

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Literature in America being the medium of assertiveness provides a platform to Africans where they can mark the ability of creating their identity in the world which considers them as having no voice to represent. In the white world, they are regarded as inferior, subhuman and incapable of producing any literature. It appears that literature is of course, a vehicle of demonstrating the potentiality of creativity and productivity. This urge for potentiality through creative art has been mentioned very beautifully by such philosophers as David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Jefferson, and Hegel stating that the absence and presence of a written literature is the best criteria of the potential, innate humanity of a race. Considering the significance of written literature, people of African descent in America seem to demonstrate the intellectual ability to write their own literature and to express the capability of creating the self by their own.

In the 18th century, Afro American literary tradition emerges as a response to the allegations that people of African origin do not and cannot create literature. They are also accused of not having any mastery over arts and Sciences. At this juncture, blacks come to understand that it is not the true representation of their image produced by whites and Europeans. By realizing the importance of literary genre, they start thinking of having their own cultural, social and literary product of their own. The same realization is also surfaced in the emergence of American literature as the prominent writer Ralph Waldo Emerson addresses the scholars to produce their own literature. In his “The American Scholar” he states, “We will walk on our own feet, we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. The study of letters shall be no longer a name for pity.... A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men.” (10)

In spite of producing a body of creative literature in the middle of the 18th century, Afro-Americans face the opposition in defining themselves among the dominantly white reading public. In spite of all the hurdles, canon of Afro-American literature gradually emerges by shaping Black identity and culture in its new form. In American history, Afro-American literature has a long journey to figure itself on the literary scene. This journey as mentioned in *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, has different phases like: period of slavery

and freedom (1746-1865); Reconstruction and after (1865-1919); Harlem Renaissance (1919-1940); Realism, Naturalism, Modernism (1940-1960); Black Arts (1960-1970); Contemporary Literature (1970 to present).

While tracing out the Afro- American history, the first known writing of this canon is a poem written by Lucy Terry in 1746. During this period, Black writers project literature as an instrument to voice the injustices they face and observe. Phillis Wheatley the first Afro-American to publish a book, delineates in her poetry the capacity of the Africans for mastery of language and higher thoughts. Undoubtedly, the emergence of such type of writing raises the voice against the justifications that consider the enforcement of slavery as appropriate because blacks are subhuman, unintelligent, pagan and immoral. In light of this opposition, prominent figures like Olaudah Equiano, David Walker, and James M. Whitefield have colored the literary scene by proving that blacks are also capable of literary expression and civilized mind.

This idea of civilized mind has its roots in the movement named 'enlightenment' which has profound influence on the formation of United States. It has been considered a tool for social injustice because of the distinction it implies between human and non-human, civilized and savage. It considers that humans are characterized by their capacity for reason, language and abstract thought and as white accused; Blacks are non- human because they are devoid of rationality and original thoughts. In this context, the Enlightenment belief proves the authority of Native Americans over the enslaved Black Americans. These happenings enforce the period of slavery having greater importance in the economic development of United States. This period of slavery has the darker side with the divided psyche of the slaves. Consequently, slave narrative in literary field grew as the first distinctively American literary genre, contributing the foundation of Afro-American literature. Some literary giants like Olaudah Equiano in *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano* (1789); Fredrick Douglass in *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass, an American Slave*; Harriet Jacobs in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* present the cruelty of slavery, brutalization of slaves, disruption of family unit and moral contamination of slavery for both the slave and the master. Later on during the abolition period, slave narrative gets a new connotation with its emphasis on generic rather than the individual nature.

In the early 19th century, the threat of the expansion of slavery culminates to its highest point which arouses the instinct of abolitionism. During this time, the mass of anti-slavery

novels, pamphlets, speeches, poems, narratives are published which include writers like David Walker, Sojourner Truth, William Wells Brown, Harriet Wilson, Fredrick Douglass, Harriet Jacob etc. The most influential of all abolitionist writings is Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin, A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*. William Cloyd Garrison being a Christian militant considers abolitionism in terms of 'a holy mission, part of a moral crusade that was considered the 'Second Great Awakening' (qtd. in Matterson, 1). Finally, due to such efforts made by abolitionists, slavery was eradicated by the ratification of 15th Amendment in 1865.

