

## Racial Passing in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*

This present research analyzes the theme of racial passing in Morrison's *God Help the Child*. The novel depicts the history of black suffering caused by the racial bias. The research aims at unravelling different aspects of racial passing of African American people. Passing is a term in which a person carries a false identity to gain social membership in society without entitlement. Black had to hide their identity because it became a matter of self-humiliation. The African people faced many problems like domination, sexual abuse and prostitution. Black colour becomes the main cause of suffering to black people. They had to hide their identity if they wanted to come out of a marginalized position. Almost always the white has been in the position of superiority and the African American people in a situation of inferiority. African Americans are largely the descendants of slaves who were brought from their African homelands by force to work in the new world. Enslaved blacks were forced to work clearing and cultivating the farmlands of the new world. They were treated as animals and sold like animals. They had no right to put their views in front of the people. Their voice was suppressed and they were unable to make their right choices. They were long denied a rightful share in the economic, social and political progress of the United States. Nevertheless, African Americans have made basic and lasting contributions to American history and culture.

*God Help the Child* as an African American novel that depicts the history of black suffering caused by institutional racism and self-humiliation. In this novel, the protagonist named Bride's childhood is very miserable; she did not get love from her mother who is a light-skinned woman because Bride is 'Midnight Black' and nobody in her family is black. She even becomes the seed of her parents' split life because her father abandons her and her mother simply because she is born black and

he never touches his own daughter. He thinks that his daughter is “Sudanese Black”. The protagonist Bride who has blue black skin is neglected by the white skinned parents who are ashamed of her. Her mother threatens Bride not to call her mother rather Sweetness. This shapes the racial domination of the child in early age being black skinned due to perception that only the white is symbol of beauty. Her childhood is very miserable and she struggles hard in society where no one heals her wounds. Again she has got pain from her Boyfriend Booker who calls that she is not a woman he wants; these words hurt her very much. She is abandoned in every aspect of life. After her boyfriend Booker abandons her, psychologically split Bride heads to North Carolina to find him who lives there with his aunt Queen Olive. She meets Steve, Evelyn the husband and wife and their adopted daughter Rain. Booker and Bride reunite after listening to the advice of Queen Olive, an aunt with whom Booker stays after leaving Bride and breaking his arm. Queen Olive dies, they bury her and Bride announces that she is pregnant with Booker’s child. At the end of the novel, they two have decided to stay together.

The novel advocates the hard time of neglected and despised girl in the name of black skin colour. This shows that the American society is still in the great ditch of racial injustice which is represented in this novel. Even in post- modern time, also racism is still in existence and it is not hard to imagine that how much the African American were dominated by the white in the past. African Americans people faced the problem of racism, slavery, sexual abuse, gender violence. *God Help the Child* presents the unbearable condition of racial injustice tackled by the protagonist named Bride. Especially the black people were victimized when they have poor status of their life. Morison encapsulates the theme of race by presenting the story of parents who forced their own child in the prostitution for their survival. This shows that the

poverty is still in the existence in both black and white community. Even the parents of Bride neglected her simply because her skin is black. Because white slave master took black slave women, their offspring were sometimes blacks, mulatto and white. Such mixing of blood created various level of color line. Such process of duality occurred in generation after generation. For generation, enslaved black women carry mixed race children who were deemed “mulatoos”, “quardroons”, “octoroons”. It is shame for them to call their child. It is very shocking event that the white parents gave “hexadecaroons” based on their percentage of white blood. Similar event we can see in the text *God Help the Child*. Through such activities we can easily guess how much the American society is engulfed with the racial feeling of discrimination. Being an African American writer Morrison gives voice to the voiceless character like Bride in the novel. She tries to uplift the marginal people who are repressed.

Morrison’s *God Help the Child* has sustained innumerable interpretative appreciations as long as its announcement in 2015. Roxane Gay writes in *The Guardian* regarding Morrison and her novel in relation to the child who is tortured by her parents who do not want to reveal Bride as their daughter. Sweetness tries to save herself in the society by ignoring her own child Bride whose complexion is ebony black. Bride grew up without love and affection. Her childhood was greatly deprived of her parent’s love and affection. She was immensely tortured by the behaviour of her mother Sweetness. Roxen Gay further writes:

Bride grew up without love, tenderness, affection or apology. Sweetness makes it clear she saw herself as protecting her child from a world that would be even more inclined to punish Bride for the darkness of her skin. . . “Some of you probably think it’s a bad thing to group ourselves according to skin colour-the lighter, the better-in social clubs, neighbourhoods, churches,

soroties even coloured schools. But how else can we hold on to a little dignity?" (par. 3)

The novel depicts the troublesome condition of neglected and despised girl just because of her skin colour. She does not get love and affection from her parents. Mother Sweetness is pouring her inner realities living in white community. It is not her choice to deny her daughter but to keep or maintain status in white society, she was forced to deny her child named Bride. There was immense racial domination where one had to hide their identity only to feel secure in the white society. In order to show the high status in the society, she ignores her baby girl as other.

