

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Du Bois and the African American Struggle for Equality and Racial Justice**

Some of the critical problems which are arising today are the problems of discrimination, exclusion and prejudice, whether implicit or explicit. It appears as if the whole world is divided into different sections, almost like cubes that are arranged in a pyramid of hierarchies. This pyramid of hierarchies and of inorganic relationships of loss and profit has challenged the very idea of freedom and equality in this world. The problems which have affected the larger factions of human population throughout the generation and have violated the very idea of freedom and equality in the very face of it, are Racism, caste base discrimination, antisemitism, segregation and discrimination around the globe.

Gyanendra Pandey rightly points out that “Modernity brings with it a fable of freedom, prosperity, and peace, available to all. A rider is quickly added. Freedom can be extended to only to those who are ready for it: not to children, for example, nor (for the longest time) women, or the colonized, the “backward,” the illiterate, the propertyless, and so on. The pledge of ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’ regularly announced has also been regularly deferred” (5). This is true of the one of the oldest democracies of the world, America and biggest democracy of the world, India. In the US, African Americans have suffered for twelve generations of slavery and systemic racism thereafter and Dalits in India have endured systemic oppression, perhaps longer than any other group in the world.

Wilkerson in her latest book on the caste system has proclaimed that one of these kinds of discriminations are not random but three different continents has similar kind of history of systematic discrimination and exploitations of what she calls subordinate castes. Isabel Wilkerson has tried to connect two different concepts from two different geographical locations, with similar functioning and results. She argued that Race is skin while the caste system is the bone of the American Society, culture, and tradition. She notes that:

Throughout human history, three caste systems have stood out. The tragically accelerated, chilling, and officially vanquished caste system of Nazi Germany. The

lingering, millennia-long caste system of India. And the shape-shifting, unspoken, race-based caste pyramid in the United States. Each version relied on stigmatizing those deemed inferior to justify the dehumanization necessary to keep the lowest-ranked people at the bottom and to rationalize the protocols of enforcement. A caste system endures because it is often justified as divine will, originating from sacred text or the presumed laws of nature, reinforced throughout the culture and passed down through the generations (17).

She may be right, but on a different note, another point of view has been discussed by the thinkers of Critical Race Theory. J. O. Calmore argues that there is “the universality of white experience/judgment as to the authoritative standard that binds people of color and normatively measures, directs, controls, and regulates the terms of proper thought, expression, presentation, and behavior” (qtd in Tate 198-199). In this chapter I will discuss the manner in which the problem of Racism in America and the exploitation of African American population has been theorized and articulated by selected thinkers and writers. Although America claims that it believes in values and principle that all humans are created equal in the eyes of God and it promotes the Enlightenment ideals of “Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness” for all its citizens, its foundation is based on Genocide of Native Americans and Slavery of African American population. In the eyes of founding fathers of America, the definition of man does not extend to the African Americans or Native Americans. The definition of man certainly includes the white male particularly Caucasians, it has created its boundaries and defines the inclusion rule from the very beginning and on the basis of that it has excluded all the others from the power structure. As a consequence, it has secured the superior positionality of its white citizens through the centuries. Although certain attempts were made to penetrate this boundary, it was so thickly implanted in the psyche of its customs, judiciary and society that still it seems impossible to break its bars.

Derrida in three of his essays “Before the Law”, “The Law of the Genre” and “Force of Law” has attempted to trace the authority of law as well as the peculiar ways in which the law functions. He found traces of the authority of the law not in the reason and logic but in myths and tales (sometimes traditions or customs). He argues that how can something be logical and reasonable when its foundations are on something illogical or opposite to reason. The same applies to the definition of the term Caucasian. Isabel Wilkerson has drawn our attention to one

myth, that sheds some light on the caste system in America. She writes with reference to racial categorization that:

As a window into the random nature of these categories, the use of the term Caucasian to label people descended from Europe is a relatively new and arbitrary practice in human history. The word was not passed down from the ancients but rather sprang from the mind of a German professor of medicine, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, in 1795...He coined the term Caucasian on the basis of a favorite skull of his that had come into his possession from the Caucasus Mountains of Russia. To him, the skull was the most beautiful of all that he owned. So, he gave the group to which he belonged, the Europeans, the same name as the region that had produced it. That is how people now identified as white got the scientific-sounding yet random name Caucasian (65).

She also notes that this rule or law or definition has excluded a large number of people, who have spent their lives in America. She has given a real-life case of a person of Japanese origin who went to the Supreme Court of America regarding American citizenship. She writes about Takao Ozawa who spent around twenty years in the United States. His skin was white in appearance. When he applied for citizenship, it was rejected. The case was then taken to the Supreme Court who upheld the rejection. Wilkerson writes "In 1922, the Court held unanimously that white meant not skin color but "Caucasian," and that Japanese were not Caucasian, notwithstanding the fact that few white Americans had origins in the Caucasus Mountains of Russia either and that those who did were at that very moment being kept out, too" (126). She continues that a few months later, an Indian immigrant from a dominant caste in India applied for citizenship stating his Aryan origin. "It may be true that the blond Scandinavian and the brown Hindu have a common ancestor in the dim reaches of antiquity," responded the Court to his plea, "but the average man knows perfectly well that there are unmistakable and profound differences between them today" (126). In this way the whole basis of this rule or definition was based on some kind of myth or ideology. This proves that those who have founded the nation have in one way or another controlled the means of production of establishing race superiority. William Tate in his seminal essay "Critical Race Theory and Education: History, Theory, and Implications" notes that how USA government has upheld the law which sanctioned the inferiority of the African American and tolerated slavery and discriminatory practices against the law even after the abolition of slavery. Drawing from Claude Anderson, he notes that:

The men who constructed the Constitution formed the foundation for the subordination and exploitation of African Americans. In 1786, the framers of the Constitution laid the legal ground- work for a White-Black binary opposition by (a) counting Blacks as three fifths of a person, (b) delaying for 20 years the effective date for outlawing the slave trade, and (c) obligating the government to uphold fugitive slave laws and to use its troops to end Black insurrections and violence. Thus, by constitutional law, the federal government was legally empowered to support a cultural ethos of African American inferiority manifested as slavery (Tate 200-201).

The founding fathers of America has a very limited the definition of men for selected few. Although, the text in American constitution says that “all men are created equal” but it was subsequently interpreted in very exclusive way. The very definition of man for the founding fathers of America was limited to Rich, White, and Caucasian and later it was granted to poor white who shared the same origin. They have rejected the notion of equality, not only between white and black but between categories of white. So, it was out of question for the African American slaves to dream of equality or inclusion for many centuries. Ralph Ellison has rightly pointed out that “Negroes were Americans even before there was a United States, and if we’re going to talk at all about what we are, this historical and cultural fact has to be recognized. And if we’re going to accept this as true, then the identity of Negroes is bound up intricately, irrevocably, with the identities of white Americans” (qtd in Warren 347). Even after the Abolition of Slavery in 1865 the African Americans were exploited (and are still exploited) based on their origin and skin color. Those who have served this country for twelve generations without any compensation, those who have fought in the wars and experienced inhuman discrimination collectively are still not human in the eyes of some of their fellow countrymen. This is one of the fundamental questions which ask us that how and why this self-proclaimed enlightened race or country has committed such acts? Race as a cultural concept has taken a firm position in present on the backdrop that many scholars have rejected the scientific categorization of the race based on non-standardization and ambiguity.

In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* it is noted that “Race” has five criteria for the division of humanity into small groups: (1) they reflect biological foundation; (2) the members of race share/develop some discrete characteristics which are not found in other races; (3) these characteristics are inherited by birth and helps individual in his identity formation by ancestry



and genealogy; (4) different races' origin can be traced via genealogical studies and (5) these biological characteristics play important role in physical, behavioral and other differences between racism (James and Burgos Summer 2020).

Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann outline five characteristics of race which differentiates it from ethnicity. First, racial identity is externally imposed, for instance, the construction of a single Negro race to homogenize various tribes of Africa. Second, race is a consequence of the early globalization, which led to colonization of people with different phenotypes. Third, race involves power relation e.g. the ideology of white supremacy, where one race held power to exploit the other race or races. Fourth, racial identities are hierarchical as this notion of superiority and inferiority creates hierarchical entities or hierarchical relations among races. Fifth, racial identities are considered as inherent related to birth or descent (cited in James and Burgos Summer 2020.). The *Stanford Encyclopaedia* entry on the 'Race' notes that race as a concept has first implemented in the Iberian Peninsula. It notes that:

Perhaps the first, unconscious stirrings of the concept of race arose within the Iberian Peninsula... During and after their Reconquista (reconquest)..., the Catholic Monarchs Isabel and Ferdinand sought to establish a uniformly Christian state by expelling first the Jews (in 1492) and then the Muslims (in 1502). ...To ensure that only truly faithful Christians remained within the realm, the grand inquisitor Torquemada reformulated the Inquisition to inquire not just into defendants' religious faith and practices but into their lineage... Thus, the idea of purity of blood was born (*limpieza de sangre*), not fully the biological concept of race but perhaps the first occidental use of blood heritage as a category of religio-political membership (James and Burgos Summer 2020).

This historical movement was taken by some as the first emergence of Race as the concept of superiority and inferiority. George Fredrickson has noted that "Since this region (Iberian Peninsula) was the first in Europe to utilize African slavery while gradually rejecting the enslavement of fellow European Christians, Iberian Christians may have come to associate Black people as physically and mentally suitable only for menial labor" (qtd in James and Burgos Summer 2020). Even David Hume in his essay "Of National Characters" has stated that the White race is superior to any other race and also links natural inferiority only to "negroes" (cited in James and Burgos Summer 2020). The same kind of ideology and thinking was seen or continued to make the larger distinctions of races and to create a strong foundation

of hierarchy. The best examples are Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Madison Grant. In his book, *The Foundation of Nineteenth Century* (1899), Chamberlain has managed to create a theory that connects Christianity, Ancient Greek Philosophy, and Art with the Aryan race, and thus proclaiming it superior to any other race. It has also become the basis between Jewish and non-Jewish distinction, which also promoted antisemitic ideologies, and Chamberlain has come to be seen as the key intellectual in foundation of the twentieth-century German antisemitism. On the other hand, Grant's book, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) became the foundation for the racial segregation and discrimination against African American population, denying political, economic, and educational opportunities to keep them as subordinate to maintain the status quo. Even it has influenced certain legal and judicial laws such as anti-miscegenation or interbreeding of different races, which resulted in anti-miscegenation law in thirty states of United states until 1967 (James and Burgos Summer 2020).

W.E.B. Du Bois in his essay "The Conservation of Races" defines race as "a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life" (80). Race is a concept which has affected the life of each and every person slave or otherwise in America since last four centuries. Du Bois has pointed out that that it is impossible to make a standard categorization of humans in some small sections or race because there is vast variety and difference between the human races. Some categorizations proposed on the basis of color, race, and language, and so on have failed because these characteristics do not create any uniformity anywhere in the world or these characteristics lack any standardization or scientific uniformity. which leads to ambiguity on race as a scientific concept. Rather it has been now accepted as a socio-cultural concept. Wilkerson rightly states that "Color is a fact. Race is a social construct" (67). Du Bois believed that there are similarities of biological characteristics between various races around the world, the major difference is of their spiritual characteristics. He believed that this unique spiritual striving of each race creates distinction among races and the spiritual goal of the "Negro" race is still undecided. Thus, Du Bois rejects separation or differences of races based on science and biology, which was prevalent at that time, but accepted the spiritual differences of races

Race as a system has also supported slavery which has devoured millions of African-Americans (formerly known as Negroes/African slaves) who were captured by slavers from Africa and sold out in Europe and America. “Slavery in this land was not merely an unfortunate thing that happened to black people. It was an American innovation, an American institution created by and for the benefit of the elites of the dominant caste” Wilkerson notes (51). She further claims that The American system of slavery which:

lasted from 1619 to 1865, was not the slavery of ancient Greece or the illicit sex slavery of today... American slavery, by contrast, was legal and sanctioned by the state and a web of enforcers. Any victim who managed to escape, escaped to a world that not only did not recognize her freedom but would return her to her captors for further unspeakable horrors as retribution. In American slavery, the victims, not the enslavers, were punished, subject to whatever atrocities the enslaver could devise as a lesson to others (54).

During this time millions of slaves came to the land, which represented hope and opportunity ironically finding them as slaves, property and subject to enormous amount of mental and physical tortures which lasted for generations. This system of slavery has created an unbridgeable gap between the whites and colored that it’s past is still haunting and hindering the progress of the country and its fellow citizens. The concept of race is at the core of all of that. The race of the person, in America, defines his life and what kind of treatment the person will get throughout his life. On the basis of race the social rules has so much developed throughout the history that sometimes we found that every aspect and action of the United States and its people are directed according to the unseen rules of hierarchy created by Race. From a public lynching to the Supreme Court judgment of “separate but equal” was based on the only foundation of race. Even in the present the Police brutality and harassment of colored people which looks exclusively targeted was result of the same system which wants to maintain the status quo. This separate but equal notion has its precedence in the culture and history of law.

Robert Gooding-Williams in his essay on Du Bois notes that for Du Bois Whiteness is equally important concept to study because the idea of whiteness, white superiority promotes discrimination and violence towards African Americans to keep them in their place in the social order. Emphasizing on argument made by Joel Olson, he observes that:

Du Bois' understanding of whiteness belongs to the political theory of race he begins to sketch in *Black Reconstruction*. Specifically, Du Bois conceptualizes whiteness as a privileged position of social standing that has 1) afforded white workers a public and psychological wage compensating them for their low economic wages; and 2) formed the basis of a cross-class, political alliance uniting white workers and capitalists against black workers (black slaves included). More generally, he maintains that whiteness has historically functioned as a mechanism of power for recruiting white workers to police and reinforce the economic exploitation of black workers (Goodings-Williams Spring 2020).

The recent case of George Floyd's and Breonna Taylor's killing by police officers proves the point. The protests which erupted after these deaths and was supported by the ongoing movement of Black Lives Matter, which is a freedom cry of the people who were neglected and separated, who have worked and lived for the great country which has never accepted them as its own. Here the lines of Du Bois, "Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house?" (*The Souls of the Black Folk* 4) ring as true in these troubled times as when he wrote.

Du Bois was trying to understand the whole structure of this predatory system of Racism and how it has created artificial inferiority and imposed it on the African Americans. If we look at the studies and works of Du Bois we can see that how fundamental his studies were. Whether it is *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) or his books on *Black Reconstruction* (1935) from literature to sociological studies his studies try to gather the present or try to cultivate the upcoming generation to make aware of these oppressive structures and has also provided with some tools of protest. His work at the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People (NAACP), the well-known institution which has supported and understood the needs of African Americans and has fought for them is a living example of legacy which Du Bois has left behind. The ideological difference between Booker T. Washington and Du Bois was that, Washington emphasized economic independence instead of civil rights on the other hand Du Bois knew this will keep African American as second-Class citizens (*The Souls of the Black Folk* xvi). Du Bois believed that focus on education and civil rights are the ultimate remedies for creating equality and this cannot be compromised at any cost.

Washington believed that economic independence and industrial and vocational knowledge will help to raise of African-Americans and make them working class and land owners, he proposed that to achieve this African-Americans should compromise and let go any claim of political equality and voting rights. He signals this in his speech now known as “Atlanta Compromise” where he proposed that “In all things purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers, and yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress” (qtd in *The Souls of the Black Folk* 34). This proclamation by Washington was interpreted as total surrender of demands of civil and political equality. This made Washington the “compromiser between the South, the North and the Negro” in the eyes of Du Bois and others (*The Souls of the Black Folk* 39).

