

INTRODUCTION

A) Development of Black Autobiographies

B) What is Alienation?

Introduction :

During the early decades of 16th century, black Africans were forcibly taken to Spanish and English colonies in America as slaves. "African- American" is the term commonly used them to show the geographical-origins. It is interchangeably used with skin-color-based term "black Americans". After the United States came into being, black people were treated as much inferior and continued to be enslaved. In the sixteenth century, the Blacks were brought to America in slave ships. Nearly two million slaves were brought to the American South from Africa and the West Indies during the centuries of the Atlantic slave trade. Approximately 20% of the population of the American South over the years has been African American. Their descendants, for many centuries, had been suffering humiliation, abuse and denial of the civil rights enshrined in the constitution of United States of America. The United States has had a long and complex history of racial discrimination and resistance.

The slavery-based social, political, and economic hierarchies came into existence due to many reasons. Defeat in the Civil War severely destabilized these hierarchies. After the Civil War, the southern ruling class was compelled to adapt the new restructured, as well as reconstructing, economic system and race relations. The story of African-Americans in the United States is one of both immeasurable suffering and soaring hope. Racism as well as slavery prevented black men and women from rights of their citizenship. They were forbidden from schooling, employment, public transportation, and recreational facilities. Later these circumstances were changed by development of the black community, reconstruction, participation in the great military conflicts of the United States, racial segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement. Today, Barack Obama, the first African American, has twice become the

president of the United States of America. In 2008, he was for first time to be elected president of the United States.

The Black Americans used the weapon of pen to write their evil predicament and nurture the realm of literature. Their literature became useful weapons in their crusade and protest against social ills. Racial segregation had robbed black Southerners of their political rights as well as their economic opportunity and social mobility.

About the Author:

Richard Nathaniel Wright was the first African American author of novels, short stories and nonfictions. He was renowned for his autobiographical book '*Black Boy*' first published in 1945. Wright arrived in Chicago during the great depression, worked at odd jobs and joined the American Communist Party. Mostly the Communist party press printed his first publications. A seminal figure in African American literature, Richard has portrayed the dehumanizing effects of racism, which is further responsible for estrangement in African Americans. His stories usually center on alienated, poor black men who had no freedom and personal identity. Although some critics fault Wright's works as too violent and unabashedly propagandistic, such prominent writers as James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison consider them essential works of African American literature.

Like Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin, Wright got reputation during the 1950s as younger African American writer but when the militant Black consciousness movement increased in the 1960s, Wright's work raised and became more popular. His place in American literature remains controversial: some critics contend that his

writing is of sociological and historical, rather than literary interest. In the judgment of many commentators, however, Wright remains the most influential African American protest writer in America. *'Black Boy'* shows the color of protest, which is the first stair of his disappointment while alienation is the pinnacle of that condition. As a member of the Communist party from 1932 to 1944 he wrote the books during that period, reflect his belief in communism as the only existing agency capable of restoring humanitarian values to the earth. Wright's autobiography, *'Black Boy'* expresses the same Marxist philosophy. He discovered that even though a cell member of communist party, he was just as isolated, abused, and misunderstood as before. It results into his gradual disillusionment. "By the time he is ousted from the Communist party, however, Richard realizes that his very emotional survival may depend on his writing... Being cast out of the party reaffirms the sense of alienation; he is now thoroughly convinced that he will never find a place where he is accepted..." He finally left the party and dedicated all of his time to writing. (Smith, Valerie. 1993: 433.)

Wright clearly fathered the Negro protest novel and helped to establish a new one: an exploration of naturalism using the American Negro as his subject. In the *'Black Boy'*, he exposes all the unresolved issues that still haunt black and white Americans. This novel is a chronicle of alienation, not only from white society, but from Wright's own people. This novel protests the human condition of Blacks and reflects the individual's effort to overcome the human condition that resulted into sorrow and despair.

Herewith, Researcher wants to find how Richard Wright, a prominent Black American writer has faced alienation in White society as well as in his own family too. It is an attempt to study the contemporary White class with reference to his

autobiography '*Black Boy- A Record of Childhood and Youth*'. A blend of textual, autobiographical, sociological approaches is used in this study.

About the '*Black Boy*':

The title of this book is more apt and convenient to say what exactly the author wants to convey through his autobiographical work. It is a story, of a young Negro boy, describes his early life from Mississippi to Chicago, from the South to the North and his troubles in a majority of White society.

'*Black Boy*' has been called a masterpiece. It is an autobiographical novel based on Richard's experiences growing in the South and North America and also it is the quest of a sensitive mind for self discovery. The book recounts Wright's experiences as a youth in the South. In this sense, it becomes a journey of a young intelligent black boy from innocence to experience where he individually witnesses the tragic realities from his childhood to manhood in particular time and space.

'*Black Boy*' is a record, '*a record of childhood and youth*' (subtitle) and not the fantasies of the culture hence all life depicted here is such a brutal, corrosive though surprising and unbelievable it is a true picture of black life. Ralf Ellison stated that Richard Wright's '*Black Boy*' is also "an autobiographical catastrophe expressed lyrically." (Ellison, 1966:90). It is the medium in which "thousands of negroes will for the first time see their destiny in public print." (Ellison, 1966:104).

Richard Wright attacked on both white suppressions and the submissive nature of members of his own race in his works. He rebukes his strict religious upbringing, reprimands blacks for their servile response to racial subjugation and whips out against society. He was astonished by their too submissive nature to curb their living. His interactions with other Blacks in the South often leave him frustrated

with both himself and others. After one incident, he states: "I walked home slowly, asking myself what on earth was the matter with me, why I never seemed to do things as people expected them." (Wright, 2006:143). The only way to survive as a black man in that time was to move to the North. Richard also very well knew this reality. He writes; "The North symbolized to me all that I had not felt and seen; it had no relation whatever to what actually existed. Yet, by imagining a place where everything was possible, I kept hope alive in me." (Wright, 2006:168). This hope follows him everywhere, and although he does not understand the environment he is forced to endure living in during his youth, it makes him believe that at some point he will be able to live in an environment that is comprehensible to him.

