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Construction of Slave Body in Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave*

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By

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Construction of Slave Body in Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years a Slave*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Padma Sapkota, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of Research Committee:

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Letter of Recommendation

Padma Sapkota has completed her thesis entitled “Construction of Slave Body in Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave*” under my supervision. She carried out her research from May 2016 to November 2016. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

Dr. Anirudra Thapa

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Abstract

This paper explores the brutal treatment of white masters over illegal slaves. For this I analyze Solomon Northup's Twelve Years a Slave. It also further studies the master's treatment over slave body, and also the construction of slave body, humiliation and constant fear and a fellow man's struggle for life focusing on the white men's perception of the black body and how they are tortured, assaulted, beaten, threaten and killed. African American literary theoretical analysis, other slave narratives and the critical reviews help to analyze the slave life and its deeply rooted concept over the black people in American society. The main focus of this research is finding on how the masters control the body of the slave and exploit it. It also shades light on the double trouble of female slave and their tortured life. Even child slaves are also becomes the victim of the brutality of slave holders. The illegal practice of slavery is also seen in hidden form. Slaves are only the means of reproduction and the machine for the field. They are not taken as human being but they are tortured, humiliated, exploited and killed. All these features are found in Solomon Northup's Twelve Years a Slave.

Key Terms: Tortured Body, Objectification, Slave Narrative, Sexual Body, Threatened Body, Dead Body, Mistreatment, Brutality, Slavery.

Introduction

This research paper attempts to explore the slave body that is violently and brutally treated by the white slave holders. For this, I primarily focus on Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave*. Solomon Northup is a free black man born and breeds in New York and lives with his family, wife and three children. One day two white men offer him a job in a circus as a violin player in their show and they betray him. They drugged him and seized all his legal documents and put him in confinement in Washington. He is broad in different places of south and becomes a former slave along with his new identity. He becomes slave of Mr. William Ford and Mr. Tibbeats in between two years. Remaining ten year he serves for Mr. Epps, a very brutal and inhuman person who whips or tortures his slaves for his entertainment and pleasure. With the real experience of slavery after twelve years he becomes successful to rescue from his hellish life with the help of Mr. Bass, a Canadian carpenter and a very generous person. Solomon reunites with his family and happily lives after and works for the freedom of slaves.

After abduction in 1841 Northup was kept in slave pen and he is tortured and all his formal and legal documents were seized. Even he was whipped inhumanly to accept as a former slave. The whole picture of slavery and the mistreatment of the body of slave is picturised in the text. Slave body is constructed as tortured body, assaulted body, material body, sexual body, threatened body, beaten body, and dead body. The real identity is shadowed under the master's name. During twelve years enslavement he was brutally treated both physically and mentally. He was successful to survive from different attack and death. Therefore, this research paper focuses mainly on slave body that is subjected as the possession of white and are forced to act as their will. Therefore, *Twelve*

Years a Slave is a real experience of slavery and a testimony without any exaggeration where is the description of good and harsh reality of slavery and slave holders with their good and bad qualities.

Literature Review

Numerous critics have examined *Twelve Years a Slave* as a slave narrative about the struggle of a freeman after being enslaved. However, only a few critics, including W. E. B. Du Bois, of "African American Literary Theory", S. Mitchell's; "Constructing the Slave Body" and other critics work on the issue of slave body related with socio- political and economic aspects. Du Bois talks about the trauma of the slavery even after the freedom from slavery. He says, " free he is but his freedom is ever bounded by Truth and Justice; and slavery only dogs him when he is denied his right to tell the Truth or recognize an ideal of Justice" (African American Literary Theory, 22). Similarly, S. Mitchell talks about the lack of medical treatment of slaves. They even could not ask to have treatment for their illness. Due to the lack of right over own body they could not decide themselves. Northup also tells how he and his companion suffer without any care and treatment for minor illness too. Robert, a slave loses his life because of illness. He is not cured and dies because of smallpox.

Similarly, a critic, Bryce Barrett argues over the issue of not being able to commit suicide. Her article entitled with "The Inability to Commit Suicide" talks about their fear to commit suicide. Lack of freedom and also the loss of self confident and loss of hope for better life they want to commit suicide but they cannot. Another critic, Lina Papadaki analyses Northup's narrative under the issue of objectification. In the article "What is Objectification?" she focuses on materialization slave body and their use on the fulfilment of master's will. Slaves are

treated as an object and use on field as an instrument. Ramona Simmons in her article, "Scoured Souls: The Imbalance between Mistresses and Female Slaves" analyses the relationship between mistresses and female slaves focusing on the relation of Patsey and her mistress Epps. How a female slaves lives in between fear of both the master and his mistress. Along with all these issue as a researcher I have focused on the physical and mental treatment over slave body. How a slave body is tortured, violently abused, misbehaved and sexually assault are major focus point of this paper. Therefore, this paper revolves around these issues and tries to show gap from other critics. Other critical views are also used to prove the argument over slave body like; Esther Wolfe's, "Violent Instability: Images of Slavery in *Twelve Years a Slave* and Visual Culture", Lindon Barrett's "Slave Narratives: Literacy, the Body, Authority", Kathryn Hampshire's "On Cinematography and Discomfort in *12 Years a Slave*" and so on.

Method

Solomon Northup becomes a victim of the practice of illegal slave trade and spends very frightening and unexpected life for twelve years. During enslavement he is tortured, whipped, threatened, and also used for entertainment. He is subjected as the working object and treated brutally. This research paper is based on the slave body and how they are treated during slavery. This paper raises the issue of construction of slave body as the body for ill treatment and for entertainment to their masters. The concept of the construction of slave body and mistreatment over their body is drawn from "The African American Literary Theory" edited by Winston Napier from where W. E. B. Du Bois's opinion over the fear to tell the truth and justice after freedom. The criticism over the construction of slave body in *Twelve Years a Slave* helps to develop the research paper. The article titled with "On Cinematography and

Discomfort in 12 Years a Slave” by Kathryn Hampshire, “The Inability to Commit Suicide: An Analysis of Steve McQueen’s 12 years a Slave” by Bryce Longenberger, Ramona Simmons’s “Scoured Souls: The Imbalance between Mistresses and Female Slaves”, and Esther Wolfe’s “Violent Instability”: Images of Violence of Slavery in 12 Years a Slave and Visual Culture”. Some other referential materials also help to make the argument strong in this paper.

