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### **Revisiting Beloved: In the Era of “Black lives Matter”**

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**Abstract- “Beloved” (1987)** Written by **Toni Morrison** is a saga of Black suffering. The first page of the novel is inscribed with the words **“sixty million and more”**. The words undoubtedly refer to millions of Blacks who either died in the middle passage between Africa and America or suffered inhuman atrocities at the hands of their white counterparts. Even today; in 2021, 34 years later the novel was written; the world is still witnessing the brutal killings of Black men by Police. This article aims to present a contrast between the racism of the past as shown in Afro **American literature and racism prevailing in today’s times.**

**Keywords:** Afro America, Beloved, Black Lives Matter, Racism, Slavery

**Introduction:** “Beloved” is **Toni Morrison’s** fifth novel which went on to become a bestseller. The Nobel Prize winning author has explored **the themes of slavery, racism and feminism** in various novels. She is credited with the role of bringing Black Literature into mainstream.

“Beloved” is set in the year **1873**, eight years after the end of Civil War. **Morrison** wrote it after she got inspired by the story of an Afro American slave **Margaret Garner, who escaped slavery in 1856 by fleeing to Ohio, a free state.** Through the extensive use of the device named Magic Realism, Morrison has presented a perfect blend of horror and slave narrative. The character of **“Beloved” Sethe’s** dead daughter, embodies three generations of slavery. She comes across as a metaphor for the historical past of slavery as she haunts **Sethe and Denver.**

**“Freeing yourself was one thing, claiming ownership of that freed self was another” {1}**

This line from **Morrison** pretty much sums up the lives of negroes who were slaves then of white men and who are slaves now of their haunting past. Although, life was unfair for both the genders in Morrison’s creation, extremities of slavery were two-fold for female slaves.

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They were exploited on several levels- physical, mental, sexual and emotional as well. **Morrison** has very well described the plight of Negroes, as;

**“Definitions belong to the definers, not the defined”**

Here, definers obviously belong to the masters or writers who defined the lives and fates of their slaves. Whites crushed the spirits of the Blacks that even after a century, they still cannot redeem their lost confidence. Authors like **Toni Morrison** and **Alice Walker** in their novels focus on the traumatic experiences of Negroes, emphasizing particularly on plights of Black Woman in an unfair society and their search for cultural identity.

The protagonists, **Sethe** and **Celie** featuring in the novels. **“Beloved”** and **“The Color Purple”** respectively, have much in common with their own heart- rendering stories and atrocities they faced for being Women of Color or just to exist. In **“The culture made her believe that God is a superior entity and so are whites.”** She always lived believing the fact that God is white. It was towards the end of the book that she reclaims her sense of self and meets the God within:

**“God is inside you and everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it” {2}**

However, slavery is a thing of the past now and we like to believe that things are in a fair state. But it is not the case. In the wake of Black Lives Matter, the world is exposed again to the harsh reality of black - white racism prevailing even today in the society **Morrison** writes:

**“In this country Americans means White. Everybody else has to hyphenate”**

There is a constant quest of search for identity ongoing for the people of color in their own land. Even after reaching to a position of power, people of color like **Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey, Priyanka Chopra etc.** have faced racism at several levels. In their own land the people of society are hostile towards people of color.

Indian actor Priyanka Chopra recounts an incident in her memoir *Unfinished*, 2021 {3} that she was catcalled in America and curses like: **“Go and get gang-raped in your country”** were hurled upon her.

**Black Lives Matter as a movement began in 2013 in the United States**, decided to fighting racism and anti- Black violence, especially in the form of police brutality. Recently, the movement gained momentum on social media after the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man in 2020 by a police officer who was white, of course. The video of this event was

massively circulated on various social platforms. While drawing significant attention to the issue of deeply rooted racism in American society.

### **Research Methodology Used:**

A close reading of the cited works was done while carrying out research for writing of this paper. Also, the help of library and internet articles was taken into consideration.

### **Conclusion:**

The evil practice of Racism and violence on Blacks has reduced over a period of time, however, it still remains entrenched in the culture which separates human from human on the basis of their skin color only. **Morrison** has presented a heart rending tale of slavery intertwined with **Magic Realism**.

To conclude, we can hope for a better tomorrow for the people of color, in particular, and for every human being, in general. There is still a lot of work left to be done in the direction of a fair and equal society. But, it's, high time we take this leap of faith and progress towards a society where "**Beloved**" will be considered a classic; a masterpiece, but not contemporarily relevant document as it seems today. As **Morrison** says in "**Beloved**"

**"Me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow."**

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