

SONG OF SOLOMON: A METAMORPHOSIS, A JOURNEY TOWARDS SELF

Prof. SANJAY KUMAR SWARNKAR,
(Head) Dept. of English,
C.S.J.M. University, Kanpur

SHALINI SHUKLA
Research Scholar

ABSTRACT:

This research paper throws light on the transformational journey of our protagonist Milkman Dead towards maturity and responsibility after which he emerges as a completely different person. It sheds light on the development of milkman, how he takes a flight towards self sustainability and knowledge. The paper depicts Milkman's journey to find a treasure hidden by his ancestor in a cave, which he believes will change his whole life and will give him a chance to live his life on his own terms. Although in the beginning he was full of greed, in the end the journey makes him learn the real meaning of life. It traces the origin of his family and during the journey he goes through many new life changing experiences that inspires him to become a very kind and better person. It taught him how he had always been so lucky and got the best in his life yet he never understood its value. He realised his earlier attitude towards life was grossly wrong and he needs improvement in life. After this he started to correlate with the sufferings of the other people and started to consider himself a part of the local community. He realised how judgemental and arrogant he was previously. In a way through this difficult and surreal journey he achieved his ambitious flight.

KEYWORDS: Flight, Freedom, Heritage, Roots, Quest for Self, Inner-Consciousness
Metamorphosis, Transformation, Journey.

The research paper explains the different dimensions of his quest and enlightenment in a very impressive manner. It presents a historical picture of freedom from bondage and slavery of Afro- American people and gives a glimpse of their struggle. It is a journey of Milkman's getting ripped off from ignorance to perfection through breaking the wrath of darkness. He emerges as a hero and makes his own separate identity. The novel begins with an incident that attracts people's attention in which, like a mythological figure, Icarus Robert tries to fly from the rooftop of Mercy hospital through his fake wings. From which we understand that the main purpose of the novel is flight.

Milkman's birth took place in an extraordinary form at the very beginning of the novel, his nursing caretaker gave him his nickname "Milkman" because he was always attached to his mother. His family's strange designation of "Dead" was also given to them by the mistake of a drunken officer. His family was very ambitious and money minded. The unique designation signifies the rebirth or reincarnation of Milkman's family heritage and the root of the family.

Milkman had absolutely no idea of his family Heritage or history; through this adventurous, transitional journey he emerged as an vibrant Hero and shunned his previous image as a dormant, privileged member of a rootless family. The journey makes him able to initiate various progressive actions and make choices in his life.

In his quest Milkman came to know that his ancestor was a servant named Jack. After his independence he married an Indian woman named Sing Byrd; they settled in the south and built a farmhouse there. He made his new identity and adopted the surname "Dead" hence became "Macon Dead". Sometimes geographical conditions create a curiosity in people to know the roots. The same happened with milkman when his own alley known as "No Doctor Street" aroused curiosity in him to know why it is called so and after some efforts he found the truth that previously there used to be a stronghold of doctors but now there is not a single doctor live here as everyone left hence it is called "No Doctor's Street". The incident arouses an eagerness in himself to know his family history as well. Deborah Barnes in the book *"Myth Metaphor and Memory of Toni Morrison's Reconstructed South"* observes this evolution of cultural memory: "Only after migrants leave 'home' do they tend to regard their place in the South propitiously-a place where they were 'whole' and part of a whole" (39). Through his tireless efforts Milkman brings back the lost existence and identity of black slaves to the forefront.

Milkman's house was like an abode of the dead as their father Macon was very autocratic due to his wrath no one used to express himself. His dominance was a matter of pride for him. The atmosphere of their house was very dull and full of frustration. His sisters used to spend their time making fake roses. His mother Ruth, who was an ugly woman, confined her existence to a single room, she used to suppress her feelings. A form of patriarchal system can be traced here, where women are kept inside the boundary wall of the house and the service to man is considered their foremost duty and virtue by calling it their fate.

Macon Dead lost his father at a very young age. He had to struggle a lot to take care of himself so with the passage of time he became very strict. In the country Milkman did not have to fight for anything at all in his life; he got everything by his destiny because he was privileged. When Milkman started moving towards maturity, he found everything very monotonous which he would not approve of. This transformational journey is a bildungsroman. His perspective of looking at life changes completely. Milkman was earlier an angry, spoiled, directionless boy who has now grown up into a sensitive and a kind hearted, pure man. Who previously used to think that the best things in the world is his monopoly now built harmony within himself.

