

I Introduction

Lorraine Hansberry is one of the world famous African American playwrights. Her play *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) was the first play by an African-American woman. This play won the New York Drama Critic's circle Award as the best play of the year. She was the youngest African American, the fifth woman and the first black to win the award. Her success opened the floodgates for a generation of modern black actors and writers who were influenced and encouraged by her writing.

Lorraine Hansberry was born in 1930, the youngest of four children of Carl Augustus Hansberry and Nannie Hansberry. This family was a respected and successful black family on Chicago Illinois. Her mother Nannie Hansberry was the daughter of an African Methodist epical minister. And Carl Augustus Hansberry was a successful real estate businessman an inventor and a politician who ran for congress challenging discrimination upon the black community.

Her parents were prominent leaders in national black political and cultural circles and as a result she met a number of influential African-Americans during her childhood.

Hansberry went to college after the demise of her father; Carl Hansberry. Her first desire was to become a visual artist. So, she attended the art institute of Chicago. Then she was educated in the segregated public schools as her family worked within the system to change the laws of governing segregation. After she finished her high school level, she briefly attended the University of Wisconsin at Madison before moving to New York. She became interested in some drama groups. She began writing, sharing the parts of her first play with friends in her own living room. They helped her raise money to stage the play, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959). She became the prominent African-American woman writer for the American stage during 1959 when she was only twenty nine years old. She married to Robert Nemiroff, a white Jewish intellectual, whom

she first met on a picket line protesting the exclusion of black athletes from university sports. She worked as an associate editor at *Freedom*, Paul Robeson's radical black newspaper.

With the help of poetic language and folklore, Hansberry addressed such issues like black victimization, the emotional and social effects of racial oppression and the difficulties African-American people faced in trying to achieve a sense of identity in a society dominated by white cultural values. From her parents she has received a legacy of resistance to oppression and exploitation as well as an appreciation of African cultural rituals like music, song, poetic Afro-American language etc. and that are explicitly evoked in her writing. The influence of such values is obviously seen in her plays. In the play she has strongly dealt with the issue of African-American cultural identity crises in which the blacks neither can adopt the white culture nor they can adopt their own unique and pure African-Culture.

Hansberry used the success of *A Raisin in the Sun* as a platform to speak out for the American Civil Rights Movement and for the African struggled to free itself from white rule. She gave impassioned speeches and took part in panels and interviews to further these issues. After her initial success she lived only six years and was able to complete only one more play, a movie and a television script called *The sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (1964) which received mixed reviews and kept open for 101 performances only by the contribution and support of the theater community. It closed the night she died at 34 from cancer. After her death Robert Nemiroff, her husband completed her final work, *Les Blancs*, (1970) a play about African liberation.

Hansberry's work was a preview of the African American spirit that was engulfed by the Civil Rights Movement. Her writing foresaw the demise of colonialism. She was a spearhead of the future of the African-American people.

The play *A Raisin in the Sun* has been entitled from a poem by Langston Hughes. This play appeared at the initiation of renewed political activity on the part of blacks and it revealed its historical agitation in the use of the Negro, which black activities were rejected in 1960s. This play illustrates the value of Afro-American culture. Hansberry set this famous play in familiar territory with the terrible living conditions of the black people. *A Raisin in the Sun* was the first Broadway play directed by a black person in 50 years and it was the first play written by a black woman. When the play became motion picture in 1961, the film received a nomination for the best screen play of the year.

The very play is about a poor black family of Chicago ghetto. The climax in the play emerges when Mrs. Lena Younger, the mother, receives the inheritance of \$10,000. There was a great dispute regarding the money about how to spend it. Lena is longing for a house in a safe neighborhood but her son Walter wants to invest it in a liquor store. Mrs. Younger argues against her son's plan. She believes that the liquor store will further poison the whole community. So, she completely rejects his plan. She wants the emblem of identity and security. On the other hand, Beneatha, the daughter of Mrs. Younger wants the money to be invested for her further education in medical school, as she wants to become a famous doctor. Unfortunately they lose the money but at last the play ends on a hopeful note when the family stands together against racial, economic and Afro-American culture injustice.

One of the most dominant aspects of the Black Civil Rights Movement (1954-1965) and Black Power Movement (1966-1975) was that it helped for the increasing awareness among contemporary negroes of the centrality of a positive racial and cultural identity.

Since the creation of American nation each generation endeavored to build upon the struggle of their forebars. Black consciousness included how they had collectively viewed their history and culture. Black consciousness also reflected the relationship between African and those

spread throughout the African Diaspora. The black people succeeded 'Negro' as the major term of self definition during the black power years. In the late 1960s in the aftermath of a smaller cultural nationalist movement African -American superseded black as a preferred term as self-reference stretching back to the arrival of the Africans in America, the ongoing molding of a diversity of African people and their experiences into a singular group experience was a profound historical and cultural development.

Undoubtedly, it is conceded today that there is no scientific and biological basis for the idea of race. In this modern world the historical and cultural impact of race continues to be widespread. Today culture is often considered as a basis for peoplehood or nationhood. The black people have fought to create a unique culture of their own community. Attitudes, behaviors and institutions among all Americans have to reflect and build upon racial and cultural equality. Indeed cultural egalitarianism was often seen as both interwoven with and fundamental to the movement in it. True freedom and equality demanded that Negroes feel good about themselves their culture and their history-Hence they started questioning the so-called superior white people and demanded true freedom, equality and cultural prosperity.

During the world war II and post world II war era between 1945 and 1965 the widespread Negro commitment to fight for democracy characterized the group-based spirit. The Negro membership in national Association for the advancement of colored people, the major civil rights organization of the modern era grew more powerfully. In this way, the black people started their agitation for the abolition of the racial and cultural prejudice.

After the play *A Raisin in the Sun* got the New York Drama Critics Circle Award in 1959 with the remark that it was the best American play of the year. Many critics appeared to elucidate the secret of its success. As a result, this play has elicited numerous criticism from a number of perspectives.

The main concern of the present research work is Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun*. It would be better to analyze what other critics and reviewers have commented about this play. *A Raisin in the Sun* has received a number of criticisms from many writers, scholars and critics from different perspectives. Some of them have focused their commentaries on the issues of racial and gender discrimination some black culture and myth on the one hand and on the other hand, their commentaries are related to morality, religions and ritualistic aspects, portrayal of character and trend and tradition of Afro-American centric literature too.

For some critics of cultural readings the play most dominantly deals with the black experience of suppression and domination. It blurs the boundaries and hierarchies in relation to 'high literature', 'high art' and many other aspects of human literature. Lee A. Jacobus argues the play as the illustration of the black culture that occupies the horizon of the black minds in America.

Hansberry's play shows her deepening concern for an understanding of some of the key issues of racial and sexual politics that interested her throughout her career.....themes of blacks pressing forward with legitimate demands and expressing interests in their African heritage were to become primary themes of black culture in the 1960s, 1970s and indeed to this day. (1106-1107)

Hansberry wants to form a unique independent African-American cultural tradition. From this perspective, many critics view the play as an effort to establish an independent identity of African- American culture by the help of new creation of their national history preserving and restoring their myths. Hansberry wants to exercise her power "to get through the trauma of racial, patriarchal and cultural existence in American society to establish and even to announce a need for the history and tradition of their own." (Carter, 41)

Some critics claim that Beneatha's longing for Africa as her refusal of the so-called superior white American culture. Nathan A Scott Puts his view forward:

Hanberry's account of struggles of a Negro family (the younger) to escape the daunting dreariness of the black ghetto on Chicago's south side was not of course, without its defectors. (331)

Kajet Dacres interprets nature of the characters and themes of the book as "the strength" of the black with their "values and ability to stick together" (310)

Here, both of the critics Nathan A Scott and Kajet Dacres suppose the play as the outcome of the writer's anti racial, anti-colonial, anti-imperial and anti-cultural tendency. So, Kajet evaluates the play as one of the world famous and ground breaking success in the history of black literature and culture.

Likewise another dominant critical evaluator Amiri Baraka evaluates critically in his work, "A Raisin in the Sun's enduring Passion" from radical racial and cultural perspective:

The younger family is part of the black majority and the concerns I once dismissed as "middle class" -buying a house and moving into "white folks" neighborhood"- are actually reflective of the essence of black peoples string and the will to defeat segregation, discrimination and the national oppression (19-20).

