are the real cause of all the underlying problems of the protagonist, Okolo and his friends. The prevailing gender discrimination in African society as depicted in the novel, along with its reason is analyzed. The unconventional use of English language by Okara is examined with the theoretical background of Ngugi's *Decolonising the Mind*.

Though the novels chosen for this thesis had been primary source for several studies earlier, the comparative study of these works with reference to negotiation of identity is a novel one. The issue of identity crisis of the main protagonists of the above mentioned novels were, though the prime concern, in the studies done earlier, here the focus has been extended to majority of the characters, major and minor, whose quest for identity uncover many a universal theme as well as provide a window into the hybrid culture of these postcolonial writers and the societies in which they lived.

This thesis is structured on the basis of the selected authors' views on identity quest on their personal level and also how they deal with the main components that influence identity such as language, hybridity, place, otherness and displacement- moving through different phases of varied postcolonialism and its varied aspects. These literary voices also are an attempt to reclaim a lost history and reconstruct it. The characters in these works struggle in search of their ontological as

well as their cultural identity. Identity is an important aspect of understanding the self and relating to the society and the world at large. The characters in these novels are struggling to figure out who they are and their space in the new world-order of postcolonial/ neocolonial times. Hence the title *My World, My Space*.

DIVYA N. "MY WORLD, MY SPACE: CHARACTERISATION AND NARRATION IN SELECT POSTCOLONIAL FICTION". THESIS. DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT,2018.



## **Chapter I**

### ***Tar Baby: An African American Discourse on Identity***

“When I discover who I am, I’ll be free.” (Ellison,103).

The search for this discovery of self is the base of many problems in the minds of people. Every single human being is unique and each possesses a distinctive temperament that distinguishes him/her from others. This individualization holds a great importance in the life of each person. This is how one is known to the world, or in other words, the way which one presents himself/herself to the world. So, identity defines the existence of an individual. There are many factors that influence this identity formation of an individual. Though born into a certain family and sets of rules, an individual’s self is moulded and developed along with his/her living experiences and exposure to the outer world. The tradition, culture, nationality and above all the family into which one person is born influence a lot in the formation of his/her selfhood and individuality. In a very superficial way, one can say that an individual enjoys only a limited freedom to assert the identity as one is bound to family, society and with every situation, he/she is associated.

The feelings of bondage develop as one grows up and gradually begins to question these kind of fetters that restricts the growth of self-esteem within oneself. Every human being confronts these problems; where some succeed in overcoming it, while some others fails to cope with it and ends up in frustrations and failures. There

are many literary works, which deals with the characters ending up in tragedy, failing to face the problem of identity crisis. They fail to either understand themselves in search for their identity or lack a voice for themselves to assert their identity in the society. This is termed as identity crisis in academic discourses, especially in colonial/ postcolonial discourses. Commonwealth, postcolonial and Diaspora writers used this term widely and is mainly associated with the characters who search for their identity and meaning of their life and existence in an ethnic, Native or postcolonial state of being.

Search for identity, identity crisis, diasporic identity, hybrid identity, double consciousness, dual identity etc. are some of the different terms that signifies the situation where one person feels displaced in his/her own Native culture or nation and is influenced by an external culture. More than a normal influence, it has its effects in such a way that, that culture is being internalized by that particular character. This creates dilemma within the person who faces the problems of identity crisis. The inner conflict leads to many psychological trauma as it consciously or unconsciously affects the mental stability of that person.

Like Walt Whitman's expression "I contain multitudes" in his poem "Songs of Myself", every human beings contain multitudes. It does not refer to the highly contested diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder but to the fact that one sees oneself radically differently in different contexts. It is a very general notion that we behave different in different situations and are actors and co-actors in many other contexts. There are many internal and external factors to aggregate the dilemma of double consciousness. The postcolonial literature stressed more on the theme of

identity crisis, as they are the most affected people, who are caught in between two worlds and cultures. Many of the postcolonial writers had the first hand experience of being in the world of double identity, one being Native and the other one influenced by Western culture. They all problematized the concept of identity crisis and many argued that it was the outcome of a conscious effort from the part of colonizers to rule the colonized, making them feel inferior to the former. The colonized people and the Native ethnic “coloured people” were made to feel inferior in one way or the other. Their language, culture, traditions etc. were belittled. It was considered uncouth and boorish with no qualities to be ascribed and imitated. This was a deliberate attempt of colonizers during the earlier phase of colonization to impose power upon Native people of colonized nation.

Under colonialism, colonized people are made subservient to ways of regarding the world which reflect and support colonialist values. A particular value-system is taught as the best, truest world view. The cultural values of the colonized people are deemed as lacking in value, or even as being ‘uncivilised’ from which they must be rescued. To be blunt, the British Empire did not rule by military and physical force alone. (McLeod, 19)

This demoralizing of the colonized was explained as false in many postcolonial writings. The postcolonial writers criticized the portrayal of colonized Natives in mainstream writings. They tried to establish the real cultural identity of Natives through the characters in their works. Many characters were the real representatives of dilemma of double consciousness. They were in constant conflict with many external and internal factors that developed into further tragedies of their lives. Some

struggles hard to get back to their Native culture, some consciously accepts the western culture, some others run away from reality to find another resort. A postcolonial state of mind led to a depiction of such characters, especially, in the works that were published immediately after the independence of their nations. The trauma of colonization and freedom struggles that existed there during that time came alive and the readers could easily associate themselves with many characters, who were the voice of each individual in that country.

A feeling of oneness developed among the people of once colonized nations, for they realized the fact that they could gain independence only because of this oneness. The literary works tried to reinforce the feelings of common people through many of their characters. This study analyses four different characters, representing four different postcolonial nations and their identity problems.

In Ross Posnock's essay "How It Feels to Be a Problem: Du Bois, Fanon and the "Impossible Life" of the Black Intellectual", he says:

Fanon reveals how authenticity is wielded as a weapon of colonial control that propagates fantasies of regression, embodying them in stereotypes and nostalgias, twin devices of imperialism... Fanon says in *Black Skins, White Masks*: "I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, and slave ships (327).

Other landmark works during this period were Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Bill Ashcroft's *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), Gayatri Spivak's *The Post-colonial*

*Critic* (1990) and also works by Homi Bhabha, Kwame Anthony Appiah and Robert Young.

The literary works, which came up during this period also dealt with the inner conflict of individuals whose identity, is divided into several facets. The postcolonial literature is concerned with the political and cultural independence of a group of people who formerly lived under colonial rule. The writers rewrote the so far written literary classical works and subverted it. They interpreted those works from the perspective of a colonized person, with his colonial experience. "Writing back" was their theory. Many wrote in their own Native languages and refused to write in English. The characters in such works undergo inner conflict to establish an identity of their own. He/she will be in a constant struggle between his/her self-consciousness (i.e. the Native world and culture) and the foreign influence of the new dominant culture in which he/she lives now.

Major works, which explored these themes, came from the African American literary world. African American literature is a branch of literature rooted in America but written by the writers of African origin. The history of its origin can be traced back to the works of late eighteenth century writers such as Phillis Wheatley and Oluadah Equiano. Starting with the slave narratives, it flourished with Harlem Renaissance and underwent changes according to the different political and cultural struggles and continues with more vigour and strength with writers such as James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, Lynn Harris, Omar Tyree etc.

The main themes used by African American writers were the issues of African American people, their role and position within the American society, their culture, racism, slavery, fight for equality etc. They also made use of the traditional Native oral forms such as spirituals, sermons, gospel music, jazz and blues etc. The style of writing and the use of themes changed according to the changes in the society. As their place in the American society changed the focus of African American literature also changed.

During the early period, before the American Civil War, the writers focused mainly upon the issues of slavery and the suppression over Blacks by the White society. These literary works were commonly known by the subgenre “slave narratives”. The major writers were Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass.

After the abolition of slavery and by the end of American Civil War, many African American authors continued to write about the condition of their people in the country. The literary world witnessed a great many intellectuals like W E B Du Bois and Booker T Washington during this post-slavery period. They all worked for the upliftment of Black society through their views and writings. The Harlem Renaissance (1920-1940) brought a new life to the African American literary field. It had its impact on African American social thinking, its culture and on the entire community. They explored their identities as black Americans instead of imitating the white culture. They celebrated the black culture and revived their traditional music and other art forms. This age is defined as the flowering of black culture and literature. The most famous writers of the Harlem Renaissance period were Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Dorothy West, Nella Larsen and Claude

McKay. Earlier the books of African Americans were not received widely, but with the Harlem Renaissance it entered the mainstream of American culture and society. During the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans migrated from the South of America and settled in the Northern cities. It inspired the Black writers and they wrote against segregation and racism and created a sense of Black Nationalism among their people.

Now, in this modern century, African American literature has reached the mainstream literary world as books by “Black Writers”. They are now considered as an integral part of American literature. It is during this period, as a part of Black Arts Movement, that writers like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker came into forefront as major African American women writers. They helped to promote and define African American literature and wrote from the feminist perspective, their experience and suppression as doubly oppressed people. They succeeded in bringing out the double consciousness within the minds of African American women. These writers argued that the reason for the women’s dual conflict is that they are oppressed in the name of both colour and also gender.

The discourse of African American literary study arises out of a specific kind of exclusion from mainstream culture, criticism and history. The white feminists generalized and theorized about women’s experience on the basis of lives and works of white women from the middle class. Similarly, African American male writers represented the blacks in racist culture on the basis of the lives of the black men alone. So the Black women’s literary tradition suffered from double inheritance: from the mainstream as well as from the black literary tradition. JayitaSengupta in

her essay, “Feminist Perspectives” says, “Black feminists explore the ways in which the experience of race affects the experience of race affects the experience of gender as they examine ways in which the culturally constructed experience of gender, specifically of womanhood, affects the experience of race”(54).

Anna Julia Cooper’s compilation of essays, *A Voice from the South* (1892) can be considered to be one of the founding texts of the Black Feminist movement. By the publication of this text, black feminist literary movement established itself as a genre of Black Women’s writing. Many writers revealed black woman’s anxiety about sexuality and the need for control over one’s female body. While black male narrative structures were based on the European cultural models, the black women writers tried for finding new patterns for redefining experience. The Black Feminist movement is an extension of the Black Arts Movement and the author’s like Marshall, Gwendeline Brooks and Toni Morrison connected the two movements. They tried to protest against all misrepresentations and stereotyping. They also understood the need to write their own story and record their predicament in American society. In this way, their writings were in a sense political.

Black feminism argues that sexism, class oppression, and racism are inextricably bound together. Forms of feminism that strive to overcome sexism and class oppression but ignore race can discriminate against many people, including women, through racial bias. The Combahee River Collective argued in 1974 that the liberation of black women entails freedom for all people, since it would require the end of racism, sexism, and class oppression (Goswami, 2013:180).



African American women writers focused on the multiple oppression of gender, class and race in their works that they experienced in the American society. As noted earlier, they reconstructed the black identity and wrote about the Black self-love and heterosexual bonding. Along with this, they also wrote about the relationships between the white and black girls. Many of the black girls were obsessed with the blonde hair and blue eyes of white girls, which were considered the epitome of beauty and they sometimes even tried to imitate this stereotypical construct of beauty. However, many of these writers celebrated their black identity, without devaluing the whites. They explored many themes including the relation between woman and woman, not in the sense of 'lesbianism' but to reveal how the women characters stood themselves apart based on their colour, caste and societal status. Toni Morrison is one such novelists, who used wide-ranging themes in her novels, thereby taking African American literary movement in to a new paradigm.

Barbara Smith, in her essay, "Towards Black Feminist Criticism" writes, I was particularly struck by the way in which Toni Morrison's novels *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* could be explored from this new perspective. In both works the relationships between girls and women are essential, yet at the same time physical sexuality is overtly expressed only between men and women. Despite the apparent heterosexuality of the female characters, I discovered in reading *Sula* that it works as a lesbian novel not only because of the passionate friendship between Sula and Nel but because of Morrison's consistently critical stance towards the heterosexual institutions of male-female relationships, marriage, and the family. Consciously or not,

Morrison's work poses both lesbian and feminist questions about Black women's autonomy and their impact up on each other's lives (175).

Chloe Anthony Wofford (Toni Morrison) was the second of four children of George and Ramah Wofford, born on February 18, 1931. Both of her parents belonged to working class family and were Southern migrants. They moved North in pursuit of better living condition in the early 1900s. They settled in Ohio to escape from the cruelties of racism. Her father had a strong distrust of the Whites throughout his lifetime. Morrison's parents instilled the value of loyalty and their community. She reveals the influence of her father who told her that African people were Superior to Europeans because as victims of White racism they occupied a morally Superior position in the society.

As an African American in a town of immigrants, she grew up with the notion that the only place she could come for help and reassurance is her own community in Lorain, Ohio. Here, she had an escape from stereotyped black-settings. Morrison's parents and grandparents taught her the folk tales of black community, their songs, myths, music and the language of African American heritage. The common practice in her family, storytelling inspired Morrison to be a profound lover of books. She created her own stories after listening to the story by adults. Her parents encouraged her passion for reading, learning and culture, as well as a confidence in her own abilities and attributes as a woman. She widely read writers like Jane Austen, Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky. She was greatly inspired by these writers and their ability to identify themselves with their own cultural roots.

Toni Morrison's works were also deeply rooted in history and mythology. They resonate with pleasure and pain, wonder and horror. They can be described as fantastic realism. There is something primal about her characters. Barbara Christian, in her book, *Black Feminist Criticism* says:

Morrison's Characters come at you with the force and beauty of gushing water, seemingly fantastic but as basic as the earth they stand on. While Paule Marshall carefully sculpts her characters, Toni Morrison lets hers erupt out of the wind, sometimes gently, often with force and horror. Her works is sensuality combined with an intrigue that only a piercing intellect could create (25).

Toni Morrison uses her style and language to describe the psychic trauma experienced by so many black girls growing up in a culture where blue eyes, blonde hair, white skin etc are the symbols of beauty. Many of her characters like Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*, Jadine in *Tar Baby* etc are examples of such girls who are caught within this trauma. Even though many Black writers criticized Toni Morrison, for they felt her works too Euro-American in structure, it is clear from the themes of her works that it addressed the problems of African Americans, especially women. The themes she used were the experiences and roles of black women in a racist and male dominated society. With an exception of one, most of the other works have female protagonists. She published her first novel, *The Bluest Eye* in 1970. She won Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988 for her novel *Beloved*. She is the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993. Other major novels are *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), *Jazz* (1992) etc.

The dilemma of double consciousness and identity crisis in the characters of Toni Morrison's novels is mainly caused by the problems of class, race and gender. In an article titled "On the Backs of Blacks" published in a Special Issue: The New Face of America in Time Magazine, Morrison writes:

Popular culture, shaped by film, theatre, advertising, the press, television and literature is heavily engaged in race talk. It participates freely in this most enduring and efficient rite of passage into American culture: negative appraisals of native-born black population. Only when the lessons of racial estrangement is learned is assimilation complete. Whatever the lived experience of immigrants with African Americans- pleasant, beneficial or bruising- the rhetorical experience render blacks as non-citizens already discredited outlaws ([/content.time.com/](http://content.time.com/)).

*Tar Baby* is Toni Morrison's fourth novel which tells the story of an African American lady, Jadine, who embodies the dilemma of African American womanhood. She is brought up by the Streets, White American settlers in Isle de Chevaliers. She is a successful model in Paris and is engaged to a White person, Ryk. She visits her uncle and aunt who are living with Streets. Into this world comes Son Green, "an interloper of the black underclass, a dreadlock-wearing, black sailor, who has jumped ship and swum to Isle des Chevaliers where he hides, steals food, and watches Jadine as she sleeps." (Scott 33) He is an oppositional character to all of them and is considered as subhuman by all others except Valerian. He creates inner struggles in Sidney and Ondine, the two middle class blacks. Jadine first thinks him as a swamp nigger. But she cannot refrain from falling in love with Son. He brings

out the contradiction within her and advises her to live as a real Black woman. He takes her to Eloë, the place he thinks as his “original dime”. But Jadine could never adjust to the life there and returns to Paris leaving Son.

*Tar Baby* is really a black folk tale in which a farmer tries to catch a rabbit by making use of a tar baby, visually attractive, sticky by placing it in the middle of his cabbage patch. This folk tale is used by Morrison to analyze the complexities of class, race and sex and how the African Americans are, still held captive in the present day West. In Morrison’s work, Valerian Street is the farmer. As the owner of a candy empire, who settles in the Isle de Chavaliers, he helps and supports Jadine in her education and further life. Jadine is drawn by Morrison to resemble an African American Princess. She is a beautiful, bright, educated and ambitious girl, who lives with her patrons, Valerian and Margaret Streets. She discusses beauty tips and new trends with Margaret and eats meals with Valerian, while her uncle Sidney and aunt Ondine serve dinner for her. She has completed degree in Art History at Sorbonne with the financial assistance of Valerian. She is now a successful model in Paris and is courted by a Wealthy Parisian who has proposed marriage. Her major concern is making it being comfortable and happy. Jadine feels alienated from her race and also feels at odd with the traditional roles for women. She tries to move away from the constraints of race or gender. But circumstances and other characters continually thwart her efforts to escape from these constraints. She feels comfortable with the European culture. But inside her inner consciousness she worries about her African heritage, whether she is betraying her race and culture.

This contradiction in her mind is made clear in the instance where Son and Jadine speak for the first time. When Jadine thinks that he will rape her, Son says that it is a false notion of White girls. Then replies: “White? She was startled out of fury. I’m not you know I’m know I’m not white!” (103). Though very much accustomed to the White values, she can’t place herself to the White values. She can’t place herself as a White woman. Though seemingly unimportant, the tar-black woman in canary-yellow dress, whom Jade meets at super market, haunts her always. That black African lady, “unphotographable beauty” makes Jadine “lonely and inauthentic” (40). She spits at Jade because she lacks an authentic black identity. This experience reflects her nervousness about her racial identity. Although black, she is very different in her thought, passions, possessions etc. That “confidence transcendent beauty” (39) leaves her imprint within Jadine which haunts her like a nightmare.

Jadine is also very different from the other women characters in the novel. She rejects the maternal role and wishes to live alone. She does not want to be a mother, but at the same time she feels anxious and guilty about rejecting this role. Son and Jadine go to New York and enjoys there. But he always asked her to go to Eloe, the place of their original ancestry. By that time Jadine was physically attached to Son and so agrees to his wish. “Yet he insisted on Eloe. She listened to him and nodded, thinking anywhere with him would be alright. She was completely happy.” (193)

In Eloe, the all black community, she dreams that black women aggressively bare their breasts at her. These black women at Eloe lead her to an understanding of

the self. Ironically, it is not the White patrons who “civilize” her. It is these black women who help her to discover herself which makes her feel she belongs to the White culture. The “night women” as she describes them, drive Jadine to confront reality, which she fears and therefore rejects. Yamini.K.Murthi says:

Haunted by these black women, even after she returns to New York, Jade realizes that her self-fulfillment lay in going back to Paris, and accepting the white man who had proposed to her, and, therefore, succumbing to the white culture. (81)

Jadine was brought up by her uncle Sydney and aunt Ondine. They wanted to have a good life for her. Ondine depends on Jade for emotional support in her hour of need. She believes in her confidence. The arrival of Son upsets the entire house hold. But Ondine feels comfort and secure because of Jadine’s presence. She tells Sydney, “Don’t worry yourself. Remember Jadine’s here. Nothing can happen to us as long as she’s here” (Morrison, 87). But Ondine is shattered when she realizes that she was gone wrong in bringing up Jadine. She does not anticipate Jade’s rejection of her own culture.

Michael, the son of Streets is yet another character who questions her identity. He is an absent presence in the novel. He is present only through the memories of other characters. All wait for his return. They have met each other only twice. He asks Jadine to go back to her original culture and stop imitating whites. She is always haunted by these words of Michael. So he, even in his absence, holds a crucial role in bringing out the dual conflict within Jadine. Once, during a summer vacation, Michael and Jadine meets at Orange County. She was doing her first year

at college and they talked each other about it. She remembers his words and describes it to Valerian:

He was there and we used to talk. He was ... oh ... clearheaded- independent it seemed to me. Actually we didn't talk; we quarreled. About why I was studying art history at that snotty school instead of- I don't know what. Organizing or something. He said I was abandoning my history. My people [...] I think he wanted me to string cowrie beads or sell Afro combs. The system was all fucked up he said and only a return to handicraft and barter could change it. (72-73).

Michael was a meek child, who lacked the love of parents during his childhood. Later, Valerian always felt guilty of denying paternal love to his son. Michael, though born to well-settled White parents, was not given the love and care a child deserved. he was physically abused by his own mother this creates psychic wounds that makes him a quiet child. But he never complained about these torments to his father and still loved his mother. Michael is an anthropologist and does many community services, especially for Blacks in America. Valerian feels that: "His idea of racial progress is All Voodoo to the people. [...] He wanted a race of exotics skipping around being picturesque for him" (73). Unlike Jadine, Michael wants to go back to primitive culture and learn it. Margaret is proud of her son's welfare activities and she tells everyone about this. Jadine feels uneasy whenever she remembers Michael and she reveals that he has asked her to go back to Morgan Street. But, she says, "Actually it was good he made me think about myself that way, at that place" (75).



A feeling of uneasiness and a quest for contentment can be traced throughout the novel, revealed by majority of the characters. Toni Morrison begins the novel, as 'He believed he was safe' (4). She used 'Believed' rather than thought in order to stamp doubt, suggest unease.'(xi, Foreword). Not only the major/ prime characters but minor/supporting characters too are place in the situation of 'uneasiness' or 'not fit into 'feeling at many instances. In the forward of the text, the author herself asks the doubt about the folktale of "Tar Baby" which significantly suggest the word "attraction". The folktale retells the story of a farmer who struggles to find out a solution to get rid of rabbit, which eats lettuce and cabbage from his farm. To stop that he makes a tar figure, that too dressed in a female form to arouse the curiosity of rabbit and there by attracting it into that. The rabbit is thus trapped using this tar figure. Farmer succeeds in finding out the solution to save his farm yields. But, here the author questions this.

It's clear why the rabbit ate as much lettuce and cabbage as he could. It's clear why the farmer had to stop him. But why a tar figure? And why (in the version I was told) is it dressed as a female? Did the farmer understand the rabbit so well he could count on its curiosity? But the rabbit isn't curious at all, he passes by the tar baby. It is his being ignored and her being ill-manner that annoy, than infuriate him. He threatens, then strikes her. Now he is stupid, if one of his paws sticks, why try another? (x).

The novel also figures these characters. Here Valerian can be seen the farmer who raises Jadine, the tar baby. Son Green gets attracted to this Tar Baby, knowing that there is something attractive in her. But, in some version of criticism, Son is

considered the Tar Baby, who attracts Jadine. Jadine falls in love with Son knowing that she could never lead a contented life with him. Something in him, which is so sticky like the tar figure, fascinates her and they get closer. Though they have a strong and deep physical relationship and liked to spent time together, they have contradictions and differences of opinion in the matter of culture and traditional values they withhold. Jadine wished to be at Paris and become a successful model. On contrary, Son wanted to move to Eloë, where his soul lies. Though they loved each other and wished to live together, these conflicts created severe fights in between their happy moments.

Jadine had never thought of having a relation with a Black man, as she considered herself as one among the whites, leading a life of a successful model. She could not believe herself that she is attracted to such a black man, who romanticizes the history and life of real Black culture. Even the dream of Jadine changes with his involvement in her life. At Paris, she dreamt of large hats, which represented the beauty queens among whites. Though she is a model and she is chosen for the cover photo of the famous magazine *Elle*, she knew that she is not as white and beautiful as the real Parisian models. Therefore, the large beautiful hats disturbed her nights.

She fell asleep immediately when she first lay down, but after an hour she woke rigid and frightened from a dream of large hats. Large beautiful women's hats like Norma Shearer's and Mae West's and Jeanette MacDonald's although the dreamer is too young to have seen their movies or remembered them if she had. Feathers. Veils. Flowers. Brims flat, brims

drooping, brims folded, and rounded. Hat after lovely sailing hat surrounding her until she is finger-snapped awake (44).

Jadine's disappointment to become a white in all sense is reflected through her dream. Whether she wished to be a real white is a question that always haunted her. She is again perplexed after her encounter with the "unphotographable beauty" (46), the black woman in yellow dress. That lady puts her in the dilemma and makes her inauthentic. Jadine tried to get rid of the incidents happened in the Supra Market and the figure of that fat lady. But, like the hat of white women, this black lady too disturbed her inner consciousness. "Jadine kicked off her sheet and buried her head under the pillow to keep the moonlight out of her eyes, and the woman in yellow out of her mind" (49). Jadine's insecurity over her identity is revealed through these incidents. She could not accept any challenges courageously, instead thrown into bewilderment pondering over the issues.

Toni Morrison's novels are a major voice on the theme of isolation and identity in the post-colonial African studies. Voicing the tails of the disillusioned and isolated feminine voice of the black, she stresses on the basic premise which authorizes oppressions, such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality and physical abilities. In all her writings, Morrison shows herself to be the tireless explorer of cultural cliché and stereotypes, in particular of those that affect women (Goswami,2013: 180-81).

Such a cultural cliché and some stereotypes add to the dilemma in Jadine. As she could not think of losing Son Green, Jadine agrees to accompany him to Eloe. There she faces lot many problems, as she is new to her ancestral culture. Born and

brought up in a culture different from her native African land, Jadine feels alien to the place. She could not accept the age-old concepts prevailing in Eloë. She grew up with all freedom and the restrictions imposed over her annoyed her. Many times, she felt like running away. But her love for Son holds her back at Eloë. Though they lived together and had a passionate sexual relationship, they were not allowed to stay together there. They had to remain in separate houses, where they were under supervision of elder people. Jadine could not accept such customs. She thought: “Paleolithic, she thought. I am stuck here with a pack of Neanderthals who think sex is dirty or strange or something and he is standing here almost thirty years doing it. Stupid” (257).

Along with such controls, the advices about the qualities of a good woman infuriate Jadine. The friend of Son, Soldier, speaks of Son’s former wife Cheyenne, who “wasn’t pretty, but... had the best pussy in Florida, the absolute best...” (254). He continues, “She didn’t control nothin. At least not during the day. But good God she sure did run the nights” (256). Though Soldier told it to warn Jadine about the qualities of a woman to keep in a marital relation, it is one of the sexiest comment made in the novel. The attitude of the society to count the value of womanhood based on her chastity and the sensual pleasure she could provide for her partner is revealed through the words of Soldier. Morrison has made a conscious effort to bring out such obscene stand points about woman through these kind of statements.

Jadine felt embarrassed hearing the words of Soldier, as she was not to such sexist statements before. She lived in a place where the women were given their space and moreover, she believed in the independence of womanhood. So these

words left her dumbfound. “Son embarrassed her in the road with the camera; Rosa made her feel like a slut; and now Soldier was trying to make her feel like a virgin competing with...” (254).

Every single person in Eloe whom Jadine meets reminds of her discarded ancestry. Whenever Ondine tried to tell her about their ancestors and their life at Baltimore, Jadine refused to lend her attention. But, at Eloe, she was forced to hear it. She is reminded of the responsibilities of a dutiful wife and a modest black woman. All these made her uncomfortable, because she was never into her roots before. There was no one to tell her about the ancestry. Though there was her uncle and aunt, she has left them for her studies. So, this made her unaware of the customs and concepts prevailed in Black community. Jadine thought of leading a good life with Son. But the visit to Eloe and experiences there puts an end to her dream.

Son and Jadine fall in a deep relationship within a few days after his entry to Isles. But, they fail to resolve the oppositions between them even after living together for months. He contradiction lies here. In spite of attractions that propel them towards each other, also a very strong repulsion separated them. The man-woman dichotomy is clearly explained by Morrison through the relation between Son and Jadine. They both were concerned about their own masculinity and femininity and never compromised each other. Jadine could not adjust with Son’s traditional values and so she leaves Eloe. Perhaps Son is most affected by her departure. On the other hand she dreams of her bright future at Paris.

At Eloe, Jadine’s dreams become nightmare filled with women-her mother, Ondine, the black woman in yellow-canary dress etc. they make her feel sick. She

finds herself unfit in that society. For her, in Eloë, “there was, may be a past but definitely no future”(259). Jadine and Son finally move apart. She flees back to Isle from Eloë, but finally moves to Paris, which she feels is her place and future. When Son follows her to the Isle to make her convinced about Eloë, she has already left. Jadine, at one point asserts that, “I want to get out of my skin and be only the person inside-not American-not black-just me” (40). The question of “the person inside” creates the whole problem for her. A black woman with white values fails to find out this inner self-whether to go for her African heritage or to stay back with her European, inherited, values. Morrison uses the image of the African woman in the yellow dress as a symbol for the authenticity that the faded, with cosmetics, Jadine lacks.

Victor Turner defines marginality in terms of W. E. B. Du Bois' concept of double consciousness. He says that Toni Morrison is aware of her character's consciousness of the twoness. But more often none of her characters transcend the limitations of this double consciousness. They are caught between the inferiority complex that is caused by the domain of his own culture and obsessed with the cultural myths of the major culture.

Jadine also confronts this issue of double consciousness. If ever she goes back to Paris, whether she will be able to move away from the question of authenticity and her heritage remain as an unanswered query. Judylyn S Ryan, in his essay “Contested Visions/Double-Vision in Tar Baby” says:

At age of twenty-five, with a global community of “night women” waiting in Paris, Rome, New York and elsewhere, if not rescue, then certainly to

challenge and inspire her, Jadine may recollect “true and ancient properties” and move beyond double consciousness to double-vision (619).

Morrison states in the foreword to the novel: “A love story, then. Difficult, unresponsive, but seducing woman and clever, anarchic male, each with definitions of independence and domestically, of safety and danger that clash” (xiii). The novel explores the relation between many characters. However, the love relation of Son and Jadine is the major one; it also deals with different types of relations and its constraints of the people residing in L’Arbe de la Croix. Every characters in the novel is in conflict with each other. There is no true relation except that of Sydney and Ondine. All others wear a mask of feigned love to maintain their relation. This creates dilemma in the characters and they expose their crisis at one point of time.

Sydney and Ondine, the black couple had been assisting Streets from the time they were settled at Isles. Sydney helped Valerian Street in his green house and some laundry works while Ondine did cooking and cleaning. Margaret, immediately after her marriage, came to Isle de le Chevaliers with Valerian. Since she had no acquaintances, she befriends Ondine. They talked each other and shared their personal matters. But, when she began to get closer, Valerian put an end to this, telling that “she should guide the servants, not consort with them” (59). Margaret quarreled with him telling that Ondine is not like other colored people; she is as good as they are. Morrison, through this brings out the common notion of a White towards coloured people. Valerian was not rude to Sydney and Ondine, but he is against consorting with Negroes. He kept a distance from the servants; even they were given freedom to talk to him.

The conflict between the whites and blacks in the novel aggravates as the novel progresses. Sydney gradually takes an upper hand in some situations as Valerian becomes unhealthy to take hold of things. He insists on Valerian's diet and controls him from taking too much physical and mental strain. Ondine, who was carrying a great secret in her mind, bursts out on the Christmas Eve's evening and she reveals the misconduct of Margaret towards her son Michael. The heights of racial and gender discrimination reaches its heights during the party. The frustrations of both races burst out, even they managed to accommodate each other for a long period. Ondine reacted furiously:

Held tightly in the arms of Son, Ondine was shouting wildly, "You white freak! You baby killer! I saw you! You think I don't know what that apple pie shit is for?"

Jadine had a hard time holding back Margaret, who was shouting, "Shut up! You nigger! You nigger bitch! Shut your big mouth, I'll kill you!"

"You cut him up. You cut your baby up. Made him bleed for you. For fun you did it. Made him scream, you, you, freak. You crazy white freak. She did", Ondine addressed the others, still shouting. "She stuck pins in his behind. Burned him with cigarettes. Yes she did, I saw her; I saw his little behind. She burned him!" (208).

