

## ECONOMICALLY PRIVILEGED AND UNDERPRIVILEGED – A SRI LANKAN READING OF TONI MORRISON'S NOVELS

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Toni Morrison is known as a black-American, feminist, and class novelist who uses a combination of powerful language and relatable characters to create memorable stories. The theme of class runs deep throughout her novels. Her stories revolve around the current events taking place in the lives of the former slaves and the “liberated” slaves of the US. They live in a community where the effects of their pasts are still being felt in the present, even after their liberation from the slavery, they continue to be haunted by it. Morrison's extensive use of the themes of gender and sexuality are brought into relief by her ability to combine them with class. Although there are many authors throughout the world have previously used these themes in their writing, her ability to use her character's working-class lifestyles to intensify their gender roles and sexuality are one of the reasons her writing is so powerful. In *Sula*, for example, the main character is a dominant female. She refuses to take a husband, something that deeply troubles her mother.

Class is by no means the only social issue discussed in Morrison's work. One of the difficulties associated with defining Morrison's works is making the judgment of whether or not the characters' race leads to the bulk of the oppression that they experience. A white character sometimes is better than a black character. For instance, the Garners in *Beloved* is better than that of Macon Dead in *Song of Solomon*. In a sense, the fact that the economic and social problems her characters face are not race specific. They are difficulties and experiences that anyone in the working class could experience, regardless of the sex, country, race, language, religion, and colour of their skin.

The present study focuses how Toni Morrison's novels can be applied to the Sri Lankan context, especially the Tamils who have been migrated to the urban from the rustic set-ups and to abroad from Sri Lanka.

**Key-words:** Slaves, Class, Tamils, Migration, Abroad