

**Marginalization of Black Women from Slavery to
Contemporary time: Exploration of Self-Identity and Self-
Assertion**

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Abstract

The African Americans had been tortured and subjugated since the time of slave trade when they were brought to America. Women of African American community had to face more subjugation than the male one. They were the minor and inferior group who experienced triple marginalization during the time of slavery and even after the abolition of slavery. Civil rights movement, Women movement, Black movement etc could not change their position in the society. Eventually, they did not consider black women's effort and experience in the account under the oppression of racism and sexism. They were not only marginalized by the white man but also white women and black man in the society. There were always a concept of gender hierarchy and competition between white women and black women that created polarization in their relationship. It created an unavoidable and unacceptable environment for black women in the society and forced them to challenge the conventional feminist ideology. Black feminism and Womanism were the two different ideologies and theories established by the African American women to explore their individuality and create a significant mark in the white and male dominated patriarchal society. The aim of this paper is to explore the struggle and oppression of black women in the American society because of being 'black' and 'woman' through the lens of Black feminism and Womanism. The paper will demonstrate the fact how they have achieved their self-identity and established self-assertion under the domination of racism and sexism. To demonstrate their situation and prove the content I have used three novels *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacob, *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. These novels help the paper to depict the reality of slavery and the post slavery condition of black women. The paper also describes how black women overcome the effect of slavery in their daily and social life even in 20th century. Academic journals, books, articles are also used in this paper to make the data stronger.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

From the very beginning of the civilization till now women are considered as weaker than men. They are thought as the dependent one. They are represented in the society in a misogynistic way or stereotypical way. Were one to take a sweeping glance at the history of female oppression, it would appear the representation and condition of women has been interdependent; Norm and literature, culture and imaginary portrayed them as a submissive and inferior creature in the male dominated patriarchal societies. For black or African - American women, however the situation was doubly oppressive and this interdependence manifest as extreme marginalization. They were not only dominated or marginalized by the male whether they white or black in their society; they also faced obstacles with the white women. The struggle of black women to assert themselves and their identities, in this situation, is an emerging area of literary representation.

Slavery was a condition of human being in which they were owned by other people. They were considered as property not as a human being. They did not have the freedom and right to live their life independently. Every single aspect of their life was determined or controlled by their owners. They worked very hard for their owner but did not get any appreciation or proper respect for that. These people were recognized as slaves. Slavery was such a state which deprived people to get their own recognition. Those who worked as a slave that means accepted the domination were known as enslaved people. Slavery had its roots in the Eastern Europe. Croatia, Greece, Turkey, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Romania etc were the Eastern European countries. America also was the country of slaves who practiced slavery for several years. America started to practice slavery from the very beginning when America was under the British colony. It continued for the next 250 years. Slavery ends in the America after the declaration of independence. But half of the states of America the southern part

practiced slavery till the civil war. From the 16th century or the colonial time there was an active term of trade named triangular trade. The trade was also known as transatlantic slave trade. The trade occurred between the three ports of the Atlantic which were England, Africa and America. This trade helped to change the economy of America and established the slavery in northern and southern America strongly.

Civil war took place in United State in 1861 and ends in 1865. The war took place between the north which was known as Union and the south which was known as Confederacy. There were 13 states in the Confederacy and they were supported slavery. They wanted to be separated from the Union. They did not want the abolition of slavery whereas the Union wanted to emancipate slavery. The Union stopped practice slavery after the American Revolution. Their economy was based on industry and who worked for them was known as worker. On the other hand, the economy of the Confederacy was based on agriculture and those who work for them known as slaves. When the north started to work for abolishing the slavery the south got afraid of destroying their economy. After the election when Abraham Lincoln became the president, his anti-slavery view made them more anxious. The situations of the slaves were not good by that time. They were tortured and neglected at the lowest level and that led to the war. The war ended with the triumph of the Union. The confederacy surrendered in 1865 and abolishes slavery with the 13th Amendment.

After the civil war the economy of America was devastating and there was a new challenge to unite the black and whites. Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson etc were the pioneer of that time. They wanted to reunite the south and north. They also worked for them. Several laws were passed for the rights of the black people. But the situation was not up to the mark. Congress party and some other people from north started to oppose against those laws and established a law called 'Black Codes'. These laws were for the black peoples which prevented them from fulfilling their basic rights. It was said in the law that black people

could not get the voting rights, jobs etc. In order to protest against the code the government founded 'Freedman's Bureau' and established some schools, churches and other for the black children. The northern helped the south for rebuilding. The northern people who did not support the progress started to criticise the others. There was the law of the equality in the constitution but people were not ready to follow those laws and rules. They still had obligations and restrictions against black people. There was no slavery in America after the civil war but inequality and discrimination were extreme towards the black people. Racism came to the limelight and it was said that racial differences was one of the weapon in replace of slavery to discriminate and dominate the black people in America. The condition became worst and terrifying when the Supreme Court declared 'separate but equal' facilities for the black and white people. They were totally segregated from the normal life of white people and society.

In the both part of America – the north and the south had the segregation but in different way. In the south segregation was direct and the north was indirect. The civil rights movement was one of the most incredible social movement take place in United States. The movement was organized by the black people of the America who were facing racism and discrimination mostly from the reconstruction era. It was the movement for the equal rights of black people in the state and the demand for getting voting rights. The movement also includes the equal opportunities and facilities for black people regarding education and employment. Civil Rights movement improvised the condition of black people a little but it also had some failure and unsuccessful.

Black people were constantly tortured and discriminated by the white people and the society. But the situation was worse and terrible for the black women. From the slavery to till they are not recognised as a human being. They were tortured by the both black men and white men. White women were also not supportive towards them and discriminated them in

every aspects of their social and mental life. The situation and condition of black women were same after the abolition of slavery. They were not only faced the gender discrimination but also were the victim of racism and sexism. From slavery to the contemporary time, they had to sacrifice and fight a lot to find their worth and ability and to make their acceptance in the society (Welung). They had to overcome many obstacles to create their recognition and identity in the society. The Civil Rights movement was for the black people but the problem was black women were not considered as human being. As a result, the movement for black people became the movement for black men.

The legacy of black women's subjugation started to become horrifying during the time of slavery. At that time both the black men and women were tortured by the whites but the condition of women were worse than the description. Women were tortured by the white men and their owners. They were considered as an object rather than the human being. They were actually the attraction for sexuality. They were raped and not able to get justice. There was no law for them to get justice. They were treated as granted. If any white women get raped the white man will get punished but if the black women get raped the white man will not get punished. White men used to make sexual relation with them but did not give them the right of wife not even their children get the recognition of father. They were humiliated in the every aspect of their life. They were not only tortured by the white men but also they got raped and tortured by the black men. Rupe Simms a professor in her article "Controlling Images and Gender Construction of Enslaved African Women" mentioned the three images of black women portrayed by the powerful people of the society that time. He discussed that black women were considered as beasts and they had the image of the mammy, Jezebel and mule. Every black woman of that time had to struggle alongside black men who suffered in their workplace. The significant difference: black women suffered in the inside the home and outside as well. However, white women did not transcend race to show solidarity with them

for the most important. They were jealous of them and also treated them as slave. There were no law or rights for them. They were characterised by the people of the society. They were characterised by the ideal or stereotypical ideologies of the society.

Feminism is a term which claims the equal rights for women. It is a social movement that advocates achieving the social, political, professional and educational equality for women. Feminism indicates the fact that societies give priority to the male point of view and treated women unfairly on that society. The goal of this movement is to ensure the equal rights and opportunities for women as like men. This movement includes the voting rights for women, equal opportunities in the social, economical and professional sector, equal wages or pay, having own property etc. feminist movement also works for the social rights of the women. They demand for rights of controlling birth which includes contraceptive and abortions. Feminism also talks about the protection of women from the domestic violence and sexual harassment. The term feminism first used in Netherland.

Feminist theory is the extended version of the feminism. It talks about the nature of sexism and gender inequality. Feminist theory focuses on the patriarchal ideologies, stereotypes about the women and most importantly objectification. Women are always thought as “other” in the society. They are the inferior one. Feminist theory opposes the idea. Feminist theories first come to the light in 1794 by the publication of “A Vindication of the Rights of the Women” by Mary Wollstonecraft an English writer. In 1851 an African women rights activist Sojourner Truth accused that men’s flawed point of view towards women is the main reason for the limitation of women. “Women having limited rights due to the men’s flawed perception of women” (Sojourner Truth, 1851). Numerous feminist theories and ideologies have developed over the years and promote different aim and point of view. Toril Moi an American feminist defined feminism with three terms: Feminist, Female and Feminine. According to Toril Moi being feminist is a “political position” that means both

women and men can be feminist. Being female is a “biological matter” that means the differentiation of male and female based on sex. And lastly being feminine is a “set of culturally defined characteristics” that means one’s particular character and behavior or action which is decided by the society. Feminism is categorized by the three waves which gives the knowledge about the transformation of the idea of feminism throughout the century.

The first wave of feminism took place in 19th century and the beginning of 20th century during the First World War. It focused on getting political power which includes voting rights for women. During the world war when there was insufficient existence of men in working sight women have to take their place to run the economy. That was the first time when women realize that they are also capable of doing outside work and earning money as well as men. They also realized that they have the ability or worth to contribute in the economy of the country. So they focused on getting their rights by suffrage movement. In the meantime, some feminist were also focusing on the economic rights of women and doing campaign against the body politicized idea. This concept represents the fact men believed that women are weaker sex because of their natural reproduction system. The second wave of feminism started in the early 1960s to 1980s. It was the expanded version of first wave. It deals with more on the equality of the women in other aspects of life than suffrage. It emphasized on the ending of gender discrimination. It mostly talks about the legal and social equality for women. This movement is the beginning of the idea of individuality. It refers that women are losing their own identity in the behind their husband and children. They have to understand their own ability and capability (Emmanuel). The third wave of feminism took place in early 1990s. It is the extended and modified version of second wave. It took place because of the massive failure of second wave. Third wave of feminist movement includes female empowerment having the issues of sexuality, challenging heterosexuality. It starts by questioning the definition of femininity. It gives focus on the individual identity more than

anything else (Springer, 1063). Third wave feminism emphasizes on the fact that race, ethnicity, nationality, class, religion and culture are the most demonstrative factors of women's life. Feminism is not only for the upper - middle class white women. Third wave feminism exploits that women from different societal backgrounds experience different types of difficulties and challenges. They need to create their own identity based on their situation and positions. So the rules cannot be the same for all. It also subverted the sexist and stereotypical images and language for women which are decided by the society. It promotes gender identity and sex positivity.

There have been a lot of changes in today's society for women from the beginning but still, they are not completely privileged. Though the time has changed and the position of women has improved since early times, still there is inequality and discrimination in the society. It seems that third wave feminism did not work for black women. There is a difference between upper- middle class white women and black women in terms of privileges and opportunities they get. They focus on the life of white women and they conclude that lifestyle, experience, privileges are different for white women and black women. They are not the same. They face totally different and unusual difficulties and experience different challenges than white women. But the feminists of American society did not care for that. They made feminist rights and rules according to their own situation and condition. They did not even bother to think about black women. Black women were exploited both by race and gender. Being a 'black' and also a 'woman' made their life more difficult than anything else.

