

## **I: Outstanding Eminence of Willa Cather**

### **Fascia of Willa Cather's Writings**

Willa Cather, the mainstream author of the United States was born in Virginia and spent her early childhood there. Soon her family moved to Nebraska and she had to spend the day of her later childhood as an immigrant with the other immigrants. The impression of those immigrants remained so fresh and deep in her mind that she has succeeded to draw the people and events as the major characters and the plots respectively in many of her later novels.

She joined the university of Nebraska and did her graduation from there. Her interest in literature and creative writing grew so intensely that ultimately she proved all her interest and enthusiasm as the parts of her literary career. She did so by publishing a number of books on different issues. She began her multidimensional aptitude with writing poetry. The publication of her early poems under the title *April Twilights* in 1903, became the morning star of her life. After the successful publication of her poetical composition, Cather utilized her creative writing skill in story writing. Within two years that is around 1905, she succeeded to publish *The Troll Garden* as the collection of her outstanding short stories. These two books came as the imminent evidences of her inventive ability, and it further inspired her to enter into any field of literature. Her poems and stories got full space both in home and society. Consequently, Cather engaged herself so much in writing that after a few years, in 1912, she succeeded to publish her first novel entitled *Alexander Bridge*, with its reflection of unique reality. The novel dealing with an event of day to day life, remained most influential not only to the ordinary people, but it approached to knock the literary mind and intellectual minds too. In fact, it is a story of

an engineer who remains in love with two women. On one side he loved his wife and on the other with a woman whom he loved in his youth. The love affairs of his youth which he revives to other's wife, puts him in an odd position especially, and it invites his painful days. As being a woman, Cather takes the subject matter of womanly life and shares it with the unusual and careless male sentiment.

Then the frontier movement, which fascinates almost reputed contemporary authors of the United States, touches miss Cather too. As soon as she gets fascinated with the frontier movement, she begins to exploit it in her writings. The book *O' Pioneer!* came as its eminent example, which she published in 1913. The very text, as the title shows deals with land and its relationship with the people newly and hardly adjusting themselves in the distinct soil. Willa Cather in this very text has talked much about the prairies and frontiers.

Willa Cather began to think much about the woman, her interest and realization. Reflecting her own feelings and attitudes, she showed her great interest in women and turned her sentiments in her next book, and entitled it as *The Song of the Lark* (1915). Though the events and thoughts are her own, yet the book reflects a story of a woman as a major character. It includes all the happiness and misery usually based on the experiences of a woman.

*My Antonia* is the text from Cather's hand, which has been popular as the synonym of the author herself. The very text has elevated the reputation of Miss Cather so high that it helped her to put the author in the row of her contemporary reputed authors. The time of publication also matters a lot. *My Antonia* was published at the blooming period of the American literature, that is 1918. The theme of the novel can be

interpreted from various perspectives, but it reflects the lifestyle of immigrants in the frontiers. The background of the novel is associating with the suffering of a Bohemian girl, who suffers not by the flaw of her own, but as an immigrant in the new land and new culture. The very spirit of the text does not hesitate to expose the biographical aspect of the author. However, Miss Cather with her unusual writing skill has turned the situation inside the novel to the wide sense of fictional gravity.

Writing continued on her own, Cather succeeded to capture the inner sentiment of her readers and this sensation created a whim in public. Consequently, Cather was awarded the highly reputed award known as the Pulitzer Prize with the publication of her novel *One of Ours* in 1922. Though the very work could not be so popular, yet the prize remained itself as the token of the throughout evaluation of her numerous literary works. Whatever may be the defect in internal arrangement, but the plot of the text is remarkable as it touches the very spirit of the World War I. The impact of war is exposed as the negative aspect of human life no matter it makes the soldiers suffer or the very public, but it hurts all. In the novel, the central character (protagonist) who is an army soldier fighting in the war, gets more frustrated of useless war. His interest in war gets lost and he makes his efforts to escape from the very oppressive life, which he is forced to spend.

*The Professor's House*, which Cather published in 1925, narrates a story of an idealistic scholarship adjustment to the Middle Age. It provides ample information about the lifestyle of the medieval scholars. Similarly, her short novel, *My Mortal Enemy*, which was published in 1926, has been concerned with a selfish and strong willed woman who meets with her own downfall. It shows that Cather though herself is a woman, but she remained fair in expression. The narration of the downfall of the woman through the

hand of the same sex, itself proves that Miss Cather in her writings does fictionalizes what seems to be possible.

In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, (1927) Cather reflects her intense love of the past, which itself has become one of the unique characteristics of Willa Cather's writings. Past plays a significant role in Miss Cather's sentiment. She loves past not because her present is not good, but because it makes the present. Cather is neither an escapist nor the nostalgic author in true sense, but somewhat middle. However, her strong attachment to the past cannot be ignored. She enjoys with the past without having any fault or personal grudge with the present. She compares the presence with the past as she finds something lacking in the presence. So her love to the past works as the means to compensate what is missed in the present, and vice versa.

Cather could not be indifference towards the ongoing struggle and movements of the black-white relationship though she didn't like to involve in such racial and political controversies of her time. As being the protector of justice and peace in society, she could not close her eyes to the very injustice and suffering of the black people. The ideas were in latent form inside her, but she didn't publicize them until the publication of her *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, the work against slavery. Remaining reserve for a long time about the ethnic issue going on through centuries, Cather open the floodgate of her opinion only in 1940 with the publication of her much read text, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. In this novel, she recalls her childhood, which she spent in Virginia, and reveals what she considers humanity and justice. Slavery and its negative impact in the contemporary United States, lies at the center of the novel. At the end of the novel, Miss Cather concludes the issue with a better solution of reconciliation, which she thinks only

one option for peace and rest. Through this novel, she lay the plight of the Afro-Americans in the hand of the Anglo-Americans and insists to be negotiated rather than going on to the never-ending tug of war.

After writing a number of novels, Cather again returns to the story writing, which she practiced at the beginning of her literary career. Her vision of story and its plot gets further strengthened at this next phase. Writing a number of stories in the Lawrence and Hemming way styles, she publishes them collectively under the title *Bright Medus* in 1920. Her art of composing story exploiting the day-to-day event from the contemporary society, touches everybody's heart. Her stories deal specially with the careers of the artists. Cather after having the great success in story writing jumps into the essay writing. Her *Not Underforty* is the collection of her essays, which she published in 1936. The essays reflect her experiences, intellectually rising thoughts and feelings approaching to the intuitional ground.

If we consider upon the life of Willa Cather, we observe her intense devotion to writing, creating new literature out of the adventures and feelings of human life. The base of her literary field is the life experienced by the ordinary people living in the mercy of mother earth. If we turn to her artistic creation and particularly focus upon the excessively blooming period, which lies between 1918-1931, we observe her intuitional understanding sprinkled in every claim with highly intellectual statement. In this period we find her best novels published and on the basis of it many critics have recognized her as the true novelists of 1920s. She became the contemporary of Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald. However, we can distinguish Cather from them on the ground of priority she gives in her writing. In this context, both Hemingway and Fitzgerald gave priority to the

stories, but she strengthened the art of novel writing. In this context, we can also compare Will Cather with the best novelist like Henry James. Not all, but three novels—*My Antonia* (1918), *A Lost Lady* (1923), and *The Professor's House* (1925) are purely in the pattern both in contents and styles, created independently by James Joyce himself. Similarly, we can compare her second novel, *O' Pioneer!* (1913), particularly with William Faulkner. Considering her ability demonstrated in her free writings, we observe her not only a versatile one, but perfectly multidimensional. In this way, Willa Cather's dignity and reputation as a writer is as high as the great American authors like Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Faulkner.

Now it is important and contextual to discuss about the main features of her writings. The most important characteristics of Cather's writing, which a number of critics have recognized and analyzed is her sense of nostalgia towards the old America. It is not only in her best novel like *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, but also in almost of her writings. For instance, Lionel Trilling in *Willa Cather*, writes, "Miss Cather's most explicit treatment of the passing of the old order is the central work of her career" (8). Cather herself agreed in many interviews and face to face interaction with her that her the major part of her writings covers what she saw and used in the past. In her early writing, Cather has interpreted the events of Virginia and in her later writing, she has depicted the visual scenes of Nebraska. "Nebraska and Willa Cather grew together,"(17) writes Alfred Kazin in "Elegy: Willa Cather." She dreams from the past in most her distinctive literary culture. Regarding the same nostalgic sense, Kazin further says:

But the very intensity of her nostalgia had from the first led her beyond nostalgia; it had given her the conviction that the values of the world she

had lost were the primary values and everything else nearly their degradation. (18)

The memory of the past remained so rooted in her writing through which everybody can see the two writers going together—the first is the past one which is limited only in her memory, and the other is the existing itself. Her interest to the past one and regret for its lost indirectly insists the reader to replace the present with the past. Analyzing the past and present as the two poles, Kazin writes, “The poles of her world, that becomes the great theme of her novels” (18-19).

