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Women as the Other in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*

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Letter of Approval

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Abstract

This paper explores how women particularly black women are presented as the 'other' through the experiences of the characters in Morrison's novel, God Help the Child. The research studies how women characters like Bride and her mother Sweetness are othered according to class, gender, and race oppression applying key idea of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak 'subaltern representation' and supporting idea of Bell Hooks 'female agency' to elaborate on the concept of othering. Their opinions present women have been historically relegated to the status of other, defined in opposition to men, and how female characters exemplify societal marginalization and oppression in patriarchal society. Novel's female characters Bride and her mother Sweetness face intersecting factors including emotional, gender, racial, religious, sexual suppression and societal expectations from the patriarchal authorities in the white society. Bride's black skin symbolizes her alienation to affecting identity and relationships in the society. Whereas, Sweetness is Bride's mother is rejected and dejected by her husband name of Louis for giving birth a black skinned child. Bride's denial, from her boyfriend Booker because of her physical appearance, and she exemplifies patriarchal attitudes through his abusive behaviour towards her. So, the novel's explores how women defined multifaceted ways as marginalized in society according to their identity.

Keywords: Black Woman, Female Agency, and Subaltern Representation.

This research explores how Morrison's novel *God Help the Child* critiquessociety for representing women in postcolonial context. Women as other refer to how they are often viewed and treated as different or subordinate with marginalization to men in society. So, this research mostly focuses on the lives of

women characters, particularly protagonist Bride, her mother Sweetness, her friends Brooklyn and Sofia Huxley. They presented in the novel how societal structures and personal relationships are to define them as marginalized and different or inferior in society due to their gender and race. There are mostly black women segregated towards marginalized position in the society because they are doubly dominated in terms of their gender on the one hand and race just being black on the other hand. Father of Bride and husband of Sweetness left them because Bride was born with deep black skin whereas nobody was born having that color in their family or even in the society. Because of that Louis blames his wife to give birth to illegitimate child. He never touches his child and behaves with her like a stranger and treats her as an enemy. Because of this he left home without any advices with his family. And after that her boyfriend Booker also left her just because as a black woman, her experiences and judgments are influenced by both gender and race. And Sofia Huxley experiences societal rejection with dehumanization, it reflects the broader themes of gender oppression and the enduring impact of patriarchal structures on women's lives. Patriarchal structures not only impact on individual life but also impact on societal structures to other women from their access to mainstream society.

Toni Morrison is an African American black female author with Pulitzer Prize winning novelist, editor, and professor. She was born in February 12, 1931 in Lorain, Ohio, she was one of the most influential voices as a black feminist writer in American literature. In her novels she talks on the behalf of black females who have experienced injustices and prejudices in white patriarchal society. Most of the Morrison's novel often written with theme of females struggle to face injustice rules and regulations according to their color, gender, identity and race. The novel published *The Bluest Eye* (1970) about self- image and identity of a young girl. And, Morrison's

second novel published *Sula* (1973) about a friendship between two black women and her next work, *Beloved* (1987) about struggle for identity. Above all novels often explore themes of identity race, gender, examine how women, particularly African American women are marginalized and “othered” in society. Morrison’s eleventh novel, *God Help the Child*, was published in 2015. She died in New York on 2019.

God Help the Child is the 11th novel by African American feminist writer Toni Morrison. The novel’s original title preferred by Morrison herself is *The Wrath of Children*. Mainly, this novel is about identity crisis, family struggle, racism, child abuse, colorism, oppression with patriarchal authority and so on in the postcolonial era in African American society. Protagonist Bride and her mother Sweetness character have experienced discrimination about their identity according to their skin colour and gender in African American society. Novel stands only for the characters that we know with any kind of depth or significance are Bride, Sweetness, Brooklyn and Sofia Huxly.

The story follows Bride and her painful relationships with her parents; here are the lines to clearly this point. Bride’s mother Sweetness says her husband “we had three good years together but when she was born he blamed me and treated Lula Ann like She was a stranger- more than that, an enemy. He never touched her. I never did convince him that I ain’t never, ever foolded around with another man” (5). These lines highlight the profound effects of women familial rejection from the man within the context of gender and racial issues. Sweetness’s husband ignore his daughters because she born with black skin in white patriarchal society, and he blames his wife for extra relations outside him. So, from above lines explain how women can be othered within their own families according to their gender and race. The narrative alternates from female characters voice along the way in addressing to gender

discrimination, race perceptions, marginalization, inferior, and violence.

In the novel *God Help the Child*, the story begins with the statements of Sweetness. She is the mother of protagonist. She explains in the first line about issues of her black skinned child, her name is Bride. The story goes around the main character of Bride, and her full name is Lula Ann Bridewell. She was born with deep darkness skinned child from yellow skinned mother and light skinned father in the society. Bride faces many obstacles mostly in her childhood period because of her black skin colour, her mother says to Bride about her skinned color like, “midnight black and Sudanese black” (1). She grew up without parent’s love, tenderness, affection, social acceptances, and apology. After the twenties years she works for the cosmetics company with name of Sylvia, Inc. which sells a flat out with six cool colors cosmetic lines, among these cosmetics lines Bride has been developed one of them as owned of herself. And she calls it “You, Girl: cosmetics for your personal millennium” (10). The whole story follows Bride’s present life situation going on with flashing back to past events like; she faces different social issues like race, gender as well as social discrimination from her outer looks in her life while encountering with other characters.

In the starting time while Bride’s mother telling the story of her daughter Lula Ann’s birth. Sweetness and her husband Louis are both what Sweetness says “She was so black she scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black. I’m light-skinned, with good hair, what we call high yellow, and so Lula Ann’s father” (1). So, both parents are shocked when Lula Ann is born with black skin. When she is born with that colour then Sweetness’s husband doesn’t accept the child because she is born with different colour. Sweetness says “He never touched her” (5) Sweetness’s husband Louis never touched his daughter Bride because being a black skinned girl. After that

he left his home to break their three years marital relationship. He never returns towards his family not because of other issues but because of his daughter's dark skin colour.

