

## I. Sula and Social Context

Social clash is a common phenomenon everywhere. A society dominates individuals through its norms and values and if one denies accepting social imposition for the sake of individual freedom, s/he is bound to be in conflict with society in terms of personal desires, emotions, imaginations and idiosyncrasies. As the society fails to accommodate individual behaviors, one goes beyond the boundary, fixity and legality of society and challenges to break them which invites the clash between individual and society. Toni Morrison has successfully sketched the picture of such a clash in her novel, *Sula*. Toni Morrison born as Chloe Anthony Wofford to Ramah and George Wofford in Lorain, Ohio, in 1931, her childhood was filled with the African-American folklore, music, rituals and myths to make her one of the acclaimed novelists of the post-modern era; to attribute the breath of her vision to the precision of her focus and to the literature as functioning as much as did the storytelling tradition of the past that reminded members of that community, their heritage and defining their role.

Toni Morrison, having received master's degree in English from Cornell University, worked at Texas Southern University and later taught at Howard University from 1957 to 1964. She became a senior editor from an assistant editor at Random house in 1964 and nurtured to publication works by Angel Davis Toni Cade Bambara, June Jordan and Gayle Jones as well as the encyclopedia. *The Black Book* (1970), her position as a senior editor helped change the course of contemporary Black literature. Dorothea D. Mbalia views that Morrison's novels document Morrison's increasing understanding of the role of historical materialism in discovering the source of, and the solution to the oppression of the African people. They exemplify an extrinsic political position. The strength of such an approach is

that it “provides a valuable context for any consideration of Morrison’s representation of black consciousness, culture and history” (Peach 90).

Morrison’s works heighten the sense of individualism and the continued primacy of elitist aesthetic formalism. Her novels struggle for personal transcendence, a search for self-discovery too; they combine a communal centre with a focus on individual consciousness and awareness. Each of her novels gives the individual knowledge, meaning and faith in a clearly duplicitous world.

Morrison’s novels are characterized as the crafted prose in which the ordinary words are placed so as to produce lyrical quality and sharp emotional responses from her readers. Her extra ordinary mythic characters are driven by their own moral vision to struggle in order to find truths. Her subjects are related to individual and society, good and evil, love and hate, beauty and death. She is best known for her intricately woven novels which focus on intimate relationships, especially between men and women, set against the backdrop of African-American culture. Her prose laced with soft traces of feminism can proudly compete with the highest praised novels in literature of psychological uplift from white racism taking myth as a source of their culture. Cynthia A Davis discusses Morrison’s “Use of myth in possibility of freedom; the use of symbolism to response to alienating white value system [. . .]” (217).

Morrison is regarded as a mythmaker, folkloric in her technique and poetic in her language. Morrison seems to be in love with mesmerizing lyricism that conveys love of a community and offers hope in a chaotic world a world drenched not only with the evil of thinking but also the evil of sexism. Her world of fiction is mythic, legendry – full of complicated stories about ordinary people who have survived and

proposed in an extraordinary and almost miraculous way inside the malestrom of American racism and sexism.

Morrison often deals with the experience of African-Americans who have undergone the bitter reality under the strict racial suppression of whites. Though she explores the sad experiences of blacks, the way of her dealing with the subject is very pleasing and heart touching.

Her work is difficult which evokes a past suffused in the subjectivity of memory; she breathes artistic life into the past and makes a world coherent, on infinite craws for story telling in which history has meaning and purpose as assimilated myth, not so much used to understand the past but to convey the black culture into the present . As honorific literature, her work has the tint of reality. Her works represent the cultural revolution associated with the flowering of black literature in which especially feminine voice is cultivated and evaluated to explore the world with the black American women's writing.

Traditionally black communities have functioned as structures that sustain and preserve individual, particularly in adversity, Morrison's narratives address the nature and forms of this connection between self and other, individual and group that ambiguously shape people's values and impede their capacity to express them with the community's norms and values.

*Sula* (1973), Morrison's second novel, which was selected for the National Book Award, traces the lives of two black women from childhood to maturity. It is about a marvelously unconventional woman, Sula Peace who becomes a pariah in her hometown of Medallion, which is much like Loraine. Although considered as a symbol of freedom by some members of the community, she is perceived as evil

because her actions suggest that she can be violent, malicious and heartless. During the course of story, for example, she drops a young boy to his death, watches with interest as her mother dies by the fire and seduces Jude, Nel's husband. With the discovery at the age of twelve that she and her friend, Nel Wright "Were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they set about creating something else to be" (Morrison, 216).

Nel married and her life follows convention, while Sula's life evolved into unlimited experiment. Not bound by any social codes. Sula was first thought to be unusual, outrageous, and eventually evil. In becoming a pariah in her community, she was the measure for evil and ironically, inspired goodness in those around her. At her death both the community and Nel learned that Sula was their life force; she was other half of the equation. Without Sula, Nel felt incomplete. Sula and Nel represent the both good and evil sides of human beings but the relationship between the characters can be viewed as Morrison's attempt to represent the intrinsic conflict experienced by a black woman, Sula.

Different critics have critically analyzed the text *Sula*, through various approaches. As Susan Willis argues "social practices of the bottom community have little or nothing to do with the economics of exchange of social life. For the bottom, the impossibility of being a part of production and trade . . . create a space for the generation of a community". (81). Willis reads the novel's presentation of the Bottom in positive terms:

The novel does make this connection between exclusion from economic production and development of a black community. In fact, racial and economic oppression appear to be the necessary condition for the existence of a black folk culture. In the chapter '1965', the

communal practices that characterized the earlier black neighborhood have disappeared as a result of increasing economic integration of blacks into the white US economic system. However, the novel does not critically affirm the kind of community contingent upon oppression and segregation. If the forced exclusion of blacks from labor and production generates a distinctive culture, it precipitates their collective suicide at the end of the novel. If the black folk community of the Bottom is both celebrated and criticized, so is the radical, a new identity of Sula. (113)

Due to the economic and racial oppression upon them, the black folks are united to preserve their tradition and culture. The case of both the black Bottom community and Sula is sketched as similar.

In *Sula*, Sula's neighbors fear and condemn her to fit a conventional role, but her shapelessness gives them shapes:

Their convection of Sula's evil changed them in accountable yet mysterious ways. Once the source of their personal misfortune was identified, they had leave to protect and one another. They began to cherish their husband and wives, protect their children, repair their houses and in general they band together against the devil in their midst. (117-118).

Displacing their fear and anger onto Sula, they can define themselves as better. Sula can bear that role having chosen to be rebellious and outsider within her own society. It is tempting to argue that this kind of hero is a catalyst for good in the society. All things have their use and even Sula's evil nature is used by her community to validate

and enrich its own existence. As a pariah she gives them a focus through which they achieve some unity.

The text can also be viewed as woman's struggle for change. In this respect, Jun Furman comments:

[Morrison] . . . moves . . . a step forward into women's struggle's change delimiting symbols and take control of their lives but excavating an identity that has been long buried beneath stereotype and convention in wrenching endeavor, and Morrison demonstrates in *Sula* that although recasting one's role in the community is possible, there is a price to be paid for change. (12)

Choosing one's own name in a certain tragic case can also be the rejection of race and culture. Helen Wright, in *Sula*, for example, abhors the circumstance of her own birth to Creole prostitute in order to be as far away from the Sundown house as possible. Helen, Nel's mother is born the Sundown house in New Orleans. The rest of her life is moved as far away from the wild blood that brothel represents as she can. "A high toned lady she fashioned her own daughter to be obedient, to be bland, she drove her daughter's imagination underground" (18) for fear that it might revert. Helen, like black aesthetic, avoids the past, which she thinks, has some tenets of her mother's bad characters. On the contrary, *Sula* shows an absolute resection of the past and is alienated from the conventional people in the Bottom Community. In this regard, Kimberly Benston writes:

The new black subjects of the 1960's, based as it is on absolute temporal discontinuity, necessarily defaces common reality, *Sula's* character clearly demonstrates that a whole sale rejection of the past

can only produce a single individual alienated from the community.

(82)

Sula's attempt to create new identity entails a complete disregard for her ancestors, for example, she enjoys watching her mother burn and she even shocks the sentiments of her community by sending her grandmother, Eva, away to an old person's house. With no linkage to the past, Sula's radical difference proves to be meaningless and ultimately reduces her to accept the very sadness she tried to challenge: "If I leave the hundred years, my urine will flow the same way, my armpits and breath will smell the same. My hair will grow from the same holes. I did not mean anything: I never meant anything" (147). In an attempt to reject her repetition of life, she becomes even ready to sacrifice herself.

