



Chapter-One

Racial Composition of America

America has been, most significantly, composed of three major races: the Native American, the Black, and the White, as they have contributed to create and found the physical as well as cultural domains to maintain America's cultural and social order. The Native Americans are also known as the American Indians and the Red Indians. In relation to the blacks, they are known with different names as the Negro and the colored, and so are the whites who bear the ancestral relations with the English and the Hispanics. These races have not only formed America as the land of prosperity, but they have also collectively made efforts to create America's culture, music and art forms. In this way, they have equally contributed at different times in the history to construct America as a racially integrated nation.

There is a long and deep-rooted history behind the emergence of the concept of race. Looking back to its origins, neither the concept of race nor a term that could be constructed to represent it is to be found in the literature of classical antiquity or in the Judeo-Christian scriptures and the earlier writings from the Nile Valley. However, as Michael Omi and Howard Winant in *Racial Formation in the United States* (1994) argue, "the identification of distinctive human groups, and their association with differences in physical appearance, goes back to pre-history, can be found in the earliest documents-in the Bible, for example, or in Herodotus" (61). Therefore, it can be argued that America has developed the concept of race - at least, since historical times.

"All human societies have versions of their own origins, and the American Indians are no different," state Foner and Garraty in *The Reader's Companion to American History* (1991). Moreover, the Native Americans are believed to be the aboriginals of America. Yet,

no acute account of their origin is prevailed. But, in connection with their own origin, "stories of natural or supernatural creation in the Americas, or emergence from other world exist among all the Indian tribes" (Foner and Garraty 544).

It is, indeed, a very difficult approach to trace the arrival of the Native Americans, who comprise a considerable share in the racial composition of America, because, "the origins of the cultural developments are lost in the 10,000 or more years without written record that preceded European contact in 1600s" (Thernstrom 62). They have, like this, lost the reliable sources to be recorded because of the unwritten account. Denoting the arrival of the Native Americans and the causes of their population growth in America Thernstrom in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (1980) elaborates:

The Indians of North America reached the continent via the Bering Strait between 10,000 to 20,000 years ago. There is much to support this view, although recent findings such as the possibility of sailing across the Pacific and the northern Atlantic, suggest greater complexity in the migration that gave rise to the North American Indian population. (62).

The Native Americans have several groups in them variously called as tribes, nations, bands, peoples and ethnic groups in America. In spite of having a number of groups and cults, it is the crucial fact that the American Indians have maintained a high degree of diversity and continued to develop in a variety of ways. Therefore, in America, they have been variously depicted as one of many throughout the American history. Most Americans believe that they were not and have not become a single undifferentiated people justifying the single label of identity as American Indians. They have at least, one hundred seventy peoples with different cultural background, together with different historical experiences, and as a result, different senses of identity.

The Native American is one of the major races to portray the racial composition of

America. In regard of the early relations of the Native Americans with the blacks and the whites, Alan Brinkley, then, recalls the ideological tussle in *A Concise History of the American people: The Unfinished Nation* (2000):

In the 18th century, many whites had shared Thomas Jefferson's view of the Indians as "Noble Savages", people without real civilization but an inherent dignity that made civilization possible among them. By the first decades of the 19th century, however, this vaguely philanthropic attitude was fading, particularly among the whites in the West. They were coming to view Native Americans simply as "Savages", not only uncivilized but uncivilizable. That was one reason for the growing white commitment to removing the Indians from all the lands of Mississippi: the belief that the whites could not be expected to live in close proximity to "Savages". (253)

The Native Americans have maintained uniformity in the course of the development. Sometime in the past, the Native Americans came into confrontation with other newly settled races: the Black and the White. As they refused to modify with the new comers and assimilate with their new ways of life, they were blamed to have been uncivilized. Their refusal for the change kept them out of the changing scenario. So, it was the period of their degradation. Very usual assumption, then, among the people followed that the Native Americans were considered to have been "a vanishing race in the nineteenth century...but in a period of twenty years from 1950 to 1970, there was an increase of them by one hundred percent (Thernstrom 59).

America seems to be an integrationist rather than a pluralist state –that is, its political structure is wholly individualistic. In contrast with some other western states, it had never given political reorganization to any racial group as such within its border except for the Native Americans. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, America became ready to

grant citizenship to the Native Americans, but on an individual basis. However, the Native Americans had been recognized as distinct racial group holding land collectively and sharing kind of political existence under the tribal councils in America.

In this way, despite being the earliest inhabitant, the Native Americans had to wait for the share of the United States. The Native Americans still do not possess the reverence of the newly settled races, as they have tried to impose their autonomy on them. Yet, their racial heritages have contributed to the making of America and its racial composition.

The other important race that contributes to the racial composition of America is the black race. Most blacks residing in America are called African Americans due to their ancestral relation with the African blacks. They share a vast diversity of land and its population in America as a race. For that, black Americans were the only racial group brought to America against their will. They came from a vast continent, even larger than Europe, and initially spoke a great variety of languages and represented very different cultures. But in more than two centuries of bondage their many ancestral languages and cultures faded away. The black Americans believe that "The ancestral homeland of most black Americans is West Africa" (Hine et al 3). They possess a long history in terms of their arrival in America. So, the blacks were brought into America as slaves in leadership of the Atlantic Slave Trade to work in the farms, mines, sugar, and tobacco factories. Therefore, it is arduous to determine where they exactly originated because of the lack the actual written history. Yet, it can be said that most African Americans are the descendents of the captive Africans who were enslaved within the boundaries of the present United States. Still, their historical documents and records are based on the accounts of the whites. The supposed racial superiority was on behalf of the whites, when compared to the other races. Shedding lights on the origin and arrival of the African Americans in America, Thernstrom states:

The origin of Afro-Americans can not be determined accurately. European

record-keepers were unperceptive about the subtler differences among Africans and their records often referred to the general place of embarkation, not of the specific groups within the area. Nevertheless, most of the slaves brought to British North America appear to have come from a narrow strip of the West African coast. (7)

The black Americans have provided America with their racial endowments as they strongly share the racial composition of America. Marking their entrance to the land of America that they not only settled but also brought with them the black cultural heritages that contributed to form America's own music and fairy tales. Du Bois, a twentieth century African American scholar, in his essay "The conservation of Races" mentions as "We are that people whose subtle sense of song has given America its only American music, its only American fairy tales, its only touch of pathos and humor amid its mad money-getting plutocracy" (822).

Despite the contributions of the black Americans made to contrive America a racially integrated nation, they have been segregated on the basis of their ancestry as slaves. The blacks have made a tedious and arduous journey through the dreadful desert of injustice in the quest of getting human dignity and American identity. The blacks believed that slavery was indeed the cause of all sorrow and the root of all prejudices. In the past, the black people, who were supposed to be inferior to the white people merely because of their skin pigmentation and had no land, property or home, were compelled to serve their white masters in every desirable way. Their culture was put to peril; they were broken down as brutes. Though various civil rights movements and other humanitarian campaigns have brought about a great deal of change in their lives, their afflicted souls are still being horrified by the ghastly ghosts of the past. The dawning of the twenty-first century has not yet completely healed the injured soul.

In fact, the black Americans had a rich culture of their own. They didn't come to America in a void: They brought with them the priceless heritage of age –old –cherished culture, potential craftsmanship, and rich civilization of their own. Although there was even white cultural hegemony, the huge numbers of blacks lived together and evolved African American culture. Katz in *Eyewitness: The Negro in American History* justifies the cultural richness of the Africans in this way:

In the year before the arrival of the Europeans, Africans achieved a cultural progress equal to and often superior to that of Europe. During the African metal age that began 500 year before the birth of Christ, the African people began to cultivate the soil, build great cities, develop their arts, smelt and work iron ore, and build complex social system. (5)

In late nineteenth century, the black Americans were distressed by the negative views of themselves. They opposed slavery and urged emancipation. President, Abraham Lincoln, announced the emancipation of the blacks formally in protocols. But his action further created a new kind of racial problem for blacks in America. In spite of formulation, racial equalities and uniformity, Lincoln created a difference between people of two races and encouraged blacks to leave America voluntarily. Lincoln at a ceremony for American blacks stated:

There is no room for two destined races of white men in America, much less for two distinct races of whites and blacks. We can never attain the ideal union, our father dreamed with millions of an alien, inferior race among us, whose assimilation is neither possible nor desirable. You and we are different races. We have between us a broader difference that exists between almost any other races [...] In a word, we suffer on each side. If this be admitted, it affords a reason at least why we should be separated. (qtd in Szwarc 28)

Even though the presence of the blacks was vaguely defined in America in the past, now they comprise about fourteen percent of the total American population. Presently, the blacks have become a strong component as the black race in the racial composition of America that they share vast racial divisions.

The third important race which shares the highest population of America is the White. The term "White American" is often used to refer to the people of European descent residing in the present United States. Yet, racial categories generally reflect a social definition of races in America. They do not conform to any biological, anthropological, or genetic criteria. But "White people" can also be defined as the people having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe. The history of the whites shows that the people from England began to settle permanently in the part of North America in 1607, that later became the United States. So it can be argued that they were the English Whites, who are called white Americans at present, to have settled in the colonial America. In connection with the conversion of the English to white American, Thernstorm explains that "The people arrived in the 17th century did not have to accommodate themselves to another society, for they quickly shouldered the Indians aside. Nevertheless, like other migrants, migration subjected them to forces that converted them and their children into American" (320).

The recent United States census conducted in 2000 states that the whites share 47.9 percent of that total population in America (Marker 206). That shows the whites, as a racial group, have majority of people belonged their race. Furthermore, the increase of population was due to the more favorable status in America in comparison to other races. Then, from the fifteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was a massive transfer of population from Africa and Europe to North America. In the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the transfer continued for European derived populations. The diversity within the so-called minority population is complicated by the problems of racial

classification. Therefore, how racial groups are classified has a tremendous impact on racial composition. Thus, America has had a dignified race which has equally contributed to its racial composition and the racial composition in America is distinct having composition of the three major races: the Native American, the Black and the White.

African Slaves: Historical Beginning to Build a Viable Nation

African slaves have made significant efforts to mold America as a practicable nation. The blacks who shared the common genetic attributes of the Africans were brought to America as slaves to work for the white masters. They not only arrived but also carried their ancestral African heritages such as music, culture and art forms to America. In this way, the African slaves have also contributed to the physical as well as cultural making of the country. In relation to the African slaves' settlement in America, Thernstrom describes:

The permanent settlement of Africans in the North America began in 1619 when a Dutch frigate sold twenty blacks to English colonists at Jamestown, a year before *Mayflower* landed pilgrims at Plymouth and more than a century after the first African slaves had been brought to Hispaniola in the west Indies in 1501. African peoples thus involved in the formative stages of American development. (6)

It was an unceasing process to bring African slaves into America. Slave labor was not peculiar to the European colonies in the Americas. In the early years, slave trade was chiefly conducted by the Atlantic Slave Trade led by Portugal and Spain during the sixteenth century. In the early seventeenth century, the Dutch drove the Portuguese from the West African coast and became the chief slave-trading nation. Those slaves brought in the group of twenty in 1619, who are traditionally considered to have been the first of their race to reach British North America. Slavery in America was based on race; most of the enslaved were

males who were generally employed as agricultural laborers rather than soldiers or domestics servants. But, Hine writes that "the slaves also became chattel-personal property- of their masters and lost their customary rights as human beings" (28). In this case, British North America received "fewer than one of every twenty slaves and most of them were taken to the West Indies" (Thernstrom 6). Some of the earliest slaves were brought into America from the West Indies, but most came directly from Africa. The majority of the slaves bound for North American colonies arrived during a relatively short span of seventy years, between 1741 and 1810.