Then, Sweetness faces many social problems in the society because of her child's black skin, Sweetness feels embarrassed to be have been with her child with such a dark skin. She treats her harshly from the beginning and doesn't even want to touch the baby. She is frequently ashamed for people to think that Bride is her child because society privileges the white color of the skin in contrast she is a mother of the child who has deep black colour. Sweetness' response to her child Bride to call her "Sweetness instead of "Mama" and "Mother" (6) is because of her unconscious denial of her motherhood and to bring normalcy in mother- daughter relationship with broader societal acceptance.

When her husband leaves them in same house after some times later mother and her child faces many family obstacles from their landlord as patriarchal authority. When she was young that time she saw their landlord was molesting a child. Sweetness made Bride promise not to tell anyone because she did not want to lose their apartment. Because if they are lose that apartment they reaches difficult situations in society because they are black skin colour human and there is nobody wants provide another room for hire to black people.

In the time of high school, Lula Ann Bridewell changes her name, first becoming Ann Bride then in her career she puts name Bride. After sometimes, she meets with Booker a white boy and she loves him. Even she doesn't know any information about him like even his background. After that between them happen some minor arguments about their relationship then Booker leaves her to saying, "You are not that woman I want" (8). This line examine the marginalization of

women by denying them acceptance and respect based on their identity. And it reflects a broader social issue where women are often marginalized and oppressed by men. Then Bride feels difficulty about her mind loss to him because of her color of skin and being a woman. Then she visits a prisoner, Sofia Huxley is a woman who was imprisoned fifteen years for child abuse.

Bride goes through a series of emotional and physical problems while searching for boyfriend, Booker. In this situation, she remembers her mother's behaviour in her childhood time. Sweetness was emotionally and physically distant from her because of her darkness skin, She knows that her mother ashamed of her. Then Bride discovers Booker through pawn shop's ticket and she wants his address as well. Bride going on as an inferior, marginalize through her family behaviour as other and Booker's brother also killed by molester from white people. Then Queen helps to Bride to find out Booker's address. At last they have a great reunion after listening to the advice of her.

The notion of Otherness seeks to examine how majority and minority identities are constructed by the society. It claims that the term "Other" represents of different social groups in society to control by those who hold a greater level of social rights and power according to their race, gender and class. The research explores how women particularly black women are ostracized by the white supremacy with patriarchal rules and regulations in African American society even after postcolonial period. The research explores and analyses that black women, particularly African American women are othered in the society as non-human. To prove this research uses insights from feminism and postcolonial feminism.

So, there are many literary scholars to appreciate and critique from various lens upon this novel since its publication. And many literary figures explore the issues

of women's condition and plight in post-colonial society through different articles, journals, reviews and analysing novel's characters, who are criticize through marginalized and inferior perspective.

Among them Manuela Lopez Ramirez is one who expresses in her article, "Racialized Beauty: The Ugly Duckling in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*." She presents racism, sexism and classism from the experience of her female characters to highlight how these types of oppressive structures define each other in society. She presents,

Morrison critiques the American system of Patriarchal racism, sexism, and classism, which is currently in place, exposing issues of race and how this society has denied African American's racial identity... Lula Ann easy victim of her neighbours' racist views. Mr. Leigh calls her "nigger" and "cunt" when she is only a six-year-old girl, after she sees him molesting a boy. She feels the poignant hate and revulsion of his words. Later at school, she also suffers racial prejudice and marginalization when bad names, ape sounds or monkey mimicry are whispered or shouted at her. (174-178)

According to Manuela Lopez Ramirez presents the condition of American society which is mostly going on through patriarchal authority by the race, gender, sex and class to define female identity in society. Lula Ann's experiences easily present the theme of women as marginalized as a second sex particularly within the framework of race and gender. She faces racial and gender based abuse from men Mr. Leigh with dehumanizing words like "nigger" or "cunt". These words reflect not only dehumanize her but it also refers all women in society with their secondary status. Even in the school she faces racial prejudice and marginalization through insults and demeaning activities like ape sounds with mimicry, it refers nature of oppression by the society

with girls. American society led by the patriarchal rules in different aspects upon females' life style. There is no real identity of female's in patriarchal society even now without male like; Sweetness and Bride, who are main characters in this novel deprived of their identity. Both are marginalized characters who couldn't introduce their identity as perfectly because of their racial and gender problems and they are recognised as inferior.

Similarly, Makwana Ajay opines in his article, "Colorism in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*" comments over the character of mother. He says,

However, Sweetness endures the responsibility of Lula with many restrictions. She too rarely touches Lula's body. Sweetness feels extremely embarrassed to have a dark skin baby, to protect her social image at outside, she advises Lula not to call her 'mother or mama' publicly. She suggests Lula to call her as 'Sweetness'. Sweetness condemns negatively the physical appearance of Lula by comparing with 'witch'. (452)

In this way mother's rejection for call herself a mother of a child is due to racial segregation because fear of public's reaction upon them about their race with gender. Mostly, novel talks about the very weak conditions about Lula's life because she was born with different colour then her parents. Mother Sweetness faces many social restrictions from society because her daughter was born with different color and there is nobody born like her. She says her daughter call me "Sweetness instead of Mother or Mama" (6) because she is afraid of societal acceptance being as a single mother in family. Bride's father Louis leaves both mother and daughter in difficult situations. There is only mother mostly going through her child's racial and gender problems in society but father doesn't care about them.