Along with myth her writing is deeply concerned with her own folk roots, her community and her culture in which she grew up. Another dominant critic Jewel Handy Gresham Nemiroff claims that Harsberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* is full of ethos, pathos which can capture the soul of Afro-American cultural value. According to him,

A Raisin in the Sun remains a work that is as powerfully relevant today as when it was written. It continues to be among the most performed works in the American theatrical repertory.....Hansberry stands as the mother of modern African American drama Strange, however, to call her "mother" of a vast body of cultural experience. (xiii-xiv).

Still more heart touching criticism is made by Retta Blaney in his work entitled Broadway revival of 'Raisin in the Sun's shines'. He admires that the play has been proved as a milestone for the achievement of liberation and the Afro-American cultural identity. He argues in a way which touches the heart of each African-American people.

For at the deepest level it is not the specific situation but the human condition, human aspiration and human relations...conflicts between men and women, parents and children, old ways and new and the endless struggle against human oppression, whatever form it may take, for the individual fulfillment, recognition and liberation that are at the heart of such plays. (1,2)

Hansberry's success lies in the themes of need for a home and privacy which was lacking among the black people and which was ultimately the major milestone in black history. Here another critic Gerald Weales has made a review of Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun*. He introduces the play *A Raisin in the Sun* as:

A play about a black family Chicago ghetto, Raisin has a protagonist who learns, painfully that being a man is not the same thing as being a success. The play shares themes and its realistic style with much of the rest of the American repertory. Hansberry is deeply concerned with what it means to be black particularly to be a black writer. (430)

Here Weales points out that being a black female writer Hansberry brought an issue to the world which is often rejected by most of the whites. He, further, argues that what type of pain and suffering she might have faced while writing this play; as being a black writer. He explains that the main cause of the suppression of the black people is that they always lacked their own home privacy and their distinctive Afro-American culture.

Weales also made another criticism on the play *A Raisin in the Sun* under his work "Drama" that is related to the tradition of the Afro-American culture. He states that Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* is bearing its own identification mark. He further critically examines the play and argues that Hansberry has become a very good example to write a Broadway play about a black family written by a black playwright. He comments that writing Broadway plays during 1959 was too difficult for each playwright. Hence, Weales praises Hansberry's theme. He puts his comment forward:

Such tags are not inaccurate, simple incomplete plays do have a family look about them but faced with perennial devices, recurrent ideas, a play may resemble its ancestors or its descendants as much as it does its siblings. Take Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* as an example. It was unusual in 1959 to have a Broadway play about a black family written by a black playwright. If Hansberry's play is new and surprising, on that score, it is very much of its time in its questioning of the favorite American myth, that success is not only possible but inevitable. (397)

In the same way Frank Rich in his critical Appreciation entitled: *A Raisin in the Sun*, The 25th Anniversary, has critically evaluated and appreciated Hansberry's play. He points out that her play is full of black nationalism. She is quite radical in destabilizing the Afro-American cultural value. He comments that this play is set on the basis of the past. He comments that Hansberry is a

writer of unlimited compassion and who always believed that all people must be measured by both their "hills and valleys". He further elaborates his appreciation:

Her play encompasses every thing from the rise of black nationalism in the united states and Africa.....she always saw the present and future in the light of the pastmiss Hansberry's works within the confines of what might be called a kitchen sink drama set in a cramped tri-generational household on the Hansberry's real drama is the battle for the souls and identity of Walter Lee Younger, the family's son.(7-8).

Likewise another critic Harold Cruse discusses about the moral and cultural values for the Afro-American people. He argues that Hansberry is such a playwright who wants to create harmony among the black and the so-called superior white people. He argues that for Hansberry assimilation and integration are the best solution for racial difficulties. He expresses his comment in this way:

"Ignoring completely the feminist value of *A Raisin in the Sun* and the fact that Hansberry was the youngest dramatist to win the best play award, simply because she represents assimilation and integration as a solution for racial difficulties. Cruse is a separatist who believes that all black acceptance of middle class [white] values is a "sell-out" and that therefore *A Raisin in the Sun* should be considered a "soap opera". (4-5)

Similarly another reviewer Clayton Riley in his review entitled "Lorraine Hansberry: A Melody in a Different Key" elaborates that Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun* is such type of play which is full of black ethos, pathos and the experience of suffering and pain on the basis of their color. He further compares the black experience along with the white American people's experience. He says that universality is the main focal point in Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun*. He expresses his comments on the play in the following way:

Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun* focuses on the universality of themes.....It emphasizes the fact that because black experience strikes "a different key" in the American experience, the universality is frequently overlooked. (205-212)

It is obvious that none of the critics or reviewer discusses the unification of the Afro-American culture along with their individuality and history. Despite having differences in their finding, they look if they are neglecting Hansberry's subject matter in which she discusses about the preservation and cultivation of Afro-American cultural identity as well as the Afro-American society. In the succeeding chapter the present researcher will explore and analyze Afro-American culture and its different aspects to explore the protagonists' quest for African-American cultural identity.

II. African-American Cultural Heritage and its Significance for the People belonging therewith

The way of life of people, their customs, religions, rituals, beliefs, ideas and their moral value is known as culture. Culture can be defined in another way that it is the sum of moral and ritual values that set up people's life style and the activities of everyday life. The most dominant manifestation of culture lies in daily activities such as communicating, childbearing, childrearing, singing, dancing, dressing, recreating and so on. And when these daily activities and behavioral-preferences are concentrated in creative expression then they become cultural forms of high level what we call the arts, i.e. music, literature, painting, dance, photography and so on.

In one way or another culture is in the network of human activities and human world. It is inseparable from human daily activities and behavioral-preferences. We cannot deny the fact that culture varies according to the variation of the human history that frequently changes with the change of time and the change of socio-political scenario and life style accordingly. Undoubtedly we can state that cultural field covers vast area including the intellectual and artistic products of a particular group of people. It covers different moments and aspects of human life such as literature, music, song, dance, food, language, sports, dressup, habits and attitude, religious rites and rituals, entertainment and so on. So, no doubt, we can state that culture is the accumulated knowledge of all social, literary, artistic and collective activity which is passed or handed over from one generation to another generation.

In this way, we can state that the study of art and literature forms parts of analysis of cultural production. Hence, it can be claimed that these cultural products help us to define groups of people, societies of whole nations. British cultural critic, Raymond Williams, takes culture as “the whole way of life of a social group or whole society [...], it is a signifying system through which necessarily a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored” (55). Williams, mainly focuses on the need of some kind of common culture as a unifying force in society. Here, he seems supporting the working class culture. In this way, Williams favours the culture of the working class people. On the other hand, E.P. Thompson, a Marxist historian views an alternative definition of culture as “the whole way of struggle (10) in the place of the whole way of life.

In the matter of cultural identity, Stuart Hall, one of the great cultural critics, in his essay entitled *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* defines another different way of thinking about cultural identity. He defines cultural identity in two different ways.

The first position defines ‘Cultural identity in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true’ self, hiding inside many other, more superficial or artificially imposed selves; which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Cultural identity in the second sense is matter of becoming as well as of being. It belongs to the future as much as to past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. (11-12)

What Hall views is that an identity lies not outside by within representation. So, an individual is culturally determined. A type of certain balance between individual

behavioral characteristic and a community's cultural pattern is possible only through a sound development of culture and individual belonging it. If an individual is engaged upon an alien world where the cultural practices including customs, rituals and beliefs are quite different, S/he would certainly meet some crisis there. "When someone brought up in one culture and placed in another culture S/he may face cultural shock and the reactions may be anger, frustration, fear, curiosity, fascination, repulsion hatred or confusion" (Saraswathi 223).

Thus, the totality of culture as a frame of reference shapes and controls human idea about the world in surrounding. Any individual may lose significant aspects of his/her culture or his/her world of experience by the time when there is a cultural displacement. So, one has to keep very close intimacy with his/her culture in order to enrich and prosper it.