Objective / Significance

Solomon Northup's narrative is the purportedly real story of his life as a former slave and about the heart rendering past life. The torture and violence that he experiences during slavery is narrated in his narrative which helps him to come out from the traumatic life. The major aim of this research is to analyse the mistreatment of slave body. During slavery what types of life that Northup has experienced and how he faces them and success to escape from the hell and reunites with his family are also comes under the study. He faces lots of brutality, sexual assault, physical violence and mental torture. Female slaves are more victimized than male slaves. According to Solomon account Patsey is the most pathetic and victimized slave among her companion. She is known as the queen of cotton picking but she suffers the most. She suffers both from master and mistress. If she obeys her master she has to do as master demands and hated by her mistress, if not then she is violated by her master. She suffers both physically and sexually. So, this paper also shades light on the condition of female slaves as documented in *Twelve Years a Slave*. Therefore the variations in the use of slave body in the narrative and also to specify the slave body in slavery system and white's inhuman mentality and racial discrimination are also the objectives of this paper.

Analysis

'Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.' This line applies in Solomon Northup's life. He born as a free black man but after experiencing his almost thirty years liberty he is kidnapped and sold into slavery. His identity is changed from a freeman to a slave. The betrayal abduction moves to his new construction of life. He is put in confinement and treated as a slave. Northup recalls his painful memories where he describes; "The pain in my head had subsided in a measure, but I was very faint and weak. I was sitting upon a low bench, made of rough boards, and without coat or hat. I was hand-cuffed. Around my ankles also were a pair of heavy fetters. One end of a chain was fastened to a large ring in the floor, the other to the fetters on my ankles. I tried in vain to stand upon my feet" (Northup,18). Northup expresses how his free and happy life is drastically moves to a confined and a chained life. His body is treated as a non human body where his hands are in hand-cuff; his legs are in heavy fetters. The one side of the chain is ended in a large ring and other in his ankles. He is treated as a prisoner having big crime. His identity as a free black is seized and a new identity as a former slave is constructed.

During slavery most of the kidnapped people were put into confinement and made them to accept their new identity and sold into slavery. They are tortured both physically and mentally. Torturing the slave body is identical in slavery. A critic, Esther Wolfe in her article entitled; ""Violent Instability": Images of Slavery in Twelve Years a Slave and Visual Culture" analyses the movie based on this Northup's text as the movie "revolves around the film's realism, specifically its realistic portrayal of the violence and trauma of slavery and the image of the tortured slave body. " (Wolfe,16). Northup describes his unforgettable memories that shake

everyone. Northup narrates about his physical and mental torture to accept himself as a slave where he describes the scene as;

[F]ormidable whips appeared, I was seized by both of them, and roughly divested of my clothing. My feet, as has been stated, were fastened to the floor. Drawing me over the bench, face downwards, Radburn placed his heavy foot upon the fetters, between my wrists, holding them painfully to the floor. With the paddle, Burch commenced beating me. Blow after blow was inflicted upon my naked body. When his unrelenting arm grew tired, he stopped and asked if I still insisted I was a free man. I did not insist upon it, and then the blows were renewed, faster and more energetically, if possible than before... I prayed for mercy, but my prayer was only answer with stripes. I thought I must die beneath the lashes of the accursed brute. Even now the flash crawls upon my bones, as I recall the scene. I was all on fire. My sufferings I can compare to nothing else than the burning agonies of hell. (23)

He is forced to accept himself as a slave illogically. Formerly, Northup is a free man and he cannot be enslaved legally but his all legal documents are seized. This is how he is mentally tortured. When he does not agreed with their words then he is tortured physically. The whole scene that he describes about his first whipping as a slave is the evidence for his torturous life during enslavement. The crawling of flesh upon body and the agony as if body in the fire proofs the tortured slave body. Blow after blow falls upon his naked body. The unbearable torture and the hatred as a black is what he experience in his slavery period. The white's perception towards the black is always as 'Other'. Blacks are humiliated because of their blackness and

whites take the advantages of their colour and rule over them. Northup is enslaved because of his race. The deeply rooted racial discrimination also over rule him. He is inflicted with physical and mental torture very brutally.

The very innocent and pathetic figure, Patsey is also tortured very badly. Her attracted body figure and her devotion in the work make her as the queen of the field. She picks cotton very expertly with her both hands. But her life is always in danger. Northup narrates her story very minutely as he forwards;

Naturally, she was a joyous creature, a laughing, light-hearted girl, rejoicing in the mere sense of existence. Yet Patsey wept oftener, and suffered more, than any of her companions. She had been literally excoriated. Her back bore the scars of a thousand stripes; not because she was an unmindful and rebellious spirit, but because it had fallen to her lot to be the slave of a licentious master and a jealous mistress. She shrank before the lustful eye of the one, and was in danger even of her life at the hands of other, and between the two, she was indeed accursed. (123)

Patsey lives her life always in fear when she is inflicted by whom. She is punished not because of her weak performance but because of her hunger master and a jealous mistress. As a slave and also a female she has to face lots of torture. After looking at her life anyone can easily guess the bitter reality of the slavery and the slave life. As a female slave Patsey has to move through lots of insignificant behaviour of masters. She is the representative figure of the female slaves who are tortured very violently. Northup further talks about the threat in Patsey's daily life. He states that;

Patsey walk under a cloud. If she uttered a word in opposition to her master's will, the lash was resorted to atonce, to bring her to

subjection; if she was not watchful when about her cabin, or when walking in the yard, a billet of wood, or a broken bottle perhaps, hurled from her mistress' hand, would smite her unexpectedly in the face. The enslaved victim of lust and hate, Patsey had no comfort of her life. (124)

The mental torture and uncomfortable life she goes through is unimaginable in a normal life. In each and every step of her life she has to move very carefully. Neither she can complain about her master's abuse nor walk freely in the yard. She has the threat of both master and mistress. The unlimited and unpredicted mental torture she is bearing in her life. When her mistress attacks her it is unknown. So, she has to move very carefully. She is in threat even she does good job or bad job. She has never experienced a friendly behaviour from her masters. Rather she lives a very fearful life and always been conscious when she will be attacked. As a slave Patsey has a very frightening life but even as a female she suffers a lot.