Du Bois in his *The Souls of the Black Folk* notes that the deliberate proposal to sacrifice the political power, civil rights and higher education of the African American youth led to creation of (1) disenfranchisement of the African American population, (2) legal creation of segregation based society where African American’s inferiority became accepted truth and (3) the withdrawal of the funds for higher education of the African Americans and segregated schools which has crippled progress of the African American population (40). Du Bois with other leaders of his race, who rejected ideas of Washington, asserted that they will not cease their struggle until their demands for (1) The right to vote, (2) Civic equality and (3) The education of youth according to ability, will not fulfilled (42). Du Bois also emphasized and motivated African-Americans that they “must insist Continually...that voting is necessary to modern manhood, that color discrimination is barbarism, and that black boys need education as well as white boys” (43). Du Bois noted that the impact of slavery and racial prejudice were very prevalent in that time. The atmosphere created by this has hindered progress of not only African-Americans but all. The industrial education proposed by Washington will take time to be establish and due to segregation will slow and always be inferior until equal education opportunities will not be provided by the state. He also believed that the great changes in society will not come until the African-Americans will get support of other factions of American society.

Du Bois’ fiercest critique of American government and most assertive demands for the political and civil rights for African-Americans are found in his very short but influential “Niagara

Speech” of 1905. This was given as a part of Niagara Movement which condemn discrimination at all level and demanded equal rights for all, especially voting rights. In this speech Du Bois demanded voting rights, desegregation of public places, social integration and right to social interactions without fear of violence by anyone, equal protection by law, and education for African Americans and eradication of illiteracy (*Teaching American History*). The demand of education made by Du Bois is not merely knowledge of vocation and industrial training, unlike Washington, Du Bois clearly demands “education which is development of power and ideal”; education which will motivate African-American children to know, to think and to aspire (*Teaching American History*). In this speech Du Bois demands the young generation of America to come together and destroy the system which is based on racism and discrimination and build up new system in which all are free, equal and are pursuing happiness as the constitution has promised.

Du Bois in his, *The Souls of Black Folk*, invokes the text of American constitution and text which was used by the Founding fathers of America when they proclaim that “We hold these truths to self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (46). By invoking this text of the American Constitution, Du Bois is addressing those African American leaders who share Washington’s ideology of sacrifice of civil and political rights in favor of economic development and those white Americans who are not ready to accept African Americans as equals and free citizens. Du Bois asserts through this that political freedom and social equality is a part of the “inalienable” rights given by the American Constitution to all citizens. All-natural born Americans, including African-Americans, are entitled to these rights. Du Bois also asserts that no any race is superior or inferior to the other, and African-Americans should not accept this imposed inferiority and should struggle to achieve equality promised by the constitutions.

Du Bois wanted his readers to see the African Americans from their point of view and not from the perspectives and stereotypes created by the whites. To do this he creates many unique concepts to clearly articulate the feelings and discriminations African Americans were facing. Reiland Rabaka (2021) notes that “Du Bois translated his social scientific findings from *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*, *The Philadelphia Negro*, and several of his Atlanta

University Studies into accessible concepts that could reach across the borders and boundaries of race, religion, education, politics, and social class” (47). Through the concept such as double consciousness, veil, color-line, second sight and gift he tries to explore and make visible the uniqueness of African Americans experiences in America. The veil represents the daily microaggressions and discrimination faced by African Americans. The concepts double consciousness talks about the twoness, what Du Bois suggests, African American struggles with the being of African and American in a white world. Awareness of this constant struggle with this twoness agonises the African American. Du Bois suggests solution by creation of a hybrid African American personality by the mixture of these two selves without losing their characteristics. For whites, African Americans were invisible but for African Americans others are clearly visible even whites. African American were never homogenous, as Du Bois notes in his study *The Philadelphia Negro*. The prevailing socio-political environment which presents white as superior and African American as inferior was one of the reasons behind the internalisation of the inferiority by the African Americans and is one of the causes for the double consciousness. African Americans self is free and he/she accepts it as free with many possibilities but at the same time there is another self which is shackled, locked and caged without choice or any hope for possibilities. Ralph Ellison rightly notes that “freedom was not only the recognition of necessity, it was the recognition of possibility” (xi).

Through the concept of the color-line Du Bois points at the racism and racialism prevailing at the national level in every discipline, of public and private life, which can be located at the polices like Black codes, legalised segregations, Jim Crow laws, and also still prevailing police brutality which targets African Americans. This colour-line may be invisible and insignificant for the white world, is very visible to African Americans and played a very crucial role in their lives. The *Plessy vs Fergusson* verdict of 1896 by Supreme court which holds segregation in public places justified and constitutional was a result of this racial divide made by the color-line. This verdict legalised segregation and created foundation for above mentioned policies which were inherently racist affecting millions of African Americans.

Justice John Harlan Marshall also known as “the Great Dissenter” was the only dissenting voice in this verdict of *Plessy vs Fergusson*, pointing that the law of segregated space which the case was discussing is not the accessibility of the space by Whites or African Americans, but was

particularly designed to keep the African Americans in their place, that is, separate and inferior. Through these kinds of laws, the inferiority of African American which was a social norm at that time was imposed on the African Americans as a badge of servitude by these laws. Justice Harlan Marshall notes that:

The white race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth, and in power. So, I doubt not, it will continue to be for all time, if it remains true to its great heritage, and holds fast to the principles of constitutional liberty. But in view of the constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful. The law regards man as man, and takes no account of his surroundings or of his color when his civil rights as guaranteed by the supreme law of the land are involved. It is therefore to be regretted that this high tribunal, the final expositor of the fundamental law of the land, has reached the conclusion that it is competent for a state to regulate the enjoyment by citizens of their civil rights solely upon the basis of race (Ferguson).

Justice Harlan Marshall was the only justice who represented the importance of dissent in the American democracy, who understood that the fate of two races were mingled and interconnected. He notes in his dissent that “Sixty millions of whites are in no danger from the presence here of eight millions of blacks. The destinies of the two races, in this country, are indissolubly linked together, and the interests of both require that the common government of all shall not permit the seeds of race hate to be planted under the sanction of law” (Ferguson). Despite these crucial and logical arguments, the verdict was enacted and changed the lives of millions. The verdict was not upholding the principles given by the American Constitution and was declared unconstitutional in 1954. The effects this verdict had created was exact as justice Harlan Marshall has predicted. It perpetuated feeling of distrust among races, prevented millions of African Americans to enjoys their rights as citizens and encouraged the notion of white superiority and African American inferiority degrading the status of the later.

Du Bois in his short story “Of the Coming of John” in *The Souls of the Black Folk* talks about the implications of this verdict by putting two Johns, one white and the other African American



in the real life. Both the Johns when returned after their education the white John face prosperity and unlimited possibilities of future development, while the other John was shackled and stripped of any hope, will or opportunity of pursuit of happiness. At the tragic end, the white John was killed by the other John because the white John has sexually abused the other John's sister. The fate brings African American John facing the roaring public who is there to lynch him. Du Bois through this short story wanted to emphasise that the racism is destroying great potential of the both the races and ultimately potential of America.