Almost all the slaves were destined to work in the farms, sugar and tobacco factories, and the plantations. They had to serve the white masters according to their will. In comparison to the north, the south had larger number of slave owners, and they completely controlled the lives and destinies of most of the slaves. In narrowly material terms, slaves were usually amply fed with low quality food. Nevertheless, larger number of slaves worked in urban areas; two third of them as craftsman, stevedores, dry men, barbers, house and hotel servants, and common laborers.

Racial distinction between the masters and the slaves heightened the tension inherent in an unjust social order. The rise of a world market-the development of new tastes and of manufactures dependent upon non-European sources of raw materials- encouraged the rationalization of colonial agriculture under the ferocious domination of a few European. Then, African slaves involved in the new production system as Eugene. D. Genovese in *The World the Slaves Made* (1976) states that "African labor provided the human power to fuel the new system of production in all the entire New World slave societies, which, however, had roots in different geographical, economic and cultural condition" (4). Genovese in the preface of his book clearly mentions that "the slaves, as an objective social class, laid the foundations for a separate black national culture while enormously enriching American

culture as a whole" (XV). But, the separate black national culture has always been American, however, it has drawn in African origins or reflected the distinct development of black people in America.

African slaves not only set up the formal social organizations but also revived the African culture in America that built the American cultural primary structures. As Hine states:

African slaves taken to America were able to preserve much more of their ancestral way of life than was previously believed possible. The slave family organization, work habits, languages structures and some words, religious beliefs, legends and stories, pottery styles, art, and music all made it to America. These African legacies lived in their new land and continued to shape American life down to the present. (23)

The slaves have to physically toil in the farms and plantations, including various other works from dawn to dusk. The central feature of any slave system was to prevent the escape of the slaves in the antebellum America, not by fences or guards, but by keeping the slaves ignorant, dependent, and in fear. Slaves were not given chances to socialize themselves. Therefore, a majority of slaves could neither read nor write and teaching them to learn was considered to have been a crime. As Sowell writes, "slaves were kept in captivity by ignorance rather than by physical restraints, it was easy to escape a slave plantation temporarily but very difficult to escape permanently. Patrols manned by local whites recaptured runaways and regulated or punished other slaves who were off their plantations for whatever reason" (187).

The account of the slaves in southern slavery is one of labor, perseverance, and resistance. Slave labor was responsible for the growth of southern economy that helped to produce prosperity throughout America. The slaves, man and women, preserved and

expanded an American as well as African American cultural heritage that included African, European and Native American roots. They resisted determined efforts to dehumanize them. They developed family relationships, communities, churches and traditions that helped them to preserve their character as a people.

In this way, African slaves have bestowed to improvise America as a practicable and well endowed nation. They have provided America with their cultural heritages to have its cultural recognition. In fact, they have molded the shape of America to contrive its physical and cultural domains. The slaves, who went through dark years in slavery, have also contributed to building America a viable nation through their labor, cultural endowments and presence as a strong racial group.

Hughes as an African American Poet

James Langston Hughes was born on 1st February 1902 in Joplin, Missouri. His father, James Hughes immigrated to Mexico and his mother, Carrie Langston, remarried. When his parents divorced, he was brought up by his grandmother, Mary Langston, until he was thirteen. He grew up in Lawrence, Kansas and Lincoln, Illinois, before going to high school in Cleveland, Ohio, and spent a year, in Mexico and a year in Columbia University. During these years, he happened to do various odd jobs as assistant cook, a bus boy, etc. Then, he traveled to Africa and Europe working as a seaman that helped him to see the condition of the black folks in various regions. He died on May 22, 1967 in New York because of complications from prostate cancer.

Hughes is primarily an African American poet who has become the descendent of the black Africans in America. Therefore, his poems are affected by the past memories of the racial predecessors and the land the origin. Hughes revives the past of the black race including the ancestors, racial traditions, culture, music, and all that is related to the black

race through his poems as racial memories. Hughes's poems have been strongly blended with the sentiments of the African Americans. Jack Cady in *The American Writer: Shaping a Nation's Mind* (1999) elaborates the content of his poetry in early stages:

As a beginning writer, Hughes's characters were not people but lives lived on one side of the color line, idiom, religion and oppression of those who were known as American Negro. Hughes leaned towards portrayal or picturing, rather than extended philosophy- at least that is, true of his poetry. He functioned as the classic story teller supplying identity to his people, and his characterizations got better as he grew older. (222).

Uninterruptedly, Hughes gave rise to the African American sentiments and became an acclaimed poet at the nation's first African American college, Lincoln University, in Pennsylvania. Hughes's first volume of poetry *The Weary Blues*, appeared in 1926 in which "he fused its key technical commitment: the music of black American as the prime source and expression of their cultural truth" (Rampersad and Roessel 3). Hughes published his first novel *Not Without Laughter* (1929) after he completed his years at Lincoln University. The novel portrayed the boyhood of a black child same as his boyhood in Kansas. He also published his first collection of short stories *The Ways of White Folks* (1934). Hughes ridiculed the notion that writer could promote racial reconciliation. One of the characters decisively declares, "Art would break down color lines, art would save the race and prevent lynching!" (qtd in Hine et al 407). He pursued racial themes in *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927) depicting young black women tempted by liaisons with white men in "Red silk Stockings". His drama *Mulatto* (1935) became the longest running play by an African American which included miscegenation and the south as its theme. He voiced for the right and race consciousness of the African Americans. He also defended the authenticity of black art and literature. As he mentions:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too[...] We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free with in ourselves. (qtd in Hine 408)

Hughes has portrayed the dignity of African Americans as he is a member of the big umbrella of the black race. Although he wrote novels, short stories, non-fiction, plays, librettos, and essays; he is primarily remembered as a poet who sang of the joys and pains, pride and humiliation of being black in America.



Chapter–Two

Racial Depiction in Literature

Society is an immense body of well- structured institutions. It is formed with various components such as race groups, cultural and traditional essence and literary artifact. The components, however large or small they are, they keep on interacting with each other. Society itself produces the concept of racism and literary artifact. Literature is an artistic portrayal of a society that it provides a glimpse of the contemporary events prevailed in the society. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of a literary work on the basis of social and cultural ideal in which it is produced gives an outlet to the existing conflicts and contradictions, which truly determines the indispensable character of the society. The racial characteristics put forward in it are the major issues of the study of racial depiction in literature.

Similarly, socialization is the other side of literature. Besides, it is a gradual process that brings humankind into variations. The ideal conflict among the races in terms of their physique, color and culture paralyzes the discerning capability of people and produces one's control over other. Anthropologists do not agree with the idea that views people and categorizes their capability in terms of their outer complexion and appearance rather than the content of their character and so do the modern biologists who oppose the idea of such characterization. All human beings are equally gifted at birth though they may be different in color and physique. Therefore, the description of such events and incidents in literature is a peephole through which we can peek into the real world plagued by social anomalies, anarchies and upheavals. Literature, thus, is the product of social reality and depiction of human life.

Literature depicts the upheavals, sorrow and happiness undergone by people at various times in the history as it is a criticism of life. Also, it doesn't remain unaffected from

the social realities. The early English literature, to be analyzed through this facet, drags into its domain, the racial agenda, no matter how implicit it may be. But it is apparent that the literature created by the white cultural chauvinists has always depicted the blacks and other non-white people as uncivilized, faithless and arrogant. Literature in the nineteenth century ceased to imitate the great classics of the Hellenic world and adopted race as a central theme for their writings, not only in Europe and North America but also in the world literature. In *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (1990), Appiah emphasizes how nationality, race and literature dominated the literary sensibility in the nineteenth century :

In a world whose politics were so dominated by racialism, it is hardly surprising that races become literary theme. What is, perhaps more puzzling is the fact that many of those works that have been central to our understanding of what literature is, are also thematically preoccupied with racial issues. But the reason for this is not far to seek: it lies in the dual connection made in eighteenth-and- nineteenth century thought between, on the one hand, race and nationality, and, on the other, nationality and literature. In short the nation is the key middle term in understanding the relation between the concept of race and the idea of literature. (282)

Racial depiction is common in literary work. The study of race can be said to have prevailed even in the classical literature. In Homer's *Iliad* "Zeus and Other Olympians" blameless Ethiopians", and there are arguments in the works of pre-Socratic sophists to the effect that it is individual character and not skin color that determines a person's worth (Appiah 275). In this way, in the classical period individuality of a person was more respected than their color of skin. Racial prejudice is depicted in the renaissance literature, chiefly, in Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Merchant of Venice*, and Marlow's *The Jew of Malta*. Shakespeare's *Tempest* is an allegory of colonialism and best reflects the tension between the

colonial Caliban and the colonizer, Prospero. It also portrays the brutality of the colonization of non-white people. Prospero has been depicted as a scholar of high civilization with tremendous knowledge and as an antithesis of Caliban, “a savage and deformed slave” (Appiah 278). Prospero possesses the whole island and drives away Caliban to a desolate region and takes illusive control to civilize all. Segregation enroots as Caliban is physically tortured and socially segregated. He is forced to get in the service of Prospero, and obey his commands as a slave, with a fragile hope of freedom. Calibans are still believed to be wandering in search of a promised land in the wilderness.

In the same way, race has affected the microcosm of Shakespeare's *Othello*. The central emotional core of the play is the union between Othello, the black moor and Desdemona, a white woman and daughter of a Venetian Senator. The drama is occupied with a discourse preconceived in the English people of that time. Othello is depicted as a moor, who gets married secretly with a white woman from a noble family. The stereotypic views in Elizabethan England were that moors and Jews were barely an empirical reality. They were the most abhorred people though the attitude to them do not seem to have been based on experience of those people. Their views were based on theological conception that both of them; Jews and moors were non-Christian. Moors could be easily detected due to their distinct color that was associated with Christian iconography with sin and the devil, and the Jews were considered to have been Christ-killers.