Wright says that, "After I had outlived the shocks of childhood, after the habit of reflection had been born in me, I used to mull over the strange absence of real kindness in Negroes, how unstable was our tenderness, how lacking in genuine passion we were, how void of great hope, how timid our joy, how bare our traditions, how hollow our memories, how lacking we were in those intangible sentiments that bind man to man, and how shallow was even our despair..."(Wright, 2005: 45). He was almost wasted due to broken in spirit in the white supreme society and his family members who were responsible to spoil him in his small age of six when he already became a drunkard once in the street and he fought constantly either with his family members or with the society. He finally found his outlet in writing. At the end of the book, he decided that there was nothing he could ever do to improve his life in the South and committed to moving to Chicago to pursue his art. His own quest to escape the suffocating world of his childhood and find a place where he could freely exercise his individuality, creativity, and integrity was ultimately successful.

Life in the South was intensely alienating for young Richard. He grew up in an environment of poverty, violence, and constant hunger. His physical punishments and frequent quarrels with the family are the major reasons behind his aloofness from his family. It results into his self-alienation. His formal schooling frequently interrupted as he moved from town to town and ended when he was seventeen. At every turn, his desire to communicate was stunted or suppressed whether by family members who insisted him to be quiet or by teachers who harassed and mocked him. He was surrounded by people he considered contemptibly ignorant, people who willingly allowed their lives to be restricted by tradition and authority no matter how illegitimate or self-destructive whether they were racist Whites or passive, uncompassionate Blacks, his fellow southerners viewed Richard's independence and intelligence with suspicion. They scorned and humiliated him for the poverty of his family. It resulted into his social alienation.

A] Development of Black Autobiography:

Stephen Butterfield states, “to find the heart of autobiography in American literature, we must turn to the work of black writers.” (Butterfield, 1974: 284). Because, Both White and Black literature began with autobiographical accounts in United States but comparatively black writing had something that was not present in white colonial journals. That something is the struggle. Every writer had to struggle but the black struggle is different. This struggle is to gain identity rubbed deliberately by social order. Though Black autobiographies are mirrors or reflection of their lives; it is a bid for freedom, hope to crack the shell of slavery and exploitation. It is not only the exhibition of reality but also the disclosure of white deeds, monster of deprivation and racism, suppression and supremacy. The nature of the experiences of the Blacks in America is too terrible, frightening and disgusting to be considered real.

Autobiography is an account of a person’s life written or otherwise recorded by that person. Autobiography has been, through the ages, one of the most effective forms of human protest be it religious, political, or personal. It is a means to share one’s history and culture with others. The production of autobiography opens a venue for individuals to examine how the thing their parents taught them, their formal education, cultural variations and life experiences. All affect who they are and how they perceive, react to and interact with others. An autobiography allows others to have a better understanding of the writer. Therefore, it is a valuable tool to convey one’s own life as it is that provides knowledge. An autobiography is not only the experience of the author but it is the interpretation, examination and creation of the life where author wants to show the importance of his life. It contains objective facts as well as subjective awareness. It is dialectic between what you wish to become and what society has determined you are.

Richard Wright has written his autobiography when he was just thirty-six-year-old. Normally people write their life stories when they feel something, or something touches to their mind and they want to tell or compelled by a necessity to express those so personal, so emotional things to the external world. Autobiographies of those people provide various ideas, about life as a result the attempt of portraying the life nurtures those ideas. Since his childhood, Wright felt something, which pulled him to create '*Black Boy*' in his young age. Very few writers wrote their autobiography in their young age. George Moore's, published in 1888 '*Confessions of a Young Man*' is a fictionalized autobiographical account of his days in Paris, and a pioneering work in the realm of fictional autobiography and James Joyce's '*A portrait of Artist as a Young Man*' (1916) are some instances. James Joyce was literally influenced by Moore. To write a life story is nothing but the driving desire to communicate the views and visions about life and living.

Black autobiographies or any good autobiography affirms the potential worth and tells the true story of someone who has traveled the different path.

The history of Afro-American autobiographies is long and full. There were almost four hundred and seventeen works written between the period of 1865 and 1973. It indicates that Black Americans felt that the autobiography is an effective means for communicate their views and experiences in the society and about the society as well as their relations with the society.

The institution of slavery in the United States was a site of unimaginable physical, emotional, and spiritual cruelty, justified by greed and racism, and sanctioned by religion, philosophy, and the law. Its very existence betrayed the contradictions at the heart of national identity and consciousness. It is thus little

wonder that it has compelled a rich, challenging, and demanding body of cultural products, from sorrow songs and work songs, to the narratives written by individuals who had emerged from a system that denied them literacy.

The problem of the historicity of early Afro-American autobiography, and in particular the slave narrative, has been debated for decades. According to William L. Andrews, “Led by Ulrich B. Phillips, the first historian of American slavery regarded slave narratives as merely an arm of abolitionist propaganda, strong in righteous indignation but weak in factual substance.” Further Andrews states that, “The scholars like Eugene Genovese and John W. Blassingame denied that the slavery could be fully understood apart from the perspective of its victims.” (Andrews, 1999: 232). It resulted into publication of number of valuable studies giving importance to the slave narratives as the reliable historical documents. Then after writing of autobiography became an attempt to open a discourse with the white world on the questions of slavery, black identity, etc.

Autobiography of Black people in America was originally in the form of slave narrative. The period between 1831 and 1895 is considered as the period of slave narratives in the realm of black literature. In eighteenth and nineteenth century, thousands of former slaves wrote their life stories of escape from bondage into freedom. Those are nothing but the ‘Slave narratives’. The slave narrative was first printed in 1705. In the 1930’s it was further expanded by 2000 oral narratives. In both the written and the oral autobiographies, the individual discovers himself as a member of the suffering humanity. Thus, in the Black autobiographies, the voice of the single individual synthesizes the tone of the community. The first slave narrative was the two-volume *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano; or, Gustavus*

Vassa, the African, Written by himself (1789), became an international best-seller which traces Equiano's career from boyhood in West Africa, through the dreadful transatlantic Middle Passage, to eventual freedom and economic success as a British citizen. Booker t. Washington's *'Up from Slavery'* (1901) is considered as the last true slave narrative.

