CHAPTER -V
CONCLUSION

The present research study is undertaken to highlight the exploration of race, racism, class, and gender preferences in the lives of black characters in black authors’ literary work. The aim of this study is to assess the racial identity in the novels of Dorothy West, Pauline Hopkins, and Alice Walker and to evaluate their places in the canon of African American women’s novel. It is an attempt made to evaluate their identity and dignity as true human being. It was necessary to study such authors and their characters basically, black women and their liberation that were under the oppression which is mentioned in previous chapters.

This study brings to light the fact that African American women’s novel is deeply embedded in history since the Negroes were brought as slaves from their native African countries and dehumanized as animal and slave. The history of African Americans is not good. It was the period where suppression and oppression was going on. Before this era, the Negro men were slaves but Negro women were slaves of slaves. This depersonalization was on the triple jeopardy—race, class, and sex. They had also oppressed economically, politically and ideologically. They had no political and had no dignity and identity as a human being. Numerous and various atrocities were inflicted and perpetrated on them as branding, raping, lynching, and auctioning as beast animals.
As mentioned in earlier chapters, blacks/negroes were caught in the oppression. They had not their own identity to live in society as human being. They were under the slavery and were living their life as a slave. Therefore to get the solution and remedy over this situation, Black women writers created the black aesthetic and revolution to ask the questions to patriarchal order. As awakening that one is oppressed because one is black and female. Black women writers are taken for this study to create such consciousness and make African Americans aware about their identity, status and their humanity to end such oppression.

While exploring racial identity in the novels of Dorothy West, Pauline Hopkins, and Alice Walker an effort is made to evaluate their thematic and stylistic innovative contributions among the African American writers is mapped and these three authors are assessed, criticized and evaluated in their right perspectives. This evaluative, critical approach brought certain comparative, distinctive aspects and features that were highlighted in subsequent chapters. The black writers who are mentioned above, projected themselves from an insider’s point of view. They have valiantly attempted to place the predicament of their race and gender in historical experiences. The present women writers are selected for this study have explored the struggle of African Americans and women victims who have faced a patriarchal institutions and inequalities by racism and sexism. This study focuses on the three black women novelists mainly Dorothy West, Pauline Hopkins, and Alice Walker with their innovative thematic concerns and techniques which
have achieved unique places in the fictional world of African American women and literature.

First woman novelist is studied, Dorothy West. Being the daughter of a slave father, her writing’s main concern is color and class. In her most of writings she highlights the issues of poor and working class people. In her novels she has depicted the women characters who are radical and raise their voice against the social injustice. Her writing deals with the voices of liberation. Liberation from racial, class, and traditional values which are quite harmful and a disaster for modern era on the way of development and betterment. She has created her women characters who are bold and outspoken. She has created such characters because she believes in equality of human rights. According to her, women should be treated equally with men. There should not be imbalance and discrimination between men and women. Dorothy West is well known writer among the African American women writers. She is known as foremother of African American fiction. She published her novels to raise questions of social justice. Her novels reveal the personal encounters with such race and gender politics. Black women’s consciousnesses, individual voices of society are the important aspects of her writing. She primarily stressed the importance of self identity and definition as part of the journey from victimization to a free mind. This affirmation of ‘self’ is the only solution to the problem or situation. She explores this journey towards freedom in the ways that are characteristically female.
Dorothy West’s novel, *The Wedding* is the story of a small girl, Shelby. She is black and belongs to a medical profession family. Her almost all family members are physicians. Shelby was in love with a man named, Meade. Shelby wants to marry with him but her family goes against her decision and choice. They wanted a man who should be from black race and his profession should be like them. Through this incident, Dorothy West has explored the racial conflict between white and black race. She wanted to state that how twentieth century is still caught in the racial barriers. Accepting her love and rejecting the barriers of race, Shelby becomes a true woman of twenty first century. Through protagonist Shelby, West projected a new modern woman who is expressive and outspoken, who believes in freedom of mind.

African Americans have been facing the problems of race and class since last many years. They lived the life of slavery. Being black, they don’t have their own choices in society. Choices are not made for them by the whites. Shelby is a character who wants to live her life in her own way. Though her forthcoming life partner is white and not belongs to her class and race but Shelby finds her true love in him. Shelby’s father, a well educated man in medical profession who had quite idea about it that, there is no any race and human classification on the basis of biology but to maintain status in his society, he Shelby’s rejects her demands to marry with such man. Throughout the novel there is discourse on perusing Shelby’s mind to do marry in their own class and race person. But Shelby sticks with her own
decision and at the end of the novel, she marries with a person whom she had proposed and desired earlier.