After the end of slavery, blacks still have a sense of self hatred and inferiority on the basis of being black. But this sense of inferiority is not spiritual; rather it is the 'consciousness of body'¹ in terms of Frantz Fanon. In the 20th century, Fanon considers the consciousness of body a negative activity in case of Blacks and it can never bring the 'supposed inferiority.' This consciousness of inferiority on the basis of the color of skin has also been pictured by the Romantic poet William Blake who in his poem "The Little Black Boy" presents the awareness of black child. Here, having a sense of self-hatredness, the little boy says:

My mother bore me in the Southern wild,
And I am black, but oh! my soul is white,
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereaved of light. (1—4)

But later on, the child regards his black body as a garment the soul must wear on the earth. This spiritual philosophy reminds one of the Bhagavad Gita which states that as a person puts on new garments giving up old ones, similarly the soul accepts new material bodies giving up the old useless one.

During the Reconstruction age, the disparity on account of the color of skin could not be completely eliminated in case of black Americans. Even, despite all the efforts done by Republications--- Reconstruction Act of 1867, opening of schools for educating freed slaves, enfranchising blacks etc., the Afro-Americans could not regain the better position. The incidents like Jim Crow Segregation, Ku Klux Klan, and Lynching had the dire effect on the blacks. By observing the condition of Blacks in America, Dubois in his forethought of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) says, "The problem of this 20th century is the problem of color line" (3). This problem of color line has been depicted throughout the whole Afro-American literature. Besides it, magazines, newspapers become the tool to reinforce the cultural pride and self-awareness in

the minds of African as well as American people. For instance, the first black-oriented daily newspaper entitled 'Daily American'² edited by James Weldon focuses on the issue of racial injustice and seeks to encourage blacks for advancement. In this period, the literary figures are of the view that artistic achievement is a key to social uplift and consequently, they urge to assimilate black folk culture through literary art. The essay form becomes the important jargon in the hands of prominent writers such as W.E.B. Dubois, James Weldon, and Charles Chesnutt. But at this stage, writers have the difficult task to explore the black identity because of the tormented psyche of the blacks. This tormented psyche is the 'double consciousness' in Dubois's words. As having 'twoness', blacks are not in the position to claim the blackness in its complete form. They prefer to be neutral in case of black and white identity. For example, in James Weldon's *The Autobiography of Ex-Colored Man*, the protagonist thinks of using his talent to form a new black American musical genre. Though he has a long desire to bring glory and honor to the Negro race, he succumbs to the prevailing circumstances. At this juncture, he prefers to remain neutral. He neither wants to disclaim the black nor claim the white race. He seeks comfortable way for him. By seeing the ill-treatment of blacks, he projects himself as Whiteman having a light skin. Even, he seems not to have any concern to polish his own talent; rather he seeks convenience in case of race.

Furthermore after the World War 1, the move of African Americans from rural South to urban North has a significant role in the emerging Afro-American literary history. Considering mainly the better economic opportunities provided by the North and the racial injustices in the South, the 'Great Migration' brings a chance for self-fulfillment and the realization of true identity. During this migration in Harlem, a group of writers and intellectuals produces the sizable body of literature concerned with contemporary life and its social and cultural instability focusing on the rise of black middle class and New Race Consciousness. Of course, they encourage and promote literary and creative art pertaining to the Negro. As it is defined, this period "was the time of creativity, when black people had something to say, and others were willing to listen" (Meachen, 4). Earlier, blacks in American history were not recognized beyond the image of a slave, servant or hired hands. But during the early 20th century, the urban setting of developing Harlem provides a venue for Afro-Americans to appreciate the variety of black life and culture. Even, Langston Hughes one of the prominent literary figures of Harlem Renaissance, talks about the motif of the movement—"We younger Negro artists who create

now intend to express our individual dark skinned selves without fear or shame.... We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on the top of the mountain, free within ourselves” (28-34). In this essay “The New Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” Hughes urges black intellectuals and artists to break off the artificial standards set for them by whites. This expression of individual dark skinned selves encouraged blacks to honor their folk roots and materials. The folk materials provide a rich source for the artistic and intellectual imagination and help the blacks free from the severe condition of the past. For instance, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neal Hurston fuses creative imagination with folk materials.