Moreover, slave body is also objectified. Slaves are treated as object. They are consumed for material purpose. There is no any emotional attachment in between masters and slaves. The relation is only surfaced over body and bodily activities. Northup's body is changed into slave body and further it is constructed as a material body. He is objectified as a commodity and treated as an object. Object for plantation, entertainment, and also for money. He is materialised as a slave and sold into slavery. As his description he is threatened and beaten very pathetically. He is compelled to accept him as a slave because he is beaten very deadly. He becomes no man for Mr. Burch and Radburn. Through violence and assaults Solomon accepts himself as the property of the slave holders. Slaves are the matter of profit and loss. Their body is the commercialized body so they are kept in market

for sell. Before selling him he is forced to be a slave and take him in the market. The position of slaves is no more less than cattle's rather they have worst condition. Northup is also sold in different places with different masters. First he is bought by James H. Burch and then with other more than three masters.

In the narrative Northup inquires the cause of his imprisonment and gets answer from Burchas; "I was his slave - that he had bought me, and that he was about to send me to New Orleans" (Northup, 22). Commodification of slave body is the product of socio - political and cultural practices in American society during slavery. Taking the reference from Lindon Barrett's "African-American Slave Narratives: Literacy, the Body, Authority", she talks about the slave life of James L. Smith where she talks about the slave body as, "the problem of presenting the African-American body as both an indispensable marker of self-identification and the anchor of political and social ideologies of unbearable hostility" (426). It becomes a culture of white towards African – American to be treated inhumanly and suppressed. There is the vast gap between Black and White, the hierarchical gap. Blacks are bought and sold openly in the market as if they are the object of means for white. A critic Lina Papadaki takes the reference of Emanuel Kant's idea about objectification in her article entitled: 'What is Objectification?' where he argues, "objectification involves *treating* a person as an object, in the sense of a mere instrument for someone else's purposes, and consequently *reducing* this individual to the status of a mere instrument" (Papadaki, 17). As Kant argues slaves are also treated as object to fulfill the purpose of the slave holders. They are used as instrument for the field purpose and also for the means of entertainment. Solomon Northup is also materialized as an object. He is abducted from Washington and sold into slavery through transferring in different places. He is placed in the market as an

object for sell and bargain begins. Northup tells how he is examined as an object while he is in a room for selling. He describes the whole situation that;

The latter gentleman was very loquacious, dwelling at much length upon our several good points and qualities. He would make us hold up our heads, walk briskly back and forth, while customers would feel of our hands and arms and bodies, turn us about, ask us what we do, make us open our mouths and show our teeth, precisely as a jockey examines a horse which he is about to barter for or purchase.

(48)

Human beings are examining as like purchasing cattle. The whole physicality is checked and then only bargain begins for their reasonable price. Northup clears in the given extract that he is examined as like a jockey examines a horse that is about to purchase. The scene proves that the objectification of slave body. The deeply rooted racial discrimination between black and white is the main cause of Solomon's abduction and slave life. So, Barrett argues that "narrative presents incident after incident of the mishaps, injuries, beatings, and whippings befalling virtually every African American introduced to readers" (Barrett,426). Northup's narrative also presents all the incidents he experiences as a slave by whites. His real identity as a free black man is hidden and till the end of 12 years he is called as Platt. S Mitchell in her article entitled "Constructing the Slave body" puts her argument that, "the human body has a history. Perception of the body have been used as a means of social control. Those in control have sought to maintain that power by constructing inferior Others" (Mitchell, 49). Power determines the one as superior and other as inferior. Through the power white threaten the black and abducted people and forced through violence and fear of death the rule upon the weak and compelled people.

Northup is also threatened and whipped to accept him as a slave. He narrates that "I asserted, aloud and boldly, that I was a free man- a resident of Saratoga, where I had a wife and children, who were also free, and that my name was Northup...He denied that I was free, and with an emphatic oath, declared that I came from Georgia" (22). Northup is whipped continuously to accept his new identity. He states the situation of his not realizing himself as a slave. He further says, "I was becoming almost unable to speak. Still he plied the lash without stint upon my poor body, until it seemed that the lacerated flesh was stripped from my bones at every stroke" (23). Only after making one inferior "Others" he/she can be controlled and moved on own will. The brutality and the violence attitude of white over black are seen as the control and domination of slave body. The ideology is created by the society and culture practices where one is always in the margin because of the power and authority. The construction of slave body is also the because of power and authority of white master who always use their power for the domination of poor and pathetic slave.

