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Multidimensional Victimization of Women in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

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Abstract:The Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison has been recognized as the conscience of America because she indisputably exposed the realities of the black people under the hegemonic regime. They were dehumanized and crushed by the white masters; the most sufferers were the black women. They were doubly victimized as they were black and they were women. Their identities were demolished by their masters. In addition, they were also domestically abused and assaulted by their husbands. Because of the patriarchal society the women were silenced and Morrison's novels depicted the same issue. Women are viewed as the weakest gender and thus became an object of domination to men. The present paper discusses the victimized women in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*.

Keywords: hegemonic, black, patriarchal, women and victimization.

Jazz is a historical novel, published in 1992 by Morrison. It portrays about the triangle love between Joe Trave, Dorcas and Violet. Set in Harlem during the 1920's, it also showcased the importance of the jazz music blended with the theme of love and violation. Joe is a fifty-year-old man, fell in love with Dorcas, a teenage girl. Already married Violet, his love towards Dorcas seem fruitful to him because of her youthfulness and beauty. When he witnesses her with her boyfriend Acton, he murders her. Acton too worried more about his bloodshed dress due to the shooting of Joe. Both Dorcas and Violet are victimized by the phallogocentric ideals of manhood.

Gender constitutes male and female; but since the historical times, women is considered to be a weaker sex and observed as a sub ordinate being in the society. Joe can enjoy all the privileges because he is a man. He married Violet and betrayed her through his relation with Dorcas. In fact, his job as a cosmetics sales man is an added advantage so that he is surrounded by women around him. During his visit regarding sales, he met Dorcas and fell in love with her at the first sight. He admires her

as "With her I was fresh, new again" (*Jazz* 3). Dorcas' beauty and age makes him embarrassed and he rents the room of Malvonne for love nest.

The guilt of having affair with a young girl does not bother Joe and he surprised her with more gifts like phonographic records, silk stockings, Schrafft's chocolates, cologne and flowers. He differentiates the picking of Dorcas and choosing Violet as:

I chose you. Nobody gave you to me. Nobody said that's the one for you. I icked you out. Wrong time, yep, and doing wrong by my wife. But the picking out, the choosing... I didn't fall in love, I rose in it. (*Jazz* 135).

Women became an object of choosing and picking like that of grocery items to him and relishes the affair with her. He does not mind lying awake next to his wife with the thoughts filled with the young Dorcas. As Dorcas was an orphan, the intimacy of Joe provided some sort of relief to her. She shared her traumatic past to him and so she got temporary relief. It is an infatuation for her because her age in teens, bestowed her to fall for a man in fifties.

The relationship with Dorcas seemed superior to Joe and he accuses Violet for not taking care of him. While Malvonne scolds him for his affair, he condemns his wife as:

Violet takes better care of her parrot than she does me. Rest of the time, she's cooking pork I can't eat, or pressing hair I can't stand the smell of. Maybe that's the way it goes with people been married long as we have... I ain't allowed near her (*Jazz* 49).

Men's duty ends with solving the economic problems. But a woman's duty is multi-faceted; she has to do all the house hold works, including cooking, washing, cleaning

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and etc., which cannot be enlisted in words. Men always find fault with women with every work they do and this is evidenced from Joe.

On the other hand, Violet remains true and loves Joe whole-heartedly. The affair between Joe and Dorcas last only for two months. When he saw her dancing with her boyfriend Acton, the enraged Joe immediately shoots her. In that situation too, Dorcas never pointed out Joe behind her murder. The violation on women is increasing now-a-days and Dorcas' murder is one among that. Women are prone to dangers every minute which includes physical violence, verbal violence and acid attacks. If they do not act according to the wish of men, any one of the attacks is ensured on them.

When Violet learns about Joe's affair and his murder through Malvonne, she went to Dorcas' funeral and slashes the dead Dorcas with her with a knife. The whole society mocked her by claiming her as "violent" (*Jazz 77*). In spite of that, she never finds fault with her husband, Joe. She supports him when she converses with Alice, the aunt of Dorcas; she replied to the questions of Alice that "He never hurt nothing. Except Dorcas" (*Jazz 81*). The tender-heartedness of Violet is thus revealed. Even though Joe is a murderer, she accepts him whole-heartedly and never accuses him with anyone because she values him more.

The murder of her niece Dorcas makes Alice furious; she judged that she was murdered because she is a woman and armless:

she called the impunity of the man who killed her niece just because he could...it had not even made him think twice about what danger he was putting himself in. he just did it. One man. One defenseless girl (*Jazz 73*).

So, women need to be strong enough to face the crime against them and should be armed. She regrets for her niece's murder by a "sample man" (*Jazz 73*) Joe and as a man, acknowledged as a stronger gender, killed Dorcas. The only relation left to Alice was taken off by Joe.

The victimization of Alice Manfred is different. The moment she got breasts they were bounded and resented, a resentment increased to outright hatred of her pregnant possibilities and never stopped until she married Louise Manfred and it became the opposite. Even before

the wedding, her parents were murmured about their grandchildren they could see and hold. Contrarily, her husband ran off with another woman and left her off. She was helpless at that time and cannot do anything against him expect "planned sugar in his motor, scissors to his tie, burned suits, slashed shoes, ripped socks" (*Jazz 86*).

The same is with the case of Rose Dear, the mother of Violet. She bore five children to her husband and he abandoned her after their birth. Her sisters comforted her to remain patient to raise her children but could not bear the insults because of him and jumped into the well. Two weeks after her burial, her husband arrived, loaded with ingots of gold for the children and silk embroidered pillow for Rose Dear. But it "would have been real nice under her head in the pine box-if only he'd been on time" (*Jazz 99*). The children were left motherless because of Rose Dear's husband's late arrival and abandonment. He left after twenty-one days and dismissed his children and on account of these traumas, Violet decided not to have children.

These manifold actions on women characters shows that women are victimized by men. Violet, Rose Dear, Alice Manfred remain chaste and believed in their husband. These results in Joe's fall for Dorcas, abandonment of his family by Rose Dear's husband and the same for Alice. Even Rose Dear went to the core of victimization through her suicide and so Violet, by witnessing her mothers' pathetic conditions, decided not to have children.

Violet and Alice somehow escape from the traumas and do not want to be victimized because of men. Violet slashes the dead body of Dorcas during the funeral, which makes the society to call her as "violent" and Alice somehow harms her husband through her small activities and thus pacified her anger at him. Women are used as a property by men, they were exploited in the name of racism, they are sexually violated and humiliated emotionally for decades.

This is the social structure in the world. Man can enjoy according to his desires and can have relationship with any woman he wants but the society expects women to remain devoted to their husband and remain pure. They are prone to domestic violence and abuses and forever they are in a threat because they are women. This needs to be changed and they must fight against the oppressive forces and they should no longer remain as a victim.

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At present, there are social Medias to support them and social movements like Me Too serves as a platform to voice out their problems. Today women are ready to fight against the problems by men and even then, they are assaulted in the name of dowry and love. Vismaya's issue in Kerala is a better example of this. Even education is the better way to eradicate their problems, may women are not voicing out their problems. Women

must be bold and ready to face the turmoil's and the parents should upbringing their daughters to face and fight against the male-dominated world in a courageous way.

REFERENCES

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