Undoubtedly, the literary movement of Harlem has brought black community to the front. It makes Afro-Americans to celebrate their heritage, a heritage marked by struggle and preservice. In this period of excitement, black artists become conscious of black art, music and literature. They come to understand the fact that black culture has its own significance. As a result, the concept of ‘New Negro Philosophy’ emerges. By describing this concept, Alain Locke in his essay entitled ‘The New Negro’ says that the younger generation is vibrant with a new psychology. This ‘New Psychology’ is nothing but a freedom of expression by affirming of a distinct cultural heritage. The New Negro as Locke defines is an assertive being who is both proud of his race and insistent on his right as an American. This makes clear that the ‘New Negro’ is not completely cut from the American roots. This situation brings the ‘notion of twoness’ as W.E.B. Dubois regards in *The Souls of Black Folk*, “one ever feels his two- ness— an American, a negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strings: two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”(3)

However, Harlem Renaissance is by no means a monolithic movement confined to a single purpose. Different writers and poets opine and consider its spirit differently. Some regard racial identity as to be focused while others rely on the freedom to express. For example, Countee Cullen favors only freedom to write in the mainstream and has not emphasized on racialized poetry. He wants to be a poet and not a Negro poet. But Langston Hughes opposes this notion by saying, “No great poet has ever been afraid of being himself” (1). During the early phase of the movement, poetry is the primary form of expression which is more centered on the themes of pride and dignity. The poets, here consciously explore the self-estimation and self-assertion. Taking instance from literary history, Claude McKay’s “If We Must Die” (1919) is probably the first poem of the movement which asserts a strong sense of self in the face of

extreme opposition. Countee Cullen's "Heritage" describes the poetic persona's struggle to come to terms with the meaning of his African heritage. Throughout the poem, Africa is a thing of beauty that invokes the speaker's imagination. Likewise, Hughes in his "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" reaches back to his African heritage:

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young
I build my hut near the Congo and it lulled me sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids about it.
... My soul has grown deep like the Rivers. (4-9)

Besides exploring pride and dignity to black culture, the literary giants like Zora Neale Hurston, W.E.B. DuBois, Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, and Langston Hughes are very much concerned about alienation and marginalization of blacks in American society. Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923) evokes the terror and beauty of rural black life in Georgia and demonstrates the threat that modern urban society presents to African American folk culture. Here, Toomer contrasts between rural and urban black life by emphasizing the sterility of urban life. Such theme affirms Toomer's sense of the value of folk culture to the Renaissance artists. During this period, the women artists have also made significant contribution in shaping Afro-American literary framework. They primarily focus on the exploration of female sexuality and of romantic relationships. They are of the view that the issue of passing or an attempt to deny one's black identity by posing as a white person effects the issue of sex, class and culture. Of course, the literary movement of Harlem refers to a time of great creativity and productivity when artists and literary giants owe the honor to their native heritage. Even it is considered that without Harlem Renaissance, Afro- American literary tradition could not have developed the way it did. But it could not be prolonged for more periods of time. It probably marks its end during 1930s due to the Great Depression and the most probably the premature death of the patron A' Lelia Walker and Countee Cullen.

After realizing the self- assertion in the period of Harlem Renaissance, racial segregation has been severely protested under the garb of Civil Rights Movement which ultimately leads the way of passing the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voting Rights Act (1965). In America, Civil Rights movement has been started between the time 1945 to 1970s to end discrimination against African Americans and other disadvantaged groups and to demolish legal racial segregation especially in US South. Later on, in 1955, this movement reaches to its height in Montgomery,

Alabama as a reaction against the capture of black woman who refused to surrender her seat to a white man on a racially segregated bus. Under the leadership of Martin Luther king, people support the activists against the violence of some Southern whites. This movement has affected literature in a positive direction. The genres such as drama, stories, poems, plays foster public awareness of injustice. It includes essays by James Baldwin, poems by Gwendolyn Brooks and Margret Walker. Even, Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976) throws light on the valuable perspective of the movement.