The idea of search for identity, especially cultural identity has been rapidly rising among people after 1990s. The norms, values, customs, structures, institutions and modes of thinking about culture provided a space to people. Mikko Lehtonen, a cultural critic, regarding human beings as cultural beings asserts:

"Cultural symbols are omnipresent precisely for the reason that they are essential for our survival. Culture is the 'survival kit' of humankind. Being biologically defective humans must resort to their reflective resources for survival"(5).

Lehtonen, here comments that one must have individual existence to be a human being, and it is the cultural pattern that shapes one's individual characteristics. The

thoughts and sentiments of an individual find their appropriate route only because of culture. Hence culture is a life saving mechanism, the 'integrated whole' or 'totality'. It is an 'integrated whole' that has its own configuration though there exist different levels and sublevels. If we think of Lehtonen's idea we can claim that any individual becomes an integrated member of his/her own concerned culture community by acquiring its rules and instructions. It is, now, more obvious that an individual is better understood within the specific cultural system as history of each culture is characterized by a set of norms, values, beliefs and practices which are responsible for the individual behavior.

In this way, culture is an ambiguous term by its nature. Still culture is the common platform where any particular group of people has to live together who happens to get connected with one another in the process of settlement. Hence, it has been a phraseology to define the characteristic of individuals and their life styles, traditions along with a social and historical movement. It influences all human experiences, ideas and attitudes. So, no doubt, culture is different from one race to another, one moment of gender, occupation and ethnicity to another. Hence culture is the source of identity of different types of people living in a certain community. Undoubtedly we can claim that culture is the inherent property of human beings.

Now the main concern of the present research work is African-American cultural identity. So it is better to concentrate on Afro-American culture in detail. Afro-American culture evolved through creolization. Afro-American people succeed to retain their tradition and reform their past culture through creolization in which more than two cultures interact and with them taking the characteristics of another culture. Hence

different elements of African tradition interacted with religion, language, beliefs, norms and values of the American culture where they built up their culture through music, song, folklore, myth, practices, beliefs, language and so on. Hence, mixing up of the elements of African tradition with the American culture is called as Afro-American culture. This dynamic mixture of African culture was interacting and exchanging with Euro-American cultures, which were themselves varied because of the different national identities and cultural patterns of the oppressive white culture. So, the establishment of the cultural identity of Afro-American people was unique and quite different from the white American culture.

The African people had belief in different types of magical practices. They were afraid of the soul of the dead people. Through the ritual of burial they attempted to get rid of the soul of uncanny comings and afraid of the souls of the dead because they believed the powers of the soul of someone to whom injury was done during his life and those powers were not released in death which were now intent on doing harm by using a revengeful force. The African people thought that their life forces can be controlled through their good deeds and sacrifices. They believed that through sins the life force is taken away and misfortune is brought down. The whole community becomes involved in an effort to restore sacred order as well as prosperity of their village.

According to the African-American culture, art was an important part of the African way of life and it was tied closely to everyday activities. They used their art to help them to overcome the dangers of their environment and their religion. They believed in the universal life force which the almighty creator pours into the world and gives life

to every created thing, human beings, animals, plants and stones. They also believed that the dead retain their living force. The Afro-American people had great faith in priest or medicine man; who was supposed to be able to create a force which causes the divine power to flow and control its people in meaningful way. The medicine man undergoes a long period of training. The person learns practical means of healing the illness. He was thought to be a wise man who knows how to convince the use of his methods to heal his victim. He also has the ability to appear in a mysterious form. Hence the victim has belief on such persons as they were able to disguise in different form.

The Afro-American people had placed great value on the African masks as their cultural identity. Masks were used to enable the souls of the dead to make their appearance in a visible way. They had designed the masks for multi-purpose. So the design of the masks depended upon its purpose. The masks must be made as unreal as possible. They formed an analogy to particular divine forces and myths. The navels and genitals signified the continuance of mankind. The sculptors seen with a large navel can be interpreted as a sign that a very powerful spirit had already left the eternal body. Hence they had different means of indication of the will power of the spirit world. No doubt they were very much impressive with it in order to preserve their cultural existence.

About four million people from Africa to North America were carried by the slave traders over a period of almost four centuries. They became homeless and were separated from their tribes and families where they were enslaved in a new world. Although the slaves had brought rich heritage of Africa and other aspects of cultural life

as sculpture but they were of no use. Besides African languages, traditional African rituals and all practices were prohibited. Not only this much but also music, song, folklore and other Afro-American practices were strictly prohibited publicly. But music, song, folklore, folktales and dances flourished among the Afro-American people and there became their inseparable culture.

In every culture language becomes dominant part of their culture. So, it is also one of the inseparable parts of Afro-American culture. In the beginning Afro-American people were not intelligent enough to learn and communicate the English language at first. So, they spoke the Pidgin English language. Pidgin and Creole language which is still spoken in the parts of the United States of America reflects the pieces of the African culture. So, the English speakers of the Negro community were greatly influenced by their native language. In their community they used the language like Fante, Ga, Kikongo, Kimbundu, Mandika, Twi, Ease, Ibo and Yorba for communication. As time went on the Pidgin and Creole languages were also influenced by the language of settlers (French, German, Spanish and Portuguese) as well as native Americans. By twisting, breaking and mixing parts of the language spoken around them, Afro-Americans created a way to express themselves and communicate with other in the BEV which became the parts of their culture later. So, they created their own language and established their own unique culture. Hence language is one of the dominant parts of their culture.

Another dominant aspect of African-American culture is the drums and the traditional African music. Their communities maintained the basic features of traditional African music. So, when they had no drums or any musical instrument they would

practice “Patting Juba”. In the words of Solomon Northup patting juba involved, “Striking the hands on the knees, then striking the hands together, then striking the right shoulder with one hand, the left with the other all the while keeping time with the feet, and singing[...]”(10)

Besides, religion was another dominant aspect of Afro-American culture. There were several general cultural themes that ran throughout the African-American community. Religion was one of them. African people mixed their belief with the existing Christian religion and then they produced a theology of their own. Christianity spread rapidly throughout the black communities during the movement of Great Awakening. This movement illuminated the mystical and magical elements of Christianity, a side which the Africans could understand it. Lawrence W. Levine views:

“Magical folk beliefs encountered Christian myth and the result allowed slaves to exert their will and preserve their sanity by imposing a sense of rationality and predictability upon a hostile and capricious environment.”(63)

Blaissingame comments that Christian myth furthered a communal spirit among members of different tribes. Traditional folk beliefs held a more immediate appeal. African people took Christianity as a way to give them hope for the future and to strengthen their bonds between one another. Hence, the African Americans blended old styles with new in every aspect of their culture. He further argues “the secular songs told of the slave’s , loves , work , floggings and expressed his moods and reality of his oppression”.(23) In this way, the African-American people kept their culture in existence.

By the beginning of early 20th century the blues had emerged as a dynamic and powerful addition to the music of black America. Schultz presents his opinion,

“In the spirituals, black American first started to sing of their feelings of homelessness; in the blues, they continued to sing it”. (127).

In an interview taken in 1960, blues musician Sidney Bechet identified the source of the essential connection between music and story-telling. He says, “Me, I want to explain myself so bad. I want to have myself understood. And the music it can do that. The music, it’s my whole story”. (qtd. in Levine 190). Both gospel and blues are the genres of musical expressions of the cultural identity.

John Lee Hooker views the blues as “not only what’s happened to you its what happened to your fore parents and other people. And that’s what makes the blues” (qtd. in Levine 237). So the historical and cultural breadth of the blues illustrates the vitality and strength of the close connection between music and folklore. Mahalia Jackson comments that blue songs “are the songs of despair but gospel songs are the songs of hope” (qtd. in Levine 174). James Baldwin in his haunting short story, “sonny’s Blues”, illustrates the transcendent power of the intermingled storytelling-blues tradition. He views:

“While the tale of how we suffer and how we are delighted and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be heard. There isn’t any other tale to tell, it’s the only light we have got in all this darkness”.(139).

Likewise Zora Neale Hurston views that “somewhere songs for sound-singing branched off from songs of storytelling until we arrive at prose”. (Hurston 877). She

further argues that folklore is nothing less than “the boiled-down juice of human living” (Hurstun 875). In this way, the critics view in their own way about the songs and the music of African-American people.