Culture is the living entity that advocates the inner credos of a race. Racial matters commonly depicted in literary works that prosper and continue the cultural artifacts to survive. In connection with racial depiction present in the works of literature, Leslie Mermon Silko's *Ceremony* can be dealt as an exemplary novel that portrays the cultural belief and incredible power of the Native American Culture. As Tayo, the protagonist, returns to his family from World War II, he suffers from a kind of post traumatic stress

disorder which has affected him both, emotionally and physically. As a result, he feels horrific with his memories which he sustained as a prisoner of war in Japan, when he comes to live with his family on the Laguna Pueblo reservation in Mexico. Tayo is half Native American and half Caucasian. Therefore he has to accompany and cope with the stresses of having two cultures: Native American and Caucasian. He has to directly deal and accompany with two worlds as the Native American world and white world. His traumatic stress is not cured despite the application of modern means for cure. But, the belief of the ceremonies in the Native Americans is stronger that they believe the ceremonies can be effective to cure him. His family and friends apparently know the cause of his illness and depression. Finally, Native American ceremonies that truly help him to get over his illness. Tayo eventually finds peace in the Native American ceremonies, which are rich cultural entities in their belief. The relationship of America and its perception to view the Native Americans are detailed through the character of Tayo in *Ceremony*. Silko also introduced the Native American cultural values attached to the importance of oral tradition in this novel.

The dominant issues of race are also visible in Afro-American literary criticism. Mark Twain's novel *Huckleberry Finn*, for instance, also touches on racial theme. It tells a story about an out cast boy and his friendship with Jim, a run away nigger. They sail down the Mississippi together on raft hoping to reach Cairo where Jim can be free. Huck assists Jim to be free. When he realizes that he is helping a slave to get away, Huck comes into antagonism. However, his sympathies are on Jim, and he helps him to save his life. Jim is sketched not as a burden but as a source what Mark Twain, Huck, and Tom need, in the novel.

Thus, depiction of the racial issues in literature has played a dominant role in structuring literary sensibility and literary production. Likewise, Black literature, for African American authors, has also become a means to articulate the wounded black spirit and its effects. The major proportion of black writing has been concerned thematically with racial

issues in collective black psychology. Appiah elucidates that race bears and will continue to yield a most crucial relevance in literary imagination unless racial prejudices thrive in the society:

Differences among peoples, like differences among communities within a single society, play a central role in our thinking about who "we" are, in structuring our values and in determining the identities through which we live. Race has been central to literature and thought about literature throughout this period [...] And so long as it continues it is likely that race will continue to be preoccupation, not only of the literary history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but also of the future literary study. (257)

Therefore, racial depiction in literature is a common phenomenon as it excavates the social reality. Race is also depicted to form an integral body of the people having similar origins and other physical features. On the other hand, it provides a platform to depict the representative characters of the races to view the contemporary time and situation in which the issues of particular races are depicted.

Race and Literature

Race is a social construct that divides humankind into several subdivisions in terms of certain physical characteristics such as color of skin, type of hair, shape and color of eyes, shape of nose and so on. Scholars have also proposed the criteria such as color, hair, cranial measurements, language, etc. in order to analyze race differences which help to categorize human beings into a number of races. W. E. B. Du Bois in his essay "The conservation of Races" discloses that "we have at least two, perhaps three, great families of human beings- the Whites and Negroes, possibly the yellow race. That other races have arisen from the intermingling of the blood of these two races" (816).

Du Bois agrees with the existence of two major races, and the others are considered to have been the intermingling of these two races. In *The Encyclopedia Americana*, (2002), Brace writes "race has been a cause of more misunderstanding and human suffering than anything else that can be associated with a single word in any language" (116). The term "race", according to Gretchen Gerzina, "refers to origins in a common stock, and this could be family, religion or nation, and it applies equally to plant and animal life" (125). In this way, race contains various ways of understanding but it is constructed through the essential link between the structural and cultural dimensions of race. It can also be understood as an unstable construct of social meanings being transformed by political struggle.

Race is primarily understood as a concept which is based on biology of human characteristics. It unfolds a huge umbrella to consist of the people of the similar physique and genetics, in general. Race may be defined as a concept which connotes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies. When dealt race superficially, it is a group of people having similar color of skin and a race is identified by the color of skin or hair, and other physical traits. Such point of view to deal with the races shadows the subtle characteristics such as physical ability and intelligence.

Race has very close association to literature as it deals with the memories of the past and current phenomena of the present. Literature can itself be the reflection of the racial structure of a society. It also bears the hidden and unexcavated facts of a race. It represents the contemporary society and is itself the reflection and recollection of the racial structure of the society. Despite the uncertainties, contradictions, and conflicts regarding the validity of race, its concept continuously plays a fundamental role in representing the social life. Du Bois in "The conservation of Races" stresses the significance of the study of race as both cultural representation and social structure. He writes, "The history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races, and who ignores or

seeks to override the race idea in human history"(817).

Race and literature have an integrated form that one completes the remnants of other by means of inclusive descriptions. Literature has also become a platform to strengthen the political rights and voice for liberty from the segregation. Regarding the contemporary situation of the blacks, James M. Whitfield, a black American poet, addresses America, to publicize the contributions of the blacks to remind who they are and what they have done for the making of America in his poem "America":

America, it is to thee,
 Thou boasted land of liberty-
 It is to thee I raise my song,
 Thou land of blood, and crime, and wrong
 It is to thee, my native land,
 From whence has issued many a band
 To tear the black man from his soil,
 And force him here to delve and toil,
 Chained on your blood-be moistened sod,
 Cringing beneath a tyrant rod,
 Stripped of those rights which Nature's God,
 Bequeathed to all human race. (1-12)

Race has always been a matter of deep concentration in literature. Whitfield reminds the time of discrimination between the blacks and the whites in America in the later nineteenth century. Despite the inhabitation in the land of America, he doesn't seem to be content with the identity what he has got. He becomes the spokesperson of the black voices which he brings out through the means of literature. Whitefield advocates for the liberty of the black people through literature. The blacks are still deprived of the rights provided by

Nature's God due to the discriminatory activities, reflected in their behavior, of the whites in America.

Black American writers have played vital roles by creating American stories which are ignored by the mainstream writers. The mainstream fiction from its beginning systematically distorts the African American presence in contribution to American literary tradition. They place the black people even out of circumference as vital aliens even though African roots were planted during the sixteenth century. Colonel West in the preface to his 1994 book *Race Matters* presents a clear instance of what it means to be black in present America. He states that while he was on his way to an appointment, racial memories of the black-past flashed through his mind when he did not get a taxi as he was colored- "The tenth taxi refused me and stopped for a kind well-dressed smiling fellow citizen of European descent" (XV). Such racial discriminatory practices are depicted in literature. Therefore, any form of literature can be a means of expression. Race and literature have become dependent to each other that race as for depiction and literature as a platform are dealt to bring their issues together.

In this way, race as a striking theme for literary works includes the social, cultural and political aspects of the societies. It includes depiction and description, with the pathos and agonies; happiness and sorrows; and ups and downs of the human beings in several racial groups. Thus, literature, for all times, has worked as an open mouthpiece to portray the society and its people.

Black as a Race

Modern science has rejected the notion that there is a racial essence that can explain a person's moral, intellectual or literary capacity. However, belief in races, no matter how unreal it is, has still had a strong grip and a profound and deep-rooted impact in many

individuals and communities. Like the concept of gender, race is an outcome of the prejudiced and discriminatory social structure. Modern scientists believe that race is not biologically concerned but rather a socially constructed way of differentiating human beings. Race, like the concept of gender, is real in the sense that it leaves a complicated impact on an individual's sense of self experiences and life.

The concept and meaning of race are dynamic as they change according to the time. The physical differences found in the human race may be grouped together into basic types or races, which are divided further into sub-races. A sub-grouping is, therefore, a branch of a particular race which exhibits slightly different physical characteristics but still shares enough of common genetic inheritance with other sub-groupings to be included in broad racial categories. There is a broadly termed "Black" race in existence. There are major sub-groupings among that racial category, divided on the bases of the places of origins as the Congo basin pigmy and Ultra tall Masai tribesmen of Kenya. Another grouping is into nations and tribes which maybe described as political units of men of the same speech and customs. Therefore, a race can be described as a group of individuals having similar genetic attributes and the group of people who have similar language culture, and art forms. Du Bois in his essay "The conservation of Races" argues:

It is a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, tradition and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for accomplishment of certain more or less conceived ideals of live. (817)

Du Bois also introduces the major division of races as "the whites and the Negroes present in the world as the two big families of human beings (816). It includes the whites of European descent and the Negroes or Blacks of African descent living in various parts of the world spreading from Africa to North America. Blacks as a race share the common genetic

attributes. They possess almost similar kind of appearance of their physique and particularly, the race includes the people of African descent. In the course of time, they came to be known as colored, Negroes and Black. Du Bois, disclosing the relationship and the types of races, thus, excavates:

We find upon the world's stage today eighty distinctly differentiated races, in the sense in which History tells us the word must be used. They are, the Slavs of Eastern Europe, the Teutons of middle Europe, the English of Great Britain and America, the Romance nations of southern and Western Europe, the Negroes of Africa and America, the Semitic people of western Asia and Northern Africa, the Hindus of Central Asia and the Mongolians of Eastern Asia. (817-18)

Therefore, black as a race is distinctly separated from the people, who are physically different in appearance and genetics, belonged to other races such as the whites. The division is not on the bases of their internal talents and intelligence or physical capacity. But, it is on the ground of their ancestry, the places of origin and color as distinct entities. As "Darbin himself said that great is the physical unlikeness of the various races of men, their likeness are greater and upon this rests the whole scientific doctrine of Human Brotherhood" (qtd in Du Bois 816).

Black is one of the major races in existence. The members of the black race deserve the same kind of physical appearance and usually deserve the frizzy hair, broad nose and dark skin having a relatively long skull. They possess all these attributes of their body not because of the climate but because of their gene. The argument of climatic influence as a cause of physical racial differences may be as flawed as the belief in a common racial ancestor. The race has its color not because it originated into hot region like Africa. The reality is that physical characteristics are genetically determined at the moment of

conception, and there is absolutely no evidence to indicate that living in a cold or a hot climate changes the genetic make up of a group of people. The only way a gene pool can be changed is if enough members of that gene pool physically mix-physically integrate and have offspring with-a gene pool outside of that original group. This is the only way in which genes can change- and history is full of examples of where this has happened. As Du Bois explains, "The term Negro is, perhaps the most indefinite of all, combining the Mulattoes and Zamboes of American and Egyptians, Bantus and Bushmen of Africa" (818). Mulattoes are the mixed breed of the white and the black parents still, they deserve the same designation as blacks, despite of slight differences in their appearance.

Thus, it summarizes that black is a race that comprises the people of the common traditions, languages, art forms, attitudes and other means of expression. And, black as a race includes common genetic attributes that determine their physical appearance.