Through the concepts of the Second-sight and the Gift, Du Bois wanted to appreciate the great contribution of the African Americans to the America and their ability to see strengths and weaknesses of Africa and America even in the severe adversities. For him Second sight of the African American is neither automatic or axiomatic it is under the constant threat of double consciousness. These two sights enable African Americans to view two worlds and it also gives them capacity to see the contribution made by Black as well as White souls for the America. This ability of second sight can be used by the African Americans to synthesize the Double Consciousness, Du Bois proclaimed it as the solution to the problem of the Double Consciousness. Through the theory of gift Du Bois reminds African Americans and whites that the African American have contributed in the development of America, and without the contributions of the African Americans the America would not have been the same as it is now. Emphasising on the Gifts given by African Americans to America he asserts and asks:

Your country? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed we were here. Here we have brought our three gifts and mingled them with yours.... Nor has our gift of the Spirit been merely passive. Actively we have woven ourselves with the very warp and woof of this nation, —we fought their battles, shared their sorrow, mingled our blood with theirs, and generation after generation have pleaded with a headstrong, careless people to despise not Justice, Mercy, and Truth, lest the nation be smitten with a curse. Our song, our toil, our cheer, and warning have been given to this nation in blood-brotherhood. Are not these gifts worth the giving? Is not this work and striving? Would America have been America without her Negro people? (*The Souls of the Black Folk* 198)

Du Bois in his study of Race and Racism in America, not only studied the idea of Blackness but also of that Whiteness. For him the concept of whiteness and white supremacy was more

fundamental for the problem of colour-line not only in America but around the world. As Du Bois' philosophy and idea related to colour-line extended, Du Bois realised that colour-line is the problem of not only of America but of whole world. He started writing about this and gave a critique of whiteness, white supremacy and white imperialism. Du Bois' work came as the critical inquiry in the problem of whiteness, the same way the African Americans were made problem and objectified by the whites, Du Bois uses his tropes like veil, double consciousness and other concept to objectify the whites and whiteness, putting them on the equal level as the problem like the African Americans and Blackness were notified by the whites.

He tried to expose the moral cowardice and intellectual perversities of the whiteness which prevents whites to face reality of the race and stops them to acknowledge the problem of racism of which whiteness and white supremacy is foundation. Rabaka notes that "a careful reading of *The Souls of Black Folk* from the black point of view reveals that the race problem is, in fact, a *white problem* because whites created the social construction of race, invented institutions to perpetuate the racial hierarchy at the heart of white supremacy, and historically and currently benefit the most from the continuation of racial colonialism, racial capitalism, and white supremacy" (Rabaka 69). Du Bois in his own way, deconstructed the binary opposition of White superiority and Black inferiority. For Du Bois this problem of white supremacy has created a white world where African Americans are strangers, outsiders, outcaste and others. Du Bois pointed out that there is conceptual problem in the white world created for the whites and white values to judge this world. In this white world, white and whiteness is normal, in the white-dominated black world, white and whiteness is normal but black and blackness is abnormal everywhere due to white hegemony. Du Bois believed that American values which are assumed as synonymous to white values are actually based on false conception. He wants to demarcate that White values which are projected as American values are not "the American values", but American values are inclusive and affirmative unlike white values. American values are values of not only whites but also contains African Americans and all those who live here and spent generations. White values are fundamentally corrupt and of divisive nature, they are infected by the sickness of white supremacy which is killing America and all of its citizens, irrespective of race.

Du Bois while discussing the problem of white supremacy and whiteness emphasises on the idea of color-line which is for him was the problem of the world at the dawn of the twentieth century. This color-line, can be argued, is the line of whiteness, this white line controls who will be included who and will be not, who will be loved and who will be hated, where aid should be sent and where soldiers to invade, who will be protected by the police brutality and who will be tortured, who will vote and who will not be allowed to vote. The problem of whiteness is prevalent at the time of Du Bois, it was prevalent when Malcolm X and Dr. King was alive and it is still prevalent in the time of Black Lives Matter, Police Brutality and Anti-Black policies.

### **Toni Morrison's *Beloved***

Toni Morrison was born as Chloe Ardelia Wofford on February 18 1931 in USA. During the Great Migration Morrison's family migrated from southern states to northern states. Morrison's father greatly valued education and this was seen in Morrison's excellent school records and academic endeavours. Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye* was published in 1970. Before publication of her one of the well know novels *Beloved* (1987) Morrison had published *Sula* in 1973, *Song of Solomon* in 1977, *Baby, Tar Baby* in 1981 and her play *Dreaming Emmet* in 1986. In 1988 she received Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved*. Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993, she was the first African American woman to win the prize.

Set during 1855 to 1875, *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison tells the story of the post effects of Slavery on the human psyche. Slavery does not just torture or deal physical harm, it harms on psychological levels and amputates the very intellectual and emotional capacities of enslaved that it creates abundant hindrances against coping with normal life or reality. The story of Sethe, Paul D, Baby Suggs, Denver, and Beloved with countless other fictional characters as well as real-life examples justify this. The background or the real-life incident on which this novel was based demonstrates the deviant effects of race and the value and necessity of freedom for humans.

The time and setting of the novel are very important, the subject of the novel is directly related to the law and its implications. The law in question is *The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850*, enacted

on September 18<sup>th</sup> 1850 by American Congress. This law not only granted that the slaves who are runaways and in free state can be taken back and enslaved again by their owners but also forced federal government in helping in finding, capturing and returning these slaves to their owner. Carmen Gillespie in his *Critical Companion to Toni Morrison* notes that for Morrison:

The idea for the novel *Beloved* originated with the historical narrative of MARGARET GARNER, a woman who in 1856 ran away from the farm where she was enslaved in Kentucky. When she and the others she escaped with were followed and discovered by their owner, Garner tried to kill her children rather than have them re-enslaved. She succeeded in killing one of her children, and her subsequent trial became the subject of national controversy particularly as concerned the issue of ABOLITION (Gillespie 19 capitals in the original).

The origin and implications of this can be found in the prevailing laws at that time. The law created by those who were white and wanted to be benefitted from slavery exploited slaves and manipulated laws for personal gains. Wilkerson talked about this, she notes that:

The Virginia General Assembly declared the status of all people born in the colony. ‘Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or free,’ the Assembly decreed in 1662, ‘be it therefore enacted and declared by this present Grand Assembly, that all children borne in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother.’ With this decree, the colonists were breaking from English legal precedent, the only precepts they had ever known, the ancient order that gave children the status of the father. This new law allowed enslavers to claim the children of black women, the vast majority of whom were enslaved, as their property for life and for ensuing generations (106).

The implications of this can be observed by the insights provided by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in her essay “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race” on the 1855 case of *State of Missouri vs Celia*. Celia was a purchased by Robert Newsome when she was fourteen, until she turned nineteen she was sexually exploited by her owner and gave birth to a boy and was pregnant again. When she was nineteen, pregnant and was ill, Newsome tried to rape her, she warned Newsome that she might hurt him. She fatally injures him by hitting a stick on his head that instantly kills him. After that she burns the body and, in the morning, spreads his ashes on the pathway. When it was discovered she was tried of the first-degree murder. The defence rested their claim saying that her actions were protected

and justified by “the Missouri statutes that protected women from attempts to ravish, rape and defile” (Higginbotham 258). Higginbotham notes that the language of this particular statute used the phrase “any woman” while other unrelated statutes use particular terms like “white female”, “slave” or “negro”. The court observed that she was slave, with whom Newsome has habit of having sexual relationship, the court does not consider Celia as a woman and considered her as a slave, finding her guilty and sentencing her to death by hanging after the child’s birth (258). It should be noted that she was hanged after the childbirth. Because the child in her womb, after Newsome’s death became the property of the Newsome’s estate.

In the attempt of taking this subject matter, Morrison has tried to put herself in the mind of the victims. She had created a whole new world to dilute the incident because in its raw form the subject matter and presentation was so bold and shocking that it could be misinterpreted. The question of freedom and the effects/impact of slavery on the psyche are the main subjects matter of this novel, because the real value of freedom is only understood when you realize that you have lost it, don’t have it or you have fear of losing it. The very existence of slavery entraps the freedom of the enslaved and creates structures and systems of keeping it that way.