'Black feminism' is a term which was created by black women for their recognition and identity. The ideology or concept of black feminism started in the 1960s or 1970s when the second wave feminism took place. Second wave feminism talks about the suffering and rights of upper - middle class white women which totally deprive the suffering

and oppression of black women. They make rules according to the toleration and situation of white women. But women of other color or black women claimed that they are not as same situation as white. They had more difficult and horrible journey than them. The term or concept 'black feminism' comes to the limelight when the second wave of feminism failed to fulfill the purpose or needs for black women. At the very first black feminist movement took place in response to black liberation movement and women movement. In black liberation movement they were sexually oppressed and in the women movement they were racially subjugated. However, 'black' was meant for the men and 'women' were meant for the white women. As a result, their existence was ignored. To stop racist, sexist and classist inequality or discrimination against them and prove that how these are interconnected with their daily life, they took action addressed by 'black feminist movement'. This is only for the black women to recognize their identity and achieve their designation and position in the society. The Civil rights movement, Black Nationalism, Black Panthers etc were some liberation movements for black people or black race. But the irony was the concept of 'freedom' was represented with black manhood or masculinity. In the Black liberation movement black women had to face the sexist attitudes because of this ideology. There was no place for women. Black men were against the idea of equality. They believed that if women got the equal identity and position in the society as them, they would lose their masculinity. To protect their masculinity they started to control over black women and force them to accept their misogynist attitudes. Black women were enforced gender role in their own community. Racism was one of the major issues in the life of black women. In the feminist movement of 1960s they were subjugated racially. They were ignored and taken for granted by the white women. In the movement the experiences and sufferings of the white women and middle class white women were recognized as universal women's experience. They refused and disrespected the sufferings and experiences of black women. Though the white women deny

the claim of being racist, every woman movements of American society point out the fact that black women were neglected by race and class. To make their position in the society and conceal the effect of racism, sexism and classism from their life black women decided to form a feminist movement of their own known as 'Black Feminist Movement'. The aim of this movement is to address the sufferings and experiences of black women from every class. It is a political movement which aimed to combat the various oppression and struggle that black women faced. To make this movement stronger and professional they established several organizations during the late 1970 to 1980s. All these organizations represent manifold and simultaneous rights of black women including reproductive rights, violence, rape, harassment, body politics, lesbian and gay rights etc. National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) was found in 1973 to talk about the interconnectedness of racism, sexism and classism in the life of black women. It also accredits the issues of homophobia and lesbianism. The Combahee River Collective was one of the main organizations founded by Barbara Smith which mainly talks about the struggle of black women in every section of life. Though this organization ended in 1980 but it created an important impact on the black feminism movement. Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper, Mary Church Terrell, Dorothy Height, Audre Lorde, Rosa Perks etc were the pioneer of the black feminism movement. They worked for the black women rights movement and lead the African American women to achieve their rights and own identity.

Paule Marshall, Alice Walker, Bell Hooks, Toni Morrison etc were the black women writers of various times who represented the literary works of African America society in the world of literature. Their writings illustrate the struggle and experience of black women's in the cruel patriarchal society. They also passionately depict the black women's thirst for their identity and self- recognition. Their writings inspired and encouraged many women to fight

for their rights and make position in the male dominated patriarchal society where they also neglected by the other women.

Womanism is a theological term which explores the diversity and effect of culture and community in the regular and daily life of black women and women of colour. The term first coined in 1983 by famous writer and activists Alice Walker. Walker defined the term as strong and intense than black feminism by explicating it as “Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender”. The term demonstrated the sufferings and experiences of black women and women of colour and preached the ideology to work with men equally. It also talked about the sisterhood and solidarity between the women which helped them to get individuality and reached them to the quest for womanhood. Womanism had created the positivity which encouraged them to fight against racism, sexism and the patriarchal domination they had been faced for their entire life. It established the space for black women and women of colour in the society with men. Womanism was not only defined by Alice Walker. Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi and Clenora Hudson-Weems also established and elaborated the definition of womanism as ‘African Womanism’ and ‘Africana Womanism’.

The intention of this paper is to analyze and demonstrate the socio-economic condition or status of black women in the society from the time of slavery to contemporary time. Black women were victimized for being ‘black’ and also for being ‘women’. It was a very challenging journey for them to create their own position in this sexist and racist society. The paper will discuss the fact that how they explore their identity and established self assertion being marginalized by both man and woman in every aspects of life. The paper will also address the sacrifices and struggle they face while creating their existence in the society. To discuss the content the paper will analyze a slave narrative *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacob, *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. They are the African American writers who have addressed the struggle, pain and trauma that black women faced

all the time in their life from slavery to present and explained how they overcome the triple marginalization by fighting against the patriarchal dominated society. This will help the reader to identify the condition of black women in the society and their constant struggle for identity.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The word 'marginalization' is often considered in reference to the minority or inferior group. It does not contain the same meaning for everyone. In particular, this thesis aims to analyze the marginalization of African American women and transformation of exploring their identities in the American society. In this section the paper will briefly talk about the articles and texts of the scholars who have presented their work and researches in favor of this context. The socio-economic condition of black women from slavery to contemporary time will be discussed from various perspectives.

2.1) Triple Marginalization

Throughout history of whole world we acknowledge the fact that patriarchy confronts women as the most subjugated human being. They were not considered as a human being and treated as an outsider in the society. But the scenario was worse for black women who were not only oppressed by the white male but also by their own people. *Colonial and Canonical Marginalization and Oppression basis on Gender* is an article where the writer Seodial Deena described this fact that black women faced triple marginalization from white male and female and black male. She explains that colonialism is extremely patriarchal system which only exploits the sufferings of colonized man and children and disregards the sufferings of women. In her writing she describes the fact that feminism did not work for the black women. In 1960s when feminism started to take a radical phase in America only concerned about the white female marginalization. They were failed to understand the oppression that the black women encountered. In this article we find that the writer describes that not only white male writer but also black male writer's portrait women characters in a stereotypical way in their writings. Deena says that traditional canon portraits women as object and always kept them

silent until they started to talk for themselves. The writer mention some black female writers like Toni Morrison, Sylvia Wynter, June Jordan, Alice Walker etc. who made their own identity by going against patriarchal tradition and the white canon. This was not easy for them as they not only face oppression for being black women but also for being female writer. The article also importantly gives emphasize on marginalization of black women from the canonical perspective. However, the content of this paper will only focus on the colonialism.

In the same way, writer Rosemary Crawley describes the fact that American society failed to repel their 'white' superiority over the black women even after celebrating diversity in her article *Diversity and the Marginalization of Black Women's Issues*. They demonstrate their society as diversity but they failed to maintain that. Black women are still treated as the "other" in their own society. In this article the writer explains that she has done a research with black women where she arranged a workshop with hundred black women to share their experience in white society. She also asked them whether they are reluctant in their own community or not. The response was mostly same for everyone that even after addressing and celebrating diversity publicly in the whole society where people are accepting differences in every sector the subjugation of black women remain the same as before. The workshop took place in 1990 when Americans were establishing and spreading their identity in whole world for evocation of plurality and diversity at the same time were celebrating the polarization of 'black' and 'white' in the basis of race and gender. According to the workshop result it was noted that white women always had a competitive relationship with black women in every sector. They got all the privileges but could not stand the idea of black women being talented and strong. The writer concluded her workshop by saying that diversity was unable to create appropriate environment for the black women where they can thrive because white supremacy and male domination are still remain unacknowledged.

As we talked earlier that black women not only faced domination by the white but also their own community people marginalized them more. Black hyper masculinity was one of the mainstreams of the marginalization of black women. Hyper-masculinity is a psychological term that exaggerates the stereotypical behavior of man which emphasizes on aggression, physical strength and sexuality. Donald L. Mosher and Mark Sirkin are the scholars who used this term first in 1984 to define the cultural behavior of man. They define this behavior with three concepts such as callous sexual attitudes toward women, violence is the symbol of manliness and dangerous things will make them more strong and highlighted. Black male were the most affected victims of this hyper-masculinity. They had that strong urge or anger to express or exaggerate their manliness towards other and the other is always women.

One of the great scholars Nahum Welung in the article *Triple consciousness: The Reimagination of Black Female Identities in Contemporary American Culture* describes the fact that how white patriarchy and this black hyper masculinity altogether marginalized black women socially and economically and gives priority to the white women. To analyze their position the writer conduct a theory named TCT- Triple Consciousness Theory which is inspired by W.E.B. Du Bois double consciousness theory. It explains that black women considered themselves from the three different perspectives- blackness, womanhood and America. In this article the writer focuses on the existence and identity of the black women in the white patriarchal society where black men and white women played an important role as a betrayal. The writer addresses the gender limitations of Du Bois double consciousness and creates this TCT. He argues that black women are fated with three barriers in their life which resist them to flourish or make their own recognition. 'America' which represents the hegemony of white patriarchal society, 'blackness' represents the racial shape which encourage the exaggeration of black hyper-masculinity and lastly 'womanhood' represents

the hierarchal gendered identity which emphasizes on the prioritization of white women identity. To prove his theory the writer addresses Rosanna Gay's *Bad feminism* where she refers feminism as 'bad' because it ostracized black women by white feminists and only encounters their life. 'I decided feminism wasn't for me as a black woman...because feminism has historically been far more invested in improving the lives of heterosexual white women to the detriment of others' (Gay). Beyonce's epic album *Lemonade* is also analyzed to represent the journey of black women in the white society. Her song 'Sorry' and 'Becky' from the album represents the abandonment and betrayal of black men and white women. The writer also talks about the TV show *Insecure* and film *Black Panther* for demonstrating the concept black hyper-masculinity that how it marginalized black women and demoralized their existence as human being. The writer concludes the article by pointing out that Du Bois concept of double consciousness ignore the subjugation of black women and create a boundary to their desire for individuality. Though these four resources demonstrate the power of black women, it somehow conceal behind the patriarchal ideology.

Prematurely knowing of the Evil Things: the Sexual Abuse of African American Girls and Young Women in Slavery and Freedom an article by Wilma King. In the article she talks about the sexual violation of black females from the slavery to late 20th century. The writer explains that black women not only raped and abused by the white males but also the black males. It was irony that they did not get any punishment for that as it was not consider as offensive crime. There was no law against that crime whilst black males got punished for doing anything bad with the white females. The writer explains several stories to demonstrate the ideology. During the time of slavery black women were not considered as human being so they could be treated as however the males wanted to treat them. Rape or any sexual exploitation was the most common factors of that time. There was no age consideration or any kind of relationship importance to sexually exploit black women. James Henry

Hammond a middle aged man married a 17 year old girl Catherine to capture all her properties. He not only abused his wife but also did not spare his own daughter. Besides, he also purchased an 18 year old girl to exaggerate his sexual exploitation. Celia an 18 years old girl was purchased by 60 years old man called Newsom and was raped by him on the way of home. He continued his abusive behavior without any interference. One day Celia refused to attend because of her illness but Newsom didn't agree and so she attacks him with the stick and killed him. She was taken to the trial and her lawyer defends her by the Missouri statute law, 'every person who shall take any women, unlawfully, against her will, with intent to compel her by force, menace or duress...to be defiled'. But the irony was that the judge was refused to consider Celia 'any women' clause rather he confined her guilty of murder and encouraged to give punishment. 19th century Virginia statute or Missouri statute acclaims that if any black male raped or committed any sexual exploitation to any white women, he will be sentenced by death but there was no law or acclamation for black women exploitation by black male. As it was not even consider as crime. During the post civil war era rape and any other sexual exploitation become the symbol of power and masculinity for both black and white male. At the same time the law became more vague and ambiguous. Complain against the rapist or criminal would be derogatory of the dignity of victim and would be against her morality especially Christian morality.