Then, other critics Hooras Subzal and Noroz Ahmed, talks in their

journal, "Investigating through Feminist Lens; the struggle of Empowerment in Toni Morrison's novel *God Help the Child*." They present female characters rejected from their family with sexist and racist oppression in male dominated society. They write,

The protagonist of the novel *God Help the Child* (2015) is prominent representative of the feminist oppression and empowerment in the male dominated society. Her sufferings start with her father leaving her and her mother with her black colour in a racist and patriarchal society, and her boyfriend leaving her without explanation. Her fate is similar to that of her mother. Both are the abandoned women in love. (322)

According to them, above lines present about the Lula Ann, she is protagonist of this novel. She oppressed by her father and her boyfriend in African American racial and patriarchal society. Sweetness's husband and Lula Ann's boyfriend leave her because they don't want this type of skin colour women in their life. But there is not only the Lula Ann oppressed by patriarchal authority but there are another women who are oppressed like; Sweetness and Sofia Huxley. Other critics, Roxane Gay in her book review on *God Help the Child* by Toni Morrison review 'Incredible Powerful' comments over the family problems. She says,

As a child, her mother Sweetness punished Bride for her dark skin, which ended her marriage. Sweetness husband Louis could not bring himself to love a child with skin as dark as Bride's, "we had three good years, Sweetness tells us, but when she was born, he blamed me and treated Lula Ann like she was a stranger more than that an enemy". Her mother meanwhile insisted her child call her Sweetness instead of anything material. (Gay)

In this way, there is only female characters victim by male with decision of patriarchal society. When the child Bride born with black colour there is not only mother's

involvement for this. Sweetness's husband blamed her and he treated his child like stranger. Sweetness's husband fully uses patriarchal authority in his family's characters on women. And after that Bride's mother calls her child don't call me mother because of her their three years marriage relationships apart in society. So, there is only reveals the female fault not male because there is male are superior and female are inferior in American African society.

Similarly, Jihan Zayed and Shoista Maseeh portrays their views in "Polyphony of Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*" brought the issue of colorism in society and how effect it woman life style to going on survive in front of white and patriarchal society. They present,

Sweetness could see people around her looking at Lula Ann with cold stare. But the fact remains that Sweetness is worried not for the lack of fairness in her daughter but the presence of blackness. Blackness is something to be avoided and scared of. The reason: discrimination. It was hard enough just being a colored women even a high yellow one-trying to rent in a decent part of the city. (38)

In this way, Sweetness mostly fear from society because there is no accepts of black colour people mostly female in white and patriarchal society. She gives the born black female child and deny by her husband. Sweetness worried about her child because there is lack of fairness between black and white people mostly with female. There is main reason is being a woman and being a black for separate between male and female body as superior and inferior, centralization and marginalization is racial and gender discrimination in society.

Morrison's most of the novels are about the black people with women's character which refers to marginalization in American African patriarchal society. In

her first novel *The Bluest Eye* and last novel *God Help the Child* mentions the issue of race, gender, sexual activities and so on. Pecola, the character in *The Bluest Eye*, and Bride, the character in *God Help the Child*, both received rejection because of their dark skin colour and gender status in patriarchal society. Ari Nurhayati in her article, “Intersecting Oppression of Gender and Race in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* and *God Help the Child*” comments on the white beauty and inferior conditions of women. She remarks,

In both *The Bluest Eye* and *God Help the Child*, the African-Americans are hegemonized by white beauty and experience injustice. They are victims of white superiority and placed in the inferior status. For the African-American women, this condition can be more severe. The demand to be beautiful addressed to them makes them the more depressed knowing the fact that their physical features are far from being the ideal. This can raise in them the feeling of self-hate. Negative judgements that are addressed to these women make their position get worse since they feel more convinced that they have lacks and weakness. (383-384)

These lines present about women rejection from the perspective of white supremacy and patriarchal society is the main cause for creating inferiority upon women lifestyle in African-American society. Toni Morrison presents the women’s conditions through her characters in two different novels. In the society, women’s judgements with their outer look in front of different opportunities in African-American society. There is no mention of male’s life style through their outer looks even if they are black or white skinned, there is only mentioned women’s social status with different points of view. Women are mostly depressed from their physical appearance in front of men and they feel self-hated to being an inferior and marginalized in society.

Similarly, there is another study by Vina HartsaA'YuniHidayati upon her research; "Black Women Oppression in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*" shed lights upon black women as marginalization and powerlessness. According to her, Bride and Sweetness experience powerlessness due to two reasons: the capitalist power and absence of acceptance. Both bride and Sweetness together feel powerless under the landlord's order. Mr. Leigh as the apartment owner considers himself as the dominant who has the power to control Bride and Sweetness. On the other hand, Bride and Sweetness feel powerless due to rejection of their family but Bide also needs acceptance from her society. (52)

Vina HartsaA'YuniHidayati's in her research women's characters are powerless in front of their own family and capitalist society. Because both Sweetness and her daughter Briedominated by capitalist power and patriarchal power with white African-American society. Sweetness and Bride dominated by their landlords Mr. Leigh under the economic conditions. They have no any words to speak against him even he did anything with anybody, because they remained under male gaze according to their economic and social conditions. There is not allowed to live happily for black people in society and also marginalizing behaviours mostly with female's body.

Black people were victimized from the centuries till the modern time through their race and gender in society. Manuela Lopez Ramire presents in his journal on "Racialized Beauty: The Ugly Duckling in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*." She writes,

Lula Anna is an easy victim of her neighbours' racist views. Mr. Leigh calla her "nigger" and "cunt" when she is only a six- year-old-girl, after she sees him molesting a boy. She feels the poignant hate and revulsion of his words.