Similarly Kara Walker in the *The New York Times* reviews that in the rotation of life Lula Ann Bridewell. She drops "Lula", "Ann", and "Well" from her name to be recognized as "Bride" by her self –empowerment and motivation, such person succeeds to be a regional manager at cosmetic company leading fascinating life in her early twenties. To make her self- dependent and to create her distinct identity she overcomes many obstacles and recognized by her name Bride who always wears white clothes to fascinate people towards her. Walker argues:

At the heart of the novel is a woman who calls herself bride. Young beautiful, with deep blue-black skin and career in the cosmetics industry, she was rejected as a child by her light-skinned mother, Sweetness, who's been poisoned by that strain of colour and class anxiety still present in black communities. "It didn't take more than an hour after they pulled her out from between my legs to realize something was wrong" Sweetness says. "Really wrong. She was so black she scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black." (para. 3)

*God help the Child* is a novel that investigates the torture faced by the protagonist by

her own parents only because she was born indifferent than her parents. Her mother Sweetness tells that being black skin colour of Bride is not her fault. But her husband Louis thinks that Sweetness cheats upon him and hiding the reality. Then after without any trust upon her wife he left both Sweetness and her daughter Bride. Sweetness also treated her own daughter as other. She does not give her love and affection. Bride who was Sudanese black was deprived of her motherly love and care. She says that her mother does not touch her.

Another critic Walton Muyumba writes her view about the novel in *The Atlantics* He states that *God Help the Child* is about childhood suffering. According to her, Morrison addresses the sentiments of the character by injecting narration of the dominated people. Her primary aim is to place her as a humanist author. Morrison unravels the agenda of how American Children are being mistreated by their parents. Though *God Help the child* Morrison makes us clear that there is great impact of our histories on our emotional faculties. Muyumba opines:

Morrison's greatness-the beauty of her prose, her formal and imaginative risk-taking, her intellectual prowess -is founded on fiction about human devilishness and weakness, bodies crippled and in crisis, and the impact of our histories on our emotional faculties. If not at maximum strength, her powers are proudly on display in *God Help the Child*. (par.14)

*God Help the Child* tells that history is directly connected to the lifestyle of the people. History has great impact on the people living in contemporary society. Bride copes up with the harsh reality of mothering and childhood in a world polluted by racism and violence. She grew up without tender love and care even though she achieved success in cosmetic company where she holds the position of manager.

Likewise David L. Ulin writes in *Los Angeles Times* book critics views Toni

Morrison's eleventh novel *God Help the Child* and *The Bluest Eyes* carry the similar events. In both novels there is great violence over their child. In *God Help the Child* the protagonist Bride who was Sudanese black tackles great negligence from her parent. Toni Morrison's eleventh novel *God Help the Child* begins with the echoes of the writer's earliest work *The Bluest Eyes*. Morrison focuses the experiences of the character Bride- a young, dark skinned black woman who works in the cosmetics industry while reckoning with the rejections of her past.

The conflict recalls Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eyes* (1970) in which an African American girl derided as ugly longs to be both beautiful and white.

Also, as in *The bluest Eyes*, *God Help the Child* involves the theme of sexual abuse. . . Literature though, does not work that way, or perhaps it's more accurate to say that every book must stand or fall on its own. And unlike *The bluest Eyes* which is a challenging novel, resisting easy resolution, *God Help the Child* rarely stirs into articulated life. (par. 6-8)

Regarding the African American's novel we can find similar trace in both of Morrison's novel in *God Help the Child* and *The Bluest Eyes*. Bride is suppressed by her parent even though due to her will power and dedication she established her identity regarding her cosmetic company. Bride does not try to confront with her parent for her identity where her identity is not clear but she struggles hard to settle her own identity by being manager of cosmetic company. She wears stylish clothes in order to lure the attention of the people but also that her dress does not reflect her stylish but she seems like trivial. This kind of activity makes her artificial rather natural appearance. Stylish clothes cannot hide the reality of Bride's countenance. Her natural face is the prime factor of her identity. She somehow relax in her way by wearing white dress to calm her heartbroken soul and mind.

