



# THE EVOLUTION OF SLAVERY FROM INCEPTION TO ABOLITION, THE INEVITABLE IDEA OF SLAVE NARRATIVES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HARRIET JACOB'S *INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A SLAVE GIRL*

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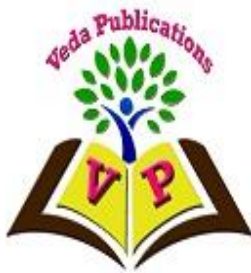
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## ABSTRACT



The essential reason of this paper is to jump into the incidents and to look at the narrator's depiction about a dark female chattel battling for her opportunity and her rights. Slave Narratives portray the brutality the African Americans dealt with, learning about the past atrocities of African American Slavery portrayed in *Harriet Jacobs Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself (1861)*, under the pseudonym Linda Brent. This paper analyzes how slave accounts got to be the essential execute for outlaw or previous slaves in America as slave accounts record the repulsion of servitude as experienced by previous slaves, slaves narratives of ebony slaves present an effective apparatus for uncovering the brutalities of the chattel slave framework.

**Keywords:** *Slavery, Slave Narratives, Race, Women and Femininity, Rules and Order.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

The reports of slaves pristinely came into sight in the United States in 1703; however, those that exist distributed mainly throughout the abolitionist period from 1831 to the maximum possible Civil War in 1865 and most conspicuous during the period were Frederick Douglass's Narrative (1845). Different accounts during this spell incorporate William W. Brown's narrative of William W. Brown, inscribed independently of anyone else. The fascinating narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavas Vasa the African; and the story of Mary Prince: a slave from the West Indian.

Writings of abolitionists especially the narratives of slaves became very paramount as they provide a humanistic aspect in the history of American literature. People who have been gainsaid liberation, their narratives tell their story of authentic struggle. People often verbalize about slavery and its issues and it is a general verbalization – general issues, general experience, and general are often an abstract. Slavery for African Americans was a very personal experience and most often the experiences or the readings of the slavery were not visually perceived through the eyes of perceivers who were a component that belonged to the system of slavery for years.

Slave Narratives is a type of collection of memoirs with unmistakable subjects that follows the storyteller's way from servitude to opportunity. Slave Narratives primary goal is to make the detestations of subjugation kenneled to all, it speaks to how slavery is portrayed both as a catalyst of abuse and freedom. African Americans in America were controlled through viciousness or its danger; they were misused monetarily and physically; their works characterize their voyage from neediness and mental torment to at last liberating themselves from bondage and their assurance to beat the cultural and wilful restrictions. The time of servitude is one of the most shocking periods throughout the entire existence of mankind, and slave accounts are foremost on the grounds that they are an update that the general public should never let it emphasize again. They are furthermore a proof that every individual issue and that the battle against gregarious injustices is still in process. The

African Americans have battled a great deal in the history, and these are their records of all the terrible occasions they endured, however figured out how to raise above them, with their confidence and activities. With the benefit of their prompting the peripheral gatherings aggregated fortitude to mindfully tune in to their inward voice and recount to their account of long stretches of enduring using the words not known to the scholarly world.

Every slave wished to be free. Narrators in their slave narratives shared mundane objectives and a rudimentary formula of inscribing a slave narrative, it commences with the account of narrator's birth where the authors tell his/her story from the commencement of the days they have spent being a slave for years. It customarily commences with the nebulous description of the narrator's parents and childhood life or how the narrator was born as a slave or telling about the slavery of his/her parents. Most slave narratives start with the description of the author that *I was born a slave* or *Inscribed by himself* and then they perpetuate with the description of the convivial and geographical conditions of the place they used to live in or being enslaved in.

Harriet Ann Jacobs was one of the prominent writers of slave narratives, after her prosperous getaway, depicted her life in a staggering women's activist slave story in which she articulates the numerous aspects of subjugation, essentially concerned the female slave understanding. Besides, her progress toward origin made *Incidents* magnified as the primary life account by a female slave.

