

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL TRAIT OF BLACK AMERICAN

In the history of the United States, Blacks's tragic side for slavery and race had played a vital role. Most of these black people were employed as slaves with the whites as their masters. Treatment of slaves on farm and plantation ranged from a decorous paternalism to extreme cruelty. Slaves reacted to their status in a variety of ways. Many accomodated themselves to the situation. Escape into other-worldly interests was undoubtly a widespread palliative. More badly, the Southern states regarded slaves not as persons, but as property, and enacted legislation to assure the stability of the slave regime and the complete subordination of the slave population. Slaves couldn't own property, posses fire-arms, engage in commerce, leave the plantation without permission from their owners, testify in the court except against other Negroes, make contracts, learn to read and write, or hold meeting without the presence of white persons. They were prohibited from striking white persons, but the murder or rape of a slave

or of a free Negro by white person was not regarded as a serious offense, associated with the slave system and an essential part of its support was an elaborate rationalization of the inferiority of Negroes and of the wisdom and justice of a slave status for them.

When the reconstruction ended in 1876, the legal emancipation of the Negro was in fact soon denied him. Since that time the American Negro had lived under legal, economic, and social limitations which had been especially severe in the Deep South but which differed more in degree than kind in the North and West. These limitations had taken the form of segregation and discrimination. Negroes had forced capitulation in most cities to desegregated public transportation and the removal of 'colored' signs on railroad-station, doors and drinking fountains. Public services, such as libraries, municipal golf courses and parks and for the most parts been desegregated, and many public swimming pools as well. Coming up to the 20th century, history noted vast movement among American Negroes -actual migration to Northern urban centers, advancement in economic position, and political step toward exerting pressure through a united negro 'community'. Nevertheless, despite tremendous strides through federal legislation and

legal action, the Negro after mid-century lagged behind the white population in earning power, house facilities, and educational opportunities. Moreover, rising expectations when frustrated brought despair and anger.

Blacks lived under harsh terror of white strength that were always ready to kill them just because their black skins. Whites curbed their lives so strictly and swept chances away for blacks to stand equally as them. Racial prejudices and discrimination spread and had become a major social problem in America. Violence for Negro by white person was omnipresent : these were beating by whites, black women raped, black men (black niggers) fighting back, some of them castrated and lynched. Savalor, fanaticism and fear characterized the decaying black tenements of the Southern cities. The worse tragic terror occurred when a racial movement led by white known as 'Ku Klux Klan took place. It was political movement to eliminate black race. If the black condition was previously dull, this terror made it getting worse. Yet, the situation went on.

Negroes had been treated with flagrant discrimination by the police and by the court of law. The marginal man, Negro, confronting a harsh environment, the scorn of fellow citizen, physical and psychological oppression,

could either internalize his frustration, suffering inwardly as a victim, or become a rebel, striking out at others. The victim accepted his predicament, elevating pain to a moral virtue; the rebel responded violently in an attempt to survive. But Negroes' dreams of power were undercut by the reality of Jim Crow and more subtle discrimination. Ambition was encouraged, impotency reinforced. All entrances and exits were blocked. All these provoked Negro rioting and acts of violence-rebellion. Those signified their struggle to overcome the effect of slavery and Jim Crowism in their native land.



CHAPTER IV

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF RICHARD WRIGHT AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NATIVE SON