The slave narrators gave us eyewitness accounts of their lives in old South filled with a lot of miseries. Negroes were sold at inflated prices to customers used to work in the fields, at the home. If no market existed for them, they might be turned out to starve in the woods, or literally thrown in the garbage can. Sometimes slave was slain in broad daylight, before eyewitnesses, and his body was left in the gutter to be picked by trash collection for next day. Slaves had no rights of living as a common citizen of America. Their standards of living were sometimes below that of the cows or chickens. Not a single word or a smile was allowed to them at a wrong time, which would result into a beating to death or to cripple for life. They were whipped, underclothed, overworked, departed from their families, starved, sexually assaulted, deceived, and betrayed under all kinds of circumstances by white society. The narrators of these miseries were among those thousands of slaves who had faced, resisted, and who escaped from this dirt. The whole slave system was responsible to create suppressive energy to make slaves ignorant, fearful and powerless to express their speech and thoughts. Hence, the rise of slave narratives was dawn in the life of slaves, which not only argued for humanity and fought against oppressions but also testified the mental capacities of the slaves. Slave narrative has shown the world what truth is and demanded equal rights for black people. Gradually one after another slave narrative came into existence and little by little, they construct the framework of black American literature. Black autobiography then became a source for them to tell their

endurance as well as intelligence. The slave narrators have adapted the literary forms and tradition of white American culture. The major objective of slave narrator was to move white public opinion against slavery to undermine racism. It is the proof of their ability to master the literary material of white culture to open the door for black people to enter in the main stream of American society.

The audience of slave narratives was mostly a large number of Whites. This fact is taken into consideration at the time of narrating the life stories. Although many narratives were making melodramatic appeals for white pity and piety, the main purpose of author was to delineate miseries in the life of victims of slavery. Mostly slave narratives are following religious principles. Authors praise God, good works and denounce all types of sins, especially drinking, lying, stealing, fornication, breaking the Sabbath etc. But Samuel Ward, William and Ellen Craft, Frederick Douglass and John Thompson were writings as it is; all describe with pride and humor the incidents in which they successfully resisted tyranny. The moral assumptions of the slave narratives are temperance, honesty, worship of God and Christ, respect for hard work and truth. William Wells Brown, a fugitive who later became the first Negro American novelist portrays an incident of a slave who had never allowed anyone to whip him. Similarly, in the '*Life of John Thompson*' Ben, a slave resists the whipping of his overseer by counter attacking him in order to get rid of White terror. After that incident of intense resistance, he was never bothered. Solomon Northup has also given an account of his resistance in which he lashes his overseer until his right arm ached. In the narratives of Moses Grandy, refusal to excessive work plays vital role for better conditions for all the slaves. In this way, black slaves rebelliously tried their best to make self-identity in contemporary white ruling class.

As Arna Bontemps has stated of these autobiographies are “the setters of mankind and the yearning of all living things for freedom. (Bontemps, 1969: p.xviii). In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, slave narratives were an important means of opening a dialogue between Blacks and Whites about slavery and freedom. The slave narratives were designed to enlighten white readers about both the realities of slavery as an institution and the humanity of black people as individuals deserving of full human rights.

Frederick Douglass is an important figure in the era of black literature who had seen and participated in most crucial events like anti-slavery movement, The civil war, reconstruction, industrial capitalism. Like W. E. B. Du bois, Douglass published three autobiographies: the ‘*Narrative*’ of his life, published in 1845 shortly after his escape from slavery; ‘*My Bondage and My Freedom*’, published ten years later; and ‘*The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*’ completed in 1892, three years before his death. His experiences of and contributions to antislavery movement are depicted in the first two autobiographies: ‘*Narrative*’ and ‘*My Bondage and My Freedom*’. ‘*The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*’ is concerned to the Negro civil rights. His slave narratives follow the similar characteristic themes of contemporary slave narratives having respect to hard work, forceful resistance, importance of education. According to Stephen Butterfield, Douglass “is a superior, as a writer, to Solomon Bayley, Moses Grandy, Austin Steward, and dozens of other slave narrators, precisely because he did so much more than report what it was like to pick cotton and how he eluded the perils of escape.” (Butterfield, 1974: 80). Butterfield has referred Marion Wilson Starling’s ‘*the slave Narrative: It’s Place in American Literary History*’ (1946) where Douglass is singled out as the best narrator. (Butterfield, 1974:88).

The issue of racial discrimination and rights of Blacks became the foundation of whole achievements of the slave narrators. The language of slave narratives is close to the material facts of experience. The syntax is formal with loose paragraphs. The language and structure of the slave narrative is highly individualized. Some slave narratives are formal and elaborated. For example, narratives of Du Bois, some are colloquial like Langston Hughes'. Laughter and satire are two weapons or devices directed at some aspects of racial oppressions.

African American literature found and expanded in the written forms of work songs, gospel songs, and folktales and it grew again as African American writers published works of poetry, autobiography, and fiction, as well as pamphlets, sermons, and tracts, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the works of writers including Frances E. W. Harper, Booker T. Washington, Charles Chesnut, W.E.B. Du Bois, Sutton Griggs, and Alice Moore, Dunbar Nelson. African American literature acquired new forms of expression, originality, and vision in the hands of such writers. Works such as Washington's *'Up from Slavery'* (1901), Chesnut's *'The Marrow of Tradition'* (1901), and Du Bois's *'The Souls of Black Folk'* (1903), like Frederick Douglass's *'Narrative of the Life of an American Slave'* (1845), changed not only African American literature but America itself.

The germs of black autobiography are found in last two decade of the civil war, which is a slavery period, when the slave narratives came to full maturity and most of their authors were taking prominent roles in the antislavery activities. The narrator of the slave narratives were among those thousands who were resisted, strived, escaped from the shackles of conventions. Samuel Ward, William and Ellen Craft, Frederick Douglass and John Thompson, these all writers described the

incidents of tyranny to resistance. During the last three decades of legal slavery in America, from the early 1830s to the end of the Civil War in 1865, African American writers perfected one of the nation's first truly indigenous genres of written literature: the North America slave narrative. The genre achieves its most eloquent expression in Frederick Douglass's '*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: an American Slave*' (1845) and Harriet Jacobs's '*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*' (1861).

Like all slave narratives, Jacobs's and Douglass's works embody the tension between the conflicting motives that generated autobiographies of slave life. Slave narrator portrays slavery as a condition of extreme physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual deprivation, a kind of hell on earth.