He also shades light on human trafficking and physical violence of the slaves. Children are also the victim of this cruel business along with their parents and sold separately. If they do not follow their order then they are threatened and whipped. Children are sold in different place with different people. No slave holders show any sympathy upon them while children are separating from their parents. Eliza, a mother with two children is sold but they all are purchased separately. She begs for all of their purchase with same master but she is beaten and threatened if she shows her grief and tries not to follow their action. Randall and Emily are the two children age of twelve and seven or eight respectively. Northup narrates the ongoing commodity of slaves as:

A man purchased Randall. The trade is going on, Eliza was crying aloud, and wringing her hands. She besought the man not to buy him, unless he has bought herself and Emily... the man answered that he could not afford it, and then burst into a paroxysm of grief weeping plaintively. Freeman turned round to her savagely, with his whip in his uplifted hand, ordering her to stop her noise, or he would flog her...he would take her to the yard and give her a hundred lashes. (49)

Slaves are bought and sold in the market as like commodity. They are tortured both physically and mentally. As Barrett states that, "Narrative representations of the tortured or injured body are virtually ubiquitous in the texts of ex-slave narratives" (Barrett, 431). In Northup's text also we find the large number of tortured and injured body. All the characters described in the text are tortured differently and all suffer the most. Barrett also analyses Northup's narrative in her article by saying

[T]he figure of the black woman in bodily distress is employed by male narrators to provide dramatic testimonies concerning the evils of slave-holding. Northrup, for example, presents repeatedly to his reader Eliza, whose deterioration after separation from her children is read primarily through the text of her body; more usually, how-ever, reference is made to the sexual persecution of female slaves. (431)

Female body is treated as the means of their entertainment, a toy for sexual pleasure and also as the means of reproducing more slaves after the ban of Trans-Atlantic slavery in 1808. Not only Eliza her daughter Emily is also not sold with her mother rather Mr. Burch possesses her for more money. She is regarded as the most demanded girl for white masters in future. So, Burch ignores to sell her in low price. In narrative we can read Burch's saying, "[T]here were heaps and piles of money to

be made of her, he said, when she was a few years older. There were men enough in New- Orleans who would give five thousand dollars for such an extra, handsome, fancy piece as Emily would be, rather than not get her... she was a beauty a picture a doll one of the regular bloods" (53). Even a girl child is separated from her mother for fulfilling his hidden interest. A girl is a monetary object and the matter of beauty which is used to attract more men and earn more money by fulfilling their desires. Her youth and physicality is cashed and abused her until she is able to act as their wish. Slave children are the long term cash products who benefit them from their childhood to old age if nothing does happen. Slavery in its nature is very brutal and inhuman where no one can imagine to have free live. The life is very torturous and violent where in every step has fear of death and black future. No former slaves can imagine their free life also do not know about the lives of outer world. They are bounded in such very limited spaces where they think is only the world exists which they have seen and experienced. They dream for the free life but are unable to experience and life ends with the desire of having a liberty. Generation after generation are indulging in slavery and for them freedom is the meaningless thing. The word freedom is like an unfulfilled dream. Freedom is beyond of the lives of slavery. During slavery free blacks are also kidnapped and enslaved by giving them mental and physical torture.

Slave body is constructed as the material body where slaves are bought and sold in market with bargain as like cattle. Slaves are purchased for the purpose of plantation in the south. Southern part is the former place of practicing slavery. Slaves are transported from north to south for the plantation in cheap value. Solomon is also transported from north to south. He is brought to Louisiana from Washington. Northup tells about his transferring from one place to another which is

totally unknown for him and beyond from his imagination. He narrates that, "at Fredericksburgh we were transferred from stage coach to a car, and before dark arrived in Richmond, the chief city of Virginia. At this city we were taken from cars, and driven through the street to a slave pen, between the railroad depot and the river, kept by a Mr. Goodin" (32-33). Most of the slaves are purchased from the market for plantation and domestication. Solomon at last purchases by William Ford and moves to parish of Avoyelles, heart of Louisiana. He is broadened from New – Orleans to Louisiana.

Similarly, slave body is constructed as a dead body. The ill slaves are leaved to die than to care them well. They die without having medical treatment and care. S Mitchell argues in her writing entitled: "Constructing the Slave Body" that; African American were physically and intellectually inferior to white and naturally suited to slavery" (48). She again argues:

The slave body was one site of the battle between slaves on one hand and owners and physicians on the other. At one extreme, this battle was fought over the often-denied rights of slaves to decide on appropriate medical treatment for themselves and their families. A common trait of slave owners was the desire to be informed when a slave was ill in order to make decisions regarding the slave's treatment. (48)

It means slaves have no right to decide about their medical treatment and have to lose their life because of the lack of medical treatment. Northup mentions his shadow like figure, Robert, a freeman as like him from Cincinnati, seized at Fredericksburgh, placed in confinement and in Goddin's pen about three weeks. Northup says

Robert was taken ill... he had the small-pox. He continued to grow worse, and four days previous to our arrival in New Orleans he died. One of the sailor sewed him in his blanket, with a large stone from the ballast at his feet, and then laying him on a hatchway, and elevating it with tackles above the railing, the inanimate body of poor Robert was consigned to the white waters of the gulf. (42)

The minor disease becomes the cause of poor Robert's death. He is the representative of the slaves who die because of the lack of medicine and proper treatment. This is also the result of the cruelty and inhumanity of the so-called masters. Nobody does care about the death of slaves. They are always the ignorant figure. No master and mistress do care if any slave gets ill. Northup describes his condition of getting ill and his masters' behaviour towards him

When in health I found little difficulty in keeping pace with my fellow-labourers, but now it seemed to be an utter impossibility. Often I feel behind, when the driver's lash was sure to greet my back, infusing into my sick and dropping body a little temporary energy. I continued to decline until at length the whip became entirely ineffectual. The sharpest sting of the rawhide could not arouse me. Finally in September, when the busy season of cotton picking was at hand, I was unable to leave my cabin. Up to this time I had received no medicine, nor any attention from my master and mistress. (116)