*Sula* is a powerful book in the field of social clash. It vividly unfolds the contemporary social complexities mainly through the protagonist Sula Peace who constantly counters and bypasses the currently existing social values, rituals and, in a wider sense, a way of life. As her likes and behaviors sharply contradict with the then established social norms, the society downplays her and is showing the frequent denial to provide her with a space as a member of the same society.

In *Sula*, Morrison examines the complex economic, historical, moral, cultural and geographical factors that problematize their relation within the black community and the world beyond.

The novel takes its name from a character, Sula, who is absent until one fourth part of novel. The most interesting as well as shocking figure of the novel, Sula is known for her idiosyncratic behaviors. Morrison shows her individual way of behaviors and actions that are absolutely different from the people in the community.

As she is urged to get married and have some babies by her grandmother, Eva Peace, she instantly pours her rage. Sula says, "I do not want to make somebody else. I want to make myself" (92).

Sula features a scapegoat- protagonist who is alienated from her community. Although Sula chooses her isolation, it is precisely the distance that destroys her. Sula centers on a character who believes that she can create for herself an identity that exists beyond community and social expectations. Sula uses her life as her medium like an artist with no art form by exploring her own thoughts and emotions and giving them full reign. She feels no obligation to please anybody unless their pleasure pleases her.

Thus, Sula defies social restraints with a vengeance. She disavows gratuitous social flattery by refusing to compliment either the food placed before her or her old friends gone to seed and using her conversation to experiment with her neighbors' responses. Worst of all in her neighbors' judgment, she discards men, black and white, as rapidly as she sleeps with them, even with the husband of her best friend, Nel. The relationship between Nel and Sula is permanently destroyed when Sula sleeps with Jude although Sula reflects that she never intends to cause Nel pain. In this regard, the narrator in *Sula* narrates ". . . she had no thought at all of causing Nel pain when she bedded down with Jude" (119).

Without Nel, Sula is cut off from the only relation that endows her life with meaning. As a result, she drifts to her death. Nel, too, is rendered incomplete when her friendship with Sula ends. At first, she thinks that her incapable grief is the result of having lost her husband, but she realizes at the end of the novel, what she has missed in her life is not Jude, but Sula.



Sula's story stands in analogous relation to Shadrack's symbolic evidence that her situation is hardly unique. Communal response to Sula is identically Shadrack's response to the unexpected. Shadrack, the insane World War I veteran whose story opens the novel, exemplifies in the extreme this need to explain or find a place for the inexplicable. By creating National Suicide Day, he finds the way of controlling his fear. The people of the bottom of Medallion, Ohio, ridicule Shadrack's holiday, but their survival like his, depends upon finding ways of controlling their terrors. Superstitions, which recur in the narrative and in their collective discourse help them, explain disturbing disruptions. When Hannah, Sula's mother, dies suddenly, Eva, Sula's grandmother reflects that she will prepare for the tragedy if she reads properly the omens received. Likewise denizens of the bottom remark that they should anticipate Sula's vicious effect on the community because her return is accompanied by a plague of robins.

Sula desires for the knowledge of self. Her search for wholeness and self knowledge is strengthened at her vulnerable age. She gains the knowledge of herself through sexuality. But Sula's sexuality is not fully explored in the novel until she is twenty seven years old. Because of her drive for self-knowledge and because of her imagination, she experiences complete aloneness in sex. Therefore, she knows not her partner, but herself. Moreover, she goes to church suppers without wearing underwear and laughs at their god. She rejects the moral and cultural values of the community and even questions the existence of their god. As the narrator remarks:

She came to their church suppers without underwear, bought their streaming platters of food and merely picked at it relishing nothing, exclaiming over no one's ribs or cobbler. They believed that she was laughing at their god. (114)

Thus, Sula, although she is an individual of the same society, she irrespectively discards the society and the barriers it has founded. She no more follows her society's path rather she shakes the conceptualized creeds; dogmatic beliefs and many more contemporary social orthodoxy.

She is always firm and bold in her beliefs and follows her own individual pattern of life accordingly. Sula, thus, ignores all the moral, cultural and social beliefs of the Bottom. Sula's indulgence in sexual act and the black folk's insistence that she sleeps with white men become the damning reason for defining her 'bitch'. She is labeled as the devil in the Bottom not only because of her unique experience in sex but also because of her rejection of the reproductive function, which is valued by the community. Therefore, Sula's refusal of the moral, cultural and social norms and values of the Bottom community is the strong foundation on which an intricate clash between individual and society is based. Sula who stands as an outsider is even ready to violate every decorum and morally and socially acceptable behaviors. As a result, the entire people of the Bottom community clash with her. After the series of evil acts committed by Sula, especially, in the eyes of her society, the clash ultimately becomes indispensable.

Sula becomes an outcast against whom the entire group reasserts its values. White men are tempted by Sula's enigmatic charm. Women become more attentive to their spouses and children in defense against her charismatic power. She catalyzes the anxieties of those whose path she crosses because she lives out the amoral potentialities that moral people repress. As Sula transgresses the social and sexual mores of her community, she is viewed as evil.

Now, it's been clear that Sula stands as an anarchist, a villain against the whole society, the Bottom which consequently creates a discourse about Sula and tags her as a bitch. Because Sula is ever guided by her emotions and imaginations, she deliberately fails to show respect to the prevailing social custom and culture. Her own unusual behaviors to her society identified her not as a social member of the Bottom, but as a pariah; devil and bitch which alienates her from the collective life of the Bottom community. When she returns to her hometown after ten years, she is absolutely changed that she is disloyal to the society and its accepted regularities; for she paves her own whimsical way of life, adopts herself as the one who horrifies others, causes embarrassment to other social creatures. Her each action that is hardly digested by the society, results into the clash in which she is outlawed and marginalized from the centre of the society.

Due to the differences in the attitudes to look at life and world, both in individual and society, a wall of division is erected. I shall explore this perspective, the clash between individual and society, in chapter two.

Society always stands for power, authority and rule of law and the individual existence or voice has no dignified and glorious space unless s/he passes the social censorship. When an individual is forced to abide by the customs beyond his/her impulse, then, definitely he fights against social forces that confine the individual liberty. A society often deserves an individual to bow before it and its rules and regulations whereas an individual, if not blinded by dogmatic doctrines is a critical to it. S/he is aware of the practical aspects presented by the alienation of the individual through feelings of powerlessness caused by massive centralization in modern society.

The text, *Sula* has already a wide range of theses done through various perspectives, yet it's not been studied through the social clash or conflict perspective.

This research will discover the clash in *Sula* that I shall elaborate in chapter three.

## II. Society and Individual

Society is evolved out of various ups and downs, conflicts and common consents. A society constructs rules, regulations and systems, and it expects individuals to follow these codes. Some individuals accept them and behave normally suppressing their impulses whereas some individuals do not accept and follow the society. Moreover, society can not accommodate individual behaviors and obstructs the development of individual life, knowledge and experience. Weak individuals do not have courage to oppose the social imposition so, they accept society but those who are strong, bold, and aggressive, break these boundaries, experiment new things and achieve new experience. Toni Morrison, in her text, *Sula*, has portrayed the situation of social clash in which the major character Sula illustrates the cause and effect of such clash.

The present research pictures a deep cleavage between an individual and society due to the clash in individuals' interests and prevalent norms of authoritative society; the society stands for domineering institution which, in the name of homogeneity, forces certain people to be rebellious against it, and eventually causes the clash as inevitable phenomenon.

The term 'society', in general, represents the meaning of an organized life, a collective cult of life, authority, social codes and taboos, in which an individual, in a sense, is mere a member of the society. A society can also be termed as a massive force that limits the individuals' choice and freedom so as to preserve social customs and culture. The individual is often considered as a minor social unit having no decisive role to play or ability to violate prevailing social practices. The individual voice is silenced by the social authority if s/he stands against social norms and values.

The problem of the nature of community raises fundamental questions in ethics, sociology, jurisprudence, political science and metaphysics, and is thus extremely complicated. What is the relation between individual and society? What is the community? Is it a mere collection, or has it a unity comparable to the unity of an organism or person? What is the nature of social groupings within community, or what is their relation to the whole? Has community as such ends of its own, or does it exist merely to render possible realization of the ends of the individuals that compose it? Is there any real meaning in this contrast, or is it perhaps based on false abstractions? This thesis will concentrate to explore the answers to the above questions.

Various scholars, sociologists, thinkers have defined the society, more or less, in a same way. Arnold W. Green writes:

A society is the largest group to which any individual belongs. A society is made up of a population, organization, time, place, and interests. The population includes both sexes and all ages. Social life is organized, primarily as a division of labor, within a common territory and on a permanent basis in time. Many common interests are shared; and all interests, common and specialized, are inclusive enough to make social life self sufficient among the members. (31)

Green believes in organic whole of different lives and commonly shared interests of the society. He has meant society as an inclusive entity showing interconnections of all the individuals to it.