Similarly, Susan Elkin portrays his views in *Independent* that Morrison in *God help the Child* brought the issues of how colour makes people feel bad. Coloured people are always tortured and victimized in the society where they are forced to inhale the polluted oxygen created by the people who are in power and position. They are always in humiliation where their voice is repressed. African American people are massively dominated by the white people. Elkin further states:

Morrison uses it to show just how much colour and its details matter to some black people. Sweetness is proud that some of her relatives could have “passed” for white. Prejudice and twisted values are not the exclusive province of white people. Centuries of oppression have conditioned them into some black people too. Sweetness’s nicely observed, sometimes self-justificatory thoughts open the novel and continue as a presence, both in Bride’s thinking and personality and in the reader’s consciousness of what has formed the main character. (par. 6)

Black people were victimized from the centuries till the modern time. *God Help the Child*, a novel that supports for the team spirit of the entire black community.

Morrison’s position as novelist has always been critical enough to critique the cross cutting issues of subjugation of blacks. African American people are always victimized by the people who were in position. From the centuries to modern period black people are underestimated and they were made subject matter. Their identity is always in problem and they overcome many obstacles for survival of their lives. *God Help the Child* portrays the difficulty of a young Bride who has struggle very hard in her lifetime in order to get tender touch from her mother as well as from the people residing in the contemporary society.

Likewise Mecca Jamilah Sullivan reviewed in the Morrison’s novel. American

people's deep rooted psychology in racism created a great terror in the characters who want to escape from such bad practice. In order to uplift their status Morrison tries to give voices to the voiceless character through her novel.

God Help the Child takes up classic Morrisonian themes: beauty, violence, racism, American blackness and its ghosts of personal and communal trauma, the consumption of bodies—and black women's bodies in particular—the lasting injury of rejection, the exquisite glory of desire. The novel tells the story of Bride, born Lula Ann Bridewell, a young, dark-skinned black woman whose life has been shaped by her body's failure to meet the norms of consumable womanhood. As a "blueblack" child, she is rejected by her "high-yellow" mother, Sweetness, who refuses to touch her for most of her girlhood. . . . Bride's father, too, vanishes without touching her. (13, 14 )

Morrison's novel carried the different themes of beauty, violence, racism and so on. Black body is taken as a rejection from the members of American society. Black color is taken as a curse by the people. Parent and child relation is amazing in this novel. Louis, father of Bride blames to her mother for sexual infidelity. Sweetness's husband Louis committed such a great adventure to leave his wife and his daughter only because of her skin colour. He was such a stereotype person whose mind is guided by the racial discrimination. Both parent of Bride felt humiliation of her skin color.

All the reviewers mentioned above portray different kinds of views regarding the Morrison's eleventh novel *God Help the Child*. This novel explores the themes connected to the racism and colourism on children. They are victimized by the skin colour and become traumatize. Most of the scholars argue that this novel visualizes the African American people's own history. They were brought from their homeland Africa to New Land where they were forced to do work for their masters. Enslaved



women were raped by the masters and the new born baby's identity is not fixed whether is belong to white or black community. The new born baby's identity goes in the crisis. When Black women gave birth to the white children their identity is dual. Outer appearance reflects his/her white identity but his/ her blood is mixed. People wouldn't find his/her real identity because of the white countenance. Such mixed bloods claimed themselves as the white and make their better life. The act of passing presenting them as white actually wanted to uplift their position. The reason is the society's biased attitude to black.

This research is based on primary and secondary resources as well as material available in the library, journals and internet websites. This paper has taken theoretical insights from various theorists and writers like Richard Alba's *Blurring The Color Line*, Gayle Wald's *Crossing the Line*, Allyson Hobbs's *A Chosen Exile*, Henry Louis Gates's *The Signifying Monkey* and Steven J. Belluscio's *To Be Suddenly White*.

According to Richard Alba, passing becomes the ambiguous term. To Gayld Wald, passing is a social practice. Hobbs says that passing is a continuous and historical process which is never ending. Similarly Belluscio explores the troubled relationship between literary passing and literary realism and Henry Louis Gates talks about the relationship between black vernacular tradition and African tradition.

Racial passing is a situation in which a person is categorized as a member of one racial group but he/she is taken as a member of a racial group other than their own. Passing is generally interconnected with blacks and other minorities who seek to present themselves as part of the white masses. Those who were able to pass as white often engaged in passing as white in order to get job, to go school and to engage in different activities like white. Passing theory narrate a unique process by which

individuals are not who they claim to be and communicate false identity badge to achieve social group membership without entitlement. In Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*, white couple's child was born Sudanese black. Her parents were also the part of mix blood. Explicitly it is surprising that white couple had child but when we try to seek implicitly it is because their generation also passed with the black and white blood. In the novel Sweetness describes:

It's not my fault. So you can't blame me. I didn't do it and have no idea how it happened. It didn't take more than an hour after they pulled her out from between my legs to realize something was wrong. Really wrong. She was so black she scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black. I'm light-skinned, with good hair, what we call high yellow, and so is Lula Ann's father. Ain't nobody in my family anywhere near that colour. (03)

Part one begins with the monologue of the Sweetness, who describes that her poor treatment of Lula Ann, her dark skinned daughter, was not her fault because racism forced her to prepare the child for a hard life. Sweetness describes that giving birth to the dark skinned daughter is not her fault. She says that her daughter's skin colour scared her. She believes that she is oppressed by the existing racism because it was the notion of racism which takes her emotionally away from her daughter. She says that her colour is beyond the imagination, Midnight black, Sudanese black. From this we come to know that in white community black skin is taken as a curse. Even blacks internalized that view to a great extent.

