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Bertha Mason and Universal Sisterhood in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre: A Feminist Critique of Failed Sisterhood

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the radicalized and gendered oppression of Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, demonstrating how she is mistreated not only by white men but also by white women, thereby violating the principle of universal sisterhood. Through a feminist lens and a critique of universal sisterhood, the study analyzes how Jane, the key narrator, describes Bertha in dehumanizing terms such as "demoniac," "hyena," and "tigress," reinforcing racial stereotypes. Using a qualitative and inductive approach, the research reveals that while white women in English society possess opportunities for social mobility, Black women like Bertha are denied agency, voice, and identity. Drawing on Spivak's argument, the study highlights how women with weaker social and racial backgrounds are rendered invisible in contrast to Western white women supported by historical and cultural privilege. The analysis concludes that feminism's claim of common oppression is flawed, as women experience oppression differently; consequently, universal sisterhood cannot be sustained when racial inequality persists and one woman's advancement comes at the cost of another's marginalization.

Keywords: Jane Eyre, Universal Sisterhood, Black Feminism, Spivak Framework, Women Marginalization.

INTRODUCTION

The miserable and deserted lives of black women have been reflected in many works in English literature. They have suffered from oppression of both sexuality and racial discrimination (Shi, 2020). Charlotte Brontë's work *Jane Eyre* is taken as one of the English literary classics and one of the most outstanding works in the Victorian literature of black feminism which draws readers' attention towards Jamaican black woman Bertha Mason who suffers at the hands of men and women of the white race. Since its publication, English literary and cultural scholars have begun to explore the novel's thematic, ideological, and aesthetic complexity. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* describes the abysmal state of black women in English society. *Jane Eyre* paints the picture of Bertha Mason, the black woman, in insulting tone and violates the principle of universal sisterhood. The black women in general have always been suffering because of their identity crises, their backgrounds, their social values, complexion, legal rights and moral values were always a mystery for white people. In West, black women's traditional roles



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are still family-focused with domestic chores, rearing children and taking care of her household. Apart from these challenges, they are also oppressed with racial discrimination, sexual abuse and domestic violence (Dung, & Valdez, 2019). In the novel, *Jane Eyre*, Bertha is treated in the same way because she has been brought to England. She is encouraged to come to Great Britain. She brings a large estate with herself. Later on, she was robbed by the two same men who married her. She has been exploited by colonial power— white mentality. In this paper, the character of white Jane and black Mason are analyzed through the lens of black feminism and Spivak's highly influential essay *Can the subaltern speak?* Black feminist thoughts are suitable as a guiding theoretical framework for investigating the lives of Black women (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). In this novel unlike Jane, Bertha, a black woman, cannot learn, grow, or leave Thornfield. She is the madwoman in the attic, reduced to triviality and placed far away from other 'women particularly white women. She is also one of Spivak's subalterns along with Jane Eyre, who most of times appear to be the victim of maltreatment and isolation. Since she has no control and she appears only to communicate through her violent acts. The readers come across the fact that Bertha sets fire to Thornfield and she kills herself by jumping off the roof and thus a subaltern lost her life due to maltreatment of white members of her society. The black and marginalized women are never treated as important and valuable as white women; and the irony of the fact is that white women have access to all those platforms at a high scale which can support women in all regards. This leads to the fact that black women are utterly neglected with respect to their basic human rights and the Feminism movement is not enough to solve the women problems on a larger scale. There are still hidden areas left which needs to be explored and dealt accordingly. Bertha is described as inhuman throughout the novel. The key narrator, Jane describes her laugh as demoniac and she is mentioned as a hyenal or Tigress. The turning of Bertha from human into a wild animal highlights the loss of Mason's humanity in the white men and women* eyes. So it is interesting to note that Postcolonial feminist theorists (i.e. Spivak, 1988; Mohanty, 2003) argues that Western feminist models are unsuitable for thinking of research with women in postcolonial sites and raise questions whether women of the Third World or all women could be conceptualized as unified subjectivists easy to locate in the group of women (Mohanty, 1991c). Many black feminists would prefer a "Woman Doctrine" as a term to express their views *Jane Eyre* is a beautiful literary piece, which depicts the realities of all the ages and gives voice to the words of those people who interrogate the multidimensional problems faced by women in general and Black women in particular. In this novel, readers come across several incidences based on the realities of that time which supports the fact that universal sisterhood cannot be claimed with logic. In the novel the main character, Jane, is speaking directly to her readers and tells the entire story.