Patricia Waugh notes that “Morrison’s novels explore the racial history of black people in terms of how their oppression is lived out through relationships with their family and yet how these same relationships carry the possibility of human dignity and connection” (qtd in. Lyles-Scott 195). Sethe is the main character or protagonist of the novel. The whole story revolves around her, she is the character who has suffered and lost most in comparison to other characters as well as she is the most courageous character and has endured the gravest of tortures by her so-called masters. Gillespie notes that:

The portraits of Paul D and Sethe created by Toni Morrison in *Beloved* confront the questions of what it means to be a man and also what it means to be a mother when the basic elements of freedom and humanity are denied. These questions are always difficult but are rendered nearly impossible to answer with the lack of autonomy and choice that defines slavery. Even when the characters are no longer literally enslaved, their thoughts and actions are haunted by their memories of their earliest and formative experiences as someone else’s property (19).

Sethe has endured the torture and exploitation by the Schoolteacher and his Nephews, and this was very visually described in the novel. The conversation of Paul D. and Sethe as follow makes it clear:

“They used cowhide on you?”

“And the took my milk.”

“They beat you and you was pregnant?”

“And they took my milk!” (Morrison 17)

The reference to the Cherokee tree growing on Sethe’s back, a startling metaphor of the scars of the whiplash, gives us an idea of how she was tortured when she was pregnant. She was disrespected by the Schoolteacher and his Nephews, they were the masters who took over after the death of former benevolent master Mr. Garner in very suspicious manner. Along with this torture the incident when she was pregnant helped by the little girl and how she reached Baby Suggs’ home that whole incident gives us an idea of how strong she is. But the real test comes when she was at Baby Sugg’s home after running away to freedom. She was free for the first time. She talks about that short period of freedom, precisely 28 days, which she spent when she was at the house number 124 where she was living with Baby Suggs and her children, after her escape from the plantation. This experience of precious freedom led her to kill her children when she realized that the schoolteacher came to claim her at the best time of her life. She was afraid of that that she and her children will end up in the hell of slavery again. She talks of the joy of motherhood she has experienced for the first time in these 28 days. She talks of her experience of freedom and also how much she values hers and her children’s freedom. That is why she tried to kill her children, and was able to kill only one, until she was restrained. While justifying her actions Sethe tells Paul D that “she could not go back to slavery or let her children go. For her the truth is simple: She would not let her children be slaves, so she put them where she thought they would be safe, on the other side of this life” (Gillespie 24-25). The problem here discussed by Morrison is directly related to the law of the United States at that time. Particularly the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 which gives the right to the slave owners to chase and capture and take back the ownership of his fugitive slaves. The very idea of claiming something makes the idea more complicated because one can claim the property, and Slaves according to the law was classified as property, and not as human beings but as “animate chattel.” One more question this novel discusses. The characters of the novel, most of the African American slaves are considered as property and not as human beings, by the soft-

hearted whites like Mr. Garner as well as by the wicked ones like the Schoolteacher. The Schoolteacher at one-point notes down in his diary, points about comparing slaves with the Animals and controlling them like that. The Law of that time gives them to behave or to do whatever with their slaves and slaves cannot go to courts for justice or remedy.

It was clear and evident that laws were used as to create foundation and system of advancement and support of slavery. Each slave, runaway or other, does know that freeing oneself is different and claiming oneself as a free individual is a different thing. The law does not provide support to the runaway slaves' claim who consider themselves as free individual, but it supports the owner of the slaves to claim back the runaway slaves. This is why the Schoolteacher came to the house no 124, where Sethe is living, to claim Sethe and her children as his property. At that moment Sethe realized that what she is going to lose is her newly experienced freedom, she realizes that the Schoolteacher has come to drag her and her children back to the hell of Slavery and to prevent that she does the act of killing her children. She knew that she cannot turn back to anyone for help/justice not even to the law. In that time of chaos, she chose that she will not let her children live and endure slavery so she does what no one thought one can do. Dean Franco in his "What we talk about when we talk about Beloved" notes that, "Trauma is experienced as the breaking and re-making of the law, and in this way Sethe's action is an injury to the law, and the one who would claim her, at the same time that it is a trauma to her. Contrary to the way we typically think of injury, it is against the law she breaks that Sethe has claim and produces claim for others around her, because Sethe's humanity and her claim for her family precede the law" (117). The Schoolteacher after he saw what was done by Sethe realized that there was nothing to claim and after filling claim of insurance he left, renouncing his claim on Sethe and her children.

One another important character of the novel is Baby Suggs. She is Sethe's mother-in-law, whose freedom was bought by her only surviving son Halle, who goes mad after watching what the Schoolteacher and his nephews do to Sethe after they capture her. Baby Suggs has given birth to eight children and seven were taken from her and sold out. Her only surviving son Halle took care of her and bought her freedom from Mr. Garner after working around the country. Her name on the bill of sale was Jenny Whitlaw but she chooses to stick with her name Baby Suggs, because it was the only thing that was left of her husband, what he used to call

her. Baby Suggs, as Sethe, has endured so much pain, the pain of giving birth to seven children who were taken away from her, and the only thing she has remembered of them is that her youngest liked burnt bread crumbs. She is a strong character who knows how to cope with the situation and she also provides some relief and comfort to Sethe after what she has done. She does not judge Sethe's action. She in some manner understands that Sethe has done what she thinks was best for her children. The character of Baby Suggs was compassionate and full of mercy. After her freedom she starts a prayer circle in the woods. She was very kind hearted she prepares and give a feast to everyone in the neighborhood when Sethe and her children, her family, arrives at 124. She asserts her freedom as Cynthia Lyles-Scott rightly observes in her essay that:

Morrison supports the idea of Baby Suggs being self-possessed or self-owned, when in one of Sethe's flashbacks, Morrison writes as the omnipotent author about how Baby Suggs suddenly comes alive unto herself and claims her body and soul after being freed from enslavement at the hands of Mr. Garner. 'Suddenly she [Baby Suggs] saw her hands and thought . . . 'These hands belong to me. These my hands.' Next, she felt a knocking in her chest and discovered something else new: her own heartbeat (Lyles-Scott 200).

Paul D, as the initial in his name, suggests that he was the fourth of the same name, there were three more Paul before him. Paul D was the character who has seen the dehumanization of slaves and has firsthand experience of it. When Mr. Garner was alive the days at Sweet Home (Plantation) were good for everyone, Mr. Garner treated his slaves differently from other farm owners and also boasts about it. Paul D was allowed to keep his gun with him and that although a slave Paul D thought he has some identity; however, everything changes after the suspicious death of Mr. Garner. After Mr. Garner's death, his brother-in-law took control of the farm, and first, he took away Paul D's gun, Paul D by losing his gun felt like losing his masculinity. The days changed for everyone because the Schoolteacher was not generous like Mr. Garner. The most humiliating experience Paul D has gone through was, as he recounts to Sethe, that when she left The Schoolteacher had put the *bit* in his mouth and he was chained. At that moment he saw the rooster named Mister and Paul D has this humiliating experience that this animal is free while as being a human being he is not free and constrained in chains and this incident has wounded Paul D deeply and has somewhat broken him. When he was sold to the mining company he experiences more degrading incidents, there he often encounters sodomy and the slaves were chained in groups and were kept in the underground and cramped cages so they



cannot escape. These experiences and encounters affected Paul D in such a way that after escaping from there, it was hard for Paul D to gather himself together and start a new life. These events come back as nightmares to haunt Paul D.

