Chapter – II

Black American Literature and its Adaptation of the Bildungsroman as a Literary Genre

In the early 19th century Black writers began to thrive in the new intellectually charged atmosphere. It was in the 1920’s numerous of their works which was acknowledged critical praises in literary mainstream circles and popular acclaim among both Black and white audience. The outpour of literature which originally dubbed the New Negro movement came to be known as Harlem Renaissance. The politics and ideals that were born from this era served as an inspiration for the African American artists for years together. It also functioned as a basis for the civil rights movement of the 1960’s. The kind of literary themes that gained prominence during that time were diverse and occasionally conflicting. They were usually concerned with promoting racial pride and embraced Pan - American sentiment. Most of their works were initiated to be addressing the frame of mind of alienation and marginality which were experienced by minorities in the American society. It was a rich and vibrant tradition at the same time it is kind of a complicated marriage between those of progressive ideas with that of traditional custom and folklore of African American tradition.
Harlem Renaissance is the most influential movement in African American literary history, embarrassing literary, musical, theatrical and visual arts. They are made participants of which they sought to reconceptualise the race called “the Negro” apart from the demigods’ whites who stereotyped and also influenced the Black peoples’ relationship to their heritage and thence from them to each other. They also wanted to break and free themselves of Victorian moral values bourgeois shaming their lives that might, as seen by whites, reinforce, racist beliefs. Though they were never influenced or dominated by a particular school of thought which would be rather characterized by way of intense debate whereby the movement laid the groundwork for which all the later African American literature that had an enormous impact on the subsequent Black literature and consciousness worldwide. Most often the Renaissance period upheaval was confirmed to the Harlem district of New York City.

Harlem has also been successful in attracting a remarkable concentration of intellect and talent which also served as a symbolic capital of the cultural awakening. In fact the interest in Black heritage also coincided with the efforts to define on American culture which is distinct from that of European characterized by the ethnic pluralism as well as democratic ethos. The concept of cultural pluralism was also inspired by the nations which were developed by the United States to be a novel kind in which diverse cultures in a nation should be developed side by side in perfect harmony rather than just be “melted” together to form into an evolving civilization.
The collective foundations of this crusade included the Great migration of African Americans from the rural to urban spaces and from line South to the North. It also included the dramatic rise of the level of literacy, the creation of the national organization was dedicated to pressing African American civil nights, uplifting the race and also opening socioeconomic opportunities, thereby resulting in developing a race pride. Black expatriates and excites who came from the Caribbean and from Africa crossed paths in a metropolis such as New York City and Paris after World War I. They did have an invigorating influence on each other that gave the broader “Negro Renaissance” as it was well known then, in a profoundly important international cast.

The Renaissance had countless sources in Black culture, primarily in the United States and the Caribbean which established itself well beyond Harlem. As the symbolic capital of Harlem, acted as a catalyst for artistic experimentation and also became a popular nightlife destination. It so happened that its location in the communications capital of North America in fact had helped them to gain visibility and also created a lot of opportunities for publication which was not evident anywhere else. As the Renaissance was constructed on earlier ethnicities of African American culture, it was profoundly affected by the novel trends such as primitivism in the European as well as in the white American artistic circles. Modernist primitivism was partly inspired by the Freudian psychology, but it was intended to extol “primitive” people as enjoying a more direct relationship to the natural world and to
elemental human desires than the hyper civilized whites. The key to artistic revolution and authentic expression, some intellects felt would be found in the so called culture of “primitive races”. The prestige that is to be upheld in all these experiments had caused the African American intellects to look into their own African heritage with wide open eyes and with new perspectives to reconnect with a heritage long dispersed or misunderstood by both Blacks and whites.

The kind of interest that was kindled in Black heritage coincided with efforts to define the American culture distinct from that of Europe, as an aspect which could be characterized by ethnic pluralism and that of the democratic ethos. Stimulated nationals of the United States as a new kind of nation on which assorted cultures should develop side by side in harmony. W.E.B. Du Bois was one of the prominent authors who reflected this view to the outside world. His works were texts defining the New Negro movement as it had reflected the profound effect it had on an entire generation that had formed the core of the Harlem Renaissance. It was during this period various forms of cultural pluralist thought took form and a fertile environment for the blossoming of African American arts developed. The exertions on the part of some American intellectual to distinguish American literature and culture from European cultural forms coincided with the beliefs about their relationship to American national identity with that of African American intellectuals by the African Americans.
The American Whites as always continued to look towards Europe or have sacrificed artistic values to that of commercial ones, claimed that Native American cultures seemed to be dying out. But African Americans’ centuries ago struggled for freedom had made them the prophets of democracy and the vanguard of American culture. Frequently ironic and often bawdy, they expressed their longings and philosophical perspectives of the Black working class and the art for the countries most oppressed people, a materialistic equivalent the spirituals and those that acted as an corrective measure to the bourgeois Black assimilationism.