Some slaves are cured by their master because of the fear of loss in their business. Otherwise no one does care whether slaves are getting ill or dying. Death of slave is not the big matter for the masters. They are dying as minor insects and are unnoticeable. Even masters search for profit and loss in death of the slaves. So, slave

body is constructed as dead body. it is not a crime to kill slaves rather they are killed even for minor offences. Sometime they are attacked to death because of cruelty and jealousy. If a slave gets attention from the master or mistress then he or she becomes the victim of hatred and attack of them. Mistress Epps is jealous with Patsey, a very pathetic and more victimized figure because of her husband's passion towards Patsey. So, she wants to see Patsey suffer. Northup explains about the reality that, "Nothing delighted the mistress so much as to see (Patsey) suffer, and more than once, when Epps has refused to sell her; has she tempted me with bribes to put her secretly to death, and bury her body in some lonely place in the margin of the swamp" (History vs Hollywood). Owners do not have any sympathy and positive feelings and emotion towards slave. As a woman mistress Epps does not understand the complex life and her compulsion to follow her husband. In comparison to men women are more emotional and sympathetic towards others pain and suffering but here Patsey is in double trouble. She suffers equally from both sides. Bryce Longenberger indicates over the reality of suicide and death in slavery through Terry L. Synder's statement that, "the nature of self- destruction among slaves have been largely overlooked because, during the time of slavery, it was committed suicide versus slaves who died of other causes" (Longenberger, 31). Slaves choose to end their life than having fearful and insecure life as a slave. In each and every situation they have to suffer more and more. Their body is not the flesh body rather they have to make their master please at any time they offer. So, even life in their body their body is like dead body. They lose all kinds of pain and emotions and just present them as if they are some lifeless object.

An innocent man from Natchez is killed by Mr. Marshall, a person from wealthy and aristocratic in the country of William Ford. He killed that person

because of anger. Death is regarded as crime in slavery. "On the floor of one of the rooms lay the ghastly corpse of the man from Natchez, while Marshall, enraged and covered with wounds and blood, was stalking back and forth" (Northup, 134).

Death is the ultimate stage of living being and all have right to live but in slave's condition it depends on their desire without any conditions and views. No age boundary does work in slavery. A young master can have ill treatment towards an old and aged slave. Northup also describes about an old slave uncle Abram, Who was frequently treated with great brutality, although he was one of the kindest and most faithful creature in the world. I found him lying on the cabin floor, his clothes saturated with blood. He informed me that he had been stabbed! (Northup, 168). He further describes the situation about his body that, "Epps was so enraged threat, that with drunken recklessness, he flew upon the old man, and stabbed him in the back. It was a long, ugly wound, but did not happen to penetrate far enough to result fatally. It was sewed up by the mistress, who censured her husband with extreme severity, not only denouncing his inhumanity" (168). Epps finds fault in everything and orders uncle Abram contrary of his job he fails to do work properly and because of confusion and nervousness, he doesn't commits any blunder but having intoxication and anger, he tried to kill him. There is no need to have great mistake of slaves but their punishment is not determined as their mistakes rather on the mood of the master. They are punished not according to their level of mistakes rather depends on mood and behaviour of the master. Mr. Epps is the cruelest being among all the master Northup mentions. He too expresses his feeling over his character that:

Master Epps was a roustering, bdlustering, noisy fellow, whose chief delight was in dancing with his "niggers," or lashing them about the yard with his long whip, just for the pleasure of hearing them screech

and scream, as the great welts were planted on their backs. When sober, he was silent, reserved and cunning, not beating us indiscriminately, as in his drunken moments. (107)

Traditional Europeans characterize black as less than human. W. E. B. Du Bois expresses his opinion about a black man even in today's time that, "free he is but his freedom is ever bounded by Truth and Justice; and slavery only dogs him when he is denied his right to tell the Truth or recognize an ideal of Justice" (African American Literary Theory, 22). During slavery black people do not have right to speak truth so they are always in margin and dominated. A Negro driver of Edwin Epps is also killed very brutally. Here Northup describes his death

Summer before last he was so unfortunate as to incur the displeasure of the overseer, a coarse, heartless brute, who whipped him most cruelly. Augustus ran away. Reaching a canerick on Hawkins' plantation, he secreted himself in the top of it. All Carey's dogs were put upon his track – some fifteen of them- and soon scented his footsteps to the hiding place. They surrounded the rick, baying and scratching, but couldn't reach him. Presently, guided by the clamor of the hounds, the pursuers rode up, when the overseer, mounting on to the rick, drew him forth. As he rolled down to the ground the whole pack plunged upon him, and before they could be beaten off, had gnawed and mutilated his body in the most shocking manner, their teeth having penetrated to the bone in an hundred places. He was taken up, tied upon a mule, and carried home. But this was Augustus' last trouble. He lingered until the next day, when death sought the unhappy boy, and kindly relieved him from his agony. (161)

Such a pathetic condition of slaves is going on until the end of this system. Whites are too much cold hearted toward black slaves. They like to suffer the innocent people and take pleasure from their pain and sufferings. Only counted masters are quite more generous and kind hearted towards slaves. In Northup's life also he finds William Ford as a good master. He never tortures him physically and mentally rather he used to be pleased with his honesty and hardworking with perfection. In the narrative Northup not only points out the weakness and the negative aspects of white masters rather he praises Mr. Ford's and his behaviour. He saves his life from the attack from Tibeats. Tibeats tries to kill him but he becomes unsuccessful. William Ford stops him from doing murder without any big reason. Tibeats is an extremist who don't have any human feeling always is in aggression. Northup lets us know that Tibeats let him to die in hanging. Mr. Chapin tries to convince him about his rude behaviour with Northup but he does not listen. Mr. Chapin says, "Gentleman, I have a few word to say. You had better to listen to them. Whoever moves that slave another foot from where he stands is a dead man. In the first place, he does not deserve this treatment. It is a shame to murder to him in this manner. I never knew a more faithful boy than Platt. You, Tibeats, are in the fault yourself" (Northup, 74). If anyone discards the order or the decision of master like, Tibeats their ultimate punishment is death. So, killing slaves is not the big deal for masters during slavery. It is not conducted a crime rather slaves are more blamed and punished. Each and every time there is the fear of death for slaves and they have to be conscious enough. They are bounded by fear, anxiety, insecurity, and hopelessness. They could not imagine that they can also live free life rather they leave their hope for life and induce themselves within the situation. Northup always seeks for escape and also tries but he does not get success.