Besides music, the Afro-American people believed on the oral tradition. They relied on the oral traditions much as their African ancestors did. Orator and storytelling is a way of bridging gaps between the black community’s folk roots and the black American tradition. So, elements of African culture synthesizing with the Euro-American culture ultimately became the Afro-American culture. Hence, they tried their best to keep their orator and storytelling alive by the means of oral tradition.

Imposition of White Culture upon Black Culture

Oppression and marginalization in America remained the main cause of rebellion and agitation for liberty. Besides racism and slavery became another cause of imposition of white culture over black culture. Although the blacks in America had brought their African traditions and culture with them during different period of time but their culture was dominated through different activities of the whites. So, the black people had no opportunity to flourish and prosper their African culture in America.

Just with the initiation of Columbus’s discovery of America, a large number of whites from different parts of the world migrated to America and then they started the colonization of American land. At that time whites, the so called masters, subordinated the blacks in every sphere of life. Racism appeared in the American soil from such subordination of black race.

Paul Gilroy argues that black self-identities and cultural expressions utilize a plurality of histories and that we should think of identities as being in motion rather than existing as absolutes of nature or culture. He views,

“it may be that a common experience of powerlessness somehow transcending history and experienced in racial categories; in the antagonism between white and black rather than European and African, is enough to secure affinity between these divergent patterns of subordination”.(158-9)

In order to escape from southern racist violence, the black people migrated to Northern cities. The main motif was search for freedom from the imposition of the so-called superior white culture. But in the North they felt more alienation, isolation and fragmentation in their task of finding a new shelter and establishing a new community of own. Du Bois has expressed the bitter Afro-American experience, the continuing process of alienation and the instability of black people. He comments;

“it was a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of world that looks an amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two ness- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dragged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder [...]. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife-this longing to attain self conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better, truer self. (364-65).

Undoubtedly there was cruelty and oppression in the time of slavery. The Afro-American people were extremely suppressed in every sphere of life. Besides, in the North, Black's lives were shaped by uncertainty, fear and apartness. They were expelled from their job. They were denied the possession of land. They were prohibited from formal education, shelter and medical facilities. This partiality worsen the deplorable condition of the blacks in their poverty and hopelessness.

In America racism is the most dominant issue raised by the African-American people. Racism is the issue that worsened and made a gulf in the relationship between blacks and whites in America. The African American people suffered a lot after their arrival in America. Historically their relationship took the shape on the basis of segregation and oppression of black people. As George W. Ellis views that the main cause of racism in America was whites' belief that their race was naturally superior and the colored race was naturally inferior. He further argues.

In the U.S. race prejudice is predicated upon the belief that the colored race is naturally inferior to the white race physically, religiously, socially and morally. As a matter ultimate fact it is actually based upon the advantages temporary and imaginary which the white groups economically, politically and socially. (II)

In America the whites developed an ideology to justify the blacks on the grounds of racial superiority of whites and the innate and permanent inferiority of the black race. In the fifteenth century biblical story of Noah's son, Ham in the Genesis 9:25-27. Noah had been angry because Ham saw him naked, So Noah laid a curse upon Ham's son, Canaan. The curse was that Canaan and all his descendents would be slaves. Whites

believed that Canaan settled in Africa and the inhabitants of Africa should be slaves and they are inferior forever. Treating blacks as inferiors whites forced them to perform manual labor which was the work of lower class and inferior people. In this way the belief in an inherent inferiority of blacks was proved. Whites took pleasure over blacks' toil, sweat and blood. Blacks remained colorized, oppressed and broken. There was no way out for them from the white society.

Around in late nineteenth century there was a movement that emerged in black community. Some of the blacks proposed for assimilation with the American whites on the other hand another group of the blacks proposed for their own distinctive and unique black culture. Later they came to the conclusion that they should refuse the proposal of assimilation with the whites. When they refused assimilation with whites they were forced to leave America. At the same time, some racist whites formed an organization entitled. Ku Klux Klan which aimed to maintain white supremacy in the south. This organization bitterly terrorized black people by dragging them from their homes, driving them away and destroying their property. In this way, the new century brought more violence and bloodshed to the blacks. There was no more option left for the blacks except accepting the injustice performed by the whites upon them.

So, the African-American people were suppressed in every sphere of their life. They were marginalized everywhere. Hence, there is no doubt to state that the history of American society is a history of oppression and marginalization. American geographical and cultural space has provided unlimited potential to the whites since its settlement. On the other hand blacks had been denied such spaces. In different historical periods the

African-American people tried to negotiate their relationships with their cultural tradition although the whites and their cultural heritage constantly marginalized them. Blacks' struggle continued in order to cross the boundaries of racial superiority to break the ethics of racism and to bring equality, justice and liberty till the 20th century. This struggle reached in its climax during the Civil Right Movement of 1960s. After that movement it began to protect and expand the rights of African-Americans to a great extend. Then they began to take the breath of relief in comparison of previous condition.

Opposition of Afro-Americans against White Cultures for their Identity

Afro-Americans thought that they had their own distinct and unique culture. For them their only culture was the most superior. So they started to resist and oppose against the so-called white superior culture form the beginning of the period of slavery. There were many slave narratives which were published between 1830s and 1865. Most of such narratives published during this period attacked the prevalent oppression of the black people. Some of the novels like William Will Brown's *Garies and their Friends* and Martin Delavey's *Blake and The Huts of America*, that flourished the anti-slavery movement and advocated for freedom. Undoubtedly it is obvious that it was a kind of resistance and opposition against whites for their freedom and justice. In this way, the blacks continued to resist the so-called superior white culture. They left no stone unturned for the opposition and resistance of the white culture.

The tendency of resistance became dominant in the period between 1890s and 1920s when the black novels took a revolutionary step. There were many novels written

as the protest of the white culture. Element of protest can be observed in the novels like Charles Chestnut's *The House behind cedars* and Sutton Grogg's *The Hindered Hand*.

America was prosperous and powerful in every field at that time. When America expanded its industries it needed a large number of labors. Then a large number of Negroes were transported to the North America as the labors. In the American industries. After their arrival in America they formed their community in Harlem, New York, where they had strange experience that forced them to revise their traditional ways of thinking. They made their motto: 'buy property' (Johnson 137) When they uplifted themselves economically, they tried to establish their cultural values and independent life in a new place. The new experience and the advanced living standard invited new literary movement. After this they no more fully depended upon the whites for their hand to mouth. Besides they had gained knowledge of different fields which helped them to live better life.

Then, in the history of America a kind of new movement emerged entitled New Negro Movement. This movement was named after Alain Locke's "The New Negro" which proved to be an important document of the Harlem Renaissance. This movement was the modern art movement of the Afro-American history Alain Locke wanted to give term to this movement as a 'spiritual emancipation.' He further commented that the Negro has "American ideas should therefore strive for recognition of those (517).

The "The New Negro" Proved to be one of the milestones to the black writers, artists, musicians, actors, intellectuals and others during that period. The cultural expression of "The New Negro" became widespread in America. Then the black cultural

movement got its energy from this movement and as a result Afro-American culture was no more shunned. After that many artists including Langston Hughes were inspired to expose the life style and culture of black people in such a way that had not been done before. As a result the Afro-American artists raised their voice for equality and recognition of the artistic values in the community of white Americans. This artistic movement made their literature protest writing. After this the Afro-Americans constantly raised their voice against the white supremacy for equality and liberty as well as their Afro-American cultural value.

Further Alain Locke comments in “Negro Youth Speaks” that “[...] with arresting visions and vibrant prophecies, forecasting in the mirror of art what we must see and recognize in the streets of reality tomorrow, foretelling in new notes and accents the maturing speech of full racial utterance”(Negro Youth Speaks 17). Most of the Afro-American artists and intellectuals shared their experience with this new and unique experience. As a result a number of black artists and writers followed his idea.