Through these characters, Morrison has tried to put some major questions before readers. She questions the moral character of the religion and the country which has supported this inhuman system and benefitted from it. She asked the very fundamental question that, should these characters be considered human beings or property? Who was responsible for making Sethe kill her children? How dehumanizing and humiliating it is to chain a person or cage him? And the main question being as we are discussing is What does it mean to be free? What is freedom? And What is the Value of Freedom? If we study the novel we recognize that these characters especially Baby Suggs and Sethe knew the value of freedom and knew how to be free. The novel lays bare the lack of choice and at the same time compulsion of following orders is slavery. Freedom is the exact opposite to that. When Baby Suggs and Sethe were slaves, they both lacked freedom, but they both have some idea of choice and freedom, which was realized to Baby Suggs after getting her freedom and to Sethe after her escape from “Sweet Home” (plantation). As Sethe chooses Halle as her husband and it was her choice of running away after she comes to know about the Schoolteacher’s mentality and it was her choice not to let her children be driven back into slavery. But she realized her true freedom when she came to 124 and has the opportunity to do things on her own, without being told, she also found new experiences and feelings of motherhood which she never had a chance of experiencing while working as a slave on a farm. The character of Sethe epitomizes the value of freedom and the dehumanizing effects of slavery on the human psyche.

### **Ralph Ellison’s *The Invisible Man***

Ralph Waldo Ellison was born in Oklahoma on March 1 1914. His father died when he was three-year-old, her mother worked as a domestic worker and was very active in politics for many years. Ellison was from his school days were interested in music and Jazz, he learnt to play saxophone, trumpet and other instruments. When he was in New York he met Langston Hughes and Richard Wright who encouraged him to write, his short stories and other writing started appearing in magazines in the late 1930s. His writing was influenced and improved when in the year 1938 when he started working with the folklore. In 1944 Ellison received

Rosenwald Foundation Fellowship to write a novel, but was not able to finish. In 1952 Ellison established himself as an influential writer with the publication of *The Invisible Man*. Ellison won National Book award for fiction in 1953 and his novel was considered as one of the most influential novels in the American literary history. Even after seventy years of its publication it was as relevant as it was first published. Ellison was awarded several fellowships and honours during his life time including United States Medal of Freedom in 1969.

One of the most innovative novels of American Literature, *The Invisible Man* (1952) by Ralph Ellison acquires a unique place in academia as well as in the general reading circles. Ellison's *The Invisible Man* has boldly put forward the question of racism in America to its fellow countryman as well as to the world. It was not the subject matter which was radical, it was the method or technique or the treatment of that subject matter that has made it so unique. He tried to create or to gather the unmodified, scattered consciousness of his race in such a way that it makes itself visible, by evoking its invisibility and giving it a tangible form of words. The story as we all know is of an unnamed African American college student who is in his junior year. This unnamed narrator or protagonist of this novel is invisible like his all community/race. It is not like magic that he can disappear, it is because people are not ready to see him, particularly the white people in the white world. He says in his epilogue at the end that he has started with his share of optimism to do something good for himself and his people, but he faced failure at every step that he lost all his optimism and he chooses to be/stay in the darkness in the manhole. This darkness makes him relive the most important incidents of his life from his grandfather's advice to his descent into the manhole.

*The Invisible Man* was written at a very crucial time in American history. The protests and resistances were raising against the invisibility of entire race, whose problems and issues were appropriated by false promises or violence. The African American race was invisible race, who is struggling to make itself seen and wanted to acquire visibility. There was a constant struggle raising, due to the ill treatments of African Americans, segregation was law of the land, lynching of African Americans and Jim Crow laws were very common and accepted. *Brown vs Board of Education* will happen in 1954. Emmett Till will be lynched and murdered in 1955, the same year Rosa Parks will refuse to give up her seat because she was tired of giving in. Civil Rights movement will start soon, ending with Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights

Act of 1965. It is one of the ironies of the oldest democracy of the world, that large part of its population was not part of it. In this oldest democracy African-Americans have to wait one hundred years to exercise their voting rights and equal status. After four hundred years since their arrival in America, way before the birth of this great nation, African American population is still invisible, still struggling to be visible. they still need to force the government and others to see them. Recent Black Lives Matter movement is an apt example of this.

About the invisibility Ellison talks about in this novel has been felt by many and has been noted in words. Walter White, an influential leader of the NAACP, has noted about this feeling of being invisible in his autobiography published in 1948. He notes that “I was a Negro, a human being with an invisible pigmentation which marked me as a person to be hunted, hanged, abused, discriminated against, kept in poverty, and ignorance, in order that those whose skin was white would have readily at hand a proof of their superiority” (qtd in Pandey 16). With this background and social atmosphere, Ellison deals with various topics in his novel like the questions of equality, liberty, identity, and existence. Being so vast and feature-rich this novel has possibilities of multiple interpretations. But according to me the major theme or question Ellison here discusses is Equality and Double Consciousness. The concept of Double Consciousness was given by Du Bois, about which is discussed in detail in the later part of this chapter. It represents the twoness of the African Americans, one is his real self and other white man’s projection of African Americans in a white world. If we see the background of the novel, particularly the historical and political background we will come to realize that the novel is a very apt representation of that time. The case of *Plessy Vs Fergusson* (1896) and its decision of “Separate but equal”, which by no means was what as it looks, was deeply based on the post-enslavement racial divide the country was experience. This decision legalized the segregation and sanctioned the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, the increase in lynching of Africa Americans, and anti-black racist rioting and mob violence. This rule created two Americas one where whites were flourishing and the other where African Americans were living in dire conditions. These two Americas were sanction by law and accepted by the protectors of democracy. *Plessy Vs Fergusson* and subsequent segregation it created was stated unconstitutional by the *Brown vs Board of Education* (1954), and its effects has made the country think about the future of the country along with the future of its minority population particularly African American population. This was also the early days when the civil rights movements were in developing

stage throughout the nation. It was the time when slowly but gradually African American population was gaining consciousness of the injustices.

It was no surprise to us to see the narrator's movement from South to North as a positive move. This particular movement was very symbolic because in earlier history this movement was related to the movement from slavery to freedom. As we know that runaway slaves come to the north to get their freedom from the slavery of the south. But in this novel, the narrator was forced to go to the north and it was not a voluntary movement; the narrator was also sent by the prestigious president of his college. The president of the college was named Bledsoe, who is the first antagonist who forced the narrator to chase after jobs with seven recommendation letters. But as the history has noted that African-American was seen as the problem, everywhere in America. His was the life, which should be passed in the deferment of his freedom and his development, by keep him running with false consciousness created by the whites in a white world.

When the narrator arrives in Harlem and starts going for interviews to his job he thought he would just finish his job for a semester and will return to the south to pursue his career there. He was under the illusion which was about to break as he gave interviews where he was recommended and was rejected every time. It was by luck he comes to know about the contents of the recommendation letters, given to him by Bledsoe, when the son of one of the trustees show it to him. To his surprise, the narrator comes to know that these were not the recommendations but were letters that ensured that he should not be offered any post. The letter informs to every receiver that "This case represents, my dear Mr. Emerson, one of the rare, delicate instances in which one for whom we held great expectations has gone grievously astray, and who in his fall threatens to upset certain delicate relationships between certain interested individuals and the school...I beg of you, sir, to help him continue in the direction of that promise which, like the horizon, recedes ever brightly and distantly beyond the hopeful traveler" (184).

After reading this letter the narrator remembers the advice given by his grandfather when he was on his deathbed. This treatment of the narrator symbolizes the treatment of the whole race and African American community in this country. Bledsoe knew that if he wants to stay in his

powerful position he has to keep his trustees/masters happy and the only way of doing that is by telling them what they want to listen and showing them what they want to see. He punished the narrator because the narrator has questioned his authority and therefore indirectly the authority controlled by the whites. Bledsoe comes to realize that the narrator is too smart. The only way he thought of taking revenge and teaching him a lesson is by sending him on the run for his entire life. It was because of the sympathy and generosity of the trustee's son that the narrator realized what was happening and why. After his accident at the factory plant and after Miss Mary took him to her boarding house he spent some months unemployed and also thinks about his life. One day when he saw an eviction and gave a speech and settled the order by his speech he was offered a job by a person named Brother Jack. They were called the Brotherhood, they meet at the houses and parties and discuss the plan and action which will do "Good for all." Brotherhood is an interracial organization. He was offered a handsome salary and was also given a chance to pursue the career on the one condition that he has to sever all the relations with his past. He agrees to that and he was given a new name and identity which is also symbolic which we will discuss later in this chapter. He was trained for the indoctrination of the party and also was very successful. He was also introduced to brother Clifton who was another colored party member. The narrator also encountered Ras, a black separatist, and nationalist who was powerful in the Harlem district. The narrator gain popularity in the Harlem district after he was given charge of the district.