Emphasizing upon what Kazin considers to the Cather’s attachment to the past, E. K. Brown too writes, “Dominated by the feelings that both kinds of life end in death, we know how to measure them, the ancient and the contemporary” (29).

Willa Cather praises her fellow craftsman on rare occasion. “It was usually because they also turned to the past and rooted their values there” (42). In this context, reminding the *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, Morton D. Zabel in “Will Cather: The Tone of Time” writes:

She at last turned back, from Nebraska to the Virginia of her birth and earlier memories, to the country of older laws severer costumes—to Back Creek Valley to the home of Henry Colbert, the miller, and his wife Sapphira—she brought the air more primitive Western World into it, the insistence on primary or primitive emotion. (47)

Besides the nostalgic sense of writing, Cather is also praised by a number of critics for the aesthetic sense in her writings. Her ability to draw aesthetic sense is unique for others, but very common in herself. Herold Bloom in “Introduction of Willa Cather:

Modern Critical View,” admires Cather for aesthetic creation. He writes, “Cather, in my judgment—is authentically strongest and most persuasive in her loving diction of her heroines” (3). Her own sense of beauty is popular. She extracts beauty from two ways—one is while drawing the nature to its true form, and the other is by associating different contexts. Herold understands that Cather has power to extract aesthetic sense even from her lonely moments of life. He further says, “Cather’s fiction, its fragment best, also suggests things much lonelier than itself” (5).

### **Problem and Solution**

Willa Cather is independently perfect to create crisis out of the ordinary events and acts, and engages herself with them to find its solution. It is an art to play with fictional discourse. Considering this inimitable characteristic of Cather, David Daiches in “The Claims of History” writes, “The book as a whole is the story of the development and resolution of this crisis” (34). Cather does not employ special resources for the solution of problem rising in common life, but exploits her experiences and analyzes with intuitive insight.

Supporting Herold, Ted J. Warner in “A Novel Way of Making History” writes about Cather, “A skilful writer and wonderful teller of tales” (265). Her works are imminently readable, fascinatingly alive with detail and description of people and places.

The critic like James Woodren on Willa Cather has argued that the reason behind Cather’s dignified writings must be her happy childhood. Comparatively, Cather has spent a carefree and happy childhood and that has become an trustworthy secrecy of her writing. In this regard, Woodren claims that Cather must be grateful to her parents for managing such pleasing and joyful childhood for their daughter. Woodren writes:

Willa Cather was fortunate in the selection of her parents. I had the feeling that Cather was a lot luckier than some of her writing friends and contemporaries, and when I did some investigation of the biographies of those others, I discovered that my hunch was correct. . . . Among these women, only Cather could be said to have had a really happy childhood.

(19)

Woodren likes to be tempted to what Cather enjoyed in her childhood. The things Cather seen and used are the most ordinary ones, but they fascinated her in such a way that Cather visualized them in the same emotional aspect. Woodren pointing out Cather's childhood, further mentions:

Cather's first nine years in Virginia were happy years. She lived the life of a healthy, active child surrounded by a large number of relatives—uncles, aunts, two grandmothers, a grandfather and after a while two brothers and a baby sisters. (20)

Cather was the first of the seven children. At her nine, she goes to Nebraska and spends the rest of her childhood in its Back Creek. As an intelligent and energetic child, she explores her new prairie world and leaves about the old world with the company of her new immigrant neighbors.

Then the impression of such environmentally changing childhood along with her parental love provide her a new realm of thought, and she begins to portray the loving father-daughter relationship especially focusing upon the love between Rachel Blake and Henry Colbert, the characters of *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. In other words, the novel reflects Cather's own love to her father and vice versa. Reminding it, Woodren writes:

We can conclude that from childhood, she adored her father, and though she and her mother often clashed in her youth, she comes to value her mother more and more as time went on. . . What is important about the Cather's prenatal relationship is the use it was put to in fiction. (30)

It is true that literature is an outcome of individual experience emerging through family, environment, culture and public dealings. Henry James, one of the influential novelists says, "A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life, and as people feel life, so they will feel the art that is most closely related to it" (84).

Since the novel *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* deals with slavery, Ann Romines in "Sapphira and the Slave Girl: the Daughters' Plot," has compared Willa Cather with Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). She writes:

In *Sapphira*, she took on many of the concerns addressed in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In both novels, the actual and symbolic exigencies of slavery give special urgency to the work of traditional plot. And the plot themselves are similar, turning on a woman's escape by the underground railroad. (156)

Romines perceives the two authors flowing harmoniously with the anti slavery notions along with their texts. First, Stowe and Cather both are women writers who reflect women's sentiment through their protagonists Eliza and Nancy. Second, both take the subject matter of slavery and rise to the climax of its negativity. However, they differ in the conclusions of their novels. Thirdly, we observe reunion in both novels. After twenty-one years, Eliza and Cassy, the mother and daughter get reunited as Nancy and the rest of the members of the Till family do.

Cather is tactful in the sense that she takes a white woman Sapphiara Colbert at the front and Nancy, the black slave girl behind her. She creates opposition between the wife and husband: Sapphiara stands to promote slavery, but her husband, Mr. Colbert, disapproves it. When the former plans to sell the slave girl, the latter stops it. Sapphiara then invites her nephew, Martin Colbert to facilitate the rape of Nancy. Rachel Blake, the only daughter of Colbert family, develops anti-slavery notion, and imparts to her father's abolitionist sentiment. The father and the daughter ultimately get united to liberate the poor slave girl, and succeeded to send her Canada.

Cather creates two plots in her novel like Sapphira and poor girl—one is traditional and the other is revolutionary. The traditional plot can be seen with her mother and the other slaves in Colbert family. All slaves show their readiness to serve young Martin, Sapphira's nephew, whose intention is only to exploit everyone for his selfishness. There is no objection from other slaves, but so far the slave like Nancy is concern, she opposes directly and independently. If she remains submissive and uncomplaining, there will be no problem, but she complains often to different people and ultimately becomes ready to follow the suggestion of Sapphira's daughter, Mrs. Blake though it remains risky enough. So it is Nancy's revolutionary sentiment, which works faster and upturns the situation. That is why, Romines writes about the plot of the novel, "These, two kinds of female plots coverage, one traditional, and other revolutionary" (159), which is quite relevant, and touching to the spirit of the text.

### **Willa Cather and the Vision of Slavery**

Slavery is recognized and experienced in different forms and practices, ad it has been analyzed and interpreted especially by both western and non-western authors in

their writings. We can divide the sense of slavery broadly into two categories—the notion of slavery in the Afro-American, and the Anglo-American authors.

The Afro-American authors who originally belonged to the African soil and closely attached themselves with the African myth and culture are of course against the slavery, and influenced by the anti-slavery movement. We can take, the authors like Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and others, for instance, who take slavery quite negatively, and have struggled to abolish it ultimately. They consider it as the most inhuman practice initiated and implemented by the so-called conscious people of this universe.

The above authors have recognized slavery as the symbol of profanity and are still showing their grudge and discontent in their writings. For them slavery is not only a negative aspect of life, but a life-taking chronic disease, incurable and perilous. They take it like a curse and warned not for the slaveholders only, but also for the slaves too. In this context, slavery has not made the slaves only suffering, but all to some extent. The notable thing, which we can observe in the writings of the above mentioned authors is that there is no possibility of reconciliation between the master and the slave. For them, it has no other option, and only way remained is an intense struggle with life and death needed against the slavery. They do not believe on mere revolt, and do not hesitate to go ahead with the possible subversive act. But the non-African authors, who take interest in slavery and have written a number of texts on this issue, have shown enough ground of reconciliation.

The author like Willa Cather shows more interest in the issues of slavery and has shown her heartfelt sympathy towards the suffering of the slaves (Negroes). She has

observed slavery in distinct form than what the ordinary people have known. She believes that there lies enough space of compromise between the two forces—slaves and slaveholders. Cather neither takes slavery as a curse nor thinks to revolt against it, but a conflict with enough space for negotiation. She has clearly illustrated this sense of reconciliation in her writings especially in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. Though the text reflects anti-slavery notion, but the authoress has proved that the issue of slavery can be negotiated, which in this research is concluded as the matter of reconciliation.

Willa Cather in this regard, points out hatred and suppression, injustice and discrimination as the characteristics of slavery, which are faced by the black people under the white administration in the present United States. However, Cather as a conscious authoress leaves enough ground of reconciliation.

In the very text entitled *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, for instance, Cather deals with the two families, Colbert and the Till, who represent master and slave respectively. At the beginning of the novel, the conflict between these rebel groups reaches to a certain climax. But at the end of the novel, Sapphiara Colbert, the white mistress regrets for what she does, which is her indifference towards the rights of the slave girl, Nancy Till. She begins to respect the dignity of the former slave girl, Nancy Till, and welcomes her as a reverent guest in her own house.