The Civil Rights Movement had been the hope of a large number of aspirations to middle-class people but ultimately it failed to do so. When it failed many of middle-class Afro-American youths formed the social base for a new nationalist movement against America. This movement became a relying slogan for the new born nationalist who began to defect from the Civil Rights Movement, particularly after the death of the great intellectuals Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. As a result this movement gave birth to new movement termed as Black Arts Movement. This movement had fought for full integration into the supremacy of white mainstream. Black Power too failed to raise and

point out the problems of black people resulted from oppression and capitalist exploitation. The Black Arts Movement defined the problems of black people that proposed the solution of their problem which was radically reformist. “A cultural revolution in Arts and ideas” (Neal 26). Larry Neal comments the purpose of the cultural revolution as:

The motive behind the black aesthetic is the destruction of the white thing, the destruction of white ideas and white ways of looking at the world. The new aesthetic is mostly predicted on ethnics who ask the question. Whose vision of the world is finally more meaningful, ours or the white oppressors? What is truth? Or more precisely, whose truth shall we express, that of the oppressed or of the oppressors? (27)

Black writers no more, pleaded for their equal status in white, dominated literary mainstream after the rise of the black aesthetic. Their works have become racially expressive, rather than racially rhetorical and they liked to speak as Negroes. So, they desired blackness everywhere in America.

During the depression era in America Be Bop arrived on the stage. The key concept of the Be Bop experience was that it was a cultural revolt against the white culture. The hippie society was developed as revolt against the white culture. The hipsters were in revolt with long beard, dark glasses even at night beret and a militant political attitude. These hipsters were black people who had been ignored in the south and who were bitter about being kept from realizing their full humanity. Later this revolt represented a new cultural fuel. As a result the African Americans were more inspired to

revolt against the supremacy of the white culture A B Spellman puts his opinion forward in this way:

The Be Bop revolution saw the Jazz musician adopting an entirely different social posture [...]. Here, for the first time, a black artistic Vanguard assumed whole studies of compartment attire, and speech which were calculated to be the indica of a group which felt that its own values were more sophisticated than, if not superiority the mores of the American society at large. The music and he manner developed concomitantly, which indicates that the musicians were aware that each musical innovation was a new way of commenting on the world, around them. (36)

There emerged different types of powerful external forces to the Negro Community that had a tremendous effect on the development of the arts and cultural movement during different era in the American history. Black people were constantly radical on every matter. Black, people and their intellectual artists began to understand that racial discrimination was just the product of capitalism. Thus, all of the Negro community began to be active as leaders and participants in campaigns for radical and revolutionary changes. Hence, this theme of revolution could be observed in the works of many Afro-American artists. Here, Richard Wright puts his view forward.

It means that a Negro writer must learn to view the life of a Negro living in New York's Harlem or Chicago's south side with the consciousness that one- sixth of the earth surface belongs to the working class. It means that a Negro woman having cotton in the south and the whole in swivel chairs in Wall Street and take the fruits of her toil. (56)

There were a number of Afro-American intellectuals, leaders and artists who continued their revolt against the so-called superior white culture. A number of revolutionary works were appeared in the Afro- American literary and cultural movement. One of the revolution heroes or artists who brought the revolutionary task at the climax was Langston Hughes. He dramatically carried out the nature of the revolutionary task of the black writers in his work entitled *Good Morning Revolutionary* at the first American writers Congress in 1935 which is as follows.

Negro writers can seek to unite blacks and whites in our country not on the nebulous basis of an interracial meeting or the shifting sands of religious brotherhood, but on the solid ground of the daily working class struggle to wipe out , now and forever all the old inequalities of the past. (9).

In this way the Afro Americans tried their best to preserve and prosper their distinctive and unique culture. They left no stone unturned for the conservation and prosperity of their culture. Hence their target on the great values of art would certainly help the black writers to throw off the chains of discrimination which were put on them by the so-called superior white racism and to establish their own principle and analysis of their art which explicitly shows their life style. They have carried out their virtue of finding beauty in them and they have offered liberty prosperity and progress in every sphere of the Afro- American people: Hence, they have struggled and tried their best for the establishment of Afro – American cultural identity.

III. Quest for Cultural Identity in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*

Impact of Mainstream White Culture upon the Characters

Raisin is the dominant issue that their culture with the supremacy. Hence it has long –rooted damaging effect within the Negro community. The so-called superior white people had oppressed the blacks in every sphere of their life. Age-rooted continued subjugation by the white people had a devastating effect on African-American families. The responsible male figures were often absent, so, women were in the burden of raising the children alone. Due to such a big gulf between the superiority and the inferiority prevailing by the means of race and the culture we can find out the problems in African American lives. Hence the black intellectual leaders and artists are trying their best to avoid such gap between their culture and the white culture.

Sufficient impact of mainstream culture can be observed in the behavior of the characters. The younger family was alienated from white middle class family. The white middle class family was well off; they had a big building with a yard, a big car and a happy family. At the same time, the afro-American people were living a miserable life. They didn't have a sufficient place to live in. they did have a small cramped house where they were compelled to pass their miserable life. They youngsters also seem to live in such world though their struggle to attain such life is nearby impossible because the youngsters are not a stereotype middle-class family. So, the characters belonging to the black family appears to be revolutionary and epochal.

We can also notice the effects of dominant white culture can be found by means of language. We can identify two different levels of speech the Standard English spoken by the whites and the vernacular spoken by the blacks. The whites reveal the language barrier that separates them from the black community. On the one hand, the whites are trying to impose their language upon the black community. They use formal and standard English but on the other hand, the black people don't follow the white language. They have twisted and broken the standard English language of the white people and reshaped and recreated their own vernacular. Thence the black community prefers their own distinctive vernacular to the Standard English, Mama, Beneatha's, other speaks to Beneatha like this

"I just wonder sometimes why you have to flit so from one thing to another all the time. You ain't never done nothing with all that camera equipment you brought home"-
(47)

Here, Mama has tried to keep her Afro-American language alive by deconstructing the grammatical rules of the so-called standard language of the white community. Hence, it obviously proves that the Afro-Americans follow no more white language rather they have created their distinctive Black English Vernacular that they use white communicating to each other.

By contrasting different levels of language Hansberry stresses the cultural situation of the two races. She has explicitly stressed the songs and music of the black community. They have their jazz Bebop community. They think that blues are the songs of hope. Blues are the way of recognizing and sharing human pain in order to overcome it . the blues illustrates the vitality and strength of the close connection between music and

the close connection between music and folklore. In this way, blues is a way of bridging gaps between black community's folk roots and the Black American tradition. Here Beneatha, Mama's daughter wants to enjoy the African song with the record.

The African-Americans used to practice "Patting Juba". This patting juba involved striking hands of the knees, then striking the hands together, then striking the right shoulder with one hand, and left with the other all the while keeping time with the feet and singing. They usually used to do so when they had no drums or any musical instrument. In this way, Beneatha maintained the basic features of traditional African music; dance and folk songs.

Alundi, Alundi

Alundi Alunya

Jop pu a jeepua

Ang gu soooooooooo

Ai yai yae.....

Ayhay- alundi.....(77)

Beneatha wants to keep her ancestral tradition alive by carefully following it. Not only that she also encourages her brother Walter and Mam, Mrs Lena younger is trying to sing and dance the way her ancestors did. She is trying to keep Nigerian folk song and dance immortal as it is the Afro-American cultural heritage.

Moreover, Hansberry also stresses the different social situations of the two racial groups. Obviously it is the conflict between the two races and between the cultures. The whites always reflect the social hierarchy in a society in which racism segregation and the oppression of blacks are the characteristics. Karl Linder says "I am sure your people must be aware of some of the incidents which have happened in various parts of the city when colored people have move into certain areas" (116)

Racism is based on the tendency towards categorizing and judging the values and standards of minority group cultures by the values and standards of the majority group cultures and labeling the former culture inferior. It is also based on the tendency towards adhering to and preferring the values and personal beliefs of one's own group. the concept of Negro race as inferior and European culture as superior is based on the belief that Negroes lack certain qualities.

In this way, the whites always dominate the blacks. Even in this context Linder is trying to convince the younger family and exploit them making their neighbor. Walter views the Afro-American race as " the world's most backward race of people and that's a fact"(38)

In the North, racism wasn't as powerful and omnipresent as in the southern states. The blacks may contradict the whites but they 'speak up' to them.