On the literary map of the 20th century, Afro- American studies has been one of the most influential of social, political and intellectual movements not only affecting the US but also influencing many people who have suffered oppression from racial discrimination in other parts of the world. In the post- colonial era, the theorists like Frantz Fanon deal with the idea of 'Blackness' to explore the study of black culture as the part of the world's major diasporas. In the extract 'The Fact of Blackness' taken from *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), Fanon clearly mentions that it is the external stimulus that makes black feel himself as a Negro. Even in Fanon's view, in order to make himself known in the world, the Negro cannot modify his inborn complex; he can simply assert himself as a black man. This would make him come out of inferiority complexion. Once negro is supposed to be locked into the body and considered as the wretched of the earth, is now a being as Fanon states, "who has acquired consciousness of himself and his body, who has attained to the dialectic of subject and object, the body is no longer a cause of the structure of consciousness, it has become an object of consciousness." (qtd. in Ashcroft, et.al., 293)

The history of the struggle for self- determination by Afro-American is intertwined with wider movements of diasporic African struggles for independence. For example, figures like Marcus Garvey have a central role in American struggle for self-determination. The 'Back to Africa' that he initiates has a noticeable impact in building Liberia as a nation. In case of Liberia, his history of 'Back to Africa' facilitates the return of freed black slaves to their 'native' continent. During this time, the ideologies of blackness associated with political movements such as Pan-Africanism and Negritude become important themes in the literary history of America. These movements characterize the idea of African 'diaspora'³ which relates the experience of Africans in the global world. This concept of 'diaspora' emerges as 'Africans at home and abroad needed to counter the narratives developed by Europeans to justify colonialism and by

Americans to rationalize slavery' (Gikandi, 143). In this context, art becomes one of the key ingredients in the fight for human freedom and construction of an autonomous African nation.

From 1940s, the idea of Negritude states that all people of Negro descent share certain inalienable essential characteristics. It broadens the perception of Negro as possessing a 'distinctive' personality into all spheres of life. As a movement, Negritude⁴ emerges in Paris in early 1930s. The figures like Sedar Senghor, Aime Cesaire, Leon Damas in the newspaper entitled 'L'Etudiant noir' (The Black Student) discuss the problems by stressing commonalities amongst all black people around the world. In France, African and West Indian students feel themselves isolated because of the color. This sense of unbelongingness leads them to rediscover their past, their black roots and African heritage. By describing the situation in which the concept of 'Negritude' is formulated, Senghor states:

No reform was in sight and the colonizers were justifying our political and economic dependence by the theory of the tabula rasa. In order to establish an effective revolution, our revolution, who had first to divest ourselves of our borrowed attire-- that of assimilation—and assert our being, that is to say our negritude. (qtd. in Ahluwalia, 231)

In tune with Senghor, Cesaire describes it as 'the simple recognition of the fact of being black and the acceptance of the fact, of our destiny as black people, of our history and our culture' (231). In the post- colonial era, the main problem that emerges in case of Negritude is that the very people who have an urge for returning to authenticity and renewal, have also imbibed the values of the colonizers. They neither belong to their own culture nor that of the colonizers. This state of alienation of colonized blacks reminds one of Homi K. Bhabha, one of the prominent postcolonial thinkers who poses "the desire to emerge as 'authentic' through mimicry—through a process of writing and repetition—is the final irony of partial representation" (88). By realizing the prevailing circumstances, Negritude writers not only celebrate African culture and tradition, but also challenge colonizers who consider blacks as a subject of denigration and brutalization. These writers posit the affirmation of racial images celebrating the idea of 'blackness.' Though negative representation of blackness is deeply embedded within European imagination, the concept of 'Negritude' paves the way towards decolonization. Even at present in America, the 'Negritude' has entered in popular culture. *The New York Times* of 10 Sept. 2001 reports that after the Sisters Serena and Venus Williams met in 2001 final of US open tennis tournament, the film director Spike Lee explains their superstars'

status: “They can play. They got game. They got ball.” For black America especially, he remarks, “they’ve got, you know the word... negritude.” (qtd. in Gikandi, 366)