As Harriet Jacobs begins her slave narrative with:

*"I was born a slave,*

*but I never knew it till*

*six years of my happy childhood." (p.11)*

**FACING HER SLAVE IDENTITY**

Harriet Jacob gave a record of her life as a slave and her pitiless experts with this slave story. In the underlying days of her subjection Harriet had a caring special lady as her mistress who showed her how to peruse and compose, however when her fancy



mistress passed on, Harriet was offered to another ace who was merciless to her. In such manner Harriet composes: ***Memory of a faithful slave does not avail much to save her children from the auction block" (p.15).***

The conception here is that in Harriet's view, there are no good masters. In her narrative Jacobs addressed Northern white people directly as these people need to be a symbol of pious, pristine, domestic and compliant, and slavery exploits every quality like these and all these principles. Female slaves were treated deplorably even by their mistress. Fundamentally, they were de-feminized.

Harriet's mother and father were faithful slaves she has mentioned in the autobiography that her father's desire was that if he can in future buy his children's freedom, but he was under debts always he was not capable of doing so. When Jacob's was 6 years old, her mother died and that's when she came to know about that she is genuinely a property of someone and she is a slave Linda (Harriet) was at first was a cosseted slave not cosseted like a child but cosseted like a slave, her first mistress was kind to her and she edified her to read and inscribe, but on her mistress death Harriet postulated that her mistress will liberate her from the slavery and she will mention that in the will about Harriet but instead her mistress sells her and makes Harriet slave for her sisters daughter. Slaves for white people were no better than a prized livestock. And no matter how nice or how faithful an ebony slave remained to his master they were exploited to every calibre of inhumanity, and they were never liberated from this vicious circle of slavery.

Her parents edified her to optically discern them as an individual being and reverence their individuality, she never acceded with her grandmothers cerebrating that they had to surrender in every circumstance. Her new masters were Dr. Flint and Mrs. Flint and Dr. Flint wanted to utilize Harriet as an object to consummate his sexual advances but soon Harriet realized that she is not an object. The war of her life at this moment commenced and she knew that she was not willing to surrender to Dr. Flint's sexual advances. ***"Whose will***

***must I and should surrender to his, never before had my puny arm felt half so strong". (p.29),*** her body may belong to Dr. Flint, but she felt that she is spiritually free.

#### THE PERILS OF SLAVERY FOR WOMEN

Most slave narratives which were inscribed by men verbalized about the physical pain and suffering over bodily changes and bruises. A male slave can only endure bodily suffering. The only thing male slaves had to do was to make themselves physically vigorous and get the body in control to fight over his master. While verbalizing about female slaves Jacobs indited a different kind of slave narrative where she endeavoured to expound that other than beating up of female slaves or keeping them starved for days female slaves had to go through all kinds of noetic tortures as well. They were ravished, sexually harassed, they were kept away from their children and at the terminus the only thing they had to go through is the loss of their children. She portrays the suffering and agony of all the mothers and slave girls who were endeavouring to obnubilate their shame when they were harassed by their masters or when they were dis severed from her children. For all these women and slaves, the suffering is both mental and physical tortures and a male slave cannot understand the dual pain and suffering that female slave had to go through. She knew that she is her maters property and when Dr. Flint coerces her for sexual advances he whispers something dirty or come in her way, he wanted Jacobs to surrender to his will. Jacobs indites about double dehumanizing factors that are a component of her life as a slave: ***Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, they have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own. (p.119).***

***'Reader, I draw no imaginary pictures of southern homes. I am telling you the plain truth. Yet when victims make their escape from the wild beast of Slavery, northerners consent to act the part of bloodhounds, and hunt the poor fugitive back into his den, "full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness." Nay, more, they are not only***

