

## Psychological trauma of ‘Brida’ in God Help the Child by Toni Morrison

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### Abstract

This present research work undertakes an analysis of the representation of childhood trauma in Toni Morrison’s “God Help the Child” by drawing attention to the characters’ past experiences of distress and anguish and their weight upon the present. It mostly focuses on the examination of the psychology of personality subjected to babyhood molestation and misuse, take advantage of their deficiency in nurturing sound postures with their environment and the persons nearby them. The work attests to the physical and emotional oppression worked out upon children all around the world and strives to investigate alternative modes of thought and behavior in dealing with children. The study resides upon Judith Herman’s theoretical intuitions into the phenomenon of trauma centering on the idea of intrusion and marginal character disorder resulting from disturbing experiences.

**Keywords:** Toni Morrison, Trauma Theory, Judith Herman, Intrusion, Borderline Personality Disorder.

Women writers would naturally choose themes and characters closer to their hearts. As Janet Wolff points out, “What women write or point is related to their experiences. These experiences, in the nineteenth century, early twentieth century and now, have been very different from those of men. Women writers have focused on and they are concerned with the situation of women in society”. Toni Morrison has presented the fragmented psyche of her protagonist in this novel.

Every individual has certain desires and almost suffers from a deep feeling of not being enough. When these desires remain unfulfilled, the outcome is psychological suffering. It is the consequence of some extraordinary stressful proceedings that splinter a person’s sense of security and make him feel helpless and vulnerable.

Psychological suffering may manifest itself in sadness, fear, anger, frustration, depression, hatred and disappointments, etc. This chapter highlights the theme of psychological suffering in the novel. Marital unhappiness or domestic disharmony is a major cause of psychological suffering. Psychological suffering occurs to a person when he fails to fulfill his desires.

Psyche stances for the mind working as the middle of a thought, feeling and behaviour and deliberately or automatically altering or arbitrating the body's replies to the community and bodily environment. A public trend runs through feminist groups that a masculine weakens a feminine's psyche by projecting her with male notions. Feminist wants to represent feminist spirit and personality differently thereby portraying the different shades of the feminine psyche.

Toni presents the psychological development of women that takes place at an early age. The child at its premature stage starts grasping and analyzing things to a great extent. As the process of growing, the mind develops and at a particular stage, it stops its vigorous action. This maturity helps people to go deeper and view things. The novel explores the mental attitude of women at different stages like childhood and adolescence. The first phase of the woman's life lies in innocence and childhood. During this period a child is afraid of punishments and tries to get a good name from others. It always expects encouragement and lacks seriousness.

At this age (7 to 12 years), children understand the concepts of space more logically and practical way. They can recognize cultural and individual differences and are capable of managing their personal needs. At this stage, children may exercise their independence by being disobedient and rebellious. In this novel, Bride needs her mother's love. It is in this stage the child becomes mature and grows a feeling of carnal identity. The girls are very conscious of their physical appearance and are very much concerned about their beauty. They are certain physical appearance and are very much concerned about their beauty. They are certain physical changes and each one is attracted by the opposite sex. These characteristics are seen in the characters of Toni Morrison.

This novel not only expounds on the mental and physical development but also the moral growth of every person. The moral growth of human beings varies from person to person. This may be viewed from three different perspectives.

According to Gilligan, the first one seems to be unsocialized selfishness, second is the submersion in others and the third can be found as authenticity in relationship. The persons stuck upon the first type are self-centered and isolated beings, who conceive morality as imposed from without or outside world. This primary concern is to survive. The people of the second type, who, delineate morality by social conventions and traditional feminine goodness selflessly immerse themselves in others. The persons in the third category include their responsibilities to themselves as well as to others, which forms the basis for authentic emotional connections. If the desires and longings remain and unfulfilled then it may remain in the subconscious and appear like a dream. For Freud, dreams "are essentially symbolic fulfillments of unconscious wishes".

As Gilligan suggests, “the woman at this point validates her claim to social membership through the adoption of societal values. Consensual judgment about goodness becomes the overriding concern as survival is now she to depend on acceptance of others”.

The people who belong to this group forfeit all their desires and self-hood to appear good to the society. They are much concerned about society and put a mask of righteousness. The persons of this type are fully adhering to the social norms.

Originally actions of everyday life, as well as extraordinary happening make life interesting, as they evoke varied feelings and emotions in human beings.

The dominant emotion love leads to other minor emotions like contempt, sorrow, ferry, velour, fear, disgust, and wonder. These emotions have a deep influence on human life. When one of these emotions exceeds the limit, there springs out mental conflict, frustration and psychological torture. Chopra opines, “If we examine our lives of only the past month are so, we will find how vulnerable we are too emotional imbalances. Because we are mostly unaware or ad best superficially aware of our emotional lives, we tent to allow one or two races to dominate us”.

