



A Study of Selected Slave Narratives by African American Women Writers

Dr. Shashank B. Mane

Associate Professor,
Dept. of English

Tuljaram Chaturchand College, Baramati

Abstract:

This paper deals with the selected slave narratives by women writers in antebellum period. The slave narratives was a powerful literary genre till the 19th century in America, which introduced the evil of slavery to the northerners in the country. Slavery was unlawful in the north and many did not know how the southern landowners treat their slaves. With the publication of numerous slave narratives in the 17th and 18th century pathetic conditions of the slaves reached every corner in America and the whole country was divided on the issue of slavery. The northerners wanted to abolish it, while the southerners wanted to continue it as it was beneficial to them. The issue was finally resolved through a war, commonly known as the American Civil War (1862-1865) which ultimately resulted in the abolition of slavery. The present paper studies slave narratives of three women writers – Isabella Baum free, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and Harriet Jacob. Slave narratives was a neglected genre in American literature till recently and the women's slave narratives hardly received attention. Hence the paper evaluates a few narratives by African-American women writers

Key words: Slavery, exploitation, America

The evil custom of slavery ended in America in 1865 liberating thousands of black slaves from their white masters, who exploited them fully. The black slaves were brought to America from Africa and were forced to work on the plantation in America owned by the whites. The first ship of the slaves – *Mayflower* – arrived on the American shore in 1619 and since then the slave trade continued in America. Thus, slavery began in America due to the greedy and selfish whites. The slaves were treated inhumanly; they were not given basic human rights and sometimes were tortured to death. The black slaves patiently endured the injustices done to them for several years, but started resisting the atrocities of the whites slowly.

Some landowners were gentle and treated their slaves in a good way; they gave their slaves nutritious food, comfortable accommodation and also some education. Thus, after staying in a foreign land for many years as slaves, they could speak their masters' language. Some of them started writing about themselves and about their fellow slaves depicting the conditions of the slaves in America. Some of them could not read and write so they narrated their stories to their masters, who penned them down, thus preserving the life stories of the oppressed. These narratives, often termed as “slave narratives” came in