2.2) Racialised Sexism in daily and social life

We learned earlier that African American women get marginalized or domination by three different perspectives which leads them to face racialised sexism in their daily and social life. In American society they get highlighted by both race and gender which severely affected their regular life. Being 'black' and 'women' marginalized them from every social sectors of their life such as family, workplace, educational institutions etc. It deprives them from get individualism or individual identity in the society. According to NiCole T.

Buchanan conceptualization of masculinity and social hierarchy is one of the main reasons for sexual harassment but racial hierarchy is also a reason for black women to experience sexual harassment in American society and they face it in a unique way because they are both black and female. In her journal article *The Nexus of Race and Gender Domination: Racialized sexual harassment of African American women* Buchanan describes how African American women faced racialized sexism and domination in their workplace and other aspects. She mentions that feminist researchers' treat all women are same but multiculturalists' claims that not all women experience the same oppression or harassment. For her research on sexual harassment and male dominance, she conduct an interview over thirty- seven African American women to record their experience. She explains one of her result says that black women experience male dominance from both white and black men and racial dominance from both white men and women. Buchanan proposed that the nature of harassment of black women is unique not only in its form but also in perception. The paper also explains that the images and stereotypes of black women which were drawn during the time of slavery pervade in the American culture and people still maintain those. This also encouraged people to marginalize them. They are expected to fulfill the role of the images originated in slavery in their workplace. They are criticized for their clothing style, behavior even for gesture, posture and never taken as a talented and wise person to get the highest rank or position. One of the interviewer shares that when any African American women get a higher position they don't take it as their achievement rather they promote it in a negative way. They face different types of harassment and get limited social privileges.

Similarly, educational institution did not help them to get rid of the mainstream. They had to deal with the double stress and unacceptable experiences in institutions. *African American Women in Higher Education: Issues and support strategies* is a journal article where the writer Cynthia C. Bartman talks about the unusual and unacceptable experiences of

African American women in the higher education sector in U.S. The paper says that in higher education sector the numbers of African American students are not satisfactory. They are low in number. The writer explains that education sector also cannot save them from facing racism and sexism or racialized sexism. The paper ensures the fact that African American women face extra or double stress of being black and women in their college education. They are treated as outsider in their classroom and campus. The writer points out some problems that they face in their education sector in her paper. Lack of gender gap, lack of black faculty, multiple marginalized identities, lack of critical mass etc are the issues discussed in the paper. She describes that these make them felt left out and took them to isolation. It helps them to lose confidence on one self and downcast to work outside of their community. The writer also suggests some requirements that how to prevent racialized sexism and make a safe and acceptable environment for African American women.

In another article named *Three Paths, One Struggle: Black Women and Girls Battling Invisibility in U.S. Classrooms* the writers describe the condition of black women in the doctorate field as being invisible. They are treated as invisible in their classroom because of their skin colour and sex. In this paper the writers addressed 'Franklin's Invisibility Syndrome Paradigm' to construct the ideology that how this being invisible experiences create impact on their further studies and work. The paper explores that they not only bear academic pressure but also racism and sexism for being black and women. Their situation becomes worse when they face problem by their own community people along with white men and women. 'Franklin's Invisibility Syndrome Paradigm' refers invisibility as an inner struggle. He defined invisibility as "Invisibility is an inner struggle with feeling that one's talents, abilities, personality and worth are not valued or recognized" (Franklin 1999, p. 761). In the higher educational sector they face negligence and worthless. The U.S, classroom or educational sector does not give them the opportunity to establish their talent. Their

participation does not get any value or respect rather they find themselves unimportant and unrecognized. They remain invisible to the whole society. For their research the writers did an experiment with 20 students. The research concluded the fact that black women feel disregarded and worthless because of the lack of recognition and appropriate acknowledgement. Their existence become ignored in the class which make them feel so powerless that they cannot share their living experience and remain silent. The writers conclude by mentioning the fact that U.S. classroom or educational sector represents black women as worthless by ignoring their knowledge, values, customs and cultural representation and questioning their identity.

Leaving all the social sectors like discussed before workplace and educational institutions behind, African American women did not ever get proper justice or respect from their family also. Yet family is the social institution where people get the most support and respect. They faced extreme sexism in their family from the time of slavery to now. According to W.E.B. Du Bois, 'Black women carried a special burden- not only were they black, poor, and second class citizens, but they were female as well'(bois,42). It was also said that their family experiences effects on their other sectors of life. In the article by Patricia Hill Collins *Gender, Black Feminism, and Black Political Economy* the writer talks about how black women face different family experiences and these experiences create effect on their political economy. The writer also explains that it leads black women to live in poverty and maintain low financial situation.

2.3) Body politics

Sexualisation of black women came to the mainstream hand in hand with all other aspects. Besides, marginalized by race and gender they also sexualized by their body. From the time of slavery they were characterized by some stereotypical images which make them

more neglected and violated in the society. In the journal article *Controlling the Images and Gender Constructions of Enslaved African Women*” writer Rupe Simms talks about how the society constructed stereotypical images for the African women. He mentioned the three images of black women were portrayed by the powerful people of the society during the time of slavery. He discussed that black women were considered as beasts and they had the image of the mammy, jezebel and mule. Mammy was the ideal image of the women who would devotedly and selflessly work for their white master and their family. She was asexual which is neither threat for the mistress nor attracted to the master. She exemplifies the superiority of white domination. Jezebel was the promiscuous image of women. They were characterised as a breeder and portrayed as sexually aggressive. It was said that they were the reason of the rape. Lastly, mule was the worst and most dominating images of the women. They were characterised as beasts. Their value or importance was confined in their labour. They were extremely dominated by the white masters and purchased as property. He discussed the fact that black men were suffered in their workplace but the black women suffered in the inside the home and outside as well. However, white women were not the supportive one. They were jealous of them and also treated them as slave. There were no laws or rights for them. They were characterised by the ideal or stereotypical ideologies of the society. In his paper he mentioned the law of Virginia State to show the injustice towards African women in the time of slavery. The law acclaims that the rape or abuse of a black women by white man or their own people would not be considered as a crime.

Likewise, Rupe Simms the writers Rasul A. Mowatt and Bryana H. French in their journal article *Black/Female/Body Hypervisibility and invisibility* talks about how black women become hypervisible when it comes to the negative body images that portrayed for them years ago and describes how these images effect their daily and regular life in American society. They conduct a leisure research on black women where they compose two

juxtaposing positions for black women – invisibility and hypervisibility. They argue that black women's play invisible role in the social and academic sphere because of systematic oppression of sexism and racism. On the other hand, they become hypervisible when it comes to the body politics. Their bodies are stereotyped as abnormal and objectified. The paper describes the three stereotypical negative images of black women which were characterized by the male society. It shows black women as manipulative, promiscuous female who are always ready for sex and always seduce man. So that it is not labeled as rape or sexual exploitation as they are hypersexual. These images are the reason for black women experiencing extreme level of commercialized sexual exploitation like sex tourism, pornography, escort service etc. In this article the writer mentioned another negative portrayal of black women called Sapphire who is considered as angry, unintelligent, and dominating in a very offensive way. Patriarchal male dominated society labeled them as 'troublemaker'. The writer concludes her paper by mentioning the fact that the portrayal of these negative images affects them psychologically and physically along with their daily life and validating them as more ignored and neglected in the white dominating society.

On the other hand, Audre Lorde also talks about the images of black women but she challenges the portrayals and demonstrate their identity and female sexuality as strong, courageous and independent in her article *Revising Stereotypes of Afro-American Womanhood*. She mentions that these stereotypes still continues in the contemporary time and make black women victim of economic, social and sexual exploitation. From the slavery the patriarchal society create a negative image of black women. They used to characterize them by some name put labeled on them on the basis of male perspective. They put a specific ideology about them and that is still continuing. In this article the writer challenges those stereotypes or myths of black women and represent them as strong and brave human being. Lorde reconstruct and redefine the black female identity and black womanhood in her prose

and poems. She asks all the African American women to challenge these stereotypes and celebrates the beauty of physical and sensuous aspects of themselves.

2.4) Emergence of feminist identities because of marginalization

After all this marginalized act and behavior African American women reached at this decision point that if they want to survive in this racialised sexist society and want to prove their existence and create identity they have to fight back. To protect themselves from the sufferings and maintain an identity in the society they participate in the feminist movement. But they faced different racial domination and ignorance from the white women. Several theories, organization took place during late 19th to 21st century. They create separate feminist movement called 'Black feminism' to express their sufferings and different experiences into the account which was conceal behind the white supremacy in the feminist movement.

Black feminism

Black feminism took place immediately after the second wave of feminism. Some of the critics considered it as criticism and total opposite of second wave of feminism. The Combahee River Collective, a black feminist organization state that, "The synthesis of these oppressions creates the condition of our lives. As black women we see black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face".

Black Women, Sexism and Racism: Black or Antiracist Feminism? Is a journal article written by Gemma Tang Nian. The article talks about the polarization of feminism into black and white in the U.S. society. She explains that existence of the racism in the U.S. society and in movement itself is the main reason for the polarization of feminism into 'black' and 'white'. Within the advancement of time black men achieved the political power over the society but

black women are still remain in the same position. They still face both sexism and racism in their daily and regular life. The paper analyse the fact feminism did not take some of the concepts and practices to the account which proves that black women were not relevant to them or they ignore their experiences. At the time of 1980s feminism was mainly talked about abortion, male violence including rape but when black feminists started to work with them reproduction, patriarchy and family turned out to be a problematic phenomenon. The natures of these issues were different for them. For example, according to the analysis of this paper black women face domestic violence more than white women and the worst was they didn't get any justice for that. The police did not take it seriously rather labeled it as disloyalty of a woman towards her husband. Similarly, when a white woman was being raped they got the legal justice for that but for the black women it was not even considered as a crime. They had to suffer it silently or else they would be tortured by the police. The writer concludes the paper by analysing the fact that to avoid these controversies and recognise their oppression black women created their own term called black feminism which only acknowledge the experiences of multiple oppression of black women in the racist and sexist society.