A 'society' in brief, means people living together in communities. In a broader sense, it is defined as a particular type of community which shares the same customs, laws, rituals and so forth. In this same context, Morris Ginsberg has vividly remarked:

. . . Firstly, it rightly insists that individuals in society are essentially and intrinsically connected, and that the social whole is constituted by their inter- relations. In this respect society is organic, not in the sense that it is like an animal or a vegetable, but rather in the sense that it satisfies the definition of organic in the wider sense as consisting of a "whole constituted by the interconnection of the parts which are themselves maintained each by its interconnection with the remainder" (117).

Though the above illustration reveals that the society is composed of varied individuals, it's obvious that the focus is on commonality and organized life tendency. Ginsberg finds some inadequacies of organic theory to bridge the gap between a community and individual. He further says:

Not only so, but even taking the most highly developed communities, the organic theory does not rightly represent the relation of the individual to the community . . . further; the organic theory ignores the elements of conflict and disharmony which abound in community. There is in a sense a common life, and the community seeks to maintain itself as a whole, but the unity attained is often won not by the liberation of living energy, but by mechanical suppression and repression, and "the life of the community" may in fact mean the life of a very small dominant section of it. Above all the organic theory obscures the fact that the individual, though essentially related to the

community, the community is nothing but individuals in relation \_is not exhausted in those relations that he is a unique centre of consciousness which is not fused with the life of the whole (118).

So, the unity of community that is perceived in its surface is not the automatic or natural coherence. Such a social harmony though for namesake, is achieved only by ruling out the rebellious individual opinions who discard to conform the existing values.

To discuss more about the interrelation and its divergent aspects between society and individual, it's appropriate to introduce conflict theory that has a greater impact on this regard. Both society and individual are not untouched by the conflict, for a long lived human civilization itself is evolved out of it. Conflict theorists are oriented toward the study of social structures and institutions. This theory is opposed to the stability of society, common morality, the orderliness of society. In this regard, George Ritzer writes:

Conflicts theorists see whatever order there is in society as stemming from the coercion of some members by those at the top. Where functionalists focus on the cohesion created by shared societal values, conflict theorist emphasize the role of power in maintaining order in society . . . conversely, conflict can lead to consensus and integration. An example is the alliance between the United States and Japan that developed after world war (259).

Ritzer in this way, views that exponents of conflict theory intermingle integration and disintegration, stability and change, consensus and conflict etc. He opines we can not have conflict, unless there is some prior consensus.



Because of the bold steps taken by many individuals in many historical phases, it's been possible that humankind has seen socio-economic and politico-cultural emergences. In Martin Slattery's words, "The idea that is conflict rather than consensus that underpins social order and social change has been the key feature of a wide range of sociological theories" (78).

Thus, Slattery argues that conflict is not only the synonyms to chaos, anarchy and violation but also is the bringer of some radical good changes. Regarding the conflict and its effects- negative or positive – born as outcome of conflict, Slattery further writes:

Thus, in Dahrendorf's theory, while conflict underpins the status-quo through an interminable balance of power, it also has the potential to generate social change and development. When and where conflict is intense, then change may be radical; when it is accompanied by violence, it is likely to be sudden . . . Dahrendorf's picture of society is thus one of the interminable conflict at the personal, group, organizational and class level. It is chaotic and characterized by apparently random conflict between those in and out of power, between the dominant and the subordinate. Yet such conflict has a purpose (80).

Conflict in a society initiates as a result of clash between powerful and powerless people, society and individual. Debate exists in various shapes and colors. Society that denotes majority, dominates minorities in the view to enforce majority's principles and keep law and order. It provokes the individuals representing the minority to maintain the psychological distance with society.

Various researches prove that even the sociology is not free from the bitter critiques. The critiques from the different critical schools claim that sociologists' task has centered on society, paying no or less importance to individual concerns. It is widely known fact that a society is a combined whole of radical, politico- cultural and ideological variations. Critics sharply comment on the experts that unless a society is studied and analyzed inclusive of its diverse shreds, the science of society will ever remain with full of cracks, questions. In this regard, George Ritzer views:

Members of this school; are critical of sociologists' focus on society as a whole rather than individuals in society. Although most sociological perspectives are not guilty of ignoring this interaction, this view is cornerstone of the critical school's attacks on sociologists. Because they ignore the individuals, sociologists are seen as being unable to say anything meaningful about political changes that could lead to a "just and humane society" (46).

Conflict in a society occurs then when there is blockade in the smooth and steady dialogue between the society as a whole and the individuals as its close members. At one point when individual does not feel comfort, secured and self-esteemed, with entire rights, s/he transforms herself into a rebellious person, or an explosive form against the social impositions and its implications. Besides, there can be many other extrinsic or intrinsic reasons due to which the society is entangled into some sort of conflict. R. J. Bennets writes:

It is difficult to understand why conflict arises. There have been a variety of reasons , including territorial, racial, religious, political and economic . . . conflict does not always involve direct confrontation, often differences in nation's views and aims are expressed in protests

or actions designed to indicate disapproval. Sometimes the protests are strong and involve some sort of threat. (85)

As Bennets outlined, in a broader perspective, any sort or nature of conflict may take place on the ground of territory, politics or economy, conflicts definitely vary in their nature and forms. Whatever the reason it may be, it is unquestioned that conflict is a step further of rebellion and rebellion is the direct response to suppression, oppression, domination or restrictions. We are often likely to presume wrong about the cause and effect of conflict for we see it with the lens of negative vision but it is the conflict that materializes most of positive changes. The very clash or conflict is the key to check and balance of a society so that the society is prevented from being tyrannical, abusing of power, and promotes individual rights and keeps the rule of law. In this regard, Slattery writes:

. . . it [conflict] keeps a check on those in authority and encourages the ordinary citizen to question and on occasion resist those in power . . . therefore, for Dahrendorf, constant conflict is not only normal and inevitable, not only the source of gradual and occasionally radical social change, I is also the basis of social order and social integration \_ a form of eternal tension between chaos and order, stability and change. Dahrendorf therefore sought to bridge the gap between consensus and conflict theories and to update conflict theory as a struggle between those in and out of authority as much as a struggle over the ownership and distribution of wealth (81).

According to Martin Slattery, conflict theory as a struggle between those in and out of power, conflict rises between two groups, forces when there is situation of exploiter and exploited, suppressor and suppressed, oppressor and oppressed and so forth.

An individual clashes with society in terms of many more relative causes. It is because a particular person, who may be from any class, race, quality or background, may not equally adjust with all distinctive types of social practices. Due to the gap between a particular society and a particular person, it's likely to outbreak the clash in them. About the relation between a man and his society, V. V. Alokhar writes:

Normally man is in contact and 'communication' with others. He stimulates and is stimulated by his surroundings; he responds and is responded to. A very large part of his behavior is social in character and has social significance . . . of course; the individual is not in commerce with the entire social world. The range of his social give-and – take depends on his age, abilities, training, habits, occupations, status etc. Illiterates for example, are isolated from the world of literature, science and cosmopolitan culture. Members of particular religions, racial or occupational group are relatively isolated from other groups. Men of achievement remain psychologically at distance from those without achievement. Then again, individuals who have dignity and the spiritual dimension of their personality deliberately isolate themselves for varying periods. The fact remains, however, for most of the time the individual is in contact with others. These others may be directly present before him or they may be at a distance and communication through various means of communication; or they may be present in his thought. In all cases they affect him (75).

A person is born in a society which already has a definite structure and which conditions their personality that they are only one of the elements of the totality of relationships which make up a society, and the relations are not created by any single

individual but are made up of the various interactions between individuals. Society is far more than the source of impersonal rules and values.

Society is number of individuals related to each other in various ways. Each member is unit related to other units. Society is one collective with many other parts, each human being, which interact. But no part of one person except, perhaps, in the case Siamese twins. No experience can exist in two minds at once, unless, perhaps, such twins are joined at the skull and one part of the brain belongs to both. Two separate people can not have one strictly identical thought.

Society, then, is made up of distinct and separate individuals. Normal people's minds are absolutely isolated from any direct contacts with each other. A person's social environment (other persons related significantly to him and to each other) causes him to exist, to have the character which he has, to actualize what values he can, and to undergo whatever frustrations and sufferings afflict him. His social – cultural environment is just as important to him as his biological heredity. Both are necessary, but neither one is sufficient to produce a man or woman who is capable of taking responsibility and of functioning normally in human society.

