

SUBSTANTIVENESS AND SPECULATIVE STUDY OF NAMES IN TONI MORRISON'S NOVELS

K.P. Bakhyaseema,

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English and Research Centre, Seethalakshmi Achi College for Women, Pallathur, Sivagangai Dist.

Abstract

The article focuses on the peculiarities of Toni Morrison in assigning names to her characters. The paper exemplifies, the stylistic parameters of Toni Morrison in terms of cultural and social backdrop. In some of the novels as *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula* and *Beloved*, certain aspects are of least significant, but they may have an enormous significance in the literary scenario.

Key words: Toni Morrison, American Literature, English literature, Elizabethan Period.

The point of consideration in this paper is the names of certain characters in the novels of Toni Morrison. Characters who are assigned with certain names in the novels of Morrison are not only a matter of nominal importance, but of communicating a lot about the characters in the book. The significance of these names must be made aware to the students and readers. An attempt is being taken up to throw some real lights on the significance of select names by Toni Morrison. By using the parameters, foregrounding and explicating the suggestive richness are brought to light.

In all human lives, name plays vital role from the beginning of language. In literature and in lives, names play a crucial role. if WH. Hudson is read, the period of English literature are christened as Period of English period, Elizabethan period, et, on.... By reading these periods based on the names, the tone and tenor of the period can be easily accessed taking name as a benchmark. Consequently, each period is named after a particular name, that implies a particular name that has a close association with that period.

The names of characters in the novels of modern times, especially, depends on the plot and genre of the novel. The plot being comic, the names of characters are comic. The names of characters become ironic, if the plot is ironic. The stylistic peculiarity and the talent of the author depends on the name chosen for the characters with suggestive potential for the character in the novels. The way, the novelist can foreground, the plot of the work with their characters' names.

Toni Morrison is most important writer of this aspect and kind. Toni Morrison is an African- American writer. Being a nobel prize winner for her subversive writings, the atrocities of racism is exposed by her. Her novels expose the quest for identity of coloured people. As Morrisons' novels have theme constituting Identity crisis and its quest, the characters created by her in a way, is somehow suggestive of their identity. The readers of the book, can easily understand the irony of Morrison. Toni's evocatively, assigns name to the characters to convey the pathetic condition of the characters.

In *The Bluest Eyes*, the predominant focus is on American standards of beauty and its impact on the lives of coloured people. There exists aberration for blacks in American community as the people are not considered a part of African-American community. Even, ever

in the society of whites, the blacks lack acceptance and love. These aspects defines itself through the white standards as normative expectation.

Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* searches for love Pecola who belongs to Breedloves family lacks love. Breedloves, breed no love among themselves. The name Breedlove suggests the significance of love, but the irony is love finds no place in Breedloves' family. Perfect understanding, love, compatibility are all missing between the parents Breedlove and Pauline. There is no familial understanding between the three, Mr. Breedlove, Mrs. Pauline Breedlove and Pecola. The parents neither provide love to children nor protect them from the abuses of the society. Lack of parental care, love results in putting the children Pecola and her brother outdoors. To Pecola, parents love fail and the recognition from society too gets missing.

Throughout the novel, Pecola craves for love and becomes insane. Pecola represents not only the life of a single coloured girl but a representative of many a black girls who are innocents and craves for love, recognition in a divided society. Morrison is so apt in using the name Breedlove, to represent the missing love in black families. Unmistakably, the naming strategy highlights the sense of irony in the novel.

All coloured families need love, compassion from white society. The Blacks expect whites to treat them as their brothers and sisters and if it happens so, their loves may be different from their present alienated experiences. All human beings need identity. Identity to human beings are missing because of missing love. Indifferent exteriority does not support alterity to one's identity. Every human being requires identity.

Second novel *Sula* narrates two family stories. One is Wright family and the next is Peace family. When we pronounce 'Wright family' in the word, 'w' is silently pronounced and so the pronunciation is 'Right'. Wright family members are all right and silent. The name 'Right' suggest that all the rules and regulations of the society are all correctly followed by the Wright family members.

Individuality is of least importance to family members of Wright and their individuality gains no prominence and importance under societal norms. Subsequently, the family is considered to be the right one by the society. Morrison knows very well that it's not correct to create characters as right family but ironically, she satirises the society using the name '(W) right' for the family.