At the same context, another scholar Ula Y. Taylor analysis the goals and purposes of black feminism and identifies the fact that how society dominantly maintains the racialized sexism in her article *Making Waves: The Theory and Practice of Black feminism*. Black feminists founded the National Black Feminism Organization (NBFO) because they face sexism in the Black Powers Movement and racism in the Women's Liberation Movement. Gradually they stated to include economical, political factors, family, paid-unpaid labour etc along with the social factors as women were marginalizing in every sectors of their life. But it was not up to the mark that many white women directly refused to work or participate with black women in any sector. After the third wave of feminism, black feminists started to come in the limelight

as women are now getting inspired by the raising voice of black women writers. Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, Audre Lorde, June Jordan etc writers came forward to make their position in the white dominated society. It was well known that how white men treated black women but become more pathetic and dangerous when black men also started to exaggerate their manhood and masculinity over them. The writer points out another fact though by that time feminist movement made several changes, violence and control over women remained same. She refers that the myths about African American womanhood constructed in the time of slavery still affected the life of black women as society pressurised them to act like that. The writer concludes her paper by mentioning an important term which is founded by Alice Walker named 'womanism' and it rose in 21st century. It explores the intensity of black women culture. It promotes the love for 'self' and appreciation for the black women culture. It gives them more flexibility to choose and freedom of identity.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is another theoretical term which came up in 1989 by KimberleyCrenshaw. Intersectionality is a theoretical framework which explains how social and political identities like race, class and gender interconnected with each other or combined to discriminate a group of marginalized people. It expanded the meaning of the black feminist theory. It describes the intersection of blackness and womanhood as Crenshaw defines that black women fight for their recognition as black women rather than just black or just women.

Am I a Black Woman or a Woman Who Is Black? A Few Thoughts on the Meaning of Intersectionality is a journal article written by Julia S. Jordan-Zachery. The aim of this article is to understand the impact of intersectionality in the life of black women within the dominant society and their own community. The writer also analyzes the fact that how elite class white society portrays a negative image of black womanhood and forced them to

maintain. She also offers some suggestion through how black women can challenge the society to make their identity. In this paper the writer intend to emphasise that a person should be treated as equally not as the basis of their skin colour, sex and gender. Intersectionality is the term which talks about how black women or other marginalised group disadvantaged by multiple source of oppression such as race, gender and class. It also portrays that these oppressions are interconnected create effective impact on their everyday life.

Womenism

Womenism is another term which was first used by Alice Walker in her *book In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womenist Prose* in 1983 but it rose in 21st century. Unlike black feminism, it explores the intensity of black women culture and black womanhood. This is an expansion version of black feminism which encouraged black women to strongly fight back for their existence in the society and also make them aware of their rights and privileges. *What is in Name? Womenism, Black Feminism and Beyond* is a small article from the book *The Black Scholar*. This article is written by Patricia Hill Collins. In this article the writer talks about the origin and goals of womanism and also defines the actual meaning of this theory with black feminism. The writer explains the fact that it is not necessary to define the limitations of these theories rather named it 'womanism' to make it more explicit and strong. according to Alice Walker, "I don't choose womanism because it is better than feminism...I choose it because I prefer the sound, the feel, the fit of it: because I cherish the spirit of the women (like Sojourner) the word calls to mind, and because I share the old ethnic-American habit of offering society a new word when the old word it is using fails to describe behavior and change that only a new word can help it more fully see" (Hills,13). Womanism is not the opposite of Black feminism rather it gives feminism a strong and complex variety of thoughts. It gives black women superiority and pluralism of black empowerment. The writer

concludes her paper by stating that, "Many black women view feminism as a movement that at best, is exclusively for women, and, at worst, dedicated to attacking or eliminating men...Womanism seemingly supplies a way for black women to address gender oppression without attacking black men" (Hills,16).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1) Qualitative Methodology

To analyze the collected data and information in a correct way in any research, choosing a suitable research paradigm is necessary. The type of research paradigm has been followed in this thesis is Qualitative research. Qualitative research contains the analysis and review of existing data and literature. According to Creswell, ‘Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social and human problem. The researcher build a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting’(Creswell, 1994). It helps to get in-depth into a problem and generates new ideas. The data collected for this research is to analyze the struggle of African American women in search of their self-identity and position in the society which is marginalized due to stereotypical ideologies, racialised sexism and inequality. It also analyzes the transformations that take place in their life to find individuality and recognition.

According to Suzanne Campbell, ‘Qualitative research collects open-ended, emerging data and allow a study for exploratory nature’ (Campbell, 2003). The data for this research are the secondary resources which contain texts, dialogues, conversations etc. from the three novels which will be analyzed to explore the topic. The novels are *Incidents in the life of a Slave girl* by Harriet Jacob, *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. Besides, several supporting articles will be followed to reach the goal of this research.

3.2) Research Design

The purpose of this research is to identify the struggle of black women particularly and show that how they explore their individuality and make a strong position in the enormously dominant society. The three novels that are used in this research symbolize the

struggle of black women in every sectors of their life. It represents the factors that compel them to think about themselves. Secondly, the portrayals of female characters in these novels shows the dominated, subjugated, discriminated condition of black women which deprive them from the right of freedom they have. When they get marginalized by their companions and the existing society they live eventually makes them feel worthless by both physically and mentally. This is the reason why they have to fight for themselves. All the female characters we found in these novels are struggled in their situations and experienced the worst. Some of them show the ultimate effect of the subjugation by enduring all the domination and inequality while some of them inspired or encouraged by fighting back with the dominant for their individuality and self identity.

This research paper is discussed by the black feminist theory and womanist theory which are the separated and extended versions of feminist theory. Feminism is a social movement that talks about the achievement of social, political, professional and educational equality for women. It focuses on the fact that the existing society they live on is extremely patriarchal and male dominated. It only gives priority to the male point of view and treated women unfairly on that society. It talks about the patriarchal ideologies, stereotypes about the women and most importantly objectification which creates boundary to the rights of having freedom and identification of women. However, I will discuss some of the limitations of feminism coined during the time of 1960s to 70s. Black women activists joined the feminist movement and soon realized the harsh reality that feminism is centered with the problems of white women. They came to join the movement to end the sexist oppression rather they ended up experiencing racist oppression. The term “women” meant “white women” and the term “black” meant black men. The pathetic racial attitudes and segregation of white women towards black women gave them the feelings of betrayal and resulted in many women organization which solely centered with black women. At that time some black feminist

activists developed a feminist consciousness that gave them the strength to fight against racialised sexist society. On the one hand, “women’s movement” had been portrayed as “white women’s movement” by ignoring or neglecting their existence and treated them as ‘other’. At the same time, when female liberation started to take place and black male and female marched shoulder to shoulder to fight against the white supremacy in civil rights movement, black men imposed their domination and sexist attitudes as a symbol of their masculinity and manhood. Black feminist movement took place to address the unique sufferings and experiences of black women which were ignored and neglected in the feminist movement. It also addresses the ways racism; sexism and classism influence the everyday life of black women and compel them to believe in their own self.

3.3) Theoretical Framework

Black feminism is a term which explores the experiences of black women of being black and women and analyse the fact how white supremacy and patriarchy with the help of racism, sexism and class oppression affects their regular and social life. The problems of black women had been around since the time of slavery. Misogyny and negative stereotypes and images of black women were always in the praxis. Sojourner Truth first coined out the position of black women in her famous speech “Ain’t I a Woman”. She said,

....and ain’t I a women? Look at me! Look at my arm! ... I have plowed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me- and ain’t I a women? I could work as much as many man (when I could get it). And bear the lash as well- and ain’t I a woman? I have borne five children and I seen them mos all sold off into slavery and when I cried out in the mother’s grief, none but Jesus hear – and ain’t I a woman? (Truth, 1852)

Many black female writers played an important role to make black feminism stronger and put it into the mainstream by analyzing the complex and immeasurable conditions of black women in their writings. In her book *Ain't I a Woman* Bell Hooks portrays the condition of black women,

Black women are one of the most devalued female groups in American society, and they have been the recipients of a male abuse and cruelty that has known no bounds and limits. Since the black woman has been stereotyped by both white and black men as the 'bad' women, she has not been able to ally herself with men from either group to get protection from the other... white male perception of a black female. (Hooks, 108)

After Truth and Bell Hooks *A Voice from the South* (1892) by Anna Julia Cooper expresses the black feminist perspective which is considered as one of the masterpieces of literature. In her book she describes the importance of black female voice for changing the social structure. Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, Angela Davis etc. are the pioneers of black feminist movement and black feminism ideology. Their work shows that how black community politics and white dominated society created an unacceptable environment for black women due to sexism from black and white male and racism and classism from white feminists. Black feminism and black feminist movement came to the limelight in 1960s immediate after the second wave of feminism to protest against the dominant and make their own space for recognition and individuality. Before the civil rights movement there was several women's organization for black women whose focus was into only racial segregation from white male and their society. But after receiving the experience from civil rights movement and women movement in 1960, they all come along with a single platform whichever goal is to protest against all kind of oppression or exploitation, marginalization and subjugation including racial, sexist they receive from white dominated society and their own community.

Gradually, black feminism became more explicit and combined by the organizations like “National Black Feminist Organization” (1973) and “The Combahee River Collective”. The purpose of these organizations was to empower black women mentally, spiritually, economically and socially.

Sethe, Denver, Linda, Pauline, Claudia, Pecola etc. are the victims of oppression, violation and subjugation in the white dominated society. They are not even safe in their own community and their own house. They were sexually abused, raped, oppressed, dominated and submissive by the both white and black male. Some of them could go through it, fight back against it and achieve their own stand point and individuality while some could not win against the situation. The writers of these characters create these self-esteem and self-assertive characters to inspire and encourage all the black female to take care of their existence and importance in their regular and social life.

However, there was an ongoing debate whether the term is called black feminism or womanism. The term womanism comes from the word ‘womanist’. Alice Walker introduced or used the term ‘womanist’ instead of ‘feminist’ first in 1983 in her volume essay *In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens: Womanist Prose*. Walker examined and analyzed the whole struggle history of black women from period of slavery to civil rights movement to overcome the negative stereotypes and limitations given by the white community. In the essay she coined four meanings for the term ‘womanist’. The first meaning of the term was ‘Black feminist or feminist of colour’ as most of the black women or activists could not find any difference between the two since they both considered a common goal of black women’s self-identity and self-determination. According to Barbara Omolade,

Black feminism is sometimes referred to as womanism because both are concerned with struggle against sexism and racism by Black

women who are themselves part of the Black community's efforts to achieve equity and liberty. (1994).

The second and third definitions for term 'womanist' were, it 'appreciates and prefers women's culture' and 'love of culture and self'. These definitions symbolizes the emotional flexibility and strength of black women who loves other women or men sexually or non-sexually, appreciates their role in the global environment and enthusiastic to the survival and wholeness of entire human race. Walker encouraged black women to love and respect their own 'self' and find self-dignity. The fourth and final definition of the term was 'womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender'. The definition represent the idea that womanism has intensity and expanded growth than black feminism. Walker represents womanism as a strong and intense term by comparing it with the royal colour purple and feminism as a weak and pale by comparing with the colour lavender. It also reminds the people one of the notions that feminism is more related and centered with white women. Womanism is a theoretical term which considered sufferings and experiences of black women or women of color as the centre of analysis and demonstrate their role in the patriarchal male dominated racialised sexist society by exploring their existence and self-identity as a human being not as women or black.