Because of the brutal physical violence and treated them only as a bodily figure without any emotions and sufferings they are treated as an object for pleasure and labour. Body is only the matter or the means for them to act as their will. They are whipped if they donot perform well. Northup says that, "it was rarely a day passed by without one or more whippings. It is the literal, unvarnished truth, that the crack of the lash, and the shrieking of the slaves, can be heard from the dark till bed time on Epp's plantation" (117). The physical and mental torture and loss of hope always haunts the slaves. Because of harsh brutality, suppression, physical violence, sexual assaultsare the reason of death and suicide. A critic, Bryce Longenberger analyses about the cause of death and suicide in slave in her article entitled, "The Inability to Commit Suicide: An Analysis of Steve McQueen's *12 Years a Slave*". According to her, "Slaves who commit suicide often acted in defiance of and in resistance to their master" (Longenberger, 31). When people lose their hope of life and want to resist from pain then they chose the ultimate end of life. She takes reference from Linda Kay Kneeland who explains that, "Slave choose suicide as a form of retaliation when they "determined that they are unwilling to exist under the only choices they could perceive, and when they saw only more pain in the future"" (Longenbeger, 31). Suicide also appears in Solomon's mind when he loses hope for freedom and better future. He is thinking that, "death was far less than the living prospect that was before us" (Northup, 40). When a man is going through difficulties and does not see any solution to overcome the situation then he/she chooses death and end their life.

Physical violence, sexual harassment and mental torture are the inevitable things in slave's life. No each day is there where they are not punished and abused. Every day they have to go through harsh brutality. They hardly experience the good

quality of their master. They have no right to speak as their wish. They are totally under the control of masters both physically and mentally. When people have to move in others wish and order then that is the most torturous experience in life. Slaves are the bounded and controlled beings. They don't have right to speak, laugh, and also feeling heartbroken without the wish of master. Then onward he faces lots of brutality, harassment and inhumanity. He starts to be fearful from human faces, especially from white. His image for white is changed to a cruel, inhuman and harsh brutal being without any sympathy and kindness towards the poor being. Because of fear of more torture he accept him as a slave. An ill slave does not get medical treatment rather he dies without getting medicine. Even a minor disease becomes the cause of death. Robert, a slave who also come through the same situation of Northup dies because of small pox. He dies on the way to New Orleans and his dead body is thrown in the water. No any cultural and religious rituals are for slaves. They are not regarded as human rather less than animals. Kathryn Hampshire, a critic introduces slavery in her article, "On Cinematography and Discomfort in *12 Years a Slave*", "Slavery is violent by its nature. From the physical brutality to the psychological damage enslavement inflicts" (Hampshire, 22). Brutality and violence are the identical to slavery. Northup experiences the life near to death when Master Tibbeats hanged him in the tree. He narrates so painful incident of his life that, "Tibbeats tied my wrists, drawing the rope around them with his utmost strength. Then he bound my ankles in the same manner. In the mean time the other two had slipped a cord with my elbows, running it across my back, and trying it firmly. It was utterly impossible to move hand or foot. With remaining piece of rope Tibbeats made an awkward noose, and placed it about my neck" (73). To take a revenge Tibbeats

hanged him which is so severe for a slave who does not have any right and power to defence him.

Accordingly, the Power and position of a person determine the treatment over other. Tibbeats use his power over Northup. As a master he has authority to do whatever he want to do with him and as an inferior, Northup tolerates and waiting for the mercy. The power determines the superiority and the inferiority in the society. Powerful people are always in top of the system and powerless are dominated and marginalized. In slavery system the hierarchy between superior and inferior is lined by the power of money and authority and race. Whites are superior and black as inferior being. It is a natural process that inferior is suppressed by superior. So, it is normal to have brutal behaviour towards slave. The body inflicted very badly after his hanging. For a long time he is hanged and he is in pathetic condition where he narrates,

I was yet bound, the rope still dangling from my neck, and standing in the same tracks where Tibbeats and his comrades left me. I could not move an inch, so firmly had I been bound. To have been enabled to lean against the weaving-house would have been a luxury indeed. But it was far beyond my reach, though distant less than twenty feet. I wanted to lie down, but knew I could not rise again. The ground was so parched and boiling hot I was aware it would but add to the discomfort of my situation. If I could have only moved my position, however slightly, it would have been relief unspeakable. But the hot rays of a southern sun, beating all the long summer day on my bared head, produced not half the suffering I experienced from my aching limbs. My wrists and ankles, and the cords of my legs and arms

began to swell, burying the rope that bound them into the swollen flesh. (76)

They are never expected to be free from physical and mental torture. Therefore, slavery means to suffer physically and psychologically. For a free person to accept himself or herself as a slave is a torture that conform them to have bounded and controlled life. Their expectation for freedom and free life is only for a dream. Northup also experiences such feelings when he finds him in confinement within chains and has lashes of whipping. He also talks about the very severe attack of Patrollers to Wiley. In Bayou Boeuf patrollers have organization they have right to seize or even shoot the wandering slaves in plantation. They have a leader armed and accompanied by dogs that attack Wiley and punish him. Northup narrates the whole pathetic scenario of attack:

Wiley fled before one of these companies could overtake him, but one of their dogs, a great ravenous hound, griped him by the leg, and held him fast. The patrollers whipped him severely, and brought him, a prisoner, to Epps. From him he received another flagellation still more sever, so that the cuts of the lash and the bites of the dog rendered him sore, stiff and miserable, insomuch he was scarcely able to move. It was impossible in such a state to keep up his row and consequently there was not an hour in the day but Wiley felt the sting of his master's rawhide on his raw and bleeding back. His suffering became in tolerable, and finally he resolved to run away. (157)