Later at school, she also suffers racial prejudice and marginalization when bad names, ape sounds or monkey mimicry are whispered or shouted at her. Like Duckling and Pecola, Lula Ann is teased and abused by other children. Being trained to avoid confrontation, she is passive in the face of the humiliation and ill-treatment she undergoes. (178)

In this way, Lula Ann is victim by her neighbours like Mr. Leigh through her black skin colour and according to her gender in the society. It refer the black women's identity crisis through her ugly skin to reflection on the white and male eyes in the society. Bride's identity is like an inferior in front of her father and her boyfriend because they leave her only cause of her outer looks. In school she is called by her name but by her others name like nigger and cunt. She is compared with monkey and other lowest character and teased by other. So all these, reasons create her identity as marginalized. She is not well treated by her neighbours and friends in the society because she is a black girl.

Furthermore, another critic Jiang Qiuping in her journal "A Brief Analysis of *God Help the Child* from the Perspective of Feminist Criticism" comments over the patriarchal society. He presents,

The world is surrounded by the aesthetic standard dominated by the male. It is implying that girls should be pretty enough to easily get a job or promotion. Nowadays, women from different cultures still suffer appearance anxiety from various extents, because the world is still under the male gaze..... Meanwhile, Bride's typecast ex-boyfriends show a patriarchal man who feels he must have a beautiful woman on his arm in order to impress other men his "prowess". In other words, Bride is regarded as an expensive commodity of under the male gaze. The extreme of pursuing a perfect appearance indicates that the female

always suffer from appearance anxiety under the male gaze. (2-3)

According to Jiang Qiuping in his journal presents women's existence is always under the male gaze or patriarchal gaze with white people in society. Males are always searching for good looking and attractive girl in his life because they want to concerns stunning body in front of society. Women want to be beautiful with use of different commodity to recognize herself as a white and acceptable woman under the male gaze. Like protagonist Bride, who wearing a white dress most of the time because she wants to appearance good looking with stunning body for male perspective. Bride without a white dress, she feels uncomfortable because she is the black skin girl and she treated like as voiceless, inferior, marginalize from mostly her parents and white supremacy.

Critic Malhnoor Rasheed and Ambreen Salahuddin write their view about the novel in their Journal, "An analysis of Voicelessness of Black African American women in Toni Morrison's Work." According to them;

Similarly, in the *God Help the Child*, Bride's mother, Sweetness suffered a lot. After the birth of Bride Sweetness's husband abandoned her. He left his family. He even accused his wife, and he said this baby girl is the product of an illegitimate relationship. All the responsibilities of Bride were on Sweetness. She was mute in this society. This misogynist society does not allow her to speak for her fundamental rights and males run from their responsibilities. (186)

In this way, according to them this novel's character Sweetness being marginalized under the rights of patriarchy and white people in African American society. After the birth of her daughter Bride, she faces many difficulties from her husband and people of society because Bride born with black skin. Sweetness's husband leaves her with

daughter in same society with difficult situation where black people and most of the women become marginalized. There is no any option to speak against men. At the time of birth of Bride's Sweetness as a speechless even her husband accused Sweetness have an illegitimate relationship. Then her husband leaves home with full responsibilities on Sweetness. So, there is male blames on female body for any things because they are marginalized according their gender and race.

Linda Mydland in his research, "Attachment and Trauma in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*" there are most of the female characters going through their traumatic situation. Like Bride, Sweetness, Brooklyn, and Sofia Huxley from their family and societal expectations. They are all victimized by activities of sexual abuse. Her notions;

It is fair to assert that the caretaker in all of the character's lives is incapable of establishing a secure base. Bride, Brooklyn and Rain's childhood have numerous similarities. First, their only caregiver presents in their mother but she merely provides them with a roof over their heads. The secure base the mother is supposed to establish is absent. Bride's mother does not show any affection or love her child, Brooklyn's mother ignores the sexual abuse she is exposed to by her uncle; Rain's mother's cruelty is beyond understanding as she lets men have sex with her daughter for money. (86)

According to Linda Mydland in her thesis, claim most of the female characters caretaker by their mother as incapable because mother herself victimizes with different patriarchal activities in society. These three female children are faces mostly sexual abusive from their neighbour's uncle and landlord causes of poverty and heavy of male authority. Above all female characters are going familial and social problems. Bride's mother does not show any love and acceptance towards her

daughter Bride because her black skin colour and her mother want to be a white woman without her child presence.

The women as the other refer to the way of women lifestyle with differently in society they are treated according to gender, race, and physical looks compared to men in society. Where, black women have different issues in society like marginalization with discrimination due to their dual identity in white and patriarchal society. It emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing the complex ways in which race and gender intersect to shape the experiences of black women in society. Women have historically been marginalized excluded or considered as secondary to men in various aspects of social, political and cultural life. Thus, the notion of “women as the other in Morrison’s *God Help the Child*” is an issue to be explored however it has not been explored yet. So, exploring the issue is innovative and unique.

In the methodological level, perspective of postcolonial female theory is a social, political, and economical movement which talks about the right of women and voices of women who are dominated by societal expectance. Post colonialism is the study of theory and literature as it speaks about the colonizer and the colonized experience. One of the concept of post colonialism theory is ‘Otherness’ refers to how people are treated with based on their gender; race, colour as well as who are seen as different from the dominant groups are marginalized and excluded from power and privilege. Women are subjected to processes of othering where their perspectives of daily life experiences and identities are portrayed as fundamentally different according to men. Otherness is created through a process of binary opposition, where certain characteristics are associated with the dominant group and others are associated with marginalized group. Men are portrayed as superior, brave and

intelligent where women are portrayed as inferior and loser to those of men.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) was a French existentialist philosopher, feminist writer. She is most popular with her best knowing book *The Second Sex* (1949). She remarks men are portrayed as superior, brave, absolute, subject and intelligent with first sex while women defined as inferior, object, other, unintelligent and loser. She presents women always are defined in relationship with men in society. According to her remarks “Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being” (15). For her women is nothing without male, she has not any identity and she known through male relationship. Women’s identities are often defined through their role as mothers, daughters, and wives with dependent upon male human beings. In Morrison’s novel female characters like Bride and Sweetness, they are struggling with race and gender discrimination to search their identity without male identity. Bride cannot achieve a proper identity without her father and boyfriend; they leave her because she is black skinned girl in white and patriarchal society. And, Sweetness is also dominant according to by her gender with patriarchal and American white society. When her husband leaves her and child Bride, she cannot take outside of home because they are living in patriarchal society. She says, “I knew enough not to take her with me when I applied to landlords so I left her with a teenage cousin to babysit” (6). This line clearly illustrates how women are victim by their race, gender and class in African American society.

