Chapter I

Introduction

African American literature is written by, about and for African Americans. These writings are produced by the Africans who live in America after the end of British colonization in Africa. The African literary writings were born out of the lineage of the original slaves who were brought out of Africa. Due to their race, culture and submissive traits, they were compelled to be enslaved. These bond slaves served the Americans in various ways. The Black Americans were only a racial or ethnic group brought down from Africa to America against their will. The Black Americans were transformed into newer Americans, as their cultural heritage was substantially on American soil. Various cruelties and atrocities were done to African Americans. The slaves were usually amply fed with low-quality food, their housing were of low standards quite worse than the European peasants or workers. The slaves had to depend on the slave owners for their food, clothing and also for organizing their daily lives and conditions. Moreover the
children of the slaves were taken away from their parents and were sold. Husbands and wives were forcibly separated by the slave owners. These atrocities made the blacks to yearn for emancipation and it was reflected in the writings of African Americans.

The early African American literature was mostly in autobiographical spiritual narrative style. It was during the Harlem Renaissance, literature and art began to evoke self-expression. The slaves were underestimated by the slave owners and they felt that they were incapable of mastering the arts and science. One of the white philosophers, David Humes suspects “Negroes... to be naturally inferior to the whites” without “ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts no science” (Of Love and Dust, 9). The early African Americans through their writings proved that they were also capable to create literature equal to that of the white community. The writings of this period were creative, but equipped with misery. The Blacks lent out their emotion through their writings. Even though they produced creative work of art, they struggled for recognition as authors. As there were lots of white reading public, the black writers had lots of resistance to depict themselves, their craft and their
culture too. They had to maintain the position as African Americans and wanted to establish their individuality among the whites. Oral tradition had contributed a lot to African Americans' culture. The ballad, the blues, the church songs, sermons, stories and hip hop songs were a part of the oral tradition, which was not written down as literate, but because an expression of the blacks. They have their own style which is quite notable, but lack of grammar could be seen even now in the early African Americans' writings. During the late 1930s, the Black writers not only imitated the vernacular but also improvised it. Few Black writers who used the vernacular to improvise literature were Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, Thillis Wheatley, Olaudah Equiano, David Walker and James M. Whitfield. Early African American writers challenged the dominant culture through their writings. The blacks were incapable of fighting physically but they tactfully opposed the whites through their writings. The apprehension did not hinder the earliest African Americans' writers and they proved that even the Blacks possessed a civilized mind and had the capacity to express their emotions through literature. The notable turning point in African Americans' literature was during
the Harlem Renaissance. Even though the Blacks produced their own way of representing various things, it was only read by the other Blacks, but with the rise of the Renaissance, their literature was observed by the black people. They also performed the black fine art and these works were also absorbed by the American culture.

The African Americans’ creativity was blooming in Harlem, New York and also in other metropolises during 1920s. Even though poverty and racism are juxtaposed, music, art, dance and literature were quite innovative. There were also other political parties such as the National Association for the advancement of coloured people, the National urban league and the Universal Negro Improvement Association. The periodicals such as The Messenger, opportunity and Negro would play a major part to elevate the Black Americans. These writings initiated great interest so that the literary and artistic tradition could take pride in their work. These black writers imitated the styles of the Europeans and white Americans instead of celebrating their creativity and pride. They also celebrated their black culture and the ties with Africa.
Literary writings from 1940 to 1960 were based on realism, naturalism and modernism. Realism refers to the faithful reproduction of reality while naturalism refers to franker, harsher treatment of reality, whereas modernism denotes a break with purely representational aesthetics with the familiar functions of language and convention of forms. The writers during the period took a different approach to their writings. The setting of their novel was both northern and urban or cities like Chicago, Boston and New York.

The writings of this time were common in nature which wanted to rise up a social awareness among the blacks. Many writers lived during the Depression period whose writings were based on nonracial subjects, Zora Neale Hurston, who belonged to this period was labelled as non-Negro as her characters were white in a rural setting. James Baldwin wrote his essays in the protest form of writings. Ralph Ellison was influenced by European writers and his writings were of western modern tradition. There was also multiracism due to an oppressive relationship between African American and European American. The writers who had the traits of the whites were labelled as traitors.
The Black Art Movement which occurred in 1960s existed both at home and abroad. Civil Right Movement, Black Power agitation, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. President John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X as well as the Vietnam War, problems with Cuba were the other social and political discrepancies that occurred during that period. These were also reflected through the mirror of literature. The writers called the African Americans to unite against the white supremacy. After 1960, the African Americans celebrated Afro Centricity. This was shown through poetry, drama and fiction.