On the basis of such theme explored in this novel Dorothy West has shown that there should not be barriers between two races and classes. Instead of it, everyone should appreciate the nature of a person because race divides people in different categories and sub categories. Through racial difference people can’t be united. This message has been aptly curved in this novel to the readers.

_The Living is Easy_, West’s second novel which is a story of Cleo, protagonist of the novel. West has explored the world of Cleo. She wants her life to be lavished one. She is living in Boston society where white people’s attitude towards black is negative. Light skinned black Cleo marries with a black man, Bart who is known as banana trader. He has his own shop of banana. He is most senior than Cleo. West has portrayed the character like Cleo, who is very desirous to achieve things which she likes most. After coming in Boston society, Cleo tries to maintain her status equal to white people. Sometimes we find that being black she dominates her own family members who are black as like her. She invites her sisters to live with her. She wanted to give them a good life therefore she takes a huge flat on rent which was more than her needs and beyond her limits. She dominates her sisters as well as her husband Bart who is a common man. Cleo often shouts and hates him, calling him Mr. Nigger. She hides many things from Bart. She takes
benefit of his kind nature. She had decided to make her sisters’ as well as her own life easy and comfortable but she does not get success to manage all things properly. She becomes frustrate and goes under mental trauma. At the end, her sisters left her and went to their husbands. Cleo becomes lonely and comes under debt. Her desires were beyond her limits. West has beautifully depicted the picture of black couple and their complex life. Cleo is the symbol of modern era. She represents the black woman who has many desires but while acquiring it, she fails.

Pauline Hopkins is the second woman novelist who is studied. The subject matter of her novels is interracial elements. She has three novels on her credit namely: Contending Forces, Hagar’s Daughter, and Of One Blood, or Hidden Self. She has explored the difficulties faced by African Americans in the racist violence of past civil War American in her novels. She is considered to be the most influential literary editor of the first decade of the twentieth century. She wrote her traditional romance novels as a medium for exploring racial and social themes. Through her editorial work, fiction, and a substantial body of nonfiction that addressed black history, racial discrimination, economic justice, and women’s role in society. Among other topics, she emerged as one of the era’s prominent public intellectual.

Hopkins was an extraordinary author and editor, whose work, although popular, was never popular, was never fully appreciated in its time. The authors and poets of the Harlem Renaissance who prospered in the 1920’s,
such as Langston Hughes and Nella Larsen, Benefitted from the stylistic doors opened and the subjects in her writings explored. In 1980’s, a number of her works was popularized by literary scholars, and her historical value was solidified. In 1988, the schomberg library of nineteenth century Black women writers included Hopkins’ novels and short stories in its anthology in acknowledgement of their importance.

Hopkins’ novel, *Contending Forces* is divided into two parts. The first section of the novel, introduces the Montfort’s, a slaveholding family in Bermuda. Responding to pressure from British abolitionists to outlaw slavery in its colonies, Hopkins included agricultural production within a slave economy. The second part of the novel is about the freed Southern mulatto women, who are descended from slaves and migrated to Boston. She has presented the experiences of Southern freed women, who are free born Massachusetts blacks. She has created a Du Boisean character, Will Smith, a native born and college educated Massachusetts black man, as love interest for her Southern mulatto heroin, Sappho Clark. She was being raped by her white uncle when she was fourteen years old. She was abducted, raped and poisoned. Although she had been a beautiful girl, she was half crazed and ruined when she was found after her missing for three weeks. Since then she has kept silent about her past. Through her situation, Hopkins wants to show that how racial terrorism is there and we should stand against it. The second part of the novel broadly depicted on Will Smith and Sappho. Sappho was belonging to mixed race. She had hidden her past. Will, a modern character
who wanted to marry with her. He had desired to accept her. At the end, Hopkins has shown the unification of two souls. Will and Sappho come together. Though they were from different races unite in one race. In short Hopkins has aptly explored the racial unity in present novel.

Hopkins’ second novel. *Of One Blood, or Hidden Self* is divided in two parts. One African, one American that together solve the mystery of identity – unraveling the hidden self. It starts with Reuel Briggs, a medical student passing for white. He was belongs to African race but unaware about his identity. His self was hidden. Sometimes he becomes sensible towards Africans, sometimes he hates them.