Womanism not only challenged the policies that marginalized them but also provided ideological principles and framework for empowerment of black women and women of color from all over the world. To deal with racism, sexist oppression and patriarchal domination in the society on daily basis, womanism emphasized on the self-sufficiency and self-confidence that helped them to express themselves very positively. The principles of womanism also give importance in the solidarity among women. Solidarity enables women to form alliance with each other and support each other in any condition or situation they face against the power structure. Many women scholars and writers introduced themselves as womanist rather

than feminist because of its broader framework and acceptability, especially women from Africa and African Diaspora embraced the ideology of womanism very strongly.

Womanism cannot be defined in one particular definition because of its broader and expansive framework. Besides, Alice Walker Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi in her article *The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English* (1985) and Clenora Hudson-Weems in her book *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (1993) also defined the idea of womanism by their own. Ogunyemi's perspective on womanism known as "African Womanism" while Hudson-Weems's perspective on Womanism considered as "Africana Womanism". They did not provide any different or new goals or activity but gave emphasis on the solidarity and struggle of black women and women of colour. They also highlighted the polarization of womanism and feminism and spotted womanism as the strongest version of Black feminism.

Both Black feminism and Womanism shares the same goal to provide acceptable and secure society for the black women by making them enthusiastic, independent, self-assertive and confident. It encourages black women to raise voice against the patriarchal domination, white supremacy, marginalization and oppression. The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the marginalized condition of black women by using these theories and explore the struggle of achieving self-assertion and identity.

Chapter 4: Analysis

Human existence, experience, and struggle in the society have been considered masculine phenomena. The structure of the society has been historically seen from the male point of view and constructed from the perspective and power of masculinity. The history of African Americans is not different. Power, politics, masculinity, male dominance etc are the core parts of the history of African American. From the very beginning of slavery to the present time African American women have been marginalized by the male dominated patriarchal society. They were marginalized, submissive, oppressed and dehumanized for being 'black' and 'women'. This part of the paper aims to define the struggle and marginalization of black women in the patriarchal racialized sexist society in the quest for their self-identity and assertion.

4.1) Feminist theory through the perspective of Black Women

Feminism is a term which has been used for woman about their social, political, economical, and institutional and most importantly human rights. According to Merriam Webster dictionary "Feminism is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes". In other words "Organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interest" (Merriam Webster). From the very beginning of its establishment until now it has included women's experiences, struggles, rights and desire for freedom and identity. According to K K Ruthven,

From Christine de'Pisan to Marry Wollstonecraft, from Simon de'Baeuvoir to Jane Austen and beyond, women have been demanding and fighting for their rights in an andocentric world. Feminism is a protest movement launched by women of West for equal social, political, legal, moral and cultural rights with men. Feminism is sentiment that differentiates a female from the doormat. It

is an anti masculine movement of the women, by the women and for the women.

Throughout time, the definition of feminism has changed. It talks about the oppression and marginalization of women. Feminism represents the efforts and experiences of women that they face to live in the male dominated patriarchal society. According to Juliet Mitchell,

Feminist conscious is the consciousness of victimization. It talks about the oppression of women and discoveries and changes that can be done. Present day, feminist theorists believe that, feminism is an impossible position. The agonistic definition of feminism sees it as the struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist oppression.

Feminism came to the context in American society with several movements in 1830s. It faced several phases to reach in its goal. The social and political revolution of Europe in 19th century affected American society most. Women from different states started to revolt against their abusive husbands and fought for the rights. Immediate after the American Revolution, they achieved the right of vote in New Jersey and Virginia. But their struggle did not end there rather they faced more oppression and humiliation. By that time, they started to work in the industry as free labour and got lowest salary. They had experienced the taste of freedom and recognized the importance of their existence for the first time at this moment. The first Woman's Right convention held in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848 where a huge number of women gathered without the supervision of man and raised their voice for the right of equity in marriage, sexuality, financial freedom including equality in education, employment and the law. As a result, it awake most of the states and forced to work for women rights. It is recognized as the most important and remarkable event in the history of feminism in American society. During the time of two world wars the situation became more intense and

changed drastically. Women started to work in the different professions and areas with the men and until then they gained the rights of vote, marriage and property. Yet, they did not get the proper recognition rather they had experienced sexist attitudes. As a result, different NGO's, organizations started to take place for the demand of equality of women in the patriarchal society. By this time, feminism achieved its goal for first wave of feminism and moved towards establishing the second wave of feminism. Second wave of feminism failed to achieve its goal and faced severe criticism as it considered all women as same and created the polarization between women groups. At the end of the 20th century and the early 21st century, third wave of feminism came to the limelight and established a different notion for woman's identity and recognition in the society.

According to these definitions and explanation it was clear that feminism was a term which was used for woman to find their self identity, rights and existence in the patriarchal society. It was the inspiration and encouragement for the women all over the world to raise their voice against the stereotypes and oppressions they had faced in their daily and social life. However, it played a different role in the life of black women in American society. For the last four or five decades feminism or feminist activists and intellectuals worked hard for the women and played an important role to change and improve their position in the society. But throughout the whole time they only talked about the experiences and sufferings of white middle class women. They addressed the rights and privileges for white women and ignored the existence of black women. It was clearly on the mainstream that the term feminism or feminists of American society only concerned about the white women and dominantly ignored and neglected the black women and their existence. They failed to acknowledge the fact that all women were not same. They had faced different sufferings and experiences in their daily and social life. "While mainstream feminist treats all women as the same but multiculturalists warn that not all women experience oppression in similar ways. Specially, as a result of the

combined effect of both male and racial domination, black women may be triggered in unique ways” (Nichole. T Buchanan, 2005). Due to race and being minority group black women had been dehumanized, marginalized and criticized from the very beginning of the history. They were mostly brutalized and humiliated during the time of slavery as they were objectified and stereotyped. They were portrayed in a negative way by the male dominated white scholars of the society during the time of slavery and black man were also treated them sex objects and ignored their existence as human. The legacy of slavery still continues in the present day and affected their daily life. It was constant that white people established a social hierarchy in the society based on race and sex which implied the pyramid of all living beings portrayed by Aristotle. In Aristotle’s pyramid ‘non white women’ means black women who held the last position in the society (Simms). It represented the fact that black women had no existence in the society even though they were still living rather their position was compared with children and considered as emotion freak and illogical. White people also ranked white men first; white women second, black man third or sometimes got the chance to be equal with white women and as usual by devaluing the existence and identity of black women ranked in the last position in the society.

The legacy of slavery and white domination was also followed in women’s movement in the middle of 20th century. Their experiences and sufferings were eventually ignored and neglected in the agenda of feminism and considered the sufferings and oppressions were same for all women by prioritising and focusing only on the daily life of white middle class women. It was really hard for black women to cope up with the post slavery trauma and maintain their life in the society as they were outsider and considered ‘other’ in the male dominated society as well as in their own community. Feminism and feminist movement invaded a hope of light in their life to get recognition and create their own identity in the society. They did not expect to be prioritised and got equality as man and white

women. However, the act of racism in the movements and the agenda of feminist movement crashed black feminists terribly and discouraged the other women of colour to come out. Those who were afraid and could not get the courage to fight for themselves become more confined and incurred their self in invisibility. It was not expected to be betrayed by their same companion where they were fighting for the same reason. Many of the scholars mentioned this as the decline of black women's empowerment. The act of this movement and feminism isolated and separated them from the mainstream and society as earlier and added another prominent agenda to fight against.

4.2) Analysis of the Black Feminist/ Feminism and Womanist/ Womanism theory in the life of black women

After the massive fail of second wave of feminism and the betrayal of white women and black men in the movements black women feminists came up with their own ideologies and theories specifically focusing on the sufferings and experiences of their daily and social life. Black feminism was initialized to focus on the specific issues and experiences of black women that shaped and affected their daily and social life. It also addressed the sexual aggression, gender and economic exploitation, body politics such as negative images they had been facing in their daily, social and professional life. It was a huge challenge and only scope for black feminists to prove and signify their position and existence in the racialized sexist society. It was also a difficult situation for them because they had to create such an ideology and theory which would not only fulfil the needs of black women but also regain their faith in the feminist ideologies and encouraged them to fight against the mainstream. Sheila Radford-Hill mentioned in her book *Further to Fly* about the difficulties that black feminists faced. She stated,

History and enmity impaled black feminists on the horns of three impossible challenges. The first challenge was the need to prove to other black women that feminism was not for white women only. Confronting white feminists with the demand to share power and to affirm diversity was the second challenge. The third challenge involved fighting the misogynist tendencies of Black Nationalism and womanhood. The fact that black feminists had to expend so much energy to change the terms of the feminist debate shows how entrenched racism was within second-wave feminism. (Radford-Hill, chapter 4)

Black feminism is an ideology which stated that racism, sexism, class oppression and gender identity were connected to each other and it also represented that Black women's daily and social life was shaped and affected by these terms. It was a turning point for black women to fight for their rights and freedom again as it defined, contextualised and validated the harsh reality and experiences of black women. After establishing the theological term 'Black Feminism' black activists realized that they had to organize a group separated from black males and white women to make the basis of the ideology of black feminism more strong and constant in the society. By establishing 'National Black Feminist Organization' (NBFO) in 1973 they gave white women and black males a worthiest and compatible reply for the movements. The purpose of this organization was to prevail the negative images and myths which were maintained by the society from the period of slavery, confront the racist and sexist activities towards black women along with sexual and social institutional exploitation by exploring self-assertion and identity. NBFO stated the purposes of the organization as,

Black women have suffered cruelly in this society from living the phenomenon of being black and female in a country that is both racist

and sexist. There has been very little examination of the damage it has caused on the lives and on the minds of black women. Because we live in a patriarchy, we have allowed a premium to be put on black male suffering. No one of us would minimize the pain or hardship or the cruel and inhuman treatment experienced by the black man ...We, not white men or black men, must define our own self-image as black women. (NBFO, 1973 as cited in Johnson, pp. 227-248)

It was difficult for black women to lead a social, economical and a regular life in racialised sexist society where they were judged in every moment of their life by the society. Gender hierarchy, discrimination, sexual exploitation, class oppression, body politics, racism and sexism were the factors that they had to deal with in every aspects of their life. Their talent and knowledge were ignored and treated as invisible. From family to workplace they were considered as 'other' and outsider of the society. One of the most influential and affected factors they had to deal was the negative images and stereotypes followed by the male society. These images and stereotypes were originated during the time of slavery by the male chauvinists of the society. They were expected to be behaved like the idealised characters that imposed on them still in the end of the 20th century. Rasul A. Mowatt and Bryana H. French the two writers explained in their article that black women had to play two juxtaposing images in the society. They became invisible in the academic and other social institutions when it comes to work with white and black man and white women. However, they became hyper visible when it comes to their beauty and body. American society had been idealised the definition of beauty as white women's gesture, posture and style and criticised black beauty as ugly, seductive in a negative way. Black feminism emerged in the life of black women with the light of hope. They started to think about their rights and privileges and got the motivation to embrace the ideology of self-definition. Black feminist theory valued the

life of black women and gave the chance and created an acceptable environment to express themselves and their knowledge. It also challenged the negative stereotypes and images and the constructive definition of womanhood that was defined by the male society. 'The Combahee River Collective' was one of the main organisations under black feminism which was activated from 1974 to 1980. This organization added more aspects to the theory and ideology of black feminism. It openly talked about homosexuality, heterosexuality; poor, non-black other colour or women. Though it was run for a short and limited period of time it created a huge opportunity for all the women of colour and spread positivity for the sexual equality. The seeds of equality and freedom had been rooted for them as they experienced the taste of it.