In *Blurring The Color Line* Richard Alba talks about the racial passing. It is a matter of crossing between the white and black race in the past. Gradually the symptoms of the crossing appear generation to generation. It is very ambiguous in nature. One can find different characteristics regarding the race. Richard Alba defines:

“Passing” is the extreme case of assimilation in a bright- boundary context, where assimilation in general requires a jettisoning of membership in one group and assumption of the risks involved in trying to gain acceptance in another. The risk in passing one exceptionally high because of the need to conceal one’s origin perhaps even from those closet to one-self. (228)

Passing is a double-dealing that permit a person to adopt certain roles or identities from which he would be prohibited by overcoming social standards in the absence of his confusing conduct. The classic racial passer in the United States has been the White Negro the individual whose physical appearance allows him to present himself as white but whose lack of lineage makes him a Negro according to dominant racial rules.

Richard Alba’s notion of racial passing can be shown in the Morrison’s *God Help the Child*. As Alba portrays that the passing became the main ambiguous term that the character in *Blurring the Line*. Similar kind of ambiguity and confusion appears in the character. In the novel white coloured woman gave birth to the black baby. At that moment she was showing her innocence by saying that it is not her fault to give a birth to the black child. Sometime due to passing some people take the advantages by keeping their standard high as the white people. As the time passes there came unbelievable appearance to the people. When a person passes a white he takes equal rights from the authority. But the birth of black child becomes a matter of problem for such passers.

Through monologue, Bride’s mother is expressing her secret things. When her daughter was born with black colour she even thinks to keep her in orphanage and at the same time she is afraid of people who keep their child in the church step. She furthermore adds that she heard that the couple in Germany snow as white has given

birth to the children one white, one coloured. She remembers:

I even thought of giving her away to an orphanage someplace. And I was scared to be one of those mothers who put their babies on church steps.

Recently I heard about a couple in Germany, white as snow, who had a dark – skinned baby nobody could explain. Twins, I believe\_one white, one colored.

But I don't know if it's true. All I know is that for me, nursing her was like having a pick ninny sucking my teat. I went to bottle feeding soon as I got home. (5)

*God Help the Child* presents the very different reality of African American people. They have very complicated life where they cannot remain confident in their own identity. They spend their whole life in a terror and horror from generation to generation. Their identity is not fixed and they cannot fully claim who they actually are. Sweetness, through her monologue, is expressing her views by declaring many events which are the matters of self-humiliation. She knows about the originality of her passing. To maintain a social status of white, she is pretending to be white. But when her daughter Bride was born with black colour, she is sharing the different events of the people. She even does not breastfeed her daughter. She says that nursing to her child was like having a black child sucking her nipple. So she bottle feeds rather than breast feeding to her child.

An American professor Gayle Wald in her book *Crossing the Line* has analyzed works from many well-regarded African American writers and film makers. Gayle's book analyses racial passing, identity and adaptability in the twentieth century. She says that the passing is deep rooted in the mind of people whose generation is gone through the line of passing but they have to face some challenges during their life time. Regarding these issues, Gayle Wald argues:

I have been arguing throughout this study that racial passing, as a social practice, is mediated by the “looking relations” of white supremacy. In saying this, I have meant first to suggest that the specific conditions and modalities of racial passing are circumscribed by normative visual epistemologies of race, which assign meaning and value to visibilized traits of hair texture, skin color, and the like. (169)

According to Wald, racial passing is a social practice. To erode race’s authority, Wald argues, we must understand how race defines and yet fails to represent identity. She uses cultural narratives of passing to illustrate both the contradictions of race and the deployment of such contradictions for a variety of needs, interests and desires.

In *God Help the Child*, Sweetness claims to be a part of white society. She hides her real identity and tries to adapt with the white society. She is in dual mentality that whether she is black or white because of racial crossing in her lineage. Outwardly Sweetness is light skinned with good hair but her daughter is black skinned. She treats her child as other and even she feels awkward to touch her. Those white skinned people whose veins are also contained by the Negro blood are able to make their status high as white people and get every right for the uplift of their lifestyle. They want to claim themselves as white. Similar thing is shown in the Sweetness. In her monologue she accepts Bride’s black color but in the society she does not take it easily in order to maintain her status in the society.