Hopkins explored the notion of double consciousness. She inquired into African American lurked in their unconsciousness. The Characters in the novel, Reuel and Dianthe brought together by an incident of an accident. Reuel was a medical student. In his hospital a patient had admitted who was Dianthe. She was involved in the train accident and carried to Reuel’s hospital. Since she was unconscious and no breath was coming from her. Everyone thought that she is dead but Reuel diagnosed that she has been long and persistently subjected to mesmeric influences. She had no memory of her past. Reuel who has seen her vision before he meets her in a flesh, marries her before she recovers her memory. But he finds he does not have money to lead him to married life and decides to join in the expedition to Africa as a doctor where he finds that he was in the line of royal family in ancient Africa and he
is endowed with a supernatural power. Meanwhile, Dianthe becomes Reuel’s close friend, Aubrey Livingstone’s concubine and she is eventually poisoned by him. On the other hand Reuel gets information that, Dianthe, Aubrey, and he himself are the children of Mira, a slave woman who was raped by Aubrey Livingston Sr., Mira’s half brother. Among the siblings, only Dianthe owes the sin of incest. It is because women are the victims of incest in the system of slavery. Although Dianthe was born after emancipation, we can say that she is still under the influence of slavery. Aubrey Livingston Sr. was the planter. He had his own plantation in which many women were working. All were his slaves. Aubrey sr. exploited a woman, Mira. He maintained sexual relationship with her and raped her.

Showing this complex plot and story, Hopkins wants to explore the dirty picture of slavery as well as the desire of interracial marriages of Reuel and Dianthe but at the end of the novel, we come to know that they are brother and sister and morally they can’t come together as husband and wife. Hopkins has also shown the brutal history of African Americans through the character of Reuel Briggs which he finds at the expedition of Africa.

The third woman novelist is studied, Alice Walker. The new visionary novelist, Alice Walker has committed herself to explore the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties and triumphs of black women. According to her, earth itself has become the nigger of the world. Black author like Alice Walker has given the voice the infinite complexities of black women’s lives as creators,
leaders and mothers in African American literature. Through her writing, she expresses a unique form of oppression in discursive and non discursive practices as she is triply jeopardized by race, gender and class. Being black author, Alice Walker committed to racial issues labeled herself a womanist. Alice Walker in her writings exposes the global scope of the objectification of women’s bodies, while differentiating the racialized exploitation of women’s bodies under slavery. As a feminist, Alice Walker’s writing deals with the oppression of black women and men characters. She writes on social and racial issues. Her novels primarily focus on a new identity for black women and their self awareness. Her central themes like Violence, Harassment, exploitation, ancestry and civil rights movement are the essence and substance of her work. Through all these aspects, Alice Walker has become the brightest star among the black American women writers. Alice Walker fights against social injustice. She has exposed racism and sexism that affected the black women in America. She is one of the first black woman writer who explores the problems of sexism when most other blacks were declaring that racism was the cause of all ills of African American people. Perhaps the most controversial of her subjects is her insistence on investigating the relationship between black men and women. Black parents and children with unwavering honesty. Her most of novels’ themes are problems of black women, struggle against a racist, sexist, and violent society. There are two important stands in Walker’s fiction under the formally organizing image of the shadow. The first being racial violence and the second being black experience.
Alice Walker’s novel, *The Color Purple* is the story of a small girl, Celie. She narrates her own painful story to her sister throughout the novel. In Celie’s autobiographical tale, racism succeeds sexism as the cause of social violence in the narrative. The switch from a sexual to racial code, each of which provides a distinct language and a distinct logic of social relations, releases into the text different kinds of questions about Celie’s identity: the new information challenges what Celie mistakenly thought they already know about the horrific systematic sexual violence that seemed to be distinguishing mask of family life for women.

In the narrative of *The Color Purple* the first violation, rape, is succeeded by the second and prior act, lynching: a logic of equivalence is installed in the narrative that in effect makes race a synonym for scandalous, transgressive Afro-American sexuality. Both in the conventional link between racial and violence. In the novel, gender difference takes on the pressure of justifying and representing racial oppression. The act of lynching effects a transfer at the moment of brutal contact from one (the racial) system of oppression to another (the sexual) precisely the scandalous code that terrorizes Celie at the beginning of the novel. Lynching was the act of violence white men performed to racialize to invoke the context of black inferiority and sub humanity— the victim; the aura of sexual transgression is also always produced around the lynched by the Lynchers, white men guarding the turf of their racial and sexual hegemony.
With Celie’s anguished letters, Walker enables us to enter into the private thoughts and emotional state of her traumatized, guilt – and shame-ridden and depressed fourteen-year-old protagonist, who has been repeatedly raped and impregnated by the man (Alphonso) whom she believes to be her biological father. Celie writes to God because she is ashamed of what was happening to her. Celie discovers that Alphonso is not her biological father and that she lived for the first two years of her life as the only child in a loving family. The father adored his pregnant wife and we would expect, his daughter Celie. But one night, when she was barely two years old, her successful father’s store and blacksmith shop were burned and destroyed; he and his two brothers were dragged from their homes and hanged by jealous white merchants; and, when mutilated and burned body was brought home to his wife by neighbors, she gave birth to Nettie and suffered an emotional breakdown.