Harlem Renaissance: A Window to Black Culture

The Harlem Renaissance is a cultural epoch in which black culture was highly flourished and has played crucial role in black studies. Since it gave rise to black culture in America beginning in the early 1920s, it can also be regarded as the period of great African American awakening. A culture itself is the name given to the physical manifestations created by racial groups –the actual language, art forms, religion and social order at achievements of a particular racial group. Therefore, race and culture are closely connected to each other; in fact, they flow from each other in an interactive relationship. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (2004) describes "Harlem Renaissance" as:

A period of remarkable creativity in literature, music, dance, painting and sculpture by African Americans, from the end of the first World War in 1917 through the 1920s. As a result of the mass migrations to the Urban North in

order to escape the legal segregation of the American South, and also in order to take advantage of the jobs opened to African-Americans at the beginnings of the war, the population of the region of Manhattan known as Harlem became most exclusively Black, and the vital center of African American culture in America. (114)

For most of American history, most black and white Americans have shown little interest in serious literature or intellectual developments. People were more fascinated by sports, automobiles, the radio, and popular music than they were by poetry, plays, museums or movies. Still the 1920s witnessed a proliferation of creative works by a remarkable group of gifted white writers and artists such as "T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald, who explored a range of themes but were mostly critical of American life and society" (Hine et al 406). Finally they found American culture "so unappealing that they exiled themselves in Europe" (Hine et al 406). It was the time of the black intellectuals "who congregated in Manhattan and gave rise to the creative movement known as the Harlem Renaissance" (Hine et al 406). The movement of African American is qualified as the Renaissance because of some specialties emerged in the second half of the 1920s. As Gates Jr. and McKay mention in *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*:

In particular, the second half of the decade witnessed an outpouring of publications by African Americans that unprecedented in its variety and scope, so that it clearly qualifies as a moment of renaissance, as such moments of unusually fertile cultural activities are often called. [...] Although the term Harlem Renaissance is convenient and defensible, it is important to remember that what took place in New York was in many respects a heightened version of the unusual cultural productivity taking place elsewhere in the United States. (929)

Poets, novelists and painters probed racial theme and dealt with black culture detailing what it meant to be black in America. There had certainly been serious cultural developments among African Americans before the 1920s. At the turn of the century, Novelist Charles W. Chestnut depicted a young black woman's attempt to pass for white in *The House behind the Cedars*. Poul Lawrence Dunbar wrote evocatively of black life, frequent relying on black dialect. Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the study of Negro life and History in 1915. The association helped them to bring black culture out and establish in the contemporary racially prejudiced society. Claude McKay, a Jamaican who settled in New York City, wrote a powerful poem "If We Must Die" in response to the brutal attacks by white people in Chicago on black residents. The poem encouraged the blacks to fight against suppression and segregation and unite the blacks with a single motto to set black culture. McKay points out in "If We Must Die":

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an glorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot. (1-4)

Publication of Such poems boosted the depressed morale of the black Americans to bear no suppression. Such works of literature developed the feeling of integration and unity among the members of the black race. Harlem Renaissance, variously known as the New Negro Movement, the New Negro Renaissance, and the Negro Renaissance, was the rapid rise of such talents as Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes and Zora Neal Hurtson, who enforced their writing with cultural and racial depiction." The Harlem Renaissance was, indeed, the heyday of African American culture highlighting black music, dance and literature (Bell 94). Bell further writes:

The intention of the more committed New Negro artists was to project their

vision as honestly as they could, to discover a usable past, to define and explore their culture, not exploit it. Their purpose was to express the historical struggle of black Americans to achieve a dynamic synthesis of their individual and collective double consciousness. (113).

The Renaissance gradually emerged in the early 1920s and then expanded dramatically later in the decade as more creative figures were drawn to Harlem. Jean Toomer published *cane*, a collection of stories and poetry about southern black life and culture in 1923. "The first novel published during the Renaissance was *There is Confusion* (1924) which explored the manners and color consciousness among well-to-do Negroes" (Hine et al 407). There was an avalanche of magazines like *The Crisis*, *Opportunity* and *Survey Graphic*. "In 1925 *Survey Graphic* published a special edition devoted to black life and culture called "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro"(407).

Harlem Renaissance stood as a window to view and experience black culture that helped the culture to flourish in America, especially in the North. As the southerners migrated to the North for escaping slavery and having job opportunities, the North, chiefly Harlem and New York, became densely populated. When the Northern whites involved in the First World War, they were eager to hire and recruit black workers. As a result, black workers had job opportunities. New comers found grand avenues, broad sidewalks and finely constructed houses that everything was available to them. Harlem became home to all classes of blacks including leading writers and artists. "As the national interest in African American culture grew, encouraged by a variety of factors, such as the growing popularity of Jazz, Blues and dance, Harlem seemed well on its way to becoming as the prominent, writer and civil rights leader James Weldon Johnson put it," the Negro capital of the world" (Gates Jr. and McKay 930).

During the Harlem Renaissance, Harlem and New York became the center of many of

the important African American cultural and political national organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League, and Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. Along with these organizations certain magazines like *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*, based in Harlem, worked hard to stimulate a cultural awakening. *Crisis* provided a platform to new writers and artists to publish their literary works. Gates Jr. and McKay describe that "Du Bois and *The Crisis* took the lead in calling for a cultural renaissance among blacks" (931).

Black culture flourished together with its black music. Black music owned popularity not only among the blacks but also among all kinds of people. The white people believed "black culture was so fascinating, unsophisticated, and primitive, which is what made it so fascinating" (Hine et al 409). Black writers like Langston Hughes, Claudie McKay, and Countee Cullen wanted to depict black life realistically-form its gangsters to its gamblers. These black literary voices were less popular than the entertainers, musicians, singers, and dancers who were also the part of the Harlem Renaissance." From wailing trumpets, beating drums, dancing feet, plaintive and mournful songs, Harlem's clubs, cabarets, theaters and ballrooms echoed with the vibrant and soulful sounds of black Americans. By comparison, white American music seemed sedate and bland" (Hine et al 410) jazz and blues are popular music which have helped to draw the attention of all kinds of people and unite them together. "Jazz had its origins in New Orleans, but it drew ragtime and spirituals as it moved up the Mississippi River to Kansas City and Chicago on its way to Harlem (410).

Thus, the Harlem Renaissance was an important epoch in African American literature. It became a period of cultural flourishing. Black culture flourished and came to be experienced by all the kind of people. It stood as a window to view the cultural procession and experience their music and arts. Writers and poets penned to enhance their cultural elements.



Chapter-Three

Racial Memories in Hughes's Poems

Memory is a faculty or a capacity by which past experiences can be brought, thought about, or described at the present time. Nevertheless, racial memory is a faculty concerned with a particular race, and its present members who identify themselves as the members of the race deserving all the intact genetic and other identifiable attributes, and assimilate with the profound traditional and cultural aspects of the race. Therefore, racial memory can be described as a faculty which helps to retrospect the past occurrences of the race and its ancestors with the portrayal of their inseparable culture, traditions, and other indispensable racial essences. *New Oxford Dictionary of English* defines racial memory as "a supposedly inherited sub-conscious memory of events in human history or prehistory"(1448). In other words, racial memory can also be recounted as the revivification of the racial quintessence in the works of literature by the writers and poets on the bases of the racial predecessors, culture and tradition evolved in their time. Hence, racial memory includes the reflection of the culture, traditions, ancestral deeds and the depiction of the past events, or the achievements of the racial predecessors detailed by the authors in their literary works.

Racial memories often get reflected in the works of literature when the writers are haunted by the past and glorious memories of the race, and its traditions as well as the ancestors at the present time. So, the members of the race long to excavate and extract out the past racial deeds and traditions at the present time. The relevance of the past racial traditions seems to be essential for the racial and cultural identity of the race at present, that is, the apex of their longing which causes them to be nostalgic for the racial traditions. Accordingly, racial memories include the reminiscence of the dimmed culture, traditions, and racial forerunners.

The following oceanic model of racial memories can be sketched to portray the emergence of racial memories in the members of the race. This figure denotes the old racial traditions and places them at the bottom to mark the past time. The racial traditions can also be regarded as the identical symbols of the race.

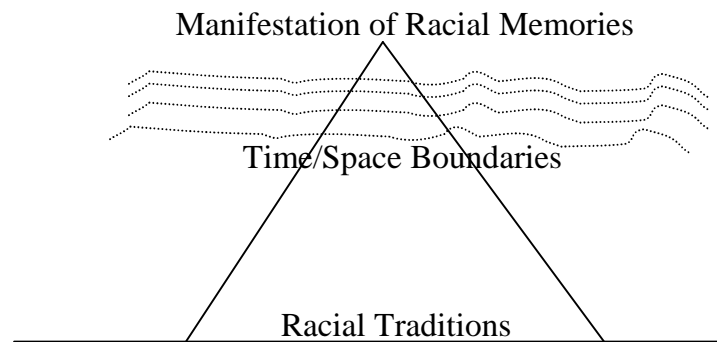


Fig. 1 Oceanic Model of Racial Memories

Racial traditions lie at the bottom in the figure which represents the very past, and it proceeds to the present. The racial traditions are bound with the time and space boundaries and manifested at the present. In this way, racial traditions, which evolved within the certain span of time, have particular effects and influences on the present race members. The manifestations of racial memories are present in Hughes's poems. African Americans are the decedents of the Africans and assimilate the same cultural and traditional essences, as their predecessors, Africans, evolved in the past. That is why, racial traditions of the past, importantly, emerge in the present members of the race, as Hughes's poems contain the manifestation of racial memories. Therefore, Hughes reminisces the past in recollection of the racial traditions. Finally, there is the manifestation of racial memories in his poems at the present time.

Hughes's poems reflect racial memories of the black race as he is an African American poet and shares the cultural as well as genetic attributes of the black race. Most of his poems comprise racial memories as he describes the ancestors, and their land. He glorifies

the black ancestors and their remarkable contributions made to the development of the black race in spite of the unfavorable and unsuitable conditions in Europe and the Americas.

The members of a race, not only of the black but also of the other, cannot remain unconcerned with the racial matters. Therefore, the upheavals of the time through which the predecessors have gone, are recorded in the history. As a result, history stands as a mirror to view all that, particularly happened in the past. Each member of the race carries the legacies of the ancestors, and their traditions and culture, which are considered to be the practices of the old deeds. At this moment, memories of the past without excluding culture, traditions and ancestral deeds are reflected at the existing members of the race. The reverence of Hughes to the past racial traditions reflects his racial memories in his poems.

Hughes commonly draws and displays racial memories in his poems. The memories are of the black race, racial essences, racial ancestors, and their cultural practices which the African Americans have also been assimilating as a part of their life since the time of their predecessors. Hughes's first poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers", published in *The Crisis* in June 1921, revives the racial memories precisely because it reveals the acute sensitivity of the racial past of the African Americans. "The Negro Speaks of River" heralds the existence of a mystic union of Negroes in every country and every age. In this poem, Hughes recalls the history of the black Americans back to the creation of the world, and credits them with possessing wisdom no less than that of the greatest rivers of civilization that humanity had ever known, from Euphrates to the Nile, from Congo to the Mississippi. When he derives the past and meditates on it, Hughes has never indulged in a gratuitous idealization of the land of ancestors. In addition to everything, the exaltation of African atavism has a significant place in his poems. Memories of the African ancestors are discovered in his poems. His inclination to the past is probably because he is not being treated in his country, America as a citizen equal to any other inhabitants. He celebrates Africa as his mother land. It is not only because

all the black people originated there but also America which has always behaved with the African Americans in discriminatory ways.