During 1960s, America has a hardship with such incidents as Civil Rights Movements, Black Power Agitation, assassinations of Martin Luther King, President John Kennedy and Malcolm X; Vietnam etc. As literature reflects society, Afro- American writers describe the injustices against them and give a call to unite as a strong force against white supremacy. For instance, the poets like Amiri Baraka, Etheridge Knight, Sonia Sanchez, Quiney troupe have found the best way to propagate political message against white domination. During this period, Black Arts and Black Power concept both relate broadly to Afro-American’s desire for self-determination and nationhood. In politics, the spokesmen mainly Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X advocate black separatism, black pride and black solidarity by opposing integration and assimilation. Even, Martin Luther King denies white supremacy by saying, “Power is not white man’s birthright, it will not be legislated for us and delivered in neat government packages. It is social force any group can utilize by accumulation its elements in a planned deliberate campaign to organize it under its own control.” (7)

The Black Power concept strongly influences the supporters of Black Arts Movement. This is considered as “the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept” (Neal, 29). During this era, it is emphasized that it is better for black to separate themselves from white culture and the best way to promote separatism is to build independent black cultural institution and bring art to the community. The cultural pride regarding Afro-American race has been reflected by the phrase ‘Black is beautiful’ given by John Sweat Rock. This cultural movement rejects the notion that black people’s natural features and hair are inherently ugly. The prevailing belief that black beauty is less attractive than white one causes the inferiority in the minds of blacks. In contrary to it, ‘Black is beautiful’ movement encourages blacks feel good and love their bodies. Of course, it generates pride in ‘blackness’ and defines an African American identity. The main focus of Black Arts Movement and Black Aesthetic Movement has been mentioned by Larry Neal as he says, “For without a change of vision, we are slaves to the oppressor’s ideas and values—ideas and values that finally attack the very core of our existence. Therefore, we must see the world in terms of our own realities” (54). Even, Amiri Baraka, the founder of BAM, mirrors his dream in the poem ‘Black Art’:

We want a black poem,
And a Black world
Let the world be a Black poem
And let all Black people speak this poem
Silently or loud. (50--55)

At this point of time, the black was no more a matter of slavery and inferiority; rather the people of African origin consider themselves a sign of dignity.

Furthermore, in the succeeding period, Afro American literature flourishes on the significant extent with the writings of eminent literary giants such as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, Jamaica Kincaid etc. The number of literary prizes won by black authors in the past decade including Pulitzer Prize, National and American Book Awards etc. exceeds the total number of such honors won by black writers during the rest of the century. Besides, in the past two decades, black literature courses become a central part of offering in English Departments and in the departments of American Studies, Afro American and Women's studies. In 20th century America, black writers have played the significant role in demonstrating the literary and cultural agenda of black community. For instance, Maya Angelow's appearance at President Bill Clinton's inauguration in 1993, the first poet to read the inauguration and Rita Dove's unprecedented two term appointment as Poet Laureate of US are the signs of remarkable presence of African American literature in American society.

Now it is beyond the shadow of any doubt that black Americans have played a significant role in shaping America as a nation. Even at present, Africans have unquestionably marked their presence in various fields like sports, politics, and business transactions. For instance, Barak Obama (the first Afro-American to occupy white house), Dean Oliver Barrow (first Black Prime Minister), Condoleeza Rice (National Security Advisor), Liza Perez Jackson (Administrator of US Environmental Protection Agency), Lawrence Douglass Wilder (Governor) are the eminent figures who have used their calibre in making the best layout of the administrative field. Similarly, athletes- George Weah(Soccer player), Tiger Woods, Serena and Venus Williams, Shani Davis have the top rank position in the sports academy. Vashti Mckenzie in the field of Christianity, is well known for the first female bishop of African Methodist Episposal (AME) church and Shirley Ann Jackson has been acclaimed the first black woman to receive Ph.D.⁵

