



## **THE DICHOTOMY IN HARRIET ANN JACOB'S INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A SLAVE GIRL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In the present scenario, many writers want to be a racist and most people would like to present the darker side of the Blacks, because race and racism are elemental and doomed parts of our culture and social history. Especially, people will become colour blind when it comes to matters of race. During the beginning stages, White people controlled the entire life of Black people. The novelist Harriet Ann Jacobs examined the contrast elements that happened to the Blacks and Whites through her autobiographical novel, Incidents in The Life of a Slave Girl which deals with the disparity between two different things were considered as Dichotomy elements. It also explicates the darkest side of Black women who experienced double marginalization as Black and as women in her novel. This paper presents the condition of race and gender under the condition of positive or negative outcomes.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

A Dichotomy means an idea or classification splits into two. It is a contrast between two things such as the two opposite ideas like war and peace or love and hate. It was fundamentally begun in 300BC and this type of idea may be started to present the categorization of skin colors on ancient days. Then the people followed the categorization that creates the group race called Racial groups. The term 'Race' became powerless due to its association with political ideologies of Racism after the Second World War.



In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, slave narratives were an important means of opening a discourse between blacks and whites about slavery and freedom. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, the accounts were given by the colonists that the American settlers in North America and the United states were captured and held by the Native Americans. The development of slave narratives was transformed from autobiographical accounts to modern fictional works which leads to the establishment of slave narratives as Literary genre. These autobiographical accounts included more generally in any account of the life or major portions of the life of an escapee or former slave, either written or orally related by the slave himself or herself. Autobiographical works are not only a memory but also maintaining and capturing the historical truth transmitted in accurate sense.

In general, mostly the slave narratives follow a plot which is common to all that starts from the initial situation, the slave in his master's home. The protagonist escapes to the rough country and narrates the struggle for survival and acknowledgment throughout his uncertain journey to freedom. Then these narratives were written on the second thoughts by freed slaves and their abolitionist. They advocate and focus on the transformation from the dehumanized slave to the self - uncontrolled free man.

*Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl* was written by Harriet Ann Jacobs who was a famous women writer during her period. She wrote an autobiography which was first succeeded in a newspaper then it was published as a book in 1861 under the pseudonym, Linda Brent. It was a reworking of the genre of slave narratives and sentimental novel and it is one of the first books to address the struggle for freedom by the female slaves and it explored their struggles with sexual harassment and abuse, and their efforts to protect their roles as Women and Mothers.

Through this novel, Harriet Ann explained about her life and how she faced struggles from her childhood to the adolescent age by using autobiographical elements. Her life was totally controlled and treated as a slave by the white people and even the following generation also faced the same. Harriet described it in her first chapter that her uncle Benjamin as a bright, handsome man nearly equal to white because of his grandparents. But his tone identified by his children in intense that his skin tone was black which reveals about the role of skin color and perceptions of race.

The whole novel depicts the life of both the Black and the White people. The Whites were considered as the upper class whereas the blacks were the slaves. The Whites were high in society by their status and considered by their white skin tone. At the same time, the Blacks were treated as laborer by the White because of their poor status and considered their black skintone as inferior one.



Painful as the separation may have no specific reason to mention about her mother's death as something caused by direct and violent abuse. It was the breaking up of families and keeping the living apart from each other that Harriet Ann really feared and criticized. The terrible thoughts of many enslaved mothers were the sale of their children and sometimes it takes place in real life. Moreover, the cause from time to time has its origin in another unchecked deployment of uninformed power. More than that it just belonging to someone else and risking in being overworked, a number of women in bondage were sexually abused and deceived by their owners or even both.

Harriet was aware that speaking plainly about this oppression would make other people judge and condemn what she had done. She accepted this possibility and also made clear to her readers, especially the female audience, that while she was a woman like them, many facts of life were not the same: "You never knew what it is to be a slave; to be entirely unprotected by law or tradition; to have the laws reduce you to the condition of a chattel, entirely subject to the will of another." She attempted to create a bond of independence across class and race.

She struggled for freedom from the bondage of slavery during the middle of the nineteenth century. It depicts a black woman's resistance against the white hegemony and her almost supernatural efforts to free herself and her children from enslavement. But in the intricate weave of the narrative is also woven the story of the white women of the antebellum south as well as the north.

In the novel, Harriet described about the relationship between Linda and Mrs. Flint is an important instrument for understanding the status of both the women, the black as well as the white during the times of slavery. These complex relationship between the black and the white women and between the white men and the white women are further depicted is shown by Jacobs that how both black and white are dependent on the mercy of the Patriarchal system that enables white men to exercise complete control over their wives and of course over the black slave women. The wives like Mrs. Flint would rather torture their female slaves and vent their anger on them rather than confront their husbands for their sexual promiscuity. They would tolerate their husband's behavior for they had no options of coming out of the trustless marriages and divorces which was being a social taboo.

Even slavery destroys the notion of a black family, the white family itself does not go undamaged white wives has to accept patriarchy and put up with their husband's adultery in the slave quarters, while white children grow up watching scenes of violent abuse and as adults repeat the patterns they have been taught.

Although in the end ultimately Mrs. Bruce purchases Linda's freedom, demonstrating not only her unconditional committed to Linda's welfare, but also her dedication to the principle

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of freedom. In the novel compelling true story about the physical and psychological oppression of the black slave women in the south. It also deals with a story that breaks many myths about the southern White women as well as it inspired many people.

## REFERENCE

Jacobs, Ann Harriet. *Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Newyork: Cosimo Classics.2001.