The first half of the twentieth century was a period of deep alienation and identity crisis in black writing. It is also the period of search of the self-identity and place for the black writers. After the publication of '*Up from Slavery*', violent change took place in black literature, especially in autobiography. As individual author succeeded by virtue of their outstanding abilities in the white world, he is gradually removed from black masses. A kind of distance created between black author and his own people. At the same time, he was also neglected in mainstream of white Americans because of his color. As a result, he had to face alienation from both classes: White as well as Black.

Identity crisis is seen acutely in the works of W. E. B. Du. Bois, J. Saunders Redding, and Richard Wright. Black identity is also seen in the works of Langston Hughes, and Claude McKay where they reexamine the whole relationship of black writer and black people. Hughes and McKay construct their identities primarily as poets. The pride of being black is seen in the autobiography of Ruby Berklyn

Goodwin, *'It's good to be Black'* (1953). The black pride in literature stood as a defense against racism and racial discrimination. Authors like Washington, Du Bois, Redding, and McKay have been shown the qualities of blacks such as capacity to learn, hardworking, integrity, endurance, warmth and aesthetic sense. W. E. B. Du Bois has given account of his life in four books. *'The souls of Black Folk'* (1903) *'Dark water'* (1920), *'Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept'* (1940) and *'Autobiography'* (1968). All are mixture of personal narrative with political essay in which author gives primary importance to his being in the white and colored worlds. Writers like Booker t. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois were aware about the importance of higher education for Negroes to create an intellectual leadership of black civilization. The slave narratives give an account of twentieth century Black Americans' brief encounter with their past in the words of their ancestors. It was produced to show white people that slaves were indeed human beings; having same human qualities attributed to white people. Slave narratives were helpful to uncertain Black people, later generations to define their identities from the life stories of former slaves. The importance of slave narratives increased in twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Consciousness about self, freedom, and time to think about 'self identity' of the Black Americans cannot be over estimated.

'Here I Stand', by Paul Robeson, was first published in 1958, and reissued in 1971 and 1988. It sets out his thoughts about the pressing issues of race in the 1950s, and about the accusations that had been made against him. Paul Robeson, one of the greatest intellects and talents of modern times, narrated the story of the growth of his life. It is not full-scale autobiography but it exposes the hypocrisy of U.S. policies at home and abroad given the treatment of Negroes by its people and its government. He spoke out forthrightly and without apology about the persistence of Jim Crow in the

1950s. He also defended the vision of racial equality he saw in socialist societies. This cost him his career as an actor, singer, his right to travel and his reputation. '*Here I Stand*' touches on many aspects of inequality still affecting Blacks in 1958. Stephen Butterfield states that after publication of '*Here I Stand*', white commercial newspapers and magazines ignored it but black owned newspapers courageously spoke in its favor. (Butterfield, 1974:105). This fact indicates that an important change had taken place in the audience of black autobiography in second half of the twentieth century. Later in 1999, '*Paul Robeson: Here I Stand*' is a documentary film released on the life and career of Robeson.

In the autobiographies published in the second half of the twentieth century, the emphasis is on politics and revolution. The theme of black identity is common in over all autobiographies in black literature.

The "neo-slave narrative" has become one of the most widely read and discussed forms of African American literature. It is an extraordinary genre of retrospective literature about slavery that exploded in the last decades of the twentieth century. Neo Slave Narratives is a study in the political, social, and cultural content of a given literary form in which the novel is first-person slave narrative based on slavery cast. The first appearances of that literary form in the 1960s, Neo Slave Narratives explore the complex relationship between nostalgia and critique. African American intellectuals between 1976 and 1990 remember and use the site of slavery to represent the crucial cultural debates that arose during the sixties.

According to conventional wisdom, the term "neo-slave narratives" originated with Bernard W. Bell's study of '*The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*' (1987). This genre, which includes some of the most compelling fiction

produced in the last fifty years, has evolved to include texts set during the period of slavery as well as those set afterwards, at any time from the era of reconstruction until the present. They approach the institution of slavery from varied perspective and embrace a variety of styles of writing: from realist novels grounded in historical research to speculative fiction, postmodern experiments, satire, and work that combine these diverse modes. Beginning with Margaret Walker's '*Jubilee*' (1966) Ernest J. Gaines's '*The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*' (1971), Sherley Ann Williams's '*Dessa Rose*' (1986), Toni Morrison's '*Beloved*' (1987), and Charles Johnson's '*Middle Passage*' (1990). These autobiographical and fictional descendants of the slave narrative confirm the continuing importance and vitality of its legacy: to probe the origins of psychological as well as social oppression and to critique the meaning of freedom for black and white Americans alike from the founding of the United States to the present day.

Though Black Americans were slaves, the Black women plight was very dangerous as compared to Black men. Black women were often presented as fat and doting mammies or as seductive temptresses and jezebels, seducing conquering with sex. Submissive, unattractive, always busy in cooking, cleaning activities. The only way for black women was to write their own identities, rather than those formerly created and promoted by White authors, filmmakers, television producers and other Whites. The major reason behind writing the autobiography for Black women is the previous sources of the images were unreliable and based on stereotypical prejudiced representations and ideologies. This was very troublesome because generally, society in America bases its interactions with and opinions of, Black women and men.

First black women were not ready to tell their stories. In the nineteenth century the pseudo narratives of female slaves were penned by Whites. Letters by Phillis Wheatley and biographies of Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. In 1850s. Charlotte Forten, a daughter of wealthy black abolitionist James Forten, wrote a journal, which is a sensitive response of an upper class Negro girl. She could not sever the bitter reality of bondage of poor Blacks. She worked as a teacher for black union troops and freed the slaves. After that very few black women came ahead to tell their life. Ida Wells is one of them. Her '*Crusade for Justice*' published in 1928, which is a true slave narrative. Ida B. Wells was one of the foremost crusaders against black oppression. The autobiography is especially a document of the widespread patterns of lynching of African American men by white mobs. Wells-Barnett fought against any acceptance of these illegal and violent acts and protested about these horrors. She struggled with many people. Her struggles included arguments with other leaders such as the suffragette Susan B. Anthony, the civil rights activist W. E. B. Du Bois, and the African American leader Booker T. Washington. '*Crusade for Justice*' tells of her private life as mother of a growing family as well as her public activities as teacher, lecturer, and journalist in her fight against attitudes and laws oppressing Blacks. She struggled for Blacks and women's rights.