The bitter relationship between Sapphiara and Nancy suddenly turns as a matter of friendship and intimacy. The strange thing, which one notices at the end of the text is the negotiation between the archenemies. At the beginning of the text, the reader finds the conflict turning into a form of enmity soaring to its climax; and no reader can feel that it will come down so calmly and peacefully. This context of the text, the researcher has

grasped immediately and has determined to evaluate Cather as an aware author of the black-white relationship. She favors neither the side but ultimately proves the enmity turning into friendship and reconciliation.

## II: Slavery

### A Brief History of slavery

In spite of the long history of slavery, we cannot make the absolute definition of slavery and we fail to determine who actually is slave, and what is slavery. We use these terms only to show the relative meaning. Still we do not find consensus of everybody on any definition of slavery. It is so not because it is a difficult term, but because it is complex in use and observation. In different contexts, one can be seen as a slave on one side, and on the other the same can be observed as a free person. So the slave or slavery cannot be defined in absolute form, but in a relative context. After all we all are slave if we are working for others, but we don't like to be so usually.

Although many scholars like historians, anthropologists, politicians, economists, and sociologists and others have interpreted slavery in different forms and structures, nevertheless slavery can be agreed only on the basis of a certain agreement and understanding.

If we deeply consider in the history of slavery, a slave was no greater than an object in the market, and he was accepted as goods and chattels. People dealt him like their properties to be used whenever they wished. Every owner dealt slave as a part of his property, which became a fundamental characteristics of slavery. *The New Encyclopedia of Britannica* defines slave, "The slave was species of property; thus, he belonged to someone else. In some societies slaves were considered movable property, in others immovable property, like real estate" (285).

The ancient slave master dealt every slave in not better form than an animal, an ox or an ax and he was not taken as a responsible one for what he did. He had few rights than his owner. He was not accepted as only the marginalized individual, but also a person who was socially dead in the society where he had been enslaved. In fact, a slave is valued for his labor and product, and existence is ignored as the owner or someone else claims for any production.

Another characteristic of slavery is related with the bondage of the slave. He is deprived from his personal liberty of walking everywhere. He had no rights to move in different geographical regions he desired for. Every slave is bounded in his choice even for occupation and sexual partners.

In the history of slavery we find different ways to make one slave. One of the most famous ways was through capture in war. In ancient age, people who were kidnapped were dealt as slaves and their offspring became the bondage slaves. Some people were enslaved as punishment for their crimes and debts. Many of the children were sold into slavery by their parents/relatives to escape from starvation. Some of the parents started to sell their uneducated children just to escape from them. In the same system, some were self-sold, and it was very common in primitive age.

Slavery was formed in the early days due to the two reasons—labor shortage on one side and availability of the open resources. These are known as the prerequisite for slavery. Whatever might be the reason for slavery, but the common type of slavery is the domestic slavery, which includes farming and harvesting. This household or domestic slavery later turned into serfdom.

Regarding serfdom, Britannica writes:

In the past a serf usually was an agriculturist, whereas depending upon the society, a slave usually employed in almost any occupation. . . The serf moreover, was usually bound to the land whereas the slave was bound to his owner, i.e. he had to live where his owner told him to, and he often could be sold by his owner at any time. (286). Though the serf and slave seem to be equal status, but it is important to distinguish them even with a minor distinction. From this perspective, we find a serf quite respective and free comparatively to a slave. Actually, the former deals with farming, and the later deals with the master with direct service. Another basic distinction is that the serf could own his means of production except the land, but the slave could own nothing, not even the clothes. The owner could less respect the family life of a serf than of a slave. In ancient age, poverty paved way to the slavery, for instance, if one was in debt and had no source to pay back it; he had no option except to surrender oneself as a slave to the household of the creditor. The persons who remained unable to pay the borrowed money had to be turned into slavery. They were known as debt slaves, but they were treated worse than slaves. The free slaves were sometimes to be set free with a sum of money, sometimes a plot of land, but debt slaves hardly got such opportunities.

Though slavery is found sufficiently developed in Western and African Countries, but it was origin from China around eleventh to twelfth century B. C. There were different types of slaves—people employed in the household works, captives of the war and unable to pay the debt in given time. In china in those days self- sale slaves were also in large numbers. The practice of slavery slowly moved to Korea and India.

According to Britannica, in 1841, there were an estimated 8, 000,000, to 9000,000, slaves in India alone. Some of them were recruited formally purchasing from dealers and parents, but some of them were self-sold of the starving. A number of slaves were owned from Africa to the slave owing societies of the West, especially to the New World.

Centuries before, Athens of ancient Greece was the center of slave society. It remained the slave-trading center till third century B. C. At that time, Europe constituted slaves about one third of the population. Most of the slaves were employed in metal mines rather than in farming and harvesting. Britannica writes:

Slaves were responsible for the prosperity of Athens and the leisure of the aristocrats, who had time to create the high culture, now considered the beginning of the Western civilization. The existence of large scale slavery was also responsible, it seems logical to believe, for the Athenians' thoughts as freedom that are considered a central part of the Western heritage. (287)

Another major slave society was in Rome of Italy, which became popular between second century B. C. to fourth century A. D. Initially, this Roman slave center supplied the domestic farmers to Spain and Mediterranean. It began to sell the captives of flood and put them in farming. When the number of human slaves increased, the private ownership of land began and the slaves were sold for both agricultural purpose and commodity production. Then approximately thirty percent of European population was enslaved. The best-known slave societies were developed in Caribbean world in the early sixteenth century. Masses of African slaves were employed in sugar plantations and later

these centers became popular as sugar colonies. The sugar plantation became the world's largest enterprises. The labor shortage by the high death rate of fatal disease provided long lasting opportunity for the African slaves in Cuba, and Mexico too. Many slaves who were imported after sixteen century were employed to mine gold first and also to silver mining. Later when gold was existed around 1800 about half of the population of Brazil renamed slaves. It was the Caribbean slave society who supplied the slaves to Virginia from the later half of the seventeenth century. Later the African slaves were transshipped to North America directly. There in North America, especially in Virginia, the tobacco became the most profitable crop, and it occupied most of the slaves. Then cotton culture created a huge demand for slaves and it developed the plantation slaves in production of cotton.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the cities of New World became the most fascinating slave centers. Slavery became the lucrative enterprise comparable to the other areas of investments. It became popular not only in the New World, but also in Babylonia, Israel and Egypt. Even after the slaves were in the New World in sufficient number as they needed, the supply of African slaves increased and they were sold in cheaper price like the usual commodities sugar and salt in the New World market centers. In England the sale and purchase of slaves were forbidden in the fifteenth century, but it persisted longer in Eastern Europe (Poland).

Slavery got changed into serfdom in Russia. As the Russian Empire grew and spread its hegemony, it enforced the abolition of slavery. The United States also passed a bill in 1777 to abolish slavery, and another supreme court's verdict of 1807 forbade trading in slaves with Africa.

After 1807, the British abolished the slave trade with its colonies, and in Caribbean slavery was completely abolished. It became illegal in Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina, with the first half of the nineteenth century. The American anti-slavery movement urged all to abolish slavery by voluntarily to reduce the slave culture in the south. The civil war and Abram Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 became the extreme parts of abolition of slavery from the United States.

In understanding the history of slavery, it is mysterious that no slave owner prefers to enslave to his own fellows. Every slave master likes to employ other than what he is socially or religiously attached. This is the open secret clue of slavery. Britannica writes, "Most groups, whether national or religious, forbade the enslavement of their fellows; thus the Spanish could not enslave Spaniards, Arabs could not enslave Arabs and Christian and Muslim could not enslaved their co-religionists" (291). It is the legal attitude of the slave owning that the slave had to be an outsider ordinarily. That is why the slaves usually defined as property movable as well as fixed depending on the slave owning society. In the same way the slaves are also purchased for different time slots. Some inherit slaves, some keep forever and some employ for specific purpose. There are the variations of grading slaves based on the use.

### **Master-Slave Relationship**

The key aspect of slavery is the master-slave relationship, whether the slave is legal or illegal. The law itself in slavery says a little and the rest of the things depend on the nature of work and attitude of owner. For instance, there is legal right to any owner to kill the slave for his own benefit, but it is done often and no owner is abided with law and on the other slaves are praised, awarded and proved property like the offspring of the

owner where law says nothing. In the history of slavery, we are aware of many slaves beheaded, buried alive. Seethe, the protagonist of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* observes, "One crazy, one sold, one missing, one burnt and me licking iron with my hands crossed behind me" (72). Morrison further writes:

Eighteen seventy-four and white folks were still on the loose. Whole towns wiped clean of Negroes; eight seven lynching in one year in Kentucky; four colored schools burned to the ground; grown men whipped like children; children whipped like adults; black women raped by the crew; property taken, necks broken. (180)

Only in ancient China it has been said that the Chinese law punished the master who killed his slave and that punishment was more severe if the slave had done no wrong. However, the legal proceeds against the owner were soft, and monolithic. Regarding it, Britannica writes:

No society on the other hand had the slightest sympathy for the slave who killed his owner. Roman law even prescribed that all other slaves living under the same roof were to be put to death along with the slave who had committed the homicide. (291)

Assault and brutality are the concerns of the law of slavery. Even in modern slavery practicing societies, sadistic murder and brutality of slaves by the owners are rarely condemned. There is no record creating fear against the injustice towards slaves. Rape and pregnancy of the slave women by the owner have become the common practice of the slavery. Of course, there have been more causes of sexual relation between mistresses and male slaves cannot be ignored. However, the mistresses excused and the

slaves were burned alive in many societies. The law of slavery does not determine any thing about the marriage among the slaves and the future of the offspring.