By the end of the twentieth century, African American’s culture was represented in theatre, television and through literature. In 1990, Toni Morrison becomes a Nobel Laureate and August Wilson won the second Pulitzer Prize for drama. The late twentieth century African American Literature had a diversity of African American experiences which was inspired by their forefathers and they were more complex and diverse.

It is essential to know about the history or the background of the African American who are otherwise called as the blacks. There are no traces of African
culture that linger among the American Negroes. Even though the history of Africa is not of importance explaining how the African were captured or sent to America, it is essential to have an understanding about their history. The continent of Africa is larger than that of Europe, but its coastal lines are not as long as that of Europe because there are only few natural harbours indenting its coast. The dense jungles, vast deserts, narrow coastal plains add to difficulty of internal transportation and communication. The consequence was that the continent had been highly fragmented and isolated the people. Moreover, there were more than 800 languages and they were divided into myriad tribes. The political and military vulnerability of the people paved way for their mass enslavement by the foreigners. The Arabs were the first mass enslavers of African Negroes.

More than one third of the slaves were in the Western Hemisphere in 1825. The largest number of slaves was in the United States in the Western Hemisphere. Only in this country, the slave population reproduced itself and the number of slaves increased naturally. Despite the other cruelties and atrocities, the average life span of
the American slaves was slightly below than that of whites in the United States during the nineteenth century. The slave owners considered the slaves to be invested and regarded them as the persons who should be safeguarded. The slaves were kept dependent on the slave owners and the leading slave owners created a predicament of perfect dependence of the slaves on them. The slaves were prevented from taking care of themselves, and were trained only to work.

Throughout many generations of deterioration of motivation little incentives were paid for their work. Even after the slavery system disappeared there prevailed foot-dragging and work-evading patterns. The slaves by themselves formulated the same patterns for their living. Racial solidarity was considered as the basic but the betrayal of the whites was unforgivable. Even the slave drivers, i.e. slaves who are in charge of the other slaves who authorized these punishments to the other slaves were not ruled out from these criteria. On large plantations, few servants, who served in the white houses, developed a kind of personal attachment towards the members of the white household, but they also had to
respect the internal difference among the black and the whites.

The slaves could find emotional fulfilment and close attachment only in the black world which was ultimately only for the blacks. If a slave becomes a pariah, it means personal disaster to the slave. Even though there was no official sanction or institutions to imbibe them, they norms of their community had their own importance.

The human relationship among the slaves is centred on the family. The slave marriages and slave family relations had no legal standing, since they lasted only for decades, but not for a life time. This method of livelihood lingered and persisted throughout the slave society, both rural and urban areas. A study in 1866 of the slave couples demonstrates that the majority of the slaves was in their forties and had been together with their partners only for a decade or two. Marriage was not taken seriously or terminated. Premarital relations and premarital pregnancy existed among the slaves. Sometimes one of the partners has been sold away and the marriage would be terminated. After emancipation, the separated couples searched for their partners for years.
The slave owners forbade the slaves, not to use such expression “my mother” or “my sister”. The black families had a surname which was passed down for generations in the black family, even though they knew that these surnames were prohibited and they avoided using it among the whites. Even after emancipation, the ex-slaves felt reluctant to tell their surnames and concealed them. They did not bear the surnames of the whites but was brought from the African ancestors. The slave community had their own customs.

Cotton cultivation was ultimately after the invention of the cotton gin in 1792. Slaves were pooled up on the south, since the soil and climate of the south were very favourable for cotton cultivation. Some parts of the country were suitable for the cultivation of other kinds of crops. Cotton growing was considered a classic example in the United States, but sugar was produced in Louisiana. There were also other crops which were grown and the whites considered the geographical distribution of the slaves to labour in the field of agriculture.

The slaves in the plantations or the racial ideology could not make a great impact in the fertile Mississippi
delta and also in the so called black belt, the rich land which extends across Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. These are also known as the Deep Southern States which have the most extreme issue of first rate of slavery and then later the civil rights.