This was a new knowledge to Valerian Street and it shattered him completely. He becomes more silent and passive after that. Margaret tried to defend her mistakes, explaining it as an outcome of her immaturity. Her young age and also her



inexperience and frustrations of becoming a mother in an unexpected time were given as explanations. Ondine felt relieved after this incident as it was fuming in her inside because she loved Michael and comforted him out of sympathy. Ondine explains the situation to Valerian:

“Your Son! Your precious Michael. When he was just a baby. A wee wee little bitty baby. Ondine started to cry. “I used to hold him and pet him. He was so scared.” [...] All the time scared. And he wanted her to stop. He wanted her to stop so bad. And every time she’d stop for a while, but the I’d see him curled up on his side, staring off. After a while- after a while he didn’t even cry. And she wants him home . . . for Christmas and apple pie. A little boy who she hurt so much he can’t even cry.” (quotes as in text) (209).

Thus Ondine establishes a kind of superiority over Margaret, the Principal Beauty, who always held a high position over the Blacks. Ondine believed herself as the authority of the kitchen at Isle and she never allowed anyone else to dominate over her. After all these issues, Margaret tries to befriend Ondine again, but she kept a distance from Margaret. Though an African American and a servant, Ondine never felt alienated in that house because, she considered it as her own place. But, at times she is reminded of her good old days at Baltimore, which she tries to impart to Jadine. Ondine trusted Jadine and believed that she will take care of them during their old age. She often consoles Sydney by keeping this belief.

Sydney and Ondine enjoyed more freedom than the Yardman and Mary at Street’s house. The real name of these servants are not known to anyone. Gideon, the Yardman and Thérèse , who is addressed as Mary, are introduced with their real

name only after the arrival of Son. They were not given any kind of humane consideration. So, even there was a division between the African Americans too. Even Sydney, Ondine and Jadine treated them as marginalized. They considered themselves superior to other Blacks as they had the freedom to work inside the home and to speak freely with the whites.

If Sydney and Ondine worried for the whites, their niece, Jadine sat with the same whites and enjoyed all kind of freedom there. Sydney and Ondine had no children and so they took the responsibility of Jadine, the child of Sydney's brother. But, Jadine has never felt that love and responsibility towards them. She was always ambitious and very selfish that she went after her dreams, not caring for other's wishes and dreams. Sydney and Ondine feel happy for Jadine's successful life as model. They felt proud of her and encouraged her to move forward. But, still reminds her of her duty being a woman and a daughter. When Jadine elopes with Son, her uncle and aunt feels depressed, as they wanted their niece to be well-known model in Paris. They feared that Son would force her to live in Eloe. However, when she returns to Isle, leaving Son, Ondine feels relieved. At the same time, she worries about the selfishness of Jadine and feared that she will not take care of them as her vision is self-centered and she consciously forgets her duties. Ondine tells Jadine:

Jadine, a girl has got to be a daughter first. She has to learn that. And if she never learns how to be a daughter, she can't learn never how to be a woman. I mean a real woman: a woman good enough for a child; good enough for a child; good enough for a man- good enough for the respect of other women.

[...] A daughter is a woman that cares about where she come from and takes care of them that took care of her (281).

Barbara Christian, in her essay “Contemporary Afro-American Women’s Fiction” explains the state of Jadine as:

Jadine in *Tar Baby* is portrayed as the woman who has taken a position so far removed from her community that she becomes a part of the West. In her search of self, she becomes selfish; in her desire for power, she loses essential part of herself. Thus, Morrison has moved full circle from Pecola, who is destroyed by her community, to Jadine, who destroys any relationship to community in herself (181).

Son takes her to Eloë in a hope that she will change herself and accept her lost ancestral identity when she experience the beauty and value of ethnic culture there. But, the contrary happened and the visit made their relation worse. They argued each other on different matters and their contradictions began to show up, which they concealed earlier out of love for each other. Jadine always thought herself an outsider in Eloë. She said Jadine: “I hate Eloë and Eloë hates me. Never was any feeling more mutual” (Morrison, 266). She stands opposite to the wish of Son and persuades him to settle down at some other place, where they can be free of the racial and cultural fetters. She feels him as one among the primitives and asks him to go for his studies. He initially agrees for that as he valued her presence in his life. But, again, when she put forth the idea of getting financial help from Valerian for that matter, Son rejects the idea and tells that he does not want a white person to meet his expenses. Morrison presents Son as a Black person, who is proud of his

identity and individuality. The novelist never allows him to feel inferior and depicts him stronger than the white character, Valerian. Son is very true to his inner self that he never wears a mask the modern hypocrite society. He wants to be his real self with all the innate features of an African man.

Son, like his character, is real in his love too. He loved Jadine unconditionally, giving all care and support for her. Beyond the physical likeness, there was a deep mental love for Jadine. That is revealed from the initial chapters itself. During the Christmas Eve, when Margaret and Ondine fought each other, Jadine was shocked and could not hold herself from breaking into tears. That time, Son took care of her and consoled her. He stood with her in all her needs. At the same time, he corrected her and asked her to be considerate to the other Blacks working for Valerian. Son was even ready to join for his studies for her satisfaction. But, while moving to the end of the novel, there happens a change in the character of Son. He becomes so attached to Jadine that he goes in search of her, while Jadine leaves him for her career. He meets Gideon and Thérèse there and they discourage his search for her, as they knew that she could not accept his native identity. From them he understands that she had already left that place.

Son feels depressed over that news because he had been living in a hope that she will return to him one day. He thinks of his days at New York:

He had waited in New York too long before coming here. But he had been convinced that she was not really gone as in “never coming back.” He thought before long she’d come banging in as she had done before. So he couldn’t leave the apartment except for short spells. She’d call and he would

not be there. She'd ring the bell and he would not be there. It took a week of silent pacing — of sleeplessness for him — to decide to go looking, and from what Gideon said it was a week ago that she was here; she must have left almost immediately (298).

This shows his concern for Jadine. He was optimistic until that day that she will return to him and they will live together. But, all his dreams and hopes ended with the words of Gideon and Thérèse. Gideon asks, "You sick man. Not just your head either. Why can't you let her go?" (298). Then Son thinks:

Let go the woman you had been looking for everywhere just because she was difficult? Because she had a temper, energy, ideas of her own and fought back? Let go a woman whose eyebrows were a study, whose face was enough to engage your attention all your life? Let go a woman who was not only a woman but a sound, all the music he had ever wanted to play, a world and a way of being in it? "I can't," he said (299).

Son considered her the music of his life, his world. He did not want her to let go from his life. He was ready to go in search of her to any part of the world. But, the male prejudices inside him comes out in some instances. Once, during the quarrel with Jadine, he accuses her for being a traitor, for surrendering her real identity for self-satisfaction and fame in the modern white world of beauty and luxury. Jadine, on the other side, believed that she is helping Son to escape from the primitive culture and thereby making him fit to live in a developed society. Morrison brings out the contradictions within them through her narrative. She writes:

She thought she was rescuing him from the night women who wanted him for themselves, wanted him feeling superior in a cradle, deferring to him; wanted her to settle for fertility rather than originality, nurturing instead of building. He thought he was rescuing her from Valerian, meaning *them*, the aliens, the people who in a mere three hundred years had killed a world millions of years old (269).

In spite of all these concerns, Son also holds some gender and racial prejudices. As mentioned above, he believed that the Whites are exploiting the Blacks and there should not be any kind of friendship between them. He says: "...white folks and black folks should not sit down and eat together.... They should work together sometimes, but they should not eat together or live together or sleep together. Do any of those personal things in life" (210). He believed that the relation between the two races won't last long as they had differences more than the similarities. He blamed Jadine for receiving aid from Valerian and thereby unintentionally becoming a subservient captive to Whites. He tells that she does not have an original dime or ancestry to claim upon as she had been never into her original self. She is addressed as a city breed girl, with faded black skin. The white consciousness of Jadine faces challenges from Son.

The contradiction of Son and Jadine grew up day by day and they repulsed each other even in between their passionate physical relationship. They thought of each one as: "One had a past, the other a future and each one bore the culture to save the race in his hands. Mama-spoiled black man, will you mature with me? Culture bearing black woman, whose culture are you bearing?" (269). Jadine thought the

ancient culture as immature one, which is still in its beginning stage. Son, on contrary, believed that Jadine does not belong to any culture, which is her basic flaw. They fought violently and silently on this matter. Finally, at a furious situation, Son burst out yelling at her:

The problem is me. Solve it. With me or without me, but solve it because it ain't going anywhere. You sweep me under the rug and your children will cut your throat. That fucker in Europe, the one you were thinking about marrying? Go have children. That should suit you. Then you can do exactly what you bitches have always done: take care of white folks' children. Feed, love and care for white people's children. That's what you are born for; that's what you have waited for all your life. So have that white man's baby, that's your job. You have been doing it for two hundred years, you can do it for two hundred more.... You turn little black babies into little white ones; you turn your black brothers into white brothers; you turn your men into white men and when a black woman treats me like what I am, what really I am, you say she's spoiling me (267-70).

The frustration and anger inside Son on Jadine's attitude to the black culture and women and her fondness for white culture is shown through these words. Son believed that the modern African American girls are after the luxuries of white world, betraying their real culture.

Toni Morrison explains many stereotypical images of race and gender in *Tar Baby*. Though she believed in the strength of both blacks and women, she portrays these images to let the readers know the kind of misrepresentations in the writings.

She manages to bring the characters out of these stereotyping and create an identity of their own. Jadine is one such character, who goes beyond the typecast African American woman character. Like many other African American girls, she too is obsessed with the beauty concept of Western culture. She wanted to be recognized by others based on her beauty and complexion. She has never been into a traumatic situation like rape or mental harassment, as many stereotypical characters. She moves through the dilemma of racial conflict with the arrival of Son. But, she succeeded in controlling her inner struggle by taking the decision of going back to Paris.

Morrison had a strong belief in the creative faculties of women. She considered women as a strong force within herself. This led to the development of black female expression in literature. In the United States, the contemporary feminist movement started with the white women's struggle with the existing patriarchal societal forces to gain equal opportunities for their development and existence. The black women felt that their concerns were not represented in the movement. The Black American women were concerned much about ethnic and racial discriminations. The twin aspect of racism and gender discrimination figures through the novels of Toni Morrison. She makes the repressed, anguished and the silent express their innermost thoughts and emotions (Goswami, 2013:181).

The women characters of Morrison held a high position in her novels. They regarded themselves with dignity and respect. Their hardships and resistance to overcome the racial and gender discrimination set an example for the future African



American women in America. The black women were depicted with nobility and high regard. In *Tar Baby*, the women at Eloë are depicted as strong characters with an individuality of their own. Jadine, though one among that community, thinks of the real Black women as illiterate, giving importance to their wifely competence and childbearing capacity. She feared to think of her as one among them and became anxious thinking of her future being wife to Son and living in Eloë as a Black woman.

Son serves as the spokesperson of Morrison to throw light to the qualities of African women. Whenever Jadine argues about the “equality, sexual equality, as though women were inferior. He could not understand that” (Morrison, 268). Morrison explains the power and potential of women through the memories of Son. Son could not understand Jadine’s argument that women are inferior people because he grew up among several native women, who were equally competent as men. They were excellent homemakers, at the same time capable of doing the things that were considered the monopoly of men. He remembers:

Cheyenne was driving a beat-up old truck at age nine, four years before he could even shift gears, and she could drop a pheasant like an Indian. His mother’s memory was kept alive by those who remembered how she roped horses when she was a girl. His grandmother built a cowshed with only Rosa to help. In fact the room Jadine slept in, Rosa built herself which was why it didn’t have any windows. Anybody who thought of women were inferior didn’t come out of north Florida (268).

Morrison might have deliberately included this narrative in the novel to contradict the images of native women described in the writings of mainstream White writers. She challenged the stereotypical representation of native women and exposed the different face of them. She describes every Black woman character in the novel as the epitome of black culture and civilization. Even the character of Thérèse, shows up the inner strength of a native woman. She was half blind, but knew everything happening in the Isle. She, along with Gideon provided food for Son, when he was hiding in the room of Margaret. She had a hatred for Americans and so wished that the Negro has come to kill Margaret. She even hated the American Negroes. Gideon, the Yardman worked for the White people with satisfaction. Though he had disliking for them, his anger did not last for hours. But Thérèse was not like that.

Unlike Thérèse whose hatreds were complex and passionate as exemplified by her refusal to speak to the American Negroes, and never even to acknowledge the presence of the white Americans in her world. To effect this she believed all she had to do was not look at them (or rather not look at them while they looked at her) so her face was always turned away when they addressed her and her glance. (when it was not on her work) went to a distant point on the horizon which she could not have seen if her life depended on it (111).

Thérèse was very curious to see Son as she feels him as the real black man, whom she missed in the place she lives. She tells the story of blind race and swamp women in Sein de Veilles to Son. She is unhappy with Ondine and Sydney, as they are more close to Whites. She calls Ondine machete-hair and devil out of her hatred towards

her. She and Gideon are driven out of Street's house as they had stolen apples kept for Christmas party. Her revenge for whites increases by this incident and when Son comes in search of Jadine to Thérèse and Gideon, Gideon discourages him, but Thérèse promises her help as she felt that Son will kill the people at Isle out of his anger. She is found blind by the end of the novel. She embodies the real Caribbean woman, who lives in poverty and works hard for livelihood.

Thérèse's blindness is narrated as something inherited as she belongs to the blind race of Africans, who were the descendants of some slaves. She held many false notions about America and she shares her doubt with Son and tries to know about the people and life in America. These prejudices are the main reason behind her aversion to Whites and American Negroes. Alma Estee, one of the relatives of Gideon and Thérèse stands contrast to Jadine. She longs for a wig from America so as to resemble like an American lady. According to Matus, Morrison has used this character as a warning against "the consumer values and American standards of beauty" (101). For Alma, Jadine is the model and she tries to be one like her. For that she asks Son to get a wig from America, which he forgets. But she believed that he will surely get it for her.

Later in the novel, when Jadine meets Alma at the airport in Dominique, she was wearing a wig, which was "so overwhelming one" (Morrison. 289) to understand her. Jadine was surprised hearing Alma, as she was very curious to know about Son and their relationship. She asks, "You took the chocolate eater away" (289). Jadine feels embarrassed hearing the questions of a girl, with whom she had never made a conversation before. Alma believed the words of Thérèse and asks

Jadine, whether she killed Son. Jadine gets angry over this and accuses Thérèse. But Alma defends Thérèse stating that “Thérèse has magic breasts. They still give milk (289). Alma considers Thérèse as the common mamma figure in native Africa, who cares and nurtures children, who bears big breasts that always contains milk to feed them. If Alma romanticizes this quality, Jadine makes fun of this. She is reminded of black night women at Eloë and tells that there is one right place for her. While leaving the airport she bids good bye to Alma calling her “Mary” and the girl whispers her actual name. The whispering of Alma Estée shows the change happening in the character of native Blacks. Thérèse has never tried to tell anyone her real name, even others called her Mary, which is a common name used to address the native black women, especially the descendants of slave race. But, as the generation changes, Alma, one among the younger generation, feels disgusted over this addressing and tries to communicate her real identity.

Even this small account of narration reveals the unchangeable character of Jadine. Even after her relation with Son and her visit to Eloë, where she gets a clear picture of native women, her attitude towards them does not change. She considers her own people inferior to her and treats them as savage and uncultured. Jadine is not influenced by anybody in her life while considering her identity. Her aunt and uncle tries to impart the qualities of a good child and a woman, though they did not want her to return to her native tradition and accept it. They extended their help and support on all her ventures. Even, when she elopes with Son, even if they worried over her future, did not curse her for her misdeed. Rather, prayed for her well-being.

Even when she returns leaving Son, the also they did not blame her. But, advices her to settle down and reminds of her duties, being a daughter to them.

To their surprise, Jadine denies their expectations unsympathetically. Her selfish and unemotional replies leave Sydney and Ondine speechless. They receive it with shocking embarrassment. There, Jadine makes them real orphans, leaving them behind and goes in search of her bright future. She deserts them as she deserted Son. Every native/black characters in the novel supportJadine to fulfill her dreams to become a complete self as a Native, according to their wish. But, on contrary, Jadine abandons all those supports and chooses her destiny, to become a White, which is her identity as per her inner thoughts.

Feminism and Racism in Morrison's novels are inextricably linked together. She deals with the black feminism in her novel which treats women as subalterns and worthless beings. Alienated from their selves, the female protagonist search for their identity in the miserable world through self-discovery and self-identification. They are critically opposed to the system of society which gives way to racial oppressions and relegates all women to a state of a binding vine. Toni Morrison's female characters opposes such structure of culture which wounds them with this dual oppression. Thus, her novels gives us a new perspective towards the problems pointed out by the post-colonial African authors. (Goswami, 2013:185)

But, *Tar baby* can be considered an exceptional one from her earlier novels. More than the pathos of race, this novel enters into a different level of perspective. If the character of PecolaBreedlove in *The Bluest Eye* and Sula in the novel

*Sula* symbolizes the disillusionment and the damaged psyche of black girl/woman in the white cultural context, Jadine in *Tar Baby* depicts another face of African American woman. The former ones had no self-esteem and they struggled to find a place for self-expression. There too, Pecola fails as the concept of white beauty haunts her strongly. On the other hand, Sula is more radical and believed in the independence of black woman, but caught within the white patriarchal society, where her identity is questioned. Jadine, instead, is portrayed as a character who enjoyed the freedom for self-expression and maintained a self-esteem of her own, until she gets into the complexities of race and ancestral past/tradition.

Morrison's way of staging Jadine's dilemma of identity and choice is to present her with a number of alternatives that question her authenticity and recall her to past traditions. Yet the alternatives presented are by no means unambiguous, and as we shall see, Jadine is never simply the erring child who needs to be reclaimed by an unquestionably sustaining set of past practices (Matus, 94).

Jadine never wanted to claim herself as one among the ancestral culture of Africa. Though not a conscious effort, she is being distanced from the tradition and culture of her ancestors. Thérèse says Son," Forget her. There is nothing in her parts for you. She has forgotten her ancient properties" (Morrison, 263). This forgotten ancient property had never been an issue for her during her life at Paris, until she meets the black lady in yellow dress. This was not a problem for her identity until the arrival of Son in her life. This was not a reason for her spatial dislocation until

she reaches Eloë. So, apart from her inner consciousness, it was many other external factors that contributed to her identity crisis and dilemma of double consciousness.

*Tar Baby* explores different aspects of identity crisis. Every character in this novel poses the question of the meaning of real self. From the White colonizers to the Black Yardman of the novel is in their plight for establishing their identity. The novel opens up a new realm of search for identity because, even the one whom the outside world considers a successful candy owner living in all luxury, Valerian Street, lives with complex mental state since he could not become a good husband and a caring father. He was the only heir of the big candy factory of his ancestors. He was the only male child of his generation in their house and out of happiness his uncles “named a candy after him, *Valerians*” (50). He took charge of the candy factory and went through many bitter experiences in professional and personal life. He was initially married to a girl who disliked him, which ended up in divorce. Later, he meets the Principal Beauty of Maine, Margaret and marries her. He buys an island in the Caribbean and builds a house there. He thought that he should retire from the duty at the age of sixty five that he could enjoy his old age life. So, he sells the candy factory to another business giant and moves to his new house at Caribbean island along with Margaret.

Valerian loved Michael, but did not express it. This created a chasm between the two. “When he knew for certain that Michael would always be a stranger to him, he built the green house as a place of controlled ever-flowering life to greet death in” (53). He considered his life as “normal and decent” (53). He believed himself as very generous, decent and humane in life. He spends his time in green house,

cleaning and nurturing new plants. Sydney helped him in his plantations to get rid of pests and ants. Sydney and Ondine, who had been working for Valerian for long years, were given freedom to talk freely to him. Sydney did laundry for Valerian and also took care of his day to day needs. Ondine cooked meals according to his wish, but insisted on healthy food as he had health problems.

Valerian's bigoted attitude is revealed through his attitude towards different black people working for him. Sydney and Ondine had been serving for him for many years and they were considered sincere workers. They were paid generously according to Valerian. On the other hand, he takes care of Jadine, the niece of Sydney and Ondine and pays for her education at prestigious university. He places her as a substitute for his son Michael. So, Jadine is provided all comforts, that she stays in a comfortable room and is allowed to enter in any part of the house, with freedom to have opinion about the matters discussed there. But, her uncle and aunt were not allowed to live inside and sit together with the owners. They had to live a room attached to kitchen. However, Valerian had an attitude change for the people belonging to same race. Further, it changes when he treats the native blacks of Caribbean island. He neglected Gideon and Thérèse and like every other characters, did not try to know their real names. His intolerance to forgive a small theft by these blacks shows his hatred towards them. At the same time, Son, another black man was given the privilege to reside in the guest room of his house by Valerian and invited him to dine together. The rationality behind this discrimination remains mysterious until the end of the novel.



Valerian's old age has made him mentally weaker. That is why Ondine shouts at him when he tells that he has expelled Yardman and Mary out of the house for stealing apple. She felt embarrassed that Valerian did not punish Son for stealing chocolates from their home while he was hiding at Margaret's room. A shift of power can be traced during this incident. Sydney and Ondine assume themselves as the authorities of domestic help at Street's house. The extermination of Gideon and Thérèse without informing them made them angry and retorts harshly. Valerian stood astonished when Sydney and Ondine spoke rudely against his decision. He says: "I am being questioned by these people, as if, as if I could be called into question!" (206). He continues: "All of a sudden I'm beholden to a cook for the welfare of two people she hated anyway?" (207).

The dispute within the white owner and black servants become visible at this moment. Valerian's superior white consciousness shows up the face immediately when his African American servants questioned him. The unhappiness being subservient domestic helpers inside Ondine and Sydney is revealed. Ondine says, "I may be cook, Mr. Street, I'm a person too (207). Valerian asks them to leave the job out of instantaneous anger. But, it loses its force, when ordered a second time. This shows his cowardice in taking a firm decision. This makes his life more miserable when it moved further. Even though he wanted to punish Margaret for her misbehavior to Michael, he could not do it. Every time Margaret comes near him, he is reminded of the cruelties she had done to their son. But he postpones his decision to hit her.

Moving to the end of the novel, Valerian is seen as a powerless character. There is always a tension between Valerian and Margaret. Morrison depicts the character of Margaret to show the alienation felt by the white women in the society. She is born to a middle class family, but gains the reputation being beautiful lady of Maine. She is renowned as the Principal Beauty, with whom Valerian falls in love. JayitaSengupta, in her essay “Resistance and Reconstruction: The Gender Conflict” states:

Born beautiful in a family of plain parents Margaret is ignored and despised and finally left alone to do what she will of her assets. She becomes the object of Valerian’s passion and nothing substantial is expected of her. Valerian’s social status prohibits her friendship with Ondine, the only person with whom she can relate her life. With her limited education she has hardly anything in common with Valerian’s society. So her alienation is also cultural alienation and she retaliates by hurting the thing she could have loved most, her child” (92-93).

Margaret represents the wounded psyche of white middle class women. She feels lonely in her life as she lacked the love of her husband. He neglected her and went in search of his enjoyment and success. Margaret had to spend her life within the house of Streets. She was not willing to move from Philadelphia to Caribbean Island. But, Valerian always reassured that they will one day go back to their place. She hated her life there and the outcome was her indifference for everyone residing there. Even though she discussed everything with Jadine, their relation was not strong. In fact, there was a hidden competition between the two, as they were jealous of each other.

One was the renowned beauty during her teenage and the other one, famous model of the present time. This caused a friction between them, though not evidently described in narration. Like that, she is in conflict with Ondine too. Ondine felt superior to Margaret as she is in charge of the whole household things. Not only that Ondine loved and cared Michael more than his biological mother Margaret. They were always in dispute, which bursts out during the Christmas Eve's eve. Though they quarreled each other, Margaret felt relieved over the matter that Ondine revealed the burden, which haunted her for many years. Since the incident created shock for Valerian, Margaret gradually takes the charge of the house.

Margaret is considered failure as a mother, as she hurt her own son. But, she explains her action as an outcome of her stressed mind. The contradiction is that she claimed that Michael loves her because she loved him. Valerian could not forgive her deed, but he is powerless to react against it. Margaret explained the cruelties she did to Michael and Valerian had no strength to hear it. Then she said, "You can. I have *done* it, lived with. You can hear it" (237). Narration continues: "She seemed strong to him. He was wasting away, filed to nothing, and she was stronger and stronger. Talking about it as though it were a case history, an operation, some surgery that had been performed on her that she had survived and she was describing it to him" (238).

Morrison has tried to bring changes in the character of Margaret by the end of the novel. She was seen under the control of Valerian, during the beginning of the novel. Her voice was not registered and her wishes were not taken into consideration. All the other characters felt that she has got some psychological

depression as she always waited for her son's return, which did not happen. When it is revealed that she felt "delicious" hurting the "sweet creamy flesh" of infant Michael, all felt her as mad mother (231). Valerian had a false concept about her. "All the years since, he thought she drank, was a not-so-secret alcoholic; the sleeping masks, the clumsiness, the beauty spa vacations, the withdrawals, the hard-to-wake mornings, the night crying, the irritability, the sloppy candy-kisses mother love" (231). This shows how ignorant Valerian was about Margaret and her character. He spent all time upon his personal matters, plantation and hearing music and did not acknowledge the presence of his wife. This control and neglect has made her sober and passive. Along with that, the secret about Michael haunted her badly. With the revelation of truth, she becomes relieved. "She rose at once; the wonderful relief of public humiliation, the solid security of the pillory, were upon her. Like the much-sought after, finally captured, strangler, she wore that look of harmony...." (235).

Margaret Street takes off the artificial appearance she has been wearing all these years to conceal her inner conflict. She washes away the colours from her hair and comes to her real self. She removes the heavy cosmetics and "now he could see the lines, the ones the make-up had shielded brilliantly" (239). She takes in charge of the things at L'Arbe de la Criox. She enters the kitchen and apologizes Ondine. By the end of the novel, Morrison brings her back to her real self, by making her stronger enough to control the whole house and there by asserting the need of freedom and care in the life of a woman. Ondine makes the remarkable comment on

the reason behind the misbehaviors of Margaret as, “He kept her stupid, kept her idle. That always spells danger” (279).

Morison, through the novel *Tar Baby*, emphasizes the fact that every person, either black or white, confronts identity issues, as each one wishes to be recognized in different ways. This lack of recognition and freedom of expression turns their life into dilemma. The whole narration itself addresses the dilemma of people after the big fight during the Christmas Eve’s evening.

L’Arbe de la Croix became a house of shadows. Couples locked into each other or away from each other, the murmurings of whose hearts rivaled the dreaming daisy trees. Jadine and Son off together plotting. Sydney and Ondine walking on glass shards, afraid, sullen. Snapping at one another one minute, soothing each other the next. Valerian stayed mostly in his room; the greenhouse remained untended, the mail unread. Silence pressed down on the dahlias and cyclamen- for there was no diet of music anymore (235).

Sydney and Ondine feared that they would be fired out of their job. However, gradually everything settles down. Margaret made the situation at ease by breaking her silence and entering into the day-to-day life with more energy than before. Valerian slipped away into a life of uncertainty. He could not take a decision over anything happening around him. Valerian wanted to talk to Michael, but he felt guilty that he had never taken care of him. He considered it as his innocence, that he knew nothing. But it is blamed as his irresponsibility.

He was guilty, therefore of innocence.... An innocent man is a sin before God. Inhuman and therefore unworthy. No man should live without absorbing the sins of his kind, the foul air of his innocence, even if it did wilt rows of angel trumpets and cause them to fall from the vines (243).

While Jadine and Son failed to understand each other, at Isle, Valerian and Margaret restore their relation with Sydney and Ondine. Sydney discourages Valerian's decision to go back to Philadelphia by giving him the assurance that: "We'll give you the best of care. Just like we always done" (287). Margaret and Ondine almost moves in a same path that their children abandoned them. Morrison explains the agony of a mother through the words of Margaret. Shesays: "We're both childless now, Ondine. And we're both stuck here. We should be friends. It's not too late" (241).But Ondine, in a way denies it, believing that they won't be able to get along with each other. Thus, the whole novel addresses the dilemmas in different characters and manages to reach a solution for some of their issues. There too the question of a complete solution for this problem remains unanswered. Because racism and sexism never end in a society, where the binaries are addressedwith disparity.

Oprah Winfrey, in an interview for Entertainment Tonight on August 5, 2013, told the interviewer Nancy O'Dell that she has been a victim of racism and sexism many times, even after she has become a known figure in America. She says,

True racism is being able to have power over somebody else. So that doesn't have happened to me in that way. It shows up to me in this way. Sometimes I'm in the situation where I'm the only African American person in the

hundred Americans, I can see in the energy of the people there, they...they don't sense that I should be holding one of those seats there. I can sense that. I cannot tell that is it racism or sexism. Because, often it is both. I think, the sexism thing is huge. The higher the ladder you climb it gets huge, because men are used to running things (0:59-1:40).

She also explains an incident happened in Zurich, where she faced racism in a shopping mall. The white sales girl was not ready to show her the vanity bag telling that she might not afford the price of that bag. The paradox was that the sales girl could not understand that the person standing in front of her is one of the millionaires of the world. This interview is the best example for the existing racism in the world, that too in America, where they had an African American as their President. So *Tar Baby* still holds its importance being a folktale and a novel that speaks of the issues of African Americans that has relevance even today.

The whole story is narrated with an air of mystery from the beginning itself. The foreword of the novel serves as an introductory note to the whole novel and the concept of tar baby in African folklore. Morrison states:

It was the image of tar, however, artfully shaped, black, disturbing, threatening yet inviting, that led me to African masks: ancient, alive, and breathing, their features exaggerated, their power mysterious. A blatant sculpture at the heart of the folktale became the bones of the narrative. All of these characters are themselves masks. And like African masks, the novel merged the primal and the contemporary, lore and reality. It was a blend

proved by heady, even dizzying, but I believed the plotline solid and familiar enough to withhold or contain a reader's vertigo (XIII).

The author, in a new form, retells the old folktale. As detailed earlier, Jadine is attributed the characteristics of tar baby, who attracted Son to her life. But, the whole narrative poses a dilemma in the reader as the story advances. Moving to the later part of the story, Son is depicted as the one who attracts Jadine to go back to the ancestral culture. As Judylyn S Ryan titled his essay, there is a "Contested Vision/Double Vision in *Tar Baby*". The vision or the perspective of Jadine has a dispute, which leads to her dilemma. Her assumption of her identity as a white is questioned by the perception of Son on her identity as a faded white/faded black. This double is the base of the narration. Morrison has used this double vision to narrate the whole story. "Double-vision represents an unchauvinistic comprehension of these contesting visions, as a prerequisite for mapping out a wholesome path of emergence — individually and collectively — from debilitating conflict and irresolution" (601).

The setting of the novel is also different from Morrison's other novels. Unlike other works, it is set in Caribbean Islands and to an extent; this reveals the whole difference in the theme of the novel too. If Morrison's other novel had the characters who struggled hard to survive in the white society, this novel depicted the characters, who lived confidently in their identity. Though there are conflicts in between many characters, they tried to resolve it themselves not moving into the trauma as experienced by many other postcolonial native people. The main conflict is between the different identity policies, and the power relations represented in it.



The novelist does not reveal the identity of the character until he discloses his name to the residents of L'Arbe de la Croix as William Green alias Son. There is an atmosphere of a mystery in the initial part of the narrative. "Although his skin blended well with the dark waters, he was careful not to lift his arms too high above the waves. He gained on the pier and was gratified that his shoes still knocked softly against his hips" (Morrison, 3). And the very beginning line "He believed he was safe" (3) shows something mysterious and strange about the character swimming across the sea and then entering a boat secretly.

He sidled along the deck, his back against the walls of the wheelhouse, and looked into its curved windows. No one was there, but he heard music from below and smelled food cooked with a heavy dose of curry. He had nothing in mind to say if anyone suddenly appeared. It was better not to plan, not have ready-made story because, however tight, prepared stories sounded most like a lie. The sex, weight, the demeanor of whomever he encountered would inform and determine his tale (5).