Intersectionality is an extended version of Black feminism which was coined out by Kimberley Crenshaw in 1989. This term could not be ignored when it comes to the creation of power of black women. The term described the fact that some societal factors like racism, sexism, class oppression, gender discrimination and sexual exploitation; the major system of oppression were interconnected and interlocking with each other and altogether they shaped and affected the daily and social life of black women. This term expanded the content and area of black feminism by rearticulating concerns about the marginalization of black women which inspired and encouraged black women to come forward and seek existential identification for them. It helped black women to believe in themselves and their worth and also motivated to break the stereotypes and myths of white dominated patriarchal society.

Several black feminist activists, writers, philosophers talked about the rights and oppressions of black women from the very beginning but the theory officially established as Black feminism in the mid 20th century. It created lot of awareness, worked hard for the rights of black women and ensure their right and important position in their community as well as society. Yet, some of the critics or feminists found lacking on black feminism. They

argued that black feminism could not ensure the diversity of black women or women of colour. They only talked about the experience and oppressions of black women and let them work against man. They did not consider the effect of culture, community in the regular life of black women. To make it more explicit and consider the lacked part of the black feminism into the account, they came up with the new theory and ideology called “Womanism”. The word ‘womanism’ comes from the word ‘womanish’ which means ‘the opposite of girlish which stands for irresponsible, not serious’.

The term was first coined by famous writer and civil rights worker Alice Walker in her book in 1983 but it came to the limelight in the early 21st century. To describe the goals and ideologies of Womanism writer Sina H. Webster stated that,

Womanism described a way of living for Black women. Womanism did not call for separation between men and women, but instead allowed and encouraged Black men to participate. Womanism also went beyond the concern for the rights of black women alone by placing a high value on community, culture, women and loving women, both sexually and non-sexually. (Harris, 2010 as cited in Webster, 2017 p. 197)

Womanism not only talks about the oppression of black women but also implies the importance of solidarity between black men and women. It emphasizes on the fact that both black men and women have to work together and respected each other for the survival of the Black community in the White dominated society. Likewise, ‘The Combahee River Committee’ it celebrates the freedom of sexuality by giving priority to the life of heterosexual, homosexual people. It highlights the solidarity and sisterhood between all the women as it simplifies that without unity black people cannot survive their community and

culture. “A womanist is triply concerned with herself, other black women, and the entire Black race, female and male- but also all humanity, showing an ever-expanding and ultimately universal arc of political concern, empathy and activism”. (Phillips, xxiii). Womanism and feminism are totally different from each other as their goals, activities, and purposes are different where as womanism and black feminism are sometimes referred as same and connected with each other. Because both the theories are concerned about the struggle against sexism and racism by black woman who are an important part of the community and society’s equity and survival.

4.3) Contribution of the African American women writers in this tradition

The women of African American society started writing or using pen as a weapon of their fight against the male chauvinist society after the abolition of slavery. Still that was countable and they had to use pseudonym for their writings. This part will discuss the contribution of the black women writers to develop and encourage the situation of black women to find their identity and self assertion in the society. The paper will briefly talk about Harriet Jacob and Toni Morrison.

After the end of the civil war many male slave narratives started to writing about the horror and degradation of slavery but all of them was from the perspective of male point of view. Those narratives contained the political views and male superiority and sufferings of the whole black people but no one pointed out the women sufferings. At that time, Harriet Ann Jacob came forward with her slave narrative *Incidents in the life of a slave girl* in 1865. The slave narrative was written from the point of view of a female for the first time. In this narrative, Jacob talked about the sufferings and reality of being a female slave and her own experiences. Her writing challenged the conventional ideology of slavery and condition of women during that time. She depicted the actual reality of female slaves that how they were

treated, her struggles to fight against her master and quest for freedom she wanted from the beginning.

Jacobs inspired many women to raise their voice against the odds of the society they were facing by her writing. But still there was lack of female writers in the African American society. The scenario had changed in the 20th century. Many women writers started to come forward to express their passion and sufferings of the black women writers. Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Patricia Hill Collins, Audre Lorde, Zora Neale Hurston, Paul Marshall etc were the mainstream writers of the African American literature. Their writings inspired black women to understand their worth and identity.

Toni Morrison was the first African American woman who won the noble prize in literature. Her contribution to the literature of African American made a strong position. In her writings, she mainly focused on the struggles and sufferings of black women along with the black community and culture. Through her novel and essays, Morrison described the societal issues like racism, sexism, sexual and class exploitation that black women had been facing in every aspects of their daily life. She talked about the effects of slavery in the life of black women and how they could deal with these issues for creating their existence in the society. Morrison's writings inspired many of the contemporary writers to reveal their identity. Her writing explored the opportunity for black women to fight against the domination and create their own identity in the society.

4.4) Review of the Novels

This part of the paper will analyse and discuss the three novels - *Incidents in the life of a slave girl* by Harriet Jacobs, *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison to demonstrate the marginalization and sufferings of African American women that they face in this patriarchal racialized sexist society.

4.4.1) Struggle of black women as a slave

Slavery is the darkest period and a heinous tragedy of the human history. Both the black man and women suffered in slavery but the black women carried a horrific sign of slavery in their entire lives which prohibit them to lead a normal and regular life. The effects of slavery lead them to physical and mental dissatisfaction and make their life hard to cope up in the patriarchal male dominated society. In an interview with Bonnie Angelo, Toni Morrison once said, “I thought this has got to be the least read of all the books I’d written because it is about something the characters don’t want to remember, I don’t want to remember, black people don’t want to remember, white people don’t want to remember” (Morrison). To justify the reality and the horrifying scenario of slavery Harriet Jacobs mentioned in her preface that, “Reader, be assured this narrative is no fiction. I am aware that some of my adventure may seem incredible, but they are nevertheless strictly true” (Jacobs).

Incidents in the life of a slave girl is a novel which reveals the horrible reality of slavery and extreme marginalization and sufferings of the black people specially the black women. In this novel the writer Jacobs describes the issues of what it meant to be a slave daughter, girl, women and mother. In the novel we see that Jacobs explains the worst condition of women among all people of the community. “Slavery is terrible for men: but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, *they* have wrongs, sufferings and mortifications peculiarly their own” (Jacobs, chapter 14). As a female slave they had to deal with the sexual maturation, sexual violation and control, patriarchal domination in the white society. During the time of slavery they did not even considered as a human being to the white dominated society as well as in their own community. They had to face excessive sexual violation by their white masters and also from their people. They were neglected in every possible way as mother, daughter and women. They were confined in their masters’ hand and the utmost jealous of their wives. “When he told me that I was made for

his use, made to obey his command in everything; that I was nothing but a slave, whose will must and should surrender to his..." (Jacobs, chapter 4). The white society imposed negative stereotypes and images of them that they became 'toy' for the male society. They were considered as 'object' specially the 'object' of sexual attraction and pleasure for both white and black male. There were two types of female slaves as one worked only for their masters and another work in the field. Both of them could not have their own family and children. The story of a female slave is full of politics of oppression, sexual violation, dominance and degradation. In this novel, Jacob demonstrates the horror of being a female slave and her journey of getting freedom. "Women are considered of no value, unless they continually increase their owner's stock. They are put on a par with animals" (Jacobs, chapter 4). Women of that time were compared with animals. As they were slaves, they did not have any right to fight against the oppression or they did not get the justice for the injustice behaviour they faced. Eventually, it was not considered as crime in the society as well as in the eye of law. There was no law or customs to protect them from the odds. "No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death: all these are inflicted by fiends who bear the shape of men" (Jacobs, chapter 5). In the novel we find that Jacobs explains how slavery did not give them the right to have a family of their choice and children to live a happy life. They could not even enjoy the life of wife and motherhood as their children were taken away from them and most of them did not get the name of their father. "But to the slave mother New Year's Day comes laden with peculiar sorrows. She sits on her cabin floor, watching the children who may all be torn from her the next morning...she may be ignorant creature, degraded by the system that has brutalized her from childhood; but she has a mother's instincts, and is capable of feeling a mother's agonies" (Jacob). Sometimes it

occurred that they had to sacrifice their children's life to escape from the horror of slavery they faced in their life. "Death is better than slavery" (Jacobs, chapter 11).

Slavery is the longest and darkest period for African American people especially for the black women who suffered most in the time of slavery. It is not easy for them to forget the incidents of slavery. *Beloved* is a fictional slave narrative where Toni Morrison depicts the effects of slavery in the life of African American women even after the end of slavery. Morrison wanted to portrait the fact that how the consequences of slavery still haunts the regular and daily life of African American women. In the novel, we found that Sethe the protagonist who escaped from slavery eighteen years ago but still could not forget the horror of slavery. It had affected her mentally and physically. As we saw in the earlier novel that how slavery victimized a black women. To save her children from the brutality of slavery, Sethe tried to escape from the plantation she worked. But the master of the plantation heard the news and Sethe decided to kill her children to save them. She was unsuccessful to kill her all the children except the young girl called Beloved. In the middle of the novel we noticed that Beloved returned to the house mysteriously. It pointed out the fact of recalling the harsh reality and brutality of the slavery. Throughout the novel we noticed several horrifying incidents of slavery recalled by Sethe and her co worker Paul D. Sethe explained that being a slave mother was very much difficult because a slave girl could not have a proper family, children and identity as they were the only property of the slave holders. They could not even have any romantic relationship with other men. It was not easy decision for a mother to kill her daughter but if the mother experienced the cruelty and exploitation of slavery, she had to take the courage to save her children. Another new trait we found in the novel that slaves were not allowed to have their real or original name. They had to rename by their respective masters which implied the point that slavery distinct the self-identity of black people.

However, for black women they were not allowed to exist in the society or community as human being.