Hughes bridges the past of the black race with the present status of the African Americans to show how their memories prolong. From the depth of grief and estrangement from the land of origin, the poet sweeps back to life by clinging to his greatest faith, which is in his people and his sense of kinship with them. Rampersad in *The life of Langston Hughes* (1988) writes on "The Negro Speaks of Rivers":

The muddy river is his race, the primal source out of what he is born a new, on that "muddy bosom" of the race as black mother, or grand mother. He rests secure for ever. The angle of the sun on the muddy water is like the angle of the poet's vision, which turns mud into gold. The diction of the poem is simple and unaffected either by direct or rhetorical excess: its eloquence is like that of the best of the black spirituals[...]A man child is born soft spoken, almost casual, yet noble and proud and black as his Africa. (45)

Hughes captures the African Americans' historical journey to America in "The Negro Speaks of Rivers." The poem is the beginning of long chain of poems by Hughes that confronts, distils, extends, and transforms the historical experiences of black people as racial memories into an art both limpid and programmatic depicts the glorious past of the blacks who came to settle in America having various transitory periods. Hughes has functioned as a sage due to inclined racial memories in terms of his ancestors and the African past. Therefore, he imparts the secret and long accumulated history of a people to its younger members; they might make the lessons of the past active in the future. The impartation occurs in the central stanza of the poem "The Negro speaks of Rivers". Hughes uses first person pronoun to describe the activities done by the racial ancestors. The 'I' of the poem may not be, that of "a Negro" but "the Negro," which suggests the whole of the people and their history.

Hughes memorizes historical deeds of the blacks by naming particular rivers and particular activities performed nearby. The poem implicates the whole history of African and American slavery without ever articulating words. "I bathed in the Euphrates", and "I built my hut near the Congo" are the natural activities of natural man performed in his natural habitat. Yet, Hughes sketches the contributions of the black ancestors which compels the poet to think upon the black race and its predecessors:

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
 I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
 I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
 I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
 went down to New Orleans, and I've seen it muddy
 bosom turn all golden in the sunset. (5-10, 23)

This means that, Hughes memorizes the past deeds of his racial ancestors. Raising the pyramids above the Nile was the act of slaves, and Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans would have been in the context of American slavery. Implicit in the history of people who has first been free and then enslaved is the vision of freedom regained. In the same way rivers not only stand for race but also signify fertility as well as dissemination of life in concentric half circle. The liquid, as the externalized form of contemplative imagination, has both flow and advancement of the race. Yet, "The Negro speak of Rivers" reclaims the origins in Africa of physical and spiritual humanity.

Ancestral history of the African Americans has become a haunting body which compels Hughes to excavate the racial ancestors and their bestowal to the black race. In "Negro", he meditates on various guises of the black people as he includes, "I am a Negro/Black as the night is black/Black like the depth of my Africa" (1-3). It discloses his impulses towards Africa. Hughes mentions that the blacks have come across in different

forms like" a slave, a worker, a singer and a dispersed victim." In "Negro", Hughes, as a member of the black race, pens his assimilation" describing the black ancestors as himself using the first person pronoun "I". Stating forward, Hughes contemplates on the slavery how the black slaves were forcibly used in constructive works in America. He further mentions, "I have been a worker/Under my hands the pyramids arose/I made mortar for the Woolworth Building" (7-9). Hughes memorizes the black slaves as the people who set the pedestal of the pyramids, which still keeps glory and pride of the ancestors. Black slaves had equally contributed to build the Woolworth Building, which was the first shopping complex to sell low priced goods for the poor blacks built in 1829. Blacks were the people to prepare mortar, a mixture of lime with cement, sand, and water for the Woolworth Building. These acts are the glory for the black descendents. For that reason, Hughes immortalizes the acts of predecessors in his poems drawing them back to the present as racial memories.

The African Americans have come across the difficult times having faced the scars of slavery. Yet, they have carried the ancestral legacies with them wherever they have moved. Hughes's racial memories are echoed through his poem "The Negro Mother." In this poem, he creates a persona, the Negro mother, to speak of the hard times and the dreams of the black peoples. The mother represents the forerunners of the black race. The mother, addressing all the kins of the black race, pleads to preserve the ancestral heritages that show the reverence to the black race. Hughes, through the persona, appeals to the new African American generation to reminisce the black heritages such as intact cultural and traditional entities, and inspires them to complete the incomplete deeds and the dreams. The Negro mother, on behalf of Hughes, reminisces the unforgotten past:

Children, I come today
To tell you the story of the long dark way
That I had to climb, that I had to know.

In order that the race might live and grow

Look at my face-dark as the night-

Yet shining like the sun with love's true light. (1-6, 125)

Hughes discloses the racial memories which are yet unexpressed but piled with the layers in the sub-conscious memory. To defile the past occurrences of the black race, the mother informs about her arrival to memorize the old days and familiarize the upheavals in the course of development. Hughes has made the mother express his interconnection and confidential relationship with the black race. According to the mother, the new generation of the blacks has to know about the glorious history of the black race and its peoples. Hughes instigates the persona to plead on behalf of the well being of the black traditions and culture. He prods the mother to speak for the fulfillment of the dreams as the dreams of equality, liberty and fraternity. Then, the mother forwards an addression to the blacks to reminisce the unfulfilled dream of freedom of the whole black fraternity. Hughes insists:

All you dark children in the world out there,

Remember my sweat, my pain, my despair

Remember my years, heavy with sorrow-

And make of these years a torch for tomorrow.

Make my past a road to the light.

Out of the darkness, the ignorance, the night.

Lift high my banner out of the dust

Stand like freeman supporting my trust. (Negro Mother 36-42)

The Negro mother, on that account, is the representative of the black race, and Hughes has made her speak of the arduous journey from Africa to America along with the plead to think and remember the ancestral figures. The Negro mother, speaking in favor of the black race, wants her black children, modern black generation, to use the sorrow of the

past as a torch to view the present and handle it as a power so that they can be led to success at the present time.

Hughes assembles the whole black figures and their remarkable contributions to the advancement of the black race in his poem "A Ballad of Negro History", sub-titled "There is so Much to Write About." It begins with the reminiscence of the black race as a solemn awe to it. Hughes begins, "There is so much to write about/In the Negro race/On each page of history/Glows a dusky face" (1-4). Hughes revives the great black figures from different walks of life. They have been memorized only because they have the intact connection with the black race. Thus, Hughes's racial memories splash through this poem. Hughes concludes the poem with significant sketches as he finds, "On each page of history/ We leave a shining trace/On each page of history/ My race!/ My race!/ My race!" (79-84). This emphasized expression on the race also reveals racial memories of the poet.

Thus, Hughes's poems contain racial memories in theme. His poems comprise the African past, cultural and traditional evolution and chiefly, the racial ancestors with their significant deeds done as a slave or a freeman. The unforgettable legacies of the ancestors are sketched as racial memories in his poems. Hughes, in this sense, portrays the racial essences of the black race as racial memories in his poems.

Expression of Nostalgia: Longing for the Lost Culture

All African Americans are the descendents of the African blacks. They consider Africa as their mother land and a place of complete freedom because they have developed belief that only the link to Africa, the land of their origin, can provide their life with meaning. Therefore, the African Americans have always paid a great reverence toward Africa, probably because of their ancestral blood relation and cultural and traditional assimilation with the black Africans. Hughes presents his nostalgic stature of Africa and the Africans.

Hughes becomes nostalgic with reverence to the African heritages; chiefly, because of the lost black culture in America. Hughes, in his poem "Afro-American Fragment" goes back to the past days of the Africans, who were destined to be slaves but had cultivated the immortal cultural and traditional rites. Hughes becomes nostalgic thinking upon the flourished culture of the Africans. He recalls, "So long/ so far away /Is Africa" (1-3). Hughes meditates on his memories upon the motherland which have become pale and dim as he is not able to remember and recollect. Hughes becomes nostalgic to the lost culture of the African Americans which they flourished in the time of extreme suppression and estrangement, too. Hughes expresses his impulses to return to the originality of the lost black culture. In "Afro-American Fragment", Hughes is caught with nostalgia that causes him to withdraw to the lost culture. He meditates:

Subdued and time lost
 Are the drums-and yet
 Through some vast mist of race
 There comes this song,
 I do not understand
 This song of atavistic land,
 Of bitter yearning lost
 Without a place-
 So long,
 So Far away
 Is Africa's
 Dark face. (13-24, 129)

So, the beating of the drums stands for the black religious ceremonies. The music the blues and the Jazz, is originally the carrier of the black culture. In spite of the historical

discrimination and prejudices the songs which came through the mist of racial upheavals, have carried and contained the drum beating in them. Hughes reveals the loss of yearnings at present and becomes nostalgic upon the lost culture pouring himself upon the deeds of the African blacks to revive and bring into the present form. Furthermore, Hughes pleads to save the black musical heritages as they are amalgamated with the blood of the blacks. Hughes, consequently becomes nostalgic and expresses it to such a degree:

Save those that history books create,
 Save those that songs
 Beat back into the blood-
 Beat out of blood with words sad-sung,
 In strange Un-Negro tongue. (4-9, 129)

The African Americans when treated as aliens in America by the whites, they have expressed their nostalgia to the lost culture. Their aspiration is to turn back to the lost culture and revive them. Therefore, Hughes has also expressed more concern and expression of nostalgia toward the black culture and the home of world-wide blacks, Africa. It shouldn't mean that they are irresponsible towards the black race. To preserve the black cultural heritages, the African Americans, too, have gone and confronted with many shortcomings. Hughes's poem "Dream variations" is filled with nostalgia of a singer who wants to have a life without persecution. In this connection, Lohani and Adhikary write that "Dream Variations is a nostalgic lyric which poignantly expresses the singer's wish for a carefree life away from color persecution and racial discrimination"(102). Reminiscing the dimmed cultural practices the persona explodes, "To fling my arms wide/In some place of the Sun/To whirl and to dance. / Till the day is done" (1-4, 40). However, the great concern of the African Americans is to have equality, and the designation of the American citizen, though they are never irrespective toward Africa.

Hughes, as if haunted by the African memories, is supposed to have been called by Africa. The feeling of the call by the land deploys his nostalgia. Hughes in "Dustbowl" has portrayed "Africa" as the land which has kept an everlasting relationship with the African Americans. His longing for the lost culture is revealed to such a degree that he writes, "the land/wants one to come back" (1-2 441). It can be explained as the strong longing of the culture which was once flourished in the land of the blacks in Africa. Thus, expression of nostalgia reveals the longing for the lost culture which remains intact to all the African Americans as well.