Women characters, in this drama, are shown double marginalized. They are not only oppressed by racism but also by men's repeated negligence and abandonment. The scenes describe that women are responsible for themselves, their families and their

communities. Here, in the play *Mr. Younger*, Mrs. Lena Younger's husband, is not seen in any scene. In the absence of her husband Mrs. Younger has to take the responsibility for her family to rear them up. In the same way, Walter Lee Younger, being a responsible male character treats other family members as if he is quite irresponsible. When he gets angry with Ruth he shouts at her and expresses his anger towards her; "That is just what is wrong with the colored woman in this world....Don't understand about building their men up and making 'em feel like they somebody." (34). In such a way, Ruth convinces and makes him cool minded when Walter and his wife Ruth argue and quarrel it is Mama supports the family financially, intellectually and emotionally whenever required.

The Younger family is struggling for their life. There is tussle among the family members. Everybody in the family differ from each other. One does not listen to another. When nobody understands and listens to Walter he says: **WILL SOMEBODY PLEASE LISTEN TO ME TODAY!** (70). They view the same thing from different angles and points. They all stuck in their own opinion that's why there is always argument and tussle among the family members. When Walter is alone in his house he gets terrible irritated and he expresses his plightful condition. In his anger he even sometimes gets heavily drunk and shouts at every members of the family at night. He gets terribly depressed with his family members and shouts: "Nobody in this house is ever going to understand me." (38)

In this way, there is impact of the mainstream white culture upon the characters. They are compelled to pass their miserable life. Though they wished to live a happy life like the white middle class people but they had no more way to get out of such poor

condition. Due to the extreme exploitation of the whites the black people are facing very much difficulty to preserve their own distinctive Afro-American culture.

Dilemma of the Younger Family

The Younger family is in great dilemma since the beginning of the play. The characters can't take any decision what to do to make their future bright, progressive and prosperous. Everyone in the family lacks any consideration for other members. That is why there is always tussle and confusion among the family members. Such type of situation irritates them and they again start quarrelling. In order to get rid of such difficult situation, Walter Lee Younger, Mama's son begins to drink and shouts at other members of the house. Being a male character, he shouts his patriarchy in the family and tries to make others follow whatever he liked. But his such mistreatment was unbearable to them. As a result, there is always counter argument with each other in the family view the same thing from different angles and different perspectives. Nobody tried to understand others sentiments among the members in the family.

The play begins with the Younger family who is about to receive an insurance check for \$10,000. This much amount of money comes from the deceased Mr. Younger's life insurance policy. Every one of the adult members has to reconcile and come to a decision about what to do with that much amount of money. But each of them has different idea regarding the investment of the money. The head of the family Mrs. Lena Younger, Mama wants the money be invested to buy a nice house and settle down there in a peaceful environment. Mama's son Walter Lee Younger, wants to invest the money for another purpose. He thinks that the money must be invested in a liquor store with this

other partners. According to his opinion the investment in the liquor store will solve their financial problem forever. Walter's wife, Ruth Younger, agrees with mama's point of view and she also hopes that she and Walter can provide more space and opportunity for their son, Travis Lee Younger. Beneatha, Mama's daughter and Walter's sister, wants to invest the money for other purpose which is drastically different from other family members. She thinks and hopes that the money must be invested for her medical school tuition. Moreover she doesnot wish her family members to be interested in joining the world of the white people. She always tries to find her Afro-American cultural identity by looking back to the past and Africa. In this way, the family members are in great distress. Besides they are always in the argument. They could have discussed over the problem and come to a single decision as a solution to overcome the problem.

There is dilemma because of various reasons. Domination and suppression the males ant eh whites upon the black females if one of them. As a black male character, Walter is busy in assimilating with the white culture and suppression of the black female characters like Ruth and Beneatha. But Beneatha, as a black female character takes another bold point. She not only rejects the racial order but also patriarchal order since both of the them are linked with each other. She further opines that both of them are playing as reactionary role in suppression the black females. Tather she gives her respect to her African suitor, Asagal. As a black female, she stands in joining American blacks with African past, tradition and culture.

George tries to convince Beneatha to assimilate with the white culture and proposes her for marriage she gets terribly irritated. The he puts his culture superior to the

Afro-American culture and says: "Oh, dear, dear, dear! A lecture on the African past! On our great West African heritage! In one second we will hear all about the great Ashanti empires: the great songhay civilizations: and the great sculpture of Benin-and then some poetry in the Bantu-and the whole monologue will end with the word heritage! Let's face it, baby, your heritage is nothing but a bunch of raggedy-assed spirituals and some grass huts" (81). Beneatha completely disagrees with his view and says that Afro-American roots, past, tradition and culture is always great and respected that is immortal.

Walter views that living in America, they should assimilate with the white American people. He says to Beneatha there is nothing to do with race. He further comments: "Race, race, race!.... Girl, I do believe you are the first person in the history of the entire human race to successfully brainwash yourself"-(113)

Beneatha completely rejects his view. She says "I hate assimilationist Negroes !" (81). She further argues that there is only Negro race and the African American believe only in black race and black culture. And she also does the same. She argues with Walter and comments. "Talk about-olddddd-d-fashionedddd-Negroes!

Besides, there is confusion and a dispute over religion. Mama and Walter have faith in God. They believe that God is the supreme and almighty father. He has the power to keep this universe as it is not only this much, God has the power to do everything. They further opine that the creator of this earth is only the Almighty father, God. What Mama wants Beneatha is to have faith in God since he is the creator and protector. She also views that God and Christianity has the greatest power in the earth. Showing her faith on God, she says: "Father, give us strength. Lord, protect us...Lord,

Lord, Lord....(120-121). Similarly Walter also believes on God and says that all the people in the world are God's children. He thinks that God can make the people whatever he likes. He gets pleasure in praying the God and he sweetly sings: "I got wings...you got wings...All the God's children got wings...."

In this way the given extracts prove that both Mama and her son Walter have faith on God.

Beneatha's point of view towards God is quite different from Mama and Walter. She thinks that there is no God in this earth. She strongly opposes Mama's point of view about God and his superiority. She further opines: "I'm just tired of hearing about God all the time....Mama, you don't understand. It's all a matter of ideas and God is just one idea. I don't accept. It's not important. I am not going out and be immoral or commit crimes because I don't believe in God. I don't even think about it. It's just that I get tired of him getting credit for all the things the human race achieves through its own stubborn effort. There simply is no blasted God-there is only man and it is he who makes miracles!" (50-51)

Hence, it is obvious from the given extract of Beneatha that she does not believe that there is God. Rather she thinks that God is matter of ideas. So, she does not want to give credit to God for any achievement in her life. She thinks that any achievement human being gain is through toil not by the grace of God.

There is dilemma even in the selection of Beneatha's suitor. Beneatha's mother, Mama wants her to get married to George Murchison. But Beneatha completely rejects

their proposal . She rather prefers Joseph Asagai to George Murchison . As Asagai is the person who can understand her passion and sentiments .She further argues that he is from their own tribe .She prefers her own race to the oppressive white race .That's why she says that she never likes to assimilate with such white people she wants to preserve her notion of cultural identity .After all, as a Nigerian, Asagai has distinct cultural identity to preserve. But George Murchison is not like Asagai in the matter of race and cultural identity.

Likewise, Beneatha's education in medical faculty remains ambiguous. In the beginning of the play, she proposes to her family members that she should get But her family members don't seem to support her in this matter. When the younger handed over to her Brother, Walter Lee Younger . We used the money and tried to invest in a liquor store. But he was betrayed by his own business partner. Hence, she is not proud of her family's economic and social situation and she is a bit embarrassed by it when Asagai visits her. In this way, she says that she wants to get to Africa to realize her own cultural value when her mama asks her why she wants to marry to Asagai.

The play also portrays a pitiful condition of the younger family in which the family members get in completely dilemma. As a result a type of conflict emerges among them They suffer from financial problem About in most of the scenes we can observe the characters suffering we can observe the characters suffering from this problem. As a source of their income we cannot see any remarkable source. Walter younger is the person who is the only male character in the play. He is a chauffeur. He earns so little by driving a car. That is why he lives a miserable life. He wants he live a happy life in the

white dominant society. He wants to make this desire possible by opening a liquor store with some business partners.