In 1970, Maya Angelou's '*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*' came into existence. Some critics like Sidonie Smith and Stephen Butterfield see similarities in Maya Angelou's autobiography and Richard Wright's autobiography '*Black Boy*'. Maya's autobiography, like Wright's '*Black Boy*' opens with a primal childhood scene that focuses on the nature of the imprisoning environment from which the black girl child seeks to escape. She wrote this memoir at a time when autobiographies of women, and particularly black women, had begun to proclaim women's significance

in the mainstream as thinkers and activists. Out of her five autobiographies, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is probably Angelou's most popular and critically acclaimed volume. Angelou's book conveys the difficulties associated with the mixture of racial and gender discrimination endured by a southern black girl. At the same time, she speaks to many other issues, such as the relationships between parents and children, child abuse, and the search for one's own path in life. The book is a complement to fictional works that articulate on the subject of racism, such as Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. According to Sidonie Smith, "The autobiography of black America is haunted by orphans, descendants of the orphaned slave narrators, who traveled through life desperately in search of a home where they can escape the shadow of lonely displacement." (Smith, Sidonie. 1974:125). Maya's autobiography is an instance for it.

Anne Moody is an African-American author who has written about her experiences growing up poor and Black in rural Mississippi. Her autobiography *Coming of Age in Mississippi* published in 1968 is acclaimed for its realistic portrayal of life. She worked by joining the Civil Rights Movement, and fighting racism against Blacks in the United States beginning in the 1960s.

Dust Tracks on a Road is Zora Neale Hurston's poignant, funny, and bold autobiography published in 1942. It is about an imaginative and exciting account of her rise from childhood poverty in the rural South to a prominent place among the leading artists and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance. As compelling as her acclaimed fiction, Hurston's very personal literary self-portrait offers a revealing, often audacious glimpse into public and private life of an extraordinary artist, anthropologist, chronicler, and champion of the black experience in America. Full of

the wit and wisdom of a proud, spirited woman who started off low and climbed high. *'Dust Tracks on a Road'* is a rare treasure from one of literature's most cherished voices. Ellen Tarry was an author of literature for children and young adults. Tarry was the first African-American picture book author. Tarry's *'The Third Door: The Autobiography of an American Negro Woman'* (1955) tells of her life in the South, her migration to New York City, her friendship with McKay, and her deep commitment to Catholicism.

Carole Boyce Davies (1994) advises readers, "Black women's writing . . . should be read as a series of boundary crossings and not as a fixed, geographical, ethnically or nationally bound category of writing. In cross-cultural, transnational, translocal, diasporic perspectives, this reworking of the grounds of "Black women's writing" redefines identity away from exclusion and marginality." (Davies, C. B., 1994:4)

From this, it is clear that the journey of black autobiography is from selecting and organizing self-experiences to fight a social system to the discovery of self-identity and from realization of black being to realizing the value of Black as a human being. The main purpose of the slave narrative is to struggle for abolition of slavery by creating public sentiment.

The Black autobiographies may be classified into various categories. Mainly one can classify these autobiographies on the basis of the gender of the author: Black men autobiographies and another as Black women autobiographies. Another way to classify these autobiographies is on the basis of the address note or the core subject of the autobiography. It can also be classified according to the time span in decades.

As far as the core subject is taken into consideration, these autobiographies are classified as follow:

1. Literature of Protest and Social Comment:

Richard Wright's '*Black Boy*' (2006) and W.E.B. Dubois's '*Dusk of Dawn*' (1940)

2. Harlem Renaissance Autobiographies:

Zora Neale Hurston's '*Dust Tracks On the Road*' (1942) and Langston Hughes' '*The Big Sea*' (1940) In '*The Big Sea*' he recounts those memorable years in the two great playgrounds of the decade-Harlem and Paris. In Paris, he was a cook and waiter in nightclubs. He knew the musicians and dancers, the drunks and dope fiends. In Harlem, he was a rising young poet at the center of the "Harlem Renaissance." as well as Claude McKay's '*A Long Way from the Home*' (1937). He wandered through Europe and North Africa, a period vividly described in this autobiography. Arna Bontemps, Sterling A. Brown, Countee Cullen, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ralph Waldo Ellison, James Weldon Johnson are some authors contributed to Harlem renaissance autobiography.

3. Contemporary Autobiographies:

'*Autobiographies of Malcolm X*' (1965), the result of collaboration between Malcolm X and journalist Alex Haley. Haley co-authored the autobiography, based on a series of in-depth interviews he conducted between 1963 and Malcolm X's 1965 assassination. This Autobiography is a spiritual conversion narrative that outlines Malcolm X's philosophy of black pride and black nationalism. In Ralph Ellison's '*The Invisible Man*', (1952), the narrator begins telling his story with the claim that he is an "invisible man." But his invisibility is not a physical condition or he is not literally invisible. It is the result of the refusal of others to see him. He says that because of his

invisibility, he has been hiding from the world in order to write the story of his life and invisibility. In 1976, Haley published '*Roots: the Saga of an American Family*', a novel based on his family's history.