The second family is Peace family. The family leads an individual life. They live the life of their own sake never bothering about the societal norms, regulations and rules. Peace family follow their own set of rules, regulations to keep them peacefully and to live happily and peacefully. The never bothered character of peace family becomes the reason for them to lead a happy life. 'peace' exists in the life of Peace family. Even though, Eva peace, Hannah Peace and Sula Peace, have peace in their life, their peace become unacceptable in the society and by the society.

The protagonist Sula in the novel *Sula* is abandoned by the society. She gains the least support from her neighbours and relatives. Sula sets her own dictums and rules to be happy and peaceful. The society looks at Sula as a pure evil and no one dares to speak to her. Although, the society is not at peace with her, ever at her dead bed, Sula, dies peacefully.

‘Peace’ can be connotated in the other way also. ‘Peace’, the word’s homophone is ‘piece’. In the novel, Morrison effectively, applies ‘peace’ to suggest this ‘piece’ too. The society does not accept Sula’s individuality. Neither Eva Peace, the grandmother of Sula’s individuality too is rejected by the society. Henceforth, the family becomes Peace (fragmented piece) in the society. A sense of fragmented piece among, within the society the family exists, is the ironical hint Morrison highlights through the family. Consequently, the Peace family loses its identity in the society and are alone. Peace family are ostracized in the society, and community of blacks too.

Morrison, by depicting the name ‘Peace’ deliberately wants to make transparent to the readers that black’s individuality is not accepted in the society, they have to emphasize their own self on their own, stand on their own self, by not bothering about anyone. Unbothering about anyone in the society will give peace to blacks as Sula Peace to live peacefully. The long-deserving, longing Peace will never be attained by Blacks until they live their own lives according to their individuality. The readers are made aware by Morrison that the way to gain peace is completely missing in Blacks life down through the ages.

Next novel *Beloved* is the most famous one in the fictional career of Toni Morrison. The pivotal theme of the novel is slavery and its impact on a black family and black women, in particular. Black’s memory are still haunted with slavery that crushes and destroys them. The main concern that Morrison advises to teach blacks is that, they should overcome the terrific memories of slavery to become united and to be loved the purpose of their community. For this reason, Morrison titles the novel as *Beloved*.

The main protagonist of the novel Sethe does not want her children to suffer and live under slavery. No one in the society supports Sethe, when she suffered slavery and when her memories of slavery haunted Sethe. Sethe kills her unnamed daughter to save her life from an impending slavish life. Sethe baptises her murdered daughter as ‘Beloved’ on the tombstone. The ghost of Beloved haunts Sethe. Here, the ghost of Beloved represents nothing but Sethe’s memories of slavery. Sethe is nowhere in the society, has no significance in the society before Beloved starts haunting her. The members of the society has not known anything about Sethe. When it comes to the point, when Sethe needs the help from the members of the society is important, they come to the rescue of Sethe by sending away Beloved. The hidden meaning and power behind, in sending away Beloved is purely developing a comfortable lovable bond among them. By narrating this remarkable bond among the coloured people, Morrison tries to prove that bond of love among blacks play a very poignant role in forgetting their past of slavery. Morrison also suggests to all the black women that the only way to overcome the horrific impacts and memories of slavery is ‘to-be-loved’ by each other. Henceforth, the name ‘Beloved’ has double parody and significance in the novel.

In sharp contrast to the suggestion of the Shakespearean character Juliet, who is evident and an illustration for, that name is only a matter of nominal importance, Toni Morrison conveys vary many aspects about characters in her novels.

To conclude, a variety of names Morrison uses in her novels to convey multiple ideas and feelings. She has symbolically, ironically, and sarcastically applied meanings to the names she has given to her characters. The paper makes it clear Morrison’s ability in using different

names to suit a variety of situations, to grab the attention of readers and to show the peculiar nature of her characters. All the variegated fates of blacks are also underscored by the author Morrison. So foregrounding, the significance, suggestive significance of the name of characters of Toni Morrison rightly announces Toni Morrison is voice for voiceless.

References

Hudson, William Henry, Outline History of English Literature., Hardpress, 2012, Print.

Morrison, Toni, The Bluest Eye. London. Pan, 1970. Print

Morrison, Toni, Sula. London. Pan, 1970. Print.

Morrison, Toni, Beloved. London. Pan 1987. Print.

Shakespeare, William. Romeo and Juliet. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008, Print.