

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

It is common knowledge that slavery is a word that contains many perceptions. Some say that means the actions of treating human beings improperly as if they are animals, regardless of their race, gender, work, maturity, etc. Everyone can make a slave of other people and also be in the position of a slave. Slavery can be done by all human beings to all human beings no matter who they are or what they are. ("*Slavery*" <<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/slavery>>)

Another perception on slavery happened in the time when the white people were searching and exploring this earth. At that time, slavery is the dehumanization of human beings considering the freedom of will and the human rights from God. In specific term, slave means colored people and the master is white people who have the authority on the colored people. The masters want to set the colored people to live in the master's construction of living. The masters do not want to know about the colored people's life but want to insist more on their way of living to be constructed in the colored people's way of life. On the other hand, the masters do not exactly set their living like their way it is, but they construct the colored people only to be their servants or worst than that (Hofstadter 204).

Slavery is a social-economic system which people (colored people) are deprived of personal freedom and compelled to perform labor service. The term also refers to the

status or condition of those people who are treated as the property of another person or household. The white people treat their slaves as animals. They buy them as human property and take the slave to their ranches or plantations. They have the entire slave's right including life, freedom, property, child, and everything. The slaves live in the place far from the main house and live like buildings more or less like stables. They are forced to work everyday and if they disobey the rule they will get punishments from the master. (*"The History of Slavery"* <<http://www.historywiz.com/slavery.htm>>)

Slavery in America is signed up by the first shipment of colored people from Africa as prisoner to Virginia colony in 1619. The colored people work as servant in white people's house. They have already ordered just like an ordinary ordered servant in that time. After their working contract is finished, they are free to go. Then there is no exact time when and how the situation change to become colored people slavery, but in 1640 there are many colored people are brought to Virginia colony. It is no longer under the working contract again but it is as slave. This action is followed by other colonies (Sowell 261).

In 1793, American people have invented the cotton machine which makes the production of cotton being increased especially in the South. On this phenomenon, there is great expansion of plantation agriculture and this makes the need of slaves is increasing too. So, there are many slaves traded to fulfill the problem. The master then entrust the organization of the field to hire overseers because they can not handle the big amount of slaves by themselves. By the year 1808, the trading slave from Africa is prohibited by the constitution. On the other hand, this rule can not help the slaves to reduce the pathetic situation. It is because the South makes new approach to get the slaves by the natural

process of reproduction. The new approach and the growth of cotton production make the slaves become more pathetic than before. They are forced to work overtime in achieving the goal of production and also they are forced to make new infants to create new slaves. The female slaves often are raped by other slaves, the overseers, or the masters itself (Parkes 201).

The victims of slavery, which is the slaves themselves, truly get shocked by the conditions that they face when they are born in this free world. It gives them bad injuries physically and mentally which is called Trauma. Trauma is an emotional or psychological injury as a result from an extremely stressful or life-threatening situation that really gives long term effect. Trauma can not be erased from someone's thought. It also gives over reaction to someone if he/she finds the events that remind them of the past tragedy (Atkinson 403). Sometimes, someone will lose their consciousness and react suddenly toward the situation. Although the people's reaction toward trauma is different, there is a usual reaction. Trauma shows up in the term of unconsciousness of human being. This case is also portrayed in Sethe's character in the novel *Beloved*. This novel portrays the depression of the slaves. For example, the Negro woman should serve her master although he is not her husband. If she rejects or refuses, she will get hard punishment, in this case, she can be hung or whipped as the punishment. There is no policy that can save or protect her from this punishment. The only policy is made by her own master. There is no right or possession for the slave (Sowell 254).

*Beloved* was written by Toni Morrison, a black American writer who won Literary Nobel in 1993. She was born in Lorain, Ohio, the second of four children in a working-class family. Her works were commonly about political terms, observing the

dark side of black people in their own country. Her works are *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1999), and *Love* (2003). Most of all her works always get great respond from the readers. Some of her works also get the prizes including *Beloved* which won Pulitzer Prize (annually award for the best works of journalistic, literature, drama, and music) in 1988. (“Toni Morrison”

[http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1993/morrison-bio.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1993/morrison-bio.html)>)

*Beloved* tells about Sethe, a running slave. She is a mother of four children. She loves her children very much. No matter what may happen to her, she will save them and even sacrifice herself for them. She escapes from *Sweet Home*, the ranch of slavery and she starts to live with her children. She tries to make her new life in the new place. Sometime later, her master finds her house. They want to take Sethe and her children back as their slaves. Sethe lost her consciousness and brings her children back to the house. She says she will never give her children because she loves them and does not want the children to get the same experience like her. Then she decides to kill her children in order to save them from the cruelty of slavery. One child dies and the other three can be saved. The trauma of slavery makes Sethe can not use her mind to find another way. It seems like the trauma hides her clear thought until she takes killing way as the only reaction. It shows how trauma can influence human's psychology in taking the reaction.