4. Accommodationist Autobiographies: Booker T. Washington developed a reputation as an accommodationist. Accommodationist is one that compromises with or adapts to the viewpoint of the opposition. Booker T. Washington's autobiography '*Up From Slavery*' shows truly the germs of his accommodationist stance toward white racism. This text is in fact an illustration of the problem facing African Americans by detailing the problems of one. By showing how he has risen from servitude to success, he demonstrates how others of his race can do the same, as well as how sympathizers can aid in the process. No doubt, Resistance either militant or armed was the founding principle of the black autobiographies; '*Up From Slavery*' is an exception for it. In words of Stephen Butterfield, "One value that survived the slave narratives almost unchanged is militant resistance. Themes of armed resistance to white terrorism occur in every autobiography of this group, with the single exception of '*Up From Slavery*' (Butterfield, 1974: 121)

Prison Autobiographies:

Prison Autobiography is a different genre. The autobiography written in the prison or the autobiographies contain experience of imprisonment are entitled as Prison autobiographies. '*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*' by Malcolm X, published in 1965 and H. Rap Brown. '*Die NiggerDie!*' (1969; Reprint 2002) are prison autobiographies. H. Rap Brown's '*Die Nigger Die*' is an autobiography, which was first published in 1969. It is much more than a personal history, however; it is a call to arms, an urgent message to the black community to be the vanguard force in the struggle of oppressed people. It is subtitled as a political autobiography. Obviously,

“Negroism” is the main object of this autobiography. *‘Seize the Time’* first published more than twenty years ago. Bobby Seale wrote most of this book under the strain of being a political prisoner in the San Francisco County Jail in 1969 and 1970. At that time, most protest organizations, particularly anti-war and civil rights groups, were targeted for attacks by all levels of government. *‘Seize the Time’* was published while he was incarcerated and a defendant in two major political trials-consecutive, racist, political trials that he eventually won. *‘Seize the Time’* also about the co-founder of the Black Panther Party, Huey P. Newton.

George Jackson was accused of stealing \$70 from a gas station in Los Angeles and spent the ten years in Soledad Prison, seven and a half of them in solitary confinement. Instead of succumbing to the dehumanization of prison existence, he transformed himself into the leading theoretician of the prison movement and a brilliant writer. His work *‘Soledad Brother’* contains the letters that he wrote from 1964 to 1970. *‘Soledad Brother’* went on to become a classic of black literature and political philosophy.

Eldridge Cleaver, in 1968 published book *‘Soul On Ice’*, based on essays he had written in prison years earlier, cemented Cleaver's reputation as a spokesman for black power. Cleaver published several books, including the autobiographical titles *‘Soul on Ice’* (1968) and *‘Soul on Fire’* (1978), *‘Eldridge Cleaver: Post-Prison Writings and Speeches’* (1969), and *‘Eldridge Cleaver’s Black Papers’* (1969). Cleaver’s writing is not much self oriented. Evidently, Sidonie Smith, in his *‘Where I’m Bound’* states that “In a certain sense, Cleaver’s is no conventional autobiography. He offers no facts about his background, family, youth and so on. But *‘Soul on Ice’* joins such recent autobiographical writings as George Jackson’s *‘Soledad Brother’* and Leroi Jones’ *‘Home’* among others, writings that are not so much histories of

individuals as they are social analyses of American racism.” (Smith, Sidonie. 1974:119).

The main characteristics of these autobiographies are highly subjective protest against established social norms and on the victimization on the part of the central character. The protagonist or the narrator or the hero has to face many migrations, escape from their native place to some unknown place. For instances: Ralph Ellison’s *‘Invisible Man’*, Richard Wright in *‘Black Boy’*, Eldridge Cleaver in *‘Soul on Ice’*. The life described in these autobiographies is as good as dead. Because it is always at the specific point. The impulse of black soul is the main reason behind the tradition of black autobiographical writings analyzing mostly social issues. Because society is a place, a platform where blackness is met explicitly and implicitly to racism. Black writers such as Du Bois, Fredrick Douglass made an acute analysis of the effects of slavery upon both white and black communities. W. E. B. Du Bois subtitled his autobiography *‘Dusk of Dawn’* as *‘An Essay toward the Autobiography of a Race Concept’*

Richard Wright himself has grown in the socially deprived environment. In his autobiography, *‘Black Boy’*, he wanted to focus on the whole complex of American race history. Though he was not a slave, he has followed the slave narrative structure: self-taught literacy, anger, inability to fit the mould of a slave, discontent and despair, migration of the persons to the North. Therefore Valerie Smith says “Richard Wright, whose most acclaimed novel appeared over thirty years after Johnson’s *‘Ex-[Coloured] Man’*, built a career around telling the story of the black outsider, a persona that his autobiography and biography suggest may well have arisen from his own experience. In *‘Black Boy’*, the first volume of his autobiography,

he describes ways in which the black family, operating as an agent of the majority white culture, suppresses all signs of individuality and power in its youth in order to fit them for their subordinate position in the Jim Crow system.” (Smith, Valerie. 1993:433.)

All the qualities of slave narratives in the ‘*Black Boy*’ include the identity crisis, alienation, the restless movement, views on education and knowledge, hope for freedom, resistance are the foundation stones of the black American autobiographies. ‘*Black Boy*’ gives ideas about lives, problems, and the aspirations of black Americans. Modern black autobiographies such as Richard Wright's ‘*Black Boy*’ and ‘*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*’ (1965) testify the influence of the slave narrative on the first-person writing of African Americans in post-World War II.

B) What is Alienation?

The concept of alienation has a long history of its own. Ranging from the Bible to literary works as well as treatises on law, economy and philosophy reflect objective trends of European development, from slavery to the age of transition from capitalism to socialism. Intellectual influences, revealing important continuities across the transformations of social structures, acquire their real significance only if they are considered in this objective framework of development. Alienation is the process whereby people become foreign to the world they are living in. The concept of alienation is deeply embedded in all the great religions as well as social and political theories of the civilized epoch, namely, the idea that some time people lived in harmony, and then there was some kind of rupture which left people feeling like foreigners due to some problems of their selves or of others in the world.

There are various views of alienation from different angles. Many sociologists, philosophers have been discussed this term. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the term 'Alienation'. Etymologically, the word alienation is derived from Latin word *Alienatio*. It is the derivative of the word *alienare* (v). It means to "make something another's, remove or to take away". The word *alienare* is derived from the word *alienus* which means 'belonging or pertaining to another'. Word *Alienus* is at the root of all these words meaning 'other' (adj.) or 'another' (n.) (Schacht, 1970:1).

