



Title: Institutional Violence with special reference to the American Civil War Fiction

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Institutional Violence is and has been an integral part of society because this is something that begins with a purpose of wellbeing of every one. However, over a period of time the purpose itself for which the institute had begun gets dissolved and gets modified as per the interests of the power-owning class of the society.

Slavery that emerged hundreds of years ago was also form of Institutional Violence that began in the form of an institute that was framed for the purpose of religious transformation of the pagan African black people who had been brought to a foreign land by force and then declared a being without civilization. Slavery has existed throughout the world since ancient times of Old Testament. Historians confirm prevalence of Slavery in Rome, Arab, and Egypt. The practice of slavery was deeply engrained in ancient social culture of Rome where to own a slave was a matter of social distinction. Therefore, slavery was widespread throughout the Rome citizenry. All the masters exercised full dominion over slaves.

Hence slavery was assumed as a universal social practice. Most Countries practiced domestic slavery that was the most common type of slavery. Then the, slave masters had a very small number of slaves. the domestic workers performed a variety of household services for an individual or a family, from providing care for children and elderly dependents to cleaning and household maintenance.

Prevalence of slavery was admitted and advocated in the bygone days but its form varied from place to place. Sometimes slaves were defeated and deserted soldiers. As we observe in Rolando Mellafe's book, *Slavery in Latin America*. where he elaborates an archaic form of slavery and writes, "Slavery was well-known social economic institution from the earliest times. It initially consisted of the enslavement of conquered peoples and captives of war.

We can conclude that the effectiveness of slavery in production and economic stability had been well established in classical times, and it was to become even more obvious in the fifteenth and sixteenth century." During this period of enslavement, European countries were living under the supreme power of church. But the Age of the Great Awakening loosened the grip of the church on the monarchy.

The enhanced authority of the monarchy brought a dramatic change when the Portugal king John I's son prince Henry, attacked the Moslem Port of Cautha in North Morocco. His successful victory inspired him to discover Africa and he endorsed Portuguese traders to explore foreign land. By the middle of the fifteenth century Spanish traders had also joined the Portuguese in search of the new merchandise. When sailors got freedom to travel and trade with the African islands, they got hold of immensely profitable sailing expedition and both the Spanish and the Portuguese got engaged in the massive search of Canary Island and the gulf

of Guinea.

This was the inauguration of inter-continental and transatlantic trade that began with trading of olive oil, gold and nuts. Alluring profits of sailing expedition gave rise to the commercial Revolution which stimulated the traders' greed to sell anything to derive wealth. And Negro slave also became a part of tradable commodities.

When Charles II issued license to the slave traders, the trade became a mutual benefit for the monarchy as well as the trading companies. All this led to budding of the trading companies and the slave traders achieved access to everywhere in the society.

It was in 1619 when the first cargo of African arrived into the colonies of Virginia

When the first cargo arrived in American Colonies the white people were already in search of an inexpensive and easily obtainable labour which could be used for deforestation and agriculture. They lacked a suitable labour system which was the one and only problem of the whole system.

At the preliminary stage of Negro slavery, American people did not make any discrepancy between the black and the white servants. Servants did not work as slaves because they were not hereditary servants and their children were free to live independently, they were also free to have possessions and they could buy freedom. Before 1660 many Negroes managed to get their freedom we find two negroes in *The Negro in Eighteenth Century Williamsburg*.

One of the best know of these was Anthony Johnson, who had apparently reached Virginia in 1621 and had within a year or two gained his freedom. Johnson then married Mary, a Negro woman who came on the Margett and John in 1622. He began to acquire property and to import Negro servants of his own, until he had developed a small African Community in Northampton County. (Tate 3)

The harmonious co-existence could not remain stable for a long time because outburst of the colonialism shifted people's interest on the largescale farming. Consequently, they pushed the native Americans and highjacked a large part of farms and began deforestation, this was the period when slavery was not biased by lust of wealth. With the passage of time the white people considered indispensable want of more labour to gratify their demands as we find in the book *The Black American: Interpretative Readings*:

All the colonies shared a shortage of labour as well as similar attitudes of racial prejudice; but by the end of the seventeenth century it became apparent that the South's plantation-aristocracy and staple crop system could best utilize slave labor. (Scheiner and Edelstein 53)

When the white people saw the status of a Negro slave in a foreign land, they found that he had nothing to defend himself from the master's service. If master did not want to free him he was not able to appeal to the government or the judiciary to obtain his freedom. Thus, white masters found no reason to free a Negro servant. Right from this point Negro's identity into an insignificant person that did not deserve to be treated as a human being.