Slave prevailed for thousands of years in all the parts of the world. But the slavery which emerged in America has a unique feature. Slavery was considered to be political and it was accepted all over by the leading moralists of that time. Few colonies banned slave trade, but the Britishers nullified it. There were lots of problems such as economic, social and military, which racially distanced the people who were in bondage and many Americans wanted to spare themselves from such problems.

Throughout the history, slavery in a free society raised issues which were controversial in the institution of the United States. There is a peculiar thing about American slavery. Firstly the slaves and masters were physically different. Secondly, slavery in a free society requires extreme ideological justification and finally the moral predicament of slavery was considered as an
institution. This fumed both in England and America, and it led to an agreement to ban the international slave trade in 1808, but this was in futile.

In the beginning of 1830s the fugitive slave narratives cropped up as a popular literary form. The African American literature was used as an instrument to raise voice against the injustice which they were experiencing and observing. The slave narratives were an indispensable tool for the black authors who had made an effort to put an end to the slavery. The act of writing exhibited that a black writer could bring out an eloquent prose and this paved way for free expressions on their own ways without the assistance of the white sponsors. Black women narrators also emerged during this era. Like Harriet Jacobs, Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman. These women writers brought out the underlying concept of women’s insight and their persecution in an effective way more than the male writers who failed to exhibit in their writings.

The first African American literary Renaissance was between 1850 and 1860. The commonest form of this literature was slave narrative. Civil war brought out
drastic political changes. Slave narratives could be classified into three divisions: tales of religious redemption, tales to progress, tales which inspire the abolition and to pave the way to freedom. The tale which inspires the abolition is notable compared to the other two because they have trends that have a strong autobiographical concept. Fugitive narratives existed in the post bellum era by the former slaves and also before the civil war.

The contribution of slave narrative played a major role in slavery, freedom and American identity which challenged the historical consciousness of the United States.

Slave narratives document the lives of slaves who live in the South of America. This has been increased in the 1840s and 1850s. They reveal the fugitives from the south and the struggle of the people due to colour prejudice in the South. The south records the reality of racism and the American ideal of freedom. A significant number of antebellum slave narrations were advertised in the abolitionist press. This was also sold at antislavery meetings among the English-speaking world.
Former slaves recorded their experiences under slavery even after the Civil War. This ensured that the newly united nation has not forgotten its threats. It also partly affirmed the dedication to the ex-slave population, which conferred to the social and economic progress. Post-emancipation slave narratives are portrayed as a kind of crucible. This was tested and proved the resilience, industry and ingenuity of the slaves. Henceforth the slave narrative argues the willingness of the Freedman and freed the woman, their totality of inaction in the port civil war social and economic order.

The Civil Right Movements can be termed famous movement which enabled the African American to access the opportunity for the basic rights and privileges to be a US citizen. The foremost essence of the Civil Rights Movement was in the 19th century. The movement reached its pinnacle in the 1950s and 1960s. The movement was on national and local cadre whose African Americans were accompanied by the whites. This is also considered to be the largest social movement of the 20th century. It also made a great impact on both the modern women’s right movement and the student movement in 1960.
The Civil Rights Movement focused on the inequality of education, economic opportunity and discrepancies in political and legal processes which were in a devastating condition. These were centred on the American south. The state and local government passed a law, Jim-Crow laws, in the early part of the late nineteenth century. The movement focused mainly on three problematic areas: education, social discrimination and segregation and voting rights. NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People) is the oldest establishment under national civil rights organization. This organization had many branches which helped to tackle discrimination in the black communities. It also played an important role at the local level. The nation was aware of the struggle which soared up high through the Little Rock incident. There was also another boycott, which lasted for 361 days. It was instigated by Rosa Park. These incidents led to the formation of SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) in 1951. The local black minister was Martin Luther king. He later became the central leader of the larger civil rights movement.
There was a big protest during 1963, Martin Luther King Jr, along with Shuttleworth took part in the riot. Eugene Connor, the city commissioner used police dogs, fire hoses against the protesters. This act which was not appreciated awakened John Kennedy’s administration the necessity for civil right legislation. After Kennedy’s assassination, President Lyndon Johnson manoeuvred the Civil Right Act of 1964 through congress. This was considered to be a great victory for African Americans, the outlaw disassociation in public places racial and gender discriminations in employment practices were prohibited.