The protagonist Bride who was neglected by her parents became independent by involving in a cosmetic company named Sylvia, Inc. She struggles hard and is able to be a manager in a cosmetic company. Bride says that “I named it YOU GIRL: Cosmetics for Your Personal Millennium. It’s for girls and women of all complexions from ebony to lemonade to milk. And it’s mine, all mine the idea, the brand, the

campaign.” (10). Though, she was avoided by her parents she dares to involve herself in the employment for survival and to create her identity in the society. By portraying that her cosmetics company named YOU GIRL for all the girls. Women of all complexions from ebony to lemonade to milk, reflects that in the name of color we should not discriminate. She wants to create a world where there is peace and harmony among people. To maintain herself in the society she has changed her name time and again to create her identity. She tells:

But Lula Ann Bridewell is no longer available and she was never a woman.

Lula Ann was a sixteen –year-old-me who dropped that dumb countrified name as soon as I left high school. I was Ann Bride for two years until I interviewed for a sales job at Sylvia, Inc., and, on a hunch, shortened my name to Bride, with nothing anybody needs to say before or after that one memorable syllable. (11)

Bride was greatly victimized in her society where nobody understands her problems. Even parents neglect her. It is very pitiful condition for her. In the name of seeking justice and to establish herself in the white society she does a great hard work. After her high school, Lula Ann Bridewell drops her “countrified” name, first becoming Ann Bride, then finally, to sound mysterious and interesting in her career, settling on Bride no last name. During her lifetime Lula Ann Bridewell, drops “Lula”, “Ann” and “Well” from her name and identifies herself as “Bride.” By casting off countrified name and adopting other name she want to detached herself from the bitter past. She is victim of passing tendency of parents. In her consciousness level she is passing. She wants to pass as self made person. She time and again changes her name to feel secure and confident in that community. Again she wants to assimilate to the metropolitan life.

Allyson Hobb in biography *A Chosen Exile* presents the things related to racism where people want to pass. In her biography she has presented that many African Americans passed as white. Centuries ago African American people were enslaved in the house of white masters. Enslaved women were raped by the masters and from the African American women babies were born white and they declare themselves as a people of white community. Gradually those who were born mixed blood gave birth to a mysterious child. Sometime a baby is born white and sometime black. It shows racial passing in the African American People. Allyson Hobb in *A Chosen Exile* says that “Racial passing is an exile, sometimes chosen, sometimes not.” (4) It means that through the racial passing people are able to take advantage from the society but sometime they lack to take the advantages because of the ambiguous appearance of the African American people. Hobb furthermore adds that “Racial passing in the American context must be acknowledged as a subset of a much larger phenomenon that encompasses multiple disguises and forms of dissemblance”.

(32) As time passes different complexion of babies are born from the white people because inwardly they carry the negro blood in their veins since the time of being slave of white master. Hobb again adds that:

Passing is a continuous and enduring historical phenomenon that opens a wide window onto larger issues about inconstant racial definitions, the changing dynamics of race relations, and the complex and circuitous routes along which African American identity has developed in the United States... First, racially ambiguous men and women passed as free in the fluid, bustling, and multiracial world of the eighteenth century mid- Atlantic, where opportunities for self- fashioning abounded and where not all blacks were enslaved and not

all whites were free. (25)

According to Hobb, passing is continuous and historical process which is never ending. This is ongoing process. In multiracial world, due to passing, the appearances of people appear in an ambiguous way in the society. He does not believe that all the blacks are enslaved and all whites were free.

While applying Hobb's theory in the Morrison's *God Help the Child* we came to know that passing is a never ending process. White couple's child Bride was born black because of the multiracial community, where one's identity is not certain but it is fluidity. Sweetness and her husband belong to white but their daughter belongs to black. Explicitly such event made people shocked but implicitly it is because of racial passing. In white society it is very difficult to create an identity by black people but here in the Morrison's novel Bride was able to create her own identity as a regional manager in Cosmetic Company Sylvia Inc. In order to make her distinct identity in white society, time and again she drops the word from her name and lastly she identifies herself with the name Bride.

Bride's childhood was devoid of love and care. She was deprived of love from her parents. She overcomes many pain and difficulties through her life. She was totally helpless from her mother. Her mother Sweetness treats her in a cruel manner. Even she fears of touching her. Such behaviour of her mother somehow traumatizes her but she reconciles with her heart to do something creative in the society. She gave service of cosmetic to the women of different color. She lures person in a tactful way to keep attention to her. Morrison's novel shows that due to racial passing, people's identity is in complicated form. Those who passes as white can easily create their own status in the white community.