At this juncture the comment of Joseph Campbell is worth mentioning as we can see a similarity in the study of Joseph Campbell mythologies across cultures and millennia and reveals that quest narratives exhibit predictable, known features of a genre. The author must present an idea/value that a reader recognizes as virtuous.

In a scene he expresses his desire to climb the mountain alone that gives a proof of his self reliance. Different driving forces worked behind Milkman's metamorphosis; one as such is his friend Guitar who is both his friend as well as worst enemy. During an argument with Guitar he learnt of his limp mark and crippled foot, like the villain of mythology Guitar challenges him and pushes him to move forward to his self awareness and destination. The

article of Dorothy Lee described the moment as *"Guitar is the avenging son of a mutilated father. All this reminds us of Horus, the falcon-headed Egyptian sky-god, avenger of the death of his father Osiris, associated with wings and the sun; or of Horus Greek analogue Hermes, winged messenger of the gods, guide to the underworld, inventor of the lyre. There are even hints in this young master hunter of the archer Apollo, born on the seventh day of the month; also associated with the sun, the lyre, and birds; equally murderer and artist."*

Milkman met Guitar in 1954 at the time of the murder of Emmet Till but milkman has no interest in this kind of community talk. He is always lost in himself and bothered only to know much more. Due to the racist and tragic condition of his family, Guitar had become revolutionary and rebellious. He was a part of the revolutionary brotherhood group called the "Seven Days" which gets people their rights by taking revenge for killing black innocent people and maintains racial fraternity. He was very unpredictable in his behaviour and used to handle challenges on his own terms by following his own rules. Once Guitar attempted to kill Milkman but luckily he survived after his escape a new Milkman was reborn which was not deceitful and pretentious as before. Now he could feel the pain and intimacy with the local people of his community and became a person who shares their pain. His cripple leg and lymph mark reshaped which testify his new life. He had come out of his isolated self centred world. Branch in her article says myth. For instance, Eleanor Branch in her article *"Through the Maze of the Oedipal,"* Milkman's journey on foot hits his *"first steps towards an autonomy of his own construction, by walking, however tenuously, on his own two feet."* Milkman begins his journey to find a treasure hidden by his father and aunt Pilate. The journey that he starts to know his family history would prove to be a milestone for him. Facing various obstacles in this arduous journey he finds answers to various unresolved mysteries of life and attains perfection. So once we can derive the conclusion that while searching for the treasure he finds himself.

We can observe changes in Milkman even as a lover; previously his relationship with Hager was limited to using her to satisfy his physical hunger. He never understood her true love but this time he formed a mutual and genuine relationship with Sweet, for example when Sweet bathes him he also returns her favour by giving her a massage and cleaning her bathroom. He pampers her truly and their relationship does not depend only on sex itself.

Milkman's aunt Pilate has also been a source of inspiration for him to move forward. She lived amidst nature where the music of nature and aroma of Pine trees, Blackberry, Wine and Apple trees make the atmosphere heavenly, where pure cool breeze used to blow. She lived in the lap of nature like an ancient mother goddess who always wore her identity in the form of mysterious earrings which revealed some divine connection to her. She was devoid of a navel that traces her association to both birth and death. Pilate gives Milkman some Nobel advice in her mysterious and magical voice in the form of an apple and an egg that symbolises knowledge and rebirth respectively. She plays the role of his charioteer in the journey. Brenda Marshal discuss in her say that *"[Milkman] would be more astonished if he were familiar with the verse Pilate had referred to: "Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me." Guitar and Milkman are the ass and the colt tied, and Pilate is the one who goes to the station to lose them. (488)*

The flight is not just the flight of a single man alone rather it is a breaking the social cycles of slavery that had entrapped the blacks since ages. The flight becomes Milkman's pilgrimage as with this new beginning he gained the freedom that embraces him in the open sky. In his article *"The Possibility of Flight"* Fred Metting comments *"once all Africans could fly like birds; but owing to their transgressions, their wings were taken away."* Caesar grant of John iceland's saying in his collection inverted commas all god's children could fly that inverted commas once all African scored fly like birds, but owing to their transgression their wings were taken away"

To conclude, Milkman simply wanted to move away from his parent's sinister past and mend his present. He starts with the Shattered past and comes to a pointless present and again goes to the spoilt past and at last comes back like a winner. He connects to some of the most wonderful experiences of African American society like a warrior and sees his golden future and reveals his metamorphosis personality.

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