Thus, we can cope with the clash in society through the diagnosis of distinctive likes and dislikes of different members. There are also some asocial members in a society who disregard the prevailing social systems. Rousseau has seen through the society and has prescribed the ways to deal with such social hazards. He says:

For if the opposition of private interests made the establishments of societies necessary, it is the agreement of these same interests that made it possible. It is what these different interests have in common

that forms the social bond, and if there were not some point at which all the interests are in agreement, no society could exist. Now it is uniquely on the basis of this common interest that society ought to be governed . . . indeed, though it is not impossible for a private will to agree with the general will on a given point, it is as impossible at least, for this agreement to be lasting and unchanging. For the private will tends by its nature toward preferences, and the general will toward equality. (59)

Rousseau, here, focuses on the common point where the society and individuals meet in a common platform. He concludes that such agreements do not last long because individuals, sometimes, are oriented towards their own idiosyncrasies.

Theorists also assert that the societies are rigid and insensitive regarding the particular agendas of individuals. They offer no generosity and empathetic considerations to the personal visions of individuals. Mead says:

There are oppressive, stereotyped, and ultraconservative social institutions- like the church – which by their more or less rigid and inflexible unprogressiveness crush or blot out individuality . . . there is no necessary or inevitable reason why social institutions should be oppressive or rigidly conservative, or why they should not rather be, as many are, flexible and progressive, fostering individuals rather than discouraging it” (qtd. in Ritzer, 356).

Mead views on the one hand, social institutions need not destroy individuality or stifle creativity, and on the other hand, such institutions should also define what people ought to do only in very broad and general sense and should allow plenty of

room for individuality and creativity. He, here, demonstrates a very modern conception of social institutions as both constraining individuals and enabling them to be creative individuals.

Community is to be understood as a group of social beings living a common life, including all the infinite variety and complexity of relations which result from that common life or constitute it. It is obvious that there are many relations between human beings which escape formal organization either because they are so subtle and delicate that they can not be confined within more or less mechanical modes of arrangement or because they are so simple that they do not need it. The relations are essentially psychical in character, but they are so varied and multitudinous, convergent but also divergent, that they do not constitute a unity. Further, even in community, the individual is not exhausted. Though he needs it for his development and much of his mental content is made up actually of his relations to others, his affections, preferences, his duties and obligations, yet there is a core of being in him which is unique and communicable. Though he enters into relations, he is therefore not exhausted in these relations.

It is doubtless that a society constructs social codes, culture and traditions being based on the desires of those who have easy access to economic and socio-political authority in the society. The society creates fixity, boundary, formal structure of morality and discipline, and conceptualizes the homogeneity of all. A social practice or even a constitutional law is merely a socio-political construct. Such a construct is a discourse which plays a key role to drive the society as per the wish of discourse makers. Individual can hardly question or fight against such discourse for it directs all the social creatures as its subjects.

It is not just discipline and institutions which are enabled by discourse, rather we should move to seeing such brute facts as in some way produced or enabled by discourses. Michel Foucault, one of the veterans of discourse theory, has fabricated 'truth' as a mere subject of discursive socio-political variations. Foucault says:

It seems to me now that the notion of repression is quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power. In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a juridical conception of such power; one identifies power with a law which says no, power taken above all as carrying the force of a prohibition. Now I believe this is a wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power, one which has been curiously widespread. If power were never anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it?

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (qtd. in Adams, 1139)

Foucault, this is how, highlights the notion of repressive discourse in which the truth is fixed by power and its mechanisms. The domain of truth is not outside power that it's not the reward of free spirits. It is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint, each society has its regime of truth and socio-political ideology is dominant invalidating such truths. Thus, a social discourse focuses a person to be a pariah within his/her own society because s/he is unable to resist the system imposed upon them by the society.



To relate the issue of pariah, many questions can be raised as essential parts so that we can supplement our text. The questions such as: Has one ever felt alien or alienated? Has he ever felt that everyone is against him, that he is a stranger in his own home, a foreigner in his own land, that no- one understands him and that he feels isolated, rejected and divorced from the people around him, whether they be his parents, or just the people in his local community or town? He feels that he no longer belongs and he feels deep and profound sense of anger and frustration. Pretty strong feelings, no doubt, on the one hand make him feel inadequate, inferior and unwanted; and on the other hand make him feel passionately angry, resentful and determined to prove people wrong and to re- establish his place in his group, society or community. Pariah indeed is a person who is not accepted as member of society, group etc. What can be said to characterize the outsider is a sense of strangeness, or unreality. Regarding the characteristics of the outsider, Henri Barbusse, in his book *L'Enfer* writes:

The outsider is man who can not live in the comfortable, insulted world of the bourgeois; accepting what he sees and touches as reality. He sees too deep and too much and what he sees is essentially chaos. For the bourgeois, the world is fundamentally an orderly place with a disturbing element of the irrational, the terrifying, which his preoccupation with the present usually permits him to ignore. For the outsider, the world is neither rational nor orderly. When he asserts his sense of anarchy in the face of the bourgeois' complacent acceptance, it is not simply the need to cock a snook at respectability that provokes him. It is a distressing sense that truth must be told at all costs.

Otherwise there can be no hope for an ultimate restoration of order.

Even if there seems no room for hope, truth must be told. (72)

The outsider is a man who has awakened to chaos. He may have no reason to believe that chaos is positive. However, truth must be told and chaos must be faced. It is the pariah who is in some way 'not of this world'. The pariah has his proper place in the order of society, as the impractical dreamer. Regarding order versus chaos, Hermann Hesse in his novel *Magister Ludi* concludes:

It is a question of self realization. It is not enough to accept a concept of order and lie by it; that is cowardice, and such cowardice can not result in freedom. Chaos must be faced. Real order must be preceded by a descent into chaos. (38)

In Hesse's remarks, unless one is bold enough to rebel against any sort of constraints, it is impossible to liberate him or herself from the chain of social control.

The hegemonial exercise of power also causes a person to be outcast from the society. Hegemony is the use of power maintained without using the direct or physical force. It legitimizes the ideology dominant in the contemporary society. Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci coined the term and meant it as "spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (12).

It legitimizes the ideology dominant in the contemporary society. In such condition, power seems nowhere but looms everywhere. Hegemony at the level of society is to determine the continuation and consolidation of the existing power maintenance and at the level of nation is to prove dominance of one nation over another. In *Key Concept on Post –Colonial Studies*, hegemony is defined as:

Fundamentally, hegemony is the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their intentions are the interests of all. Domination is thus exerted not by force, nor by a more subtle and inclusive power over the economy and over state apparatuses such as education and the media, by which ruling class's interests is presented as the common interest and thus to be taken for granted. (Bill, 116)

Because power rests on society as a sovereign zone, it values the certain individuals only as puppets. It defines an individual placing him or her within a fixed framework. Society believes in generalization; so, it tends to create a cohesive pattern of all social beings. In this course, society squeezes individual creativity and potentiality, and dissolves his/her alternatives. When the contemporary social system can not accommodate individual imagination, then, s/he feels suppressed and suffocated. Such a plight of a person provokes him/her to antagonize with own society. When a man is made feel without an anchor, without horizon, stateless, and rootlessness, the clash between a person and society is exposed. Sociologist, Simmet saw society and the individual as being in a dialectical relationship, the "synthesis or coincidence of two logically contradictory determinants: man is both social link and being for himself, both product of society and life from an autonomous centre" (17). Simmet views man as amalgamation of both society and himself.

Similarly, Max Weber saw individuals as a composite of general characters derived from social institutions and as actors of social roles but believed that "this holds only for men in so far as they do not transcend the routines of everyday life" (18).

Thus, both Simmet and Weber have concluded that despite the individual being a unit of society, he has his own autonomy as well. So, the chain of social

mechanism works until no individual feels disgusted with it. These social experts indicate that individuals also revolt when they deny or they are denied by society.

Clash is a disagreement in which one ideology is opposed to another. There is confrontation between two oppositional doctrines which antagonize to each other on the ground of their self-centered principles. In a society, the conflict between an individual and society is often exposed. It is not pointless to argue that society is led by static ethos for it has burden to establish social peace and harmony; it nurtures status-quoism, but on the contrary, individuals are inclined to be dynamic, long for plurality of life, and head against rigidity, inflexibility of society.

Society draws horizon of do's and don'ts which sometimes can not accommodate individual choices; consequently, one is compelled to seek extra-alternatives of life that demands courage to face social questions as well as obstacles. When a person is unbounded; having no moral or social fear, then s/he is naturally out of social mechanism which maintains system or discipline. If two forces, society and individual, fail to compromise or create consensus, the cloud for clash materializes on earth. This perspective will be used to analyze the relationship between individual and society in the text, *Sula*.