Simone de Beauvoir presents her book *The Second Sex* about ‘other’. Her notions; She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he reference to her; “she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute- she is the Other” (16). According to her, women are

defined not by their own features or identities but they are recognized by the relationship with men. Their identity and existence are presented as secondary or supplementary in society. Women are less important than men and they are not in central figure in society but men are always central and superior in society. Bride Says, “My life is falling down. I’m sleeping with men whose names I don’t know and not remembering any of it. What’s going on? I’m young; I’m successful and pretty. Really pretty, so there! Sweetness. So why am I so miserable? Because he left me” (53). This quote presents broader theme of women’s struggles with self-identity in a society but their identity often values them based on relationships with men. She feels confusion about her identity even success and beauty that define women as inferior and object and men are implicitly positioned as superior. Therefore, men are considered the ‘subject and absolute’ and they are defined themselves in society however women are considered as ‘object and other’ and they are defined by their relationship with men’s identity.

In *God Help the Child* presents patriarchal authority on the character of Bride and Sweetness. Bride is a protagonist and she faces different social pressures about her identity and objectification based on her appearance with gender and race from the childhood age. And Sweetness, Bride’s mother represents a light skinned black woman, is depicted as a complex character whose experiences of oppression both with her husband and through social and traditional gender role relegates her to position of other.

The black women’s oppression was the result of double bind of being woman and being black. Black feminism was in opposition to both patriarchy as well as white feminism. So, Bride and Sweetness are discriminated as people of inferior, marginalized, victimized by white society with authority of patriarchal roles because

they are like second sex according to their gender and race. And another excerpt on the book of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* presents the gender as social construction, she writes, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine" (273). According to Simone de Beauvoir's concept the baby child does not have any ideas about the patriarchal rules in the time of birth. At the time of birth they have similar kind of attitudes and both have same attraction to all the people. But at the time of girlhood and womanhood, the society fixes their roles as differently according to patriarchal society. She presents femininity is portrayed as a socially and culturally constructed with set of behaviours, appearances, and characteristics that are assigned to individuals based on their perceived gender. Beauvoir believes that society constructs the male and female since their childhood period. Both children either male child and or female child is not born with their habits, nature, duties and responsibilities. In this context, Bandana Shrestha writes in her thesis "Woman as the patriarchal construct in Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*" according to her;

Both a man and a woman play the roles as their society expects. These types of roles and the expectations make both of them internalize their positions in the society that the man is superior and independent figure and the woman is inferior and dependent figure. Thus it reflects man as human, better and primary but the woman as non- human, worse and secondary part of the society. (6)

According to Bandana Shrestha point of view, man and women play the role according to construct as a social position which is provides patriarchal society. Male is the first

person as superior, independent and whereas women are the inferior and dependent figure. So males are the always identified their strong features and central human beings and woman identify their weakness and marginalize human beings in society. Male is self, absolute and subject and female is other and object. Here is the Simone de Beauvoir quotes to clearly the concept of women “Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man”(15). These two lines clearly present existence of male and female. Male is self and independent and female is other and dependent.

Likewise, Angelica Selinger writes in her paper “Portraying Women as Beauvoir’s “Other” Fictional Representation of women and Gender” about the female existence in white patriarchal society. She writes;

Women signify, imply, and represent sex for men, (and in the case of sexual desirability, for heterosexual men), as bees signify pollination for a cherry blossom; and because the male perspective is set up as the perspective of the self, it is set up as the whole truth and nothing but the truth of what women are. What sex is for women, and what signifies, implies, and represents sex for women, does not influence the definition of sex. Women’s experience of sex is what the biased, inessential, non-neutral, deviant, and non-central experience of sex is from the perspective of group that does not and cannot represent humanity. (5)

According to her statements explores the notion that women’s experiences of sex or gender identity are often becomes marginalized or inferior which refers them to the status of other in male centric perspective. In *God Help the Child* novel’s protagonist Bride identity is heavily influenced by how men particularly white men perceive her in society. Mother Sweetness also being internalized in societal expectations because

her daughter's dark skin makes her less desirable and acceptable in society. Male sees women's experiences as inherently less objective or less representative experience in society. This bias comes from a position of authority and social norms that prioritize male point of view. Women's gender roles often considered that secondary or less important than men gender.

The term 'subaltern' refers postcolonial perspective to individuals and groups who are socially, politically, and geographically outside the hegemonic power structure. In feminism, subalternity often highlights the intersecting oppressions faced by women who are marginalized with their gender, class, race, and sexuality and other identity. These women are often doubly or more marginalized and oppressed from the patriarchal and white society. Spivak presents her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" based on marginalized women particularly in postcolonial contexts are doubly oppressed, she says "The woman is doubly in shadow" (84). This line presents, subaltern women are doubly oppressed according to their by external hegemonic forces and by internal patriarchal norms in society. And she presents also,

The question of 'woman' seems most problematic in this context. Clearly, if you are poor, black and female you get it in three ways. If, however, this formulation is moved from the first- world context into the postcolonial (which is not identical with the third-world) context, the description 'black' or 'of color' loses persuasive significance. The necessary stratification of colonial subject-constitution in the first phase of capitalist imperialism makes 'color' useless as an emancipatory signifier. (90)

According to this passage, the challenges faced by marginalized groups, particularly subaltern women, and the limitations of certain identifiers in different contexts.