The narration further moves to the description of the house at Isle de Chevaliers and the green house built in it. The whole structure of the house gave the feeling of a luxurious hotel. Though Morrison has set the novel in a Caribbean Island, she has tried to create an environment of America. Mr. Valerian Street has bought the island to enjoy his retirement days. Since he did not want to miss his native place, he sets up the house in a modern way. He builds a greenhouse and tries to get plants from Philadelphia to grow there. Especially, hydrangeas, which he missed a lot. Morrison, in between the narration, gives the feeling that nothing is permanent in nature. Even

she describes the house as something temporary, which symbolically indicates the temporariness of the people and their relationships that is explained later through the story and life of different characters. The house is described as:

Except for the kitchen, which had a look of permanence, the rest of the house had a hotel feel about it— a kind of sooner or later leaving appearance: a painting or two hung in an all right place but none was actually stationed or properly lit; the really fine china was still boxed and waiting for a decision nobody was willing to make. It was hard to serve well in the tentativeness (12).

The readers can feel the difference in the style of narration when Morrison moves from Streets' house to Eloë. Eloë is represented as a place full of warmth and intimacy. If the people living in Isle live in conflict and dilemma, the inhabitants of Eloë enjoyed freedom and happiness in their life. Son felt complete when he is at Eloë. But Jadine, who was new to such an atmosphere could not find a space there. Thus, the places in the story also represent the inner consciousness of the characters.

There is a mixture of folktales in between the novel as described earlier. Along with the story of tar baby, Gideon, the native black man narrates some mythical stories to Son. He acts as the spokesperson of the novelist to explain the importance of oral and mythical stories in the life of Native people. He retells the tale of blind race to Son, which is described as "A fishermen's tale" (152), to explain the story of Thérèse, the native black woman, who is half-blind. It is the story of a race of blind people "who went blind the minute they saw Dominique" (152). He narrates the story like a fairy tale:

The island where the rich Americans lived is named for them, he said. Their ship foundered and sank with Frenchmen, horses and slaves aboard. The blinded slaves could not see how or where to swim so they were at mercy of the current and tide. They floated and trod water and ended up on that island along with the horses that had swum ashore. Some of them were partially blinded and were rescued later by the French, and returned to the Queen of France and indenture. The others, totally blind, hid. The ones who came back had children who, as they got on into the middle age, went blind too (152).

This story amused Son as he was hearing such an interesting myth for the first time.

Gideon told that those people learned to ride their horse through the forest even though they were blind. They never failed in their attempt of escaping from all sorts of hindrances before them. Not only that “they can’t stand for the sighted people to look at them without their permission. No telling what they’ll do if they know you saw them” (153).

The blind race gains its significance by the end of the novel. Son reaches the island in search of Jadine, where he meets Gideon and Thérèse. From there he needed to go to Isle de Chevaliers to get back his ladylove. Thérèse promises to help him and she takes him with her. By that time, Son has been losing his eyesight and he could not understand where she has been leading him. The novel ends with the picture of almost blind Son taken to the Sein de Villes by the Thérèse. The novel that started with mysterious narration, also ended with such a note. The blindness of Son adds a mystifying element to the whole story. “Each time his eyes opened they rested on the shadow of Marie Thérèse Foucault. Each time her shoulders and

profile grew darker– her outline fainter. Till finally he could barely make her out at all, he simply felt her feet against his (304).

The journey of Son starts and ends in the water. Water is always an imagery in the novels representing the life and death of human beings. Here too the survival of Son from the sea, swimming across the water marks the beginning of his story and also the story of the entire novel. The novel ends with the journey of Son in the boat led by Thérèse to Sein de Villes. Thérèse misguided him, as she does not want him to waste his life going after Jadine. She said: “You can choose now. You can get free of her. They are waiting in the hills for you. They are naked and they are blind too. I have seen them; their eyes have no color in them. But they gallop; they race those horses like angels all over the hills...” (305).

Morrison uses the image of tree-women in the swamp to give credibility to this story. Jadine feels the trees as women who held her tight when she was about to drown in the mossy floor. She felt that they advised her about the relation between a man and woman. They were excited to see Jadine first as they thought her as a runaway child, who had returned to them. But, they become arrogant when they learn that she is a girl trying to escape from them. They were represented as a group of people, who valued their identity as females, that too “exceptional femaleness” (183), which made them angry on Jadine. Morrison describes the tree women as those with highly dignified position.

... knowing as they did that the first world of the world had been built with their scared properties; that they alone could hold together the stones of pyramids and the rushes of Moses’s crib; knowing their steady consistency,

their pace of glaciers, their permanent embrace, they wondered at the girl's desperate struggle down below to be free, to be something other than they were (183).

Jadine somehow escapes from the swamp and when Son hears the whole incidents, he believed those women as swamp women in the story of Gideon. Son's belief in these kind of myths influences his future life. As detailed earlier, he reaches the swampland, guided by Thérèse, who feels Son as the real black soul, who can win the race in the hills. Thus Morrison ends the novel that race always attracts a person, if he/she is more inclined to it. Here, the character of Son finally reaches the blind race, who was the descendants of the former slaves. Here, the author romanticizes this race, with their vigour and chivalric nature. Though, initially, Son finds it difficult to move forward, he gradually makes it and walks steadily through the swampland.

First he crawled the rocks one by one, one by one, till his hands touched the shore and the nursing sound of the sea was behind him. He felt around, crawled off and then stood up. Breathing heavily, with his mouth open he took a few tentative steps. The pebbles made him stumble and so did the roots of the trees. He threw out his hands to guide and steady his going. By and by he walked steadier, now steadier. The mist lifted and the trees stepped back a bit as if to make the way easier for a certain kind of man. The he ran. Lickety-split. Looking neither to the left nor to the right. Lickety-split. Lickety-split. Lickety-lickety-lickety-split (306).

The survival technique of Son in his new environment shows his will power and self-confidence. The novel ends with an informal usage “lickety-split” that signifies the pace of the runner, meaning as fast as. Here it is used to describe the pace of Son, who runs in search of his new identity in the blind race. Thus, the novel ends with a new search, which implies that there is no end for the quest of man.

Thinking beyond the text may raise the question like; Whether Jadine will be able to abandon her African identity completely? Or, Doesn't she feel unfit to the white society, since it is becoming more racist day by day? etc. These things remain unanswered since the human behavior is unpredictable.

Jadine represents the new generation of society, who believes in the racial fluidity as she goes for her choice and choses to live in the society she loves.

Toni Morrison has explored in her novels the various aspects of African American existence. She is not among the loud protestors against the various oppressions of society nor she is trying to give any radical solutions to the problems of the black. But through her works she states strongly that the multiple oppression is not confined to one class or community, it is universal (Goswami,185).

DIVYA N. "MY WORLD, MY SPACE: CHARACTERISATION AND NARRATION IN SELECT POSTCOLONIAL FICTION". THESIS. DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, 2018.

## Chapter II

### ***In Search of April Raintree:* Reinventing the Lost Self in Native Métis World**

The history of every nation is important to know about its people, culture and literature. In his work *A Short History of Canada*, Desmond Morton writes: “History is another word for experience; it is not a form of prophecy. History tells Canadians only that they live in a tough old country, that they have a tradition of compromise, an aversion to violence, and a gift for survival” (344).

The history of Canada has evolved from a group of European colonies, inhabited by First Nations or Aboriginals, which developed into an officially bilingual multicultural federation. In Canada, the Aboriginal includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis They were the original inhabitants of Canada. Therefore, the history of Canada is mainly the history of these aboriginals. From the ancient times itself, they played a vital and indispensable role in founding and shaping Canada’s development. Situating at the Northern part of America, it had an extreme cold climate, surrounded by hills and rivers and full of prairies. The hard work of aboriginals helped Canada to change into today’s geographical configuration with favourable living condition.

People of Indian origin originally held and enjoyed the rights of using the areas of land in Canada. But, facts about aboriginals were recognised from an Aboriginal perspective by the Royal Proclamation of 1763. This provided the basis for some treaties and other means of establishing aboriginal land title. This created



many internal conflicts in Canada. But it was not that destructive like the internal wars in the USA. The aboriginal people in Canada, for the most part, cooperated peacefully as allies and partners in the act of founding the Canadian nation. They worked together for the cultural and economic survival. As allies, Aboriginal Nations also played a central role in the historical events leading to the formation of Canada. Quebec was regarded as a British Franco-Indian province in deference to the major groups shaping its destiny and future. During the wars with the USA, Indian forces held the balance of power in Canada and protected the country borders from encroachments from the South.

The Métis of the Northwest formed a Provisional Government under the leadership of Louis Riel in 1869 and laid the foundation for the creation of The Province Manitoba. It was the Métis who insisted on federation with Canada and resisted American annexation policies. The origin of Métis nation is rooted in the historical fabric of Canada. They evolved into a new and distinct aboriginal nation in the Canadian Northwest. They are the mixed-blood people, of Whites and indigenous people of Canada. Historically there are two groups of Métis – one English speaking and other French speaking.

Both originated during the fur trade of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The English and Scottish traders of the Hudson's Bay Company married women of indigenous nations, especially the Cree and Ojibwa. The descendants of these marriages lived in the Central and Eastern parts of Canada. They were Protestants and spoke English. The French traders also married the aboriginal women and thus formed French speaking, Roman Catholic Métis population. They

occupied the Montreal region and the Old Northwest part of Canada. These two groups were kept apart by the differences of religion, language and also by some commercial rivalries. Métis identity, as a separate nation began to take its form during conflicts with the Red River Colony, a farming community established on the Red River South of Lake Winnipeg in 1812.

The Métis were suspicious of the settlers, who were sponsored by the North West Company's archival, the Hudson's Bay Company. They controlled the local government and allotted land to the settlers. Both the Métis group feared that they will lose their land. Apart from that the settlers, who were not self-sufficient, began to control the trade of pemmican, a food product from bison meat. The trade was between Métis and the North West Company. So the control of trade made these people join together. The company and its Métis supporters understood it as a threat to them and the economy of Red River. Encouraged by the company, the Métis began to speak themselves as a nation and formed a militia under the leadership of Cuthbert Grant. The merger of two companies after a civil war in 1821 brought peace and the immigrant settlers were outnumbered by the Métis people. By 1840s the Métis settlement had emerged in many parts of Canada and in 1869, Hudson's Bay Company handed over all its territory to the newly formed Dominion of Canada.

Under the leadership of Louis Riel, the Métis formed a government and formed the Province of Manitoba in 1870. There was a second rebellion in which Riel was hanged for treason. They lost their political influence after this unsuccessful rebellion. It was only after the Great Depression period they arose again on the Canadian Prairies. In 1938 the government of Alberta established eight

Métis settlement in the Northern part of the province. With the passage of the time the distinction between the French Métis and English Métis lost its relevance. Now the Métis identity has been applied to the people of mixed indigenous-white descent in all provinces. They have acquired political and economic power in the present Canada with all aboriginal rights and freedom. To be Métis in contemporary Canada is a matter of self-identification with Métis history than that of racial problems.

“Métis” comes from the Latin word ‘miscere’, meaning, “to mix”. Another term for the Métis is derived from the Ojibwa (Indians) word “Wissakodewimmi” means half-burnt woodsman describing their lighter complexion in comparison to that of the full- blooded Indians ([http/Aboriginal people html](http://Aboriginal%20people.html)).

Canada instituted a legalized racial hierarchy through the Indian Act of 1870. In that, pure-blooded “Indians” were differentiated from ‘white’ Canadians and mixed-blooded persons. Consequently, the depiction of two Mites sisters in the novel and their journey in search of an identity and community demonstrates the ongoing effects of Canadian definitions of race, rights and citizenship. As a Métis Indian, Culleton describes the native life in all its primitive harshness. The Métis in the novel are the mixed-blood Indians, the Aboriginals in Canada. She portrays their life with reality and also speaks of prevalent gender and ethnic stereotypes.

Métis culture is a distinct culture because of the influence of varied aboriginal groups. A new language called Michif also emerged, which is a combination of French and Cree language. Métis were mainly fur traders, voyageurs, pioneers and middlemen who communicated between the First Nations people and the European settlers. But their contribution to the evolution of Canada

has often been underestimated by Canadian historians. Because of the prominence of European culture and racial discrimination, many of the Métis tried to hide their ethnicity.

“The cross cultural encounters between the European race and the indigenous people in Canada resulted in the Natives being ignored or considered sub-human in many literacy works, written by whites, they were exhibited as negative characters, who were the ferocious and savage enemies of the whites” (Pavithra, 134). During the 1960s Natives came forward with many movements and exposed the injustice and cruelties suffered by their people at the hands of the white settlers. They also tried to revive the tradition and culture of their ancestors.

The mid- seventies of the twentieth century when the *Literary History of Canada* (1976) spoke of the “historical absence of an Indian presence in Canadian Literature” it simultaneously ushered in a reactionary move that brought the native literature into the literary milieu of Canada. In the spring, in 1974, native publications have been so considerable that literary surveys quickly observed, “Indians are, this season, an even hotter topic than oil” (Kalaamani, 100).

The Native writers made a revolutionary move by entering into the literary field as they thought it necessary to tell the true history of the natives. Until that time, their life had been narrated from the perspective of non- Native or Euro- Canadian writers. Therefore, they revealed their history and life through the characters in their works. Those who were marginalised in the Euro- Canadian writings were brought

to the centre of narration. They were given a new face rather than the savage one as given in the non- native writings.

Primarily biographical, this aboriginal literature was the pulse of the post-colonial phase in Canada, a revisionist perspective, which had brought the “Outsider” inside, the peripheral to the centre-stage. The deregionalized deracinated aborigine was no longer the marginalized man and writers began to disenchant fellow natives about the white man’s superiority (Kalaamani, 100).

The Native writers made a conscious effort to include many things in their novels to recreate a new world of their own. Even though living in their own nation, these indigenous people lived in the status of reservation. They were considered marginalised and outcast, without giving any status in the society. This resulted in the identity crisis of many of the young Métis living in Canada. They were called “half-breeds”, meaning the people with a mixture of cultures of the First Nations and French Canadians. They were not given citizenship of Canada, instead viewed with many prejudices like, alcoholic, ungrateful, savage “gutter- creatures”. The mainstream Canadian writers also used these images when they wrote about the natives of Canada. Thus, these kind of malevolent native characters enriched the Euro-centric writings. With the development of Native writings, these stereotypical images began to diminish. The Aboriginal writers depicted the native characters, free of the above-mentioned prejudices.

Aboriginal people of Canada had only an oral literary tradition. With the invasion of Europeans, this literature changed from oral to written one. Thus the

literature because a weapon for Natives to fight against the oppression and alienation they felt under whites. Many arrived at strengthening the Natives readers' sense of identity thereby asserting their own unique identity. Collin Johnson points out that it is seeking to come to grips with and define a people, the roots of whose culture extend in an unbroken line far back in to a past in which English is recent intrusion. (Pavithra, 135)

Biography and autobiography form an integral part of Native writing. This is because; Native understood the need to write about their own place and people. This kind of aboriginal literature was the result of the postcolonial phase in Canada. The "other" or marginalized were brought to the central part of the writings. The natives of Canada were no longer considered as savage ones, but people whose cultural history was their nations indigenous past and heritage.

In the works of writers like Maria Campbell, Jeanette Armstrong or Beatrice Culleton, one can recognize the celebration of this Aboriginal heritage. However, these people struggle to find out their own identity apart from the one with which they are recognized by others. They were represented with 'native girl syndrome' in the Euro- Canadian works. These stereotyped native women can be found in majority of the works. The above-mentioned writers also wrote of such stereotypes, but with a change. Their characters also went through the syndrome like many native girls. They were forced to leave their parents and go to foster homes. They lived a pathetic life there under severe humiliation and cruelties. They were thrown out in wilderness, forcing them to prostitution to save themselves from poverty.

However, the characters of native writers never give up their hope. Their will power helps them to get over such situations and live as a native with all its pride.

Maria Campbell came into literary field with the publication of her semi-autobiographical memoir, *Half Breed* in 1973. This work is dedicated to “my Cheechum’s children”. In the introduction to this work she says, “I write this for all of you, to tell you what it is like to be a Half-breed woman in our country. I want to tell you about the joys and sorrows, the oppressing poverty, the frustrations and the dreams” (2). This book is about her Métis life, her childhood, relationship with her family, especially her grandmother, ‘Cheechum’, her life in English community and finally her successful life as a social worker for the upliftment of her own native people.

Maria Campbell’s *Halfbreed* opens up the life of a Métis in Canada. She writes about the racism and discrimination they felt in their native land. The Whites alienated them from the public sphere, considering them a race with no good qualities to acclaim. “There was an unwritten law: Our people never came in until after four and the Whites would then turn this town over to us. They never mixed with us” (Campbell, 110). She remembers that, all get together of Métis people ended up in quarrels, which made the outer world believe them to be savage and uncultured. At the same time, she gives the readers a picture of the close relationships the families maintained even in between such conflicts.

Maria’s work can be taken as an ethnographic writing as the story is weaved together with the history of Métis culture and people. She starts with the origin, history and the struggles of Métis in Canada. The work throws light upon the racial

discrimination and mental trauma of a Métis native living in such an adverse condition. She describes the callousness of whites that leads to the deterioration of many native families. She exemplifies it with her own experience. This is an account of her personal life, which starts with the history of the Métis:

In the 1860's Saskatchewan was part of what was called the Northwest Territories and was a land free of towns, barbed-wire fences and farm-houses. The Halfbreeds came here from Ontario and Manitoba to escape the prejudice and hate that comes with the opening of a new land [...] Here, for a few years they lived happily, but the 1870's and 1880's brought the settlers and the railroad, and just as happened in Ontario and Manitoba their way of life was again threatened. They were squatters with no title to the land they lived on.... They sent many petitions and resolutions to Ottawa but again, as in Ontario and Manitoba, Ottawa was not interested and continued to ignore their existence (3-4).

The history reveals the fact that Métis were treated as newcomers in their own native land. They fought for their existence under the leaders like Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. All the history books written earlier regarded their battle for freedom as failure. They were known as "Road Allowance people" (8) who lived on the road lines, without having a land of their own. Maria Campbell describes how the life of Métis was pulled into poverty and disillusionment. The people, who once lived proudly and happily, were degenerated into nothingness. They lived out of shame in a country, whose history is the history of Aboriginals. But, the invasion of settlers



made them feel alien in their own land without having strength to say a word against the invaders.

I only want to say: this is what it was like; this is what it is still like. I know that poverty is not ours alone. Your people have it too, but in those earlier days you at least had dreams, you had a tomorrow. My parents and I never shared any aspirations for a future. I never saw my father talk back to a white man unless he was drunk. I never saw him or any of our men walk with their heads held high before white people. However, when they were drunk they became aggressive and belligerent, and for a little while the whites would be afraid of them. Even these times were rare because often they drank too much and became pathetic, sick men. Crying about the past and fighting each other or going home to beat frightened wives (9).

This is common in the life of majority of the Métis families. The native Canadian writers thus used their works to have a look at the pathetic life of aboriginals along with the assertion of their presence in the history of Canada. If Maria is trying to tell about the life of a Métis in Canada, Beatrice Culleton tries to tell the life of a Métis who ignores her past and identity to live herself as a White in order to avoid humiliation being a Halfbreed.

Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree* published in 1983, is also an autobiographical work, but in the form of fiction. Her life story and experience are fictionalised through this work. She was born in St. Boniface, Manitoba as the youngest of four children of Louis and Mary Clara Mosionier. At the age of three, she became a ward of the Children's Aid Society of Winnipeg. She grew up in

several foster homes. This experience is incorporated in this story. The book is dedicated to Culleton's two elder sisters who committed suicide. The story is also about two Métis sisters, who loved each other. They grew up in foster homes and had to face many problems because of their Métis identity.

Beatrice Culleton's first novel, *In Search of April Raintree* is the story of Métis sisters, April and Cheryl Raintree, Separated from their parents and sent to different foster homes. Although separated they remained emotionally close. It is an autobiographical novel. Culleton also had to live in foster homes, that too Non-Native ones because of her parents alcoholism. Even though autobiographical, Culleton's in search of *In Search of April Raintree* is regarded as fiction. Explaining her reasons for writing the novel, Culleton stated: "These had been two suicides in my family, the rest of my family members were alcoholics, and we had to be reined in foster homes. I wanted to know why: was it because we were native." (232)

The novel portrays such two Métis sisters who undergo this traumatic situation to find out identify of their own. April and Cheryl's father, Henry Raintree, though of mixed blood is an Indian. Their mother Alice is half Irish and half Ojibway. April, like her mother has pale skin and seems like a white, while Cheryl has Indian looks black hair, brown eyes and brown skin. Like many Natives, their parents were also alcoholic addicts and this resulted in the separation of family and above all April and Cheryl. This separation marks the regaining of a life of mental turmoil. They are forced to do the works in foster homes and denied the rights of expression. They are called "half-breeds" and humiliated in many ways by the foster families and the children at school. April finds it difficult to adjust with this and tries

her best to become a white. Cheryl, too young to remember her parents drinking, romanticizes the past. She grows up as a label and becomes a Métis activist. April, after her education, marries a rich white man. She avoids Cheryl from seeing her and stops writing to her. Cheryl feels abandoned and betrayed. Cheryl opposes her sister and celebrates her lake telling that April will one day feel proud of being Métis

The ways chosen by both the sisters' finally move towards failure. April finally discovers that she cannot belong to the white society. She walks out of her husband's house and returns to find Cheryl. Cheryl, on the other hand, while delving deep into the studies of her ancestral roots discovers the unpleasant truth about the Métis people. She learns that her parents were liars, weaklings and drunkards. When she is confronted with the reality, her world crumbles. From there onwards, she begins to share the Métis identity by taking herself to drinking.

Cheryl, suffering from hypothermia, was hospitalized. April decides to nurse her and bring her back to health. When April goes to Cheryl's apartment, she is dragged into a car on the way and gang raped, mistaken for Cheryl. On the other side, Cheryl commits suicide like their mother. The gang rape and Cheryl's death fills April with pain and anger. She realizes her tragedy and accepts her Métis identity. She decides to live for "her people" and take care of Cheryl's son Henry Liberty Rain tree. She thus finds a family, which is as good as finding an ancestry, a heritage and an identity.

The novel ends giving a ray of hope in the life of April Rain tree. Though the novel is popular in Canada as well as other parts, it is rarely referred to as "Canadian literature". It is called "Native literature". This may be because of the simple style

and that it communicates and moves the readers with the experiences of two little Métis sisters and because it is critical of mainstream Canadian literature and culture.

April Raintree, who is twenty-four years when the novel begins, is the main character who undergoes the traumatic experience of double consciousness. Born in Métis culture, she grows up in non-native foster homes, which results in the dual conflict within her. Moreover, it is her younger sister Cheryl who brings out the contradiction within April's mind. Cheryl feels proud to be Métis and wishes to become a "whole Indian". Cheryl presents a book about Louis Riel, a Métis, to April for her birthday. But April doesn't like it. She says Riel had been a crazy half-breed and a rebel. She says: "[...] I had read about the Indians and the various methods of tortures they had put the missionaries through. No wonder they were known as savages. So, anything to do with Indians, I despised. I was supposed to be part Indian. I remember how relieved I was that no one in my class knew my heritage when we were going through that period in Canadian history" (Culleton, 43). April disliked to be addressed as half-breed or Indian.

Dion family, the first foster home of April, was very loving to her and she was taken care very well there. Her problems regarding the identity arise when she was taken to Mrs. DeRosier. There she was ill-treated and regarded as a servant. April was called "Grama squaw" and was accused of having relationship with two boys, Raymond and Gilbert.

Mrs. DeRosier scolds her and calls her half-breed. Once Maggie remarked: "...I have heard you half breeds were dirty but now I can see that it's true" (39). Like this, many stereotypical notions about the Métis people were used to insult

April and Cheryl. Cheryl reacted to this discrimination and April was separated from her, when she tries to support Cheryl. Thus undergoing all such issues April decides that when she leaves from the foster home, she will live just like a real white person, not poor Indian, but rich white. She even thinks of changing the spelling of “Raintree” to “Raintry”, so that it could pass for Irish. In many ways, she dreamed of inheriting a white culture, the one that ill-treats her now. Throughout her life, April takes utmost care to conceal her racial roots and assimilate into white culture.

Every moment she takes decision to become a white lady, the question came to her mind “What about Cheryl? How was I going to pass for a white person when I had a Métis sister? Especially when she was so proud of what she was?” (47). Thus Cheryl stands as a contradiction to April. Ideologically and practically Cheryl stands opposite to that of April. When April hides her Métis culture, Cheryl celebrates her race, empathized with her own people, shares their poverty and ill-health and finally ends her life imbibing all the characters of a real Métis- drunkard and entering into prostitution.

April marries Bob Radcliff, a rich white man, living in the mansion of her dreams. She believes that by possessing all comforts and luxury of a civilized society and marrying a white man, she could conceal her own culture and conform to the white outlook. Her life is at its best and successful. But on the contrary, this marriage only leads her to more problems. She is always reminded of her concealed Métis identity by her mother-in-law and the other friends and relatives of Bob. April later realizes that Bob married her not out of love, but only “to get back at his mother.” (116) April came to know that he was really in love with Heather, an

actress. This makes her angry. She understands that she cannot live as a “real white”.

Once she overhears her mother-in-law telling Heather:

Didn't you notice her sister? They are Indians [...] Well, not Indians but half-breeds, which is almost the same. And they are not half-sisters. They have the same father and the same mother. That's the trouble with mixed races [...] And I would simply dread being grandmother to a bunch of little half-breeds! (116). This makes her believe that she can never be a white lady. Failing to compromise with that kind of life, she walks out of Bob's house and returns to Cheryl.

Beatrice Culleton has pictured Cheryl more loveable than April. It is through Cheryl that April's conflict becomes more intensified. Cheryl criticizes April for getting into white culture. She says that April prostituted herself by marrying Bob. Cheryl has full confidence in her while she replies about her nationality as “Canadians”. (107)

When April returns from Bob's house and reaches Cheryl, she feels so comfortable and decides to change her name to “Raintree”. Cheryl consoles her and feels happy that April understood that the whole world is not for her.

The hospitalization of Cheryl, the gang rape on April and the suicide of Cheryl add to April's realization of her identity. April is gang raped as she is mistaken for Cheryl. She wonders how she is treated by the rapists, calling her “ungrateful squaw”. She realizes that her Métis identities easily noticed in spite of all her white looks. Meanwhile, Cheryl commits suicide and her death helps April to find out her roots. Cheryl's death signifies the struggle of a race for identity. April

says,” It was tragic that it had taken Cheryl’s death to bring me to accept my identity”. (207)

April’s life can be seen as a power struggle between the white colonizer and the colonized, the Native Métis. Finally, April decides to strive for a better tomorrow, for her sister and her son, Henry Liberty and for ‘her people’. April takes care of Henry, the survivor of the Raintree family. Thus, the novel offers a new hope for the ancient race.

Culleton, in an interview with Hartmut Lutz, says, “April was the main character because of her feelings and everything [...] So I had to build her in when she was very young and let her see what could be [...] at the end of the novel she comes full circle.” Culleton had always been neutral in her feelings about Native people. Therefore, she presented April and Cheryl as representatives, who go for different cultures. Finally makes April accept her Métis culture. April Raintree’s emotional development from a Métis to white and then again to Métis teaches her about her space in the white world of Canada. Majority of native Canadians lost the feeling of “being included” in their country because of the periodical changes happened in various Acts, Rights and Proclamations happened in the Canadian constitution on the rights of natives. They are never included as Canadians, but Indian or native Aboriginal or First Nations people, giving special rights. But, this was a kind of discrimination towards them. By giving special rights, they were marginalized from the mainstream Canadian society, even though they are the real people to enjoy all kinds of freedom, being the natives of Canada. The socio-politico-economic conditions accelerated the process of marginalization.

April Raintree openly admits that she feels shame being a Métis; rather she wants to be white. She marries a Whiteman Bob Radcliff and while moving to Toronto with her husband, she says Cheryl, “I can’t accept... I can’t accept being a Métis.... But, to me, being Métis means I’m one of the have-nots. And I want so much. I’m selfish. I know it, but that’s the way I am. I want what white society can give. Oh, Cheryl, I really believe that’s the only way for me to find happiness (Culleton, 101).

April always moved away from Cheryl as they had different views about their Native culture. Cheryl dreamt of a happy reunion with their lost parents. She romanticised her past, which is a distant memory for her. The novel is full of contradictions between April and Cheryl. April feels estranged from her Métis culture right from her childhood. She never wants to disclose her identity. For that, she avoids her contact with native people and befriends white people. Even her haste marriage to Bob is an outcome of her deliberate attempt to escape her native identity. She is relieved when she moves away from Cheryl after her marriage. At Toronto, she lives her dream though, though at times feels ashamed of her ignorance to behave in an elite white society. Barbara Radcliff, her mother-in-law takes her to shopping, social events, concerts and dinners. She teaches April all the social etiquettes, though they never become close enough to share their personal matters. Thus, because of her somewhat happy married life, April feels herself free of the burden of native Métis identity.

Again, fate plays the role of villain in the disguise of Heather Langdon, a famous actress, who was Bob’s earlier love. The discovery of Bob’s affair with



Heather gives a blow to April's life and she walks out of Bob's life. The reason was her Native identity. Michael Creal, explains in her essay "What Constitutes a Meaningful Life?": Identity Quest(ion)s in *In Search of April Raintree*":

What April learned in Toronto, however, was that her past could not really be left behind. It became evident that her mother-in-law did not want a grand child who was part Indian, and her husband, April discovered, was having an affair. The breakdown of her marriage and the satisfactory settlement meant she was free to return to Winnipeg and make a "fresh" start (253).

The "fresh" start helped her to attain an economic status and confidence to live independently. This did not stay long as she discovers the truth about Cheryl's life. April feels devastated when she hears, during the trial in the court, that Cheryl is a prostitute. This brings more conflict in the life of these sisters. April tries her best to accommodate Cheryl with her and takes her back to normal life, pleading her to stop taking alcohol. Cheryl reacts rudely telling that April has always been selfish to make her life comfortable; she had never tried to be with Cheryl during her time of need. Cheryl absconds and commits suicide jumping from the Louise Bridge. April realises that her life without Cheryl is "so empty, so cold" (Culleton, 194).

April reads the entries of Cheryl in her journal and understands how much Cheryl suffered for "their people", to bring them up into a new world of living and how much she is dejected learning the fact that Métis or any Aboriginals live passively accepting their fate. April also learns about their family, the suicide of their mother, the irresponsible character of their father and Cheryl's strained relation

with Mark, who forced her into alcoholism and prostitution. Michael Creal explains the ending of the novel as:

Cheryl's suicide note to April asked her to take care of her one-year-old son Henry Lee and help him find what his mother had longed for but never achieved. The novel ends on that note of hope. April finds herself as she unconsciously refers to "MY PEOPLE OUR PEOPLE." She realizes that a kind of denial has been lifted from her spirit and that she can now seek to live out her life with an identity that has continuity with her past, but is open to a future with new possibilities for herself and Henry Lee. It is not a romantic ending; there is every reason to believe that there will be struggle ahead, but good grounds to believe that April can now look at her life honestly and in a positive and hopeful way (254).

As detailed in the initial part, the life journey of April and Cheryl Raintree was not an easy process. They were born into a prejudiced world, where the space for an Aboriginal or Half-breed is at the mercy of the white Canadians. Even in the park, the white-skinned group of children ignored the brown-skinned Métis children and "held an upper hand in name-calling" (Culleton, 16). Though April could not understand the meaning of those names, she understood it as something not good. They were separated from the parents because of one of such prejudices that their parents are alcoholics, who cannot provide a better living condition for their children. So, they were taken away by Children's Aid people to different foster homes.

At the first foster home, April lived comfortably. Dions family treated her as one among them. They gave her First Holy Communion, took her to excursions and included her in all their activities. She started her schooling and got many friends at school. Mrs Dion was very loving that April never missed the love of her mother. Mrs Dion consoled her whenever she was sad and asked her to pray for her parents. But, this happiness did not last as Mrs Dion fell ill and she was unable to take care of family matters. Her whole destiny changed with the shifting of foster home from Dions to DeRosiers.