Amidst the worsening socio-economic conditions that were prevalent in Harlem and the political setback in what was a very conservative and racist era, it was during the 1920’s that the ku kluxlylion reached its peak in membership and the political influences in the Midwest and the South. Some of the Black leaders hoped that achievements in the arts would help revolutionize the race relations while enhancing the Blacks understanding of themselves as people. New Black authors got an opportunity to publish their world in New Important publications. Breaking away from an earlier emphasis on British literary tradition where great publishing houses like Alfred A knot, Harcourt Brace and Boni & Liveright. Translated Modernist works from a variety of nationalities previously unread in the United States, except by immigrants in their respective languages were published. Though they were interested in the notions of American cultural pluralism in some cases which were influenced by the thought of the left wing, which in other words meant were involved in the drive
for Black rights and were also aware of the vogue of primitivism. They saw a market for Blacks authored on “Negro” topics. Their concentration was accelerated by the determinations of African American magazine editors who organized literary price contexts and other events showcasing Black literary talent.

The association stressed on a turn, away from the social remonstration or propaganda towards self-expression built on what he termed ‘folk values’ a movement, which in other words, were akin to the Irish literary Renaissance which had to some extent preceded it. Yet the writers of the Harlem Renaissance were Seeing Eye to eye either with the artistic aims or with the methods Disagreement also helped to account for the Renaissance’s importance.

Black authors and artists developed distinct aesthetic tendencies inspired by African American folk sources and African traditions. The fiction belonging to the Harlem Renaissance is notable for its cultural instability in other words, for its modernity. The novelist of the great Renaissance explored the Black experience across the boundaries in varied aspects like that of class, color and gender while implicitly protesting anti-Black racism. The transformation of mainstream culture affected by the new Black middle class and by the Black creative arts using the conventions of the novel of manners, advanced themes that included racial upliftment a strong sense of patriotism and optimism for the future and also for Black solidarity. They focused on the career and the various atrocities like the lynching of Blacks, protesting against racial oppression and
exposing. The question arouses whether new styles and literary forms might be needed to convey more effectively the sensibilities and Black experiences in fiction. But on the other hand, there were elements of Black experience that were considering that the continuing power.

The concept of damaging white stereotypes, would be better left untouched writers like Du Bois were worried that white editors and readers would draw Black authors into an empty aestheticism or salacious modes of primitivism. The immense sales of the boot written Van Vechten’s Nigger Heaven seemed to be strongly confirming his fears, especially after some younger Black authors came to the novel’s defense and about the same time, Harlem became a popular nightlife destination for whites. Multicultural parties accommodated by Blacks as well as whites also developed supportive networks and patronage let to the movement. But such patronage Jon the movement led it astray and ultimately destroyed it.

Issues of racial psychology, class and sexuality in the modern city were explored by Nella Larsen and Rudolph Fisher. Larsen explored the psychology of urban sophisticates and the psychological intricacies of the race and class. Larsen identified ultimately the price, color line culture extracted of those who transgressed its most fundamental rules and her fiction remains unequaled for the originality and incisiveness with which it disclosures the contradictions of identities founded on the assertion of absolute difference between “Black and white”. Hers was a unique achievement at a time when de facto and de jure
segregation were becoming even more entrenched features of American society.

Way back in the 20th century the greatest satisfaction for Black writers were the freedom to write, all this when Harlem did not exist. For various Reconstruction African Americans, it was a tremendous accomplishment in knowing and getting to know slowly on how to read and write. More than it is just an artistic accomplishment it was a massive political movement to make the writers in order to write as well as to stir diatribes to create a uproar against slavery which must be powerful enough to shake the consciousness of a nation. Their verse somewhat seemed stilted and they prosaically wrote about the evils of slavery and racism, which were the most predominant catastrophes in their life. Thoughts, ideas, emotions, these suppression, struggle for existence all this could not or play the role of a vehicle which could roll forward and blow trumpets about their race to the big world outside. As they dismounted to be heard by the world outside, the tragedy was the range of their work was very limited, and their revolutionary thoughts did not gain the anticipated momentum. As the concepts were looked at to be kind of locked into a certain theme, the writers have only been able to write about plantations and lament and cry about slavery, trying their best to gain some solace or the fact at least some sense of satisfaction that they too could cry out their anguish and pathetic state of life.
Gaining a stature as a writer was almost an oddity and certainly a unique profession. Apart from Fredrick Douglas, who had cleaved a path for himself, writers like Phillies Wheatley, Paul Laurence Dunbar and Charles W. Chestnut has truly become appreciated as writers. But unfortunately the literature of the Blacks which had the privilege to be published was tailor made according to the whims and fancies of the white publishers. But people and acclaimed writers like chestnut and Dunbar tried to break open the chains that were imposed upon them and present to the big world outside their reality. The writers who belonged to this period did their best to stay visible to the outside world through their publications and were remarkable with it but did not help the African American tradition to flourish. The hard toil did not go in vain, it only paved way for the rise of Harlem Renaissance provoking and thereby developing a true African American culture.