The history of slavery has clearly shown that there is no legal among slaves, but there has been always good relationship between the slave and owners. The owners have made a provision to recover or recapture the runaways. They have used most imposed sanctions on owners who steal others' slaves. Other rules they have demanded and implemented are the rules for the slaves from one generation to another. No owner is likely to help the slaves to flee. The slave transaction is another part of the owners, which need more unity and cooperation.

Legal relationship among or between the slaves is also possible. Since a slave is the property of an owner, the owner should be compensated if the slave is killed or injured. Since the slave is fully depends upon his owner, it becomes the owner's responsibility to recover damages if a third party kills or assaults his slave as with the animals. On the other side, the owner should be responsible for the monolithic to theft. A slave after all is a person that killing a slave should be a crime. Similarly, if a slave kills a free person, the damage is needed to recover by the owner of the slave. Such incidents are more complex, and in such cases there is no specific law. The slave owner though claim responsibility for the profitable provision, but don't' become ready to provide compensation to other on behalf of the slave.

The slave generally remains as an outsider and also different race from his owner. Even from the ancient time, it was the rule of slavery, "no society could withstand the tension inherent in enslaving its own members," (293) according to Britannica. The slave needs to be outsider because he is enslaved against his will in one society and then taken

by force to another. Usually, a marginal person becomes the slave in every society and it helps the owner disregard the origin of his slave. Some owners knowingly ignore the clan and tribe of the slave to exploit freely different perspectives.

There are some certain assumptions of the slave. He/she is dealt as illiterate, fool, unskilled and in a form of lower human. These assumptions are made only to discriminate perfectly, exploit him. Britannica writes, "Throughout history slaves have often been considered to be stupid, uneducable, childlike, lazy, untruthful, untrustworthy, prone to drunkenness, idle, boorish, lascivious, licentious, and cowardly" (293).

### **No Fix Occupation in Slavery**

There are a number of measurements of slavery in different world religions. Interestingly, Judio-Christain-Islamic tradition accepts slavery as a natural and no condition can be fall at anyone. It matters little whether someone is a slave or a free person while living on earth. Since slavery is thrust to the outsiders, it does not need to be racial and tribal at the beginning, but later, the slaveholders themselves create the tribe of the slave. In ancient Rome, both the master and slave belonged to the white race, but later the African races replaced the slaves. In Africa both are still black. Regarding the occupations of the slaves, there is no certainty and uniformity. The slave is given any occupation according to the need of the owner. The job assigned to the slaves is innumerable in their services and responsibilities. The variation of work depends upon society to society. In some societies the owners create restrictions on particular occupations. For instance, in many societies the slaves are not given the works in religious areas like service to the clergyman, and churches. In some of the traditional societies of Hindu fundamentalists, the slaves cannot even watch the performance of rites

and rituals. However, in some societies, Britannica writes, “A few slaves even rose to be monarchs such as the slave who became sultans and founded dynasties in Islam” (294).

Under the Roman Empire, there were slaves ministers, in China slaves worked in government offices, and some of them were given the administrative tasks to different provinces. In some parts of South India, slaves were employed in the temples as the temple slaves, and used to work under the religious institutions. The interesting part of the slave occupation lies on the slaves who fought on soldiers. They were called to military slaves. In medieval England, the slaves who fought on horseback assisted most of the cavalry men. The Islamic Turks employed to confiscate the Christian children and used to take them Istanbul and raise them to be the professional soldiers. Later, the soldiers were entitled as the slave origin soldiers. Historical event show that high status slaves did work as merchants when financial organizations were not in existence, the very slaves used to expend the family firm. Such practices were made in Babylonia and later became popular in Rome, Spain, and even in China and Africa. Slaves entrusted with the large sums of money. Slaves also became skilled workers especially in Rome, who worked as carpenters, tailors and masons. Such slaves were entitled was slave craftsman. This certain development disapproved the stereotype version against slaves as careless and crude laborers.

Among the slave employment, the worst form of employment was prostitution and occupations demanding hard physical labor. For instance, mining which caused high death rates of the slaves. In other areas of gold, silver, and coal mining many slaves lost their life. The construction and domestic works were much preferred occupations in comparison to mining. Timber felling, lumber and firewood were also hard slave labor.

However, the large number of slaves was employed in agriculture. They worked in the fields of different crops like rye, oats, wheat, millet, barley, but some owners preferred to make them working with commercial crops such as olives, grapes, sugar, cotton, tobacco, coffee and rice. Their importance lay on both farming and harvesting. In some big agricultural firms of Brazil and Africa, gang labor became popular especially in plantation. The choice to the owner was that the slaves were to be driven whereas the free labor could not. These gang labors were useful in cultivation of the cash crops like sugar and coffee.

To sum up, domestic service occupied the higher strength of labor. The manual works like drawing water, hewing wood, cleaning, cooking, feeding, taking out the garbage, shopping, child-tending, and several other domestic occupations engaged slaves everywhere in the world. Whenever we hear the world slavery, these certain images appear on our mind and take it for granted.

### **Reconciliation: Way Out from Slavery**

Slavery in spite of its institutional status could not recognize its long-term negative impact to the very heart of the slaves and forced them to revolt against it with violent means. The main reason behind the revolution against slavery is the loss of cultural identity of the slaves. They had to turn out from their own cultural milieu and abandon their heritage on one side, and on the other they had to accept the enslavers' culture. The tug of war between the slave culture and master culture could not turn into a compromising point and it went through resistance and operation.

Even at the end of the twenty-first century, we do not find the absolute abolition of slavery though people from different societies and professions advocate against it. The

history of slavery has shown that people including the slaves have organized a number of revolutionary movements against slavery, and the enslavers showed their positive responses to create an environment of reconciliation. But things are not found implemented exactly to hold the spirit of the negotiation.

Whatever revolutions or movements people organize in favor of the slaves, the absolute freedom is remaining still far from the expectation. In this regard, Willa Cather's view of reconciliation seems to be more effective and inevitable. The negotiating ground she has formed in her novel *Sapphiara and the Slave Girl* though is fictional, but it reflects a true sense of reality. The author offers her full sympathy to the slaves and also agrees that slavery itself is inhuman act, but she is equally practical and reliable to explore the reconciliation between the master and slave. In the next chapter, we will observe the technique of reconciliation to solve the conflict of slavery in an illustrious pattern.

### III: Textual Analysis

#### Slavery: the Cause of Conflicts

The novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* by Willa Cather begins with the Anglo-American couple, Henry Colbert (a miller) and his wife, Mrs. Colbert. They feel uneasy with each other as they develop distinct attitudes to the Afro-Americans employed in their family. Henry Colbert keeps liberal attitude to Nancy Till, the slave girl, but Mrs. Colbert deals with Nancy quite roughly. She does not like her husband dealing the slave girl being politely and humanly. Mrs. Colbert intends to exploit Nancy as much as possible, which her husband, Mr. Henry Colbert does not like and conflict between the couple raises slowly. Such differences in dealing the poor slave girl creates imbalance in thoughts and actions, which the people working in the Colbert family realize apparently.

In this context, one can observe two types of conflict—one between the master and mistress, and another between the mistress and the slaves. Mrs. Colbert rudely addresses Nancy and other household workers as “Negroes.” The conflict between the master and mistress itself helps to germinate another conflict that is the conflict between the mistress and her slaves. When Mrs. Colbert finds Mr. Colbert acting in favor of Nancy, she suspects him as if he has an illicit relationship with the slave girl, and plans to move the girl off the family. Mrs. Colbert talks about Major Grimwood, a relative of the Colbert family. He visits the Colbert family with an intention to buy the handy girl, Nancy. Major Grimwood prefers Mrs. Colbert’s dealing with her servants, and he recognizes them as the well trained ones. But Mr. Colbert directly opposes his wife as he hears about the selling the girl. Regarding the Major Grimwood’s plan, Mr. Colbert comments, “He must know you trained your servants for your own use. We don’t sell our

people” (781). This very comment makes Mrs. Colbert feel odd, and she does not hesitate to react against it.