Judith analyses the gender politics in Ernest J. Gaines: A Critical Companian by Karen Carmean - as it helps the Black Panther party who focuses on the black women. The philosophies were affected because of the importance of Black masculinity and Newton makes an account of it. Newton points out that “the Black Panthers would effort to translate elements of the individualistic, bad and often criminal, masculinity of the streets into self-sacrificing militancy on behalf of the black community as a whole. At the same time they would hold on to the more nurturing forms of personhood
that informed black, rural southern culture and the movement for civil rights” (55).

The SNCC along with NAACP branches organized local campaign to win the voting rights for blacks and also to put an end to the isolation of the blacks in public places. Martin King Jr. and the SCLC contributed to the Albany struggle. This resulted in a great failure and resulted in a humiliated defeat for Luther King Jr. There was also another movement such as Alabama Christian Movement. They also lead a struggle against the racial discrimination.

Ernest J Gaines is considered to be one among the important and influential southern writers. He is a highly celebrated Louisiana author. Ernest J Gaines, the award winning fiction writer, whose works often attribute to the region where he was brought up: Southern central Louisiana, the rural and small town. Ernest J Gaines says that he “came from a place where people sat around and chewed sugar-cane and roasted sweet potatoes and peanuts in the ashes and sat on ditch banks and told tales and sat on porches and went into the swamps and went into the fields that’s where I came from” (Lowe, 224). This
realistic writer’s childhood home has often been described as an ideal background for a writer. Gaines was born to Manuel and Adrienne Gaines on River Lake Plantation near Oscar, Louisiana, in Point Coupee Parish in 15th, January 1933. His parents worked on the same plantation as sharecropper where their forbears had been bored as slaves. Ernest James, who was called EJ by his family, was the oldest of the seven children Adrienne had with Manuel Gaines. Even though Gaines recollects many occurrences from his childhood in a clear manner, he seemingly has a little memory of his father who abandoned his family when Ernest was around eight years old. Adrienne continued to do field labour before moving to New Orleans, to support her family, in search of work.

During the 1940s, the great Depression dawdled in the south. Education and job opportunities were limited only to the Blacks. Gaines along with his parents and eleven siblings lived in the workers quarters, which was formerly the slave quarters, a two-room house without modern improvements. The water had to be drawn from the well, before the water hydrant was installed in front of his grandmother's house. There was no electricity. A lot of heat was emitted from the kitchen stove and the
fireplace. Adrienne, while she worked, left her children in the care of their great aunt, Miss. Augustan Jefferson. She is his mother’s maternal grandfather’s sister. Ernest and his siblings were taking care of Aunt Augustan Jefferson, a crippled old lady, a person who played a major role who influenced Gaines. Even though she could not walk, she crawled on the floor like an infant, without any complaint she cooked the family’s meals, did the laundry and ironed, and then she would crawl to her garden. She initiated in Ernest her love of the earth. She appreciated growing things and a lifelong admiration, where Ernest calls “What I learned from her” was a tremendous amount of discipline. Survival entails hard labour while life needs interlude; this relaxation, they would find in their evening discussions. Aunt Augustan’s impairment and her congeniality made their home, a place where members of the small plantation community could come together. They gathered on the porch steps, swapping news and stories. Ernest not only served their guests coffee or water, but also listened to their tales from an early age. He also absorbed their language. Gaines presumed that though he had melt many
people in life, Aunt Augustan had made a great impact
that influenced him a lot in his literary career.

Gaines grew up during the great depression. Just
like the other rural children, Gaines was thrust into
work at an early stage. He began to work in the fields
while he was eight, picking cotton, gathering Irish
potatoes for about fifty cents per day. After these
works, he was sent to cut wood in the swamps. Gaines
says, "It was hard and tough being the oldest child. I
had to go into the swamps to cut wood for the stove as
well as a fireplace. When you’re a twelve year-old kid
trying to pull a sawed for half a day, it’s about the
cruelerest thing you can be to somebody" (Lowe, 27). During
his childhood, he was exposed to narration of various
people. Even in his childhood, he was asked to write
letters to friends and relatives. Ernest Gaines learnt to
produce multiple drafts of his earliest writings, until
he got a satisfactory version of the story.