Within the context, women identity is particularly complex and problematic

especially those who are poor and blackwomen and they facing multiple layers of marginalize experience and oppression insociety. And, she present how being poor, black and female leads to compounded forms of discrimination. So, she examines the complexities of identity, especially for subaltern women, who are recognized according to their role as marginalize.

In Morrison's novel *God Help the Child* subalternity refers the character of Bride and her mother Sweetness exemplifies the concept of doubly oppressed identity. She has experienced both racial and gender oppression from the society. Bride is a dark skinned African American woman who faces oppression with discrimination due to her skin color. As a woman Bride also contends with social expectations and limitations imposed on her gender by white people. In comparison to Bride her mother Sweetness lighter black skin African American woman. Despite her relatively lighter black skin, Sweetness still faces systematic racism and the legacy of racial discrimination in patriarchal society.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak addresses the marginalizing and silencing of women within the context of postcolonial discourse. Her concept of subaltern particularly in relation to women is deeply rooted in postcolonial theory and critiques of power dynamics. Spivak emphasizes that subaltern women are often excluded from the processes of representation and unable to speak for themselves. Their voices are just unheard and they are actively marginalized and silenced by these intersecting forms of oppression. In her essays "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, representation of subaltern voices. She presents, "This legally programmed asymmetry in the status of the subject which effectively defines the woman as object of one husband, obviously operates in the interest of the legally symmetrical subject-status of the male" (98). Above lines critiques, a patriarchal system whereas women

are legally and socially positioned as objects under the control of their husbands whereas men's status as autonomous legal subjects in the society. And there is women defining them according to relation of men specially their husbands in the society. The positions of women as fundamentally different from and subordinate to men reinforcing gender inequality.

Here to clear the concept of subaltern through the journal of Hemangi Bhawat and Madhavi Arekar present in their point of views "On the Margins: Theorising Spivak's Can the Subaltern Speak?" According to them;

She emphasizes that the subaltern women cannot speak at their voices and agencies were completely silenced under the political, social and cultural hegemony of Hindu patriarchal codes or moral conduct and their representation as victims of barbaric culture in British colonial narratives. In the male dominant culture, though these subaltern women attempted to voice their narratives, their voices were not recognized that led their silence in the dominant political system of representation. (43)

According to them, the subaltern women provide the voiceless and powerless due to the dual forces of Hindu patriarchal hegemony and British colonial narratives. Despite efforts by these subaltern women to assert their narratives within the male dominated society their voice to be ignored and dismissed. Women are always dominated by patriarchal authority and political and social power in the colonial society. Men are superior, central, and able to voices and where women are recognised by inferior, marginalize and voiceless and silenced.

Here, to clearly concept of subaltern women, Francis EtseAwitor presents her article "Could the Subaltern Speak? Patriarchy and Gender-Based Violence in Ben Okri's *Dangerous Love*." She remarks,

After the marriage, as the husband thinks that he has bought a wife, the latter is treated worse than a slave. She is abused, battered, sexually assaulted, exploited, and humiliated when Ifeyiwa is brought to the city by her husband, she finds it very difficult, if not impossible to adjust to her new life. She is trapped in wedlock, sharing nothing with her husband except receiving orders and obeying him. (46)

According to this excerpt, present gender based violence stems a patriarchal view which is based on male supremacy and women considered as subaltern with oppressed and assigned a secondary role in society. Here is marriage seen as a transaction where the wife is essentially the property like he thinks she is an object 'purchased' of her husband. Ifeyaliwa's experience the dehumanization and marginalization of women within a patriarchal society. In this point of view women are seen as the object like other distinct and inferior rank to men related to a secondary and subordinate status in the society. Here, women taken as secondary person with tag of 'Others' like object while men are taken as 'self' like subject with patriarchal rules and regulations.

Similarly, Bell Hooks (1952) presents the concept of 'Other' particularly in relation to the marginalization and dehumanization of women an especially woman of color through various lenses such as race, class, and gender in the white and patriarchal society. According to Bell Hooks' in her book; *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984), she presents; "Patriarchy allowed all men to completely rule women in their families, to decide their fate, to shape their destiny. Men could freely batter women with no fear of punishment. They could decide whom their daughters were to marry, whether they would read or write etc" (120). According to her this statement highlights the oppressive nature of patriarchy over the women's lives to

control their bodies, choices and opportunities for personal development. Men are superior with absolute authority to govern the lives of women in their families where women indicate the inferior rank as the 'other'. Women have no any authority to choose any decision to her. Bell Hooks another book; *Ain't I a Woman Black Women and Feminism* (1981) talks about the female social status in patriarchal and white society. She presents her notions; "In America, white racist ideology has always allowed white women to assume that the word woman is synonymous with white woman, for women of others races are always perceived as Others, as de-humanized beings who do not fall under the heading woman" (188). According to her, white women to see as womanhood and women of other races are often views as the 'Other' it means narrowly define concept of womanhood. This othering process dehumanizes women of color and white women remain closer to the centre of social and cultural power and they are subject as absolute, while women of color remain at the margins as object as other without social power.

Beauvoir presents in patriarchal society, the men have his sexual desire and the woman is not supposed as desire like he is. So man is taken as subject and woman is taken object in terms of sexual desires. This concept to clear from the concept of her book lines, according to her. She says;

Man is, sexually, subject and therefor men are normally separated from each other by the desire that drives them towards an object different from themselves. But woman is the absolute object of desire, and that is the reason why so many 'special friendships' flourish in schools, colleges, and studios; some of them are purely platonic and others grossly carnal. (340)

The passage reflects a patriarchal point of view by emphasizing the traditional gender roles and desire, where men are active members like subject and women are passive

members like absolute object. Men are portrayed as the primary person in the realm of sexual desire with active role while women are described as the second person with passive recipients of male desire of sexual needs. Women are fundamentally different and separate from men, through the lens of sexual desire.