Janice Acoose, in her essay “Post Halfbreed: Indigenous Writers as Authors of their own Realities”, wrote: “Indigenous people have survived because their cultures and languages are deeply embedded in the land, that is, they are connected to the “Mother” as opposed to “non-Indigenous” peoples’ language and writings are rooted in a patriarchal hierarchy” (35). Native/ Indigenous writers attempted to bring their “Mother” back from the clutches of colonialism and its influence through life writings and ethnographic writings. They included autobiographical elements along with the fictional elements in their works to bring forth the indigenous elements.

Canadian Literature is written in more than one language because of its regional diversity and multicultural society. Canada is a “multicultural society” where people from different regions and ethno cultures live together, who retains their own distinctive heritage. Therefore, the mainstream writers were from these bilingual cultures. The 1980’s and 90’s have witnessed a remarkable flowering of Canadian Literature in all forms-poetry, drama and fiction. In his essays Dhawan has

quoted Margaret Atwood as: "...notwithstanding criticism from its dictators, Canadian literature has demonstrated its own existence". (9)

Canadian literature is rich with native writers because Canada is a country with many ethnic groups as Métis, Ojibways, Crees, and Acadians etc. Beatrice Culleton belongs to Métis group, so included in the native writers. Native writers of Canada felt neglected from the mainstream literary field during the early periods. This is because of two reasons. One, there were very few publications of Native Canadian Writings and secondly, the critical theories took a very narrow view of this literature. Agnes Grant, in her essay, *Contemporary Native Women's Voices in Literature*, says: "We use written European tradition and apply it to literature from all cultures... This written tradition often overlooks Natives because Natives are not generally considered a living, contributing factor in all facets of Canadian society" (124-125).

Native writers told their own stories, their culture and the beauty of their Native world through their writings. They emphasized the value of communal living, sharing mingling and oral traditions and their beliefs. Many native Canadians are writing, but their works are not publishing. Among the native women voices, important ones are that of Maria Campbell and Beatrice Culleton.

April Raintree and Cheryl Raintree, the two sisters had to withstand many cruelties from their foster homes and other people around them. Their identity affects them in two different ways. While Cheryl celebrates her Métis identity, April, on the other hand, tries to escape from her aboriginal culture. Here, April feels a kind of "double consciousness" within her mind as she tries to become a 'white'

concealing her actual identity. Cheryl said of April's attitude: "You're ashamed of me," she continued. "You're ashamed of what I do. If you were ever proud of me, you'd be proud to be a half-breed. Proud, I tell you" (178-179). Cheryl never wanted her sister to marry a white man. She dissuades April from that. But April decides to marry. While bidding farewell Cheryl says April, "... I decided that I was going to do what I could to turn the native image around so that one day you could be proud of being Métis.... you may be old and gray when the day does come, but it will come. I guarantee it" (102).

April gets divorced from Bob and comes back to Winnipeg, when she receives a call from Health Sciences Centre about the hospitalisation of Cheryl. She was highly intoxicated and unconscious. April could not believe the change that happened to Cheryl. April takes care of Cheryl back to health. Since there happened great attitudinal changes in both of them, they could not get along with each other for a long period. Cheryl violently attacks April for her feigned whiteness and makes her feel mentally weak for her denial of native identity. Thus, by the end of the novel, April feels dejected of her own attitude.

The gang rape changes the whole attitude of April. She wonders how she is mistaken for her sister. Until that time, she was of the belief that she resembles a white woman and Cheryl is the real Indian. But the whole episode shatters her confidence. When she understands that she could not escape from the hands of rapists, she decides to succumb passively. She thinks: "The night ahead could only be shameful, humiliating and even if they didn't physically wound me, it would be torturous. I braced myself mentally and physically, so I would be able to face up to

anything they did. I knew I wouldn't be able to stop them from abusing me physically" (128).

Even though she wins the trial and the rapists receive imprisonment, April realises that nothing can hide her real self. However, she does not accept it as her fate and considers it as a usual thing in the life of an Aboriginal. She has to undergo many tormenting situations inside the trial room, as she was asked to explain the rape story over and again. Agnes Grant in her essay "Abuse and Violence: April Raintree's Human Rights (if she had any)" explains the dehumanising treatment of Aboriginals:

The relentless barrage of dehumanizing treatment was exacerbated by the fact that April was Métis. Though neglect, violence, and abuse are strangers to no culture, Culleton dramatically portrays how Aboriginals, and especially Aboriginal women, are particularly vulnerable. Society in general has viewed this violence as a part of Aboriginal culture, and consequently, Aboriginal people often believe it themselves (245).

Relieving from the torture felt during the trial, she becomes closer with Roger Maddison, whom she had acquaintance before her marriage. They fell in a relationship, which becomes great mental support for her. She opens up to him:

I am not. It would be better to be a full- blooded Indian or full-blooded Caucasian. But being a half-breed, well, there's just nothing there. You can admire Indian people for what they once were. They had a distinct heritage, or is it culture? Anyway, you can see how much was taken from them. And

white people, well, they've convinced each other they are the superior race, and you can see they are responsible for the progress we have today. (142).

April's aversion for her culture brews up whenever she is asked to speak of her Métis identity. She was never able to find any goodness in that; she felt is as an incomplete one, which always led to struggles in the life of their people. Then Roger tells April, "I found it interesting. I find you interesting. I'm not going to tell you to be proud of what you are. Just don't be so ashamed" (143). This gives her a second thought on her identity. She becomes confident that a man, that too a non- Métis, has asked her to be proud of her identity and not to be ashamed of that. This friendship gives her an inspiration to move forward even when she is depressed hearing of Cheryl's suicide. Roger is the only male character in the novel who provides mental support for April at the time of crisis.

Culleton exposes the gender discrimination and prejudices in Canada. Every single matter regarding Métis is looked at with predetermination. These persisting pre-notions made their life more problematic, even though many of them managed to get out of these images. They are born into world where they are regarded as "other" with no individuality. The patriarchal system prevailing in their native society, along with these White prejudices resulted in a more complex consciousness of Native women. *In Search of April Raintree* develops through the prejudiced notions that affected the life of both April and Cheryl.

Cheryl's character initially moves in a progressive and progressive manner, giving the readers a hope that she will be a successful Métis, unlike the stereotypes in the mainstream Canadian works. She learns Canadian history and finds out the

importance of Métis in the evolution of Canada. After her studies, she joins Native Friendship Centre to work for her people. She believed that a social worker could help the people come out of their struggles. Even at school and later, in her life, she quarreled with those who denied her nationality as Canadian. She argued that the history written by others are lies and the real history of Canada is that of Aboriginals', who are now marginalised. She hated April for her feigned love for white culture.

Cheryl's life goes smoothly according to her wish until she meets her father. She feels depressed when she learns that her family's destiny was like a stereotype Native family as they were degenerated and had to live separately. Cheryl lost all her hope in the reunion of her family and for a moment, she thought it was better to be an orphan than being a child to such a father. The irresponsible and carefree nature of her father was a shock to her as she was very young to recollect his character in the past. In complete dejection, she calls her father a "gutter creature". She describes the meeting with her father:

I stand quietly, hiding the horror which is boiling inside of me. I hadn't known what to expect. But it wasn't this, this bent wasted human in front of me. My father! I am horrified and repulsed: by him; [...] All my dreams to rebuild the spirit of once proud nation are destroyed in this instant. I study the pitiful creature in front of me. My father! A gutter- creature! The imagination of my childhood has played a horrific rotten trick on me. All these years, until this very, moment, I envisioned him as a tall, straight, handsome man. In the olden days, he would have been a warrior if he had



been all Indian. I had made something out of him that he wasn't, never was. Now I just want to turn and run away, pretend this isn't happening, that I had never laid eyes on him. Pretend I was an orphan. I should have listened to April (197-98).

This shattered all her confidence on being a proud native, since she realized the truth that all the romantic past, she believed of her family was only deceiving imaginations. She could not control her disgust and hatred towards her Métis culture. She, for the first time ever in her life, felt ashamed of her own, her identity and her culture. For a moment, she thought that April had been right, when she asked Cheryl to forget about parents and live like orphans. This encounter with reality changes the whole life of Cheryl. It was even worse for her to accept the truth that her mother committed suicide because of the mental turmoil she had to encounter with the separation of her daughters, April and Cheryl and the death of the younger one, Anna. Cheryl was unable to withstand the shock of the realities she heard from her father. "This revelation was shattering for Cheryl and eventually led herself into a life of alcoholism and prostitution" (Creal, 254).

Cheryl, though she appeared to be a strong character, could not confront the reality in its fullness. She felt that her parents were cheating April and herself by consoling them during and after separation. She was optimistic of their reunion. These kind of strong beliefs made her more depressed when she realised the truth. She did not expect such a blow to her confidence over her family. Though April indirectly warned Cheryl of their parents as irresponsible, Cheryl thought it as an outcome of April's love to be white. Many times, during her childhood in foster

homes and later in her adulthood itself, Cheryl has been hearing of their parents as irresponsible Métis. But, she thought it all lies, fabricated to belittle the aboriginal people.

Every time Cheryl enquired of the parents to her sister, April tried to avoid it. However, Cheryl continued her search and the result was shattering for her as detailed above. It was the beginning of her downfall. The mental torture she had from her dad and her husband, Mark made her life more miserable. She had to sacrifice herself for earning money for both the males. Her dad came in search of her whenever he is out of money for buying alcohol. Mark, on the other hand, persuaded her to prostitution telling that he is doing all things for their better living. He was a professional pimp that he did not consider that Cheryl is his wife and the mother of his child. She was beaten up cruelly by Mark whenever she ignored his words. Thus, Cheryl's life went on like a normal Métis woman, who is under the control of the patriarchal dominant society. He has fallen from the image of a proud Métis to a common Native woman, who struggled hard under the male domination and endured everything silently, though at times violently, as her destiny.

“Because identity is policed from both outside and inside a minority group, temptation for Aboriginal people to privilege so-called purity is at least as great as the temptation for non- Aboriginal people.... April doesn't like either side of the binary she sees herself as caught between” (Fee, 272). April's life is being caught in this dilemma from the childhood onwards. She is displaced from her native community as she is left with white foster parents. She admired the clean and well-dressed white children, than the dirty and shabby Indian children. She longed to play

with them and befriend them. She did not reveal her identity in her school and with friends. She believed that her native people never tried to get out of the stereotypical behaviours; that whites continued to oppress the natives and treated them as uncultured people, which they internalised because of earlier experiences. Thus, in many ways, the natives had a feeling of displacement from the world they lived.

The characters around April and Cheryl are also responsible for their miseries. From their parents to every single person they encountered contributed to their inner struggle. April could not tolerate the abuses from the white people, as she was older enough to understand the meaning of the abusive words that they used to address April and Cheryl in their foster homes. Though there were people like Dions, MacAdams and Steindalls, who supported and cared for the girls, there were lot many people, who purposely belittled them for their native identity. Their life at DeRosiers is the best example for this. Even the children of DeRosiers harassed the sisters and tried to hurt them on many occasions. Initially April was alone at their home and she was mistreated by the kids at home. Later, when Cheryl joined her, the kids started picking on them whenever they got a chance.

The sisters were alienated from other children, who never wasted a chance to make fun of them for being half-breeds. April confronted many such awkward moment, while she is at DeRosiers'. Maggie and Ricky, children of DeRosiers taunted April for having drunkard parents, who deserted their children and avoided them without coming to see them during the family meetings. Maggie had a revengeful kind of attitude towards April that she fabricated stories about April and the other two foster boys, Raymond and Gilbert. April had a friend, Jennifer, who

accepted her friendship even after knowing her native identity. But, she too mistook April hearing the words of Maggie. Even the teachers at her school believed these stories and avoided her. Later, when the truth is revealed Jennifer and her teachers console and support April and ask her to complaint the misbehavior of the foster mother to the social workers. Jennifer helps April to post her letters to Cheryl and motivates her to participate in the story writing competition to reveal her real life experiences in the form of story. This marks a change in April's life.

The story made an impact and April's English teacher helps her to inform the cruelties at the foster home to the Welfare people. Thus, she escapes from the physical and mental tortures at foster homes. But, a world of discrimination was waiting for her outside too. Her marriage and divorce; her rape and trial; suicide of Cheryl and the revelation of truth about their parents etc. are the examples for the discrimination she faced being a native and a woman in Canadian society.

N. Ramachandran Nair, in his essay "The Politics of Gender in *I Am Woman and My Story*, tells that:

Asian women and Native Canadian women have been "doubly colonised" over the centuries by colonialism/immigration and Euro-American centered male colonization. Gender Prejudices block the growth of average Indian women and Native Canadian women. There is an urgent need to break the vicious circle of gender in both cases. De/colonizing the subject becomes a necessity (67).

The serious issue of gender discrimination persists in the novel *In Search of April*

*Raintretoo*. The native women were represented as stereotypes in the mainstream writings. They were denied of the basic rights enjoyed by the male and female of white society. Even the male of native community considered them as their property to handle with all freedom and liberty. The concept of girl child as a burden is the first one to be washed off from the society. Here, Culleton takes the challenge of representing two female characters as protagonists. It is their fight to gain an identity of their own in an alien world, where they are treated with no respect. The violence and abuses made their life pathetic. They had only a few beautiful memories to nourish in their life. They hated the past and feared the future because of their experiences.

Culleton had succeeded in portraying the miserable life of Native women in Canada, giving a glimpse of all kinds of violence and torments they confront. The violation of human rights can be seen in many instances. The denial of freedom to express oneself is one of the major issues discussed in the novel. As a native girl, April is deprived of many freedoms that she really ought to enjoy. The discrimination based on the race, colour and gender prevailing in the Canadian society is revealed through the story. Even there were claims that there are no such issues, there are examples, which prove that it cannot be completely wiped away from the mind of people. Both the men and women of either the White or the Native society itself were behind these kind of discriminations.

The story narrated by April gives a clear picture of the strained relationship between her parents. She once saw her mother sleeping with another man, not her father. On another occasion, her mother quarreled with some other Native woman,

while her father sat silently enjoying the whole episode. April felt embarrassed over such happenings, as she could not understand the meaning of the things going around her. These two instances show the irresponsible character of her father to control the family matters. Her mother, though an educated woman, could not lead a peaceful life because of many issues related to Métis life. Along with her husband's reckless character, she had many physical ailments, which were given no care. She could not fulfil her duty of motherhood, as her children were taken away from her. Even her suicide can be read as the outcome of all these issues. Henry Raintree, father of April and Cheryl never bothered to bring back happiness in their life. He told Cheryl, "She was not happy with her life. Once she lost you girls and Anna died, she knew she would never get you girls back again. Those visits were hardest on her" (199). This shows the mental trauma she had undergone during her lifetime. All these happened to her only because she was a native Métis woman, with no freedom of her own; even to nurture her own children. Like Alice, many native women lost their children because of the interference of Welfare societies.

The Children's Aid Office took the native children to foster homes to keep them healthy, good and provided all facilities for their education. The life of children at many foster homes was very comfortable. Culleton exemplifies it with Dions, MacAdams and Steindalls. However, there was hell like places as DeRosiers too. There, the children were used to do the house chores and treated badly. Mrs DeRosier's instruction to April is an example for this: "... You will get up at six, go to the hen house, and bring back the eggs. While I prepare breakfast, you will wash the eggs. After breakfast, you will do the dishes. After school, you'll have more

chores to do, then you will help me prepare supper. After you do the supper dishes, you will go to your room and stay there” (37). April could not complete these assigned works sometimes, as she was too young to do it. Then, she had to hear abusive words and face cruel punishments.

As argued by many postcolonial female writers, it was White women, who tortured native women, than the male counterparts. At DeRosier’s house, there were two native boys, Raymond and Gilbert. They always followed Mr DeRosier and helped him in farming and other works. Though their sufferings are not given importance, the narrative gives the readers the impression that they were not that much ill-treated as April or Cheryl. Not only that, Mr DeRosier was humane unlike his wife. When the children harassed April and Cheryl, Mrs DeRosier supported them and scolded the sisters for their misbehaviour. On the other hand, Mr DeRosier, who saw the real incident, retorted: “They are worse than liars. What they did morning could have gotten Cheryl killed. What the hell’s the matter with you? You three make me sick!” (58). Like this, they have to face many discrimination at foster homes.

April had to go through many such embarrassing situations both at foster homes and at school. She is made fun of her native identity by her schoolmates. She felt humiliated every time and sat silently with her down. She never reacted to any such comments. At times, she felt like running away from all and keep herself aloof in a lonely place. This passive endurance affected her behavioural pattern. Since she tried to control her emotions during her life at DeRosier’s house, she never over reacted to any situations further in her life. When reunited with Cheryl at Steindalls,

April kept silent and sat reserved without showing excitement as Cheryl. Then Cheryl asked whether April is not happy to be with her. She replied:

I was Cheryl, really. It's just that I'm used to keeping the way I feel inside of me. I've been doing that for practically five years now. Maybe even longer. I don't know. It just seems it's safer not to show your feelings. Like, if Steindalls were mean people, or even Mr. Wendell, and they saw that we liked being together, they might try and keep us apart. Remember, DeRosier did that (82).

Culleton has given April a shade of a common native girl, with her submissive and docile character. Rarely, she reacted to the oppressions. The discrimination based on race and gender haunted April always. If it was race that caused her identity problem during childhood days, gender was the reason when she grew up. She was insulted calling her names, especially Gramma Squaw, which followed her throughout the novel. Even the students and teachers at her school believed all kind of made up stories by Maggie and treated her as a flirt, who even tried to seduce Mr. DeRosier. The image of a licentious native woman, who is always after the white men for sexual satisfaction, is reflected in the narrative. The novelist tries to bring out the stereotyped attitude of white people for the native woman. Though April is young, she is also not spared from these false notions. These kind of "horrible humours" (75) disheartened April as she never thought of becoming bad in any sense and even kept away from the company of boys. But, she could not escape from the clutches of prejudiced humans.



Nobody tried to understand the problems of April and Cheryl, rather accused them of their misconduct as a part of their innate culture. Even the social workers considered them as racial stereotypes believing the words of Mrs DeRosier. Once, when they tried to run away from the foster home, they were caught and separated again, warning them of the wrong direction they are moving. Mrs Semple, though a kind-hearted social worker, also had these racial and gender prejudices over native girls. She speaks of “native girl” syndrome, which is considered a common notion about native girls. Culleton, through Mrs Semple, speaks of the stereotypical picture of a native girl, which is often seen in all novels and memoirs of Métis or any other Aboriginal female character. She explains:

[...] It starts out with the fighting, the running away, the lies. Next come the accusations that everyone in the world is against you. There are the sullen, uncooperative silences, the feeling sorry for yourselves. And when you go on your own, you get pregnant right away, or you can't find or keep jobs. So you'll start with alcohol and drugs. From there, you get into shoplifting and prostitution, and in and out of jails. You'll live with men who abuse you. And goes on. You'll end up like your parents, living off society (62).

These kind of stereotyped images are often given to a girl or woman in native society. Even Maria Campbell speaks of such a life in her *Halfbreed*, though she tried to use it as a criticism against the white audience, who is primarily responsible for all these situations. She was the first one to raise the real Métis voice, describing the challenging life of a Native woman in a white Canadian society. However, she successfully places the character of her Cheechum, her great grandmother, to reveal

the real power of a Native woman, who lived fearlessly, giving priority to her own identity and culture. She never gives up herself until her death at an age of 109. Campbell too portrays the stereotyped version of female protagonist, though she finally moves forward striving hard to be a real Métis. Culleton too uses this typecast image to reveal the life of Métis in Canada.

Cheryl never wanted to be a typical native girl falling into alcoholism and prostitution. Her knowledge about the real Métis, which she reads from the historical books and autobiographies of Métis people, transforms her totally. She wished to work for the welfare of Native people. For that, she joins University to learn social work. From there, she works for Friendship Centre, thinking that she could help the Native people to come out of their depressed state. In between April fell in relation with Jerry McCallister, one of the professors at Cheryl's college. He proposed her and was ready to marry. But, even before that, he wanted to have physical relation with April, which she denies. He considered April as childish to keep distance from him. She believed in the chastity of woman, that she did not want to surrender herself to any one before marriage. However, she decides to get him back, when they broke up. She decided to tell: "I was wrong and you were right, so I'm yours for the taking" (96).

April was shocked learning that Jerry is a married man and he approached her only out of his false notion about Native girls that they are easily approachable. Though he tried to explain that he loved her sincerely and that he is about to divorce his wife for marrying April. This was a huge blow to April's confidence being a woman. She hated to go out on dates for next few months. Along with this, Cheryl's

friends, whom April called “strays” (97) irritated her during these days. It was after that she met Bob Radcliff, who changed her whole life.

Cheryl, from her childhood itself hated white people for their superiority and hypocrisy. But, during her college days she started a relationship with Grath Tyndall, a white student at university. April was happy that Cheryl’s attitude might change with this relation. April knew that Cheryl is beautiful enough to be wooed by any men. “I wasn’t surprised she could attract the opposite sex because she was very beautiful. She was also outgoing in her crowd, and stubborn when she made up her mind about anything.... He seemed to care about her more than she did about him.... If anyone could change a woman’s mind about things, it was a man” (93).

However, the relation did not last long as Cheryl understood the fake love of Grath. She explained the incident to April like this:

We were walking down Portage, and Grath saw some of his friends coming towards us. He told me to keep walking, and he’d catch up. I pretended that I was window shopping so I could listen to them. You know what he did? You know what that creep did? He left me there and went for a beer with them. He didn’t want them to know about me. That goddamned hypocrite. He’s ashamed of me (94).

Thus, the first love of both sisters ended in failure. This affected them in different ways. After this incident, Cheryl never allowed anyone to enter her life, especially white men. But, April felt that it all happened to her because of her native identity and she moved more and more away from her culture. Whenever she went out to

dine with Cheryl and her Métis friend Nancy, she felt embarrassed. She does not want her to be identified as one among native people. Thus, she stood away from their company and gradually find a space of her own in that place. Cheryl enters into a life she wished, while April moves to fulfill her dream to be a White by marrying Bob Radcliff.

The discrimination continued even after her marriage. She thought Bob married her out of love for her. She believed it as a new chapter in her life, without any more oppression and dilemma as she went through earlier in her life. Initially, it all went well and good in between the couples. She was given her space and enjoyed freedom that she never had before. But she felt loneliness as she had nothing fruitful to do at Bob's house. "I had nothing. I had everything I ever wanted, yet I had nothing" (112). Not only that she felt she had reached another foster home because of "Barbara Radcliff's disapproval" (103) and she felt like calling her "Mother Superior" (103). There was always a hidden conflict between the two. They never came closer, though they went for shopping and party together.

Mother Radcliff and Bob were not in good relation when April reached their home. April could not understand the reason behind it until the arrival of Heather Langdon. April started feeling doubt on the friendship between Bob and Heather. Mother Radcliff too spent more time with her snobbish friends. April's feeling of loneliness increased. Cheryl's visit in between, during Christmas, reinforced the disgust and disapproval of Mother Radcliff towards her. She ordered April not to take Cheryl to the dinners with them. But, to April's surprise she was asked to introduce Cheryl to Heather during the party at their home. There were many

meaningful exchanges of look and gestures between the guests and Mother Radcliff when Cheryl was introduced. April could not understand the meaning at that time; however, she understands it when she overhears the remarks of Bob's mother on their race and identity as half-breed.

April's suspicion on Bob's relation with Heather intensifies and the chasm between them deepens. "I came to hate how Heather and Bob could laugh easily and suspicion set in and I began nagging Bob in private. Meaningful conversation between us had all but disappeared. I guess all he could see was my totally negative side, and he couldn't see reason for it" (114). The relation between the two ended when she heard from Mother Radcliff, "The only reason I can think of why Bob married her after knowing what she was, was simply to get back to me" (116). For that Heather replies: "... Bob's a husband with guilty conscience. He'll realize the best thing for April is divorce" (116). April gets humiliated when she learns that they have considered her a woman, who can be easily avoided giving a large settlement. She walks away from the life of Bob. The short period of life with Bob at his house and her small acquaintances with white people forces her to believe that the white people are hypocrites and they are after two things: money and power. She is disillusioned about her eastern glorification of whiteness.

Later, April's return to Winnipeg and the brutal rape she faces exposes the atrocities the native women undergo in a White Canadian society. The confidence in her receives a great backlash with this incident. She understands that there is something common in her and Cheryl, which made rapists mistook her for her sister. The suicide of Cheryl and the realization of Cheryl's tragic life from her diaries

make April mentally stronger to fight against the social and racial discrimination faced by Native people in Canada. She believed that alcoholism is the main foe and it should be completely avoided. This alcohol was the reason for the degeneration of April's parents and then the life of her loving little sister Cheryl. Thus, she decides to work for her people and as a first step, she breaks all the bottles of alcohol. Through Henry Liberty Raintree, April hopes to nurture a new Native generation free from the stereotypical Native representations.

Culleton, along with the story of April and Cheryl, gives glimpses of the life of many native girls, moving through the trauma caused by their native identity. One such character is Nancy. Her life is same as that of many other native girls. April felt aversion rather than sympathy for such girls, as she thought it as the syndrome of all Métis family. Alcoholism was behind the problems of her family. The story of Nancy goes like this:

Nancy had been raped by her drunken father. Cheryl remarked that people called that incest, but Nancy insisted it was rape. Everyone in Nancy's family drank, even the younger kids. Or the new rage was sniffing glue. Both Nancy and her mother had prostituted themselves. Sometimes for money, sometimes for a cheap bottle of wine. Nancy was like a wilted flower. She even had a defeatist look to her.... I was shocked when Cheryl told me that Nancy was only seventeen. She looked at least twenty-five (97).

This is the common condition of majority of the Métis families. They continued it as something traditional and never thought of helping themselves to get out of it. Like April and Cheryl, some children are taken away by Welfare society and such kids

alone lives in a better condition. For some, it remained only a temporary relief as it ended when they are out of foster care. Some like April struggles not to fall into the native girl syndrome. But, through the novel, Culleton has tried to emphasize the fact that, this degenerating condition, which is represented as stereotypical one, is something that is forced upon the natives. Even if they wanted to get out of this, the society does not allow them to lead a normal life.

Cheryl is forced into prostitution to meet the needs of her partner and April is raped as she is mistaken for Cheryl. This happens for many of the native women in their life. They never go beyond such a life according to their wish. Many a time, their destiny falls like that. The society and the circumstances push them into the life of gutter creatures as explained in the novel. So, Culleton's portrayal of such native people can be considered a conscious effort to explain the actual reasons behind this stereotyped characters. Thereby voicing a protest against the cruelties done to native people and also to claim a space for native people in the multicultural Canadian society.

The narration of the story is distinct as it combines the story of both April and Cheryl at the same time. "Although April is ostensibly the main character of the novel, in that hers is the first-person perspective used to tell the story, she is not the sole focus. Culleton has crafted a unique doubled subject in the two sisters April and Cheryl; with the exception of the period that April spends in Toronto, Cheryl's story is presented alongside of April's" (Kardynal, 55). Even though the title character, April's story cannot be told without Cheryl, as both of them stands contradictory to each other in their life. However, at one point Culleton makes the readers aware of

the fact that they are identical, no matter Cheryl is more Métis and April, White in their appearance.

Culleton uses the first person narrative to tell the story, which is “a primary tactic used against the dominant discourse” (Fee, 171). April Raintree narrates the story as a memory. She is twenty-four when the novel begins; then her memory goes back to her childhood days. She narrates the whole thing with the innocence of a child that she is unaware of the unusual things happening in her home. She was made believe that the “medicine” which tasted “purely awful” (Culleton, 15) is taken by her parents and other elders to treat TB. She could never understand why the people laughed and enjoyed being TB patients and celebrated drinking medicines. She “wondered about the mysterious medicine” (31), until she understands the truth. The medicine is alcohol, which destroys many of the Métis family. Culleton narrates the incidents with the embarrassment of a child, who witnessed all such bizarre situations.

When situation worsened April and Cheryl was taken away from their parents by the Welfare people. The separation is the most heart-rending scene in the novels. Since it is narrated from the side of a six-year-old child, it moves the readers. No explanation could relieve that pain. Culleton’s attempt to narrate it from the perspective of a little girl can be considered a conscious attempt to create a sympathetic note.

Frantically, I screamed, “Mommy, please don’t make us go. Please, Mommy. We want to stay with you. Please don’t make us go. Oh, Mom, don’t!”  
[...] My mother should have fought with her life to keep us with her. Instead,



she handed us over. It didn't make any sense to me. [...] We both were crying and ignored the soothing voices from the strangers in front (18).

Every Métis child, who is taken to the foster homes, feels empathy with April as they too might have went through such situations. That may be the reason why the novel is popular as Native literature rather than Canadian literature.

April's dilemma over her life thus starts from this separation. The narration moves in a linear way describing the life of April and Cheryl in different foster homes, their schooling and bitter experiences of humiliation and alienation, being half-breeds.

*In Search of April Raintree* is not a seamless, unitary narrative. At the simplest level, it contains two voices, April as narrator and the interpolated voice of her sister Cheryl. The latter voice is represented in a variety of discourses; the stumbling (and unlikely) letters of a pre-schooler; subsequent letters; academic speeches and essays on Métis history; oratory written for a university newspaper but in the end delivered orally and privately to her sister at a powwow; dialogue, most centrally; and, posthumously, diary entries (Hoy,276).

April speaks directly to the readers. The whole story is unveiled through her words. Cheryl's voice comes in between in the form of letters, which offers a digression from the whole narrative mood. She is very vibrant, who admired Louis Riel. She wrote letters to April immediately after she learned to write. With the help of Mrs MacAdams, she manage to write it, even she went wrong in spelling. "It

wasn't that long after Christmas that I received the very first letter from Cheryl. I was amazed that she could print, and she wasn't even at school or anything. There were spelling mistakes, and some letters were reversed, but I could make out exactly what she meant. (Culleton, 31).

The words of April quoted above is an explanation by the writer herself to the readers. She consciously wrote it as Cheryl is a preschooler and the mistakes are normal in such children. If she had written it in correct semantic and syntactic structure, it would not have attained the beauty that it possesses now. The innocence of Cheryl is revealed through this. Even April is typed as "Apple" to show how spoken language influences a new and inexperienced learner, writing a letter. Their intense relation is depicted through the letters. Cheryl expected her sister's support and advice in all her crisis. Initially, April was also excited to be there with her younger sister and was happy that it kept their relation intact.

Cheryl's changes in attitude and her inclination to Louis Riel and the enthusiasm to learn their people's history is revealed through her letters. April feels disturbed reading those letters and slowly stopped replying to Cheryl's letters. The narration of story slowly changes as the contradictions between two sisters grew with great intensity. After April's marriage, the whole story revolves around her and Cheryl is not seen much. However, Cheryl's single visit to April changes the whole life of April. Cheryl's life also transforms a lot, but it is kept hidden by the writer that adds excitement to the readers. Then onwards, April is the single narrator and the story of Cheryl is revealed through her journals after her death.

However, to present as a whole that which has always been seen as fragmented, the construction of Native “I” performs a shift from that which has always been constituted as Other or Self. This may not be a subversive tactic in the classic realist text or in the popular novel, but it is within the literary discourse of Canada. [...] the novels give a voice directly to those who generally are silenced (Fee, 172).

The journals of Cheryl can be read only with sympathy and feeling sorry for her, as the entire things that happened in her life were unexpected tragedies, contributed by her father, Mark and her people. Culleton has successfully portrayed the voice of the suppressed and the afflicted with intense passion.

Most of the postcolonial narratives give importance to the oral tradition of their nation. This lore is communicated through some aged characters, especially with the representation of grandmothers. Maria Campbell’s autobiography, *Halfbreed*, revolves round such a grandma figure, Cheechum, who is the central attraction. She is the inspirational force behind the protagonist. Every time, when she loses the control of her life and mind, she is reminded of the optimistic words of Cheechum, her great grandmother, who believed in the better future of Métis in Canada. Culleton’s story lacks the presence of such a grandmother figure in *In Search of April Raintree*. There was no one to guide her and introduce her into her native identity. After her return to Winnipeg, she accompanied her to the Friendship Centre. Cheryl mingled with them and enjoyed it as she liked the native people for she “saw quiet beauty, their simple wisdom” (158) in them. But April could only

view them as people with “watery eyes, leathery brown skin— uneducated natives” (158). This held her away from them.