### III. Clash between Individual and Society: A Textual Analysis

In the text *Sula*, the protagonist, Sula is figured as a rebellious character who combats with social restrictions in her own Bottom community. She vehemently disapproves the socialization of the Bottom, especially, after her return to hometown, after a decade long stay away from home.

Sula breaks herself from her roots which mean she hates her ancestors. It is meant that she does not accept traditional way of life that denies individual liberty. She attends church without wearing underwear, rejects to get married, to be house wife. She also discards to be mother, to bear and rear child, and is inclined to be very much whimsical in her actions. She has sex indiscriminately with as many as she can and after having sex, she immediately abandons them for ever. Due to her shocking behaviors, she is outcast by the society; she is thought to be a bitch who is not allowed by the people in society to take part in any activities.

Sula has modernized herself a lot in her new and glamorous get up that keeps the people with mouth open, for people are extremely surprised to witness her in quite extravagant dress. As the narrator says:

Sula stepped off the Cincinnati Flyer into the robin shit and began the long climb up into the Bottom. She was dressed in a manner that was as close to a movie star as anyone would ever see. A black crepe dress splashed with pink and yellow zinnias, foxtails, and a black felt hat with the veil of net lowered over one eye. In her right hand was a black purse with a beaded clasp and in her left a red leather traveling case, so small, so charming –no one had seen anything like it ever before,

including the mayor's wife and the music teacher, both whom had been to Rome. (90)

Thus, in the very initiation, her arrival to her hometown evokes the people of her community to be thoughtful with a portion of skepticism. They begin to feel their internalized notion so far is shaken. As the Bottom society is deep rooted in conservative life style, it affirms its own primordial and ancestral roots at the cost of all individual modern fashions. Since they are intimate with their own communal or religious tradition for a long, they do not tolerate even a single trace in their firm faith. Unlike them, Sula, the central character, radicalizes her life tracks from the main stream of society that gradually causes her to be an alien in her own place.

Morrison's protagonists, in most of her novels are excluded from their communities in different forms and levels as they individually clash with the norms established in society. In this regard, Roberto Robenstein in her essay *Pariah and Communities* writes:

The figure of pariah is clearly central to Morrison's vision as the emblem of different levels and forms of exclusion. In her fiction, the community is understood as both a specific social structure- the vehicle through which behavior is expressed and reinforced – and a set of values operating within that structure. (154)

Morrison makes the presence of similar type of the major character also in the context of *Sula*. Sula is also led to the expulsion due to her unusual behaviors in the society.

Sula is different not only from her whole community but also from her intimate friend, Nel. They grow up together sharing their secrets, dreams and happiness. Then Sula breaks free from their small-town community in the uplands of

Ohio to roam cities of America. When she returns ten years later, much has changed including Nel, who now has a husband and three children. The friendship between the two women becomes strained and the whole town grows wary as Sula continues in her wayward, vagabond and uncompromising ways.

Though two friends have developed a deep intimacy, they follow opposite ideals. Nel follows the traditional life style and lives as a typical housewife. She is proud of her family life and becomes loyal to social values and system. But Sula refuses to marry, denies child birth and breaks the traditional life pattern. She longs for individual freedom and revolts against the social, cultural and gender barriers prevalent in the community. Sula leaves Bottom at her youth, visits different places, meets and deals with new understanding, knowledge and experiences. In this sense, two friends, of the same community, Sula and Nel, represent the individual ego and social ethos respectively. In short, Nel is community but Sula is anarchy.

Sula strongly blurs the gender disparity that the Bottom community has adopted since a long. The society behaves differently with people on the basis of gender. It discriminates the people, male as higher, prestigious whereas female as lower ranked people. It considers no or less qualified to the women for any act but this existing concept is ruptured by Sula. She follows no more social chores which the society takes for granted. As Nel and Sula argue:

"You can't do it all. You a woman . . . You can't act like a man. You can't be walking around all independent-like, doing whatever you like, taking what you want, and leaving what you don't."

"You repeating yourself."

"How repeating myself?"

"You say I'm a woman . . . Ain't that the same as being a man?"

"I don't think so and you wouldn't either if you had children."

"Then I really would act like what you call a man. Everyman I ever knew left his children. (142-143)

For Sula, gender does not matter which makes no difference in her view. But Nel raises the voice of her society than regards gender hierarchy as natural. They present themselves as if they are the faithful representatives of their own ideologies. Nel favors systematic life duly based on certain sphere of social codes, cultural values. She opines to socialize the duties and rights of people being responsible to the society but Sula, in contrast to her society, is always tempted to deconstruct the social practice as a text that has no end of meaning and ultimate relevance.

For the people in the Bottom community survival rather than change is more important because of their perception of evil as an uncontrollable phenomenon. Morrison's Sula, on the contrary, demands more from life than mere survival. The outsider's fundamental attitude is non acceptance of life, of human life lived by the society. The outsider is more imaginative and emotional than insiders or the ordinary people in community. Sula, whose fundamental attitude is against the pattern of life the society has laid, stands as an alien in this novel. From various perspectives, Morrison's fiction expresses the complex dynamics of experience through which individuals are formed, or deformed, by the often conflicting values of their respective communities. The emotional reality of Morrison's characters may thus be understood as both a response to and a reflection of benign or malignant boundaries of community.



Although the whole Bottom community is dissatisfied and shocked with radical change of Sula's life, they do not expose their hatred outward. Their criticism upon Sula is comprehended only through their gestures and psychological expressions. As the narrator remarks:

Accompanied by a plague of robins, Sula came back to Medallion . . . and it was hard to hang up clothes, pull weeds or just sit on the front porch when robins were flying and dying all around you . . . In spite of their fear, they reacted to an oppressive oddity, or what they called evil days, with an acceptance that bore on welcome. Such evil must be avoided, they felt, and precautions must be taken to protect themselves from it. (89)

The above description shows how the people feel about Sula. They see her as a form of evil. Every community has an odd individual. Sula is the odd individual in her community because she acts differently than people around her community. The decision she makes and her appearance are also different from others. Her return is paralleled with a plague of robins which means, the society has purely negative perception about her. The Bottom people are viciously troubled by the plague for which Sula is thought to be guilty. Thus, as the society's judgment depends on narrow circle because they lack broad experience and education; they (people of Bottom) are preoccupied with negative attitude about Sula.

But Sula is also very much egocentric who avoids social aids even in need. Even if her friend, Nel, comes when Sula is sick, and counsels her dearly, Sula either bitterly denies her suggestions or mocks them. As Nel and Sula talk to each other:

"That ain't help, Sula. You need to be with somebody grown.

Somebody who can . . .

"I'd rather be here, Nellie." "You know you don't have to be proud with me."

"Proud?" Sula's laughter broke through the phlegm.

"What you talking about? I like my dirt, Nellie. I'm not proud. You sure have forgotten me." (142)

Sula, hence, often behaves rather rudely with friends and others around her, at a time when she is asked and ordered to do this and that. This proves that she intends no more to be guided by others rather she wants to rely fully on herself for her each needs. She always on behalf of unrestrained individual liberty. The egoistic selfhood is the root cause for a sort of tussle she has to face. In this regard, Inder Sen says:

The egoistic self-seeking personality in its self giving action to be universal and transcendent attains qualitatively distinct fulfillments, which are far superior to the satisfaction of the desires which the ego-personality normally seeks and where strife and struggle exist. (67)

Sula is conflicted with her own society due to her insistent nature. Since Sula is blind to see to; deaf to listen to the social order of her community, the society turns against her. The Bottom community is divided into two dimensions- individual and social- Sula and the Bottom community.

Sula is often abused by the public though it is in the form of implicit criticism; it is mental, psychological and behavioral activity through which the society excludes her. Everyone, in the Bottom community takes Sula as a sign of bad omen for her

presence. In fact, they do not want their any ones to be near and in relation to her (Sula).As the narrator says:

By the time she reached the Bottom, the news of her return had brought the black people on their porches or to their windows. There were scattered hellos and nods but mostly stares. A little boy ran up to her saying, "Carry yo' bag, ma'am?" before Sula could answer his mother had called him, "You, John. Get back in here." (91)

The mother calls her son back, and this indicates that Sula is someone untouchable, not to be supported, not to be closer. Her very first step in her small town gave a flash-like impression to the community people. It was a common wholesale conception about her. She is perceived not somebody as friend, relative, rather as an evil that can be the reason for all succeeding disastrous outcomes.