He expresses his traumatic experiences very lively. Through his narration we can easily guess how pathetic his life was. He experiences torturous life himself and also sees in others life very nearly. When one get such torture in one's life then no one

could have hope for life and someone risks their life by flying from such hellish place. He has noted the very heart touching and frightening experiences of every slaves who come in his life. Slaves are not even treated better than animal. Animal can get love and care from its master but slave are treated so inhumanly. The image of violence and brutality is so harsh. They are punished or stripes till their death. Such unsympathetic and cold hearted person does not understand a mother's pain to separate from her children. Slave life is unremarkable thing for white. They always glorify themselves and dominate slaves as mere object instrumented for their will. They are habituated to play with the emotions of slaves. A master Edwin Epps, the cruellest person gets pleasure from torturing slaves. They are ordered to act as his wish. "He does as his mood, if he is in dancing mood then he orders slaves to dance for him, or if he is in whipping mood he would drive the slaves around the yard and whip them for fun" (History vs Hollywood). He feels pleasure when slaves are in pain. Usually he feels delight through "lashing them about the yard with his long whip, just for the pleasure of hearing them screech and scream, as the great welts were planted on their back" (Northup, 106). Slave's body is the means of entertainment and a toy to fulfil their desires. The sufferings and pain of slaves are not important and under concern so they show their anger, fear, desire to them. In review of movie *Twelve Years a Slave*, Esther Wolfe explains that, "12 Years a Slave...specifically its realistic portrayal of the violence and trauma of slavery and the images of the tortured slave body" (17). She further argues that, "it prolonged, unflinching images of slave torture and suffering, lingering on graphic scenes of brutality including whipping, hanging, beatings, and rape" (Wolfe, 17). Slaves are going through these inhuman activities. The slave life is the extreme level of harsh brutality and domination. It is beyond of our imagination and expectation. Mostly

female slaves are double victimized. They are also harassed sexually along with physical and mental torture. There is an article about North American slave narrative entitled, "Value of the Project" discuss about the practice of slavery in antebellum south; "slavery provided the economic foundation that supported the dominant planter ruling class. Under slavery the structure of white supremacy was hierarchical and patriarchal, resting on male privilege and masculinist honor, entrenched economic power, and raw force" (introduction). So white planters own working force only to upgrade their economic possession and supremacy by purchasing low cost slaves and dominate them. Female slaves are in double margin. They have to be the victim of both sides. Northup has described about her in-between life where she has to suffer more in comparison to her companion. He narrates that, "Her back bore the scars of a thousand stripes; not because she was an unmindful and rebellious spirit, but because it had fallen to her lot to be the slave of a licentious master and jealous mistress. She shrank before the lustful eye of one, and was in danger even of her life at the hands of the other, and between the two" (Northup, 123). Patsey is in between of her master and mistress. She has always fear of danger from both of them. Northup further says that, "the enslaved victim of lust and hate, Patsey had no comfort of her life" (123). Patsey could not share her sufferings and pain with her mistress. Rather she delights to see Patsey suffer more. She gives bribes to other male slaves to kill her. "Nothing delighted the mistress so much as to see her suffer, and more than once, when Epps had refused to sell her, has she tempered me with bribes to put her secretly to death, and bury her body in some lonely place in the margin of the swamp" (Northup, 124). Patsey becomes the hatred figure for her mistress. A female slave has to go through lots of trouble and pain in her life. She

does not get single word of sympathy which may help as a healer. So, lots of patsey are victimized mentally and physically by their mistress.

Although, slaves are always dehumanized but female slave body is victimized more than all others. Patsey, a black former slave who is brought from another master because of his heavy debt and she is known as queen of field. She works double faster than any other and also obedient and faithful. She is a very joyous, laughing, light-hearted girl who always enjoy her life without any stress. She is beautiful because of her character so all the masters are lustful with her. Master Epps most often whips Patsey while he is drunk. In the narrative it is narrated that, “as he came from Holmesville, elated with liquor- and it was often... he would whip her, merely to gratify the mistress; would punish her to an extent almost beyond endurance” (Northup, 129). White males are in double position. They do not want to lose their control over wives and also want to have unwanted relation with female slaves. Just to see his mistress happy and to gratify her he lashes the whip over poor Patsey without any reason. He fells fun on whipping them and gets satisfaction with their screaming and pain. Ramona Simmons writes about “Scoured Souls: The Imbalance between Mistresses and Female Slaves” where she talks about the oppression of male master becomes the cause of hatred and jealousy towards female slaves. She argues that, “master Epps, belittles Patsey, a female slave that is highlighted as his favourite for the amount of work she can accomplish in comparison to the other slaves... captures the plantation mistress’ attention” (Simmons, 27).She raises the issue that the female slaves and mistresses are dominated by male masters. Unlike slaves, mistresses are also a slave in their psychological view of equality. According to Simmons, “female slaves emerged as the individuals suffering the most abuse, becoming sexual object for masters to prey

upon. Alongside, they became victims of the mistress' violence for these unwanted sexual advances from the master" (Simmons, 29). With these both double trouble female slaves have very discomfort and pitiful life. Master's violence is enough for them but the additional torture from mistress make their life hell. The hatred and the agony of mistress calls for more trouble and brutality of master which makes them to lose hope for future. Nothing remains to be hopeful in their life beyond death.