Moreover in the 21st century, it is estimated that America may step away from racial prejudices due to such reasons--- contemporary immigration, rise in intermarriage, and growth of multiracial population. The scholars like David Hollinger consider the possibility that the color line may be fading and consequently US may be moving towards a cosmopolitan, post-racial era. Some regard that Obama's presidential election and widespread support that he has received from Americans of all backgrounds, indicate that the US may be moving beyond race. In fact, the day after the election, the New York Times headline "Obama Elected President as Racial Barrier Falls"⁶ highlights the significance of this event in American history. While addressing a huge rush in Chicago, Obama himself says, 'Change has come to America' (Star telegram). This change is the positive indication which opens the doors of the post racial era. In other sense, it shows that the country's political climate has changed so dramatically that Americans may finally be able to lay down the burden of race.

It is considered that today's immigrants have transformed America from a black-white society to a multi-racial one. In the post racial era, the 2000 census marks a momentous shift in America which had been hostile to racial mixture as surfaced in the legal recognition of 'one drop rule of hypodescent' in which people of having any trace of black ancestry would be considered as black. This 'one drop rule of hypodescent' is first implemented during the period of slavery which relates children born to white male slave owners and black female slaves would be legally identified as black and as a result have no rights to property and other wealth holdings of their white fathers. Though this rule was legally denied in 1967 by Supreme Court, its influence is widely felt in American society. It is this which explains why Tiger Woods whose mother is Thai and father is African—is hailed as the first Afro- American golf superstar. It also proves why Barack Obama is identified as black even though his mother is white. While one drop rule is no longer legally imposed on black Americans, it has been so ingrained into the history of race relations that both black and white Americans alike continue to cling to its legacy and practice. Here, in this post racial era, the growing of multiracial population has strongly increased the racial and ethnic diversity in the United States. This diversity raises a pertinent question—whether America has uplifted himself from the black white color line or a new division is emerging. Now, it is not only the black race, but also other non- Europeans (Latinos, Asian, and Caribbean) have also contributed in making a multiracial country with the change of the concept of 'race.'

With the deliberation of Afro- American history from the indentured servitude to the position of present black delegates, it is required to concentrate on the topic of the research **‘Reforging a new World Order: Changing Dialectics in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* and *A Mercy***. In order to understand dialectics, one needs to go back to the history of its origin. The very term ‘dialectics’ originating from Ancient Greek *dialektike*, refers to various methods of reasoning and discussion in order to discover the truth. It is as *American Heritage Dictionary* defines “the art or practice of logical discussion as employed in investigating the truth of a theory or opinion” (Dialectics, def. 2b). Even, *Merriam Webster’s Online Dictionary* states it as “any systematic reasoning, exposition, or argument that juxtaposes opposed or contradictory ideas and usually seeks to resolve their conflict” (Dialectics, def. 3a). However, it is not a type of debate as debate involves the intention of one person to win over the other. The concept of Dialectics particularly in philosophy emerges in Ancient Greek and is popularized by Plato in Socratic dialogues. Socrates favors truth as the highest value proposing that it could be discovered through reason and logical discussion. While Western philosophy traces dialectics to ancient Greek thought of Socrates and Plato, the idea of tension between two opposing forces leading to synthesis is much older and present in Indian philosophy. Indian philosophy has an ancient tradition of dialectic polemics. The two complements purusha (the active cause) and the prakriti (the passive nature) bring everything into existence. They follow the ‘rta’ the dharma (Universal law of Nature). Even Jainism considers the truth or reality as perceived differently from different point of view and that no single point of view is the complete truth.