This movement and realization of truth and his movement from a underground of the factory, return to Harlem and his rise as a speaker and endorsement by the brotherhood gave the narrator some hope only to be disillusioned again. The narrator thinks that the brotherhood is supporting him and he will be great leader, but comes to know that the brotherhood has appointed him to use him, he was not to be given any position of power. This becomes evident when Brother Jack tells the narrator that he is not hired to think. The narrator realizes there is something different about him. This difference he will realize near the end of the novel.

The turning point in the life of the narrator came when he received an anonymous letter saying that there are members in the brotherhood who are jealous of his progress. After that, he was accused by the party member that he was using the Brotherhood for his gain. It was decided by the brotherhood that he should be located somewhere else and he will discuss the women's

question. After his return after three months in Harlem, the narrator comes to know that the reputation of the Brotherhood degraded in the Harlem district and Brother Clifton has disappeared.

When he was escaping Ras's man, he recognized brother Clifton who was selling paper Dolls on the street, they converse for short while and at that moment police arrive and Clifton tries to run away and he was confronted by the police officer and later shot. After this incident, the narrator roams around in a very difficult state of mind and he tries to observe his surroundings and his people. The question came to his mind that, what has the Brotherhood had done for the people of this district of Harlem? He organizes a small funeral ceremony with a fake member list of the Brotherhood for Clifton and confronts Brother Jack. He also knew that he was singled out and even not invited to a meeting of the core committee of the Brotherhood which takes decisions. The Brotherhood declares Clifton as a traitor and deserter and also accuses the narrator of playing race card which was against the principles of Brotherhood. After leaving from there he also encountered Ras and his man once again and thought of disguising himself to escape. To his surprise, after wearing sunglasses and a hat he was mistaken by many as a person called Reinhart who was a womanizer, pimp, corrupt minister, and also a well-known person in the Harlem district. The narrator after realizing it took advantage of it and while impersonating Reinhart the narrator realizes his invisibility. He comes to realize that people voluntarily decide not to see him and he was invisible.

He came to know about the riots which broke out in Harlem and that the Brotherhood was sacrificing Harlem because of their propaganda and not doing anything to stop the riots. He encounters many Kafkaesque incidents in the riots that night and at the end, he lands in the manhole and burns every important paper from his birth certificate to his school diploma result. In the end, he decides to stay underground and in the dark after he had a vision and epiphany.

At the end the narrator realizes the two-ness of his being. One where he thinks that he is American and his future is full of possibilities of development, but near the end he realizes that he is not just the American, he is African American in a white world. In this world just like other African Americans his fate is to keep running without reaching anywhere. He realizes that his indivisibility is his boon and his curse.

*The Invisible Man*, through his narrator and his various incidents deal with the question of Equality and double consciousness in a very unique way talks about how the system of racism works and how people work with each other. The narrator tries to learn this and when he thought that he has understood the game, to his surprise he was abandoned by the main players of the game. He talks about the treatment of African Americans and their representation. Bledsoe wants the white trustees to see only the developed and sophisticated parts of the south where the Black community has made progress. The narrator puts in front of us the real picture of poverty and injustice and treatment of African Americans by the country. With the example of Trueblood at the cottage and deranged doctor at the Golden Day bar narrator tries to make the effects of racism on African Americans visible. These incidents put before us the question of equality, of treatment of African American who were marred by racism. This system of racism has benefitted one part of the country's population and degraded the other.

The question of equality is discussed throughout the novel. In the incident where the narrator's grandfather told him not to be submissive like him, although the narrator took it at the face value at that time, he only realized it when he realized that the letters given by the Bledsoe were to inform the receiver of the letter to keep the narrator running. It was also important to note that the very first incident, when he was invited to give a speech before the respected all-white audience. He was confronted by the drunk persons smoking and a naked blond female was dancing with the children. That incident ends in a battle royal where the black boys fight each other, in the end, the narrator was able to give his speech bruised and beaten which secures his place at the high school. This incident questions the notion of separate but equal. It also questions that for some who are in power are not interested to see the intellectual prowess of the African Americans, for them they will always remain the savages who are only for service or for entertainment.

The question of equality was also discussed in the latter part of the novel when the narrator joins the Brotherhood. Before coming in the contact with colored brother Clifton he thought that in brotherhood everyone was equal, but slowly he comes to realize that it was also the same there too. He was accused of using Brotherhood for personal gain and was removed from the charge of Harlem, the suspicious disappearance of Brother Clifton also arouses the question of equality in the Brotherhood. The brotherhood tries to be objective and scientific and in doing

that they plan for the future and lacks the power to take decision when the situation forces them to take. For example, the more the narrator roams the street of Harlem the more he realizes that the brotherhood has failed to answer the question of the African American population, it has deliberately ignored and neglected the problem of African Americans. The brotherhood does not think about the mass and the narrator thinks that they (mass) must be told what has been decided.

Du Bois has given us the idea of the double consciousness of African Americans. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, he defines it as:

sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife — this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self (5).

For Du Bois, this double consciousness or constant existence of two selves in one body is very much what he talks about and he states that it is unique to the African Americans. Although he does not elaborate on the origin of this situation only discusses it in two or three instances/places and left it. Klara Szmańko (2012) observes that while Du Bois' idea of double consciousness merely reduces the African Americans as objects in the hand of White, Ellison tries to make it more complex and tries to prove that African American has agency of his/her own and adds multiplicity in the concept. The invisible man was confused by his dual self and kept blinding himself from the very beginning till the end when he had self-realization of his twoness and a better understanding of the game of which he was the part. The invisible man keeps suppressing his others self while living a more submissive life which he thinks will end up helping him a more successful career. We can also see the movement of the invisible man and his harmony or understanding of the relationship of individuality and community. We can see the journey of the invisible man from self-thinking person to a person who gains a critical understanding of his surroundings who tries to make sense of everything at the end of the novel. We encounter in the beginning that the narrator keeps thinking about his personal development



while at the end of the novel he constantly observes the surroundings and the people and their situation.

Darlene Clark Hines also notes that “had Du Bois specifically included the experiences and lives of black women in his lament, ... instead of writing, “One ever feels his twoness”, he would have mused about how one ever feels her “fiveness”: Negro, American, woman, poor, black woman.” (qtd in Pitman. Summer 2016) Putting ahead critique of Du Bois’ Double Consciousness concept Klara Szmańko writes that:

Du Bois underestimates the role of black people in the process of racialization. The double-consciousness formula to a great extent reduces Afro-Americans to an object position. Treating whites as agents and blacks as objects, Du Bois becomes entangled in the rhetoric of white people, who usually objectified African Americans. The double-consciousness formula stops short of empowering black Americans. Du Bois fails to underscore that blacks are not only victims of racism, but also active subjects capable of resisting white indoctrination and throwing away confining definitions of the white world... Ellison looks at the problem from a much broader perspective, noticing an interplay of factors behind the phenomenon. *Invisible Man* makes it clear that the perception of African Americans can remain intact (Szmańko 118).