Reminiscence of African Scenes in Hughes's Poems

Africa is the origin of one of the principal American racial groups. The vast majority of the African Americans in America are the descendents of the black Africans who were transported to America against their will before America banned the slave trade in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the genealogy of the African Americans relates to the African blacks. As a result, Hughes, who is the high-spirited African American poet, reflects African scenes in his poems. As a historical construct, his poems have displayed the reverence toward Africa. To a great extent, Hughes remembers African scenes through his poems, more symbolically with the sketches of African distinct entities such as the color line and its boundless freedom for all the blacks.

Hughes portrays Africa as the land of freedom, and the common home for all blacks irrespective of their nationalities. He describes Africa as his motherland. Yet, he is an African American because he cannot accept pure American identity for himself. It is probably because of the hatred and discrimination he has confronted within America due to his blackness. Hughes, when compared with Africa, sketches America as the stepmother which has behaved with all the black Americans in step motherly way. For that reason, color

discrimination and prejudiced behaviors upon the black Americans have made Hughes reminisce Africa, the land of his forerunners. Hughes, in his poem "Africa" captures the African scenes in it, and he symbolically presents Africa as a "Sleepy giant" (1) which has been unaffected by such prejudices that bring practical differences in human societies such as, in America. The memories of Africa are dim. However, Hughes jostles Africa to awake for the African Americans, too.

In most of his poems, Hughes compares the blackness of his skin with Africa; as it is dark like the color of his skin. Even though, Africa is not able to rise up shouldering the voices of all blacks. He forwards the reason and supports, "The storm clouds/In your waking eyes" (7-8). To wake Africa from the long termed rest, Hughes sees the upheavals to come as the lightening in her smile. The poet sketches Africa as a place of pride and glory to all blacks. He meditates on the blackness of his skin color, as the representative color of the whole black fraternity, and matches the darkness with Africa. One of the very significant poems of Hughes's "Negro" portrays Africa magnificently. Hughes in "Negro" recalls Africa as a very different land that not only ensures his ancestral connection but also captures the assimilation of the African Americans. Speaking on the "Negro", Hughes compares his appearance with the dark night which draws the reference of Africa and assimilates with the blackness. When he states, "Black like the depth of my Africa" (19). "My Africa" is his complete dedication to the land. Such reminiscences are inevitable because the African Americans have gone through very bad times of slavery which is the scar in the history for the whole black race. "My" denotes Hughes's innate possessive attitude towards the land. "My Africa" implies his close connection in terms of his race, culture, and so on, and strays from America as though he is the American national.

Hughes goes over in the memory of Africa as the land which cultivated cultures for the whole humanity. The cultural practices preserved by the black Africans were souvenir to

the cultureless Europeans in the past. Hughes in "A Ballad of Negro History", subtitled "So Much to Write About" discloses the African past that, "Africa's great cultures/lighted Europe's dark" (15-16), thinking upon the slaves to Europe and America from Africa. Africa, for Hughes, seems to be the source of all good in human life as it provided the rich cultural and musical black treasures to America. In this way, African scenes are reminisced in Hughes's poems.

The reminiscences of African scenes are duly reflected in Hughes's poems. Making a reference with Ethiopia, a nation with black majority, Hughes appeals all Africa to arise for freedom. It sounds that if Africa is free; all the descendents around the world feel to have been free. That is why; Africa appears to be a great symbol of pride and glory to the blacks. Hughes draws the enslaved picture of Africa and wishes for the rise with blazing eyes and the black identical entity in his poem "Call of Ethiopia". His wishes splash with the reverence as he proceeds, "May all Africa arise/ With blazing eyes and night-dark face" (11-12). The agony of slavery on the land of America seems to be less painful than the atrocities of Africa. With the allusion of Ethiopia's freedom, Hughes inspires the Africans to arise:

Ethiopia's Free!

Be like me.

All of Africa

Arise and be free!

All you black peoples,

Be free! Be free! (Ethiopia 14-19)

Hence, the recollection of the African scenes in Hughes's poems conjuncts the African Americans with the predecessors and their ancestral land. The juxtaposition of the African scenes reflects the memories toward the land of origination and the past of the race is reflected through the depiction of the ancestral characters. Thus, Africa is a great influence on

Hughes's poems that the African scenes brought into memory at present have also displayed the deep and solemn veneration and awe to the land of all blacks around the world.

Christianity: Prejudice to Blacks

Christianity is based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, a Galilean Jew. Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah or savior who came to fulfill God's promise to bring justice and healing to the world. Although Christianity has a strong influence on the blacks, it has adversely appeared as a prejudice to blacks. The natural religion of the blacks is not Christianity, but their natural religion can also be categorized as slave religion or black religion, which expresses "belief in a supreme deity, and lesser order of spiritual beings including the spirits of ancestors and of nature-all of whom are imminent, intervening in the affairs of mortal" (Harrison 5). In fact, they practiced some natural and primitive form of unorganized religion.

Black religion cannot be reduced to any one form or tradition. It is a complex constellation of diverse system of belief and practice. Black religion has been the core to the survival of African Americans, developing as a cultural response and adoption to the conditions of their experience in America. For many people "religion is an organized system of beliefs, rituals-acts and ceremonies-personal practices and worship directed toward a supreme power or deity" (Fontaine 214). Rejecting Christianity as the sole form of emancipation, Hughes opts for economic equality as the only way for the salvation on the earth in "Goodbye Christ":

Goodbye,

Christ Jesus Lord God Jehova,

Beat it on away from here now.

Make way for a new guy with no religion at all-

A real guy named

Marx Communist Lenin Peasant Stalin Worker ME-

I said, ME! (17-23)

This poem also mocks Christianity. The speaker in the poem rejects the old Christ and offers himself a secular Messiah.

Although Christianity began as a reform movement of Judaism, it quickly spread to non-Jewish population – specifically, prejudice to the non-Whites. Christianity, if historically dealt, became the means to institutionalize slavery which comprised the generations of the blacks in America. "Christianity teaches that people are sinful by nature. They can, however, wipe out their sinfulness and past offences toward God and humanity by believing in the sacrificial death of Jesus" (Fontaine 216). Therefore, Christianity was imposed upon the blacks to make them pure as they were considered to have been sinful and for them, Christianity was thought to have been a means of both purification and civilization. The historical conversion of the non-Christian blacks into Christianity has a strong account. Fontaine writes in "Religion":

During the middle ages, from about the A.D.400s through the 1400s, Christian missionaries mainly converted European peoples. As a result, the Christian churches dominated European life for centuries [...]. Beginning in the 1500s catholic missionaries converted many people in Africa and the Americas to Christianity. Protestant missionaries became active in the 1600s and made converts in Africa and North America. (213)

Christianity worked as a biased credo to authenticize slavery and the conversion was a forced act even in the case of the African and the African American as well. Black religious ceremonies and rites were as the part of their ancestral treasure. Since the origin, tribal affiliation, language and religion were not homogeneous to African captives, they had made

uniformity in them in term of their religion. Yet, sufficient similarities existed between their respective cultures to allow a world view to emerge out of the context of their interaction and collective condition. The creativity and adaptability of that first generation of African Americans and the perspective they brought with them was appreciable. This generalized African world view as expressed in religion included some fundamental credos in it. Harrison thus sheds light on the generalized world view on the black religion as:

[...] ecstatic forms of worship including the spirits of ancestors, including drumming and ritual dancing and the belief in spirit procession; oral transmission of culture and emphasis on the collective production of the sacred; close integration of the sacred and the profane, with the religious specialist not holding an exalted position over other members of community, value and respect for all forms of life, human or otherwise, and an emphasis on living harmoniously with nature. (5-6)

These are the fundamental factors to construct black religion which stand for a symbol for the African Americans. While some Africans had been previously exposed to Christianity, the mode of Christianity imposed upon them in the Americas, particularly in the southern United States, was carefully constructed to shape them into compliant and submissive slaves. Many slave holders used Christianity prejudicially as an ideological tool of social control designed to perpetuate and justify the institution of slavery. To keep off the forceful conversion from the slaves' religion into Christianity "Slaves held secret meetings at night beneath the hush harbors, because the dense foliage contained and quieted the sounds of their worship. These secret service provided emotional, physical, or spiritual catharsis, hope, a sense of solidarity and affirmation of their intrinsic value as human beings" (Harrison 6). But, the converts were forcibly made. The missionaries targeted the Africans who had been following either local religions or Islam. To some extent, Christian missionaries faced

hardship to make converts because "people under the Muslim rule in northern Africa did not accept Christianity and the conversion of African took hundreds of years" (Decalo 131).

In this manner, Christianity was imposed on the blacks that set the prior black religion aside. In addition to that, the viewpoint of the whites to sketch them as sinful increased. Despite the conversion, the blacks were never prospected to enter the white churches for worship. Wilmore writes on the mode of the religion followed by the African Americans in America that "two issues of critical importance to black religion as the attitude of white Christians toward the Christianization and the abolition of slavery, and the nature of the earliest slave religion" (237) which characterized the further ways to set black Christianity and found black churches.

Most of the blacks were, then, Christianized, and the old form of the black religion appeared in the new form as African Americans practiced it under the name of black Christianity, which was founded on the pedestal of the black religion. A secular scholar John W. Blassingame has written:

In the United States, many African religious rites were fused into one-voodoo. From the whole panopy of African deities, the slaves chose snake god of whydah, Fon and Ewe. Symbolic of the umbilical cord and the rainbow, the snake embodied the dynamic changing quality of life. In Africa, it was sometimes the god of fertility and the determiner of good and ill fortune. Only by worshipping the god could one invoke his protective spirit. (qtd in Wilmore 238).

The historical act of conversion led them backward to the inner core of the black religion, and Christianity, though forced, sought places in the heart of the blacks. There is scant evidence that voodoo or some discrete form of reinterpreted black religion synthesized as effectively with Protestantism in the English colonies. However, missionary reports and

slave narratives show that the African conjurer and medicine man, the manipulation of charms and talismans, and the use of drums and dancing were present in the slave –quarters, as survival strategies, even after conversion to orthodox Christianity.

Hence, the blacks are still able to save the gospels of the black religion, despite the forced and unwanted conversion into Christianity. Although Christianity emerged as a prejudice to blacks in many respects to authenticize and institutionalize slavery, it has been a matter of respect at the present that most blacks are Christians. But, they still shoulder the ancestral heritages of the black religion with them. The form has been changed, but the content is the same like the beating of the drums for African ceremonies to perform rituals, which are safely preserved with them.