Analysing *God Help the Child* by Morrison through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's concept of women as *The Second Sex* offers a profound examination of how women particularly black women are marginalized, objectified, and defined in relation to men and social norms. How women are objectified and devalued based on their gender, race, and class in society. So, Morrison explores how women, particularly black women navigate their identities in society that often views them as the "other". Morrison says;

It's not my fault. So you can't blame me. I didn't do it and I have no idea how it happened. It didn't take more than an hour after they pulled her out from between my legs to realize something was wrong. Really wrong. She was so black she scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black. I'm light skinned, with good hair, what we call high yellow, and so is Lula Ann's father. Ain't nobody in my family anywhere near that color. (3)

In *God Help the Child* the quote from the first chapter of Sweetness, from this passage reveals several layers of 'othering' experience by women, particularly in the context of race and colour within their own families and communities. She provides an emotional example of how women face social pressures and prejudices often portrayed by patriarchal structures in white society. Sweetness is mother of protagonist Bride. In the birth time Sweetness immediately wants to distance from her daughter Bride because her colour skin. And Sweetness thinking about what other people say about her daughter's skin, she feels societal pressure and judgment regarding her

daughter's appearance. She says, "it's not my fault. So you can't blame me" (1) this phrase clearly present of Sweetness feelings' about the social pressure because there is nobody gives birth with that colour. And she feels helpless like hopeless she says "I didn't do it and I have no idea how it happened" (1). Here is women's value determined by their physical appearance with the real identity in society. Here Sweetness tells how my husband reaction to see her at the first time. She says,

My husband, Louis, is a porter and when he got back off the rails he looked at me like I really was crazy and looked at her like she was from the planet Jupiter. He wasn't a cussing man so when he said, "Goddamn what the hell is this?" I knew we were in trouble. That's what did it- what caused the fights between me and him. It broke our marriage to pieces. We had three good years together but when she was born he blamed me and treated Lula Ann like she was stranger- more than that, an enemy. He never touched her..... we argued and argued till told has her blackness must be from his own family- not mine. That's when it got worse, so bad he just up and left and I had to look for another, cheaper place to live. (5-6)

Above passage presents the situation like oppression and objectification of women from the white patriarchal society. Here, Louis father of Bride and husband of Sweetness, his reaction and behaviour at the first time meets his daughter in birth centre as stranger like unknown about them who are they. When Louis meets them he surprised like crazy because his child girl belongs to another planet like Jupiter, he says "What the hell is this?" When Louis meets child at first time his reaction like stranger and he says Bride born with societal pressure because she born with different physical appearance and there nobody born being a girl like her. And then he blame on his wife, she doesn't my child you have another relationship out of home, and he

never touched his child. After that he left home without any advices with his family that's reflecting a patriarchal mind-set that means devalues and mistrusts of women in front of men. Here creates issues of gender inequality where women's lives and relationships are constantly under the men's threat according to their rules. And here, Sweetness's experience is not her personal issue it's reflection of the societal structures that presents female subjugation and mistrust in male dominated society. Sweetness discriminate her child Bride because she afraid from the societal expectations about being black and being a girl. She says, "I told her to call me "Sweetness" instead of "Mother" or "Mama" (6). It was safer. Being that black and having what I think are too-thick lips calling "Mama" would confuse people. Besides, she has funny-colored eyes, crow-black with a blue tint, something witchy about them too" (6). These lines examined how Sweetness's experiences and perceptions reflect broader concept of marginalization and othering of women through gender and race culture. Mother's experiences are shaped by both her blackness and her femininity to create form of marginalization. Sweetness is desire to be addressed as "Sweetness" instead of "mother or "mama" indicates her awareness of societal biases against women. She wants to be other because she is a woman with black child, which isn't liked by patriarchal white society. Bride's "too- thick lips" and "funny colored eyes" with a "witchy" that's quality indicates how colorism, racism and beauty play the role of othering in society. Morrison says in her book "I feel like I'm melting away. I can't explain it to you but I do know when it started. It began after he said, "You not the woman I want" (8). These lines present how social rejection and personal relationships deeply impact women's identities who suffer from according to their race and gender with mistreatment. When Bride says 'I feel like I'm melting away' it symbolizes her identity going to be loss with rejection of her father and lover. When

Booker, tells her ‘you not the woman I want’ in that time she feels worthlessness value without men acceptance in society. This rejection is not only personal but also rooted in a patriarchal and racist society. Jiang Qiuping says in her journal “Bride’s typecast ex-boyfriends show a patriarchal man who feels he must have a beautiful woman on his arm in order to impress other men his “prowess”. In other words, Bride is regarded as an expensive commodity under the male gaze” (3). So here, Bride’s character often viewed as objects of male pleasure and desire, which in turn affects their self-perception and behaviour. The following lines describe how white boys treat upon girls in public place without any hesitations. Morrison says

She couldn’t know any of that or how her black skin would scare white people or make them laugh and trick her. I once saw a girl nowhere near as dark as Lula Ann and who couldn’t be more than ten years old tripped by one of a group of white boys and when she fell and tried to scramble up another one put his foot on her behind and knocked her flat again. Those boys held their stomachs and bent over with laughter. (41)