***willing, but proud, to give their daughters in marriage to slaveholders. (p.56)***

Harriet in her narrative precisely give a discourse to the reader and wants to portray that this narrative is the account of her true self and endeavours to expound how northern people were complicit about slavery. Slavery is deplorable for both masters and the slaves, ***I can testify, from my own experience and observation, that slavery makes the white fathers cruel and sensual; the sons violent and licentious; it contaminates the daughters and makes the wives wretched. (p.81)***. Jacobs doesn't simply show an accusing sketch of subjugation rehearsed by covetous families of slaveholders in the South; she withal saves vague reprehension of northern people in numerous spots within the content. At this point Jacobs abrades those who observe the criminal Slave Law and ship aback those slaves who eluded towards the North. Jacobs further displays disdain towards the people of the North who uphold little girls to slave owners with no pain in the heart. Their girls will develop into desirous courtesans, joyous to give out shrewdness and punishing the slave's blackguards claimed by them. Harriet moreover reproves northern people who peregrinate south and who are not really aware of what is happening in that district and do not cast any sharp visual over their condition; northerners are substance to gulp the outflows of the slave owner over how excited the slaves are after they were at liberty, asking why the studies of the abolitionists are so assertive. Jacobs' immediate location of peruse goes about just as supplication to her target group - colourless ladies - to re-evaluate the assumptions they had about subjection.

**ALL-CORRUPTING POWER OF SLAVERY**

Harriet perpetuates to face the challenges of slavery and she was perpetually endeavouring to preserve herself for the concupiscent advances of Dr. Flint her master. Thankfully Mr. Flint never genuinely ravished her; his advances were constrained to the nasty whispering, occluding her ways and creating menace. With the intention to preserve herself from Dr. Flint's sexual advances she decided to fall in love with a white man Mr. Sands who was good to her. She comments: ***"I feel that the slave woman ought not to be judged by the same standard as others."(p.86)***.

By opting to enter sexual cognitions with Mr. Sands without getting espoused, she condemns that given her intolerable circumstances, she optically discerned no other way out. Harriet decides disposingly to give herself away to Mr. Sands then indisposingly to Dr. Flint. Slaves at that time did not have the personal power to adhere to but Harriet utilized her personal power and decided that her life will not be judged on the same standards as it was judged for other slave girls or women. Her relationship with Mr. Sands and then giving birth to a son was a major turning point in her life. Though she contemplates and bewails contemplating the dismal future of her children and verbalizes about she doesn't know when her children will be torn away from her and sold to another master.

***"O, ye happy women, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, who have been free to choose the objects of your affection, whose homes are protected by law, do not judge the poor desolate slave girl too severely!" (p.83)***

This is a significant attestation to make; Harriet's story is disputable in its straight to the point talk of sex, however she doesn't need the readers to imagine that she was supporting pre-marriage sex. She requires making the case that white women and ebony women faced unequivocally non identical situations and ebony women must not be privy to the same penetration. Ravishing white women was penalizable, but ravishing ebony women was not, they were a property that belonged to white masters, there was always a distinction between ebony and white women in sexual autonomy as well. White girl or women were sanctioned to espouse and have children and live in a tranquil home, but ebony women were not sanctioned to do so, they were only sexually persuaded, and if they had children they were dismembered from their children and they were enslaved for their entire life, all they wanted that Ebony slaves must become numb about everything and they should stop having feelings about anything. While other 14 year old Americans were verbalizing about how to get their life together or how to earn more allowances the only thing Jacobs was cogitating is how to get out of this system of slavery how to put



a terminus to this whole slavery business that she was a component of and may be in future her children will withal be. As Slavery engendered an environment of trepidation amongst all the ebony slaves it was conspicuously a challenge for all the ebony slaves to break all the bars and emerge from it.

Jacobs in her narrative talks about simple language and logic. Jacobs writes in her narrative that slavery makes people covert and ambiguous in the want of saving themselves:

***I like a straightforward course and am always reluctant to resort to subterfuges. So far as my ways have been crooked, I charge them all upon slavery. It was that system of violence and wrong which now left me no alternative but to enact a falsehood. (p.251).***

Slaves just live in their inner selves as there is nobody to aurally perceive what they authentically felt afore. They had to comply with each command of their masters, otherwise they were penalized and the penalization for them was the physical and noetic torture. In this way they became more and more secretive as they mentally conceived that there is no one they can trust and the only thing that came to their mind was telling the masses about their exploitation through inditing, and they commenced writing these slave narratives to tell the world about their sufferings through their writing.