Harlem Renaissance as a Symbol of Black Platform

The Harlem Renaissance provided a platform to all the black literature, arts, culture and music in the 1920s. Harlem, a city in New York in America, is also the place of emergence of the Harlem Renaissance. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Harlem became the center for all black migrants, who migrated to the North from the south, to cultivate the black cultures in America, and use it as a platform to continue establishing the African Americans' talents. The South was still indulging into the suppression of blacks, but the North had lesser. And, the southern blacks wanted to get rid of suppression and enjoy greater freedom like the northerners. The whites in the North had to actively involve in the First World War, and they began to hire the black southerners to work as home servants. The war created the job opportunities for all the blacks and mass migration from south to North began at a great speed. They were also attracted by the comfortable life, chiefly, by the freedom of the northerners. For that reason, they involved in the mass migration to New York, particularly, Harlem, in the early decade of the 1900s. The migration also created the

foundation for the African Americans to set forth for enhancing their black tradition, culture and music, together with literature. Harlem became the meeting point for the people who came from different background in several ways.

The Harlem Renaissance was an outpouring of African American literature, chiefly in Harlem in the 1920s. It demonstrated that some blacks had acquired talent within American society which whites as well as blacks could appreciate. The renaissance flourished with the flowering of African music, arts, literature and sculpture, which were equally developed in America in the 1920s. The flourishing in every aspect of the black life helped to stand the Harlem Renaissance as a platform to blacks. Consequently, it became the platform to cultivate and expose real black life together with the advancement of literature, music art, and so on. The arts including music and dance concerned those years marked an especially brilliant moment in the history of blacks in America. To derive some references on how the renaissance became a symbol of black platform, some allusions can be described. The second half of the decade witnessed the flow of publications by African Americans which included poetry, fiction, drama, essay, as music, dance, painting, and sculpture. Such overflow of literature, having stood on the Harlem Renaissance, became a movement which was able to influence the blacks around the world. Gates Jr. and McKay rightly imply Harlem as the international platform for the African immigrants in these words:

What happened in the United States should be linked to certain trends abroad.

By the late 1920s, African and Caribbean students in Paris, and progressive young intellectuals and artists in the West Indies were reading the work of black Americans as well as their own thinkers, and creators, and were taking the first tentative steps toward in one instance, the Negritude literature in the British West Indies, perhaps best exemplified in the century by the poetry and plays. (929)

Through the renaissance, the black writers were able to spread the scope and area of black sentiments throughout America and around. The African American writers including Hughes, McKay, and Cullen were established with their capability and talents in American literature. However, they were not included in the mainstream American literature because of color prejudices and biasness. Stepping on the Harlem Renaissance, Harlem and New York became more crucial to the movement in America.

In the early 1920s, three works signaled the new creative energy in African American literature. Claude McKay's volume of *Harlem Shadows* (1922) became one of the first works by a black writer to be published by a mainstream national publisher. Together with that Jean Toomer wrote *Cane* (1923) which was an experimental novel that combined poetry and prose in documenting the life of American blacks. The novel by Jessie Fauset *There is Confusion* (1924) depicted middle class life among the black Americans.

No common literary style or political ideology defined the Harlem Renaissance. The participants who used the renaissance as a platform were united with their sense of taking part in a common endeavor and their commitment to giving artistic expression to the African American experience. Some common themes existed such as an interest in the roots of the twentieth-century African American experience in Africa and strong sense of racial pride and desire for social and political equality. Hughes expresses the Harlem spirit to a hope for Harlem to be completed in his poem 'Hope for Harlem'. Hughes depicts the sketch of the then Harlem. He proceeds:

There's a new skyline in Harlem

It's tall and proud and fine,

At night its walls are gleaming

Where a thousand windows shine

[-----]

That belongs to you and me. (1-4, 6, 436)

The most characteristic aspect of the Harlem Renaissance, that it provided, was the diversity of its expression. The diverse literary expression of the Harlem Renaissance ranged from Hughes's weaving of the rhythms of African American music into his poems of ghetto life, as in *The Weary Blues* (1926). More over, Countee Cullen used both African and European images to explore the African roots of the black American life. Countee Cullen in the poem 'Heritage' discussed on being both a Christian and an African, yet not belonging fully to either tradition. Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes were Watching God* (1937) used folk life of the black rural south to create a brilliant study of race and gender in which a woman finds her true identity. On that account, the black writer utilized the Harlem Renaissance as a platform to flourish the African American literature, arts and music in America.

The Harlem Renaissance provided a platform to the performing arts as well. Diversity and experimentation were reflected in the Blues singing of Bessie Smith and in Jazz music. Jazz ranged from the marriage of blues and ragtime by pianist Jelly Roll Morton to the instrumentation of the bandleader Louis Armstrong and the orchestration of composer Duke Ellington. Aaron Douglas, an artist, adopted a deliberately primitive style and incorporated African images in his painting and illustrations. In connection with the music evolved by the African Americans, Martin in "The Sounds of Blackness: African American Music" writes:

Fundamental emphases found expression in African American musical aesthetics, notably rhythm, where melody anchored European music, rhythm anchored African music. Consequently, rhythm, particularly the drum, provided a common musical syntax and grammar: a common culture style.

The drum enabled African Americans to evoke and thus to communicate with the ancestral spirits, to delineate musical time, to punctuate cultural events, to

provide a foundation of song and dance, and to communicate as with words.

(202)

Music became a tie to combine the mixed audience together. It benefited the African Americans in two ways that the whites were inclined towards to flavor of different type of music and the other; they were prospected to flourish black culture. Hornsby furthers the impression of the African American music in "African American," that "African American musician also gained fame among whites as well as blacks during the early 1920s. A bandleader named W.C. Handy, who had composed "St. Louis Blues" in 1914, became known as the father of the blues. Jazz grew out of black folk and ballads" (136).

Harlem became the center to such a degree for upsurging literary cultural and musical development and revivification that the black people centralized and worked for the race consciousness. On the other hand, Harlem's cabarets attracted both Harlem residents and white New Yorkers seeking out Harlem nightlife. Ultimately, the more successful black musicians and entertainers who appealed to a mainstream audience moved their performance down town.

The Harlem Renaissance changed the dynamics of African American arts and literature in America. The black writers were able to get publishers to publish their literary works. Furthermore, the existence of the body of African American literature, from the renaissance, inspired writers such as Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright to peruse literary careers in the late 1930s and the 1940s. To sum up, the Harlem Renaissance for thousands of blacks in America was the proof that the white race did not hold a monopoly on literature and culture but holding it as a platform, so many black literature artists and musicians encountered with the white hegemony through their creative works. As a result, the influence of the Harlem Renaissance was not confined within America, but the writers like Hughes, Cullen and McKay traveled abroad that rivaled or surpassed what they achieved in America

through the Harlem Renaissance.

Thus, the diminishing treasures of the African American were, consequently, revived and flourished first in Harlem, then across America during the period of the Harlem Renaissance. Moreover, it spread consciousness for the race, and racial, cultural and musical essences were equally developed. Eventually, the Harlem Renaissance founded the bases and stood as a symbol of black platform due to the progress it set in all the aspects of the African American life.

Hughes's Dream: Equality, Liberty and Fraternity in America

The fundamental dreams cultivated by the Americans are the rights to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness as it declared in the Declaration of Independence in 1776. African Americans, as the American citizens, rear the similar dreams in America. Hughes congregates the dreams of the African Americans, which are filled with equal opportunities in the land of prosperity, respected life and dignified identity of the African Americans in America. Hughes emphasizes the unfulfilled dreams of equality, liberty and fraternity in America together with the illumination of the African American's condition in present American.

Hughes pleads for the fulfillment of the dreams that were never completed and were often deferred with various pretensions. Hughes's poem "Let America Be America Again," published in *Esquire* and in the International Worker Order Pamphlet *A New song* in 1938, speaks of the freedom and equality, which America boasts, but it never had for the African Americans. It looks forward to a day when "Liberty/Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath" (11-12), and America, is "that great strong land of love" (7). Hughes has not limited his plea to the downtrodden African Americans; he has included the poor white, the American Indian, the immigrant, farmer, worker and the people who share the dreams of

Hughes as liberty, equality and fraternity that have never been fulfilled. The dreams still beckon. In "freedom's plow," he points out that "America is a dream" and the product of the seed of freedom and democracy must come to all peoples of all races of the world. Hughes insists:

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed-

Let it be that great strong land of love,

Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme

That any man be crushed by one above. (6-9, 189)

Throughout Hughes's life and in his literary expression, the American dreams of the African Americans appear as a ragged, uneven splotched and often unattainable goal which often became a nightmare. Yet, there is always the hope of the accomplished dreams even in the darkest moments. Hughes's dreams are bruised and often made travesty for African Americans. Hughes emphasizes on the existence of the dreams. Hughes wants America to be the land that keeps its promises to crown the people with their attainable dreams of equality, liberty and that provides "opportunities and equality" (14).

Pains of being unequal and having prejudiced treatment in America, Hughes discloses, "There's never been equality of me/ Nor freedom in this 'homeland of free' (15-16, 190). Hughes reveals the lack of equality and freedom, as the land brags for the unfreed free man. So, inequality created on the bases of color and the slavery touches Hughes, and he mentions the stigma he has carried with him as, "I am the Negro bearing Slavery's scars" (20). Hughes insists on the basic dreams of the African Americans that the 'homeland of the free', America, can complete and accomplish on their behalf. In spite of the contributions to the making of America, the African Americans are deprived of the rights to equality, liberty and fraternity, which have been the dreams they dreamed and also, the Declaration of Independence, the greatest historical document for the whole Americans, declared on behalf

of the American peoples. Yet, the dreams have not taken the real form in practice. Hughes keeps up dreaming that one day the basic dreams will come true to them. He insists in favor of the reasonable dreams:

Yet, I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream.
 In that Old world while still a serf of kings,
 Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
 That even yet its mighty daring sings.
 In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned
 That's made America the land it has become.
 O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas.
 In search of what I meant to be my home-
 [-----]
 And torn from Black Africa's strand I came
 To build a "homeland of the free. (39-47, 49-50, 190)

Hughes recalls the dreams of equality, liberty and fraternity deferred after each upheaval in order to emphasize on the promises made in the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862 by contemporary President Abraham Lincoln. Time brings changes and helps the dreams to be fulfilled but the African Americans have never had their dreams fulfilled. Therefore, America, which symbolically stands for the land of liberty and prosperity, "homeland of the free", for African Americans, has never appeared so for them. The Emancipation Proclamation had also adorned the Americans with freedom, irrespective of any biasness that could make differences among the peoples. It states emphasizing the downtrodden slaves:

[...] all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people where of shall than be in rebellion against the United States, shall be

then, thence forward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States ... will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom. (qtd in Hine et al A15).