The Renaissance began around the World War I period and extended into the 1930’s. It began mostly as a kind of movement by the African American artists and writers who had contributed from every state in the country. As a gateway for the African American writers where journals like “crisis” and “Opportunity” gave the writers a chance to publish in a unique style that catered to their perception and at the same time found white patrons. Being labeled as the “New Negroes” these Renaissance artists chiseled out a unique African American culture with a mission to improve the race relations at the same time maintaining their distinct cultural identity.
Writers like Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Nell Larsen and Zora Neale Hurston had made an indelible mark as hardcore exceptional writers of the Renaissance period. But the fledgling writers were abundantly showered with wondrous inspiration by the older established writers like the W.E.B. Du Bois editor of the journal “Crisis” and by “Charles S Johnson” editor of the journal “Opportunity”. It was only because of the cherishings of these writers that Harlem came into existence and sustained and even thrived given the state of affairs. The physiognomies of the much talked about Post Renaissance writing had often decried racism, the Harlem Renaissance had materialized as a shift from the moralizing work though the literature was exceptionally written and was also eloquently executed it did very little to change the consciousness of the country. It was for generating an upheaval and also to stir the emotions of the outside world, they also encouraged the writers to communicate the ills of the racist world that would display exemplary works of art. The advantageous dressings that were enveloped in this capsule for the readers who experienced what was delivered in verse and also through the characters' lives, whereby the message is delivered very subtly and efficiently.

As fortune would have it the economic depression, which deepened the Renaissance had to slowly fade away. It was only the works of writer like Richard Wright that marked a new era in the history of African American literature. With the works of Richard Wright the literature saw a transition period for Black writers as they bridged the wildly creative period of the
Renaissance with that of the more political activity and intense creativity to mark the specialty of the Renaissance literature. It was for this period of time that the writers came up with the concept and went against the motto “art for art sake” which believed should die and they wanted to restate the point that literature must be unswervingly intended to end racism. It was a period where they were despairing in restating the fact that the Blacks were an essential part of the American society a belief that was one of the foundations for the philosophy and that of the civil rights movement. There were a number of other concepts like realistic African - American issues and extreme eclecticism were blended by poets who were trying to take various other roads in their quest to be heard. The most dynamic part was they were rewarded and accepted in the community further than as they were gaining acceptance some of those established poets were Gwendlyn Brooks, Robert Hayden and Melvin B Tolson.

It was during this time the release of *Go tell it on the mountains* by James Baldwin and *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison brought serious African American issues to mainstream culture. They had multiplied with a worldwide acceptance and was taught in classes around the country. It was long after the Harlem Renaissance had died, and that it was patronized by the whites, unlike that of Black Aesthetic movement also known as the Black Arts Movement blossomed. Terminologies like “Black is Beautiful”, was commercialized and the artistic movement was closely paralleled by the civil rights marches, it was
a loud and clear call for independence which being experienced in the African American community.

In the process, they were stumbling upon their own identity within the Aesthetic movement. They were written not only to be heard amongst the world outside, but in order to produce works of art that would be meaningful to the Black masses. Though the language was shocking there was still a conscious attempt to show power of Black activists and their vitality. More than Martin Luther King Jr. it was Malcolm X who was more of an idol as the writers rather than being diplomats opted to be more of revolutionaries. It was believed that artists also had to be powerful political activities so as to be able to achieve nationalist goals. They were strongly driving home the fact that the artists had more responsibilities than just coming down or putting art on paper.

One of the prominent power of speech of the movement was Sonia San Chez. He was one of the most noticeable writers who was able to combine feminism along with her commitment to furthering the younger generation and the men of her race to combat for Black Nationalism many women also wrote about double marginalization on how they were forced to play a starring role in the male oriented Black nationalistic movement.