Due to the common concept, society has conceived about Sula, it blames her for each and every evil acts though that would be purely groundless accusations. The narrator remarks:

Other things happened. Mr. Finely sat on porch sucking chicken bones, as he had done for thirteen years, looked up, saw Sula, chocked on a bone and died on the spot. That incident, and Teapot's Mama, cleared up for everybody the meaning of the birthmark over her eye; it was not stemmed rose, or a snake, it was Hannah's ashes marking her from the very beginning. (114)

Being an individual against the whole society, Sula has no moral strength, no social support to oppose directly – against the bare blames, cultural taboos, open hatreds and so forth which are institutionally enforced upon her, the individual.

She's been accused of innumerable bad happenings indiscriminately, she, as an individual, is left with no option than to react back then in a subtle way. There can be referred a series of such warring situations in which Sula and the Bottom community are in a clash of vicious circle. The narrator mentions:

Teapot knocked on her door to see if she had any bottles . . . when Sula said no, the boy turned around and fell down the steps. He could not get up right away and Sula went to help him. His mother, just then, tripping home, saw Sula bending over her son's pained face. She flew into a fit of concerned, if drunken, motherhood, and dragged Teapot home. She told everybody that Sula had pushed him, and talked so strongly about it she was forced to abide by the advice of her friends and take him to the county hospital. (114)

The above lines clarify that Sula is their only target that they repeatedly attack her, or do backbiting for no apparent reason. The text, *Sula* is interwoven into bilateral clash in which society and individual have taken different roads.

Sula rejects the social and cultural values of the Bottom community in order to create her new identity, which exists beyond community and social expectations. In this regard, Valerie Smith rightly mentions "Sula centers on a character who believes that she can create for herself an identity that exists beyond community and social expectations" (276).

But the community's norms, nonetheless, are crucial to her survival and development. She becomes isolated up to death because she rejects them. Her presence challenges the value system at the core of the community's existence. So, they reject her new self and her individual pattern of life.

Roseann Bell turns to nationalist ideology to clarify the radical newness of Sula's characterization:

It should not be surprising that Sula is regarded as an important statement in contemporary discussion on the Black Aesthetic, for Sula's character suggests a positive way of freeing our fettered minds from the oppressive tentacles of a past which . . . prevents us from progressing and projecting a new vision. (75)

Bell is partially in that the newness of Sula's character can not be fully appreciated without reference to Black Aesthetic theories of the radical black subject. However, the contradictory newness of Sula is not fully readable within an exclusive nationalist or feminist ideological frame. Instead, it provides yet another example of the novel's selective and critical appropriation of both ideologies.

In fact, Sula's singular conception of herself also has been thematically criticized for its lack of social grounding. Adrienne Munich asks in her analysis of Sula's narrative about black men:

Where is Sula in this story? Is she outside the world of which Jude is the envy? How would you analyze her voice? That her story gives its teller no place is both Sula's strength and weakness. Her complete lack of social positioning allows her to defamiliarize and flout her community's conventions, but it also prohibits her from effective political intervention in the life of her community. (254)

Munich asserts that Sula's new position in her community distorts her life and she, too, starts behaving in 'tit for tat' way, in return because she is othered in her society and rendered no privileges.

Sula rejects the old image of blacks as victims and reaches for identity free of the past racial oppression. While Sula perceives the present moment as pure possibility, the black community of the Bottom clings to an absolute static vision of the past.

While privileging newness and change, Sula embodies a pariah status that can not be easily assimilated into Black Aesthetic ideology. Sula rejects the reproductive function so valued by her community.

When Eva advises her to become a mother, Sula replies, "I do not want to make somebody else. I want to make myself" (92). Sula's refusal of reproduction is her great point of difference from her community. It is what renders the people of the Bottom.

Sula's radical redefinition of herself also depends on her denial of her mother. It is her accidental discovery of the failure of maternal bond (Hannah's remark that she does not like Sula) that motivates Sula's invention of herself. "Hers was an experimental life- ever since her mother's remarks sent her flying up the stairs" (118).

Sula's new identity entails a complete disregard for her ancestors, as for example, when she enjoys watching her mother burn or when she shocks the sentiments of her community by sending her grandmother away to an old people's home. In her essay, *Rootedness: the Ancestor as Foundation*, Toni Morrison writes:

If we do not keep in touch with the ancestor . . . we are, in fact, lost . . . when you kill the ancestor, you kill yourself. I want to point out the dangers, to show that nice things do not happen to the totally self-reliant if there is no conscious historical connection. (78)

Morrison's remarks may be almost exactly applied to Sula, whose total self-reliance is suicidal because it lacks a historical connection with the ancestor. With no grounding roots in the past, Sula's radical difference proves to be meaningless and is ultimately reduced to the very sameness she tries to challenge.

Sula's newness so sharply departs from the past that it can not revitalize her community's old ways: the encounter between the new (Sula) and the old (the community), far from producing a dynamic exchange, remains locked in a state of absolute contradiction. We are told that black community's exposure to Sula "changed them in accountable yet mysterious ways" (117), but this change paradoxically works against change, only conforming to the community's adherence to their old, conservative ways.

Some pretty nasty things happen to and around Sula on the way to her adulthood of free and open choice. In freely bedding any man she chooses, she becomes hated. She is the town pariah. In fact the whole town measures their worth, their piety in direct contrast to Sula's evil. Thus, she earns the pariah status in Medallion. As the narrator remarks, "She came to their church suppers without underwear; bought their steaming platters of food and merely picked at it . . . They believed that she was laughing at their God" (114-115).

In fact, her going to church without wearing an underwear and going to bed as frequently as she can violating every decorum and other socially acceptable behaviors is a great challenge to the moral, cultural and social norms and values of the Bottom community. In this regard, the narrator remarks:

Sula was pariah, then and knew it. Knew that they despised her and believed that they framed their hatred as disgust for the easy way she

lay with men. Which was a true. She went to bed with men as frequently as she could. It was the only place where she could find what she was looking for; misery and ability to feel deep sorrow. (122)

Sula knows the rules and polite behaviors but she prefers to break to them because she has inherited the wild blood from Eva and Hannah. Both Eva's arrogance and Hannah's self indulgence merges in her. Her life is experimental because she always engages in exploring her own thoughts and emotions. Sula, like her mother always goes to bed with men without discrimination, and cares for no moral and cultural boundaries:

"What you mean take him away? I didn't kill him, I just fucked him. If we were such friends, how come you couldn't get over it?"

"You lying in that bed with out a dime or a friend to your name having done all the dirt you in this town and you still expect folks to love you?" . . .

"Oh, they'll love me all right. It will take time, but they'll love me."

(145)

Thus, it is revealed that Sula cares no relation, even intimacies when the time comes to quench her thirst, or desires. Moreover, there lies a vast difference in the meaning of life and world including all human affairs, between Sula (individual) and society.

Like Eva, Sula "had no center, no speck around which to grow . . . no ego. For that reason she felt no compulsion to verify herself" (119). She is free of ambition and she has no greed, and no desire to do any perfect thing. Though Sula shares the personalities, traits and behavior patterns of Hannah and Eva, she lives out the



restrictions of entire group of the Bottom community as she actively threatens the defenses against moral and social transgression that lie in the souls of most people.

Sula stands as a rebel in the community of the Bottom and totally rejects the moral and social values of the community and even questions the existence of their God which is depicted in the following dialogue between Sula and Eva:

"Bible say honor thy father and thy mother thy days may be long upon the land thy God giveth thee."

"Mama must have skipped that part. Her days was not too long."

"Pus mouth! God's going to strike you!"

"Which God? The one watched you burn Plum?" (93)

Sula denies the moral and social pattern of life the community has laid out for her. She is always a firm in her belief and in her own individual life which is completely different from the life style of the conventional community of the Bottom. Sula is so bold and firm in her doctrine that she is not even afraid of facing death.

The process of socialization, indeed, aims at developing a sense of devotion to society and to its moral system. A normal mind can not consider moral maxims without considering them as obligatory. Moral rules have an imperative character; they exercise a sort of ascendancy over the will which feels constrained to conform to them. In this respect, Durkheim views:

The totality of moral regulations really forms about each person an imaginary wall, at the foot of which a multitude of human passions simply die without being able to go further. For the same reason –that they are contained – it becomes possible to satisfy them. But if at any point this barrier weakens, human forces- until now restrained – pour

tumultuously through the open breach; once loosed, they find no limits where they can or must stop (qtd. in George Ritzer, 98).