#### **TAKING CONTROL OF HER DESTINY**

Harriet expounds that she did not go back to Dr. Flint's home after she gave birth to her children; Harriet gave birth to another child Ellen (her daughter). She comments: ***"I knew that my master's offer was a snare, and that if I entered it escape would be impossible."***(p.128). Mr. Flint threatens Harriet to sell her children and offers her to stay with him as his mistress and he will give liberation to her children or she may be sent to work on his son's plantation. Harriet reluctant to stay with Dr. Flint as his mistress and takes the job at the plantation. Here readers queried Harriet's decision, but all she did was for her children and she somewhere knew that if she will accept Dr. Flint's offer it will be very arduous for

her to elude and throughout her life as Harriet was apostatized by the white people she knew that Dr. Flint would not consummate his promises. After a month at the plantation, Harriet runs away and ends up hiding in a crawlspace in her Aunt's shed. She writes fake letters to Mr. Flint and tries to misguide him that the letters are coming from North and she has escaped to North and the plan works. ***"I knew the doom that awaited my fair baby in slavery, and I determined to save her from it, or perish in the attempt."***(p.90). The shed where she hid herself for 7 years was so narrow that Harriet can neither sit nor stand, no air, no light was admitted, that comfortless place was not terrible because the only thing she can do was watch her children play and laugh through a small hole she built in the shed. She was grateful that she was not beaten up or worked to death. Her children were sold by Dr. Flint to Mr. Sands, who dissimulated himself as a slave trader and Harriet requested him to free his children. She came to know that Mr. Sands is peregrinating to North with his incipient wife and he brings Ellen (Harriet's daughter) to North to look after his daughter. Harriet realizes that her children will receive the same treatment as she received the whole of her life, and the trepidation that her children might be sold to a slave trader in the north; she managed to flee to the north.

In her grandmother's shed she remains for 7 years, this expose the extent of her devotion towards her children and her exemption, the incredible sacrifice that she did for her children no one will able to endure such pain and sacrifice for someone. While she stays in the shed she recalls her life as a slave and she struggles with her feelings, fights her depression, there is also scenes of tension for her as she thinks that she is not actually free till she is in the south and at any time Dr. Flint can find her and punish her for this daring act. Only when she will fly to the north, she will understand psychologically the true meaning of freedom.

Harriet's and different slaves who figured out how to escape caused sort of interruption among the elements of the slave-ace exchange as southern financial aspects, governmental issues, society and culture rotated around this slave trade and the elusion of these slaves made a danger to this entire



slave business. In general, *Incidents* uncover the profoundly obsessive base of slave society in the South and through Dr. Flint specifically embody these dependencies. Jacobs claims that oppression under slavery is disgraceful for the ebony slaves, yet for the masters too, and this absolutely sounds valid.

As Slavery engendered an environment of trepidation amongst all the ebony slaves it was conspicuously a challenge for all the ebony slaves to break all the bars and emerge from it. Jacobs when threatened with the sale of her children and for relucting her master's advances she absquatulated and obnubilated for seven years in her grandmother's attic. And after numerous delays, indecisions, Jacobs determinately sailed to the north. Despite the fact that Linda has gone through a large portion of her time on earth struggling for opportunity, at no time till the end of her history, she was able to acquire political, social and monetary contingency; she can't bolster herself and her family and that was her greatest disappointment. Likewise, before getting physical liberty from enslavement, Harriet has fulfilled intellectual and significant liberty which empowered her to continue regardless intellect boggling challenges and limitless hardships. Along with these she gave a strong illustration for the present African Americans, a few of whom must confront clearly unconquerable hardships as blacks fight for human and social freedom. Obviously, Linda Brent's daring narrative includes exercises that are as however important this very day.

## CONCLUSION

Anne Frank said *what is done cannot be undone but it can be prevented from happening again*, if there is a solitary exercise to be gained from African American subjugation is that we should stand together against abuse and oppression. Verifiable wrongs are never corrected by turning around the mistreatment, they exist for us to gain from and guarantee the never happen again. In the wake of experiencing a lot of oppression, African American slaves were anticipating their lives and with this mistreatment they became more grounded and created systems of self-articulation. It turned into an instrument for them to tell their "lived encounters" of subjection that keeps on forming African American

culture. The melancholy, torment, enduring, trusts, their distresses are laid before us through these social slave stories. These slave stories give us a superior comprehension of the encounters of bondage and the convictions, way of life and societies of African Americans. Additionally, slave stories composed by ladies will improve ladies' investigations courses in writing, history, brain science and numerous different fields.

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