Women writers' works were encouraged and very well supported by the women’s liberation a movement which served as a channel for them to reach farther and wider. The laudable works of writers like Zora Neale Hurston helped as an inspiration and impetus for their work. Their own unique voice
which reverberated across the world had gained its own appreciation and were able to distinguish the female voice and the pain along with the uniqueness of it. The eclectic band of women writers made them cry loud enough to be heard by the outside world were Gayle Jones, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor and Terry McMillan. In fact, more than the male authors it was the female authors who produced more quality as well as quantity in the publishing world and created a jitter in the country. They had the advantage to be all the more rewarded and finally were able to see the light at the end of the tunnel when Toni Morrison was bestowed the Nobel Prize for literature. It was the Black Aesthetic movement that the writings of African American became more legitimized in America. Institution of higher education around the country started in full swing full-fledged departments on Black American studies. The set of barriers which were followed in presenting various genres were completely broken down and variety became the key word in their writings during 1950’s. They unfluctuating went on to the extent of disapproving them and blissfully embark on sabotaging their career, which leaves the victim totally shattered. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Great Expectations, Catcher in the Rye, Invisible Man.* These are books well-known to the vast majority. They all can be named *Bildungsroman* books and all offer a key perspective: they are revolved around young men getting to be men. So where are the stories about young ladies getting to be ladies?
The presence of the female *Bildungsroman* sort - infrequently called the *frauenroman* - has been discussed among researchers and women's activists alike with an obscured determination. Does the class stray from the examples of the male *Bildungsroman*? What are its complete attributes? Are there enough works expounded on females, by females, to make a sub-classification in the *Bildungsroman* kind? These are all inquiries that emerge on the grounds that outcomes are restricted when examining the "female *Bildungsroman."

Numerous examinations concerning the female *Bildungsroman* go up against a women's activist evaluate. In the 1970s, women's activist pundits utilized the expression "female *Bildungsroman*" to portray stories about growing up highlighting female heroes. These women's activist pundits broke down nineteenth and mid-twentieth century ladies authors' depiction of young ladies as they developed. The female *Bildungsroman* of these circumstances portrayed the "concealment and annihilation of female independence, imagination, and development by patriarchal sexual orientation standards" (Lazzaro-Weis 17). This depiction was fitting for the Victorian lady, who battled with the desire of social achievements and wifehood characterizing her whole existence. Female improvement was a subject in writing that demonstrated particularly hard to portray in light of the social tightening influences of the time. Composing the improvement of a female hero as parallel to a male lead character amid this day and age would have implied depicting a young lady experiencing self-improvement through instruction,
development, and citizenry. Despite the fact that this approach was radical, it was not nonexistent; it is typified in Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre.

In Bronte’s work of art, which is potentially the principal generally known female Bildungsroman the female hero encounters self-improvement past that of social and monetary status. Bronte’s novel was dubious at the time it was distributed not just due to the obscure personality of the architect (Bronte distributed it under the pen name "Ringer"), additionally on the grounds that it delineates a stranded young lady getting an education, along these lines shattering the severe class limits of the time (Watkins). It likewise relates the inward improvement and development procedure of a Victorian lady. In any case, Jane's way in the novel varies from other female Bildungsroman of the time, ones which some women's activist faultfinders say delineate ladies as "becoming down as opposed to growing up." Women journalists of the Bildungsroman kind have a tendency to portray the female experience as managing more with sentimentality, misfortune, home and group, and the era hole amongst moms and their girls (Lazzaro-Weis 21).

In spite of stark contrasts in the advancement of men and ladies, the two sexual orientations of the Bildungsroman have clear similitudes. Among these likenesses are the hero's inclusion in his or her own advancement, self-reflection and contemplation, and reintegration into society (Maier 318-319). Instead of being the inverse of Bildungsroman books with male heroes, the female Bildungsroman is viewed as an "augmentation" of the conventional transitioning kind (Maier 320). Despite the fact that male heroes are more
typical in the *Bildungsroman* classification, works, for example, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* have been generally perceived as prominent books in spite of the utilization of female principle characters. It is a direct result of these works that female essayists and the improvement of female heroes in the *Bildungsroman* sort have proceeded all through hundreds of years. Early works by female creators in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth hundreds of years made ready for female heroes to play a key part in today's way of life. Contemporary works that could be viewed as female *Bildungsroman* incorporate *Twilight* by Stephenie Meyer; “Are You There God? It's Me”, Margaret by Judy Blume, *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson and *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins;