Mrs. Colbert, who plans to sell Nancy Till, makes a plot to convince her husband, and she says, “There is my Nancy now. I could spare her quite well to oblige Mrs. Grimwood, she could hardly find a better place. It would be a fine opportunity for her” (781). Mr. Colbert who is conscious about his wife’s plot and he gets uneasy. He says to Mrs. Colbert, “I see through all this. . . Nancy least of all! Her mother is here, and old Jezebel. Her people have been in your family for four generations. You haven’t trained Nancy for Mrs. Grimwood. She stays here” (781).

Mr. Colbert showing his grudge against the wish of his wife says that slave owning and selling cannot be their job. It will not only hurt the slaves working in his family, but the whole neighbors. However, he suggests Mrs. Colbert mildly and calmly:

You can’t sell her without my name to the deed of sell, and I would never put it there. This is not a slave owning neighborhood. If you sold a good girl like Nancy off to Winchester, people hereabout would hold it against you. They would say hard things. (782)

Here we observe a conflict between the wife and husband, which emerges through whether to keep Nancy or to sell her to another family. It helps Mrs. Colbert to intensify her suppression on one side and encounter with her husband on the other. So the conflicts are found raising not only between the mistress and slave, but between the master and mistress.

After her husband’s refusal of selling the slave girl to the neighbor, Mrs. Colbert gets so much irritated that she thinks to displace all the servants, but her husband

becomes a barrier for it and she realizes that she cannot do it without the consensus of her husband. She doesn't know now how to win the heart of her husband and remembers the event before a couple of years in which he had given his full consciousness when she planned to displace all the servants. When she reminds it, Mr. Colbert accepts that he had agreed not on mere selling, but it was on compassionate and humanitarian ground. He had agreed when there was an opportunity for the slaves to be with their relatives living beyond.

Mrs. Colbert fails to convince her husband, however, she makes a number of efforts to avoid the poor slave girl. Then she uses the harsh language in such a threatening way, which rather intensifies the gravity of torture and the afflictions to Nancy. Mrs. Colbert becomes quite cruel to the helpless Nancy, and she says, "Then we must find some other way" (782). Mrs. Colbert, who has been suffering of dropsy since a long time, also avoids supporting even her daughter, Mrs. Blake. Such woman who seems quite cruel even to love her own daughter, naturally does not like to be kind towards Nancy, and accept her cruelty as a common affair of her daily life.

Mrs. Colbert is not only cruel, but also a tricky in nature. She suggests Nancy to bear everything and not to complain about and against anything. She suggests Nancy openly, "Self respecting Negroes never complain of harsh treatment. They made a joke of it, and laughed about it among themselves" (788). It is her grudge towards Nancy's complain.

When Mrs. Colbert fails to sell Nancy to her neighbor, she ultimately decides to bring her nephew, Mr. Martin, who lives in London, to invite to live in her family so that he can make the poor girl suffering as he will try to act roughly to play against her long

preserved chastity. She thinks that it is the only way to pinch the poor girl. She becomes firm in her decision as she thinks that it is only the way to reach to the climax of her conspiracy. If it is done successfully, the poor girl will not be able to live in the Colbert family. The mistress immediately writes a letter inviting the nephew to spend a few weeks with them in the Colbert family. After writing the letter, she handles it very carefully hiding its address from the eyes of Nancy. Mrs. In fact, such a mature woman becomes blind towards the age long contribution of Nancy's ancestors who served the Colbert family for generation. She herself has trained both Nancy's mother and now Nancy too.

Nancy becomes a perfect girl to serve and please her mistress even though she knows the plan of her mistress to trap the poor girl like her. Nancy deals quite cautiously in the Colbert family:

She knows how to stand when receiving orders, how to meet visitors at the front door, how to make them comfortable in the parlor and see to their wants. . . Since Mrs. Colbert had lost her the use of her feet, Till had charge of everything in the house. (795)

If we think about the perfection of Nancy, in handling the entire household works on one side, and her obedience and submission to her physically unable mistress, it looks purely an irrationality of Mrs. Colbert who tries often to curb Nancy. But Mrs. Colbert takes things in quite different ways. Nancy becomes an obstacle for Mrs. Colbert and she wants to avoid her at any cost. It is surprising to see Nancy to serve her mistress in a greater aspect. Not only Nancy, but all the black people employed in the family do serve quite satisfactorily. Their devotion and loyalty, love and own ness have no boundaries. For

instance, when Mrs. Colbert wishes to post the letter to her nephew by herself, Jefferson makes the coach (carriage) ready, Nancy drives her and Washington supports Mrs. Colbert to stand straight. But Mrs. Colbert does not understand the humbleness and devotion of those pure hearts. Once the mistress provides Mr. Colbert's old and torn boots to (Jefferson) one of the males servant to wear on his bare feet, but she herself humiliate him so bitterly that no human heart can digest it. Mrs. Colbert says, "Till, I wish you would tell me why it is so hard to keep leather on a nigger's feet" (797).

The coach passes through Mrs. Blake's house, and her two daughters greet Mrs. Colbert (their grandmother) loudly. The purpose of Mrs. Colbert is not to see her granddaughters, but to drop the mail in the post office with her own hand. As soon as Mrs. Colbert leaves her room, Mrs. Till and Nancy begin to clean up her bedroom and parlor.

Mrs. Colbert cannot stay without complaining about her servants to her husband, and often creates the negative issue against them while having meal together. When she returns from the post office, it happens to spend a moment with Mr. Colbert. She complains as usual, "Well, Henry I'd send that lazy girl (lizzie) off the place tomorrow. I'd give her away! Lizzie would be always be in the sulks, and when the cook is out of temper, she can spoil every dish, just by a turn by the hand" (808). The complain, which Mrs. Colbert often makes to her husband against the servants, makes him to be more sympathetic towards them on one side, and on the other, it creates an indirect conflict between the master and mistress ultimately. The very seed of this conflict is slavery itself. So slavery is responsible to create conflict between not only the mistress and the slave,

but indirectly, it is the very seed of misunderstanding between the master and the mistress especially in the Colbert family. .

Mrs. Colbert turns into a perfectly bias woman. She pretends something to create background to the other, and remains busy to make it successful without thinking its least impact to others. In the family, everybody knows what she is doing, but the servants have to be submissive before their mistress. She does not need to find neither any mistake nor likes to consider it reasonably; she has every right to turn the mole into a huge mountain.

Mrs. Colbert often chides Nancy for nothing. As being the servant, Nancy has to slept at the doorway of her mistress, and she cannot sleep independently. One evening, Mrs. Colbert begins to chide the slave girl all of sudden, “I wasn’t stay here to listen to your nasty tongue! An’ him de goods kind man to every nigger on de place. Shame as you, you bad woman!” (812). It makes Nancy not only sad and unhappy, but turns into anxiety with depression and frustration. She feels more pain than she can tolerate, and cannot see where the mistress is standing. She at once runs out of the kitchen, buries her face in her hands and begins to sob helplessly.

The conflict between Mr. And Mrs. Colbert rises to its climax, when Mr. Colbert becomes clear about the negativity of his wife, and biasness towards the clean-hearted Nancy. He thinks that the only way to save Nancy is to shift her to his mill in the name of his service. But as soon as he puts up the proposal, Mrs. Colbert denies it immediately. She determines to keep Nancy under her direct command. Mr. Colbert cannot resist any more against his wife, and reveals things mildly:

Of course, the blacks on this place belong to you, and I’ve never interfered with your management of them. But I warned you, Sapphira, I would not

have any of the wenches coming down to the meal. I don't mean to break in another girl. Nancy is quiet and quick. She knows how I want things and she puts them that way. I must ask you to spare her to me for a little while every morning. (814)

Mrs. Colbert in this way begins to hate not only the slave girl, but also the people whoever sympathize the girl actively. She hates her husband not because she does not like him, but because he becomes kind to Nancy. David Fairhead, the preacher of the Province, who remains the close friend of Mr. Colbert, somehow knows about the plight of Nancy, and encourages his friend, Mr. Colbert to protect the girl from the cruel hand of his wife. When Mrs. Colbert knows it, she begins to hate the preacher too, and she begins to humiliate him:

He was shy and on his guard, and Sapphira had seemed possessed to puzzle him with light ironies. Since he was from Pennsylvania, she considered him an inferior. . . . But with Fairhead, she took on a mocking condescension, as if she were all the while ridiculing his simplicity. (824)

Actually, Mrs. Colbert is aware of what she is doing for to suffer the slaves working in her family. She does it intentionally accepting that the slaves are like goods and chattels. They are not only to be exploited, but also to be sold in profit. The white master has every right to chain the slaves and supply where they are needed.