During that visit, April meets an old woman, who left an impression on her. That old woman approached April and held her hand. April felt something spiritual and mystical about her touch. She explains:

Her hand felt so warm, so dry, so old. I’m sure my smile froze and faded. I waited for her to take hand her hand away. I looked at her questioningly, but didn’t say anything. Her gaze held mine, for I saw in her eyes that deep simple wisdom of which Cheryl had spoken. And I no longer found her touch distasteful. Without speaking to me, the woman imparted her message with her eyes. She had something in me that was special, something that was deserving of her respect.... I had this overwhelming feeling that a mystical spiritual occurrence had just taken place (159).

April lacked the presence of such a spirituality in her life. If she had such an elder person in her life to influence, she might not have rejected her native identity. She thought: “If I’d such a grandmother when I was growing up, maybe I wouldn’t have been so mixed-up” (159). This absence of grandmother or an elder in the narrative shows some detachment from the traditional oral narration of postcolonial works. Culleton might have missed out the part of oral tradition, as she thought of having contemporary relevance for the work, rather than sticking on to the stereotyped concept of postcolonial narratives.

Though Culleton has not tried to romanticize the cultural past of Métis in a broader way as done in many postcolonial writings, she has incorporated the historical and cultural importance in the story through the words of Cheryl. Cheryl functions as the carrier of the native culture by explaining the history and struggle of Métis through her letters to April. She shares the reading experience of Métis history and the life of famous Métis leaders to April. The important sport event of Métis, the buffalo hunting is explained by Cheryl with great enthusiasm and pride. After reading the letter, even April feels excited. “For a very brief moment, I was caught up in her excitement. Then I wondered how she ever had the courage to stand up in front of the class and give the speech” (70).

Even the contemporary social and political changes happened during that time is included in the text. However, a conscious effort has been taken to place the historical description different from the storyline. Cheryl writes letters to April giving account of the life of Louis Riel and the struggles undertaken by him for the freedom of Métis. Likewise, the journal of Cheryl, which April reads after the death of Cheryl is also given in italics, as it is the written in past, which stays away from the story narrated until that moment.

The problem of identity conflict is common among the aboriginal people in Canada. Since it is a multicultural society and had many foreign invasions, majority of the natives felt displaced from their ancestral culture and heritage. Like many other colonized countries, Canada also was culturally influenced by the culture of Europeans. Many of the native cultures are now having these cross-cultural characteristics. But many try to retain their own traditional culture. Many native

writers take their effort to encourage their people and culture through their works. Beatrice Culleton belongs to such writers and so her book *In Search of April Raintree* has its relevance among the native Canadian literature.

In the contemporary world, the individual has the freedom to choose the race he/she wanted to live. Beatrice Culleton also portrays April as such a character, who willingly accepted White as her culture and strives to be a part of it. But, the racist and sexist society does not allow her to live freely as a White by discriminating her based on her Native Métis identity. So, she was forced to reinvent her Métis self, leaving behind her White mask, which contributed only worries and anxieties. Even though she has pictures of many Métis activists, who had failed to become a successful individuals, including her own sister Cheryl, she accepts the challenge to move forward and work for her people. The simple narrative strategy, along with highly emotional and intense issues had made *In Search of April Raintree* most relevant Native Canadian novel since its publication.

DIVYA N. "MY WORLD, MY SPACE: CHARACTERISATION AND NARRATION IN SELECT POSTCOLONIAL FICTION". THESIS. DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, 2018.

## Chapter III

### **A Return to Kiowa and Oral Tradition: A Native American Discourse on Identity and Narration in N Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn***

Identity is not in the main an individual affair. Individuals make their own identity, but not under conditions of their own choosing. In fact, identities are often created in the crucible of colonialism, racial and sexual subordination, and national conflicts, but also in the specificity of group histories and structural position (Alcoff, 2)

These aforesaid factors are the different facets of identity formation which can also lead to identity crisis. The factors that influence the formation of a person's identity are equally responsible for his or her identity crisis too. There is always a point in each person's life where he/she feels comfortable and fit into the society. This is the space found in the vast world to live contented. But many a time this space is being questioned with or without the knowledge of that individual. The factors may differ accordingly; ranging from the cultural to many other reasons that are mentioned by Alcoff. In general, there will be a feeling of displacement for those who have the thoughts of being unfit to the society where they belong to or live in. This is the root cause for identity crisis as explained in the previous chapters too. The feeling of being 'unfit' or 'displaced' or 'unsecured' in the world begins from the individual's inner self or consciousness. All other factors are peripheral to this base-major- issue.



There are many people facing the problem of displacement or a kind of spatial dislocation in terms of identity in the world of their native culture. Many struggle hard to get out of this dilemma and succeed in it. On the other hand there are people who fail to figure a way out. Identity crisis turnout to be a biggest concern for them. For example, not all the people of a postcolonial nation will have the same intensity of being alienated from their major culture. Instead they find a resort either in the colonial culture or accept a mixed culture resulting from colonial rule. The latter group forms a new set of culture and finds a comfortable life, not fully denying either of the two cultures or accepting it. They compromise between their native culture and the western culture. But, there are yet another group of people who are not into any of these groups wherein they could find a space of their own. They fail to be included eventually developing the trauma of identity crisis. Even for those who accept the new culture as mentioned earlier, they will have to struggle hard to be away from the culture into which they are born. It will be hard for them to get along with a new one overlooking the age-old ancestral tradition they are supposed to carry over through generations. Such people with hybrid culture are formed as a result of colonialism.

In USA, one of the first known postcolonial nations, many Natives have lived through this dilemma of identity crisis and hybridization. Even though once a colonized country USA has tried the best not to be labelled under the notion of postcolonialism with their inclination towards Whiteness, which mobilized their developmental processes. The sufferers were the Natives or Indigenous people who are the actual inhabitants of the country. Decolonization process did not work much

on the natives, as they were already the secondary citizens of US. Along with that, the World Wars also contributed to the condition of “displacement” from their own nation. Many were not able to survive through these traumatic situation albeit the victory of the nation. The Natives were “used” for the military purpose and thrown out after that. Many such disillusioned military returned young people strived to get out from the shock caused due to World War. Besides that, some of them could not identify themselves with their native culture and traditions. The history of many Indians in America tells the story of above-mentioned young people.

Kiowa is one of the most important American Indian tribes existing in the Oklahoma region. Earlier they were hunter-gatherers and nomads who later dominated the South Western plains. Momaday, in his memoir, *The Names: A Memoir*, has given a folk tale about the origin of Kiowa people as its prologue:

*You know. Everything had to begin, and this is how it was: the Kiowas came one by one into the world through a hollow log. They were many more than now, but not at all of them got out. There was a woman whose body was swollen up with child, and she got stuck in the log. After that, no one could get through, and that is why the Kiowas are a small tribe in number. They looked around and saw the world. It made them glad to see so many things. They called themselves Kuwda, “coming out.”(Momaday, 1).*

This ancient name Kudwa was later replaced with Kiowa or Káigwu, which means Principal or Chief People in Kiowa language. But, some believed that they migrated through the Mountains of Kiowa, which is now the eastern part of Montana. Though the word ‘Ka’ in their Tanoan language meant mother, they have a patrilineal

tradition with a chiefdom living in different groups. They migrated to different places, along with American bison, as it was their main food source. Later, they settled in the southwestern plains. They have a well-structured democratic government with an elected person as their head. The Priest of Sun is their religious head, who decides and control all their religious rites and rituals. They also have warrior societies and they trained their younger generation to be fearless and brave warriors. The election of the head is based on the intelligence and generosity of the contesting people. The ideal person is the one who have all these features. The Kiowa women have great importance in the society. They gathered and prepared food and took the whole responsibility of their family, when men were away.

The history of Kiowa describes a transition period in their lifestyle, which marks from 1873-1878. The invasion of white men and their settlement as reservation in southwestern Oklahoma made their life more restricted and difficult. The transition from a life of freedom to reservation was hard for many families. This reservation period was a developmental time for Kiowas. They started schools and got employed in many government sectors, especially in the military force. They participated in the World War II with all spirit as they had a warrior spirit within them. But, the aftermath of war and the industrialization caused some adverse effect on some Kiowas. Kiowas still enjoy many kinds of reservation in US and remain with their own tribal culture and tradition to lead them.

N Scott Momaday, one of the major Native American writers accounts the life and history of Kiowa community. Momaday was born on 27 February 1934 at Oklahoma. His father, Alfred Morris Momaday was an art teacher and her mother,

Mayme Natachee Scott was a teacher and writer of children's books. His father belonged to Kiowa community and her mother descended from early Native American and Cherokee ancestors. He grew up in a poverty-stricken farm of Kiowa community. He was entitled with the native name "Tsoaitalee" (Hager, 3), which meant rock tower in Kiowa language and Devil's Tower in non-Native Americans. Momaday's parents worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and they were transferred to many school under reservation. Thus, during his younger age itself, Momaday had multicultural experience and learned different tribal languages, along with Spanish and English languages.

Momaday's father was a good storyteller, who introduced to his son, a new world of oral tradition and stories of Kiowa. His mother encouraged him to read and write, thereby inducing a literary sense in him. Along with this, his Pan-Indian experiences have enriched his writings giving a new opening to the native writers to express about their own community. Thus, he created an influence on native and non-native readers. "From his earliest years, then, Momaday received the cultural best of both worlds, Native and Anglo, while at the same time witnessing the deprivations and sorrows of reservation life. He witnessed enduring tradition as well" (Hager, 4).

Momaday started his career writing poems and later started writing novels. His first novel *The Way to Rainy Mountains* published in 1967 is a combination of autobiographical elements and history, where he brings in Kiowa stories and his memories of living in the native community. His second novel *House Made of Dawn* published in 1968 brought him universal acclaim as a novelist by winning Pulitzer

Prize in 1969. The author narrates the story with the Pan Indian experience he had during his early life as his family had lived on Navajo Apache and Pueblo reservations. The Kiowa old traditions, which were explained, by his father and grandparents reflected in his works. The beautiful landscape and nature of Jemez Pueblo North Western New Mexico is contrasted with the modern industrial life of US.

The novels and poems published in later years also reflected his emphasis on the importance of oral tradition and the search for identity of Kiowa people in America. Momaday uses his experiences of both as a Kiowa Indian and as a Western man in his work. He, unlike his characters, has never felt it as a dilemma to have influences of both these cultures in his life. He said: "I grew up in two worlds and straddle both those worlds even now. It has made for confusion and a richness in my life. I've been able to deal with it reasonably well, I think, and I value it" (Hager, 8). His works dealt with these issues in detail giving the inner conflict of Native Americans in postcolonial or postwar America.

Momaday is the first Native American to win Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1969 for his novel *House Made of Dawn*. It is still considered the finest Native American novel, which pioneered the Native American Renaissance. Though there were many Native American writers prior to him, like William Apess, John Rollin Ridge, Simon Pokagon etc., they could not gain wide acclaim. The novels of Momaday set an example for other writers. The Native culture, heritage and tradition, which were considered insignificant, gained its importance through this literary works and became an inspiration for many writers such as Leslie Marmon

Silko, James Welch, Paula Gunn Allen etc. The revival of oral tradition was also done through the writings. There were criticisms against Native American Renaissance, as a group of people claimed that the Native literature had never faced an extinction that there was no need to revive it. But, majority of the people believed that *House Made of Dawn* by Momaday has been a revival for the Native literary field as it exposed the real life of many Kiowa in a postcolonial and postwar America.

*House Made of Dawn* is the story of Abel, a young Native American, grown up in Walatowa. He was brought up by his grandfather Francisco, who lives in the memory of ancestral Kiowa culture. Abel is introduced with his return from US Military Service after the world war. Abel fails to find a place in his own native culture, as he is haunted by the memories he had at Los Angeles. The narration of story switches between present and past to show the reasons for his conflict. The major and minor characters in the novel add to this inner conflict. The Priest of the Sun, John Big Bluff Tosamah, tries to incite the people with the tradition of Kiowa in their sermons. Momaday uses the character of The Priest of the Sun to tell the history of Kiowa and to show how Abel feels himself alienated from this tradition.

Abel's grandfather Francisco reminds him of the native culture that he has forgotten in the modern living. "Momaday presents Francisco Abel's grandfather as a vulnerable old man who is very concerned about his desire to perpetuate his Kiowa cultural heritage through his grandson. This presentation is interesting because it shows that from character's preoccupation with safeguarding his ancestral culture..." (Kone, 18). Identity of a person is much influenced by the ancestors and

the tradition into which he / she is born. They imbibe the culture, acquire the language and traditional beliefs of the particular family, and mould an individuality of their own. The heritage is expected to be maintained by that particular person who struggles hard to move along with it. But, many internal and external factors influence that individual in the course of life. This changes the role and convictions of that person, which leads to uncertainties and dilemmas. Abel is one such character, whose life is shattered by his inner conflicts and many unexpected incidents in Los Angeles.

Abel's search for identity has started from his childhood itself, with the search of his father's root. "He did not know who his father was. His father was a Navajo, they said, or a Sia, or an Isleta, an outsider anyway, which made him and his mother and Vidal somehow foreign and strange" (Momaday, 11). This uncertainty about his father's identity lies within Abel and follows him throughout his life. At a younger age, he loses his mother and his brother Vidal, which literally makes him an orphan, a rootless one. Though he had his grandfather Francisco to raise him, he was left alone without parents, which might have made him a silent and passive character. He always presented himself as a person who is out of place.

Abel's internal conflict was reflected when he had set off to join the World War. He could not gain the support of his grandfather for his venture, as he wanted Abel to be his heir, accepting the culture of Kiowa community. There was no one to accompany him and wish him well at the time of his departure. He was restless and anxious to leave his place. When he walked towards the vehicle, he felt:

He had been ready for hours, and he was restless, full of excitement and the dread of going. It was time. He heard the horn and went out and closed the door. And suddenly he had the sense of being all alone, gone long ago from the town and the valley and the hills, from everything he knew and had always known. He walked quickly and looked straight ahead, centered upon himself in the onset of loneliness and fear.... Only when it was too late did he remember to look back in the direction of the fields (21).

This symbolizes that Abel leaves his Kiowa life behind and goes for a new life with fear and doubt within him. His volatile characteristic is evident through the above-mentioned description. He was hesitant to mingle with people and felt insecure in all the places he went. This formed the basis of all his issues in life. He could not maintain any relationship in his life. Even, his grandfather was a stranger for him when he returned to Walatowa from Los Angeles. The life of Abel at warfront is not described by the author in usual narration. The fragment of it is given in the later chapters, through some flashes of his semi-conscious memories, when he was lying in the beach beaten up by somebody. He was a fearless soldier, who fought courageously for his country. But he is described as a crazy and eccentric soldier through the words of another soldier, who was with him. "He was not afraid, no sir," Bowker said (102). Later, an explanation of what happened during the war is given in detail. His strange behavior made the chief think that something has gone wrong with him.

Abel was too drunk when he reaches Walatowa, and he could not even recognize his grandfather. The old man becomes sad, since he did not expect Abel in



such a pathetic condition. He holds Abel and takes him to their home. There he is reminded of his mother and his brother Vidal, both of whom died when he was young. His memory goes back to his childhood days and through this recollection, the author brings in different traditions of Native Americans. Abel, when back to his normal consciousness, feels comfortable. He walks along the cultivated fields to the foothills. "When the first breeze of the evening rose up in the shadow that fell across the hills, he sat down and looked over the green and yellow blocks of farmland. He could see his grandfather and, others, working below in the sunlit fields. The breeze was very faint, and it bore the scent of earth and grain; and for a moment everything was all right with him. He was at home" (27). This is the common feature of Native American Narratives. Momaday says: "Both consciously and unconsciously, my writing has been deeply informed by the land with a sense of place. In some important way, place determines who and what we are. The land-person equation is essential to all of literature" (Momaday, Reflections, 9).

Though Abel tried to belong to the reservation community at Walatowa, he felt a kind of dislocation in his own Native culture. He has lost his native sense of spirituality and traditional values due to the devastating effect of World War. Even though he could bring back the memories of his past life, he could not connect himself to the present.

Abel walked into the canyon. His return to the town had been a failure, for all his looking forward. He had tried in the days that followed to speak to his grandfather, but he could not say the things he wanted; he had tried to pray, to sing, to enter into the old rhythm of the tongue, but he was no longer

attuned to it. And yet it was there still, like memory, in the reach of his hearing, as if Francisco or his mother or Vidal had spoken out of the past and the words had taken hold of the moment and made it eternal (Momaday, 53).

This reveals his inner conflict- the conflict between his native past and disillusioned present. He becomes passive and does not even communicate properly to his grandfather, who took care of him and lives for him. Abel's indifference in his character is revealed when he goes for work at Benevides house. Father Olguin sends him to chop woods for Angela Martin St. John. Angela is attracted towards Abel, but he never pays attention to her smile or gaze. He reluctantly answers her question. She feels insulted and irritated because of this behavior. His reaction is described like this:

His face darkened, but he hung on, dumb and immutable. He would not allow himself to be provoked. It was easy, natural for him to stand aside, hang on. He seemed to be watching from far away something that was happening within her, private commonplace, nothing in itself. His reserve was too much for her. She would have liked to throw him off balance, to startle and appall him, to make an obscene gesture, perhaps to say, "How would you like a white woman? My white belly and my breasts, my painted fingers and my feet?" But it would have been no use. She was certain that he would not even have been ashamed for her — or in the least surprised (31).

Since his return from war front, he has felt that his decision to come back to Walatowa was a wrong one as he felt alienated from his people. During the time of

Feast of Santiago, he could not perform well in the ritual and the games that followed it. Momaday introduces a Whiteman, an albino, contrast to Abel.

Momaday says: “Abel rode one of his grandfather’s roan black-mares and sat too rigid in the saddle, too careful of the gentle mare” (37). The narration continues: “The appearance of one of the men was striking. He was large, lithe and white-skinned; he wore little round colored glasses and rode a fine black horse of good blood. The black horse was high-spirited, and the white man held its head high on the reins and kept the stirrups free of it” (37-38).

Abel exhibited himself as a weak and reserved one, who had no powerful mind to accept challenges. In the game, Abel “made a poor showing, full of caution and gesture” (38). Albino hurts Abel with a dead rooster, for which Abel takes revenge by killing that man later. “Beyond its consequences, the act of killing is an expression of the “savage” Indian’s resistance to the White adventurer’s invasion” (Kone, 21). The act of failing of Abel by albino can be read as a deliberate act, as the Whites ought to dominate over the Natives. “Again and again the white man stuck him, heavily, brutally, upon the chest and shoulders and head, and April threw up his hands, but the great bird fell upon them and beat them down” (Momaday, 39). This shows his dominating and overpowering character. It is also described that his movements were powerful and deliberate. So, it was his conscious move to defeat a Native man with his physical power. Abel, who was very fragile in appearance, was an easy target for the albino. Thus, the novel gives glimpses of colonialism through the character, albino.

Abel reaches his hometown on July 20 (as dated in the text), and he was in military uniform until July 25, the feast day. Until that day, he could not accept that he is away from U.S warfront. But, he is seen in his native dress during the feast day, which suggests that the traditions and rituals bring back the nativism within a person, even though he was away from the native land for many years. “For the first time since coming home he had done away with his uniform. He had put on his old clothes: Levi’s and a wide black belt, a gray work shirt, and a straw hat with a low crown and a wide, rolled brim” (37). Gradually, Abel was getting into the world of Kiowa, leaving the memories of his life at U.S. But, the fate plays nasty game upon him and he was pulled into world of suffering again.

Abel’s killing of the white man is narrated in detail. There is no conversation between the two, instead their gestures and facial expression are given importance. “And throughout Abel smiled; he nodded and grew silent at length; and the smile was thin and instinctive, a hard, transparent mask upon his mouth and eyes. He waited, and the wine rose up in his blood” (73). This shows his intention that he was wearing a mask of smile to avenge the whiteman. The whiteman, on the other hand, mistook Abel’s smile as his innocence and walks with him unaware of his intention. When Abel stabs him with a knife, his reaction was an unexpected one. “The white man’s hands lay on Abel’s shoulders, and for a moment the white man stood very still. There was no expression on his face, neither rage nor pain, only the same translucent pallor and the vague distortion of sorrow and wonder at the mouth and invisible under the black glass” (73). Before falling down, the whiteman held Abel

tight and the whole strength of his body lay over Abel and he felt like escaping from his clutches.

These incidents can be read in a postcolonial scenario. The first incident, in which albino wins the upper hand during the feast is like the White people trying to colonize the natives through their power and finally the killing of whiteman as the outcome of the colonized people's resistance and protest towards the white authoritative power. But, the hard clutches of whiteman holding Abel can be considered the influence of colonizers over the natives even after the end of colonization. But, Abel shows a kind of relief after his fall: "And Abel was no longer terrified, but strangely cautious and intent, full of wonder and regard. He could not think; there was nothing left inside him but a cold, instinctive will to wonder and regard" (74). Momaday gives a transformation to the character and emotion of Abel here. The one, who was passive and silent, suddenly changes to a chivalric person who killed a person out of anger and fury. Though, it is not reflected in his face, the cold instinctive wonder inside him shows it.

In the chapter "The Priest of the Sun", Momaday gives an explanation defending the murder of whiteman by Abel. Through the words of Father Olguin, the novelist explains that

"...in his own mind it was not a man he killed. It was something else."

"An evil spirit.

"Something like that, yes." (89).

Father Olguin gives a psychological definition for his actions. He gives an extensive speech on the mental status of a person who does murder. But Abel did not speak a word or respond to this speech. His thoughts are put in these words:

He had killed the white man. It was not a complicated thing, after all; it was very simple. It was the most natural thing in the world. Surely they could see that, these men who meant to dispose of him in words. They must know that he would kill the white man again, if he had the chance, that there could be no hesitation whatsoever. For he would know what the white man was, and he would kill him if he could. A man kills such an enemy if he can (90-91).

Momaday imparts the impression of a common native man, who always kept a revenge within their mind for the sufferings the whitemen had given them. That may be the reason that, the killing of albino by Abel is given a defending opinion.

Later Abel is shown after seven years in 1952 at Los Angeles. He has been arrested for killing the whiteman. When the narration of second chapter starts, he is seen under the care of Indian relocation people. He has been mentally depressed due to the imprisonment and this finally takes him to alcoholism. There he hears the sermons of Reverend John Big Bluff Tosamah, The Priest of the Sun. His sermons are the retelling of his grandmother's story about Kiowas, their origin, rituals and the orally transmitted legendary tales. In a parallel narration, the degenerating life of Abel is described. He is found tired lying on the beach. He could not move as he was drunk and he could not understand what has happened to him. Out of pain and agony, he lied there until the effect of the alcohol wearied off. There his mind wandered around his childhood memories, about his mother and Vidal and the pain

he suffered during his young age. He could not control his mind as it “had turned on him; it was his enemy” (89). Now, he has lost his hold over his body too. He was in the bad influence of alcoholism, which was the reason behind many of his problems. He tries hard to get out of these issues, but somehow fails in his attempt.

He tried to think where the trouble had begun, what the trouble was. There was trouble; he could admit that to himself, but he had no real insight into his own situation. Maybe, certainly, *that* was the trouble; but he had no way of knowing. He wanted a drink; he wanted to be drunk. The bus leaned and creaked; he felt the surge of motion and the violent shudder of the whole machine on the gravel road. The motion and the sound seized upon him.

Then suddenly he was overcome with a desperate loneliness, and he wanted to cry out (93).

During his life at Los Angeles, he meets Milly, a social worker, with whom he maintained a good relationship. She was very sincere to him, that she helped him to come out of his trauma caused due to imprisonment. She had the responsibility to take care of Abel as a part of her social services. Abel initially hated her as she asked many questions. Abel felt many questions invalid and ridiculous that he showed his disinterest. But, she insisted on answering it as she “believed in tests, questions and answers” (94). Their relation develops on the base of her sympathy for him. She assumes herself as the protector of him. She became a usual visitor at Ben’s apartment, where Abel lived. Eventually they fell in love with each other and she starts consoling him at the time of depression. But, he never gets into a static life. He gets addicted to alcohol and loses the job because of it. Thus, again he is

displaced from a space allocated for him. Eventually, he proves that he is not only physically displaced, but mentally too, that is why, he could not succeed in maintaining relationships that he makes.

If Abel tries a lot to get out of the dilemma and leads a life alienating himself from others, there is his friend Ben Benally who stands contrary to the character of Abel. Belonging to reservation like Abel, Ben is settled in Los Angeles, leading a life contend with his circumstances. He never complains and fell dejected being and Native living in USA, with a little consideration and a lot of marginalization. Like Francisco, Ben is yet another character who keeps up a good relation with Abel. He assumes the role of the caretaker of Abel supporting him physically and mentally. Though at times he thinks of getting rid of the relationship with Abel for his indifference, Ben could not as he is sympathetic for his condition.

The relation between them is described in the third chapter “The Night Chanter” narrated by Ben Benally. The initial statement of Ben explains his concern for Abel: “He left today, and I gave him my coat, you know, I hated to give it up; it was the only one I had” (123). This whole section reveals the complexity of Abel narrated from Ben’s point of view. The dislocation and dilemma faced by Abel is explained by a person who has understood him, gives more emphasis and an in-depth understanding of Abel’s character. Unlike Abel, Ben adjusts himself to the situation of Los Angeles. He was of the belief that thinking more of the past life and tradition will be hard for a person to lead a peaceful life; not the denial of native culture, but to be tuned with the conditions of present too. The problem of Abel is narrated by Ben like this:



You have to get used to it first, and it's hard. You've got to be left alone. You've got to put a lot of things out of your mind, or you're going to get all mixed up. You've got to take it easy and get drunk once in a while and just forget about who you are. It's hard, and you want to give up. You think about getting out and going home. You want to think that you belong someplace, I guess. You go up there on the hill and you hear the singing and the talk and you think about going home. But the next day you know it's no use; you know that if you went home there would be nothing there, just the empty land and a lot of people, going no place and dying off. And you've got to forget about that too (140).

The condition of many natives who are caught in between the two worlds/culture is expounded through his words. Individual identity is an often questioned matter in the case of a postcolonial citizen living in a hybrid society, which has lost its way in the path to attain fulfillment. These people, who could not identify them with the modern national identity, are also reminded of the past with a sense of loss. The idea of identity is given an explanation like this also as Ross Pole has stated in his essay "National Identity and Citizenship", where he explains what the moral agenda of national identity is: "It is useful to contrast the moral world of person with that of national identity in terms of their different relation to the past. Part of process of my becoming a person is learning to take responsibility for my past and carry out commitments incurred in the past" (273). This is what majority of the postcolonial natives or aboriginals of every nation tends to do. They feel sentimental about their

native past and take it their responsibility to carry over the past with all its glory and honour.

In *House Made of Dawn*, Momaday exposes this feeling in different aspects. If Abel is in crisis to find his real self, Ben enjoys his life adapting to the changes. In Los Angeles Abel is seen reserved and alienated from others whereas Ben enjoys the evenings with group of Indian people; drinking and singing at a private space, away from the gaze of Whites. When someone speaks of the reservation life, Abel gets lost in thought of his life at Walatowa. Many times Ben tries to cheer up Abel and asks him to enjoy like others. Even at the time Abel is fired from his job, beaten up and hospitalized, Ben takes care of him and helps him to escape the depressed state. He, along with Milly, their friend and a social worker, takes Abel for outing to make him happy and relieved. They share many stories and jokes and spend day together in a lonely place, moving from the busy life of city.

It is also noteworthy that though Ben acts out to be comfortable in the modern industrialized world of U.S, he is also very nostalgic about his native place and culture. When Abel decides to leave the place, Ben too reveals his inner desire to go back to his own native place: "He was going home, and he was going to be all right again. And someday I was going home, too, and we are going to meet some place out there on the reservation and get drunk together" (128). When together at "The Silver Dollar, Henry's place" (124), Ben tells stories about the old native tradition and sings songs secretly to him.

*House made of Dawn* I used to tell him about those old ways, stories and the songs, Beautyway and Night Chant....and I started to sing all by myself. The

other were singing too; but it was the wrong kind of thing, and I wanted to pray. I didn't want them to hear me, because they were having a good time, and I was ashamed, I guess. I kept it down because I didn't want anybody but him to hear it (129).

Thus, native identity is explained as something that cannot be completely separated from the life of a person. Ben sets an example for this.

If Abel and Ben represents the younger generation of Native American community, Francisco, Abel's father belongs to the older generation, who respected and celebrated their life in reservation community. More than the fact that they lived in reservation, the people like Francisco believed in the pre-colonial and ancient Kiowa community and its traditional richness. He romanticized his past life and lived in the cherishing memories of his life, especially when he was a young chivalric man. He was a part of all rituals and festivals of Kiowa. Whenever he sees Abel, he was reminded of his good times. He lived in the memories, and so he too is displaced from the present time. However, he is hardworking and worked hard in the farmland as he is the only earning member of the family. Francisco wished Abel to live in the tradition and culture of Kiowa, as he is the only heir left in that family.

When Abel joined the military during the World War, Francisco was shattered as it was against his dreams and wishes. But, he advised him to be good at whatever he is doing. "But, the old man had not understood, would not understand, only wept, and Abel left him alone. It was time to go, and the old man was away in the fields" (21). Francisco felt that he is left alone with nobody to take over his legacy. When he learns that Abel is returning from army, he becomes happy again.

But, Abel's entry as a disappointed alcoholic, even without understanding his grandfather makes Francisco disillusioned. Francisco feels sad over the condition of Abel. However, gaining all courage, he brings Abel home and takes care of him. He works hard and earns money to feed him. His love and care brings back Abel to normal life. Momaday draws a secretive relation between the two, which earns its result by the end of the novel. Coming back from Los Angeles, Abel looks after Francisco, who was nearing his death. Finally, with the death of Francisco, Abel undertakes the Dawn Running in honour of his dead grandfather. Thus, Francisco can be considered the single character in the novel, who attains fulfilment in his life. This is the unseen bondage that writer depicts in the novel, which is a common characteristic of a native novel.

Francisco, in his deathbed, tells his life story to Abel in a low, but confident voice. His affirmation of identity is shown through his narration. The experience of his bear hunting and horse riding is explained with vigour and enthusiasm. Abel listens the story with interest as he had started a liking towards his tradition and culture. He looks after Francisco and takes his body to Father Olguin before dawn to perform rituals. Francisco's hard work and dedication to his community is addressed by the end of his life.

The theme of identity crisis of main characters had its effect on the several minor characters too. Especially, the women characters in the novel had their influence on Abel and vice versa. Angela and Milly are the two white women characters that appear in the novel. Angela St. John, is the one whom Abel meets at Walatowa after his return from the army. She saw him disillusioned and passive,

with no responses for her questions. He works for her and helps to cut woods for her. She feels attracted to the strong physique of Abel. Though she is married, she seduces Abel. Initially, he avoids her and does his duty without paying attention to anything else happening around him. Abel's coldness was a big blow to Angela's confidence. He "stood, dumb and docile at her pleasure" (31). He showed no interest to converse with her. "He looked at her without the trace of a smile, but his voice was soft and genial, steady. He would give her no clear way to be contemptuous of him. She considered" (30). The first visit of Abel to Benevides house left a kind of depression on Angela.

Momaday portrays her as an unhappy woman, who is not so beautiful and attractive. But, she longed to be attracted by others. The conversation between Abel and Angela reveals this. Momaday makes her open up her inner feelings. The author also brings out the physical thirst of Abel, when he comes back to Benevides house four days later after his first visit. Here, the novelist explains the sequence with details to show the male domination over the woman. Though Abel felt her not beautiful, he confesses that he wants to make love with her. The concept of women's body as an object of pleasure rather than her dignity is revealed through this incident. The conversation goes like this:

"Abel," she said after a moment, "do you think that I am beautiful?"

She had gone to the opposite wall and turned. She leaned back with her hands behind her, throwing her head a little in order to replace a lock of hair that had fallen across her brow. She sucked at her cheeks, musing.