During 1945, Gaines went to St. Augustine, a black
Catholic school in New Roads. In 1948, Gaines joined his
parents in Vallejo. As he became fifteen, he began to
absorb the deep sense of community on River Lake
Plantation. In spite of the sense of communal differences, he was ready for an adventure. The path of his life changed as they moved to northern California. “Had I left five years earlier, I would not have had enough experiences. Had I stayed five years longer, I would have been broken — in prison, dead, insane... I left at the very best time to leave. I knew the quarter and the plantation and the small town. I knew the Catholics, the Baptists, the Creoles, the mulattoes, the problems between black and white” (Lowe, 279). Gaines believed that the precious thing that he ever did was that he left Louisiana. Gaines lived in a multiracial government housing project, where he became friendly with all ethnic groups.

In south, the use of the library was restricted to the blacks. Ernest Gaines, at the age of sixteen, had his first experience in a library, Vallejo Public Library, as he went looking for his friends and family. At first he evaluated the books, took them out off the shelves and read a page or a paragraph randomly. Then he discovered the fiction section, Ernest searched for people and places he had missed. Thus, it became a futile one. He liked the works of Willa Cather and John Steinbeck, but
the characters that the writers depicted were not according to his living. He was quite disappointed in the strained and stereotyped characters which he had come across. So he decided to write his own story “I wrote it in one summer, the summer I was sixteen. It was probably the worst novel, the worst number of pages that anyone could possibly call a novel” (Lowe, 59).

After his graduation at the high school in 1951, Gaines took up a course at Vallijo Junior College. It was free to residents. He was drafted by the US army and served for about two years. After he returned from Guam, he returned stateside. He utilized his GI Bill to complete the bachelor’s degree at San Francisco state college. He chose to study language arts and also paid attention to creative writings, “My minor was English, but my major was language art. You have some playwritings and direction, speech, journalism, a little of all the language arts” (Lowe, 195). He believed that his instructor “took an interest in me very early. They singled me out and gave me a lot of help. I was the only black in the class. There must have been about twenty to twenty-five people and I was the only black. They were very encouraging (52). Gaines published several stories
in the college magazines, “Transfer” “The Turttes” and “The Boy in the Double Breasted Suit”. Gaines took about ten years to make himself as a writer. Gaines was admitted into the creative writing program at Stanford University after he won the Wallace Stegner Award. As a student, he had read widely in the Vallejo Public Library. He learnt to read deeply and paid attention to the techniques. Hemingway, Turgenev, Faulkner, Chekhov, Flaubert, Joyce is the writers who deeply influenced Gaines in the construction of the stories.

The initial years proved to be promising by writings short stories. These years were replaced by a span of incalculable and self-doubt. At this time, Gaines drafted his first novel, “Catherine Carmier. But it was unsuccessful. He thought of writings a simple novel, the bohemian life in San Francisco, The Dharma Buns (198). Gaines says about this “within a year and a half or two years, I had written three of the worst novels that have ever been written by a published writer” (Miss Jane 32) Gaines did not even try to publish these novels.

Gaines decided to write about his native, Louisiana. So Gaines visited his birthplace for the first time in
1963. He did research into the history of the area, interviewed old neighbours and friends, while he stayed there for six months. He also took photographs of the places which lay a set in his fiction. Later he published these pictures in a photo essay which was entitled “Home” (1978). The published picture comprised of the double row of identical cabins which was the “quarters” in which Gaines family lived for about five generations; the one room school house and church where Gaines pursued his first six years of education; the big house which was owned by the plantation owner; and the place where the black field worked danced, drank, fought and died, the nightclub. After this visit Gaines visited Louisiana annually. He was also teaching at the University of South Western Louisiana during each fall term.

Gaines published a revised version of his first novel, Catherine Carmier; he also published his second novel, Of Love and Dust in 1967, three years after publishing the former. A collection of Ghost stories entitled Bloodline (1968) followed after publishing the two novels. Gaines discerned after completing his three books: “I was writings in a definite pattern. One, I was writings about a defined area; and two, I was going
farther and farther into the past. I was trying to go back, back, back into our experiences in this country to find some kind meaning in our lives” (Miss Jane 34). The most unique feature of Gaines’ fiction is the realization of the history of the relations which occurred among the different ethnic groups in Louisiana. The different ethnic groups comprise of African Americans of all shades, Spanish Geoles, as well as Caucasians of Anglo-Saxon, French and Spanish background.