According to Collins Thesaurus of the English Language *alienation* is estrangement setting against, divorce, withdrawal, separation, turning away, indifference, breaking off, diversion, rupture, disaffection, remoteness. For Hegel, all alienation of man's essence is therefore nothing but the alienation of self-consciousness. Alienation refers to the estrangement that occurs in the relation

between an individual and that to which he or she is relating. This break in the relation occurs in a variety of forms, such as the estrangements between an individual and his or her social community, natural environment; own self or even God. As a psychological and theological notion, alienation has its origins in both classical philosophy and Christian theology. As a more specifically philosophical term, the idea became prominent in the nineteenth century beginning with G. W. F. Hegel and developed further, though in different directions, by Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Marx. In the twentieth century, the notion was further explored, particularly in the schools of phenomenology and existentialism, which included thinkers such as Martin Heidegger and Sartre. Christian theologians have suggested that the three levels of alienation (individual alienation from one's own self, social alienation from one another, and environmental alienation from all things) can be addressed by restoring the "image of God" lost due to the human fall, at three different levels of relationship: as an individual being who is true to the God within the self, as a social being in relationship to others, and as a natural being who lives in harmony with all creation. Although the idea of "Alienation" has come to be traced to different states of human existence including the fall of man, what emphasized is the estrangement that gives rise to anguish, forlornness and tension.

Approaches to Alienation:

In Hegel's interpretation of history, the notion of alienation is developed. According to Hegel, in its initial historical stages; Spirit is understood as divorced from the objective world and so suffers a kind of alienation from itself. In other words, to view the world as an "objective reality" separated from my consciousness is merely a form of alienation. Likewise, to view my consciousness as separate from

universal consciousness (rather than being a “moment” of it) is also a form of alienation. The overcoming of alienation occurs, then, as self-consciousness increases by recognizing that the external world is not separate from the interiority of consciousness. Over time and through the development of cultures Spirit realizes itself through higher forms and manifestations of consciousness and self-knowledge. This relation holds in the development of the social, political, and ethical domains as well. Ultimately, though, Hegel gives priority to philosophy and thought such that the highest unity and self-fulfillment occurs in the absolute knowledge of self-consciousness.

In the twentieth century, the notion of alienation assumed much attention, particularly in existential philosophy. Existentialist thinkers such as Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, and Kierkegaard think alienation differently. Kierkegaard strongly objected to Hegel’s rationalism. He emphasized the existential singularity of the human person, and argued that the task of the self is the overcoming of alienation through its own self-becoming. Kierkegaard too considered the individual as alienated, but not because he or she has not been properly amalgamated within the collective whole. Rather, Kierkegaard argued that such social amalgamation is itself a deceptive form of alienation. Many times, the uniqueness of the individual in his or her particularity is stifled or suppressed by the demands of the social structure. Here, then, a deeper form of alienation is exposed as the self’s conformity to social demands. Jean Paul Sartre goes with Marx’s theory in which he assumes man as a thing. Marx thought about alienation in context of only labour class. Heidegger put forward his thoughts on alienation on the basis of authentic and unauthentic existence of man. Heidegger analyzes certain phenomena such as “idle talk”, “everydayness”, and “the they.” Briefly stated, idle talk or chatter occurs

whenever a topic or subject is discussed in the everyday attitude of 'the they'. In other words, the subject is talked about as "the already known". If one has already known what another wants to say then that another becomes "anonymous authority". In such a mode, there is nothing new to question or discover for it has all already been said and so merely needs to be repeated. Heidegger contrasts this alienated or fallen understanding with his concept of authenticity. In authenticity, a more original mode of questioning occurs as a kind of openness or wonder to that which is under discussion. The alienation of idle talk is overcome through an authentic discourse of one's own, which makes the subject under discussion. As Heidegger says, "Idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own."

It is precisely making this thing one's own, in one's own self-understanding, that an authentic understanding is achieved. He points out that the man is not free to lead a life full of self-directed existence due to this he lives in unauthentic existence. Man has freedom to take decisions and have choices but those are interrupted in the unauthentic existence. As a result, man faces alienation.

Marx and the Alienated Worker:

The writing of Karl Marx was also greatly influenced by the dialectical philosophy of Hegel. Though Marx is a follower of Hegel, Marx puts the emphasis upon the economic, social, and political forces that are dialectically unfolding throughout history. In terms of alienation, Marx directed his critique at capitalism, which, as a force, alienates the worker in a number of ways. First, the modes of production that were being developed during the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century resulted in the alienation of worker from the product he was

producing. For not only was he isolated from the final product by being limited to an isolated part in the production, but he was also cut off from the fruits of the labor in term of profit. Moreover, the worker was alienated from the activity of the labor. Isolated to a mundane and usually repetitious function in the process of production, the worker's labor was restricted to a mechanistic rather than human employment. In other words, craftsmanship being replaced by the machinery of mass production. Finally, the alienation between human persons in terms of the employer-employee relation takes place. Here, Marx's general critique of capitalism can be seen in common economic terms such as "human expenditures" or "human resources" where real human beings are reduced to the logic of assets and liabilities, profits, and losses. Since Marx, alienation has lost much of its original sociological meaning, and has been used to describe a wide variety of phenomena. This include any feeling of separation from, and discontent with, society; feelings that there is a moral breakdown in society; feelings of powerlessness in the face of the solidity of social institutions; the impersonal, dehumanized nature of large-scale and bureaucratic social organizations. Marx had a specific understanding of the very sharp experience of alienation, which is found in modern bourgeois society. Marx developed this understanding through his critique of Hegel.

According to Hegel, through their activity, people created a culture, which then confronted them as an alien force. But for Hegel human activity was itself but the expression of the Spirit (or *Zeitgeist*) which acted through people.

In the first place, Marx insisted that it was human labor, which created culture and history, not the other way around; in other words, spirit was a human product, not the other way around. It is estrangement from self if faculties, authority,

dependency, and strength are projected upon isolated fragments of the personality instead of upon its entirety. If you expect a good rich life, the solution of your problems and difficulties to come out of only one or just a few of your assets, instead of from a harmonious, integrated combination of the whole, you become rigid in this overemphasis. You thereby neglect other faculties and are thus alienated from the self, in that an integral part of your entire self is left out of commission.

Alienation has become the central idea in modern literature. There are more interpretations elaborated by some sociologists. Ignace Feuerlicht has given three main meanings of this word; first it meant the transfer of rights or property; second the act or result of turning away from friends (estrangement); and third, insanity (Feuerlicht, 1978:3). It is the feeling of meaninglessness about life. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, "A term used with various meanings in philosophy, theology, psychology and social sciences usually with emphasis on personal powerlessness, meaninglessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation or self estrangement." (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1979:243) According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Alienation means "The action of estranging or state of estrangement in feeling or affection." (Oxford, 1973:219). Where 'Oxford advance learners' dictionary states alienation as "to make subject less friendly or sympathetic towards you. Or to make subject feel that they do not belong in a particular group. (Oxford, 2010, p.37). From this, it is clear that the alienation is the state of being withdrawn or isolated from the objective world due to disaffection or indifference. It is the sense of making something *other*.