So, some individuals are devoted for the quest of individuality, which causes them discard the socialization of all human activities and behaviors. Sula is one of the victims in the novel. Durkheim's view is closer to the practical life of Sula who has been continually struggling to free life from many social restrains. Because she gives full reign to her passions, she is neither accepted nor allowed her any convenient approach in her own society. She is divorced from her own home, family, society and from the chain of social give and take. She is quite lowly valued, and is considered to have committed an irreparable wrong. The narrator remarks:

They were the ones who said she was guilty of her unforgivable thing – the thing for which there was no understanding, no excuse, no compassion. The route from which there was no way back, the dirt that could not ever be washed away. They said that Sula slept with men . . . It made the old women draw their lips together; made small children look away from her in shame; made young men fantasize elaborate torture for her- just to get saliva back in their mouths when they saw her (112-113).

By dismantling the existing norms, thus, Sula has presented herself as an anti social member. She appears as an undefeatable challenge to society. In one sense, she has been a main attraction of all; children to adult to old in her community. She has drawn everybody's mind towards her through her peculiar actions. What is normal to Sula becomes abnormal for her society and vice versa. There remains a distant, psychological or conceptual gap between Sula and her society. Sleeping with other's husbands, with white men, seducing them as frequently as she can, laughing at social

rituals, she has offended the faith of people living in the Bottom community. Sula, an individual, is anchoring the voice for full-fledged individual liberty that sometimes extends beyond the criterion of society. As a result, society feels threatened for the preservation of its treasures, i. e. culture, custom and creed heartily attributed till to date. So, it, thinking as its prime duty to preserve and continue the contemporary practices, vows to suppress the revolutionary steps and voices of individual. That is why, an individual rebels and a ground for clash is readied. The narrator says:

Their evidence against Sula was contrived, but their conclusions about her were not. She was distinctly different . . . with a twist that was all her own imagination, she lived out her days exploring her own thoughts and emotions, giving them full reign , feeling no obligation to please anybody unless their pleasure pleased her (118).

A society, naturally, desires for a social member who does not obstruct to carry on its on going practices. But Sula's presence bothers the society as she explicitly breaks the conventional order of the society. It seems Sula acts as an enemy against the society, particularly against the societal disciplines and moralities.

The people in the Bottom community label Sula as its opponent because her behavior is different from the prevailing norms that can not be absorbed into the unconscious of the community. In this context, Barbara Christian remarks:

Sula is an outsider because she is distinctly different, because she is consciously seeking to make herself rather than others, and she is totally unconcerned about what others think; in other words, she does not care. (88)

Christian's view shows that clash is the real soul of this text through which Morrison intends to reveal the nature of African- American community.

Sula is perceived as a sinister force, sex- hungry, man- stealing, death dealing, a figure of darkness and betrayal. Having dared to smash the taboos that are neighbor's poor guarantees of simply surviving, she's scorned; despised, abandoned by the people she grew out of – to their immense loss. They accept all evil days whether caused by a natural disaster, or by the white oppression. Therefore, Sula is defined as bitch, evil or pariah in the Bottom community.

Sula who lives away from Bottom is influenced by the ideas that are not inherited in the black community. The text revolves around the opposition between a new present and oppressive past. Sula is strange and can not be assimilated with others. As Sula says:

After all the old women have lain with the teen-agers; when the young girls have slept with their old drunken uncles; after all the black men fuck all the white ones; when all the white women kiss all the black ones; when the guards have raped all the jail- birds and after all the whores make love to their grannies; after all fagots get their mother's trim; when Lindbergh sleeps with Bessie Smith and Norma Shearer makes it with Stepin Fetchit; after all the dogs have fucked all the cats and every weathervane on every barn flies off the roof to mount the hogs . . . then there'll be a little room left over for me. And I know just what it will feel like (145-146).

With the illustration given above, Sula is attempting to prove her actions to be reasonable. She naturalizes her behaviors by disclosing the prevailing condition in her

community. She presents a number of instances to tell her every act not as crime or sin.

In one context, Eva and Sula are verbally quarrelling that that unmasks the real picture of conflict in Sula's society. Both of them are annoyed and debate strongly to defy one's opinion:

"Hellfire don't need lighting and it's already burning in you . . ."

"Whatever's burning in me is mine!"

"Amen!"

"And I'll split this town in two and everything in it before I'll let you put it out!"

"Pride goeth before a fall"

"What the hell do I care about falling?" (93)

Due to her irresponsibility and impulsive acts, Sula is called hell which denotes that she has committed grave mistakes. Though she is tried to scare, she cares none and nothing above her personal thoughts and emotions. Her strange behavior has irritated not only to her family members but also the people of the Bottom community who are dogmatic in their superstitious rites and rituals.

It is not illogical to argue that culture makes people its slave since it consists of instrumental aspects. There is supremacy of firm belief which permits no space for individual choices and reasons. It is very much mechanical, in the sense that it cares not the passers by but its own straight route. The problem of the relations between group and individual is so pervading and ubiquitous that it can not be treated detached from any question of culture and of social or psychological process. The cultures

subordinate the individuals to achieve its common goals. Bronislaw Malinowski writes:

From the point view of individual psychology we see that reasonable processes and emotional reactions intertwine. The very calculations and the fact that the principles of knowledge have to be built up into systems of thought, subject matter to fear as well as to hope. He knows that his desire is often thwarted and that his expectations are subject to chance . . . we can thus realize the dogmatic essence of religion by the analysis of individual mental processes. (qtd. in Bohannan, Paul and Mark Glazer 289)

Individual interests, thus, are merely subject to chance which is rarely granted to use freely. An individual has to sacrifice his/her self for social system.

He views individuals are conditioned in a society to act for the welfare of whole mass residing in a social circle. A step further he says:

Since religion consists by and large of collective efforts to achieve ends beneficent to one and all, we find that every religious system has also its ethical factors . . . every participating individual and the leader of the performance is carrying out a task in which he subordinates his personal interest to the communal welfare. Such ceremonies with them also taboos and restrictions, duties and obligations. The ethics of magical system consists in all these rules and restrictions to which the individual has to submit in the interests of the group. (290)

Thus, individuals are expected to play only the supplementary roles in a society who have to surrender their selves before existing social norms.

The novel *Sula* displays the various hierarchies presented in the society and dismantling of them. Morrison's major concern in the novel *Sula* is the exposition of prevailing social- conflict between individual and society. With the help of heroin, Sula, Morrison uncovers all the social boundaries of Afro- American society. She has realized that domination of the whole Bottom society and its rigid censors are the obstacles for individual freedom. Sula as particular individual has experienced it as an unbearable torture.

Sula challenges the assumption that an individual should not be the 'Tuck and hem' of a society's garment (norms). In this context, Morrison's view has different form and her views are focused in favor of individual freedom.

Sula seems sharply distracted from her black community. Morrison has pictured her as radically black individual with a new vision. Sula's character has an effect of freeing fettered minds from the oppressing tentacles of a past which prevents from progressing and projecting a new vision. Sula rejects the old image of blacks as victims and tries to create an identity free from the institutional oppression. Thus, she seeks for changes, dynamism and newness. She does not find any newness in life and states, "If I lived hundred years my urine will flow the same, my armpits and breath will be the same, the same hair will grow from the same holes, I didn't mean anything, I never meant anything" (147). She is fed up with sameness of life.

Sula is characterized as an open-minded who does not hide the thing that she perceives. She is an extrovert. But, opposite to her frank nature, society is repressive, for it publicizes only after filtration. In such situation, Sula could not adjust herself amidst the quite adverse social and moral questions as "When she had come back home, social conversation was impossible for her because she couldn't lie" (121).

As Sula was opposed to her society, there emerges a deep conflict, and that conflict created a gap between individual and society. The social interaction failed with Sula because of Sula's strange reactions to social activities.

To a large extent of Sula's unusualness, she took sex as very common activity which wouldn't matter for her. Quite liberal view of sex is reflected through romance and sexuality of Sula. The interesting part of the novel is that Sula does not mind sex but refuses to be a housewife and denies absolutely to childbirth. The notion of sex is taken just as an instrument of happiness. The concept of motherhood or the very institution of reproduction is criticized. She exercises sex for comfort and physical satisfaction, not to sit in the boundary to become mother which contrasts to the social tradition. Sex is enjoyed but not accepted as the institutional view of reproduction. She rejects the idea of becoming mother. She acknowledges sex as common phenomenon and shows no seriousness in involving in any sexual activities. By doing that she has given a heavy blow to the traditional and rigid society. She has free and individual feeling for the broader sense of sex.

This liberal sense of sex, which Hannah practices, later on transforms to Sula, as she observes her mother enjoying her sex often "Once Sula came home from school and found her mother in the bed curled spoon in the arms of a man" (44).