Gaines vibrant and elaborate explores the history of race relations in The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman (1971). This novel spans a whole century, from the Civil War to Civil Rights Movement. Miss Jane Pittman was made into an acclaimed television movie and also incurred rare reviews. Gaines also won a Guggenheim Fellowship for the year 1973-74 as the novel had a great excellence.

Ernest Gaines’ reputation as a foremost writer of Louisiana region was increased after the publication of his three novels, In My Father’s House (1978), A Gathering of Old Men (1982) and A Lesson Before Dying (1993). He was made to be a great figure in the contemporary African American fiction. A Gathering of
Old Men was also made into a Television movie by the respected German Director Volker Schlondorff. In 1993, Gaines received the Book Critics Circle Award, for his novel A Lesson Before Dying. He also received the Genius Award from the MacArthur Foundation Wroth $355,000. He married Diane Saulney, an assistant district attorney in Miami, Florida.

Catherine Carmier (1964), Gaines first novel, described the occurrences in 1950s on a plantation near the fictional town of Bayonne, Louisiana where Ernest Gaines grew up. The novel pictures several major concerns of Gaines’. There are two most important conflicts: Conflict between the Geoles and darker skinned African Americans and the old culture of that region was diminishing to such an extended of eradication because Cajuns are replacing the machineries with that of the tenant farmers.

The setting of Gaines’ record novel love and dust is a plantation in Southern Louisiana. The novel deals with many subjects like manhood, human dignity and interracial issues. The next two novels A gathering of Old Men and A Lesson before dying have multiple narrators The
Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman can be added to a series of novels written by Gaines. The next novel In My Father’s House uses urban setting and described the relationship between black fathers and sons.

**Review of literature:**

The review of literature focuses on the view of the relevant critics on Ernest J Gaines' writings, without a doubt it is a review of existing critical literature. A consolidation of the views of the critics’ word helps the readers to understand this study. His works are not a usual appraisal of Ernest J Gaines; rather it is something different. One of the essential traits of Ernest J Gaines’ writings is the exposition of black emancipation. The researcher has made a close examination of his works to find out the interconnectivity between enslavement and emancipation. Until now, the critics of Ernest J Gaines have concentrated on manhood, race, gender, culture, his narrative techniques, and the poverty of blacks. But they have not scrutinized the emancipation, from the historical slave pain to black emancipation which is considered as the outcome of enslavement in the novels of Ernest J Gaines. The
researcher is concerned with the enslavement and emancipation of Gaines's novels, so that he differs from the rest of the critics. In this sense this study is a deviation from the critical works of others, and the deviation attributes originality to the study.

In *Modern Language Studies* (1988), the article entitled "Sacrifice and Redemption", by analyses Gaines's novel *Of Love and Dust*. The critic argues that the writer has written the novel in search of true love. Gaines's narrator is Jim; he is a friend and coworker of the protagonist in white plantation. Gaines Griffin, Joseph has seized upon the most delicate and incendiary portion of code, those that have to do with a sexual relationship between black people and white people. Marcus is in love with Pauline Bonbon in plantation as one of the free labourers. The critic promotes the love theme using Marcus character. Joseph makes an effective analysis of the novel *Of Love and Dust* "Sacrifice and Redemption", is preoccupied with the techniques of plot style and Cajun-black conflict in the novel. Gaines discusses the situation of plantation workers and poor black life, but the critic has not touched upon one of the major feature of Gaines writings the emancipation experience through
Marcus character. A study of from enslavement to emancipation in Gaines novels is a worthy critical endeavour, but the critic has shunned it.