The people belong to various fields of knowledge have been given their contribution to boost the concept of alienation and its manifestation. Many

philosophers, sociologists, psychiatrists, political scientists, have added something and had something to add to the discussion of alienation. Therefore, there is no universally accepted definition of this concept as its interpretations vary as well as the definitions of alienation express different thoughts. Many centuries ago, some of the principal themes of modern theories of alienation appeared in European thought, in one form or another. It can be understood from above that a variety of views of alienation have historically been suggested, ranging from Christian to Marxist views. All of them, however, seem to be able to put under three main categories: alienation from one's own self (Plato, Augustine, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre); alienation from one another (Hegel, Marx); and alienation from all things (Hegel, Marx). Alienation from one's own self occurs when one fails to accomplish an authentic self in the image of God, often mistakenly clinging to an "objectified" God. Alienation from one another means the failure to realize true human and social relationships in the image of God, oftentimes only sticking to an externalized structure or system in society. Alienation from all things is the absence of one's genuine relations with all things in the image of God, not being able to claim true stewardship. Hence, the key for solving the problem consists in restoring the image of God, damaged by the human fall, at three different levels of relationship: one's individual relationship to oneself, one's human relationship to another and one's relationship to the creation.

Restoring all the three levels of relationship is important, and none of them should be excluded in favor of the others. But, there seems to be some need for prioritization, because restoring the last two without first, realizing the first would be difficult. Thus, for example, it would be hard to solve the type of alienation in an unjust society pointed out by Marx without first accomplishing an authentic self in the

image of God. Existentialist religions such as Buddhism agree on the priority of the enlightened self before tackling the other two kinds of alienation.

Erich Fromm has given better comprehension of the alienation. He has classified alienation into four basic types. Those are as follows:

1. Man's Alienation from Nature
2. Alienation from Others
3. Alienation in Society
4. Alienation from Self

Man's Alienation from Nature:

The lament about being alienated from God or having fallen from Grace, which belongs to the common heritage of Judeo-Christian mythology. The divine order has been violated and man has alienated himself from the ways of God. According to Erich Fromm Man or human being can be alienated from nature in three different ways. One is by becoming aware of the self as separate from nature makes man alien from the nature. Second is when someone attempts to be mastered over the nature causes alienation and third is by being unable to fully relate to nature alienation occurs. (Fromm, Erich. 1992: 30-36).

The awareness of the self as separate from nature creates due to singularity crises. Though the primal self is united to the nature, subsequently some events cause the self to be experienced as separate from nature because singularity does not have components. If there are no components, the relationship does not occur. As a result, a new question arises from this awareness what the relationship of mine to that *other* thing nature. This differentiation between the self and the environment from which

the self originates causes the individual to be estranged. (Fromm, 1992: 33-35; The sane society, 1969: 120-128).

Fromm's second form of alienation from nature creates due to human behavior to make the nature servant or slave. Now man has acquired the reigns over the nature. It is said that Human being is now transcend nature. It is nothing but the supremacy over the nature. Obviously, the roots of alienation grow in this supremacy.

The third one is inability to relate fully to nature causes alienation. This is the consequence of first two modes of alienation. Because man believes unrealistically that, he is superior to nature. In other words, he cannot realize that who is exactly supreme to the other. This misunderstanding of realization of the true relationship between oneself and the Nature is inability of the man, which makes him to relate fully to the nature. Though the term 'fully relate to the nature' is somewhat ambiguous. Fromm has cleared it as the inability to sense the proper relationship to nature and natural events. (Fromm, 1992: 83-85; the sane society, 1969: 23-36).

Man's Alienation from Others:

According to Fromm, there are different types of alienation from others. He lists those as distinctness from others, relatedness to others, exploitation of others, and conformity. The recognition or the feeling of 'we exist separately' makes man distant from others.

Man's Alienation from Society:

Man's alienation from society took place because first man was living in small groups to protect from the savage nature and wild animals. Spread of education, easy supply of knowledge became responsible to break-up of man's bonds with his society. Industrialization, man's desire for profit, upper-lower classes based on their economic power split the man from his society.

Man's Alienation from his Self :

Man's alienation from his self is the self-alienation which occurs when man feels detachment rationally (cognitive) emotionally (affective) or actively (conative). Primitive man's worship of God created by him in his own image was itself an embodiment of his self-alienation. He was enjoying superiority over him by accepting subordination. In political theory, alienation is the Marxist concept that a worker can be separated from the tools he needs to do his work. This allows him to be exploited by members of other classes. Alienation from the tools needed to do the work meant that the wealthy factory owners could decide how much to pay their laborers and where the laborers could do their work. Low-paid, unskilled laborers now performed a job that used to be a well-respected and profitable profession, with profits going to the investors instead of the workers. The process whereby the worker is made to feel foreign to the products of his/her own labor. The worker is alienated from his/her product precisely because s/he no longer owns that product, which now belongs to the capitalist who has purchased the proletariat's labor-power in exchange for exclusive ownership over the proletariat's products and all profit accrued by the sale of those products.

Alienation is a timeless state of human condition. Ignace Feuerlicht states that alienation seems to be as old as man. (Ignace Feuerlicht. 1978:21). Feuerlicht discusses how the alienation finds its expression in biblical stories of Adam and Eve. It is the story of alienation from God. It is impossible for any person to live alone, without any group or community. Because man is a social animal. He lives in the society. Therefore social norms, conditions and controls affect the person's life. Such social conditions and norms vary in different societies. Sometimes psychological state and social status of an individual becomes responsible for person's detachment from

the society. According to some sociologists, alienation is a psychological state of mind where man becomes egoistical due to some passions. When social circumstances affect man's psychological development, he or she feels alienation that is called self-alienation. When the natural development of the person obstructs due to civilization, developing industrialization, society, or private properties, the pessimistic view grows in human mind, which results into alienation.

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