“No, not beautiful,” she said.

“Would you like to make love to me?”

“Yes.”

She looked evenly at him, no longer musing.

“You really would, wouldn’t you? Yes. God, I’ve seen the way you look at me sometimes.”

There was no reaction from him.

“And do you imagine,” she went on, “that *I* would like it, too?”

“I don’t know,” he answered, “but I imagine you would.” (57).

There is an air of preconception in this dialogue. They both presume that they have an attraction for each other, though they have not shown it in any ways. Momaday brings out the common notion about man-woman relationship. Angela is satisfied with this relationship and discloses her wish to take him from the reservation to get a better employment. Unfortunately, their relation ends with his imprisonment. However, her memories came back to him when he was lying in the beach, beaten up by white people. He remembers: “Angela put her white hands to his body. Abel put his hands to her white body” (89). The whiteness of her body was an attractive factor, which pulled him towards her.

Milly, the other woman character in the novel also influences Abel, while he is at Los Angeles. Though for a short period, they had an intense relationship. They kept physical and mental togetherness, having strong desire for each other. She

reaches Los Angeles as a part of social services. She is a reserved person, but pleasing and friendly in nature. She kept a constant smile, which made her work easy and better.

She had been in Los Angeles four years, and in all the time she had not talked to anyone. There were people all around; she knew them, worked with them— sometimes they would not leave her alone— but she did not talk to them, tell them anything that mattered in the least. She greeted them and joked with them and wished them well, and then she withdrew and lived her life. No one knew what she thought or felt or who she was (107).

Milly's earlier life was a tragic one, as her father left her alone during her schooldays. She married, Matt, who also went away from her and never came back. This relation presented her a child Carrie, whom Milly loved more than her. But she died out of disease at the age of four, which was the greatest sorrow of Milly's life. Later, she enters into the social services, especially in charge of the Relocation people or the reservation communities in America. Unlike other people, Abel attracted her and she befriends Abel and Ben.

Their initial meetings of Abel and Milly were not smooth, as he hated the questions asked by Milly. Even the questions asked by the White authorities to the Reservation people were ridiculous one, which contained nothing to do with their life. For example, the questions went on like this: "I would like to ———, Rich people are ———, As a child enjoyed ———." (94) etc.

Gradually, Milly gains the confidence of Abel and become intimate each other. They were physically attracted and at the same time, there develops a kind of emotional togetherness. Milly helps him financially and supports him at the time of his mental constraints. Whenever he loses the job, she finds a new one for him and makes him feel good. This relation acts as a relief for his conflict to an extent. But, he could not maintain his character in a static way that he moves into alcoholism every now and then. At those times too, Milly stood with him, consoling and looking after him.

Ben had a secret love for Milly, which he never discloses as he cared for Abel. When Abel used harsh words and played nasty jokes on Milly, Ben felt bad.

I never said anything when he talked like that. It would have been worse if I had, because he would have made fun of me, you know, and said I had some plans with her and all. It wasn't like that. She liked him better than me, I think, and I was always afraid that he might hurt her somehow. She was easygoing and friendly to everybody. She *trusted* everybody, I guess, some people are just like that. And she had had a hard time all her life. It would have been pretty easy to hurt her (143).

Milly had a very sensitive character, which she never showed before Abel because she believed in him more than she believed in anyone else. This influenced Abel too. When he was lying in the beach, even in his half-conscious mind, he thought of Milly and called out her name many times. He was relieved when he sees Ben and Milly together on the shore. Like Angela, Milly is also left behind when he returns to Walatowa.



If the two white women characters are represented as discontented in their life, though not present in the novel in person, there is a reference to one Kiowa grandmother, who lived a successful life. The Priest of Sun gives a lengthy description about his grandmother, Aho and her influence upon him. She is depicted as a woman with many supernatural and mysterious powers within her. He imparts the knowledge about the Sun Dance and its significance upon Kiowa culture through his sermons. Thus Momaday, like many postcolonial writers, writes about the greatness of a native woman, especially a grandmother figure, who is the spirit behind the whole community.

This grandmother shows a return to the oral tradition of the Kiowa community. Since an age-old Native community, Kiowa is structured upon the oral, folk and mythical stories of that culture. The novels of Momaday are based on these folktales. *House Made of Dawn* is also a novel that retells many stories about the Kiowas. The novel begins with the narration of an undated prologue with the image of the title of the novel: "Dypaloh. There was a house made of dawn. It was made of pollen and of rain, and the land was very old and everlasting" (1). Abel is running through the rain against the winter sky and his body is marked with burnt wood and ashes. The novel also ends with the same description. Abel is running, "... he was running, and under his breath he began to sing. There was no sound, and he had no voice, he had only the words of a song and he went running on the rise of the song. House made of pollen, house made of dawn. Qstedaba" (185). The narrative structure is in a circular form. The whole novel moves through the race which Abel undertakes. It is only by the end of the novel the reader understands that the event in

the prologue actually takes place after the death of Francisco. That is why it is written undated; unlike all other four dated portions of the novel. In these four sections, two take place the Jemez Pueblo of Walatowa, New Mexico and the other two in the Los Angeles area.

VamaraKone, in his article on “The role of Oral Tradition in Scott Momoday’s *House Made of Dawn*” states that:

What should be established at the very outset is that those individuals who serve as moral resources to Momaday’s novel are characters, that is to say fictitious persons even though they may reflect a certain reality. They are essential vectors in the literary and artistic creations. They represent the driving-force around the events in the novel spiral forth (14).

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there developed a concept of social cycle theory, which argued that the events that happened in the society and history long years back are repeating in cycles. As the history of human civilization is described as a “widening gyre”, the recent academic scholarship views the human history as something that moves in cycle rather than moving in the path of evolution. The postcolonial narratives considered their tribal history as a cyclical concept that will repeat again as long as their tradition survives. Though many believed that the colonialism has destroyed the tribal culture of many colonized nations, it is proved through the postcolonial writings that it cannot be destroyed easily. Many postcolonial narratives prove that there is always a return to the tribal culture, which is an integral part of that community.

Abel's personal history is an example for this cyclical concept of tribal history. His life starts in the Kiowa community, where his grandfather raises him instilling the traditional culture and values. But, his life in the army and Los Angeles detaches him from the world of native culture and spirituality of Kiowa community. Momaday uses the night chant and dawn running as two techniques restore the lost identity of Abel and brings him back to his native self through these ceremonies. Navajo community believed that the night chant has a healing effect, which can bring the patients back to their life. They believed that the ceremony has the power to rejuvenate both physical and mental stability of a person. Here, in the novel Abel is wounded physically and also undergoes mental struggle out of his disillusionment and displacement. But, the Night Chant recited by Ben takes him gradually back to his normal life. He is reminded of the things happened to him during the last few days in Los Angeles. He restores his consciousness, lost because of heavy drinking and understands that he has nothing to do in an alien world that it is better to go back to his native land.

Ben sings the whole song to Abel, which brings back Abel to his life. Until that time he was living disconnected with the world, i.e. out of the world. The title of the whole novel is taken from the night chant. It starts with the beauty of the nature, later moving to the prayer to restore the physical health and ends with the restoration of happiness everywhere. It is like this:

*Tségihi*

House made of dawn,

House made of evening light,

House made of dark cloud,  
 House made of male rain,  
 House made of dark mist,  
 House made of female rain,  
 House made of pollen,  
 House made of grasshoppers,  
 Dark cloud is at door. (129).

These opening lines are invocation of nature, which is the dwelling place of all creations of God. The importance of nature in the life of human beings, especially for the tribal people is revealed through these lines. But, it ends with the image of a dark cloud which is approaching that house. This darkness is groping into the lives of the people to make their life miserable. The following lines are the invocation to God, who can help them to come out of the sufferings.

The trail out of it is dark cloud

The Zigzag lightning stands high upon it  
 Male deity!  
 Your offering I make.  
 I have prepared a smoke for you.  
 You restore my feet for me,  
 You restore my legs for me,  
 You restore my body for me  
 You restore my mind for me  
 This very day take out your spell for me.

Your spell remove for me.

You have taken it away for me;

Far off it has gone. (130).

The prayer to male deity to restore the normal and healthy life is explained through these lines. The people are ready to offer anything for God and pray to take out the spell from them. The superstitious belief that the tribes or natives carry with them is seen through this. They consider all their illness as the curse of God or cast of some evil eye on them. So, they pray for healing all such curses upon them and restore their body and mind, which had been taken away by Him. The whole narration of the novel has been made in to nutshell in these lines. The life of Abel and many such disenchanted young native people is explained through a single chant. They are all under the conflict and they fail in their life because of the generational conflict, like many other native people. Here, the Navajo people believed that they will be brought back to their culture once, as they cannot separate their self from their tradition and past.

Happily I recover.

Happily my interior becomes cool.

Happily I go forth.

My interior feeling cool, may I walk.

No longer sore, may I walk.

Impervious to pain, may I walk.

With lively feelings, may I walk.

As it used to be long ago, may I walk.

Happily may I walk (130).

After the ceremony and prayers, the person who suffered ailments becomes healthy and happy. He/she becomes resistant to pain and regains the lively feelings and internal calmness to walk happily, as it used to be long ago. He/she wants to walk through the nature as explained in the opening lines. It should be abundant with clouds, showers and plants. The person wishes to walk on the trail of pollen and rebuild all the happiness and prosperity that he/she enjoyed in the earlier life.

May it be beautiful before me,

May it be beautiful behind me,

May it be beautiful below me,

May it be beautiful above me,

May it be beautiful all around me.

In beauty it is finished.

The prayer that started on a general note ends too in such a manner. The prayer is to bring beautiful things in and around the human being. That is all around the universe. Thus, the world has to be finished in beauty. It is the rejuvenating purpose of all the traditional, religious and spiritual ceremonies.

Thus, the night chant serves as a new spirit to the disillusioned souls, who have fallen in their lives. It provides a helping hand to revive the lost self and enter into a new life reconnecting to the traditional values. Abel, who lived alienated from his native culture, returns to Walatowa by the end of the novel and takes care of his

aged grandfather. He, without any compulsion, undertakes the dawn running after the death of grandfather and there he sings the night chant. Finally, he understands the power of the words and life of his tribal culture. So, there is a cyclical movement for Abel's personal history like the cyclical movement of history.

There are so many such characters in the novel whose narrations inform the readers about the Native past of Kiowa community. Both the spiritual leaders in the novel, Father Olguin and Tosamah, the Priest of Sun plays an important role in the narration. They both act as mouthpiece of the novelist, who wanted to explain the history of the community. Father Olguin, the priest in Walatowa, New Mexico, learns and delivers many things about the tradition and past of the Natives, whom he serves. During the feast of Santiago, an important cultural ceremony in the Kiowa community, he speaks about many things about Santiago, who holds a significant and saintly position in the tribal memory. Momaday chooses a spiritual leader to deliver such things because; spirituality has an important role in the traditional past of natives. The novel moves forward interweaving the past and the present – an important method of narration in oral culture. The juxtaposition of flashbacks and the present events are very expressive in the novel. So, though Father Olguin, Momaday tries to return to the tradition of oral culture and ancestral folklore and belief.

“Oral tradition rests on storytelling and the aesthetics of reception. In his process of presenting the Priest of the Sun, the author returns to the character's childhood experience through flashbacks. In fact, Tosamah has been influenced by Aho, his grandmother” (Kone, 16). Tosamah, in his sermons, asserts the importance

of “word” in the life of human beings and the existence of the world. He says that the Bible has nothing to reveal and he believes it only confirms what his ancestors know about the fact. “In the beginning was the word” (Momaday, 82). Along with this he recalls the stories his grandmother had told him about Kiowa culture. He remarks: “.... Her words were medicine; they were magic and invisible. They came from nothing into sound and meaning. They were beyond price; they could neither be bought nor sold” (85). Tosamah further illustrates the story of Tai-me and Kiowas that he has heard from Aho, his grandmother. “The Kiowas were a Sun-dance culture, and Tai-me was their sun dance toll, their most sacred fetish; no medicine was ever more powerful” (85).

Here, Tosamah’s speech turns emotional and through his sermons, Momaday makes the readers aware of the painful history of Kiowa, where they loses their freedom to carry out their cultural ceremony; the sun dance. U.S government issued the order and prevented them in carrying out the dance that they considered their life and essential part of their existence. Though it is an old story, narratives in such Native writings immortalizes these memories. Thus it gets transmitted orally from one generation to another.

Before the dance could begin, a company of armed soldiers rode out from Fort Still orders to disperse the tribe. Forbidden without cause the essential act of their faith, having seen with wild herds slaughtered and left to rot upon the ground, the Kiowas backed away forever from the tree (117).

Thus the novel tries to restore the old memories of a whole tribe, even though Momaday asserts that he is not a spokesperson of “Natives”. Tosamah’s sermon can



be considered as a retrospection done deliberately to instill a kind of identity crisis in the protagonist, Abel. He becomes more conscious of his native identity and aggravates his alienation and loneliness. Like the Kiowa myth, he also degenerates during his life in America. After his life in prison, for killing Albino, he moves to Los Angeles, where he is badly beaten up and is close to death on the beach. So paralleling the myth and present life of Abel, we can relate many similarities and it reveals the lives of many natives in American society.

Abel, though a meek character, never responds to anyone around him, especially after his return from army. But his inability to give vent to aggressive tendencies results in the killing of albino. His self and pride was hurt with the humiliation he encountered from albino at the time of Feast of Santiago. He never dared to encounter anybody, as he was not courageous enough to express himself. But, during the sexual encounter with Angela, immediately after his defeat by albino, he shows his power upon her. He forces her to submit to his will, which he considers his triumph over a white superiority. This might have given him the courage to confront albino and take revenge against him. However, he again moves into a world of silence, after his release from prison. There, Martinez, a cop, takes the place of albino. Martinez is a corrupted cop, who forced the people to pay for him. Abel and Ben encounter him during their return from Henry's place. Ben pays him the money he had and tells about Abel's pathetic condition. Like albino, without any warning attacks him.

Martinez told him to hold out his hands, and he did, slowly, like maybe he wasn't going to at first, with the palms up. I could see his hands in the light

and they were open and almost steady. “Turn them over,” Martinez said, and he was looking at them and they were almost ready. Then suddenly the light jumped and he brought the stick down hard and fast. I couldn’t see it, but I heard it crack on the bones of the hands, and it make me sick. He didn’t cry out or make a sound, but I could see him there against the wall, doubled up with pain and holding his hands. And the light went out and Martinez went by me in the dark, and I could hear him breathe, short and quick, like he was laughing, you know (153).

The sadistic pleasure of a white superior officer by hurting a Native living in reservation can be traced out of the character of Martinez. Unlike the encounter with albino, the encounter with Martinez creates physical break down for Abel, which leads to the end of his life at Los Angeles. He could not revive from the mental and physical destruction caused by this incident. Later, he is seen in his native place, where he tries to repair his lost self and restore his native identity.

Later when he returns to Walatowa, in a totally devastated condition, he sees his grandfather in death bed. It was Francisco who taught his grandson everything he knows about their history and the importance of their culture. Here too the writer uses the method of return to the past, which the critiques named as retrospection approach. This can be considered a conscious effort to emphasize the importance of Native culture and heritage. He also draws a parallelism between Francisco and Abel at many a point in the novel. For example, when Abel remembers his experience in Eagle Watchers society when he was young, Francisco remembers about the bear hunt during his young age. Every incident that is described in the flashbacks has

connection with the tradition of Native culture. "Running" has got a very vital role to play in the novel as it is more attached to the cultural ceremonies of Kiowas. These ceremonies are very much linked to the religious beliefs. Abel's entry to the Eagle Watchers Society when he has seen an eagle carrying a snake across the sky is such a belief. This society is an ancient ritual organization of the Kiowas. The members were easily identifiable with their special appearance and also believed to have some magic sense that attributed so much dignity for them.

Francisco retells so many such tribal history to Abel with the hope of preserving their age old culture and tradition. Even though Abel neglects it in his depressed state, with the death of Francisco, he could understand his duty to be a part of his culture. He undertakes the ritual of dawn running- a ceremony among Kiowas after the death of someone. He runs the ritual race into the dawn and starts to mumble the song. This can be considered as a return to his native culture, accepting his identity. He does the whole burial process of Francisco alone, in accordance with their tradition. So it is understood that he had his traditions within his mind, but felt alienated due to his circumstances. It can also be considered the rejection of White civilization and a return to the native culture.

Abel's feeling of estrangement and alienation can be viewed as the problem of generational conflict that is encountered by many of the younger tribal people. The tradition loses its meaning as it confronts with modernity. Though there is the concept of cyclical movement of history, there are many factors, which directly or indirectly affect the age-old traditions in the different part of the world. One of the main factors is the industrialization that is followed by the vicious circle of

globalization. Traditions came into being as a part of racial, religious, political and spiritual existence of people. It is always connected with the past and considered a significant part of the community that holds it. But, with the emergence of industrialization and modernism, these traditions began to lose its importance. The impact of colonialism and the influence of western culture are the main factors behind the development of modern outlook in the world. With the contact of imperial culture, the traditionalism began lose its value.

The younger generation of tribal people could not understand the meaning and value of tradition as they are more confronted with the cultural tradition of modern America. This is a serious issue for the Native or Latin American tribes, whose life is bounded to their culture. Though, the values of tradition was passed from one generation to another, the people who were bound to practice it were more inclined to the modern culture of West. This resulted in the alienation of their self and identity from their native race and culture. Abel, represents such a younger generation, who was living with one foot in both worlds. But, they are not fully free of the past tradition as they ought to be in their community for many reasons. This leads to the conflict within them. They are in conflict between communal obligations and search of a new Indian identity, which many times leads to the psychological trauma of young natives. This is same in the case of Abel too. He lives in the presence of past in everyday life. Both at his Native place and in modern American society, he is reminded of his communal obligations by different characters in the novel.

Unlike Abel, the characters like Ben Benally and Tosamah make it in the new world while reclaiming connection to their cultural heritage. Ben's connection with Abel and his memories of landscape and heritage of Navajo has been already mentioned. Tosamah, is an orator, physician and Priest of the Sun. Like Abel and Ben, he is also living away from the landscape of his origin. But he sustains his individual and cultural identity by keeping the spirit of nativism within his mind. He offers the sermons to the Relocation people, thereby reinforcing the spirit of his own native identity. Tosamah had a complex character, which is explained like this: "He was shaggy and awful-looking in the thin, naked light: big, lithe as a cat, narrow-eyed, suggesting in the whole of his look and manner both arrogance and agony" (80). He starts his sermon with the beginning of the world as said in the Bible. Suddenly, in between, his attitude changes.

The Priest of the Sun seemed stricken; he let go of his audience and withdrew into himself, into some strange potential of himself. His voice, which has been low and resonant, suddenly became harsh and flat; his shoulders sagged and his stomach protruded, as if he held his breath to the limit of endurance; for a moment there was a look of amazement, then utter carelessness in his face. Conviction, caricature, callousness: the remainder of his sermon was a going back and forth among these (81).

Tosamah stands contradictory to Abel. Tosamah is the man of words and he inspires and educates the people with his words and also by telling the power of words as described in "The Gospel According to John". It is this power of words, which Abel has lost in his course of life. Abel's problem of identity is compounded by his

handicap of loss of articulation and his inability to speak. Tosamah, in his sermons, speaks about the power of word and considers word as God. He talks about the power of words and oral stories in the life of natives. He remembers the stories told by the old Kiowa woman, his grandmother.

The act of listening is crucial to the concept of language, more crucial even than reading and writing, and language in turn is crucial to human society. There is a proof of that, I think, in all the histories and prehistories of human experience. When that old Kiowa woman told me stories, I listened with only one ear. I was a child, and I took the words for granted. I did not know what all of them meant, but somehow I held on them.... When she told me those old stories, something strange and good and powerful was going on.... It was a timeless, *timeless* thing; nothing of her old age or of my childhood came between us (84).

The power of word is so vital and sacred to the tribal culture. Through the words of Tosamah, Momaday addresses his audience and speaks of the importance of word in the life of a human being, especially the natives, as their tradition has been an orally transmitted one. The history, culture, myths, legends and other artefacts of native tradition have been handed over from one generation to other through the magical power of words. Momaday criticizes the white man's world and language in the novel, through the sermons.

In the white man's world, language, too-and the way in which the white man thinks of it-has undergone a process of change. The white man takes such

things as words and literatures for granted, as indeed he must, for nothing in his world is so commonplace. On every side of him there are words by the millions, an unending succession of pamphlets and papers, letters and books, bills and bulletins, commentaries and conversations. He has diluted and multiplied the Word, and words have begun to close in upon him. He is sated and insensitive; his regard for language-for the Word itself-as an instrument of creation has diminished nearly to the point of no return. It may be that he will perish by the Word (84).

Thus, the novelist explains the power of word in native tribal life and the misuse of this by the westerners to impose power upon the colonizers. Abel's agonized inner self is an outcome of his inability to articulate the power of this word through his life.

The novelist uses multiple narrations throughout the novel. The story is narrated from the perspective of different characters in the novel. This is also an important feature of Native oral tradition. The title of each chapters itself shows Momaday's interest in his Kiowa culture. "The Longhair", "The Priest of the Sun", "The Night Chanter" and "The Dawn Runner" represent the images taken from his Kiowa culture. He considered "Storytelling is imaginative and creative in nature. It is an act by which man strives to realize his capacity for wonder, meaning and delight. It is also a process in which man invests and preserves himself in the contexts of ideas. Man tells stories in order to understand his experience, whatever it may be" (Momaday, 1998:88).

Another aspect of oral tradition Momaday uses in the novel is the conscious linguistic appropriation as done by majority of postcolonial Native writers. He has used many terms from vernacular language without any explanation. The novel starts and ends with the customary oral story telling formula in Jemez - Dypaloh and Qtsedaba that denotes once upon a time and ending of a story respectively in English. Francisco also uses many Spanish words when he meets somebody from his own community. The varieties of English are used as kind of resistance to the mainstream writings. Many dialectical expressions along with the appropriation of syntactic and semantic features of language are yet another specialty. Momaday uses the method of constructive subversion in *House Made of Dawn* to deconstruct the Western notion about the colonized and thereby asserting the culture and identity of Natives.

Momaday in his nonfiction *The Man made of Words* tells:

I am interested in the way that a man looks at a given landscape and takes a possession of it in his blood and brain. For this happens, I am certain, in the ordinary motion of life, none of us lives apart from the land entirely; such an isolation is unimaginable. We have sooner or later to come to terms with the world around us- and I mean especially the physical world; not only as it is revealed to us immediately through our senses, but also as it is perceived more truly in the long turn of seasons and of years.... One effect of Technological Revolution has been to uproot us from our soil. We have become disoriented, I believe; we have suffered a psychic dislocation of ourselves in time and space (85-86).



*House Made of Dawn* is the best example for his above mentioned notions. These subtleties of the novel makes it difficult for an 'outsider' to read and understand as it contains rich description of native life and imaginative imageries.

DIVYA N. "MY WORLD, MY SPACE: CHARACTERISATION AND NARRATION IN SELECT POSTCOLONIAL FICTION". THESIS. DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, 2018.

## Chapter IV

### **An Unconventional Voice from the Voiceless: Thematic and Narrative Innovations in Gabriel Okara's *The Voice***

The history of African fiction can be traced back to late 1906, with the publication of a novel by Thomas Mofolo, a South African writer. He wrote it in native language Sesuto, which was later translated into English titled *The Traveller of the East* in 1934 by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. He published two more novels: *Pisteng* (1910) and *Chaka* (1925). He is also the first African writer to be published by British publishing house because of his inclination towards Christianity and English education. Later, two writers from Ghana, E. Casely-Hayford and R.E. Obeng also published their novels through English publishing houses. Even with the status of colonial natives, their works were considered for publication in London. "These three early African novelists shared one common bond: a certain reverence and awe for Christianity, which had led them along the pathway to Western education in the first place. Mofolo's novels were published by the Church mission from which he had received his education" (Larson, 4).

Even though translated and published, these works did not receive much attention of English readers. The first and foremost work from tropical Africa accepted by the Western literary readers was *Palm-Wine Drinkard* written by Amos Tutuola, published by British publisher Faber and Faber in 1951. Unlike the aforementioned writers, he was not into English education nor promoted Christianity through his work. "Moreover his use of the English language was notably original.

Purists were shocked by Tutuola's irreverent use of English language, and as we shall see, the novel as a genre took a slightly different space because of Tutuola's imaginative use of Yoruba folk materials" (4). It was his use of distorted English, which mainly attracted the readers. He was very much criticised from different corners for not showing respect to English, a globally accepted colonial language of power. Along with that, it was generalised that that style of writing will be the style of future Anglophone African writers. However, many African scholars came up defending the different style advocated by the writers of their nation.

The most influential formulation of the viewpoint was that of the so-called *bolekajacritics* Chinweizu, Jemie, and Madubuike. The name *bolekaja* (literally meaning 'come down and fight'), adapted to describe their critical stance, was borrowed from the phrase used by the conductors or 'touts' of Nigerian 'mammy-wagons' (passenger-carrying lorries) in their fiercely competitive vying for customers. Their attacks on many of the leading African writers in English (including Wole Soyinka, John Pepper Clark, and Christopher Okigbo) for 'old fashioned, craggy, unmusical language, obscure and inaccessible diction; a plethora of imported imagery; a divorce from African oral poetic tradition, tempered only by lifeless attempts at revivalism' and their advocacy of the work of Chinua Achebe for its simplicity, directness, and relation to oral traditions, was first published in partial form in the seventies (Chinweizu et al. 1975a, 1979) and was published in complete form in 1983 (Ashcroft, 127).

These writers and critics denied the notion of European model canon and argued that the prejudice in the mind of English writers about African writers is the reason for devaluing the artistic value of African writings. They refuted the universality given to the European style of writing stating it as not the only “worthy” or “readable” style as every native writers have their traditional model before them worthy to be followed. Though not a written one, Africans have a celebrated legacy of oral literature, which is resplendent with stories, folktales, songs, myths, legends etc. Thus, African literature emerged with new forms having some uniqueness of its own in different areas and genres of literature. Even, written in English, there were radical differences from the so-called Standard English and its style of articulation. Many Western and some Native groups of scholars could not accept it initially. But those writers strictly adhered to their new advent of writing and took it as a challenge to affirm their stand that there is no such a universal concept or values as put forward by Europeans in literary world since it is based, moreover influenced, purely on historical and cultural experience of the particular nation and its writers. Gradually the works from African literature gained its importance and attention among the literary world.

Later when Chinua Achebe published his novels, Western critics welcomed it and praised them for its simplicity in style. African novels are often expected to be simple in style and rendering as they were not from the real English speakers who are the authorities of English language. Chinua Achebe’s works received a large audience both from inside and outside Africa, not only for its simple style but also for its themes discussed. He introduced the varied culture and tradition that existed

in his Igbo/Ibo culture, which was accepted by the Africans. S. A. Khayoom, in his essay

The Neo- Anthropological novels of Achebe” has written, “Achebe is the first Nigerian writer to transmute successfully the conventions of the ‘novel’ a European art form into African literature and to use ‘African things’ and employ certain native techniques of narration to give authenticity and African flavour to his novels in order to attract the native audience and overseas readers as well (124).

Following Achebe, many writers came up with a style of their own, saying no to the imitation of European model of writing. Only the European works were considered the canons at that time, which were supposed to be the ideal one to be followed by the writers of other regions. This was being rejected by the postcolonial writers and the reflection of it was seen in African literature too. They denied to follow European writers as their traditional ancestors in writing, instead advocated a new sets of ideas, models and style, which gave importance to the oral tradition and incorporated it in the contemporary literature. Writers from different parts of the continent wrote about their ethnicity, culture and tradition, in English, including their vernacular language in between.

The literary history that started with slave narratives progressively moved to the genres like poetry, novel, short stories, drama etc. The themes of writings also changed accordingly. Many political, cultural and literary movements emerged during the nineteenth century in different parts of the continent, along with the movements by Blacks living in different parts of the world also contributed to the

development of literary field. An attempt to unite Africans all over the world to protest against oppression from Whites was formed as a part of the freedom struggle. The writers played a vital role in this through their writings. “One of the most influential concepts used to forge ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’ for colonised peoples was *Negritude*. *Negritude* has been influential in Africa, the Caribbean and America. [...] One of its aim was to unite peoples living in different nations through their shared ancestry and common origins” (McLeod, 71).

Though, the notion was influenced by the writings of the early twentieth century writers like Claude McKay and W. B. Du Bois ; AiméCésaire and Léopold Senghor, who propounded fought against the racism they felt in Paris and wrote essays and poetry giving importance to ‘Blackness’ stating that more than the skin colour, they are enriched with many qualities and values which are as worthy as Whites. They praised the cultural diversities of Africans and the feeling of unity they maintained amongst each other. These writers debunked the prevailing concept of Blacks in colonial discourses. But the problem with these writers, as criticised by Frantz Fanon, was that they addressed the Africans who were educated in Western culture.

In his famous work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, which is one of the path breaking works of postcolonial literature, Fanon, explains the universal negative concept about Blacks and the dangers and possibilities of national consciousness. There in the chapter “On National Culture” he criticises the idea of *Negritude* and its pitfalls. He brought out the fact that a generalised national consciousness is a false

idea because the problems faced by Africans in different countries were different; therefore, to have a pan- African culture is an unattainable condition.

A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence. A national culture in underdeveloped countries should therefore take its place at the Very heart of the struggle for freedom which these countries are carrying on (Fanon, 232).

Fanon's idea on national consciousness spread a new light of thinking among the native intellectuals, who until that time thought it is a very easy process to establish a pan- African culture. Merely an imitation of European model of culture is not that the natives required for unification of their culture. Instead, they have to realise that their culture had many barbarous qualities before colonisation and that they have to forget to have a new kind of culture, protecting all their glorified past and ancestral traditions. If it was this barbarous, uncivilised culture, which gave Africans savage, uncivilised 'nigger' image before the whole world, it has to be changed first. Along with this, Africans living all over the world, under the shackles of slavery had to be unified under this common consciousness, which was a Herculean task according to Fanon. He has noted that everywhere Whites looked at Africans with the same aversion, but the oppression faced by them differed according to the places they live in. Many of them never had the first-hand experience of their native land, which restricted them to understand the native culture in its full sense. So there should be



an alternate approach to tradition, thereby unifying the whole Africans under a neo-national consciousness.

Later, many scholars went after the ideas put forward by Fanon and experimented a new kind of approach with the native culture, without distorting its value. A constructive revision of culture was recommended in creating national consciousness to resist the colonial power, thus attaining independence. This was shouldered by several contemporaries and predecessors of Fanon. For example, Chinua Achebe devoted many chapters to explain the tradition of his Igbo community in his works. He made the readers aware of his native community, its rituals and important cultural elements through his works. Along with that, he brought out the problems and crisis faced within his community. Thus, he tried to highlight all facets of his culture, rather than merely nostalgic and sentimental snapshots of the past and botherations about future.

Many of the poetry published during and after colonialism were highly critical of the colonial rule that destroyed the geographical, cultural and human resources of Africa. The native poets from within and outside the continent wrote about the glorious past of precolonial Africa and their hatred towards Western civilization. The despair over the lost freedom and the yearnings for a new Africa together with lots of metaphors and symbols representing the culture of native Africa can be seen in the poems. Wole Soyinka, John Pepper Clarke, Gabriel Okara, Ben Okri, Christopher Okigbo are some of the major poets who worked upon the previously mentioned themes. Among this, many were novelists and dramatists, who extended these themes to their other genres of writings.

Gabriel Okara is one among the earliest poets of Africa born in 1921 in the Ijaw community in Bumoundi, Niger Delta region in Nigeria. He was educated at Government College, Umuahia and went to Northwestern University, Evanston, USA to learn comparative journalism. In between, he worked as a book- binder and printer for a publishing company for Colonial Nigeria's government. From there he started his career as a writer. He initially translated many poems from Ijaw to English and poems of his own. His first poem is "The Call of the River Nun" published in 1953, which won an award at Nigerian Festival of Arts. Later, many of his poems like "Piano and Drums", "You Laughed and Laughed and Laughed", "Once Upon a Time" "Mystic Drum" etc. gained the attention of the readers. The conflict between the African culture and Western culture is the theme of almost all of his poems. His poems reflect the real self of an African who is proud of his native identity.