An Invoice from the Quarters: The Fiction of Ernest J Gaines (2002), in the book the article entitled “The Fiction of Ernest J Gaines”, Mary Ellen Doyle; analyses Gaines’s recent book A Lesson Before Dying which contains selected verses from different sources. Contextually, this book is important because all of his fiction include even collection of works analysis. The book mainly focuses close reading and translating the oral form into meaningful fiction. The critic gathers information from various places, including an interview with Gaines. The usual thing is critical analysis, narrative style and technique of the plot because Gaines is an expert in first person narrative style. The critic is offering a variety of perspectives about Gaines’s fiction, and he substantiates Gaines as one of the finest southern black writers of the 20th century. The critic’s voices are more clear about powerful and contextual clement of his novels. This book is important because much of his fiction is based on the subject matter found in the voice from the quarters, including the theme of womanhood,
family life, love, romance, race, and black narrative technique. This subject matter is variously seen in *Voice from the Quarters* like other critics who write about African American critics. Gaines introduces many changes from one fiction to another. Many of the critics generalized that Gaines has portrayed only race and gender issue. At the same time Mary Ellen also analyses the same issues in a different way. But Gaines not only tells about gender and cultural conflict, but he also stresses the blacks to fight for equal rights. But the critic does not plug into a detailed discussion of the slave problem. His analysis does not have an in depth, seriousness in this respect. He discusses the writer’s treatment of the manhood and responsibility. It is a broad analysis, but the critics’ concern is confined with the poetic anthology only, and he makes only a passing reference to Gaines’s fictional work, not touching upon any particular trait of his writing including from enslavement to emancipation in his novels. The critic restricts her critical endeavours to a limited area only.

Gaines has treated the problem of black emancipation in his fiction, but many critics have made a scrutiny of the traditional traits of Ernest Gaines’ writing,
neglecting an examination of the black emancipation. Even the critics who have approached his novels did not make an in-depth study of black emancipation, and their study is rather minimal. The critics have avoided Ernest Gaines’s portrayal of enslavement to emancipation. To fill in the lacuna, the researcher has made the study, which is a deviation from often beaten track. The researcher examines the views of the critics who have a bearing on this study and the rest of the critics who have not spoken about the view of the transformation of character from enslavement to emancipation.

In The Southern Literary Journal, (2010) in his write-up entitled “Race and the Tragic Mode in Ernest J Gaines’s A Gathering of Old Men”, Raphael Lambert, has discussed some works of Gaines which includes A Gathering of Old Men. The critic says that it is his (Gaines) different narrative perspective which reminds us of the three unities—unity of action, place and time. Of course, the units are meant for drama, but he has adapted it for his fictionalization. His works become effective when the language and three unities are appropriately handled by the promising writer Ernest J Gaines. The title of the fine fiction is quite interesting, although
the title *Race and Tragic Mode* do not refer to any specific incident. The characters of the novel are constructed with revolutionary thoughts and attitude against the white supremacy and black slavery. Moreover the critic concentrates on the novelist’s humour; as a result, he finds Candy’s paternalistic values and Map’s brutality are being mocked.

He argues that Gaines reduces extreme tension on two occasions: first, the lunch break organized by Miss Merle during which the necessary sharing of good works as a pacifier and erases social differences and second the trial at the end of the novel in which judge Reynolds’ verdict reflects the chauvinism plaguing the community. The critic Raphael Lambert suggests that the title of Gaines’ *A Gathering of Old Men* is interesting and it is a different style of fiction about the black American who is living in Louisiana. By reading the stories from “The Race and Tragic Mode” one can understand that the title refers to a variety of forms of characteristic as a dramatic mode with different narrative technique. The critic serves same soup in different cups. The title is closely connected with the theme of the work as it deals with racial and gender discrimination and its tragic end.
The critic is unable to differentiate the works of Gaines from that of other writers of the African American literature, and also unable to avoid the history of the black race and white supremacy. But Gaines clearly and strictly tells another part of slavery movement, like a revolution against white supremacy and white law. Gaines has openly declared his statement to the readers through *A Gathering of Old Men*. He tells how black suffered from the slave period to the current situation. Gaines makes his readers think about the suffering of black people in south Louisiana. He has declared black emancipation is the only way to get equal rights in America. But the critic argues one of the roots in the big tree. Indeed the critic in his analysis of the article, *Race and Tragic Mode*, makes a detailed examination of the writer’s portrayal of theme, race, and tragic situation, different kind of narration and sameness of the stories. But the Raphael Lambert does not scrutinize the idea of emancipation in Gaines works, especially Gaines’ characters. It is a major lapse, but the critic does not touch upon it.

The present study focuses on how Gaines’s novels make the emancipation of blacks from enslavement in the
white dominated American society. In this progress the study highlights the evolution of black by signalling in the beginning of a social revolution, and the demand for civil right movement and finally towards an evolution of black solidarity for emancipation. The ensuing chapter commences the analysis of character under enslavement and the history of black slaves in Gaines’ *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. 