Bride who was neglected by her parents dares to struggle for the survival. To



get tender touch from her parents she accuses to her primary school teacher Sofia Huxley of sexual abuse the latter was innocent. Sofia represents the black community who is accused by her own black student. At the court she was getting support by saying that “Relax,” says the prosecutor lady. “Take your time.” And I did take my time. My hand was in a fist until my arm was straight. Then I unfolded my forefinger. *Pow! Like a pistol*” (31). At the court house Bride was getting support from the people not to be afraid to accuse Sofia Huxley. She is afraid of such false blame. But to get attention from other people, she dares to accuse her. When Huxley was accused, of child molestation then the people around Lula thank her:

“Thank you, Lula,” to get me to put my arm down. I glanced at Sweetness: she was smiling like I’ve never seen her smile before\_ with mouth and eyes. And that wasn’t all. Outside the courtroom all the mothers smiled at me, and two actually hugged me. Father gave me thumbs-up. Best of all was Sweetness. As we walked down the courthouse steps she held my hand, my hand. She never did that before and it surprised me as much as it pleased me because I always knew she didn’t like touching me. I could tell Distaste was all over her face when I was little and she had to bathe me. (31)

Bride is expressing her inner activities how she accuses innocent Sofia Huxley and how she was treated by her parent and all the people who went in support of Bride. Sofia Huxley was a primary teacher who is black. She is accused of child molestation. When Bride points at Sofia in the court, she was amazed how the little girl dared to accuse. At that moment she was not able to go beyond the accusation. This shows that even the educated school teacher’s voice was repressed and she was unable to utter a single word from her mouth it shows that how American society is engulfed by the racial discrimination. Huxley who belongs to black community is accused by the

Bride. It is intra-racial conflict where same race deceived the person of same race. All the people who were in court play a role of stimulator to the Bride. Huxley's social prestige was lowered because of false blame toward her. After accusing Sofia Huxley she was greatly thanked by the people who surround her. When Bride glanced to her mother she was amazed because Sweetness smiled with mouth and eyes that she had never seen before. Even her father gave her thumb-up. Bride says that the best expression she saw in the face of her mother Sweetness. As they walked the court house her mother held her hand that she never got such tender touch from her mother before. Bride says that it surprised her as much as it pleased her because she always knew she didn't like touching her.

The major part of the novel *God Help the Child* sets in California. It is a developed city where people do not care about other and they just remain self-centred towards their activities. Every human relation is based on money mongering psychology. People like to gain name and fame by struggling hard in the society. Morrison mocks at the psychology of character which is designed by the materialistic society. When Bride gets successful in her career as the manager of cosmetic company, she went to visit her primary school teacher whom she accused for child molestation. Sofia Huxley spends fifteen years of long imprisoned life in pitiful way. After her release from prison, Bride went to meet her to compensate her by providing money. At that moment Huxley says, "I didn't know what she was talking about or what she wanted until she threw money at me. She was one of the students who testified against me, one of the ones who helped kill me, take my life away. How could she think cash would erase fifteen years of life as death?" (69-70). By this statement, Morrison critique the materialistic trend of the American society. Here the psychology of Bride is also polluted by the materialistic norms and values where she

thinks that the money can replace her guilt. It is a great satire to the money minded people who think that money is everything to make worse thing better.

Morrison tells the story of many characters who suffered from the materialistic norms and values in the American society. She depicts reality of American culture. Rain appears as a mysterious little white girl in the novel whose story is also important to know the reality that how much the American people psychology is drowned in the materialistic life. One day when Rain was drenched in the rain she was rescued by the kind hearted couple Steve and Evelyn. Even both couple were unknown about the girl, her name, her family. They provide shelter for her. Later on, in her narration she deploys that she is victimized by the materialistic society where the money is given priority. Human feelings and emotions lagged behind in the face of money psychology. Furthermore, she explains that she wants to “chop her head off” (102). It means that she wants to cut her mother’s head if she finds her now. Moreover she expresses her anger towards her mother because her mother forced her to involve in prostitution for making money. Her mother took the money from the sex-driven customers after her daughter’s prostitution. One day when Rain misbehaves to one of the customers of her mother; she is chased away from the house. In this regard Morrison speaks through the words of Rain, “Some guy. A regular. One of the ones she let do it to me . . . He stuck his pee thing in my mouth and I bit it. So she apologized to him, gave back his twenty-dollar bill and made me stand outside...She wouldn’t let me back in .I kept pounding on the door. She opened it once to throw me my sweater.” (101-02). Throughout this circumstances Morrison makes fun of money mongering psychology of American people who in the name of money can cross the limitation of human values. Human values are commodified on the basis of skin color in American white society.