Okara's single novel *The Voice* published in 1964 made a revolutionary change in the field of African literature. It was considered a novel developed in the style of Tutuola's works. Okara's mastery over poetry is echoed in his novel. In the "Introduction" to the novel, Arthur Ravenscroft writes:

That Okara was first known as a poet should perhaps provide a clue to the ways in which he uses language in *The Voice*, and to the way in which the novel is constructed. *The Voice* is very much a poetic novel, not in that sense of the word 'poetic' which suggests artificial beauty and remoteness from ordinary life and a vague emotional roseate glow. Rather, it is poetic in structure, intense and sharp in feeling, close- knit, highly economical in

expression, with something of central importance for the total meaning of the novel going on all the time- almost in every sentence. And the ‘simplicity’ of the story and its meaning is really very deceptive (4-5).

The novel deals with the life of people in Ijaw community in Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Ijaw, also known as Ijo or Izon are a group of indigenous peoples living in the forest regions of the Bayelsa, Delta and River States within the Niger Delta in Nigeria. They are believed to be one of the earliest inhabitants of Southern Nigeria. They are the descendants of the autochthonous tribes of Africa known as the (H)ORU. Ijaw followed this ancient ORU culture, language and tradition. They were initially in different parts of Nigeria, later migrated to this river Delta region, which was supposed to have occurred in between 500 BC and 1000 AD. The traditional Ijo narratives refer back their history to many spiritual/divine initiates of the ancient African tribes.

Ijaw people are very much attached to water and they have symbolic and ritualistic myths related to it in their culture. That is the reason why they are referred to as the “water people”. There are many traditional rituals invoking water spirits. They believed that water spirits are like humans having all their strengths and shortcomings. They also had a strange concept that humans lived among these spirits before they are born and after their deaths. All the traditional and religious ceremonies are centred on these water spirits and ancestors. Ijaw has many different beliefs like this. One important God is Woyengi, the female deity known as Great Mother, whom they believed, created the earth. She, standing on the edge of the universe observed an earth, with no human beings. Then, she came as thunder and

lightning to earth and created some souls with mud sitting on a chair keeping her feet on the 'creation stone'. Then she gave each soul life with freedom to choose to be men or women out of their choice. The Ijaw believed that all the features of their life, like whether they are rich or poor; healthy or sick; long-lived or short-lived etc. was the choice made by their ancestors during the time of creation. Like this, many such beliefs and age-old traditions still exist in Ijaw community.

There are mainly two prominent groups of Ijaw people based on their language, i.e. Izon language. One is Western or Central Izon, consisted of Western Ijaw speakers, with many dialectical variants. The other one is Kalabari, an Eastern Ijaw language speaking clans who reside on the eastern side of Niger- Delta region. There are so many sub-groups other than these two prominent groups. The Ijaw community is the first Nigerian people to have contact with Westerners. They were active mediators in the slave trade between the Westerns and the native tribes living in the interior Africa. Since lived on the riverside, they had immediate contact with the travelers and invaders and this helped the Westerners to persuade them to be their negotiators in slave trade. The main occupation of Ijaw were fishing and farming. Along with that, many leaders who were go-betweens in slave trade had their own fleet of war canoes for use in protecting trade and fighting rivals. This helped them during their internal wars too.

Their status of living is very important. They traditionally lived in small villages and towns, with a hierarchical political system. Each community was ruled by their chiefs, followed by the wealthy classes and then the lower classes. This stratified society is almost same for the different clans. There were heads for each

family, and these elders formed another group in the system. They belonged to the advisory committee of the Chief, who stood with him for all his decisions. The status of this hierarchical system was maintained with all reverence until the arrival of Westerners. Until that time, the tribes had no acknowledgement for the central rule; their world was their Chiefs or Heads. With the arrival of British, they united for the freedom struggle under the common central power, though it took long years to gain independence.

This system of stratified society, with the absolute power of a Chief is portrayed by Okara in his novel, *The Voice*. *The Voice* suggests the voice of the voiceless in the Ijaw community. Ijaw/Ijo, like all other African native tribal society, is structured on a power relationship; with the hierarchical division of a chief and his subjects. The Chief is considered the voice of the God, who controls the whole community. No one dared to raise his or her voice against the Chief. The common pattern of power division can be seen in all clans or native tribes of Africa, as seen in the works of Chinua Achebe, where he describes the Igbo culture and in Wole Soyinka's works, based on Yoruba clan. There are such numerous races in Africa, all under this system of Chief or Elder ruling the whole race. Many have their own Gods and beliefs and so many superstitious rituals to impose power upon the subjects.

The Chief is the supreme authority and there will be a group of elders with him to take decisions and control the group. They ought to support him for all his deeds. The decisions taken by the Chief is considered the final verdict and the people are forced to obey it without any fail. Whoever moves against him is

punished and isolated from the public sphere. The rituals and festivals are announced and celebrated by the chief, who is the main Priest of God. In all ways, he is the authority and abode of power. Power gains its importance and value when it is imposed on somebody. Everywhere there is power structure; but it is exerted through different modes. Here the exertion of power by the Chief is through the name of Gods and superstitions. The people obey them out of fear- the prominent emotion in all human beings. They fear death penalty for their disobedience and the tormented life after death. These kind of dreadful notions govern the people of each tribe.

Most of the Anglophone African fictions can be found with the story of the writers' own tribal community and its peculiarities. It was a new experience for the non- African readers to know many curious, sometimes strange customs and life of these people. Especially for the Western world, where there was only a single ruler or government to control the whole country. Here, each small clans has single ruler and they were the absolute "emperors" in their small world. This was a novel experience for the outer world to know about such a power structure and the superstitious beliefs and rituals. But, for the inhabitants, these things are their life and blood. Even during the colonial rule, for the natives, the community heads were their centre of power, though whites ruled the whole nation. However, long years of colonisation had made an impact on many of the tribal communities, that, they converted to Christianity because of existential problems they faced at some point of their life.

The works of African writers dealt with the conflict of these tribes with Western culture. Chinua Achebe's works are example for this. They dealt with the influence of Christianity over the Igbo community, the mental conflict of people in between the crisis of whether to be with their native identity or to convert to Christianity for a better life, as propounded by the Westerners. These novels can also be viewed in one way a criticism on the autocratic rule of tribal chiefs, which believed to be one of the reasons behind the expansion of colonial rule and western culture in Africa. Like Achebe, many other writers too dealt with the issues of natives and their problems under colonial power. In general, postcolonial works were considered "writing back" against the colonisation or the pathetic story of natives under the Whites. But the African novels highlighted the internal conflicts within their country along with the common themes of identity crisis, double consciousness and trauma related to slavery.

Gabriel Okara also deals with all these problems but in a very different manner. Here, the Chief Izongo controls the tribal people with his autocratic power. The whole community is divided according to the hierarchy as the Chief, Elders and common villagers. The supremacy of the Chief is shown through the character of Izongo. He is worshipped and respected by the villagers. He considers himself as the reincarnation of power. In between the conversation, one of the messengers makes a comment: "He is raising himself to the eye of the sky" (Okara, 25). Immediately others warn him not to talk like that, as it will turn to be a crime to speak against Izongo. Second messenger says metaphorically, "The ears of Amatu are open" (25). The fear of a common villager is clearly shown in these words. They live in fear of

their Chief, who is an anarchic ruler. The villagers wished for a democratic rule where they can enjoy the freedom of expression. But, here the contrary happens and the ruler becomes autocratic and ruthless one.

Chief Izongo, during the meetings, provides free palmwine drink to the people and he praises himself indirectly to make people aware that he is doing things for their welfare. He asks them to rejoice the moments and the people do it like puppets. After expelling Okolo, he calls for the celebration and tells them that he has done a great task by sending Okolo out of Amatu; otherwise, he would have ruined the village. The celebration continued even after many days. In Chapter 11, there is a song sung by the people of Amatu in praise of Izongo. In that, Izongo is a leopard and Okolo a goat. Nobody can face the words of Izongo and nobody can fight against him is the essence of the poem. Izongo feels proud and permits free palmwine and food for the people.

Izongo's dictatorship becomes evident when Okolo returns and the Elders come up with different opinions on giving punishment to him. Izongo furiously stood up and shouted: "I am Chief Izongo. My name, like wind, has reached everywhere, has entered everybody's ears. And people know me as one who always does the straight thing and that is doing what has come out of my mouth" (126). Thus he decided to drive away Okolo.

*The Voice* is a highly political novel that draws in the corruptions and evils existing in the high places. YashodhaRamamoorthy in her essay on the novel writes: "The corruption at high places combined with political ambitions and ruthless pirations of the big people have made the common man helpless and puppet-like.



The vicious and fear clamped atmosphere of Sologa is best summed up in the outlines, without names; the leader is just the Big One (it does not matter who he is)” (19). Okara describes the same conditions in both the places mentioned in the story. If it is Chief Izongo and the Elders in Amatu, it is the Big One and his men in Sologa. So there is no difference between these two places even in a neo- colonial situation. Everyone is after power and position to overrule others, than to be humane, sacrificial and responsible citizens.

Gabriel Okara’s *The Voice* gives a different light on the issue of identity crisis. Here the protagonist Okolo is in search of ‘it’. ‘It’ is not given a definite definition, but he says it is inside everyone. ‘It’ can be the meaning of life, self-satisfaction, truth etc. Okolo says that now ‘It’ is missing inside some people and they should search for it like him. This question “Have you got it” threatens even his very existence in the world. Unlike the usual notion, postcolonial fiction as a lash against colonialism or western culture, this novel questions the autocratic rule inside the tribal communities “itself”. ‘The chief’, who is considered the direct voice of God, turns out to be very undemocratic and this leads to many internal conflicts. Like Achebe’s *Arrow of God*, here too Chief Izongo and his followers create the identity issue among common people. But no one dares to raise his or her protest against these people. The Chief is the final word and whoever questions him is put into trouble. “...she (Tuere) spoke. How do you expect to find ‘it’? How do you expect to find ‘it’ when everybody has locked up his inside” (Voice, 34).

“‘I cannot stop.’ Okolo with whisper, whisper spoke. ‘I cannot stop this thing. I must find it. It is there. I am the voice from the locked up insides which the

Elders, not wanting the people to hear, want to stop me. Their insides are smelling bad and hard at me, but..." (34).

The elders of the society could not accept a different voice from their community, a challenging lone voice against the whole system. Okolo, in a public meeting, was questioned by the chief and Elders. He said he is in search of 'it', though he could not explain its meaning correctly. Okara, purposefully, uses 'it' so that it could be explained according to the perspective of each individual or community. The African tribal culture is structured in such a way that those who walk against the traditional values are considered outcast and traitor and is even expelled from the community. The unconventional and ethnic beliefs and traditions can never be ousted from the minds of native people. But here majority of the people are not bothered about the perishing traditional values. They move along with the meaninglessness of life and celebrate their life along with the society. The artificiality and hollowness in human life is narrated through the characters. The whole community, except Tuere, and the cripple, Ukule, are set against the character of Okolo. Though many understand the truth that they are in a wrong way blindly following their chief, they could not raise a single word against the Elders. Tuere dares to challenge the chief Izongo and his followers since she was ostracized, telling she is a witch. Therefore, she has no ties with the society and rules and everyone fears her being a witch. At one point, she gives Okolo a place to hide in her hut to escape from the people of Amatu who came to punish Okolo.

Tuere is portrayed in the novel to throw a light upon the superstitious beliefs in the African society. She was accused of killing her parents and those who

proposed her with her witchcraft. She lived lonely in a hut away from the town and people. Okolo remember her;

All these Okolo remembered. He also remembered how in a circle of strong eyes and strong faces she stood being accused of taking witchcraft to kill her father and mother. They then from the town drove her. His inside then smelled bad for the town's people and for himself for not being fit to do anything on her behalf. But this feeling in his inside had slowly, slowly died with each dying year under the mysterious might of tradition. And now wonder held him for her protecting him (31).

Tuere's identity is questioned here and is ostracized though she is innocent. Even the educated people of the community treat her as a witch and fear her presence. The identity of a human being is taken away from her and the conventional cowards of Amatu ascribe an identity of a witch to her. This transformation initially devastates Tuere. Later she herself copes up with her identity problem and accepts it by living an alienated life. She could understand the dilemma of Okolo because she has already gone through that situation. She might have asked several times to herself the question that Okolo ask now, "What is the meaning of 'it', or Have you got it?" This is why she protects Okolo from the cowards and supports him. Until the end of the novel Tuere offers moral mental, support to Okolo. She says at the end 'Let them come and take us. I have been dead many years. So I fear no more. From this standing moment, where ever you go, I go' (127). Her words reflected all the "things inside" her mind and thoughts that she wanted to convey to the people since the time she was ostracized. Her words had some impact on the crowd that the

celebrations after her question were like this: “But singers and dancers were lifeless like soup without pepper...the people began to move away silent.” (122).

Tuere’s words were thought provoking to the crowd as it ignited the fire hidden in all of them. Tuere and Okolo were ready to face the consequences after that. By that time, she has been emotionally attached to Okolo. Her affection for him can be seen in her words when he left for Sologa and when he returned. She tried to stop him from going out to meet Izongo during the celebration. She feared that they will harm him and begged him to stay back. She had confessed that the sweetness in her inside was once lost and she felt it again in the presence of Okolo. Finally, at the end too, she accompanies Okolo to death. Though it was the decision of Elders to get rid of them from Amatu forever, she happily accepts it.

This shows the stubborn attitude of a person who has succeeded in the fight with the society and its illogical beliefs. Unlike Okolo, she faced the hard realities and never gave up to those situations. Okolo on the other hand, is always in conflict with the people around him and fails to convince them with his words. The literal meaning of his name ‘Okolo’, i.e., inner voice could not attain its fullest sense as he is caught in the dilemma of tribal cultural manifestations. Even in Sologo, where he goes for a journey, he was tortured and belittled for questioning his Ijaw tribe’s existing rules.

Through this novel, Okara tries to bring forth the corrupted rule in the tribal community. Like all postcolonial African novels, this does not celebrate the cultural diversity of the native nor explains the conflict between African native and western colonizers. This novel describes the spiritual void of native tribes, ruled by corrupted

leaders. Their identity and thoughts are governed by these people and they oppressed the citizens to mere path blind followers who never question the rule. Okara does not move in depth to the cultural identities of Ijaw tribe and their traditions and beliefs.

Instead, he tries to describe the internal conflict within the native people and the political upheavals. Eustace Palmer has stated, “A cry of protest against spiritual sterility, inhumanity and materialism that Okara sees everywhere about it, and it is a message of obvious relevance” (166). The degradation of moral values among the citizens creates intolerance in the nation. This leads to the identity problem as the people could not find a resort to depend on during time of crisis. If someone opines against the existing conditions and thinks differently from others, is considered insane. “‘Your head is not correct.’ Chief Izongo shouted at Okolo.” (38).

The moral degradation of the common people can be considered the outcome of the corrupted rule existing in the concerned nation. Here, Okara tries to expose the corrupted rulers, especially the Chieftains controlling the clans in Africa. Most of them are autocratic ones, who misuse the power for their self- interest and development. Their egocentric character always leads to the internal tensions that end as a vicious circle, degrading the moral values and serenity of the whole life in that place. The citizens are always in surveillance by the ruler to know if anyone is growing as a threat to his throne. Even the laws, constituted for helping the common subjects stand hostile to them under such corrupted political rule.

Okolo, who returned home after completing his studies, is disillusioned by the condition of his community. He is dejected by the corrupted, unfaithful and amoral political and social life in his village. He could not find happiness anywhere.

Everyone was expecting some “coming thing” and happily waiting for that. But Okolo could not because, “... what was there was no longer there and things had no more roots” (25). This forces him for his search for *it*. This creates tension in the village. The Chief and Elders thought that his search would be a threat to the existing system. So they warn him to stop his search.

Chief Izongo projects himself a good ruler, who is concerned of his subjects. He gave a feeling that he did everything for the welfare of the people. Before taking a decision, he asked for a common opinion of the people to make them believe that he is a very democratic leader, who is ready to accommodate everyone in the governing process. But, in real, he was a hypocrite because he did everything according to his wish though he asked for a public opinion. That is the reason behind his animosity towards Okolo. When Okolo raised questions, Izongo feared that he would lose his hold over the people. Until that time, people had been in a world of make-believe constructed by Izongo. They had never been given a chance to think against the Chief. Even they knew that they are being suppressed no one expressed it out of fear for the ruler’s wrath upon them. Even the Elders are aware of Izongo’s dictatorship and maladministration. Tebeowei, one of the elders, tells Okolo that everybody is aware of what is right and what is wrong. But all are caught in the hands of bad spirits that make them blind to see goodness in fellow beings.

It is a bad spirit that is entering everybody and if you do not allow it to get you, they say it’s you that has it.... ‘I see in my inside that what your spoken words are true and straight. But you see it in your inside that we have no power to do anything. The spirit is powerful. So it is they who get the spirit

that are powerful, and the people believe with their insides whatever they are told. Everything in the world has changed. The world is no longer straight. So if a person turns his palms down I also turn mine down. If he turns them up, opens them and shows them to the eye of the sky. I also turn mine up and show then to the eye of the sky. So turn this over in your inside and do as we do so that you will have a sweet inside like us.’ (48-49).

Like Tebeowei, there are many who knew that what they are doing is not right and they are being exploited by the authorities. But they feared to speak it out as Okolo did. Abadi, another elder of the village, is a learned man. But, he has sacrificed all his degrees and intelligence to get a position among the Elder community as he thought that power is more important than any other achievements in life. Izongo has given an important position among the group. Abadi’s knowledge, in his view, is nothing if compared to the leadership quality of Izongo. Though he had been to many Western countries, he understood that his service was needed for his native land and thus returned to Amatu. Okolo’s identity is questioned by these kind of people. On the contrary, the intervention of such kinds of people aggravates his quest. He is projected as a coward, a mad man, a man without chest and shadow, “a stinking thing like a rotten corpse” (72) and many such expressions to degrade his confidence and thereby morally destroying his identity. This was done as the authorities feared of him influencing others, which will be a set back to their autocratic rule.

Many strategies were adopted to convince the people about the irrationality and imprudence behind Okolo’s search for *it*. Abadi addressed the crowd and spoke

for Izongo and against Okolo. With his eloquence, he refuted the words of Okolo. He asked the people not to hear the words of Okolo as it is against Izongo and Amatu. He told:

Listen not to him, fellow Elders! His mouth is foul. You and I are comrades in arms and we must see this thing through to its logical conclusion. So let us with one voice answer the question that our leader has put before us a short while ago. We are in democracy and everyone has the right to express any opinion. But we have to think what our leader has done for us (45).

Though an autocratic ruler, Abadi speaks of Izongo as a democratic one. Nevertheless, there is a hidden warning in the last sentence, which reminds the people not to move against his decisions. Okolo, on the other hand, is fearless as he is confident of his rights and transparency of his quest. He could feel the cowardness of the elders and retorts like this: “‘whom are you fighting against?’ Okolo again interrupted him. ‘Are you not simply making a lot of noise because it is a fashion in order to share in the spoils. You are merely making a show of straining to open a door that is already open. You go and sleep over this,’ Okolo said”(44).

Immediately written after the Independence of Nigeria in 1960, the novel depicts the after effects of colonization even after gaining freedom. This previously mentioned dialogue of Okolo could be thus considered a consciously written one by Okara as a criticism against the influence of Western rule. Through Okolo, the writer intended to tell the readers that the present rulers of Africa is trying to mimic the Westerners through the act of imposing power rather than holding an egalitarian concept. “A door that is already open” signifies the colonial rule. The citizen of



Amatu is not free from the clasps of oppression, as their native rulers followed the dictatorial rule that was initiated in their country during the domination Whites. So, Okolo asks the leaders to sleep over the matter and come up with an answer for his questions. Thus, through *The Voice*, Okara addresses a crucial political situation in Africa.

When he fails to get an answer from Amatu, he searches for it in Sologa. There too the situation was same. The people there are under the control of the 'Big One' whom they fear. Okolo meets a constable, who agrees to help him to meet the Big One. Even that officer is under the influence of the Big One. He says: 'I am a law man be but what you say of the big man is so big. I must accurately take it down.' (75) His fear for that person is clear in his words. 'My Jesus' I have a family, man:- a wife and two children and one is in collage. My Jesus, go to the big man's house and look for human bones?' 'You are an intelligent man be.' 'The law looks at no one's face', Okolo said. Oho, you are a new man be in Sologa'. Then he whispered into Okolo's ear, 'The law looks at this big men's face. I tell you this because you are an intelligent man be' (79).

But the constable, though he promised to help Okolo, never came back. So it is evident that, even the 'law man' (80), is afraid of doing things against the Big One. If it is Izongo in Amatu, it is the Big One in Sologa. 'Big One' has given no identity or name by Okara, to generalize the situation in Africa or in any other parts of the world. The common citizens are governed by dictators at times that make their life miserable. Many people at Sologa pay no attention to his question, as they have

already known the things happened at Amatu. That is the reason why he was welcomed by the owner of the eating-house and advises him on this matter.

The writing on the walls of this house is very interesting and highly meaningful/suggestive to the situation discussed by the author in his novel *Okolo* read.' Even the Whiteman's Jesus failed to make the world fine. So let the spoilt world spoil....'Eat and drink O, die one day go...' 'If we die tomorrow Mammy water go bury we' (82-83). There are all the thoughts that the author intended to convey to the readers through his characters. The white man tried to civilize the Africans to make them live in a better condition. This is criticized through the above-mentioned slogan waiter in the eating-house. Even the white men's God could not make the world of white's fine. Then why should they worry for having a world of peace and justice. They ought to move along with the flow of water. He told Okolo that there were many such persons having the problem of identity crisis. They all had problems like search for their identity, to get the meaning of life and their strong protest for the political anarchy in the society. But, they all failed in their attempts and gave up their search. They understood that it is better to live accepting the things happening around as such without questioning. The eating-house owner uses many proverbs and parables to teach Okolo of the consequences he is going to face if he is not willing to give up his search of *it*, entering in to the highly complex world of politics.

The word 'Nigeria' appears nowhere in the novel, but few readers will doubt that Okara is commenting on Nigerian politics at a specific point of history.

What we do have, however, is a vivid account of a fictional place in West

Africa, where the customs depicted and the language used are unmistakably of West Africa, but are not by actual explanatory statement limited to one part of the world, thus enabling the parable to be applied to any country where the political situation is broadly similar to that presented in the fictional places of Amatu and Sologa (Ravenscroft, 11).

The owner is the representative of a modern man, who, amidst of the entire existing issues; find a space of his own to live with all happiness and satisfaction. He tells that it is better to forget about others and live for oneself, so that there will be no failures in the life. To run after many complex issues is like searching something in a heap of rubbish things; because, even the good things will have the stench of those garbage, not the good smell that they actually possess. Many of the people with “sweetness inside” (84) are those who were once after such issues. They tried to address issues in the society and understood it is like “a tree on you falling and with your hands you want to hold it, knowing you will be crushed to death” (84). So owner asks him not to think of big things and make his life traumatic one.

In Sologa, Okolo meets a whiteman. He feels that he will get an answer from that person for a whiteman is expected to be intelligent enough to understand the meaning of his search. He warns Okolo that he might be put in mental asylum if he does not stop his search. There too Okolo could not find a solution for his crisis. Instead of consoling him, the whiteman also asks him to forget his dilemma and go back to his native land. The whiteman also is at the command of some authority that even he understands the problem of Okolo, he is helpless. He says, “I’ve got a job to do and I will do it (87). His words also give the readers a picture of the independent

Africa when he replies Okolo for the question whether he will do it even if he knows it is wrong. “Don’t ask me. This is your country. Ask your people.’[...] You wait until we move out and see what will happen to men like you” (87). There is a hidden warning from the Whiteman that the condition of African natives will have no change even after the end of colonial rule. The internal conflicts existing in Africa, even today justifies the words of whiteman in the novel.

Okolo’s character is facing an existential problem throughout the story. He could not find a space of his own in any place, as he is haunted of the meaning of *it*. Either Amatu or Sologa provides him a comfortable place. “The complex existential problem of an individual is simplified in the novel as a search for *it* which forms the theme of the novel” (Ramamoorthy, 21). *It* gains different meaning as the novel progresses. This search leads him to many crises as feels alienated from his own native village and people.

Okara, along with the search of an individual for his identity, deals with the some common issues like the criticism on patriarchy, gender discrimination and superstitious beliefs of a native culture, which forms it a postcolonial novel. The journey to Sologa from Amatu in the canoe reveals the illogical patriarchal notions existing in the society. The canoe contained people from different strata of life. Okolo sat next to a young girl of about sixteen years old. She is going to meet her to-be-husband along with her future mother-in-law. In between their journey, it rained heavily. As stated by the author: “Then the sky suddenly broke and when the rain from the above poured, it passed telling. The rain drops were like sixth- inches cannon balls. It did not rain like rain. It rained more than raining” (Okara, 62). The

further explanation gives the reader the picture how the people sleeping woke up and tried hard to cover themselves. Since there was heavy rain, thunderbolt and wind, the canoe moved unsteadily in the river. The travelers grew panic and began to curse the crew of the canoe and at the same time, many began to pray as if they are going to die. The whole description reveals many superstitions in the African culture.

‘Ee, Woyengi, sorry for us!’

‘Things of the soil of the town, for today only save us!’

‘How is it! How is it! Amadasu will you see us die?’

‘Blow it away, blow it open!’

‘Things that follow me! This is about-to-happening big thing take away!’

‘KolokumoEgbesu! How?’ (61-62).

One of the women in the group invoked her clan’s deity “Benikurukuru! Benikurukuru! How? Have you come to take me? How! Have I in something defaulted? A sign show. He- who- owns- us, a sign show. Show.... A sign show. Anything you ask I will sacrifice. Only show....” (62).

Like this many of them consider it as some curse upon them for their bad deed, expresses their apologies for their misdeed, and beg for the mercy. They are not bothered of the co-passengers. In a short time the wind abated and stopped, also the rain and thunderbolt disappeared. It became calm and the people inside it believed it as the result of their belief in God and their prayers. The woman who asked her clan deity for the favour did not forget to thank also. “‘Today you have shown again. You have shown,’ shouted the woman in ecstasy. ‘Guard me safely to Sologa and back home safely guard me. I will make sacrifice. I vow!’” (64).

Through these kind of narrations, Okara tries to bring out the beliefs of African natives, whose life is very much associated with their deities and age old superstitions, which turn up during the time of crisis.

The incident that happened in the canoe exposes the meanness of the people to find fault with others. When it rained, the mats on the roof of the canoe began to leak and the passengers tried to cover themselves with the umbrellas and coats they had with them. Okolo put a raincoat, though an old one with holes, over his head. The girl going to her husband pressed on Okolo for warmth, with no other intentions. It was out of his innocence and care for others, he shared his raincoat to that young girl.

And Okolo sitting with the girl pressing on him under the raincoat covering them, talked to his inside. 'Protect her.... She is a male person, she is a male person, a male person, male person, male person, male person.....protect her. She knows nothing. A male person (63).

The different treatment of gender issues is evident through the episode of the journey to Sologa and the events happened after the Okolo's help to the young girl going to meet her husband. Okolo helped her as he thought it is the responsibility of a man to help a woman at the time of need. This motivates him to share his coat with that girl. She slept on his lap without any hesitation as if she felt a kind of security. But the passengers, especially her mother-in-law and the Whiteman's cook, along with other men and women blamed Okolo for his deed and argued that they both have committed a bad thing. Okolo defended and told naively that, "I did nothing to her. Her clothes all were wet and cold and she sat shivering and so I only spread my

raincoat and covered her and she slept. And all the time she slept, in my inside, a boy I too her. I, in the way you think ,did not touch her”, he ended naively.....’you cannot a thing I have done not put on my head. ‘Thus strongly Okolo spokes.’”(66)

The girl, Ebiere, also was shocked hearing the false judgments made upon their act of sitting together. She shook her head and denied the allegations made against them. She courageously encountered the situation. She did not speak a word, instead, stood calmly as if it was not her matter. The mother-in-law is worried about her daughter-in-law’s chastity and makes her swear upon the deity that Okolo has not touched her body.

Only the canoe engine man stood with Okolo and argued that they should be allowed to speak of the truth rather than passing comments blindly on a matter that has no clarity. He fought verbally with white man’s cook, a few men and women over this issue. Okolo thanked him telling that there are only a few people, who can understand his inside. If anyone tries to speak of his inside, he will be spoiled. All these comments made by Okolo draw the attention of readers to the moral degradation happening in Africa, in particular, and world in a broader perspective.

The real bondage of human beings is also seen in this, through the character of the young girl, Ebiere and her brother. In section 8, the writer takes the readers to the patriarchal prejudices existing in the society. Ebiere is taken to the elders, a group of old men and women, for her misconduct. She was made to stand in the middle of the circle of these people and questioned, “Did he touch you?”.....Speak everything out now. If you everything speak out not, things of the ground will hold you. Do you this know?” (101) The girl stood without uttering a word. She is very

strong at heart and finally she busted out in loud voice: “Again and again I have said he did not touch me,” said the daughter-in-law strongly. “I have the straight thing spoken but you say that is not straight thing be. Do you want me to say the thing that is not straight? If what I have said does not enter your insides, let me swear by the things of ground, things of the town and swear by the dead. I have my body prepared.” (102).

She is scolded for raising her voice against the elders and accused for not being modest like the women of earlier times. She is expected to be polite and down-to-earth, who ought to respect and obey the elders, especially men. She was not ready to give up her dignity before others, so she spoke confidently that she has not done anything wrong. This boldness and stern character of a young woman is not an expected behaviour in a particular society, especially in African tribal community, where the women are not given any space to live with freedom to speech. This infuriated the elders and they could not bear the attitude of Ebiere. Everyone except her brother spoke against her. He stood up and took her away from the “court” of elders telling that he knows her sister well and what she is saying will be right. He does not want the ugly clutches of fake morality tear apart.

Though Okara is criticizing the corrupted, morally degraded society, there are a very few relations coming in between which serves as a relief for those who are optimistic about a good future of the country with unity. There are many constraints of a patriarchal, superstitious and a rigid society prevailing in Africa. Okara exemplifies it through the character of Okolo, Tuere and Ebiere.



Tuere is another character, who is a victim of the above-mentioned society. She is ostracized from the Ijaw society. Even her presence is considered bad omen and people stayed away from her. Okolo remembered her past: how she has been driven away from the town calling her witch. She had been a girl of unusual habits. She kept herself alone from others, did not flirt with boys though was very beautiful. Everyone thought that she had no physical qualities of a woman that she spoke to herself and not to anybody else.

They openly called her a witch when her mother and father died one after the other within a few weeks and every young men who proposed to her died one after the other. All these Okolo remembered. He also remembered how in a circle of strong eyes and strong faces she stood being accused of witchcraft to kill her father and mother. They then from the town drove her (31).

Even Okolo, initially, believed in such things. But gradually, when he learned about mysterious tradition, his beliefs changed and began to understand the innocence of Tuere. She gave shelter to Okolo later, when people came to take away Okolo, she tried to protect him.

Tuere is also a bold woman character in the novel. Okara has given a different voice for women in his work. They are bold enough to face any difficult situations. They are strong enough to defend their deeds and make other feel fear upon their confidence. Tuere's presence, in her words, creates fear in the mind of the elders, not as she is a witch, but for her "inside" which thought differently from others. She argues with elders for Okolo's life telling that what he talk is right. She demands the common people of Amatu to re-think the orders of Chief Izongo and

elders as they are only ruling them, not for their development. When she is given a chance to speak before elders, she sharply criticises the misdeeds of Izongo and other elders and questions them: "... You fear every little thing, you are startled by every little sound like one alone at night in the forest is startled by every little sound. It is fear in your insides for one harmless man that is pushing you to do this thing you want to do. You do not want to see him for his merely asking if you got *it*..." (121).