Before cotton became a cash crop of Southern America there was slavery but it was without much demand and there was no pressure on married slaves to enhance the property.

In 1792 Eli Whitley a Yale graduate Yankee, invented a toothed wheel that could be used to separate fiber from the cotton seed. After some precision he developed a cotton gin that brought a revolutionary change all over the South. The gin not only cut short the clumsy work of cotton production but also refined the quality of the fiber of the southern cotton. Thus Cotton-Gin infused new life in the dying institution of slavery. Consequently, both the sections North and South began to cherish different economic interests that often collided with each other and they began to feel economic rivalry for each other.

As we observe in *Years of Madness*:

The Southerners looked upon the people of the North as money-mad. Derisively they spoke of them as "a nation of the shop-keepers" low-grade in the human scale, a tribe of skin flints who spent their lives thinking of ways to swindle people out of their pennies. That was the general opinion in the Southern states in the decade before the Civil War. (8)

Religious institutions, that were established to shape Negroes' mental trauma in an acceptable form of life, did try hard to exhort every slave to submit himself to the white superiority and up to a great extent they succeeded in their job but there was something left yet to be done. And this discontentment led slaves to rise against the dominion of the white people. Religious sermon played a crucial role as they fed their mind to defend their human rights. As we observe in August Meier and Elliott Rudwick's book *The Making of Black America*:

For the masses of American Negroes, the Christian religion has likewise functioned principally as a compensatory escape from the harsh realities of daily life. Yet the recent prominence of Reverend Martin Luther King Symbolizes the fact that religion has had a dual role. While it has served basically as a mechanism of accommodation to the American

Social order, it has also provided an important wellspring of Negro Protest. (Meier and Rudwick 179)

Christianity that could shield a Negro from lifetime servitude, was no longer effective after 1705. Now the slaveholders were not afraid of religious institution. Many masters motivated slave mothers and their sons to attend religious sermons so that slaves could become more obedient.

Slavery was a system of human exploitation that was based on brutality of the white people. Therefore by 1660, African slavery had become a systematized institution of labour which was taking a huge shape because the white people were getting used to slaves.

Masters were always known to be as pitiless labour-driver. They thought that more flogging would bring more efficiency in the work of slaves. Therefore, slaves were frequently punished by the plantation masters, overseers and children of masters. Slaves were punished with a variety of objects and instruments some of these included whips, chains and shackles and even a tread mill to walk on.

Many slaves expressed their anger by running away from the plantation and many escaped from work, but all they could was a temporary respite from the hellish life of slavery.

The institution of slavery was defended by the statesmen of the south but the out break of American Revolution became a milestone in shaping an explicit ideology of independence which advocated human equality. As soon as Americans configured Constitution they assimilated the concept of slavery in it.

All the proslavery views played a crucial role when the slave holder and statemen framed the constitution of United States of America, and Artfully dealt with the slave so that they could design a white men's superiority and empower him to suppress the negro slaves.

Thus, the peculiar institution of slavery was a form of institutionalized violence that legalized slave's status as a chattele property and left them unguarded to be exploited by their masters. It was in 1852 when sentimental stories of slaves were put in black and white and they were read by thousands of pro and anti- slavery people of America. Harriet Beecher Stowe prove to be one of the first authors who unearthed the hidden conspiracy under the Religious Institution of Slavery and designed the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin or the Life among the Lowly*

In the novel Mrs. Shelby's house slave, Eliza runs away to save her little boy Herry, she strives hard and at last succeeds in crossing the border of the slave states.