Alphonso rapes Celie and uses her as a sexual replacement for his exhausted wife. Walker has portrayed Celie as a traumatized and depressed survivor- victim of parent loss, physical and emotional neglect, rape incest and spousal abuse. It is one kind of her “soul murder”. Celie who has survived loss, soul murder, incest, physical and emotional abuse, has in the process acquired a home, a career, friends, and a lover and has developed an authentic self that enables her to live an authentic life. Through this novel, Walker has also shown the terrific world of racism and sexism. We can conclude her novel, The Color Purple in which Walker has elaborated the poor and black
girl who is exploited physically and mentally. Being black, she suffered and tolerated such a inhuman treatment by her own father and husband as well.

*The Temple of My Familiar*, Alice Walker’s novel, in which she has presented the saga of a black woman called Lissie Lyles who has taken birth in different races and at different times. Through Lissie, she gives the incidents of the physical horrors of the female slave experience. Their hair being chopped off, their bodies branded with pieces of hot iron and put on display as well as being subjected to repeated violation, physical punishment and endless breeding leading to death. In this novel, she has reflected the powers of relationship which call for remapping black women experiences. Her characters’ voices are multi-gendered, cross cultural and multi dimensional. It encompasses the stories by weavers, artists, painters, healers for whom art represents a means of wholeness. *Temple of My Familiar* is a critique on the human beings in the contemporary era which has to work through in order to restore a compassionate humanism as well as seeks a revisit to gender oppression. The novel also abounds in instances where the intersecting oppressions of race, ideas, and gender are highlighted along with desacralization of the environment. Walker has explored various incidents of racism through the various characters and their experiences in their past and present lives. It tells about communion between different aspects of one’s own personality such as between people of different sexes, races, cultures and times between different species or creations. Alice Walker brings out how role reversals took place and women were absolved of the duties assigned to them.
For author like, Alice Walker, the feminist struggle against oppression of black has become a part of the larger global struggle for the future of the planet. In short, we can conclude the characters from the novel, *Temple of My Familiar* are being exploited by the present social system. They are exploited and oppressed on the basis of racism.

While studying above mentioned women novelists, I found that Pauline Hopkins and Alice Walker talks broadly on the racial oppression as well as suppression of black women. There is the similarity in their themes and developing the idea about racial society. Their characters face these problems throughout their novels. On the other hand, Dorothy West, a prominent woman writer also talks broadly on the issues of race. Her perspective seems little different than Walker and Hopkins. She talks about race and class elements dominantly. Her characters face the difficulty of race and class problems in the so called human society.

Concluding the present research work we can say, in all human societies, people take note of and assign significance to the physical characteristics of others, such as skin colour, hair texture and other distinctive features. These features become socially significant categories into which people are classified on the basis of their own, not their ancestors’ physical characteristics. And in turn, this categorization elicits differing social perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards the different race. The term race is based on the premise of biological and physical difference.
In course of time, the notion of physical difference gave birth to an ideology of ‘racism’ that eventually resulted into an idea of superiority and inferiority. In ‘Racism’ all members of each racial group possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially to distinguish it as being either superior or inferior to other racial groups. The adverse effect of racism on a particular social group is nothing but a racial discrimination. Racism has been socio-political idea that denies and restricts ‘different’ people to accept opportunities and resources. This syndrome affects everyone. Therefore, racism has been a motivating factor in social discrimination, racial segregation that resulted in violence and hate towards all human beings. Throughout history, when an adversary is identified as ‘other’ based on notion of race, treatment to him/her is often more ruthless and brutal.

To sum up, like most of the African American women novelists, West, Hopkins, and Walker have placed black women in the background of historical experience. They have tried to highlight the issues pertaining their color, race, and gender. Taken as whole, West, Hopkins, and Walker trace the diverse experience of blacks in hostile environment of racism, sexism, and class oppression. These three novelists try to unfold a unique identity and dignity of the black women and to subvert the age old patriarchy. So these three novelists explore the race and racial issues broadly in their subsequent writings. Hence this study becomes valuable and innovative in the literary world of African American literature.