The concept of dialectics is moulded into a new form by the philosopher Hegel who seeks the way of searching the truth by stating a thesis, developing contradictory antithesis and combining and resolving them into a coherent synthesis. He is of the view that everything is made out of opposing forces and sides and gradual changes lead to turning points where one force overcomes the other. That’s why, he regards dialectics as a method by which human history unfolds or history progresses as a dialectical process. Later on, in the mid 19th century, the concept of dialectics is appropriated by Marxists who talk about dialectics in terms of materialism where conflict between opposing forces comes as a result of material needs. In *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975), the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin envisages human life as an ongoing, unfinalizable dialogue which takes place at every moment of daily existence. To him, dialogic relates the world as a live event but in dialectics; it is the mechanical contact of

oppositions, a contact of things rather than people. It is considered that the basic idea of 'Dialectics' is probably present in Heraclitus of Ephesus, who held that all is in constant change as a result of inner strife and opposition. Hence, the history of dialectical method is the history of philosophy. This opposition carries the way for rational discussion with a resolution or search of truth which connotes the dialectical method. In contemporary polemics, dialectics refers to an understanding of how one can or should perceive the world epistemologically; an assertion that ontologically the nature of the world outside one's perception is interconnected, contradictory, and dynamic. In a discourse, it refers to a method of presentation of ideas and conclusions.

Keeping in view the concept of dialectics, it is pertinent to note Morrison's perception in exploring black history in American context. Toni Morrison the first black woman novelist to win the Nobel Prize, is the leading voice of Afro-American tradition. Being the child of Black middle class family, she very well realizes the hardships of the black middle class in the white world and this realization of the novelist has been figured out by means of literary writing. As a writer, Morrison begins her career informally by joining group of poets and writers who discuss their work at Harvard University. During this period, she comes across a story of a black girl who longs to have the beautiful, dark and blue eyes. This later has constituted the theme of her debut novel *The Bluest Eye*. As a prominent writer of the age, she refuses to allow race to be marginalized in literary discourse. She is of the view that it is the responsibility of Afro American writers to dig out that annihilated history and secure the importance of it in making American civilization.

While beginning her career with the novel *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison traces out the tragic condition of blacks in racist America. It portrays the gloomy picture of racial beauty as having no positive results. In the novel, Pecola Breedlove is so much oppressed by the white as well as the blacks that she finds no beauty in her life. Lacking of self-love, she thinks that she can have all the things in her life if she has the white beauty. The imposition posing upon the black girl transforms her into an insane and ugly person. In the novel *Beloved*, she unearths the historical realities of horrifying experiences during Middle passage, slavery, emancipation and its aftermath. Here, she depicts the darker and gloomy side of the slave era. But later on in the novel *A Mercy*, she changes her perception regarding the theme of racial prejudices. She talks about the period of slavery but in a very different way. She excludes slavery from racism. In an interview, when Morrison is asked whether she is now moving towards a post-racial literary discourse in a

parallel development of Obama's post-racial politics, she concurs "You have to walk that time, you don't want the culture de- raced" (n.pag.). With its focus on a time before the slave system, *A Mercy* confirms her determination to think beyond racial categories. Intentionally, the novel sets out to blur the lines of racism and its characters belong to different races such as indentured servants, slaves, Dutchman and English woman etc. it is also written from the point of view of a white slave owner for the first time. This way the present research aims at to find out such dialectics in the proposed novels i.e. *The Bluest Eye* and *A Mercy*.

END NOTES

1. In the extract “The Fact of Blackness,” Fanon describes the condition of blacks by focusing on the consciousness of body and supposed inferiority.
2. ‘Daily American’ was started in 1895 and lasted only for one year. The financial crisis led to the closure of the publication.
3. In general, diaspora etymologically from Greek ‘diaspeirein’ meaning dispersion or to scatter, relates as Merriam- Webster’s Online Dictionary defines, “people settled far from their ancestral homelands.” <<http://www.meriam.webster.com/dictionary-tb/diaspora?show/>>
4. Negritude is the affirmation of racial images celebrating merely blackness. Through it, the colonized seek to reverse the representation ascribed to them, to turn those negative identities into positive images.
5. Diane Swanbrow, “Black Americans in the 21st century,” The University Record, 28 Oct.1998.
6. [http:// www.nytimes.com/2008/11/05/us/politics/05elect.htm/](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/05/us/politics/05elect.htm/)

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