In fact, Mrs. Colbert is conscious about the terrible history of slavery. She remembers the very tragic event faced by the slaves and considers it as the part of her job too. "Jezbel and other captives were gowed out in small boats and put on board in leg chains; they came from a fierce cannibal people, and had not been broken in by weeks of

discipline in the stockade” (828). The slave masters kept all necked throughout the voyage and their heads and bodies were shaved every fortnight:

The dirty farmer died in an outbreak of smallpox; his widow promptly sold Jazbel. She had been owned by several masters and had learned some English before the Dodderidge farm steward bought her. She went to the Dodderidge the year that Sapphiara was born, and had been in the family ever since. (831)

This history of those black slaves rather encourages Mrs. Colbert to suppress her servants. When Jazbel becomes quite old, Mrs. Colbert asks him to oversee the garden at the mill farm. Henry Colbert, the husband of Mrs. Colbert, becomes liberal to the slave of his family, but can't abolish it as he finds the sense of slavery rooted in every part in his society. He knows the reality:

Henry Colbert knew he had a legal right to manumit any of his wife's Negroes, but that would be an outrage to her feelings, and injustice to the slave themselves. Where would they go? How would they live? They had never learned to take care of themselves, or to provide for tomorrow. (839)

However, Colbert wants to liberate his head mill hand, Sampson, and provide him freedom to work wherever he wants. He thinks even to buy Sampson from Sapphiara let him to pass a free life.

To some extent it is true that the slave himself is intended to serve the master, because he has no other mind than the slave itself. Such slave mentality can be seen here too in Sampson. One day Mr. Colbert calls Sampson, the old slave, to his room and shows his desire to liberate him, but Sampson himself refuses to leave the Colbert family

and says, “This was his home, here he knew everybody. He didn’t want to go out among strangers. Besides, Belle, his wife who was a slack worker, and children were little”(839).

**Silence of the Bible on Slavery:**

Mr. Colbert becomes more curious to abolish the enrooted slavery and thinks to know the notion of Christian religion towards the slavery itself. He is in habit to read the Bible while feeling uneasy with the worldly affairs. He takes the holy scripture as the source of joy and relief while he goes through pain and suffering of daily activities of the worldly life. When he cannot help the slave from his own position, he wishes to get solution from God’s command in the Bible. He expects much from the holy book, but he feels discouraged, odd and uneasy when he finds the Bible silent about the painful slavery:

Nowhere in the Bible had he ever been able to find a clear condemnation of slavery. There were injunctions of kindness to slaves, mercy and tolerance. Remember them in bonds as bound with them. Yes, but nowhere did his Bible says that there should be no one in bounds, no one at all. (840)

It surprises Mr. Colbert a lot and becomes helpless. He finds not a single word mentioned in the Bible to save the slaves.

Far and against the slavery, has disintegrated the members of the Colbert family. It has distinguished Mrs. Colbert from her husband and daughter, Mrs. Rachel Blake. Alike her father, Mr. Colbert, his only daughter, Mrs. Rachel Blake, also hates slavery and stands against it. She says:

It is the owning that was wrong, the relation itself, no matter how convenient or agreeable it might be for master or servant. She had always known it was wrong. It was the thing that make her unhappy at home, and come between her and her mother. How she hated her mother's voice is sarcastic reprimand to the servants. (854)

Rachel Blake who is married and has become the mother of a couple of daughter, is very kind and sympathetic to Nancy and other slaves serving to her parents. It is the notion of slavery, which makes herself different from her mother, and she gets attached with her father as he too hates slavery.

### **Wantonness of Mr. Martin**

Mrs. Colbert who invites Mr. Martin, her nephew from England, takes his arrival proudly and seriously. As soon as he arrives from London, she orders Nancy to take care of the young boy, as she is the slave girl in the family to take the responsibility of taking care of the family guest. It is the grand strategy of Mrs. Colbert to exploit the poor slave girl with the help of that notorious young man. It is the destiny of Nancy to serve the young notorious white boy, and Mrs. Colbert makes her nephew quite easy to take more service from Nancy:

Call Nancy to take Mr. Marin up to his room and unpack his things for him. She keeps your uncle's room at the mill, Martin, and she will do yours, and look after your laundry. Young men are none to orderly, i seem to remember. (863)

Acting roughly, he pulls off his coat and waistcoat and throws them on the bed. He sits down on the rocky chair. Nancy takes the discarded garment and hands them in

the clothes press. She finds his shoes quite dirty and smelling, but she has no option, and collects the smelling socks and underwear too. She cannot deny his unusual acts though she does not like them. Whatever unpleasant the boy may be, she has to deal as a guest of Colbert family. He watches her closely and begins to flatter her, “Anybody ever tell you you’re a damn pretty girl, Nancy” (864).

Martin begins to command Nancy and others more than what their master and mistress have ever done. When he enters the dinning hall for dinner, all the servants become cautious and serve him attentively. He is dealt submissively:

Supper was served at seven o’clock in summer, and throughout the hour, Sampson twelve years old Katie, bare foot in a stiffly starched red Calico dress, walked round and round the table waving a long fly brush made of a peacock’s tail. Even in town houses, the fly brush was part of the table service. (866)

Mr. Martin enjoys with more services from the slaves of Colbert family. Everybody knows that the more they serve Martin, the more Mrs. Colbert will feel happy. She warns every slave to serve her nephew to his interest and not to provide any chance to complain her against them.

Day by day, Mr. Martin becomes too sensuous to the servant girl, Nancy. He pretends many things to exploit the poor girl. People begin to observe his vulgarity and shameful acts which only can please him. Moreover, Mrs. Colbert warns all, especially Nancy not to spare any thing to keep the young guest pleasing. The very sensuous boy begins to trap the innocent slave girl:

As she was going towards the door with the long bolster up right in her arms, Martin caught her round the soldiers and kissed her on the mouth. She let the heavy roll of feathers slide to the floor and pushed against his chest with both hands (870).

It is the direct attack upon her chastity. Nancy never expects such mean acts from the young man of the guest living in such sophisticated and civilized family, though she is poor and uneducated. With his wild acts he turns into a permanent source of her terror and horror. Nancy can't bear Mr. Martin's heinous act and she rushes to Mrs. Blake expecting a motherly shelter. She cannot open her mouth directly, and reveals with shy and hesitation about what Mr. Martin has done. "Nancy gasped and put out her hand beseechingly, 'Oh miz Blake' wait a minute, please Mam do! I don't hardly know what to say, but I'm afraid to go up the holler road- this morning'" (871).

Nancy has to remain under a constant fear and is sure that at any time, Mr. Martin can attack her. With a painful heart expecting some immediate help, Nancy appeals her mistress to do something against the wild young man's wantonness:

Oh Miz Black, he'll shorely ride up there, and overtake me in the woods!' She hid her face in her arms and began to cry. 'You don't know now it is, Mam. He's always—pesterin me, deed he is. I has to do his room for him, an' he's always after me. I'm shamed to tell you. He'll be share to overtake me up in the woods. I lost heart when I seen you was about to bake. I thought may be he'd walk along up with me. (872)

Nancy though works as a slave girl, however she keeps a strong sense of chastity and morality enough. She can enjoy with the young man following whatever he wishes,

but her sense of modesty does not allow her to be so. Her inner conscience and awareness are admirable. She offers him fresh cherries from the tree of garden, which makes him more excited and accepts it as the good opportunity to fulfill his wild and sensual desires. How lustfully he proposes, “I don’t want cherries. They’re sour, and I want something sweet” (879).

However, Nancy does not pay her attention towards his sweet but cunning admiration. He cannot influence her so easily. She remains strict and gives no lift to him. She knows what he wants, but doesn’t respond lest of his vulgar acts. The emotional boy cannot control his sensuality. He makes his efforts to quench his thirst as soon as possible, but Nancy succeeds to preserve her chastity with strong sense of ethics and morality:

Nancy followed his eyes and looked back over her soldiers. The instant her head was turned Martin stepped lightly on the chair, caught her bare ankles, and drew her two legs about his cheeks like a frame. Nancy dropped her basket and almost fell out of the tree herself. She caught at the branch above her and clung to it. (879)

Mr. Martin like a hot lion runs behind her. He keeps nothing in his mind except holding her under chest in that loneliness. He grasps her tightly and tries to lie down from her back. She cannot do anything, but screams. Old Jefferson and Sampson who happen to be around there to hear the helpless cry of the poor girl. They rush to the spot and find Nancy lying down helplessly. When they watch her deeply for a moment, she gasps and opening her eyes, she says, “took giddy like” (880). Martin himself doesn’t say anything

and moves ahead in such a way as if nothing is happened. He does not concede directly, but looks a bit disturbed with his mischievous act.

Mr. Colbert as a relative of Mr. Martin cannot avoid his company. He wishes Martin to stay as a guest and gives his company at the time of meal. But he observes Martin through his mischievous actions almost a fool and useless fellow. However, Mr. Colbert deals Martin soberly as that may hurt his wife, Mrs. Colbert:

He never asked the young man to come down to the meal; indeed, he put his nephew out of his mind as much as possible. He realized that it meant a great deal to Sapphira to have his foolish, lively young fellow about the place. (883)

Mr. Colbert though is aware of Mr. Martin for this immoral activity that may happen at any time, but likes to leave him free until somebody complains against him. He does so to please his wife rather than to please the young guest.