While the adjustment in sexual orientation of the hero in the *Bildungsroman* changed the standard of the class, the move of standards in the public eye modified the subjects secured by female journalists. Female *Bildungsroman* in contemporary writing and film can investigate issues that those of the past were not able say. Sexuality, advanced education, and different parts of society that were once forbidden to female scholars (especially when expounding on ladies) are currently portrayed and investigated broadly due to the move in social standards. For instance, “Are You There God? It's Me”, Margaret demarcates a young lady experiencing teenage years and incorporates her considerations on substantial changes. Additionally, Anderson's *Speak* investigates life in the secondary school condition and focuses on the topic of assault. These points are presently open in
the public eye for dialog, permitting the female *Bildungsroman* sort to develop and create. Be that as it may, key segments to the stories of transitioning have persevered. The most prevalent one is the consideration of a romantic tale as a feature of a young lady's growing up. While works of earlier hundreds of years focused on marriage as the conclusion, numerous contemporary works still join sentimental connections as a key part of the hero's advancement. Contemporary female *Bildungsroman* are still apparently not finished when just concentrating on self-acknowledgment and investigation of oneself. An association, especially a sentimental one, to someone else is quite often included.

All though the presence of female *Bildungsroman* works, contrasts in the advancement of men and ladies have been investigated. In any case, the likenesses in development of characters in both customary and female *Bildungsroman* demonstrate that the last is essentially an augmentation of the class instead of a direct opposite. The two sexual orientations may not be totally indistinguishable in their comings-of-age, yet the feelings and lessons learned by them are fundamentally the same as. The way that female authors are presently given more range in their topic enables these similitudes to be additionally distinguished and examined. Hence the thesis goes on to talk more about two more women authors and their *Bildungsroman* characters. In different lights and perspectives. They at absolutely diagonal corners and are fighting battles in their own style. One might seem endowed but still the battle continues.
Bildungsroman was later on adapted by the post-modernist, socialist, black feminist and also a novel genre named as female bildungsroman emerged. In the modern world it helped address the problematic nature of the newly emerging notion of the youth. In fact it became a symbolic representation of modernity. When talking about modernity, the essence of it was to envision the world that seeks its denotation in the future. The expansion of the perspective of the present day youth as it fits well into the structure of the Bildungsroman is very well accommodated with the new quintessence of Post modernity. It emerges as an alternative and also as response to the young adults in the novel of post-modernist era. Bestowed with the developmental arch and the advanced cyberpunk roots. The Bildungsroman of the Post Modernity goes on to expose the negative effect and the mature capitalism. At the same time it was also offering a hope of narrative and capitalism.

Women belonging to the developing world experienced the inheritance of socio-cultural oppression, along with the political issues that were entangled with the decolonization procedure. This factor further complicates the skirmish of these womenfolk in terms of rebellious patriarchy, in comparison with feminists all over the Western world who did not have the need to fight colonial structures. The difference between the feminist of the Western and the rest of their counterparts contrasted to an outsized extent, it was boundaries apart. This aspect was not accepted in the Western world as it differed in race and religion too. The feminists of the Western and feminists outside of the West also often differ in terms of race and religion, which is not acknowledged
in Western feminism and can cause other differences. The feminist belonging
to the Postcolonial period do not agree that women are a universal Group.
Black women writers in the post-colonial period have been omitted from the
critical theory. Meanwhile the 1960s concentration in black culture has grown
manneredly in American literary criticism. The very term Black Feminist is
thought-provoking. Alice Walker disagrees with the term feminist as applied to
black women; she writes that she traded Feminist with womanist, pronouncing
that a womanist does not turn her back upon the men of her community.

Zora Neale Hurston, Harlem Renaissance prominent representative and
folklorist insisted upon using dialect and folklore in her folktale book *Mules
and Men*. Black feminists most often have turned to the slave narrative in their
autobiographies. Thus the Black women writers, had articulated their anger,
jealousy, rage and disappointment through books, articles and anthologies in
their own way. The collective leitmotifs in their works concern the character‘s
try to define a meaningful identity, independent of unadventurous
expectations and prejudices, to sustain one's self-dignity in a world of growing
alienation, absurdity and moral decay; and promote individual self-esteem in an
intimidating social climate. Looking for liberation from the mannish
governance is one of the vital issues of feminist writing. In fact, there did exist
an unconscious common bond between women writers of the world- white,
black or colored. In the fictional works of Black Women Writers of America
one can come across the life-force. Moreover, the women writers who are
equipped to express such consciousness are labeled as Black Feminist Writers.
Though they are not through breed feminist like the rest of the world. In dismantling phallocentric configurations of power and etching feminine patterns of development in their male characters, Zora Neale Hurston has provided agendas for a revelation of communal change that depends upon a precautious perspective and a privilege of co-feeling.