4.4.2) Representation of women in the novels

The woman characters of the novel *Beloved* have mixed features. No characters have fully negative attributes. Sethe is one of the protagonists of the novel. If we analyse her character we find that Morrison portrait her as a strong and determined women who escaped from the slavery only because of her children to get a normal life like others. She is a courageous woman who took the unbelievable decision of killing her children to save them from the brutality of slavery. We have to admit the fact that it is not an easy decision for a mother to take but the reality of slavery forced her to do the act. It needs tremendous guts and courage to do that. But at the end of the novel we find that the recalling horror and brutality of the slavery and the guilt of killing her daughter make her vulnerable and weak. At the last point, she lost her mind. Moreover, if we talk about Denver we find that she is a lonely and isolated girl from the very beginning of her childhood. She is scared of her mother's truth and jealous of Paul D as he gets all the attraction and attention of her mother she has wanted all her life. But if we analyse the character in the novel we find that Denver gets the maturation to understand the meaning of life in a very early age. She saves her mother and the whole family from the poverty and the horror of *Beloved*. In the last of the novel we notice that Denver wants to start for college. It represents the determination and quest for self and identity that Denver is looking for. She does not lose her mind and become weak as her mother rather she deals with the situation and takes control over it to save her family. Lastly, *Beloved* has played both negative and positive role in the novel to demonstrate the flaws of the context. The returning of *Beloved* has portrayed her as a confident, fearless and courageous woman. It represents the effect and reality of slavery in the life of Sethe. On the

other hand, it symbolises the longing urge for Beloved to take revenge of the crime and create an existence in the society.

The novel *The Bluest Eye* was written during the time of Civil Rights Movement when black people were in the highest condition of self – hatred. They were isolated and depressed over their culture and situation. Morrison portrays the painful socio economic condition of black people specially the black woman that how their life is affected by the racial and sexual oppression and the stereotypical standards of beauty. If we talk about the representation of women characters in the novel we find the typical, oppressed and simple minded characters like Pecola, Frieda, and Pauline Breedlove who want to live in the society with the standard of white beauty and lifestyle which society want. They think that being white, blonde and having blue eyes can mix them up with society and their surroundings. The concept of self-denial or lack of self-love has represented by these characters. Pauline devoted herself to the imagination of having white beauty and lifestyle. She compares herself with the idea of physical beauty and love that she watches in the movies and considers herself ugly. Her immense urge for having white beauty and combining in the society destroys her relationship with her family. She even calls her baby ugly as being black is curse. “She looked different from what I thought....A right smart baby she was. I used to like to watch her. A cross between a puppy and a dying man. But I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly” (97-98). Similarly, Pecola also thinks that having white beauty can solve the entire problem they have and can be accepted in the community and society. This desire helps them to create self hatred for themselves. They deny their worth as human being and enormously pray for white skin and blonde hair. “Pretty eyes. Pretty blue eyes. Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although, somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something as wonderful as that happen would take a long, long time” (35).

On the other hand, a character like Claudia represents the rebellious and self-righteous attitudes against the white dominated society. It shows us the urge for having self identity and self love. She denies the conventional ideology and definition of beauty associated with white. “Frieda and she had a loving conversation about how cute Shirley Temple was. I couldn’t join in their adoration because I hated Shirley.....I like Jane Withers. They gave me a puzzled look, decided I was incomprehensible.....what I felt at that time was unsullied hatred. But before that I had felt a stranger, more frightening thing than hatred for all the Shirley Temples of the world” (13). In the novel we see that Claudia raises her voice against the torture and oppression. Though being younger of the characters she understands the hypocrisy and discrimination of the society. She shows her devotion to her own culture and rectifies the beauty of black women. Moreover, we can include three prostitutes here as they show a little bit of power over men in the community. In the novel we see that they live their life however they want. Though the whole community gossips about them and excluded them still they have the power of individuality to have their own space and position. They understand the meaning of womanhood though it is portrayed in a different way. At least they have command and control over their sexuality which is unimaginable for other black women. By showing these characters, Morrison represents the fact of self-identity and individuality of black women in the society. She encourages other black women’s to raise their voice against patriarchy and male domination to find their existence.

4.4.3) Racial and Sexual oppressions

Racial and sexual aggression and domination is one of the main portrayals of these novels. Throughout the novels, we find several racial and sexual aggression and domination towards the characters.

First of all, in the novel *Incidents in the life of slave girl* we notice that racism or racial oppression is the main reason for slave trade and slavery. Black people are dehumanized, degraded and marginalized only because of their skin colour. Their skin colour represents their inferiority towards the white society. Black men and women become the property and subject matter of white people. By implementing 'Jim Crow' law in 1832, American society makes racism or racial discrimination official. We see in the novel that how Linda Brent or Harriet Jacobs faces the consequences of this law. The aim of this law is to keep black people 'in their place' by legalizing the discrimination. 'Jim Crow' law ensure the segregation by forcing them to live a separate life. It ensures that black people cannot go to the same school, use the same transportation and get the same advantages as white people. In the novel we find that the states of North abolish slavery but they cannot exclude racial discrimination from their identity. "O, no...They don't allow colored people to go in the first class cars" (Jacobs, chapter 31). To demonstrate the reality and cruelty of racial discrimination Linda Brent describes the prejudice and oppression of North. "But everywhere I found the same manifestations of that cruel prejudice, which so discourages the feelings, and represses the energies of the colored people" (Jacobs, chapter 35).

Secondly, if we talk about *The Bluest Eye* we find the most horrible and terrifying oppression take place when Cholly raped Pecola, his own daughter. It represents the powerlessness and insecurity of the black women in the society as well as their own community and home. In the novel we find racial and sexual violation from the very beginning. Pecola is the highest victim of these violations. Even black women of this novel have faced racism and sexism in their community by white women and black man. Pecola has treated badly by the shopkeeper because of her race. She gets obviate by her mother because of her skin colour. Pauline imagine her second baby to get white beauty as the movie actresses but when she sees her she mentions her as 'ugly'. Geraldine a light skinned black

woman considers herself superior and close to white society and standard white beauty. She teaches her son not to play with 'niggers' rather play with coloured people. She calls Pecola "nasty little black bitch" when her son falsely accused her. She does not even try to hear her out as she is "nigger" and does not belong to their standard. Similarly, when Pauline is in hospital with her second child Pecola she also experiences racial discrimination. The white doctors do not give any attention to her and also do not try to help her with the pain as she is black. The doctor mentions his students that this kind of women does not feel pain and reproduces like animals. "When he got to me he said now these here women you don't have any trouble with. They deliver right away and with no pain. Just like horses" (97). It portrays the humiliation and the idea of not considering black women as human beings. They are so easily getting compared with animals.

Sexual violation and aggression

Sexual violation was the common factor for black women from the very beginning of their marginalization. Their powerless situation and position in the society makes them more vulnerable and forces them to experience sexual assault and violation. The representation of masculinity and power over weak and vulnerable also leads to sexual violation or aggression. If we analyze the novels we find that each and every female character of the novels experience violation once in a while.

Sexual violation is the main feature in the novel *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl*. Being a black female slave girl is all about sexual exploitation and violation. During the time of slavery, women were thought of as beasts and treated like animals. They are represented as lustful seductive ones who seduced the white men to fulfil their sexual urge and attraction. The male chauvinist society implies negative and stereotypical images for the black women that time which devalues and humiliates their whole life. In the article "*Raping Jezebel*

Hypocrisy, Stereotyping and Sexual identity in Harriet Jacob's Incidents in the life of a slave girl" the writer explains that sexual script allows black women to act the way the society and their circumstances want. "Sexual script, then, can be viewed as collection of societal sexual expectations....In a sense; they describe how one is expected to behave by representing a certain state of practices and attitudes as the way that a certain type of person is meant to act and feel" (Matthews, 2016 volume 4, pp 6). It describes the fact that African American women had to act the way society create the images for them and the way their masters want. To justify the act of rape and subjugation of black women the society creates the image of 'jezebel' who portrays as seductive and being longing for sex. It represents the fact that the rape and sexual exploitation of black women does not count as a crime or give any justification. In the novel we find that white men and the patriarchal society blame the victims for their victimization. That is why there was no law for them or they did not get the justice for their exploitation. White men and black men had unrestricted or free right to exploit or violate black women sexuality. "This poor women endured many cruelty from her master and mistress; sometimes she was locked up, away from her nursing baby, for a whole day and night" (Jacob, chapter 15). Black women were not only tortured by the male but also verbally or physically tortured by the white women. They were hated by the white women because of the sexual attraction they got from the white men but did not realize the sufferings. Throughout the novel Dr. Flint verbally and physically harassed Linda. He always wanted to submit her sexually and tried to control her in every ways.

Beloved portrays the sexual violation or aggression by recalling the memory of slavery when Sethe was a slave in the Sweet Home plantation. In the novel, she remembers the reality and fear of rape and sexual exploitation. She remembers the physical brutality of schoolmaster's nephews. It represents the brutal sexual exploitation of a female slave and

restores the point that female slaves are only used for the sexual violation as they are treated as the only property of their masters.

In *The Bluest Eye* we find that Frieda is assaulted by Mr. Henry; Pauline is beaten by her husband and most controversial scene in the novel that Pecola is raped by her father which depicts as the most horrible act. Cholly's childhood hatred for his mother and the incident he has faced at the age of 14 makes him unable to express love and affection towards women. The incidents represent that fact that black women are not safe and secure in their own home and with their own man. It also gives emphasis on the fact that whatever the reason behind this act was the ultimate victim is Pecola, an innocent black girl. Sexual violations indicate the vulnerability and helpless situations and conditions of the women in the society. The church priest Elihue Micah Whitcomb is a sexist person. He has devoted himself to the misanthrope philosophy and determined to never have sex to create a balance in his profession and follow the calmness. But it enhances his urge for sexual attention. He feels attraction to the young children but cannot manage the little boy easily so he molests young girls in a playful way. "His attention therefore gradually settled on those humans whose bodies were least offensive- children....and since little boys were insulting, scary and stubborn, he further limited his interests to little girls. They were usually manageable and frequently seductive" (132). He sexually oppresses young girls and elaborately writes it to God and blame God for giving him the opportunity does these acts.

4.4.4) Psychological or mental trauma that leads to lose their existence

Racial and sexual violation, unacceptable environment, oppression, discrimination, marginalization etc lead black women to face the psychological trauma. They become mentally sick or traumatize because of the consequences of the incidents. Morrison beautifully portrays the traumatized and disempowered lives of African American women

which are affected by social taboo, stereotypes and negative images, racial and sexist oppression they has been facing in their social and daily life in her novels *Beloved* and *The bluest Eye*.

Beloved is the novel where Morrison explains how the consequences of slavery affect a slave women's daily and regular life. In the novel we see Sethe as a courageous and determined woman who killed her daughter only to save them from slavery or the horrific experiences she has faced. But later in the novel we find that she is unable to bear the guilt of killing her daughter and the brutal sexual exploitation of her during the time of slavery and leads herself to the psychological trauma. It has been eighteen years Sethe escaped and freed from the slavery but still she is haunted by the brutal physical exploitation by the nephews of schoolmaster. At the same time when she wants to start a new life with Paul D, the ghost of Beloved came to her life. The ghost of Beloved helps her to remember all the cruelty and reality of slavery she has passed out in her past life which made her mentally traumatized. Because this the period of history no one wants to recall. After that, the guilt of killing her own daughter makes her insane and she starts to think that this is the second chance she gets to make up for her child. At the same time, some critics define the act of killing as Sethe's relationship with her mother. They mention that, Sethe is deprived of the parental love as she never saw her parents. We get to know from the novel that she finds the reality of her mother and realizes the obscurity. The critics explain that she has done this act of killing not to repeat the mistake of her mother who put her in the danger of slavery. On the other hand, she does not realize the loss of Denver she is making. Denver is isolated and alone who badly wanted her mother's attention from her childhood as every child wants. But maybe this lack of attention has made her stronger and confident to fight against the odds and got her own identity.