Sampson a fellow servant finds Martin torturing Nancy that night. He finds no alternative except to complain the master, and knocks Mr. Colbert's door at midnight. He reveals truth and reality that awakens the heart of Mr. Colbert:

Mr. Henry, I'm 'fraid Mr. Marin worries Nancy a right smart. . . They likes to fool round a pretty girl, even if she's colored. I don't say he means no harm, but she ain't used to them ways, an' she seems kind—a scared like all the time. I know you would't want see harm befall her. (883)

When Nancy remains busy in picking cherries in one of the trees behind the smoke house, Sampson and others hear her painful scream and know that the girl must be in trouble. They rush to the screaming place and find Nancy, “The gal was scared

fo' sho', Mr. Henry. She was trembling like a leaf an' taken sick life, I took her down, an' Jeff helped her to the cabin. I may be wrong, but I didn't like it" (884).

It is true that Mr. Colbert shows more sympathy and love to the slaves employed in his house. However, he is found relatively concerned to the suffering of the slaves, and not absolutely. The ethnic attachment is so vital that he cannot even talk against his nephew who violates the norms of humanity. Mr. Colbert though talks for justice, and stands himself against the discriminative issues, but doesn't hesitate to save his nephew indirectly. He cannot show his readiness to punish the guilty one and create justice before all. To some extent he defends his rascal nephew. "The miller's face had taken on a dark flush. I'll keep an eye on my nephew, Sampson. Sometimes a girl will make a fuss over nothing, you know" (884).

The poor girl, Nancy though knows that her mistress Mrs. Colbert will favor her nephew, Mr. Martin, in case of any complaint against him, but she is forced to knock Mrs. Colbert's door. Mrs. Colbert chides Nancy, "Have you gone crazy Nancy, waking me up out of my sleep like this?" (886). Nancy is aware of what response her mistress will make, but she does what she has to do. At midnight while she finds no other option, and knocks the door of her mistress, she further warns Nancy, "You go right back to your own bed, and control yourself properly. I won't have such crazy behavior" (886). In the same night, while sleeping on her bed before the door of her mistress, hears somebody's footstep coming to the downstairs.

Next day, the old servant, Sampson, begins to disclose the things happening in the previous night. He reveals the whole story and interprets accusing Mr. Martin directly. Mr. Colbert declares it as a shameful act of the young gentleman, but Mrs. Colbert still

makes her servants fool while defending her nephew. She becomes so blind and haughty that Mr. Colbert does not dare to bypass her. Mr. Colbert, who cannot ignore the reality, gets irritated. Now only he accuses Mr. Martin as the culprit and condemns his attitude towards exploitation and suppression of the poor girl:

Well, if you take pleasure in his company, I shan't say anything. But he'll demoralize the servants. His way with the young darkies is too free. He goes into the woods across the creek to hunt mushrooms with that trifling Bluebell. (889)

But Mrs. Colbert does not hesitate to prove her husband wrong. "If the servants go wrong from any visitor in the house, it is their own fault. I think they know their place better" (889). One afternoon, Mr. Colbert himself witnesses Martin standing at the laundry and asking Nancy Till the way she washes his two shirts.

The conflict between the husband and wife reaches to its climax, but no solution can be found. Nancy thinks about only one option that is to complain to Mrs. Blake, the daughter of Mrs. Colbert who lives with her two daughters a bit far from her mother. As soon as Nancy meets Mrs. Blake, she feels relieved and shows her gratitude "Miz Blake, you's the only I got to talk to. He's just after me night an' day, till wisht, I'd never been bawn" (897). It becomes a big problem for Nancy, But Mrs. Colbert ignores it and takes it so lightly as if it is usual act of the Colbert family.

Nancy has to sleep just before the door of Mrs. Colbert bed where Mr. Martin can get down at any time from his room at stairs. She can easily hear Mr. Martin's footsteps coming down in the dark night to trap her. Nancy reveals the events of the night where she has to encounter with the wild Martin:

One night I heard him comin' down the stairs in his bare feet, an' I jumped up an' run into the mistress's room, makin' out I thought I heard her callin' me. She was right cross 'casue I'd waked her up, and send me back to my bed, an' I layed there awake till mornin'. If I was to sleep sound, he could slip into tme any time. If I hollered, the mistress would put it all on me; she 'd say I done somethin' to make him think I was a bad girl. (898)

Miss Nancy wants somebody to help her seriously as a fully responsible person. In this regard, she finds Mrs. Blake as an appropriate woman and requests her to get some idea to save herself from the unpopular incident. Mrs. Blake who is already intimate with Nancy will certainly take her case seriously. She assures Nancy that she will keep no stone to be turned for her safety. She understands the real pain penetrated inside her and shows her interest to solve it. She says Nancy, "You're young have your life before you. I've seen how things were going, and I've fighting on how to get you away from the mill" (898). In this way, Mrs. Blake promises Nancy free from all her trouble and shows her interest to the ongoing conflict between Nancy and Mr. Martin.

### **Departure of Nancy Till to Canada**

It is Mrs. Blake who with great concern takes Nancy to Mr. Fairhead at the Back Creek and puts up before him about Nancy's problem. After a long conversation, he decides to pass her to Canada through the underground railroad. According to him, this street has been remained busier than before with the running away slaves. The slaves (Negroes) are using it as the open avenue to escape to Canada. Then Mr. Fairhead immediately writes a letter to his cousin, Martinsburg to assist Nancy to be passed from the border. "Chairs for two women could be put inside under the canvas, and they could

make the drive to town unseen by anyone” (901). Next morning, Mrs Blake meets with her father in the mill house and they talk about the possible ruin of the good girl. Mr. Colbert who has been already worried about Nancy, shows his more interest. Mrs. Blake reminds her father about the risky life of Nancy with Mrs. Colbert who can put her in danger at any where at anytime. It draws Mr. Colbert’s attention so much that he clinches his two fists and says that he will not stay idle folding his two hands to what is going on around there. He wishes to free Nancy form the possible disaster.

At the same time, Mrs. Blake talks about the assurance and assistance of Mrs. Fairhead. The father and daughter talk in detail about Nancy and conclude that it will take only a day and night walk to reach to Canada. However, Mr. Colbert begins to think about what this poor and uneducated girl will do in Canada. Later on, they think that the Canadian people are more kind than the mistress in the farm. Mr. Colbert has no objection if Nancy gets liberated from the cruel hand of the Colbert sister and brother. On the other side, Mr. Fairhead has already assured about the safety of Nancy. Mrs. Blake also asks her father for the money she needs to spend on the way and requests to manage a hundred dollar. Mr. Colbert smiles and asks Nancy to fumble the pocket of his coat where he has put flat package of bank notes. After managing everything, he prays for Nancy’s successful journey, “Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without Thy knowledge. . . Maybe she would be like the morning star, this child; the last star of night” (904).

Mr. Colbert who is a true follower of the Bible begins to pray for the safe landing of Nancy to Canada. Spiritualizing the situation, Mr. Colbert prays:

She was to go out from the dark lethargy of the cared—far and irresponsible; to make her own way in this world where nobody is altogether free, and the best that can happen to you is to walk your own way and responsible to God only. Sapphira's darkies were better cared for, better fed and better clothed, than the poor whites in the mountains. Yet what ragged, shag—hatred, squirrel-shooting mountain man would change places with Sampson, his trusted head miller? (904-5).

Mr. Tarerner, the cousin of Mr. Fairhead drives two women, Nancy and Mrs. Blake to the ferry in his buggy, so the ferryman dares to ask no questions. When the ferryman rows the two women in a boat, Nancy feels a bit uneasy, and seems disappointed all of sudden. She cannot bear the strange situation, which is about to come before her. She murmurs:

Oh, Miz, please mam take me home! I cannot go off amongst strangers. It's too hard. Let me go back and try to do better. I don't mind Miss Sapphy sold in. Why, she brought me up, an' now she's sick and sufferin.' I ought—borne it better. Miz' Blake, please mam, I want to go home to the mill an' my own folks. 910

It surprises Mrs. Blake and she tactfully suggests Nancy that if they go back to Back Creek, her mother will not accept her. On the other side, the trouble taken by Mr. Fairhead will be useless. Then a tall man, who introduces himself as the minister of gospel, stands before them. He turns to Nancy putting hand on her shoulder. He says:

Day ain't strangers, wher you're goin', honey. Day calls themselves Friends, an' dey is friends to all God's people. You'll be treated like

deyhad raised you up from a chile, an' you'll be pass along on yo' way from one kind family to de next. Do get a letter all 'bout from de Reverend Fairhead, an' de all feels 'quainted. We must be goin' now chile. (911)

Then Mrs. Blake bids her good-bye. The next day of Nancy's departure, Mrs. Blake gets a letter written by her mother about Nancy's disappearing. People in Black Creek begin to praise Nancy:

A girl like Nancy, retired and very pretty, skilful with her needle and in chamberwork, would easily fetch a thousand dollars, maybe more. But Mrs. Blake did her mother the justice to believe that this money out was not the thing that cut to the quick. (914)

Tears begin to roll from her eyes.