Later when she becomes a free person, she is released from the law punishment because of her murder. But, then, she is always in doubt toward her life. She never has a guilty feeling for what she did. She thinks that she has done the best thing for her

children. All she can do now is just living and protecting her family. On the other hand, her two sons leave her, while her daughter becomes an introvert who does not want to see other people. From this event, Sethe still insists that she is doing the right thing to all her children. Then, a mysterious girl comes to her house and introduces herself as Beloved, the name she engraved on her daughter's gravestone after Sethe had murdered her daughter. Sethe thinks that Beloved is her daughter who is risen from death that God has sent back to her. She should save and take care of Beloved because she gets a second opportunity to take care of her daughter again. It is the construction of Sethe's mind that is set toward her truly loves. Her truly love that is from the trauma of past experience is set strongly on her mind. The trauma of past experience influences her mind to continue her life. It can be seen that the trauma has brought a big impact on the people's mind set.

How her mind is set in the way of life that is really influenced and constructed by the trauma. In brief, she lives under the fear of slavery. She insists her way of thought is the right discourse in her children life. She wants everything in her life to be free from the discourse of pain. She thinks that everything painful is very unpleasant. She decides to take her children away from the pain because she loves them all and thinks that she is the only one who has the right in this world on how to live.

From the story above, it shows that trauma does not stop just in one case. Regularly, a trauma will haunt the people in their whole life. People can not live in freedom psychologically if they have trauma. Although it seems that people live in freedom apparently but it is not as free as they think about. The bad impact of trauma will raise another trauma to the people. If someone gets trauma, he/she will get the anti trauma reaction. Unconsciously, that anti reaction will influence again to him/her

psychologically. Then, there will be another trauma found on her/him. Trauma is a kind of chain that relates to another and will never end (Atkinson, 403). It is also portrayed clearly on Sethe in the story. After she gets trauma from slavery, she does the anti reaction like the way she kills her baby. Then the action she kills her baby gives her trauma again which influences in her whole life. This tragedy will haunt and create other new things on the anti reaction of the trauma.

The writer is interested in analyzing the work because *Beloved* contains the issue of traumatic experience toward slavery condition, which reflects the truth of what was really happening to the colored people in the past. The writer is impressed by the response to Sethe in murdering her child in order to avoid her children being the slave. The history of slavery is unforgettable and more complex than it looks from the official history for the slaves. The writer sees the interesting point if the history of slavery is seen from the slaves' perspective. Then the writer is really touched to analyze the root of the tragedy in this novel. How can the root be strongly constructed in her mind set in doing the trauma reaction without considering the effect or the impact in her life. The writer is more interested in the case of Sethe, from her experience being slave in slavery that brings trauma and then gives another trauma again and again later in her whole life. The past experience really influences to set the people mind in order to forward their life.

## **B. Statement of the Problems**

The study of Sethe's trauma toward slavery in Morrison's *Beloved* can be formulated as the following:

1. What are the impacts of slavery system to Sethe as a slave?

2. How do Sethe's traumas in slavery system build her mind set?

### **C. Objective of the Study**

Providing the answer to the above questions satisfactorily, the objective of the study are:

1. To find the impacts of slavery system which is related to Sethe as a slave.
2. To know how Sethe's traumas in slavery build her mind set.

### **D. Scope and Limitation**

The writer will concentrate on the subject matter of the study by limiting only to the behavior of Sethe since her behavior is representative to recognize the importance of what is going on related with the topic of the analysis. The plot and the character are also considered to be explained in order to get Sethe's feeling and how everything can build and influence to her mind set construction.

### **E. Significance of the Study**

By analyzing this novel, the writer hopes that it will give contribution to the world of knowledge generally and to literary study particularly. It is also hoped that this analysis will be an input for further studies in literature to students of the English Department, Airlangga University. The writer also hopes that this study can help the readers to analyze another works which have similarity with the phenomena or the form of fiction in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

## **F. Theoretical Background**

This thesis is intended to analyze Sethe's trauma toward slavery. The writer limits the analysis to the characterization and the plot. The plot is used to show that the events happened to the main character were related to her trauma and her psychological condition within the story. The characterization is used to know about the characteristic of the main character. The writer believes that the plot and the characterization are representative enough to be analyzed as they are related with the topic of analysis. The writer decides to use the intrinsic approach since it concerns with the intrinsic elements of the novel.

Therefore, the most appropriate theory in analyzing the problem is New Criticism. The writer thinks that Sethe has her own point of view toward the slavery according to the novel. She has her own point of view toward her life. This theory is very useful to help the writer to understand the problem on Sethe. The writer considers that the intrinsic approach is appropriate to interpret the topic.

To support the analysis, the writer uses psychological background that regards the psychological condition of Sethe as the main character in the story. Even though the writer uses psychological background of the main character, it does not mean that this study tends to turn into other field of study. It is used only to support the analysis of Sethe's trauma toward slavery.

## **G. Method of the Study**

The method in this analysis is library research related to the history of slavery, psychology and the works of Toni Morrison, particularly of *Beloved*. The writer also



finds information from any particular books dealing with the literary theories and approaches that will be used in the analysis. The main source of the analysis is the work itself – in this case Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* – whereas the other sources are used for supporting the study.

Regarding the subject of the study, descriptive analysis is used. So, the analysis of the thesis is done by describing the problems of the work through dialogues, events, and actions of the story. The descriptions of the problems are clarified by the data found in library research.

## **H. Definition of Key Terms**

Psychology : the scientific study of human behavior in order to describe, predict, explain, and change the patterns of functioning.

Slavery : the dehumanization of human being considering the freedom of will and the human right from God.

Trauma : an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened.

Mind Set : the people’s way of thought that is structured in their mind in confronting or facing their life.