He cries “That money is made out of my father’s flesh when he loses the money (128) and my wife here , she does domestic work in people’s kitchen . So, does my mother” (147). In this way he shows the plight of the family.

Likewise mama is also facing the same type of problem. She does not have any earning. She receives a check of \$ 10,000 that comes to her from her deceased husband, Mr. Younger’s life insurance company. She wants that money be invested in a house in Four o six Clybourne Street, Clybourne Park . When Ruth wants to get some information about their house she describes the house in which they are planning to move, “It’s-it’s a nice house too.... Three bedrooms- nice big one for you and Ruth ...ME and Beneatha still have to share our room, but Travis have onc of his own and I figure if the- new baby- is a boy we could get once of them double deckeer out fits....And there’s a yard with a little patch of dirt where I could maybe get to grow me a few flowers... And a nice big basement ...” (92)

She does not like to stay such cramped house and ask mama to move to Four o six clybourne street Clybourne Park . She further pleads. “I’ll work twenty hours day in all the kitchen in Chicago...I’ll strap my baby on my back if I have to and scrub all the floor in America.

In the same way, Ruth also faces the same type of problem as the other family members. It is very difficult for her to earn and save money for their son, Travis’ future.

She does not like to stay in such cramped house and asks Mama to move to four o six Clybourne Street, Clybourne Park. She further pleads: "I'll strap my baby on my back, if I have to and scrub all the floor in America and wash all the streets in America if I have to but we got to MOVE! We got to get OUT OF HERE "(140)

She has to go to others house and work in the kitchen and look after their babies. In this way, she is living a very much unpleasant and miserable life. The poor economic status of the family compelled all the members to live a poor and plightful life.

In this way, there is conflict dilemma and confusion in every sphere of the life in the Youngers family. Hansberry has portrayed the beautiful picture of the African-American people of the era 1950s. Though there is conflict and dilemma in every step of the Afro-American people, each and every character in the play try their best to reconcile and make their life progressive.

Realization of the Cultural Value

The Younger family in Chicago's southside are in great depression due to the oppressive nature of white dominant culture but the family ignore such oppressive culture and realize the importance of their own great Afro-American culture. The characters always realize that their own culture is distinctive and purely African. So, they try their best to preserve and prosper their cultural heritage. So every king of their ancestral and historical heritage is preserved by each and every character in the Younger family and other African American people. As Joseph Asagai realizes that he wants to preserve it. When Mama does not recognize him he proudly identifies himself "Nigeria is my

country. Yoruba is my tribal origin-"(64). Hence, he feels that African culture is the superior culture which is rooted in the African nation, Nigeria. So, he wants to go back to Africa and prosper its rich cultural heritage. Not only himself, he wants to marry to Beneatha who has the same kind of African tribal origin and take her to Africa.

He also realizes the importance of life style even he is in America. He wants to adopt it and wants Beneatha do the same. So, he has brought some records and the colourful robes of a Nigerian woman. He wants her to wear those beautiful African robes. He frequently talks of Africa, Egypt, Nigeria and so on. In his speech most of the time he has used African especially Nigerian language like "Ah-Sah-Guy"-(65). Hence, we can easily claim that Asagai has realized the importance and greatness of the African American culture.

Likewise Beneatha is also very much passion in her African American culture. She realizes that there is no such cultural heritage like the heritage of Africa. She, as a black American, does not have a clear-cut cultural identity. Still she believes that her ancestry originated in Africa but she has never been there. She and her immediate relatives have all grown up in Chicago's south side. Beneath, after all, understands the plightful condition of the working-class people in Chicago. She wants to follow the language and customs of West Africa.

By accepting Asagai's proposal and rejecting the socially and financially well off George Murchison she has proved that she realizes the importance of the African American culture rather than the oppressive white culture.

She strongly opposes the idea of Walter who wanted her to get married to George Murchison, a white rich man. He comments: "Girl, if you don't get them silly ideas out your head! You better marry yourself a man with some loot...." (150). Beneath disagrees with this idea of Walter and says; "George Murchison! I wouldn't marry him if he was Adam and I was Eve!" (150)/ she rather agrees Asagai's marriage proposal since he is the tribe of her own i.e. African tribe. She is living in such oppressive community. It is not her desire to live in such community but it is her compulsion. She cannot fly to her African American community. She does have no more option except accepting it. Hence, unwillingly she is living in others' community.

Undoubtedly, we can observe the realization of cultural value in the passion and sentiment of Walter. He is tired of such oppressive American culture. He thinks that depression and pessimism is the product of such culture. He always desires his own culture. Ruth and Walter's concern about moving into predominantly white neighbor reflects the great tension that existed between races and cultures.

He has been oppressed by circumstances. His entrapment in his ghetto, and in his apartment results in the desire to leave his family physically and to escape mentally by the means of alcohol. One way for him to escape this entrapment seems to be through a reliance on his family members. Yet, often circumstances are so difficult for him that he cannot even do that he continues to fight with his family members. Such type of tussle in his family is seen due to lack of the feeling of understanding. Yet he prefers his own culture to the white culture even in such difficult hour. He gets terribly irritated when George tells him that the black people are all wacked up with bitterness. He agitates:

"You contented son-of-a-bitch-you happy? You got it made? Bitter? Man, I'm a volcano. Bitter? Here I am a giant-surrounded by ants! Ants who can't even understand what it is the giant is talking about" (85).

The aforementioned expression of Walter proves that how much he loves to his black community and the cultural heritage of black people. That is why he violently shouts at George Murchison for his ill treatment to the black people. He further says that he is as powerful as volcano that can explode at any time and cause a lot of damage. He compares himself with a giant and the whites with ants. So, it is easily claimed that he realizes the great value of his African American culture.

Similarly, we can also observe this type of realization of cultural value in Mama's feelings. She prefers her own African American history and its distinctive culture. In the face of the loss of money, her idealism about family flatters. Mama's careful packing of her plant suggests that she is proud of her African American culture. She knows that she needs her own cultural power in order to face hardship in the all white neighborhood. Here the plant symbolizes her realization of African American cultural value. She further opines: "something has changed. You something new, boy. In my time we were worried about not being lynched and getting to the North if we could and how to stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity too..." (73).

Here, she compares the present time with their past time when the people were not worried about their death but they worried that their dignity might be lost. Hence, being a matriarch of the family, she is at the center of her family's life and she controls

many of the interactions of the members of her households. Besides she reminds the family of the importance of family, history and African American cultural value.

Moreover, Ruth also realizes that the African American cultural value deserves great importance. She always prefers her own culture to the white culture. She follows her own culture so far possible. She gets too much excited when Walter describes the beautiful landscape of Ethiopia. When she hears the African American song she gets very much pleased with it. She further cries: "Yes-and Africa sure is claiming her own tonight: (77).

This shows that Ruth is really excited to enjoy African music and to see African folk dance. Unwillingly she is living in such community of the white people where she does not desire. Being an African American woman, she does not desire to go to work in the white people's house. She not only desires to find her cultural identity but also to pursue an independent career without relying solely on a man. So, she tries her best to realize the importance of the African American cultural identity.

In this way, each and every character in the novel realizes the importance and greatness of their distinctive African American cultural distinctive African American cultural identity. Though all the members in the family are involved in quarrel they also don't forget that being African American people it is their duty to preserve their cultural heritage. At last of the play, Hansberry portrays the Younger family in reconciliation to fight against the oppressive white culture and realize the importance of their own cultural heritage.

Efforts of the Characters to Assert their Cultural Identity:

Beneatha's exploration of the African heritage and her entrance with the Nigerian robes symbolizes that she is trying to assert her cultural identity. When she is given the colourful robes of a Nigerian woman by Asagai, her happiness remains in no bound. She praises the robes with great pleasure. She admires: "Oh, Asagai!...You got them for me !...How beautiful and the records too !" (60). After she wears those colourful robes she runs to the mirror and admires the robes. She loves the colour robes not simply because it was a nice looking one but because it was brought to her from Nigeria, an African country. She loves her own past, tradition and culture more than the oppressive white culture. She loves her African roots. She also loves the recorded African songs that Asagai brought to her from Nigeria. Those records were very much valuable to her because they deserve great value of her culture.