Simmons further says that, "when considering the mistreatment of female slaves at the hands of their mistresses, the physical harm is what comes to mind primarily" (28). A research done by Harvard University Professor, William Johnson, female slaves are taken as physical labour to maintain the domestic position of wives (28). So, female slaves are just an object whoever use them as their wish. The master slave relation is very unsympathetic where there is no any respect and honour with each other. Mostly, masters are indifferent towards the situation of slaves. They use them according to their mood. Most of the mistresses oppressthose female slave who have relation with their husband in order to deprive him from pleasure he is seeking for. Most often, female slaves are individually suffered and become the sexual object to satisfy their master's desire. They live their life as compulsion and also dream for freedom but it could not be fulfilled. So, they adjust themselves with a very abnormal life as normal and simple. It is very hard for them to escape from that horrible life. They are treated very inhumanly. Northup narrates about the horrible whipping of Patsey by Epps as "the most cruel whipping that ever I was doomed to witness- never recall with any other emotions than that of horror- was inflicted on the unfortunate Patsey" (Northup, 108). Jealousy and anger fall with uncontrolled and unsatisfying lashes upon the naked body of a poor girl. Sometime mistress Epps also gives order to punish Patsey when master Epps is not at home.

Because of jealousy and hatred she feels pleasure to watch Patsey's suffering. Northup says that, "it has been seen that the jealousy and hatred of Mistress Epps made the daily life of her young and agile slave completely miserable" (Northup, 168). This is how the slave body is constructed as the hatred body. While whipping, "Mistress Epps stood on the piazza among her children, gazing the scene with an air of heartless satisfaction" (Northup, 170). She feels satisfied when her hatred person get punished in front of her husband who is sexually obsessed with her. Women are very loving, caring and sympathetic figure who cannot see another person in trouble but in the case of Mistress it has not been seen. Master Epps orders Northup to whip Patsey with more and more strikes and Northup follows him. But his anger never ends even Solomon is tired of whipping. At last he ceases whip from his hand and starts whipping. Patsey cries for mercy but he could not listen to her and keep on striking over her lacerated body. Northup further describes the scene that,

She was terribly lacerated... the lash was wet with blood, which flowed down her sides and dropped upon the ground. At length she is struggling. Her head sank listlessly on the ground. Her screams and supplications gradually decreased and died away into a low moan. She no longer writhed and shrank beneath the lash when it bit out small pieces of her flesh. I thought she was dying. (171)

The optimum level of brutality and agony has shown through these lashes. A normal human could not present him/herself in such a cruelty. Only a butcher can perform like this. The hidden butcher qualities comes from this insensible whipping. He acts as a criminal who does not have any humanity and sensitivity over other. He is the exceptional figure of brutality. He wants to kill her but because of being tired he let her to be alive. After the incident Patsey is not what she had to be. She leaves

to speak other, always remain silent. She is psychologically violated during that time. So, she loses the hope for liberty which she used to dream of. Northup has described the situation of Patsy after whipping. According to him, “from that on she is not what she had been... she fell into mournful and desponding mood...she became more silent than she was” (Northup, 172). Patsy is representative character of slavery system through which we can imagine the position of a woman as a slave. Even in a liberal society women are highly dominated and they are victimized physically and sexually. In slavery there is no any fear of law and humanity rather masters feel masculine when they dominate their slaves. Sexual assault, physical violence, hardship and mental torture, rape, whipping, hanging all are common in slavery. They are the natural things in slavery and in slave's life. Through this narrative a reader get the clear vision of harsh reality and the unimagined life of the slaves and uncommon practice of slavery in America Northup's enslavement.

In conclusion, after analysing the text under the issue of the construction of slave body the researcher finds the very brutal and violent images of white masters. Slavery in itself has negative meaning but after this analysis we cannot find any positive sign over slavery system. Rather we see the unimagined world that could not exist in the normal human world. The images of slave body horrify all the readers. Slavery possesses human being as an object for another human. Human life is valued as a materialized thing. They are put in the market for business purpose. Slaves are not regarded as human but they are taken as an unemotional being with whom anyone can behave as their will. Beating, hanging, threatening, whipping, lynching are common in a slave's life. There is no day without having whips or lashes. Slave body is tortured, beaten, threatened, hanged, whipped, and killed unsympathetically. Slaves are like property for the white masters and they are very

brutally treated and their life is always in risk. Slave narratives are the story of the former slaves written about their horrible past life and traumatic experience to heal their wound of slavery.

Mostly the slave narratives are about the negative attitude of slave holders and in favour of slaves. Slave masters are defined very negatively and as very brutal and inhuman. But after reading Northup's story we find the neutral position about the slave master's relationship. No exaggeration of slave's sufferings and the negative impression of master have been found in his narrative. He describes the actual nature of the masters. He not only talks about the negative points but also about the good points of the master he serves in his life. He describes Mr. William Ford and Chapin as the very generous masters he finds in his life. They are very kind towards their slaves and care about them. Mr. Bass is also a white man who helps to rescue Northup from slavery. So, he has positive attitude towards them. He presents all the people what they are in real life according to his narrative. He tries to portray the reality of his slave life. Therefore, we have to believe him that this is the real account of his life.

Accordingly, as a researcher I have arrived in a conclusion that slaves don't have their own life rather they are possessed by their masters and treated as their will. Some of them treated as the material object and some as sexual toy and the machine for reproducing more slaves. During such treatment they are beaten, hanged, threatened, sexually harassed, and killed. They are nobody for the white people. Their pains and sufferings are unnoticeable. Nobody shows sympathy over their pathetic life but they are treated violently without any reason. Their body is just a machine to perform what they have said. They are just the toys for white masters. Their life is controlled and bounded in limited area. Through reading such a slave

narrative we can make an image of slavery system and the horrific and terrible life of slaves. How they are tortured and treated lower than animals is clearly visualize after reading such confessional writing. After reading Northup's story a reader is also traumatized, the violence he experiences, the brutal treatment of master Tibeats, Patsey's suffering, death of Robert, Eliza's wound of separating from her children, and his life under the threat of death, all are unimagined and unexpected for a normal person. This mental experience is found after reading the narrative. So, as a researcher I have found the very pathetic life of slaves and their master's treatment towards them. Therefore, abolition is needed to rescue all the slaves from the hell of slavery and move them to the free life.

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