Sorrow is another emotion that most often dominates in one’s life. It is experienced when one gets betrayed by the loved ones, when they are no one to love, alienated or separated from their loved ones.

The emotion that is found by everything that upsets us or that which rebellions or repulses us in disgust. It is not just about the experience that one has an account of the external world. It is also the abhorrence that people feel for themselves and their detestable actions.

In this novel, Morrison has not merely presented the characters in different situations with varied mental attitudes, but she has also probed deep into the very psyche and emotions of each character.

The psychological growth of a person takes place at a very early age. The child at its premature stage starts grasping and analyzing things to be a great extent. As the procedure of developed continues, the mind develops and at a particular stage, it stops their vigorous action. This maturity helps people to go deeper and view things. But there come problems like the enormity of secretion or excess of production in neurons. This may lead to abnormality. Normally human psyche helps us to be alert and listen to things happening around us. It is so powerful that at times reacts a bit strange. The views of one human psyche differ from the others. On the whole, the personal psyche is useful to perceive things in the right context. Toni Morrison very clearly reflects this human psyche in her novel.

In this novel, is a contemporary novel that offers a view of psychological development. It explores the mental attitude of the people at different stages like childhood and adolescence. Bride as well as challenges the women-centered psychology that has been limited by race.

The novel demonstrates the myriad ways where fate and white society frustrate blacks and cause a mental conflict.

Childhood is a stage, which is very important in one's life. During this period a child is afraid of punishments and tries to get a good name from others. It always expects encouragement and lacks seriousness.

In childhood development, the parents play a major role to teach about the world and the community. If the parents expose their love, warmth, regularity and dependable affection to their children, their opinion of the society will be of trust. If the caregivers are neglectful or allusive the infant learns that the world is an unreliable, unforeseeable and treacherous place. According to Erik Erikson, the great developmental task in early stages to study whether the main caregivers, commonly satisfy their basic needs like comfort and affection. If the children are being short of love and affection of the parents they have a left out feeling, which affects them in their mental growth. At this stage, children expect only love from their parents. If they are not given that love they become highly disappointed life of the characters in this novel.

Throughout the book, the mother–daughter pairs have an unhappy, damaged relationship because of the lack of love a mother has for her daughter. Sweetness, the mother of Bride has never felt the love by her mother. In the same way, she too fails to give love to her daughter.

The world becomes a perilous place for the reason that everyone in the bottom society considered her as evil and there is none to love her. The reason behind her peculiar behavior is the lack of parental love, which has to be given to her at a particular stage. Like Bride to feels oppressed by her mother's strictness and propriety, and feels satisfied in her own orderly house. As the children create the changeover from infancy to youth, youths consider the parts they will take part in the youth world. It is in this stage the children come about a feeling of carnal identity. The girls are very conscious of their bodily appearance and are very much concerned about their beauty. Boys pretend to be more masculine in the presence of girls. They tease the girls and try to attract them by their mannerisms. There are certain physical changes in both the sexes and each one is attracted by the opposite sex. They also develop a little courage at this stage. Certain characteristics of the adolescent stage, the growth and maturity are also seen in the characters, Bride and Rain.

The moral growth of human beings varies from person to person. This may be viewed from three different perspectives. According to Gilligan, the first one seems to be unsocialized selfishness, second is the submission in others and the third can be found as authenticity in relationship. The persons stuck upon the first type are self-centered and isolated beings, who

conceive morality as imposed from without or outside world. The main apprehension is to survive. The people of the second type who delineate morality by social conventions and traditional feminine goodness selflessly immerse themselves in others. The persons in the third category include their responsibilities to themselves as well as to others, which forms the basis for authentic emotional connections.

The environment plays a great role in the moral growth of people. When a child develops in an unhealthy milieu the psychological attitude of the child differs from that of others. For example, the child who is not given recognition in the class and who is alienated and seen as a stranger or fearful one has the possibility of preparing its life in two ways. One is that feeling isolated it develops an inferiority complex and becomes frustrated, which even draws it towards suicide. Another way is that the child may gain strength in itself to lead an independent life. The child may also become selfish, not caring about society, which does not care for it.

Here, this is what happens in this novel. Bride feels alienated when her mother does not recognize her. She stoops too deep to blame a teacher so that she can get affection from her mother.

In this novel, Morrison has not merely presented the characters in different situations with varied mental attitudes, but she has also probed deep into the very psyche of each character. This experience enables one to have a better comprehending of the black mind and find an answer to the aching problems each character is surrounded with.

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