Similarly, in the novel *The Bluest Eye* the circumstances and oppression for being black and ugly leads to the trauma and helps to lose existence. At first we will talk about Pauline that how her feeling of isolation and loneliness traumatized her to see the world in a different way. From the very childhood she has imposed self-inflicted isolation and self-hatred because of her foot accident which makes her think herself ugly. From that time, she devoted herself to the beauty of whiteness and fantasizes about love and life partner. Her isolation and loneliness become more intense after her marriage when she moves to North with Cholly and unable to fit herself with the new environment and circumstances. When she gets to understand that she cannot fit herself with her dream or fantasy she starts to work for the white family which separates her from her own family and children. Societal stigma and constant pressure of making existence in the society makes Pauline helpless and creates mental dissatisfaction for self. Secondly, we will discuss about the protagonist of the novel Pecola who accepts the most violence and domination in her whole life. Many of the critics describe the fact that Pauline and Cholly's unhappy married and sex life, Pauline's unwillingness to live a life as a black women etc are the reasons for Pecola's rape and vulnerability to societal abuse. It makes her weak and creates dissatisfaction and hatred for life and self. The ideology of being ugly because of their black skin colour breaks their family structure which is traumatized them to that point where they want to distinguish their existence and make them blind. It makes her believe that if she has blue eyes then every situation and oppression she faces will be disappeared. She will get the parental affection and social recognition. But that does not happen rather it becomes worse than before. Societal abuse and violation, absence of parental affection creates insecurity and traumatize her for the blue eyes more and more. After her rape, she is beaten by her mother and when the news of her incestuous pregnancy spread out she is ostracized from the community. Usually it occurs when someone face this kind of violation his or her family consult or aide him or her which

helps them to overcome the tragic part of their life. But Pecola faces the different experience as she has totally abundant from the community and her family also left her at this little age. From the very childhood she was ashamed of her appearance and this kind of act made her more vulnerable to herself. That is why she visits Soaphead church to seek for blue eyes. The priest intentionally forces her to kill the dog that he is afraid to kill the animal. The shock of murder along with the rape and pregnancy, she drives insane. She starts to create an imaginary friend to help her cope with the trauma and shame she feels for herself. "Incest is a chronic traumatic stress that can lead to a host of initial long-term effects. Like child sexual abuse in general, it poses a serious mental health risk for many victims" (Mona V, cited in Hayes, 2015). Pecola starts to think that she has acquired the blue eyes and that is the reason her mother and everyone in the community cannot look at her. She takes the rejection and avoidance of the community and her family as the envious act for her beauty she receives.

Incidents in the life of a slave girl also depict the psychological trauma that Linda received in her whole life by her master Dr. Flint. The novel shows us that she was not aware of the concept of slavery till the age of six. After the death of her grandmother when she was sold to the daughter of Dr. Flint, he started to her in every possible way. So that Linda goes through a fear of his master all the time. She was afraid of him and he always reminded her that she belong to him. The extreme urge for sexual intimacy with Linda gave her more trauma and sufferings. As she was young and had no other way to go anywhere she stayed there with the fear and trauma. She was also stressed by Dr. Flint's wife as she was jealous of Linda for being sexually attracted to her husband. She never helped her to get rid of the sufferings or victimization rather she expressed her hatred towards Linda. "I was an object of her jealousy, and, consequently, of her hatred; and I knew I could not expect kindness or confidence from her under the circumstances in which I was placed" (Jacobs, chapter 6). She was constantly in the fear of Dr. Flint throughout her whole life. She had to spend seven

years in her grandmother's attic to hide from him. It led her to extreme physical and mental sufferings. From the attic she could see her children but was unable to touch them, love them which were very painful and hurtful for a mother. But she did not give up and at the end of the novel we find that she got to meet her children and freed herself from the horror of slavery.

4.4.5) Gender hierarchy and domination (white and black male, white women)

The ultimate gender hierarchy is depicted in the three novels in several ways. The novels describe the domination of white man, white women and black men towards the black women in the community. Gender hierarchy is one of the reasons that make black women submissive and marginalized in the society because they are kept in the last position in the society.

From the very beginning of the slave trade and slavery black women were treated as 'object'. They did not even consider as human being to give them a position in the society. According to Aristotle's 'Gender Hierarchy Pyramid' black women consists the last position in the society and compared with children. They thought as an emotionless, logic less creature. *Incidents in the life of a slave girl* and *Beloved* exemplify the similar gender hierarchy as both talk about the time of slavery. In the novel *Incidents in the life of a slave girl* Harriet Jacobs describes her own journey as a slave girl in the American society. She depicts the real experiences and sufferings of being female slave. During the time of slavery, the society maintained the hierarchy pyramid of Aristotle which pointed out the black women as least creature. That is why they faced and experienced triple domination and marginalization from white and black men and white women. They were raped and sexually exploited by the white male as they were the property and objects of their masters. At the same time, black men were also exploited them sexually and verbally to express their

masculinity which was treated as worthless to the white society. Black women were the only portrayal of sufferers of their restricted aggression and humiliation. On the other hand, black women were the reason of jealousy of white women or the white mistress as they were the sexual attraction for the white masters which made them emotionally vulnerable. That is why; they express their hatred and domination towards them.

Similarly, gender hierarchy also present in the novel *The Bluest Eye*. We see in the novel that how Cholly imposes his failure and lack of power by raping Pecola his own daughter and beating her wife. In the childhood incidents of Cholly we notice that he misplaces his hatred from white men to black women. The act of racism and humiliation should lead his anger and hatred towards white men who have oppressed and tortured him rather he implies these attitudes towards women because his male ego and masculinity is hit in front of a woman. His lack of affection and love and longing for superiority leads him to do the heinous act. According to Wilner, "Fathers dominate their daughters by virtue of male dominance over females and by virtue of female authority" (Wilner, 139 as cited in Hayes, 2015). However, Cholly does not realize the negativity of his act because of his male arrogance. Many of the critics justify the act by arguing for the sake of Cholly's lack of having proper family guidance, parental mannerism, lack of the sense of love and affection. But how come that does not prohibit him from objectifying women or expressing his male authority towards them. On the other hand, white female superiority is also seen in the novel. We find that the white mistress of Pauline tried to control her life by ordering her to leave Cholly. They can easily interfere in the life of black women as they are considered as weak. "I tried to get back but she didn't want me no more if I was going to stay with Cholly. She said she would let me stay if I left him. She didn't never give me the eleven dollars she owed me, neither" (93). They never tried to understand the condition and sufferings of black women.

4.4.5) Importance of female solidarity and sisterhood which represents the changes and quest for freedom and understands the meaning of womanhood

In the novel *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl* the writer Harriet Jacobs talks about her own journey as a slave girl. She portrays the picture of being slave women, girl and daughter. Throughout the novel we find several unacceptable incidents which make us vulnerable to think about women but the end of the novel encourages us to raise our voice against the odd. Harriet Jacob tolerates all kind of oppressions in her life but still she gets the chance to free herself. She has the determination to free herself and her children from the horror of slavery. To free her children from the cruelty of slavery, she has to hide herself from her master for seven years in the attic of her house. Still she does not lose her determination and will for freedom and at the end it helps her to achieve freedom from slavery. She finds her identity and self-dignity through the freedom from slavery. Jacob's quest and utmost desire for freedom leads her to find her own identity and helps her to understand the meaning of womanhood which was misunderstood and misinterpret in the time of slavery. We cannot ignore the other women who helped her through her journey to get freedom. Betty, Peter, Mrs. Bruce are some friends and well wishers of Linda or Harriet who has helped her escape from her master Dr. Flint and get the freedom and identity. This portrays the solidarity between black women and it also shows the solidarity between black women and some white women who were anti-slavery. It shows that the utmost quest and determination for freedom and self identity help and inspire Linda to understand the meaning of life and womanhood. The solidarity and friendship with other black women and white women encourages her to determine her willingness and fight for it. The solidarity between Linda and her family also depicts in the novel. Her parents never acknowledged her the horror of slavery and dehumanized condition of women. Even her grandmother never forced

her to do anything the society contains. She had a strong relationship with Linda. The novel shows us the strongest family bonding and love for the relationship.

In Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye* we cannot find the solidarity between other black women and community rather we find the two strong will characters Denver and Claudia who have achieved the 'self' by challenging the odds of the community and patriarchal white dominated society. They have challenged against the marginalization and stereotypes of the society and divert them to find their recognition and self-respected position in the society. But we cannot ignore the small gesture of the community in *Beloved* who come forward to help Sethe from the haunt of Beloved.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

To conclude this thesis, black women have been seen as unimportant minor group in the human civilization. During the time of slavery and its aftermath there were no law and protection for them from the harassment, abuse and rape. They were the victim of all types of sexual and physical exploitation. Sexualisation and body politics were the worst and important part of their degradation. In one hand the three novels represented the marginalized situation of black women and on the other hand, explored the stronger and brave attributes of black women to confront the stereotypes of society in search for their identity and individualism.

In *Incidents in the life of a slave girl* Linda Brent receives all the humiliation and oppression during the time of slavery for being a slave girl. We get to figure out the fact that slavery is worse and unacceptable for black women. They were marginalized, dominated, sexually exploited, degraded and dehumanized in the slavery. Despite all the oppression and sufferings she has achieved freedom for herself and also for her children as per her determination and longing for self-identity. Moreover, rest of the two novels by Toni Morrison explores the post slavery condition and situation of black women in the same patriarchal male dominated society. In *Beloved* we see the post slavery trauma of Sethe. It represents the fact that the memories, sufferings and experiences of slavery affect the daily and regular life of black women for their whole life which force them to deal with psychological trauma. It is not easy for them to ignore the experiences and sufferings they receive in their past life. However, *The Bluest Eye* talks about the effect of the negative images and stereotypes in the life of black women. During the time of slavery the conventional male chauvinist society created certain images and stereotypes for black women which the American society still follows. It makes the living unbearable and prohibits black women to live a normal and regular life like other women in the society. All the three novels

represent black women as victimized and vulnerable. However, the writers also creates some rebellious, strong and determined characters like Claudia, Denver and Linda Brent herself who has challenged the conventional male dominated society and made their significant position in the society. They have achieved their self-identity and recognition by fighting against the culture and society in their own way. All the character's self believe and confidence helps them to acquire self-dignity and recognition.

In this research paper, I have tried to show the condition of black women in the American society from slavery to contemporary time. They have not only experienced white supremacy under racism but also faced sexism and sexual exploitation under black community. Solidarity and sisterhood between women is also the concern as it helps and inspires them to make their significant mark in the patriarchal racialized sexist society. After lots of sacrifices and struggle black women have achieved their position and self-identity in the society in present time.

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