She also observes that there has been a common ground between which was found in Du Bois and Ellison’ treatment of the concept is that they both wanted to keep the African and American both self and cherish it because the Africanness and Americanness of the African American are one thing, to suppress or destruction of one self is the destruction of other. They just wanted that Black people should be accepted as legitimate American citizens just equals like everyone and should not consider as separate/different.

Ellison also tries to synthesize the twoness and wants to harmonize or create an understanding between the multidimensional self and identity. This concept of double consciousness has been made through the psychology to the racial understanding of the African Americans. It has been seen that the living standards and rules and regulations created by White are put forward for the African American and his oneself always looks at himself from the eye of the other, to please other and to undermine the other-self or second sight. The sickness as in Ellison’s word

which was also inflicted on the narrator. “The fact is that you carry part of sickness within you, at least I do as an invisible man. I carried my sickness and though for a long time I tried to place it in the outside world, the attempt to write it down shows me that at least half of it lay within me...But live you must, and you can either make passive love to your sickness or burn it out and go to the next conflicting phase” (Ellison 555).

The concept of Double-consciousness of Du Bois and presented by Ralph Ellison is different. Du Bois’ sees it as internalization of the inferiority of African Americans projected by and in white world, while Ellison present it as a self-learned condition through the constant following of rules and encounter to violence. Both looks similar but they are fundamentally different. While Du Bois look at twoness, Ellison just looks at two experience/identity. Du Bois’ African American is African and American, for Ellison African American is a person created by the American values who wants to make changes or contribute to these American values. For Du Bois combat of internalization of White superiority and Black inferiority makes black acutely aware about their double consciousness and forced to judge everything provided by the criteria of white culture and white values. Du Bois looks for solution outside Americanness while Ellison tries to find the solutions within. For him the African American is American and this American identity cannot be separated by anyone. The African-Americans and the existence of the United States of America is inseparable. He wants to emphasize that the African American and whites share the same common background in the United States of America.

Ellison through his writing talks about many things and as the social environment and his social standing warranted, at that time he provided what was expected of him. He was of the opinion that the recognizing there is something fundamentally wrong with the national values of America is needed. And the problem is not the presence of African American and not because of the civil rights, but the problem of homogeneity and superiority complex of the whites. These observations were aptly relevant then and they are aptly relevant now. The current situation is also full of violence and full of agony for the African Americans, with the constant fear of actual death in the society, which James Baldwin has talked about very famously. For Ellison the Whites unconscious assumption of racial superiority is the America’s fundamental problem, and this cannot be solved by all the wealth of the world. This assumption of racial

superiority blinds white American to see its disastrous impact on himself, his country and his fellow countryman. Ellison has pointed out in one of his interviews that “Understanding themselves” (qtd in Warren 343) Others, here whites, “too—yes—in terms of their own live definition of value, and of understanding themselves in relationship to other Americans. This places a big moral strain upon the individual, and it requires self-confidence, self-consciousness, self-mastery, insight, and compassion. In the broader sense it requires an alertness to human complexity. Men in our situation simply cannot afford to ignore the nuances of human relationships. And although action is necessary, forthright action, it must be guided—tempered by insight and compassion” (qtd in Warren 343). Ellison emphasize that the pluralistic society without any racial judgement or racial prejudice may be a solution and everyone should protest for and work towards that goal. This comes with the understanding that there is no race in America which has not touched and affected by the other race and their existence.

Wilkerson’s book of caste should be noted for providing a very substantial arguments in the ongoing articulation of the problem of racism in America. The critical understanding of the American way of life which is backed by solid historical research and data provided by her will prove that African Americans were treated as subordinate group were subject to systematic oppression throughout the history and development of the United States. The artificially created inferiority was made a standard for everything concerning the African Americans’ lives. Right from their arrival in Virginia in 1619 till today they are subject to unfair and biased treatment which is so deeply rooted in the culture and psyche of its majority white population that it has affected and hindered the true potential development of the nation and disproportionately help one part and on the other hand, exploited the other minorities especially African Americans. The following observation from William Tate and others proves this point, they observed that:

The United States has a long history of attempting to use the courts and legal remedies to resolve racial injustice. However, by the turn of the 20th century the doctrine of “separate but equal” was the law of the land (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896). The separate-but-equal doctrine reflected the prevailing social temperament, a belief in the inherent inferiority of African Americans that made it impossible for Whites to see themselves sharing public accommodations with Blacks. African Americans in the South were required by law to use racially segregated schools, trains, streetcars, hotels,

barbershops, restaurants, and other public accommodations.... Moreover, African Americans were denied political equality by restrictive voting laws. The flawed legal concept of separate but equal resulted in the maintenance of African American subordination (204).

Critical Race Theory tries to study the whole system of oppression of which racism is central part. They try to study the whole network of racial relations from economy to the legal rights which affects day-to-day life as well as the upcoming future. They attempt to question the very structural foundation on which the American way or tradition is based and try to explain that these foundations on which some of the major institutions are created/based are biased and prejudiced towards one particular group and it prevents the equality and or the equal opportunities of which they are entitled to. These institutions are the law, society and culture as a text which creates authority, power as well as subordinate status for particular group as these texts was written or created from the experience and purpose of the benefits of the particular homogenous group. It does not recognize the other as the part of it or it ejects it as something alien. This very idea of exclusion which need to be discussed and these texts should be subjected to fundamental criticism and reinterpretation (Tate 197).

One more question arises here as to which medium and which system it should be judged. Because as we know the language, culture and tradition can be imposed and sometimes forced on minorities and for someone to answer back, one has to learn the language of the majority sometimes oppressor, but here it becomes more ambiguous because the language and its meaning of the majority or oppressor do not recognize language which is from outside (culture, tradition, work, language, meaning). As James Baldwin in *The Fire Next Time* wrote, “For the horrors of the American Negro’s life, there has been almost no language.” The language which is the source of liberation has also created the system for subordination. It is not that other languages do not exist. To think, that this language has provided the tool for intellectual development and promoted a more universal understanding of the world and life is hypocritical and wrong at the moral and ethical level. To use a language of oppressor or is different than creating or inventing a whole new language system with its meaning not diluted, yet providing more space for understanding and mutual understanding for both the concerned parties. As Hortense Spillers has observed that, “the project of liberation for African-Americans has found urgency in two passionate motivations that are twinned—(1) to break apart, to rupture violently

the laws of American behavior that make [dehumanizing] syntax possible; (2) to introduce a new semantic field to [one's] own historic moment" (qtd in Franco 117).

In this precedence the works of all those African American leaders has played a very crucial role in their struggle to achieve political rights and social equality for not only their people but for all. We should note here the words of Du Bois when he asserted that "We claim for ourselves every single right that belongs to a freeborn American, political, civil and social; and until we get these rights we will never cease to protest and assail the ears of America. The battle we wage is not for ourselves alone but for all true Americans" (*Teaching American History*). The critical legacy and conceptual framework left behind by Du Bois was of immense help for the creation and development of Black scholarship, leadership and literary geniuses like Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Langston Hughes and Zora Hurston. These are just few names from the long list of African American writers and scholars who have dealt with the concepts of Veil, Double Consciousness, The Gift, second sight, and most importantly what it means to be free? What it means to be equal and what it means to be African American in white America?

Du Bois' influence is seen in the present work discussed in this chapters, the struggle to live as free and equal American citizen especially when you are African American. For many, it is but a dream. The deffered dream of Life, Liberty and happiness is an American Dream not available to the African Americans. But this has not stopped Du Bois, or Dr. Martin Luther King or other African American leaders like Malcolm X from stop chasing this dream. The hope in constitutional promises and ideals imagined by the founding fathers of America has been held with utmost importance by the African Americans, they have tried to maintain and synthesize their African and American hyphenation into one and this has kept their struggle alive and active. African American's immense faith in achieving justice and constant action for establishment of social equality where everyone's political rights are protected and respected are true strengths of African Americans struggle.