Steven J. Belluscio, Professor of English at Borough of Manhattan College/CUNY, is the author of *To Be Suddenly White*. It focuses on the theme of passing. Passing means that Negro becomes a white man and he takes the position of higher caste. Passing is viewed by the scholars as black/white racial binary. Critics take racial binary as a literary realism. Belluscio views that “ In the racial passing narrative, a character attempts (successfully or not) to shed all overt evidence of racial difference and imperceptibly enter mainstream society”(26). While applying the Belluscio’s theory in the Morrison’s novel too, we know that the protagonist named Bride was also the subject matter of racial passing. She was unnoticed by the people and to lure the person or to make attention of people toward her Bride accuses her primary teacher Sofia Huxley for a child molestation though her guilty. It is all done by the Bride to bring her in the position for entering in the mainstream.

Belluscio in *To Be Suddenly White* explores the troubled relationship between literary passing and literary realism. Drawing the ideas from Gayle Wald, Belluscio further adds that:

The durability of the black/white paradigm may in certain cases be abetted rather than undermined by its instability, insofar as this quality lends it a discursive mobility and flexibility. . .it examines not only black-to white but also white-to-black racial passing and in that it reads these phenomena in not only literature but also in musical culture, film, and confessional narrative.

(32)

Belluscio in his creative work *To Be Suddenly White* brought the idea of Wald’s *Crossing the Line*. In the *Crossing the Line* there is there is portrayal of the racial passing in Twentieth century. It examines not only black-to-white but also white to black racial passing. It does not only deals with the literature but also deals with the

musical culture, film and confessional narrative. In god *Help the Child* there we can see that not only black –to white passing is mentioned but also white –to black racial passing occurs. Bride’s parents pass as white but their daughter passes black.

Bride’s mother Sweetness makes her daughter deprived of love and affection. She does not want reveal that in her blood there is negro blood running in her vein. She says that she was not a bad mother. The reason behind doing some hurtful things is to protect her child. She says that:

I wasn’t a bad mother, you have to know that, but I may have done some hurtful things to my only child because I had to protect her. Had to. All because of skin privileges. At first I couldn’t see past all that black to know who she was and just plain love her. But I do. I really do. I think she understands now. I think so. (43)

Sweetness says that she treated her child badly because to protect her. She thinks that due to skin privileges in the society she treated her child in a wrong manner. She says that in past those who passed as black does not want to reveal their past in order protect them from racially engulfed society.

Bride feels a kind of racial domination through the behaviour of her mother. She overcomes many difficulties in her life. Sweetness in order to hide her real identity from the racially dominated society she does not wants to attend the parent-teacher meetings or volleyball games. Bride portrays that her neighbours and their daughter agreed in the rude behaviour of her mother to Bride:

She’s sort of pretty under all that black. Neighbors and their daughters agreed. Sweetness never attended parent-teacher meetings or volleyball games. I was encouraged to take business courses not the college track, community college instead of four- years state universities. I didn’t do any of that. After I don’t

know how many refusals, I finally got a job working stock never sales where customers would see me. I wanted the cosmetics counter but didn't dare ask for it. (35-36)

Sweetness does not want to recognize as a mother of Bride because of fear of white society where African Americans rights were limited and they are lowered by the people who are in power. Bride was not encouraged to join in college rather she was encouraged to take business courses. She was supported for community college instead of four- years state universities. But Bride did not go in the track of her mother. After facing many refusals at many job she finally got work in the working stocks. In working stocks she never sells where customers could see her. She has a kind of humiliation from her inner feeling. Bride was not satisfied with her work in working stocks but she wanted a cosmetics counter but of fear of her mother she cannot dare to express her feeling.

When Bride went for her interview at a cosmetic company (Sylvia Inc) her designer of dress suggests her "You should always wear white Bride. Only white all white all the time" (33). Bride is encouraged to wear white dress. Her blackness is commodified. It is self pride for black and no need to pass anymore in the society. White dress increases blackness of her skin. They use her blackness as a marketing strategy. It is not whole hearted acceptance of black. Bride attended the party where she was complimented by the people. Here, the people acknowledge that black is also beautiful. This is the mark that people are coming out of the racial beauty. "I am complimented constantly at the party- how beautiful, how pretty, so hot, so lovely, everyone says, but no one questions the absence of earrings" (51). In the party Bride was praised immensely by the people but herself feels a lack of her earrings. From her view we can guess that she humiliates herself. Her psychology is guided by

materialistic ideology that only the person who wears ear rings are only belong to standard people. Bride lowered her self- esteem. So, while getting appreciation from the people in the party she said that nobody ask her for absence of earrings.