Many a times masters were compelled to meet their debts. The same state of affairs has been described in the novel Uncle Tom's Cabin when Mr. Shelby was being forced to sell Eliza a quadroon woman and her child to the slave trader. We can notice the helplessness of the indebted slave master in the following conversation that happens between the slave trader Haley and Mr. Shelby. "I would rather not sell him said Mr. Shelby, thoughtfully; the fact is sir, I m a humane man, and I hate to take the boy from his mother, sir" (Stowe13)

However, unwilling the masters were, they were convinced to sell a slave. Stowe presents another aspect of a southern planter in the character sketch of Mr. Shelby. He is characterized as genuine plantation master and stereotypical southern planter. When he experiences a financial crisis, he sells Tom and little boy Harry to save his plantation. He presents the ups and downs of the plantation.

Since slave marriages had no legal status, they were made and undone at masters' will and conformance. Many slaveowners maintained monogamous matrimonial system on their plantation which forbade slaves from running away from the plantation. But all the masters did not pay much heed to develop the morality among their slaves because they thought that monogamous slave family would not bring a high number of off springs. So they did not induce slaves to follow a monogamous system, though slave marriages had no legal status. As we observe in the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*:

George says, "Don't you know a slave can't be married? There is no law in this country for that; I can't hold you for my wife, if he chooses to part us. That's why I wish I'd never seen you--- why I wish I'd never been born; it would have been better for this poor child if he had never been born. All this may happen to him yet!" (Stowe 26)

Here George Eliza's husband is a slave and contemplating on the temporary status of slave marriage and the dire consequences of parting of the slave families. Slave marriages have been affected throughout the history. Inter-racial marriages were highly objectionable and freedom of marriage between races was not always granted.

The novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* played a huge role in creating an inter-sectional strife that made southern democrats and northern Republicans enemy of each other. However, the agrarian aristocrat and slave holders of the south never realized that the political power is slipping out of their grip and the victory of the Republicans proved their apprehension correct their industrial north would not consider the requirements of the slaveholders and they declared secession from the Union this one step of the slave states enraged the newly elected president who had already declared that a nation half slave and half free can not exist.

Consequently, He found secession an in-constitutional act that turned into a Civil War that was started by the brave young men of the south who thought the war to be a short-time combat but the war continued for a long time. Many large plantations were hard hit as the Civil War progressed. Even the wealthiest landowners and planters, had little purchasing power when all the money they had invested in the Confederacy bonds was gone, and many planters found it hard to survive toward the end of the war. Plantation owners also faced the rage of invading Union forces as many of the soldiers in the Union Forces considered the Southern Plantation a Social evil. As a result of the abhorrence, it was common for the Union forces to damage and even devastate plantations homes, steal personal belongings set free slaves. Therefore, all the planters of the South were not able to protect their plantation and the south had its peculiar ordeal to face.

In *Jacob's Ladder* Samuel Gatewood who is a plantation and slave master finds that he is capable of tolerating the requirements of the war but he gets reluctant when the need of the war becomes a right to cease his property. He has to deal with the property snatchers on both the sides.

The war that began in 1861 could not end until 1865 with the sighs of Walt Wittman's

O' Captain! My Captain!

Thus, assassination of Abraham Lincoln proves that **institutional violence** proves a key role in shaping the opinions and sympathies of the common people and it remains lying like a dormant seed that sprouts the favourable conditions of differences and conflicts and precipitates in the form of war.

Conclusion:

We are living in 21st century that is on the verge of the World War III. By and large all wars are the same they begin abruptly without any presage of the time when the factions would be able to end it. Russia-Ukraine war depicts the same picture of war that were fought in the past.

The Great American Civil war 1861-1865 also left a huge loss behind it when the Confederacy surrendered and agreed to become a part of the Union. The moment of defeat was painful unfathomably for the people and military of the South. The civil strife that began in the form of an anti-slavery and anti-agrarian regime it certainly left the south with a huge amount of reconstruction and collapsed hierarchy of the slaves and the masters. Racism and institution of slavery that germinated in to the historical incident of war have been and are still existing in some or the other form.

Hence everyone should contribute to reduce the chances of strife. Possibility of war is rising like never before as we are living in the digital age where means and modes of war are more harmful so to protect and achieve our substantial development goal we must adopt the peace to avoid violence.

Difficult words:

Proslavery .. People who liked slavery

Antislavery ..People who disliked slavery

Secession ..Withdraw from Union

Republican ...Political Party of Abraham Lincoln

Assassination...Murder of a leader

Slavery ...to enslave someone

Mulattoes... African slave of white complexion

Civil Strife...War within a nation

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