Sweetness represents how women particularly black women are marginalized and dehumanized in patriarchal white society by societal norms. The girl as a black girl makes her as a target for the white boys’ to cruelty demonstrating how she doubly marginalized first according to gender and second race. White boys’ treats such as tripping her and knocking her down, it reflect men as a superior, centre position whereas women in a subjugated, inferior position. White boys physical dominance over the girl it illustrates the power of control and humiliation upon women its means it’s not only superiority of white males but also males. Mr. Leigh, who is the landlord of Sweetness’s family, he plays the systematic structures and societal attitudes that impact the lives of female. The following lines help to clear her attitudes upon female

lives,

He demanded the rent be paid in cash before noon on the first day of the month and charged a late fee if you knocked on his door five minutes late. Sweetness was so scared of him she made sure I delivered the money first thing in the morning. I know now what I didn't know then- that standing up to Mr. Leigh meant having to look for another apartment... So when I told Sweetness what I'd seen, she was furious. Not about a little crying boy, but about spreading the story the story. She wasn't interested in tiny fists or big hairy thighs; she was interested in keeping our apartment. She said, "Don't you say a word about it. Not to anybody, you hear me, Lula? Forget it. Not a single word." So I was afraid to tell her the rest- that although I didn't make a sound, I just hung over the windowsill and stared, something made the man look up. (54-55)

Sweetness and her daughter remain under the suppression of their landlord Mr. Leigh, who has the authority typically associated with male dominance. And it indicates women are powerlessness and marginalized without men relations. Here Sweetness and her daughter have economic crisis, societal pressures, and need for safety from the male gaze with their authority. Mr. Leigh's strict demand for his house rent payments in cash in one day, if they can't give that rent in a single day he takes charge with extra money. It indicates there is economic control over the tenants particularly lack of female power without male exist. When Bride seen her Landlord doing sexual activity, she says her mother about that. When Sweetness listens about that she wants to keep silence like secret because she fears of her landlord's authority about apartment. They are under the patriarchal systems, who are often defined in relation to men and relegated to a secondary status in the society. So, women often

occupy subordinate positions, reflecting Simone de Beauvoir's idea of the *The Second Sex*, where women are defined in relation to men and deprived of autonomy and power in society. So, the Novel's *God Help the Child* characters represent the how women define in the society by their gender, race and class. Sweetness, Bride and other female character present women are marginalized, subordinate, as an object which refers "other" by their appearance with gender. Mr. Leigh, Louis, and Booker are the male figure who dominated female with different sectors. So, this analysis underscores the pervasive impact of patriarchal authority on women's lives how societal norms and prejudices marginalize and dehumanize women, particularly inferior, voiceless, marginalize, passive women through their identity according to race and gender.

To sum up the research, concludes that concept of other is explored through the lives of women and their experiences with racism, gender issues and societal expectations in the novel of *God Help the Child* (2015). All the female characters are often defined by societal standards and expectations, reflecting Simone de Beauvoir's idea of women as the other. The novel presents female characters like, Bride, Sweetness, Sofia, and Brooklyn as exploited inside and outside home through inferior qualities, which makes them marginalized with powerlessness. Bride is marginalized because of both her gender and her dark skin color in her family and society whereas Sweetness marginalization leads her gender like being a woman without power in patriarchal society. Both are rejected by the male person without any conflict and advising. Bride rejected by her father and boyfriend because she is black skinned color and Sweetness rejecting by her husband because she gives birth black skinned girl in white patriarchal society.

Lula Ann's father Louis blames Sweetness because of their daughter's born by

black skin and he says you have extra relationship outside of the house. He thinks I am not the real father of her and he never touches her and he treats her like a stranger. He says “she was a stranger- more than that, an enemy. He never touched her. I never did convince him that I ain’t never, ever fooled with another man” (5). Between Sweetness and Louis having argument because of Bride’s skin color and then he left home without any suggestions. There is lack of trust broke their family relationship into pieces. Here Sweetness faced directly patriarchal authority to abandonment of self and her daughter Bride becomes indirectly by her father. But Bride becomes directly victimized by her boyfriend Booker, he says “you not the woman I want” (8). This rejection refers to Bride faces the societal and internal pressures that have shaped her identity in patriarchal society. On the other hand, Mr. Leigh character can be seen as an embodiment of patriarchal authority where he use enforcershis power over women being a landlords of his tenants. By holding a position of power as a landlord Mr. Leigh, he is able to control over the women who depend on him for housing as a tenant. It reflects of broader societal structures where men in superior positions with power of authority can control with suppresses women in society. Sweetness and her daughter suffer under the authority of capitalist economic power of landlord. So his character demonstrates how men in in authority of power can exploit and manipulate women in society under the male gaze. All these reasons relate them as ‘other’.

Simone De Beauvoir interprets the society even world as a patriarchal construction in his theory, and the male characters are, defined their superiority whereas female are defined by their inferiority in the society. She says in her book “She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute – she is the other” (15) above lines present the men are the essential with

subjects and women are the inessential with objects like other in society. In patriarchal societies men are seen as the superior human beings like subjects who define and interpret the world whereas women are considered secondary or inessential. Their identity and roles are defined not on their own terms, but in the relation to men in society.

In this novel *God Help the Child*(2015) Morrison presents the broader societal issue of women who are treated as other and their identities are defined primarily by male desires and societal biases. And being female characters faces different societal suppression in different situations with their experiences of marginalization, subjugation, and struggle for identity in patriarchal white society. Bride's dark skin color makes her an 'other' within her parents in family and society. And her boyfriend Booker rejected her because of being a black color girl, its reflect 'other'. And her mother Sweetness discomfort with her daughter's skin color which is reflect her own identity being other by both white society and racial community with patriarchal authority. Sofia Huxley and Brooklyn they have different experiences that reflect women as marginalized people in white patriarchal society. Sofia Huxley reflects the traditional, subservient roles for acceptances of women after marriage within limitations which imposed by patriarchal norms. And Brooklyn's experience of feeling like an outsider and being judged harshly for her actions underscores the ways in which women are often marginalized and deemed inferior in patriarchal societies. So, from this research women are often seen as inferior, marginalized, suppressed, with secondary position to men. It concludes that women are often othered in society through societal expectations, identity, familial social relationships and social acceptance of gender roles by portraying female experiences like Bride, her mother Sweetness and other characters are marginalized as other.

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