She prefers everything that symbolizes her African American cultural value. By making her hair as curly as Asagai she has tried to assert her culture. Naturally, most of the Africans have curly hair but she did not have such type of hair style. She mutilated her hair and made it as curly as Asagai's. as she praises her hair: "You know perfectly well how... as crinkly as yours... that's how" (61). She is very much pleased to make her hair style like every African people. She wants to assert her African culture in the white dominant society.

On the first day when Beneatha and Asagai met at school, she said to Asagai that she was longing for Africa. Asagai reminds her of what she spoke to him about. He reminds her what she said "Mr. Asagai- I want very much to talk with you about Africa. You see Mr. Aagai, I am looking for my identity!" (61). It is obvious that Beneatha does not desire to live in such oppressive white community. Rather she wants to develop her own African community and its own distinctive cultural heritage. She says that she wants to create her own identity. In this interaction between her and Asagai reveals how serious she is about finding her identity. She does not want to assimilate into the dominant white culture of 1950s. Indeed, her speaking of her roots in Africa to large her identity precedes the New African Movement of the 1960s.

Besides, in the selection of her suitor, she has tried to assert her African American cultural identity. As she has two options. She has to select one of them. She has proved that she is trying to assert the culture. George Murchison and Joseph Asagai represent two different identities, the identity that seeks assimilation and the identity that rejects assimilation. This scene repartees George and Asagai into completely different categories where George represents a person assimilating into the white world while Asagai stands for the pure African culture which strongly opposes the assimilation. By rejecting George's proposal of marriage and accepting Asagai's marriage proposal, she has proved that she is trying to assert her black cultural identity.

Asagai also seeks an opportunity to assert his cultural identity. He always admires his Africa and his ancestral heritage that are so much memorable to him. He always talks to Beneatha to go back to his Nigeria. As a gift he has brought colourful Nigerian robes

to her. He loves Beneatha as she is from the race. He wants to marry her and take her to Africa from where her ancestors had come. He admires her: "Yes!...Three hundred years later the African Prince rose up out of the seas and swept the maiden back across the middle passage over which her ancestors had come" (137).

So he wants to adopt his unique African cultural tradition though he is living in America. Undoubtedly he has very much keen interest in his African culture. He convinces Beneatha to go to Nigeria with him. He further says;

"I will show you our mountains and our stars: and give you cool drinks from gourds and the ways of our people-you have only been away for a day. Say that you'll come-"(137)

We can observe the same kind of feeling about the importance of cultural value in Walter's point of view. He is not willing to adopt the American oppressive society and its culture. Rather he wants to follow his own African American tradition and culture. He sings the old African songs and dances. He also wants his sister and his wife to dance with him. Being the representative of the blacks, he compares himself with a lion and the whites with ants. He also wants to compare himself with volcano that can explode at anytime. He proudly says to his sister Beneatha:

"Do you hear the singing of the women, singing the war songs of our fathers to the babies in the great houses? Singing the sweet war songs! Oh, DO YOU HEAR MY BLACK BROTHERS!"

Here, he wants to address all of the African American people to listen to the song sung by women. He asks the people of his community to listen to the revolutionary war songs which his ancestors used to sing. He says that these types of songs are sweet songs. So, he wants to attract the attention of all those African American people to learn the lesson about their ancestral tradition of the way of singing and dancing. Besides, he wants to request all his black people to reconcile and preserve their distinctive unique features of African American cultural heritage in America. In this way, he has tried his best to assert his African American cultural identity.

Similarly, Mama also tries her best to assert her African American cultural identity. When she comes to know that Asagai's cultural root is in Nigeria she becomes very much pleased with him as she realizes and remembers her cultural roots. She says that her ancestors were also from Africa. She says that she does have no more interest to live in to the white people's community but it is her compulsion. She argues that the oppressive nature has endangered the African American cultural heritage. She further comments:

"I think it's so sad the way our American Negroes don't know nothing about Africa 'cept Tarzan and all that. And all that money they pour into these churches when they ought to be helping you people over there drive out them French and Englishmen done taken away your land;" (64)

Here Mama has expressed her bitter feeling about the oppressive nature of the white people. She further says that the American Negroes don't know anything about their own land Africa. She further says that most of the American Negroes don't know

their cultural roots and their ancestral roots. So, she wants to alert those Negroes and get united. In this way, as a hard working, powerful and all knowing matriarch, she has been to remind the family of the importance of the history and African American culture heritage.

Ruth too feels so much adoration and gives respect to her African American cultural heritage. She is a very much plighted woman. Being expressed in the American society, she gets very much irritated. When the Younger family gets ready to move to another house in four-o six Clybourne Street, Clybourne Park, she gets very much excited and shouts “LET’S GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE” (149). In this way, she is very much happy to leave such oppressive people. He is very much interested to learn many things about Africa, where her ancestors lived. That’s why each and everything that denotes Africa is very much important to her.

At last, all the family members in Younger family are keen interested to prosper their African American culture heritage. All them realize the importance of their own unique culture which has distinctive feature. In this way, they get knowledge about the African tribe, culture, tradition and their ancestral history through which they want to assert the African American cultural identity in the community of the black as well as white people.

IV. Conclusion

Afro-American literature historically culturally as well as racially witnessed many vicissitudes in its development. Anyway, the perspective towards the black artists remarkable transformed with the emergence of the Black Aesthetics in 1960s. After that they realized their responsibility for the survival and recreation of their African cultural heritage. These cultures are intricately interrelated with the kinds of literary practices like writing dramas, poems, essays, stories and others. After this, they realized the intrinsic values of their own cultural identity.

Lorraine Hansberry centers her play *A Raisin in the Sun* on solely on the Afro-American cultural identity in America. The history of the African American people during slavery is very much painful. The only means of their pleasure is acquiring sufficient knowledge about their tribal roots and their endurance even at the painful and unbearable moment. Thus, the painfully constructed history and their new identity in America place them in new world. After the abolition of slavery, the great majority of blacks remained domestic workers and farm workers and body of white literatures. Mostly, they were deprived of higher positions. They faced discrimination in hiring for positions among all this by presenting the characters with the vision and heal for the black people's identity and traditions.

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* presents the burning is black people regarding their social discrimination, injustice, individual victimization, poetry and

unemployment. The play presents a variety of desires the African Americans were longing for. These desires were inextricably bounded with their quest for freedom and cultural identity. The son of the Younger family, Walter Younger wants to be a rich man like the white people. Beneath wants to be a successful doctor and she also wants to join in African heritage. She shows her fondness to Asagai. Mama shows her fondness for a home where her family members can enjoy. Asagai wants to change the white world into the black world. Ruth shows the interest to her husband's proposal of liquor shop it first but later she shows her interest on house which Mama is longing for. George on the other hand, wants to assimilate the white culture and live together in the community.

The black people try to discover their cultural identity through African song, folk dance and colourful Nigerian robes. As Beneatha gets those African robes and the records, her happiness remain in no bound. She wants to preserve her cultural heritage by singing the traditional African songs and wearing the Nigerian robes for her. African cultural heritage possesses great value. So, she lefts no stone unturned for the progress prosperity and preservation of the African American cultural identity.

In the course of the development of the play, Hansberry presents very much plightful condition of the Negroes. They have to face difficulty in every walk of their life. They are culturally dominated. Besides they have to move through different kinds of financial problems. The Younger family is living in Chicago Street in a cramped house. They are compelled to live in such a conjuisted house because they have no more option. Besides, Walter has to work as a chauffeur. His wife and mother have to go to work the white people's house. Beneath can't fulfill her desire of becoming a doctor. The family is

in danger of losing their African cultural heritage. Since, they cannot completely adopt their African culture as they are living in America.

In conclusion, Hansberry courageously presents her characters despite of a number of problems. They are very much conscious about preservation, progress and prosperity of their cultural heritage. In course of time, the Younger family has to face painful and unbearable situation. Despite their such type of miserable condition, the characters are presented with more lively feeling to their own cultural identity and with more powerful conduction to their emancipation. In this battle of race and culture, the black people want to revolt against the whites for harmony, equality, justice and freedom in every sphere of their potentiality. Thus, Hansberry successfully employs black cultural tradition, heritage tribal roots and mythical devices to preserve and uplift the African American people and their endangered cultural identity.

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