If the two young women characters are of courageous nature, the men are cowards, who fear to speak a word against their Chief. Though many feels that they are leading a life of puppets in the hands of the Elders, they feared to retort. Okolo is the first voice to do that. So, the novel is a collective voice, which many wished to raise, but suppressed because of fear of life.

Okolo stands for the inner voice, the collective conscience, of a society although all the others do not possess the clarity of vision or courage to see it. Nonetheless through the uneasiness felt by some minor characters like Tiri, Abadi or Tebeowei and the kind hotel-keeper of Sologa at Okolo's convictions pitted against prevalent malpractices in the society, the novelist makes it amply clear that Okolo was right and that it was not yet proper time for the people to generalize it (Ramamoorthy, 21).

Through the conversation of Okolo and Tebeowei, Okara reveals the influence of money and materialistic pleasures in the life of modern man. If the ancestors had a straight and clean mind, ready to sacrifice themselves for the society, the modern society itself is governed by corrupted leaders. The people also follow them blindly

to gain fame and power. They run after money and forget the commitments to fellow beings and society. Those who behave in other way is considered insane and kicked out of the community. This is exemplified in the Second chapter of the novel to make the reader aware that the whole community in Amatu is not under the bad influence of Izongo. There are a few, who thinks against his worst governance.

Tiri is one of the messengers, who go to the Elders to deliver the message from Izongo. He tries to convince the other messenger that the money they are earning out of their present work is bad money and it will not bring anything good in their life. He is a common man who realizes the truth behind Okolo's search. However, the other one is worried of the consequences that will follow them if they speak a word against Chief Izongo. Tiri continues to talk of the power of word, which is like water. Water has the power to control the whole universe and nothing will survive when there is no water. So the power of water cannot be denied. Like that, the words also are very important as it has the power to construct and destruct the world. Tiri tells the fact that it is not Okolo alone who is aware of the illegal things happening around them. Almost all the people know it, but not ready to respond out of their fear. Tiri says:

You think Okolo is the first to have these words grow in his inside? No. Just as you are trying to kill them, many there are who are the same thing doing. Nobody withstands the power of the spoken word. Okolo has spoken. I will speak when the time is correct and others will follow and our spoken words will gather power like the power of the hurricane and Izongo will sway and

fall like sugarcane.... Our words will have power when we speak them out.

Let's wait till the time is correct (94-95).

Tiri speaks of the common notion of the villagers of Amatu. It is because of the anxiety and worry over the after effect that everyone is keeping silence. If they had a chance to speak out, it is sure that they will raise their voice against the unjust things happening around them. Tiri feels that such a time is not far and there will be a great protest against the dictators ruling the nation.

Abadi, the character introduced earlier, undergoes a change by the end of the novel. He has attended the best universities in England, America and Germany. Izongo is very fond of him because of his knowledge and is given the position of second leader. Initially, he is the one who spoke strongly against Okolo for going against their Chief and asked the public not to hear Okolo's words. But, later, when Okolo comes back to Amatu, a change in the approach of Abadi can be noticed. He asks Izongo to give a chance for Okolo and Tuere to speak and share their problems. Izongo feels surprised of the change in Abadi's character. Even in the meeting of the Elders, to take action against Okolo for his return to Amatu dishonouring the decision taken by Izongo and Elders, Abadi sits as if lost in thought.

Otutu, another leader, suggests expelling Okolo out of the village forever. But Abadi asks not to take an immediate action, rather give him a chance to speak to Okolo and try to correct him. He could understand the common feeling of the public from their response in the celebration held by Izongo. Many people stood away without participating. From this, Abadi, since a learned man, could read the mind of those people that they too are moving in the path of Okolo. So he thinks it is better

to persuade Okolo to give up his search than driving him away from Amatu. If Okolo is driven out, there will be many such Okolos in future, which will put Amatu in trouble than ever before. Thus, by the end of the novel, many changes happen in the state of mind of people in Amatu. Before Okolo and Tuere were driven out of Amatu by tying them up in a canoe, Ukule, the cripple comes to meet them. Tuere asks him to stay in the town and tell the people about their story to make people aware of the bad things happening around them. Though the novel ends with the death of Okolo and Tuere, Okara gives the novel an optimistic ending note with the reassuring words of Ukule that, “Your spoken words will not die” (127).

The novel had a mixed reception when it was published, as it was a slim novel written in a simple style. Since written by a well-known poet, in a poetical language, it did not gain much attention. Many criticised it for its unconventional use of English language; also condemned the simplicity as old-fashioned in the world of literature. Initially, there were only reviews expressing the reader’s cold reception of the novel and on their difficulty to understand the native symbolism and irregular linguistic and narrative strategies employed in it. The narration of the story is in a linear fashion, but weaving the incidents happening in different places in alternate chapters. When Okolo moves to Sologa, his journey is described in one chapter and in the next chapter, the condition in Amatu after driving him off is detailed. So this parallel description gives the reader an ease to follow the whole story without any interruption. The search of Okolo for ‘*it*’ creates an ambiguity in the readers, as it is not given a correct explanation in the narrative. This gives a dramatic effect to the story. Each scene is explained with utmost details with many

metaphorical sentences to stress the seriousness of the situation. For example, in the description of narration when Okolo surrenders before the Chief and his people, Okara uses a different narrative technique with lots of allegories to emphasise the worst treatment Okolo receives from the people.

The people snapped at him like hungry dogs snapping at bones. They carried him in silence like the silence of ants carrying a crumb of yam or fish bone. Then they put him down and dragged him past thatch houses that in the dark like pigs with their snouts in the ground; pushed and dragged him past mud walls with pitying eyes; pushed and dragged him past concrete walls with concrete eyes; pushed and dragged him along the waterside like soldier ants with their prisoner. They pushed and dragged him in panting silence, shuffling silence, broken only by an owl hooting from the darkness of the orange tree in front of Chief Izongo's house. Okolo became tired. His mouth opened slackly and the breath came out without reaching his chest. His feet belonged to him no longer. But his head was clear and his inside was ruffled like water in a glass (38-39).

Many such narratives can be seen throughout which makes the novel vibrant amidst the passive and cold behaviour of Okolo, the protagonist. Dr. Mrs. Ila Sinha, in her essay, "Narrative Technique in Gabriel Okara's *The Voice*" explains that the important aspect of Okara's narrative technique is its cinematic effect. She exemplifies it through the description where the people of Amatu pursue Okolo as ordered by Chief Izongo. "...Okara achieves his effect through juxtaposition and alteration of descriptions of the pursuers and the pursued" (181). The narration shifts

from Okolo running to escape from the pursuers, immediately changing to the actions of mass following him, again to Okolo running fast. This kind of narrative technique adds to the dramatic effect of the novel. The incident at Sologa is yet another example for this. His search for the Big One leads him to many unexpected incidents that evoke a kind of suspense in the readers. When he steps out of the canoe, a stranger approaches and tells him that he will take him to a place where he can find *it*. He was embarrassed thinking, how someone in Sologa, a strange place for him, could get to know the story of his search. The whole happenings narrated have given an eerie effect to ignite the curiosity of the reader.

Okolo was taken to an unknown place and put in a dark room. “Okolo lay still in the darkness enclosed by darkness, his thought picked in his inside. Then his picked thoughts his eyes opened but his vision only met a rock-like darkness... His thoughts in his inside began to fly in his inside darkness like frightened birds hither, thither, homeless...” (Okara, 76). The narration of the story continues like this until the end. Chief Izongo’s upper hand over the community is narrated through dialogues. Yet another feature of Okara’s narrative style is the use of conversations. The novel, though a short one, is redundant with dialogues. Along with the first and third person point of narrative, the story is unveiled through the conversation between the characters. The dialogues between Okolo and different characters, at different stages reveal the whole motive of the novel. Similarly, the changes in the attitude of the people are made evident through the debate between the two messengers.

Okara makes a psychological journey through the minds of different people to bring out the complexities existing in the African native tribal communities. The people, fed up of the life under the rule of Chief Izongo remember the past, where they had ancestors with good heart. Okara's poem "Once Upon a Time" is such a poem, which sympathises with the present generation who do everything without heart. The poet is nostalgic about the romantic past, where the people used to smile at each other with their eyes and hearts, shake each other's hands out of love and welcome and bid farewell guests whole-heartedly without any hypocrisy. The poet laments the loss of innocence, love and compassion among the present generation. This theme is included in *The Voice*, describing the hypocrisy of the modern rulers, who wears a mask of virtue and sophistication under the real face of corruption, betrayal and selfishness.

In the novel, at many instances, there are references to the ancestors, who had straight mind and sweetness inside. Tiri tells the black shoe man, "You say water has my inside entered. I know not whiteman's book. Their book learning is different from earth's knowledge which has come down from our ancestors. Book teaches not that" (93). This explains the in-depth knowledge the ancestors had gained out of their experience, not from the formal education. Okara, through these words, attempts to glorify the traditional experience of Africans, which was once belittled by the educated Westerners. In Chapter 9, Okolo remembers his father's final words. It gives him confidence to speak and act confidently before the people who came to question on the things happened in the canoe. Okolo's father told that he was a person who did and spoke straight things. He could have become rich if he



was ready to sacrifice his truthfulness before the rulers. But he was not ready to do that. So, in his deathbed he advises Okolo:

The world is changing and engine and canoes and whiteman's houses have everybody's inside filled. But open your ears and listen, son. Let the words I am going to speak remain in your inside. I wanted you to know book because of the changing world. But whiteman's book is not everything. Now listen, son, believe in what you believe. Argue with no one about whiteman's god and Woyengi, our goddess. What your inside tells you, you believe and, always the straight thing do and the straight thing talk and your spoken words will have power and you will live in this world even when you are dead. So do not anything fear if it is the straight thing you are doing or talking (106).

The novelist takes the readers to a "metaphorical or even metaphysical level" (Ramamoorthy, 22) where he handles many existential questions like "What is their meaning of life?" (Okara, 111). During his journey, back to Amatu in a canoe full of people, Okolo sits alone without touching anybody's body since he had a bad experience for helping the young woman while travelling to Sologa. He learned that it is better to keep away from people and smile inside, because one can touch another one's body, but not the heart and soul. Everyone in the world live a life of their own, making themselves comfortable, not caring about the person sitting next to him or her. At this moment he thinks that the meaning of *it*, he is searching for is the meaning of life. He thinks, "Each man to one meaning of life; each woman to one meaning of life [...] there may be only one meaning in life and everybody is

groping along in their various ways to achieve it like religion- Christians, Moslems, Animists- all trying to reach God in their various ways [...] For him it has no name. Names bring divisions and divisions, strife. So let it be without a name; let it be nameless.... (111-112).

Thus, Okara weaves many vital things related to human beings and their problems of existence in the world through his work. Through a simple theme he brings in many complex ideas haunting the contemporary man and makes the narration interesting. The narrative technique employed by Okara reaches its fullness with the appropriation of language used in it. The use of English language without retaining to the standard grammatical pattern gives a new experience of the readers. He has constructed lexical and semantic structure in English as he used it in his vernacular language, Ijaw.

While it is true that one may regard the frequent departures from normal English vocabulary, syntax, and sentence patterning as another attempt by an African writer to convey the un-Englishness of his character's everyday language and experience, this is a matter that goes far beyond the mere injection of what Roy Campbell called 'local colour' into the story. The nature of what Okara is trying to do in this novel demands that the language in which he attempts it should be fresh and arresting, without being so startling as to defeat clarity and try the reader's patience unnecessarily. For this reason I find the word 'experimental' a useful one to describe Okara's handling of the language. The theme of a courageous man pitted against national smugness and indifference is not new, but Okara's approach to, and

handling of, it are, I do not know Ijaw, but I would infer that Okara draws upon some of the linguistic characteristics of Ijaw when he hammers out this unusual English of his (Ravenscroft,15).

This un-English usage has given him a lot of freedom to use linguistic variants accordingly. His consistent use of 'inside' throughout the novel is noticeable one. It implies different meanings according to different situations. For example, 'Your teaching words do not enter my inside' (Okara, 36). Here inside holds the meaning that he cannot understand what the elders are telling. In the sentence, 'You have a very ugly inside' (37) it means that, Izongo has a bad character or personality. His mind is not good. Like this Okara uses it in many contents.

In many African languages the words for what we call the spirit, or the soul, or the inner life of a human being, can be literally translated into English as 'inside' or 'shadow'. In English, it is very difficult to use words like 'spirit' and 'soul' without evoking the emotional and intellectual associations that these words have acquired from centuries of religions and moral writing and speech. Okara in fact evades this difficulty by translating directly from African equivalents (Ravenscroft, 16).

In the chapter "Re-placing Language", Bill Ashcroft et.al says: "In *The Voice* (1964) Gabriel Okara attempts to develop a 'culturally relevant' use of english by adapting Ijaw syntax and lexical parameters to english. This exercise specifically demonstrates the importance of the *situation* of the word in the discourse by giving rise to lexical items which have various meaning depending on how they are employed in the text" (41). Here also, the word 'inside' is taken as an example.

‘Inside’ is given a variety of interpretation from the beginning to the end of the narrative. The repetition of a single word is a kind of narrative technique used deliberately by an author. It is because he or she needs to emphasize the importance of such words in the life of man. Here, Okara uses ‘inside’ or ‘insides’ in different contexts suggesting different meanings.

EbiYeibo, a Nigerian scholar considers the novel as a social discourse. He explains that Okara has concentrated on the transliteration technique, an experimental and innovative linguistic approach to expose the problems in African society. The lexical and semantic usage of language is consciously structured in the novel. Yeibo divides the thematic development of the text based on the use of light and darkness. He considers it as a fight between light and dark, which are the synonyms for many binaries like real and unreal, truthful and untruthful, wisdom and foolishness, virtue and vice, etc. He contextualises each words and connects the meaning accordingly. “... Gabriel Okara’s *The Voice* is a form of social discourse, by examining the various lexical relations the author has deliberately deployed, within the framework of the socio-cultural world of the text, to encode and unify its meaning” (Yeibo, 220-221).

Okara has used an array of synonyms for many words in his novel For example, the word “darkness” is used to signify many things according to the context. If it is the darkness of the night at one instance, it is the cruel mind of the people or elders. Some words used in the novel are “bad bottom”, “crooked word”, “groping”, “lock-up inside” etc. Along with this the good heartedness of people is explained using the words opposite to the above-mentioned lexical items like “good

bottom”, “straight words”. “plain inside”, “straight inside” etc. So there is an arrangement of words in different parts to signify the contrasting or contesting minds of the people. (Yeibo, 219).

Okara has done many linguistic experiments in the novel by giving a different speech patterns. For example, “black black be more than blackness” (Okara, 25), “dark with darkness exceeding darkness” (32), “silence more than silence” (59), “blacker than black night” (76) and many such unconventional speech patterns are used to intensify both physical and mental condition of the character and the situation described in the particular instance. There are plenty of natural symbols and imageries used in the novel, which is a characteristic of the postcolonial novel. Water imagery is such an imagery, which is used as metaphor to explain the life and existence of the characters. Since ‘water spirit’ holds an important position in Ijaw tribe, Okara has used it in his novel that deals with the life and spirit of Ijaw and their existential crisis. Water, the flow of water and power of water are some of the expressions that recur in the narration. Living on the bank of river, the people are influenced by it and they consider the life is like the flow of water. But, this same river finally takes the life of Okolo and Tuere. *The Voice* ends with a hope that the voice of Okolo will flow like water and reach its destination soon. Like the power of water, their words of protest will also gain power one day, to destroy the anarchy ruling their community. Their hope to have a better life in the future is identified with the power of words that will once overthrow Chief Izongo.

Each one in the novel longs to have a space of their own in their community, which is free of chaos and corruption. This space is one, which almost all the

postcolonial native writers search through their novels. Okara experiments with a different style of search that addresses the problem of many native tribes in Africa. The characterisation and the narration of the novel open up a new experience altogether. Okara explores the various possibilities of nativisation as well as shows how declonisation of English reflects the specificities of a particular society with distinctive ethos beyond the reach of Standard English and Eurocentric readers.

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## **Conclusion**

The notions of double or multiple consciousness, identities in flux, diaspora etc. has become prime concerns in recent scholarship, particularly in the field of postcolonial history and literature. Double consciousness is an awareness of one's own self as well as an awareness of how others perceive that person. It is a sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, finding out certain shortfalls in oneself leading to a notion of contempt and self-pity. From this arises the wish to attain a self-consciousness and thus to merge his/her double identity into a better and truer single self. This is termed Double consciousness, a term mostly used in the discussions on postcolonialism, which deals with the nature of colonized mind and how they survive within the two different cultural identities. This struggle within the conscious and unconscious mind leads to identity crisis. Some tries to overcome it and some others fail. They either fail to confirm to their own traditional and native culture or fail to accept the new colonial culture. Such persons are greatly affected by this dilemma of double consciousness.

Most of the people in the postcolonial nations meet with the dilemma of double self and they strive hard to escape from this. Another major concern that arises out of this double consciousness is the stereotyping of the characters. The writers of the West always characterized the natives as violent, savage and inferior characters. So, majority of the postcolonial writers, during their first attempt in the literary field, tried to bring their own people out of this stereotypical representation. They presented the natives as normal human beings, just like anyone else, with all



pride and confidence. But, at the same time, they could not forget the reality and create a “Utopian” world with all happiness and comforts. They were always haunted by the minor struggles of themselves and of their own people. Therefore, many of the initial writings from the postcolonial writers dealt with the struggle of individual caught under the dilemma of double consciousness. Major reason for this is the impact of colonial rule and the inferiority complex created in their inner-consciousness by the White rulers. The inferiority about their own culture, nation and even their self and the superiority of the White, in all sense, that has been forced upon them by the Whites themselves were the main reasons behind their double consciousness. Because of the feeling of the inferiority about their own self, they try to hide it and begin to feign and practice the superior one. But, in real, they could only stand in between these two, unable to move to any of the extremes. Not only has the culture, but also race, gender, and colour contributed to this dilemma.

Postcolonial theories also focused on the matters like double- identity, politics, hybridity, orientalism, marginalization and subalternity. W. E. B Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Homi.K.Bhaba, Edward Said, GayatriSpivak and many other theorists from both East and West spoke of the dilemmas and conscious and unconscious mind set of such people undergoing all these struggles. All these matters are, in one way or the other, interconnected and related to each other since they are the products of colonialism.

There existed a kind of generalization and homogenization while writing about the postcolonial nations and its people. Even, the issues of these people are believed to be the same. But, this thesis has attempted to bring out the fact that there

are differences in the severity of the issues like identity crisis and double or multiple consciousness in people from nation to nation as well as varied race and gender. Identity crisis and double consciousness is felt for any individual who is exposed to two or more cultures at the same time. Those who lived in colonized nations and those who live in diaspora felt the severity of double consciousness. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, it is not gender oriented. The third and fourth chapter based on N Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* respectively reveals this factor. Majority of the characters in these novels are male. They all go through the phase of identity crisis. But, it varied according to the individuals and their mental strength to survive from this crisis.

In *House Made of Dawn*, though Abel and Ben are two young Native Americans, the displacement caused by colonial impact, industrialization and World Wars, affected them in two ways. If Abel was disillusioned and get into a world of mental trauma, Ben faced the challenges boldly and viewed it in a practical sense. However, he had his Native self within him, which caused no adverse effect on his conscious self. Abel, on the other hand, could not find a solution for his wanting of real self, finally writer takes him back to his native self, by making him take part in the traditional ritual of Kiowa, the dawn running. His final reentry into tribal heritage restores his integrity, which has been disrupted by an alien culture.

In Okara's novel, Okolo is the voice of the oppressed in the African society. His own Native people put his identity in dilemma. The Chief Izongo also faces the identity problem because he lived in the fear of losing his power. This made him move against Okolo, as his search of *it* is thought as a plot against the corrupted rule

in Amatu. Okara deals with many surfaces of identity crisis ranging from individual's quest to the quest of whole society or nation. In these two works, the problems of women characters are not addressed on equal footing with men's problem.

By the emergence of Feminist Movements, there came a difference in literary criticism field. Many writers began addressing the problems of women and their inner struggles. But there also developed a kind of universalizing the problems of women throughout the world, without considering the difference in nation, race, colour etc. The Black Feminist Movement, women writers from countries like India, Canada and many other Native women writers criticized the white feminist theories. They claimed that the problems faced by the women of their nations differ from that of white middle class women. If the white middle class women were oppressed only under their men, the women in the nations, under the colonial rule, underwent multiple oppression.

In the Preface to *Women's Writing in India*, Susie Tharu and K. Lalita open up discussion on this matter. They say that the problems of women in the countries like India are entirely different from the problems of white women and so the Feminist theories by Elaine Showalter, Helen Cixous etc have failed to address such problems. The Black Feminist Criticism also emphasized on this idea and came up with theories addressing the black women, the discrimination they are facing on the basis of gender and class, sexual and mental assault on them and their need for freedom and equality. This was in the case of not only Blacks, but many native women writers went through such situations. So they started their literary career to

break down the prejudices about their women and their works dealt with variety of themes like the pathetic condition of women, racial and gender oppression, their mental struggles and the double consciousness. Not that they only projected the sad face of women but many writers portrayed their strength, boldness and confidence to protest and revolt against the exploitation over them.

Toni Morrison and Beatrice Culleton are two such native women writers who can be seen as the voices of African American and Native Canadian women respectively. From the analytical study on the characters of Jadine in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* and April Raintree in Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree*, we can see that, both writers have strongly supported their own native people and culture and have succeeded in addressing their problems.

This thesis has attempted to study upon the identity crisis within the minds of Jadine, April Raintree, Abel and Okolo, the representatives of different nations and cultures. They all feel alienated in their own culture and the reasons varied accordingly. Jadine and April like to become "White", trying to forget their traditional cultural heritage. The comparison of two such characters is a very difficult task since they hold completely different nativity, historical and socio-cultural background. But we can trace many parallelisms between Jadine and April Raintree, in their dilemma of "double consciousness", struggle between European and Native cultural identities and also their contradictions with their own other native people. Abel also goes along with these two female characters. He too travels through the same path, torn between two different cultures. More than trying to be White, he is in conflict within himself since he fails to understand both the

cultures. He is rather confused than to assimilate into the master culture as Jadine and April Raintree.

If Jadine and April tried hard to be one among the White community, Abel is displaced from both his identities. He cannot be either a Native or a modern man in America. More than the influence of White culture, the novel discusses about the influence and impact of industrialization in America. Since a child born into Native Kiowa community and grew up imbibing its cultures and values, he felt alienated in the modern American society. The novel pictures the contrast between the values of traditional Kiowa culture and the modern industrialized American culture. Along with this, the aftermath of World Wars is also depicted in this. Abel is unable to forge any meaningful relationship until he returns to his own tribal culture towards the end of the novel.

In Okara's novel, the protagonist's dilemma is not because of the influence of an alien culture. There is no conflict of cultures directly seen in the narration. But, the waning of spiritual and moral values in African society, leading it in to a corrupted one is considered as an influence of the outward forces on the primitive culture. This vanishing spirituality is the main reason for the identity problem in Okara's novel. Okolo longs for a pure and pious society that holds the traditional and moral values like their predecessors. He feels desolate in the corrupted modern society. More than the factors like colonial aftermath or Western influence on culture, this novel unfolds a new arena of identity crisis in the background of neocolonialism.

The theoretical background of “double consciousness” put forward by W E B Du Bois serves as the foreground for this study. It mainly deals with the double identity of African Americans and their physical and mental struggles. But, as it has an important theoretical base that it is the dilemma of all those who live within two different cultural identities, it can be applied to all such people of any country. Métis , the natives of Canada, have different cultural facets because of both colonization and immigration. So the inner struggles caused by the cultural differences of any people can be put under the term “double consciousness”. Kiowa, an ethnic community in America also faces this problem being exposed to a modern society, which they fear. They felt that this exposure may distort their ancient culture and tradition, which is the driving force of the life of Kiowa people. Like all these three people, Ijaw of Africa also face the same question. They are torn between the ancestral culture and the new phase of this old culture.

Almost all the literary works of a nation can be placed within the historical context of that particular nation. As the nationality of writers change their experiences also change according to the difference in the historical and socio-cultural background. This is true in the case of Toni Morrison, Beatrice Culleton, N Scott Momaday and Gabriel Okara. Jadine and April Raintree differed from each other because they came from totally different writers, having different experiences. The history of both African Americans in America and Métis in Canada clearly reveals the reason behind their double consciousness.

In her novels Toni Morrison deals with what W.E.B.Du Bois defined as the ‘Double Consciousness’ of the African-American people. Citing DuBios, Bernard

Bell explain that it is,

The complex double vision of American of African descent whose humanity and culture had been historically devalued and marginalized by people of European descent....For many contemporary Afro-Americans, it is the striving to reconcile one's ancestral African past-however remote, mythic or spiritual-With one's American present, once ascribed identity with one's achieved identity (Bell, 7)

If colonization was the cause of marginality for the Indians, it was migration and bondage for the African people in America. Racism, which justified their enslavement, did not vanish with the abolition of slavery though class sometimes seemed to matter more than race. The Black Americans had only a marginal role in this American society. Toni Morrison depicts the predicament of the Black people who live on the fringes of white American society and are forced to isolate themselves from their community and get into the trap of integration if they are to gain upward mobility on economic and social terms. Jadine is also such a character who tries to live away from her black community. Her contradiction with other people of her community reveals this factor.

Culleton deals with the disintegration in the life of the natives and the Métis people caused by alcoholism and related problems along with the usual share of race, class and gender oppression. April Raintree's family disintegrates and the children were forced to live separately. The relation between two young sisters is so well emotionally packed ones that it creates a kind of disturbance in the mind of

readers. The letters written by Cheryl to April reveals their attachment. Later these same sisters move apart because of their different stand in internalizing their culture.

The culture is the same factor, which separates the characters in the novel from their native people. Like Son in *Tar Baby*, Cheryl in *In Search of April Raintree* stands as the voice of native culture. They both tries to bring Jadine and April Raintree back to their native cultural heritages. The difference between these two characters lies in the fact that Jadine fails to accept her native “black identity” and goes in search of the alien culture. But April Raintree understands that she has no existence without her native identity. She decides to work for the welfare and development of “her people”. Abel in *House Made of Dawn* returns to his Kiowa community, leaving behind his dilemmas and anxieties. Though he enters it by undertaking dawn running and the night chant, rituals done to pay homage to his dead grandfather, it is a stepping-stone to his future life in his own community. Okolo in *The Voice* loses his life in his quest to understand the meaning of *it*. However, the novel ends with a note that his life and words will show the way for the future generation, who are ready to question the authorities and the unlawful things happening around.

Each and every characters these novels one way or other reveals the fact that no human is free of identity crisis. The four novels depict the four aspects of postcolonialism. Though identity crisis is the base issue discussed in the thesis, the novels represent different kinds of identity issues according to the experience of the authors and his/her nations. Further, it is not the dual identity that results in the problems of the characters. If it is dual/double consciousness that results in



Jadine's identity crisis, it is not the same for the white characters in the novel *Tar Baby*. So, a single novel itself addresses many kinds of identities in flux.

In common, identity crisis is considered an issue related to the postcolonial/neocolonial societies. But, the thesis attempts to bring out the fact that identity crisis is only one of the issues in postcolonial works. These writers move beyond the usual concept of issues and enter into the intricacies of identity issues, stemming from the struggles of an oppressed people. Postcolonial struggle is for the "whole creation and an exploration of identity" (Walcott). Loss of the past creates the struggle for identity on the postcolonial psyche of the colonized peoples of the world. One never thinks of an identity until it is lost. This concept of loss, loss of past, a culture and a way of life leads to the loss of identity. Identity becomes the fulcrum on which the postcolonial characters revolve. Each character suffers from a lack of direction in their lives. These identities are mired in the struggle to form an emotional, cultural and societal identity that reflects the experiences of a distant past that they cannot recall.

Each of the authors allows their characters to struggle for a space in a cultural world alien to them. The struggle for a place/space in a society in which they have no place of their own unless they create an own space is the common struggle. This is a space separate from a society created by colonial power. *My Space* in the title of this thesis has tried to bring out the need for a new space that is to be created in the forward momentum of society. Past, once remembered is a glorious thing, but one cannot hold on to the past and expect to survive in the future.

Postcolonial theory serves as the background of the study with special stress on the factors like identity in flux, gender issues, linguistic and narrative strategies. Identity in flux or identity crisis is a much discussed issue in the postcolonial academic circle. It mainly deals with the crisis of the people who is caught in between the two cultures; native and western. It can be of the people who live in a postcolonial nation or the problem of the settler communities in some western nation. But here, the works like Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* and Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, explain a different kind of identities in dilemma. In *House Made of Dawn*, the root cause is industrialization and world wars. Though the character is caught in between the two cultures, the main cause for his identity crisis is his inability to adjust to the industrialized US culture. In *The Voice*, the identity of the protagonist is questioned because of the diminishing moral values of his society. He is influenced neither by modernism nor by his innate culture. His problem was with the deterioration of truth and morality from the modern generation and the corruptions in the existing governments.

Every crisis has its solution. But, it varies according to the people and their circumstances. Identity crisis is there within everyone's mind. But the reason differs according to each one. Some finds way out of it through resistance or acceptance and some others struggle and fail. Whatever the result is, every human being at one point of his life, in one way or the other, passes through the dilemma of identity crisis. The way they express it is the crucial point and these novels prove that it is not "a reason", but "many reasons" for this identity crisis. The postcolonial literary

discipline has provided the opportunity for writers to create a space of their own in a world that once stood cold and unapproachable before them.

Of late writers have been very active in depicting political and social challenges of postcolonial societies and are taken very seriously by readers and critics. Postcolonial literature is considered as a source of the issues of cultural diversity, ethnic, racial and cultural difference and power relations within them. Race continues to be a relevant aspect in upcoming studies too. While arguments have been raised that the very concept of race is flawed and is a self-defeating category that traps its users in its biological and essentialist meshes, in practical terms it remains as a personal, social and cultural identity.

A new revolution on race has already set into action and it promotes the idea of racial fluidity. In an article “Racial Fluidity and Inequality in the United States” by Aliya Saperstein and Andrew M. Penner, published in 2012, talks about the changes that happened in the idea “race”. It poses the question whether races is a static concept or a fluid one. The racial identities can be distinguished along several dimensions like, how people identify themselves, how they are identified by others and how their ancestors were identified. As of now, people are starting to see race, like gender, is a choice not biological identity you are assigned at birth. Racially fluid people reject the box they are put in and craft their own identity. The good news is that as racial lines become blurred, racism will lose its poisonous sting, hopefully. But it is followed by a bad news that there is a deeper danger lurking behind expanding the menu of racial options in the form of new racial hierarchies. Having done the statistical studies and findings, Saperstein and Penner wrote:

Perversely, this implies that in the contemporary United States, the more fluid race is at the individual level, the more entrenched racial inequality will be at the societal level, as changes in the classifications and identifications of individuals serve to reinforce the existing racial order. Indeed, if this relationship between racial fluidity and inequality continues, the convergence of the much-heralded majority-minority society and potential for upward mobility generated by the impending retirement of the disproportionately white baby boomers (Alba 2009) may yield a racial future that looks more like the past than many either hope for or expect (678).

This thesis had been discussing among others racial identities influx of people living in postcolonial societies. In *Tar Baby*, Jadine is choosing a white life, being convinced that her native culture is primitive and unsophisticated. In *In Search of April Raintree*, we have April, who shuns her Métis identity for passing of as a white. Abel, who is totally disintegrated, belonging neither to native community or white. Also Okolo's character is one in flux. We can assume these racially fluid characters as forerunners to the current hue and cry about the racial fluidity and people switching between races according to their choice. The existence of people whose racialization and racial identity are not fixed does not render race as irrelevant, but it does provide opportunity to redefine races in a way that better represents one's experiences. The world is obviously a different place today than it was as represented in the works under study. Perhaps as we move forward, the whole idea of discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality, class etc. will become irrelevant in our children's lifetime- A wishful thinking. And maybe a thesis such as

this will become obsolete, or at least a quaint historical document. Perhaps, the best I can hope for is paradoxically contribute to a future in which it will no longer be necessary or maybe it will prevail to ask new questions of old histories.

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