### **Nancy's Return**

They know that twenty-five years has been passed since the slave girl left them and also feels lot of change after the Civil War. The young men get gray and the children of their time become parents. The young generation seems distinct and liberal leaving the old parochialism and biasness.

Nancy feels much better lifestyle of the slaves in the old Colbert family. And Nancy's return from Canada after twenty-five years make all happy. It is not only change in internal situation, but also the external one. The nature itself looks pleasant, "There was as much restlessness inside the house as there was outside in the wind and clouds and trees, for today Nancy was coming home from Montreal" (931).

They make the preparation in home to welcome Nancy. "Nancy 'll come up, and you'll see her as soon as I do; my mother went down to give Nancy the hand of

welcome” (932). People in the Colbert family, reveal about Mrs. Colbert, who seemed anxious to see Nancy. Aunt Till who used to be in chain earlier welcomes Nancy, “Weel, Nancy, child, you’ve made us right proud of you” (932), and miss Blake first time observes Nancy’s lovely smile. Looking at Mrs. Blake, Nancy says, “I never forget who it was took me across the river that night, Mrs. Blake” (932). They find Nancy well dressed black coat with gray fur from top to toe, a turban, which covers her shiny, blue black hair along with a black silk dress. A gold chain of her watch and necklace on her neck shine along with the color belt of her waist. .

And there was a charm about her voice, though her speech was different from ours on Back Creek. Her words seem to be too precise, rather cutting in their unfailing distinctions. . . Nancy put into many words syllables.

(933)

Mrs. Blake also observes much change in Nancy’s manner. Nancy is in leave as her master and the mistress, who are visiting their home in London. Nancy talks with her mother for a long time, “Nancy was telling her mother about her husband and children. How they had a cottage to themselves at the end of the park and how the work was divided between the men and the maids” (933-34). Mrs. Blake along with the mother and daughter talk about the slaves freed by Mr. Colbert during the Civil War:

In the end, he had to drive ’em into town himself, an’ put ‘em down at the hotel an’ tole ‘em the las’ time they was not needed at the mill place no more. He know he never did like then two niggers. He took a wonderful lot a’ trouble gittin’ good places for his people. You remembers Sampson, honey. (935)

This is the victory of the slave girl, which we find at the end of the novel. Nancy though remembers about the past, her suffering, and the suppression of Mrs. Colbert, but does not take it seriously. The feeling of friendship, cooperation, and fraternity rises in Nancy turned the whole atmosphere into humanitarian one.

Nancy herself asks about Mr. Martin, and knows through Mrs. Blake that he has been no more in this universe. His death represents the end of anarchy, injustice and suppression. Nancy inhales the breath of peace, justice and rest, which she never expected in Back Creek. Mrs. Blake with a smile informs Nancy, about the tragic death of Mr. Martin, “He was killed in the war. He’d got to be a captain the cavalry, and the Colberts made a great to do about him after he was dead, and put up a monument. But I reckon the neighborhood was relieved” (936).

Nancy’s return back to the Back Creek itself symbolizes reunification and also reconciliation. While going through the history of slavery, reader feels excited with the revolutionary acts and notions, but Cather does not follows the same strategy, and sets up a new form of resolution in the history of slavery. The conflict beginning with the narrowing view of ethnicity exists for a long time in the societies of Back Creek. But the flow of time comes in an anti-clock direction and scatters the whole traditional structure remaining as an archetypal form. The dismantle of traditional form of master-slave relationship, itself turns into a fragile form with the efforts of the suppressed humans on one side, but time itself is also powerful on the other. It is time, which helped to establish the hegemony of the white people all over the New World, and it is the time itself, which abolishes whatever in human culture, is developed. Willa Cather conscious of time as the eternal force of justice and equality, believes that the injustice imposed by the certain

race for their selfishness and personal comfort on the cost of others' sweat and blood, will sustain no more in future. However, she does feel proud of change, and welcomes it as usual phenomena of human life in this earth. This research I think is useful to open the invisible perspective of conflict and reconciliation in the history of slavery.

#### **IV: Conclusion**

Willa Cather who was born in Virginia, and later on migrated to Nebraska, has been one of the popular storyteller and novelist among the mainstream American writers especially of the 1920s. The Virginia born author had spent her early childhood in Virginia, and later childhood in Nebraska as her parents were migrated there. However, the Virginian landscape and culture, which was deeply rooted in her inner heart in the latent form, began to rise when she started to live in the Nebraska in the neighborhood of immigrants. The scenes, people and culture of Virginia that she had in memory, began to hunt her while writings and she placed it at the center of her stories and novels as the reminiscences.

Besides narrating what she had experienced and known in a nostalgic form, Cather also penetrated the new experience of the strange land and people she could observe in Nebraska. Such combined form of narration as the nexus of past and present, provided enough ground to her critics, and most of them have not hesitated to label her the nostalgic and reminiscent author. However, some critics have viewed her writings as the mixture of reality and imagination. In this regard, a number of critics are unanimous to evaluate Cather as the skilled author of aestheticism. They believe that Cather as the creator of aesthetic sense out of assembling the ordinary events of daily life.

Along with her art of aesthetic and nostalgic presentation, Cather is evaluated as the skillful author to reflect the perfect reality in writing. As a conscious and careful writer, she avoided to be the subject matter of gossip, propaganda, debate and controversial issues, and concerned to the purely creative thought and writings. However, she didn't hesitate to expose what she saw and experienced around her. She took to the

very controversial subject matter like slavery in her later novel entitled *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* and has echoed her view successfully, which is taken as the fundamental issue of this research.

The greatest thing which a serious reader can observe in this very text is the reliable solution of slavery, which Cather invents individually on the basis of her own experience and understanding. According to her slavery is not a matter of give and take, or the legacy of any particular society or the group of people, but a compulsion of time. It is so because we find a number of changes throughout the history of slavery according to the movement of time. There was time the slaves were employed for the security of house and property, even as bodyguards, but in change of time, the slave is denied to be trusted as a man. It is what realized by the author and she denied any violent means useful for the abolition of slavery, and observes the reconciliation as the inevitable means of this chronic issue.

The novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* begins with the Colbert family of the United States, who employed a number of Negroes to assist in the farming (mill) and other household works, and among them Nancy Till (protagonist), a young black girl, lies at the center of the plot. The Anglo-American couple, Mr. Henry Colbert and Mrs. Sapphira Colbert, runs a mill in their farm. Mr. Colbert looks after the mill with some slaves, as Mrs. Colbert is a patient of dropsy, and stays in home. Mrs. Colbert who deals with the slaves harshly, and accepts them as a thing to be subjugated and exploited, makes her husband sympathetic to the poor slaves, especially, Sapphira Till.

In this way, the conflict arising with slavery first creates antagonism between the slave girl and mistress, slowly creates another conflict between the master and mistress.

Mrs. Colbert suspects her husband for his sympathy to the slave girl, and plans a number of strategies to drive away her. She decides to sell Nancy to a white family, and when her husband interrupts, she invites her nephew from London to stay there and rape Nancy. The poor Nancy cannot bear the inhuman and vulgar acts of Mr. Martin and complains against him to everybody in the family. Mrs. Colbert remains deaf, but Mr. Colbert and his daughter, Mrs. Rachel Blake, along with the cooperation of Mr. Fairhead sends Nancy to Canada successfully.

After twenty-five years, Nancy returns to the Back Creek from Canada in leave as her master and mistress too go to London to spend vacation. In Back Creek, Nancy finds every thing changed. Though she cannot meet Mrs. Colbert as she was dead a couple of years before, but all the people no matter white or black, welcome Nancy with sweet smiles and heartfelt affection. She spends a few days as if in her maternal house, and cannot think to leave them. Thus, Willa Cather through this novel wants to prove that slavery in fact is inhuman, but we cannot abolish it neither only through revolution and nor through violent and subversive act, but through mutual understanding, compromising, and reconciliation. This sense reconciliation is the ultimate message, which Willa Cather wants to communicate as a means to root out slavery.

The opinion, which Willa Cather provides us, sounds not only unique, contextual, reliable and appropriate, but also rational, practical, pragmatic and influential. Comparatively, we find Cather distinct and realistic in the sense that the slaves to abolish the slavery leave no any option, but it is still in practice, and there is no sing of abolishing it. Critics have evaluated Cather's notion of slavery as a pragmatic one from the practical perspective. The practicality of her opinion can be smelled out when we considered upon

the notion of slavery by the Afro-American and Anglo-American authors. The former take slavery as rooted with its hooks and crooks. It needs muscle power, much strength along with violent acts, destruction and anarchy. They believe on bloodshed, destruction of life and property, chaos, anarchy and disorder. But on the other, the later believe that slavery is an incurable disease with its chronic impact. They view it as a curse, if once imposed and practiced; no power can root out and upturn it. But Willa Cather's view of reconciliation lies not only at the center between them, but superior to all.

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