An American literary critics Henry Louis Gates in *The Signifying Monkey*. Gates explores the relationship between black vernacular tradition and African American tradition. It is a theory of African American Literature. The black tradition is double-voiced. In this literary criticism through the slave narratives he makes the white written text speak with a black voice. Regarding the issue of passing Gates says that:

Nevertheless, the two figures are related as functional equivalents because each in its own way stands as a moment of consciousness of black formal language use, of rhetorical structures and their appropriate modes of interpretation. . .how and why formal literary language departs from ordinary language use. The metaphor of a double-voiced EsuElegbara corresponds to the double-voiced nature of the Signifyin(g) utterance. When one text Signifies upon another text, by tropological revision or repetition and difference, the double-voiced utterance allows us to chart discrete formal relationships in Afro-American literary history. (88)

According to the Gates due to racial passing African American tradition is doubled voiced. To bring the African American in the mainstream he prioritizes the African American tradition. *The Signifying Monkey* expands the arguments of figures in Black makes a significant contribution to literary theory, African-American literature, folklore, and literary history. Similary, Morrison in her novel *God Help the Child* through the protagonist Bride and other characters in the novel she gives voices to them.

Gradually there is emergence of the concept Black is beautiful. Sweetness regrets on inhuman behaviour to her daughter Bride. She time and again remembers time of 1990s when there was a massive racism in the society. Bride was also born at that period where she is deprived of love from her parents. Sweetness could not love her daughter honestly simply because of discriminatory social belief of the time. She has also changed into a better human being by the end of her time. Sweetness says that “The last time I saw her she looked so good, I forgot about her colour” (177). It means that the racism is not innate rather it is social construction or mindset of people. It is a proof that Sweetness has a pride in her black color. Sweetness realizes her guilt and says: “If I sound irritable, ungrateful, part it is because underneath is regret. All the little things I didn’t do or did wrong. I remember when she had her first period and how I reacted. Or the times I shouted when stumbled or dropped something. . . True. I was really upset, even repelled by her skin when she was born” (177). This is the mark that Sweetness realizes her ill treatment towards her daughter. She is very regretful at the present. The flow of time changes the psychology of a people. It is a meaningful transformation which provides a positive thought for all the people.

Toni Morrison, through her novel, depicts the theme of racial passing. Passing theory describes distinct process in which the people identify them as wrong identity. Similarly in the novel Sweetness communicates herself as a white community. She does not want to reveal herself that her past generation gone through in the process of passing. The novel opens with the monologue of Sweetness where she remembers that her own mother Lula Mae has passed easy. Sweetness recollects the moment of her mother’s talk. When her mother and father went to courthouse for marriage there were two Bibles and they had to put their hands one reserved for Negroes and other



for white people. She recalls all her memory because when her daughter was born with black skin to console herself she does so. Sweetness treated Bride as not her child. She does not take her daughter with her in the society. Even she told Bride not to call mother rather Sweetness.

Morrison presents the reality of African American people in her novel *God Help the Child* who are suppressed by the white in the society. She presents the fate of a Bride who was born with black skin of a white parent. When she was born their parents feel shame to call her their own daughter. Due to Bride's skin colour her father accuses her mother for sexual infidelity and leaves both of them. Mother 'Sweetness' threatens Bride not to call her mother rather than Sweetness. This study brings the situation of people of color in modern America. Through this novel Morrison tries to bring balance between whites and non-whites communities. Morrison's protagonist Bride's hurtful experience of being black is the representative of entire black community. Bride is victim of racial injustice rampant in the white community. She was traumatized by her mother behaviour. She was also haunted by the words of her boyfriend Booker "You are not the woman I want". Her boyfriend's word time and again haunted her very much. The present research work deals with the difficulties of racial passing in the novel *God Help the Child*. This novel depicts the hardship situation of the protagonist Bride and her mother Sweetness to survive in the society. Sweetness wants to establish herself white in the society and her daughter to get tender touch from her mother she accuses Sofia Huxley her primary teacher for child molestation. After she accuses Sofia Huxley she saw a charm on her mother's face which she had not seen before. It shows that in order to achieve status like white Sweetness acts like she belongs to white but on the other hand Bride wants love and care from her mother.

African American people think that their black colour is curse for them. They do not take it as normal and tries to disguise them as a white. African Americans do not reveal themselves as beautiful but they try to maintain their status by the passing. American society was full of racial injustice where black people were lowered down. Continuity of self-humiliation of black creates themselves feeling lower than the white people. She was abandoned by her parent as well as her boyfriend Booker. By her hard work and dedication she was able to be a regional manager at Cosmetic Company Sylvia inc. The reason behind her facing such difficulty is her black skin colour in white society. Bride was born black from white skinned parents because her lineage is mixed by the white and negro blood in their veins. The result does not come directly but it comes in a amazing way. So, it is difficult to trace all the white skinned people as white. Self perception of African American people made them to feel degrade in front of the white community. They had perception that the black race has inferior status in the society. In order to erase such false ideology they should understand race as just a construction. In this novel Morrison draws the attention that how the non –white are being mentally colonized by the dominant culture of white. African American people lacks confident upon them and pretend them as white by imitating their lifestyle in order to feel themselves secure in the white society.



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