When Sula finds her mother indulging freely in sexual activity with a man, her thinking toward sex becomes flexible. Sula starts to take sex just as fun and enjoys with every type of man anywhere she likes. This very image, and broader sense of sex about Hannah is transmitted to Sula and she accepts it as natural and usual activity of life. It rather makes Sula to accept, "sex was pleasant and frequent, but otherwise unremarkable" (44), which means Sula, does not accept sex as a means of marriage and reproductive process. This very attitude of Sula toward sex distances her from her



society. Gradually she loses all sorts of ethics and morality regarding the issue of sexual affairs. "And the fury she created in the women of the town was incredible, for she would lay their husbands once and then no more" (Morrison, 115).

Thus, she does not hesitate to lay with any man of her choice. Her sense of sex makes her no hesitation to sleep even with the white people. Sula illustrates herself as a woman with no sexual boundary. Such a liberal sense of sex has made her so bold that she does not hesitate to sleep with her friend's husband. This act has stunned the people of the Bottom. This act of lying with Jude stuns Nel. She bitterly pours her rage about that, but Sula takes it quite lightly – and replies as though she has caused no stain in their relation: "It matters, Nel, but only to you. Not to anybody else. Being good to somebody else just like being mean to somebody. Risky. You don't get nothing for it" (144-145).

Such an irresponsible response of Sula is unsatisfactory for Nel and it simply irritates her. Nel reacts very aggressively and becomes ready even to cut off her friendship.

It is simply assumed that if Sula can go up to such extent even with her intimate friend, Nel, how does she behave with the rest of the society? How can she adjust with those who are always shocked and feel insulted with her liberal manner? Sula combines a vast range of characteristics and experiences which has bestowed her broad lensed vision, which demarcates the distinct lines between Sula and her society. In attitudinal difference in interpreting things between Sula and her society caused the seed of clash. The narrator remarks:

When the word got out about Eva being put in Sunnydale, the people in the Bottom shook their heads and said Sula was a roach. Later, when

they saw how she took Jude, then ditched him for others, and heard how he bought a bus ticket to Detroit (where he bought but never mailed birthday cards to his sons), they forgot all about Hannah's easy ways (or their own) and said she was a bitch. Everybody remembered the plague of robins that announced her return, and the tale about her watching Hannah burn was stirred up again. (112)

These above instances are the vivid evidences of the clash existing between an individual (Sula) and her society. The clash is rooted in the new and odd actions performed by Sula within her society, the Bottom. Instead of following the established practices in the Bottom community, Sula frequently mars them indiscriminately. She breaks the centre of tradition set up in the society which unites all the people residing in society against her. The crucial juncture where the individual and the society clashed is narrated as follows:

And that no one would ever be that version of herself which she sought to reach out to and touch with an ungloved hand. There was only her own mood and whim, and if that was all there was, she decided to turn the naked hand toward it, discover it and let others become as intimate with their own selves as she was. (121)

Hence, Sula's real intention is revealed that she is in quest for self for which the social circumstance is adverse. So, she has to confront with various social obstacles as to meet her goals. In her society, Sula is a unique figure who deliberately chooses the inconvenient path of life which is directed to deform the social formation. She insistently goes ahead as per her wish and mood which ultimately pushes her to be a villainous social target.

She compares herself with other members of her society and ranks her as superior, and the rest as inferior to her. She boasts of achieving her selfness which is a far cry for others who are loyally bound to social disciplines. The other people pay their utmost servile obedience to the society and its norms, but Sula finds no compulsion to respect all these unless her individual mind okays. The contrast is narrated as:

"Dying just like me. But the difference is they dying like a stump. Me, I am going down like one of those red woods. I sure did live in this world."

"Really? What have you got to show for it?"

"Show? To who? Girl, I got my mind. And what goes on in it. Which is to say, I got me."

"Lovely, aint it?"

"Yes, But my lovely is mine. Now your lovely is somebody else's. Made by somebody else and handed to you. Ain't that something? A second hand lonely." (143)

Sula, all the time, is steered to attain her self autonomy that sometimes overlooks the social system. Thus she is detached from her society, causing her to be an opponent force for clash.

A society is ever dedicated to establish law, order and homogeneity but an individual particularly who is in touch with a vast range of foreign culture, does not conform to the fixed realm of society.

The individuals, in most cases are condemned in the condition when they hurt social morals. In this regard, Inder Sen writes:

However reason and thought of the egoistic man are accepted as the governing principle of life and an order is sought to be realized through law and rule. But reason is a generalizing and abstracting principle and it can not comprehend concrete and unique wholes of life and deal with them adequately. It must always deal with individuals according to rules, ignoring the individualizing factors. Thus an individual can not in a rational ordering of society receive consideration as individual. The so- called freedom of the individual of democratic thought is really the freedom of the ego to indulge in its separative impulse within certain limits. But this separatism inherent in the ego creates its own problem and as reaction, comes into being the socialistic thought which affirms the solidarity of the state as against the freedom of the individual. (qtd. in Hallen, Prasad 68)

Thus, individual selfhood and socialistic thought do not walk together. These two parts of life exist in opposite poles. Needless to say, a generalized social thought fails to promote individuality and uniqueness.

The Bottom community represents the orderly rationality of consciousness and repression whereas Sula embodies the darker, more mysterious and incongruous dimension of dreams and the unconscious. Sula shows her idiosyncratic behaviors and activities without caring the rules of the society. She does whatever she likes. There are not any rules, which stop her to do the thing she favors. As a result, Sula (individual) clashes with her society.

#### IV. Conclusion

The text, *Sula*, one of the outstanding works penned by Toni Morrison, revolves around the life of the central character, Sula. It is insufficient to view the text as embodying only one particular aspect, for it is a whole blend of multi- dimensions of human beings, especially of the Bottom community.

Leaving out other perspectives, like race, gender, class, color etc. through which the text has already been studied, the present thesis is oriented to research and uncover the clash prevailing between an individual and the society. Sula represents the individual whereas the black Bottom community stands for the society. Though the text contains various dominant issues which are applicable to analyze, it is equally substantial to approach the book through the camera of social clash.

Sula lives her childhood in her own black community following its rituals. But as she grows up, she visits different places, cities and gains a wide experience of life. When she returns back to her hometown Medallion, she is entirely changed who, now, negates all the current practices carried out in the society. While staying out of her black community, she learns different world, different life, and free and flexible society that allowed freedom to the individuals. She is easily impressed by such new life style that has no taboos to limit the liberty of people. After her decade long stay, she starts a unique life in the Bottom since she is already heavily influenced and habituated with an open and relaxed life. She cares no social, ritual or moral hindrances, rather she boldly counters against such dogmas. The social norms and values always focused to preserve and promote tradition but they were inconsiderate to individual concerns. So, to oppose and react against such socialized world of life, she goes to church without an under wear, rejects marriage and childbirth, detaches

herself from ancestors. She beds with as many men as she likes, sleeps even with white men ignoring all the color or racial barriers which is considered as an unforgivable act by her society. She sleeps not only with others but also seduces her best friend's husband, Jude for she regards sex as common as altering clothes. Sula does not care extra-marital affairs and thinks that this does not make the people to break their married life. Sula manifests her idiosyncratic behaviors and activities without caring the rules of the society. She shows quite unusual and peculiar manners which stun the community people. She watches her mother burn; sends her grandmother away to Sunnydale, to a church run by white man. This act of Sula adds fuel to the Bottom people and they are more furious with her.

Thus, Sula brings an avalanche in the firm and smooth social structure. People are shocked as she questions creeds of the society. The conflict between an individual and a society can be read in the perceptual, attitudinal, conceptual and ideological clashes between Sula and her friends; between Sula and her family member and with the whole people of the black community, the Bottom.

When the society can not tolerate her, in a sense, anarchic behaviors, unexpected and unaccepted to social customs, in return, she is also bitterly responded. She is perceived as an evil form causing all social harms and calamities. Her arrival to Medallion is unequivocally reasoned for the plague of robins. She is also blamed for many more minor to major social hazards and eventually Sula is made pariah within her own society. She is labeled to evil, devil and the bitch, and the society isolates her from its day to day activities.

The community is pictured complacent with its monotonous culture and customs. Such a tendency practiced for an era, definitely blocked the progressive paths of the society. On the other hand, Sula, by her instinct, always sought to dig out

the ends of each potential. Discarding the conventional life, its fixity, she embraced an experimental life. She loved to have experiments of everything and feel herself which was contradictory to the social belief. Sula's persistence on her private thoughts caused her alien in her own society.

To sum up, Sula rejects the commonly accepted social norms; subsequently, she is also othered by the society perceiving her as their common evil. Such a rivalry to each other leads the Bottom community towards a perpetual clash.

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