Even after the Emancipation proclamation, freedom was delayed, and each time the dreams of the African Americans have been postponed. In relation to Hughes, his poems began to express more anger on the postponement of the dreams in the 1950s. His poem "Harlem", "seems to be warning the whites that there might be an explosion of black violence if blacks can't get social justice for themselves" (High 214). Therefore, "Harlem" is the revelation of the downtrodden people's reaction and voice for liberty, equality and fraternity. "Harlem" inquires the social consequences of so many deferred dreams. The speaker in the poem is the spokesperson of the whole black voice, that in some corner keeps the dreams of being equal, having freedom, and a just society. Hughes presents the speaker aggressively to warn the consequences of the frequently deferred dreams. He questions, "What happens to a dream deferred?" (1, 426) The poem captures the series of images of decay and waste, representing the dreamer's dilemma. The dreams have been animated as living ones and they have dried up probably because of negligence upon the African Americans for too long period of time. Comparing the unaccomplished dreams to a sore on the human body, Hughes suggests that unfulfilled dreams are the pains of the whole African Americans who have been troubled for centuries. So, for them, the postponed dreams are like painful injuries which begin to be infected.

Hughes in his poem "Harlem" reflects the post World War II mood of the African Americans. They were able to overcome the Great Depression which caused bankruptcy in American lives, and were also able to go through the world war, but still the basic dreams of the African Americans are deferred. Thus, Hughes's poem reveals the unresolved conflict

existing between the United States and its people. It also refers the failed promises to the African Americans.

In this manner, Hughes contemplates on the dreams, perfectly based on the historical declaration of the Declaration of Independence, which encouraged the Americans to have dreams and get them fulfilled. The Declaration of Independence regarded the people equal and equally endowed by the creator. But, the dreams of the African Americans as to have peoples endowed with equality, liberty and fraternity are often postponed and neglected. Therefore, the dreams Hughes dreamed on behalf of the African Americans are still being deferred.

Color as a Measuring Rod

Color has become the chief entity that shows dichotomy among the members of the human race. It has been a long-delved thought to categorize the people on the basis of their color, compared to the black Americans, in America. The blacks who are from the African ancestry deserve blackness in their color and are separated from the peoples of other races. Yet, color does not implicitly disclose the inner capability of the people of any races. But, African Americans have gone through many shortcomings, segregation, and discrimination due to their distinct black color. Thus, intellectuality is set aside and color becomes the measuring rod to evaluate the intellectual power of the black Americans. The color, accordingly, becomes the measuring rod and generalizes the blacks as inferior people basing on the long termed slavery they sustained.

In American context, the critical evaluation of the black writers in comparison to the whites is almost invisible. When color becomes the measuring rod, inferiority has emerged in them as they want to escape of the race. Such defeated mentality developed in the artists can be implicitly seen in Langston Hughes's essay titled "The Negro Artist and the Racial

Mountain." The essay gives the reference of a black artist who wants to be like a white artist viewed and read by most. Hughes mentions:

One of the most promising of the young Negro poets said to me once "I want to be a poet not a Negro poet" meaning I believe "I want to write like a white [...]". And I was sorry the young man said that, for no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself. And I doubted then that, with his desire to run away spiritually from his race, this boy would ever be a great poet. But this mountain standing in the way of any true Negro art in America this urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible. (1267)

Measuring the literary capacity on the basis of color is too depressing, though it was prevalent in the American literary trends, that the black literary figures were excluded from the mainstream literature. While cramming through the American contest, it is not arduous to experience the color line in social aspects, too. Then, whites have generally assumed that blackness means poverty, ignorance, moral and intellectual bankruptcy and the lack of Euro-American cultural attributes. Such assumptions are indissolubly rooted in the institution of slavery, which was reserved for the people of African descent. Even before the civil war, in *ante-bellum* America, slavery consigned nine-tenths of blacks to the poorest, and most vulnerable and powerless part of the working class. For all who came to the shores of America, America was a land of freedom, hope and opportunity- except the Negro.

All times throughout the United states, both in ideology and practice, color has played a notoriously strong role to inferiorize the black Americans, as they have been denied the right and opportunity to play the role of rightful citizen; to be competitive and hold high official positions. Consequently, color of the black people began to be understood as the

symbol of inferiority among the whites. History tells it that the system of slavery imposed strikingly harsh and inhuman Slave codes on the blacks; crucifixion, burning and starvation were legal modes of punishment to keep them below the common standard. The generalization of the whole blacks in term of color was created with the basic assumption of the slave system which was also alleged innate and permanent inferiority of the black race. During the years between 1890 and 1910, white supremacy built on the system of racial segregation-Jim Crow Laws-not only institutionalized the degradation of the blacks but also cost black lives through lynching and other forms of illegal violence. Jim Crow laws were the legal enactments adopted by southern states after the Reconstruction to enforce the segregation of whites and blacks in schools, public transportation, churches, theaters, hotels and restaurants. Regarding discrimination, in this connection, Earl E. Thorpe in *Black Historians: A Critique* (1971) writes, "a Kentucky Court ruled that a black slave by our court is not a person but a thing" (5). Douglass in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (1994) describes the black slave who stumbled at the first color line as "beings deprived of every right, stripped of every privilege, ranked with four-footed beast and compelled to live in grossest ignorance, herded together-without marriage, without God, and without hope" (276).

Hughes encompasses the color of the African Americans with the glory of the black race. He encourages the black descendants to hold the strength to exceed the color line. In "Color", he states:

Wear it
Like a banner
For the proud
Not like a shroud
[-----]

Like a song

Soaring high-

Not moan or cry. (1-4, 6-8)

Color is not the factor that determines the inner capability. Therefore, Hughes suggests the black descendants to take color as the essence of their pride, not as something to inferiorize them.

In this way, the standardization of the black people is emphasized on the basis of their color as the measuring rod. The black people are still-treated referring the background of their slavery and placed in the low social hierarchy. This biased viewpoint to deal with the African Americans is too baseless that, in fact, the individuality of a person can make difference even among the people of the same race. Thus, thinking and treating the black people inferior, or their intellectuality bankrupt is a great problem which has backwarded and hidden their individual competence and performance. In this way, the dichotomy structured on the pyramid of binary intensifies the polarization and triggers social unrest and conflicts.

Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903) asserts "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of color-line-the relation of the darker skin to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (372). The blacks in America have always been approach less due to the dichotomy of their color form the whites. In this connection, the exploration of American annals discloses that slaves, ex-slaves, and their descendants were denied the rights and privileges of authentic American identity. Deborah H. Barnes has it that "Americans of African descent-be the enslaved, indentured or free-have been an integrated, but neglected part of the American genesis" (21). Anglo hegemony effectively controlled and defined American socio-cultural reality, its values, customs and standards and marginalized the blacks on the color basis. It tried to perpetuate its supremacy by invaliditating the interpretations of socio-cultural reality by "Cultural others" in order to

create" an ideologically homogenous from heterogeneous peoples" (Beavers 83).

The blacks, on that account were cunningly befuddled and deceived out their fair share of the Promised Land by Anglo-America's treachery, trickery and greed. Racial segregation crossed nationality, language and religious barriers. For them, whiteness meant overall life, fortune, beauty and benevolence, whereas blackness stood for poverty, laziness, ugliness, dearth, and all the derogatory attributes. On behalf of the whites, there were a large range of opportunities, for the whites such as personal freedom and democratic rights protected by the state. Adversely, blackness and African ancestry proved to be a curse for African Americans and therefore they were victimized, dehumanized and marginalized throughout the different historical epochs-slavery, emancipation, migration and integration.

Color is not the determinant and indicator to an individual's subjective attributes intellectual prowess, and cultural advancement. Therefore, relating and accounting blackness with inferiority, evils, and all the other disparaging traits is unquestionably a fallacious and molded notion. This prejudiced and discriminatory notion of dividing and marginalizing an entire race and regarding them as "others" and their culture as an uncivilized --basing the judgment on colorism-- is the only facet of racism. The racist white hegemonic American society has always associated the black skin of African American people with purely eccentric and entirely subjective attributes such as aesthetic taste, literary aptitudes, intellectual propensity, and so on. White people look down upon the blacks and treat and observe them as "Outsiders", and as unproductive barren soil that can never contribute to America's development. On the other hand, to the blooming generation, measuring human capability on the ground of color may not affect the creative and determinant human mind of the people of any races.



Chapter-Four

Affirmation of Marginal Voice: A Recreation of Racial History

The historical transformation of the Africans into the African Americans is incredibly gut- wrenching and troublesome. The afflictions they had undergone to elevate and go with themselves in America with American identity are endless. Therefore, it has always been very arduous approach for the African Americans to build a stage at ease and convoke their marginalized voices to have a life of dignity in America. They have always been marginalized from the mainstream literature, society, and politics as well, on the basis of color and their ancestral slavery, which has become an inerasable disgrace for the whole blacks in America. The voices of the marginalized African Americans are able to create the racial history of their own in America in spite of their exclusion from the so called mainstream literature.

Langston Hughes has made a continual effort to erase the prejudices that blacks are inferior in heart and mind: they are treated as a people without any imaginative faculty and labeled with problem -creating people by whites. Therefore, African American writers in general and African American poets in particular have made rigorous attempt to depict the memory of their lost land and culture in works of art so as to affirm identity. Indeed, such effort is basically two faceted: firstly, they endeavor to assess the so-called mainstream discourse that negates literary and aesthetic potentiality of the blacks and to uproot the undeserved grace heaped upon their back by the institutionalized racism; and secondly, they aim at the destruction of the sense of double consciousness that the race prejudice has endangered among the blacks. The roots of black aesthetics on the whole are, therefore, the collective experiences of black people of Africa, the Middle passage,

slavery, southern plantation, emancipation, Jim Crowism, and Northern migration that have produced a residue of shared memories and frame of reference for African Americans. The Black past with its multifarious tales of pangs and pathos stirs the imagination of black writers. Despite the dangers of remembering the past, Hughes has insistently based a considerable part of his aesthetic ideal on the black history. In brief, Black consciousness and Black past are the major arenas of his literary exercise, which can be experienced in his poems as the portrayal of racial memories.

Hughes has depicted the black people as subject and creative change-agents rather than as object in the way the myths have traditionally portrayed them. His poems place the Black past at the center of the American chronicle and questions the mainstream history and literary tradition that exclude and trivialize the presence and role of the African Americans from their account. Hughes not only discovers what the past was really like but also considers why it was like it. His objective is to transmit the useable and useful past to the black ancestors, their culture and traditions; and Black past. In this way, it can be implied that each act of writing poems for him is an act of discovering deep within himself some relationship of a collective memories of the black people.

Hughes has affirmed the marginalized voices of the African Americans, of the black Americans in totality, through his poems creating and reviving the racial history which was about to be diminished due to the embittered account of the whites. He has assembled the past deeds of the racial ancestors, together with their cultural, traditional and religious practices in his poems as racial memories. Hughes has recollected the racial predecessors, in brief, the Black heritages inseparably woven with the black race and portrayed as racial memories in his poems. Racial memories present in Hughes poems have drawn the African Americans back to the history and inspired them to create the world in which they can have freedom, liberty and fraternity, along with the prestigious life with dignity

in America. Thus, it can be concluded that racial memories are inevitable in Hughes's poems to such a degree that the origins, ancestors and racial traditions have been cultivated, erected and revived to create a racial history in America.

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