Methodology:

As for as the methodology and procedural dimensions of the study are concerned, this paper utilizes Spivak's essay and feminist theoretical lens using qualitative analysis to examine the marginalization of Black women in *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. It intends at critiquing feminist movements' generalized concept of "Sisterhood," which overlooks the unique struggles of women of color. It aims at contrasting portrayals of Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason to show how Black and Creole women are oppressed not only by white men, but also by white women, violating the principle of universal sisterhood. Using a feminist theoretical lens, the study analyzes the division of women



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based on race and the role of white women in perpetuating racial oppression. The study is qualitative, focusing on these two central characters and drawing from secondary sources to address key questions about gender, race, and solidarity in the novel. It equally focuses on why Jane, rather than Bertha, is depicted as the heroine and how the novel reflects domestic violence and racism.

Literature Review:

The novel *Jane Eyre* has previously been analyzed from different perspectives but the following passages have been taken from the novel and relevant literary works to support the idea of criticism of universal sisterhood and the Black feminism movement which claims to secure and administer the problems of women belonging from all kinds of backgrounds and areas. This paper has selected *Third world and the Politics of Feminist* by Chandra Talpade Mohanty who claims that Universal Sisterhood is not possible as every woman has her own personal issues.

Gao (2013) tells us that Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847. This novel had had a great influence upon the English society at that time. For a long time, readers favored the image of *Jane Eyre* very much. *Jane Eyre* is the first, also the most popular novel to represent the modern view of women's position in the English society. Since the publication of the novel, different scholars have reviewed it from different perspectives. Gao has assessed the character of Jane. The researcher says that the main protagonist, *Jane Eyre*'s unbeaten pursuit for esteem leaves a good impression on readers. She struggles hard for equality on the economy and to get married. Her love is based on independence and she wants to stand on equal footing with her man. She overcomes her obstacles in life and marries happily. She speaks for herself. She is not tempted by money and fights hard to gain her position. In fact, the researcher does not discuss her as a marginalized figure who speaks for herself. In fact, she talks for herself and represents her own self in good manner. Gao may not come across the Spivak's essay *Can Subaltern speak* but the assessment shows that Jane is one of the key characters in the Victorian novel who speaks for herself. She is not represented by someone else. McFadden (1996) says that in the novel, Jane goes against the expected type by -refusing subservience, disagreeing with her superiors, standing up for her rights, and venturing creative thoughts (Margaret, 1997, p. 325-346).

Likewise, Bhalla (2017) talks about the keen observation of Charlotte Brontë. She says that Charlotte Brontë reveals the harsh realities of a social structure of her society in which there are vast disparities in the distribution of wealth. Monetary system of the society was based on hypocrisy and self-interest of the wealthy elite class. The lower class was not given their due rights. She was not indifferent to a marginalized section of her society. Bhalla quoted Brontë's words to support her point of view regarding the keen observation of the novelist. Brontë states that Vice is often mistaken for virtue and the world [finds] it convenient to make external show pass for sterling worth ... It may hate him who dares to scrutinize and expose, to raise the gilding and show base metal under it, to penetrate the sepulcher and reveal channel relics, but hate as it will, it is indebted to him (Brontë, 1857, p.6) The bleak and dark images in the entire novel force readers to feel the sense of estrangement that Victorian women in a male dominated and patriarchal society in which women cannot find shelter and security for which all human beings long. Charlotte was struggling against her oppressive society. The publication of *Jane Eyre* was a great success in the Victorian period. As one can see Victorian women through the eyes of Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*. Indeed, it was a magical success of a female writer, an era where women were given little space in literary



Critique of Universal Sisterhood:

According to the Collins dictionary, -sisterhood is the affection and loyalty that women feel for other women who they have something in common with (1979). Likewise, feminist has borrowed a statement from Mahatma Gandhi "No one is free when others are oppressed". The feminist movements and discourses have been centered around the notion that if one woman is oppressed, then all are oppressed (Sherrick, 1982, Mohanty 1988 & Burton, 1991). However, this movement of Universal Sisterhood is criticized by numerous writers, activities and antifeminists such as Wollaston, De Larey, Mohanty, Spivak and Hooks on the ground that it does not solve the problems of all women around the globe. This movement is centered around western feminists and addresses only their issues.

Ong (1996) also argues that Universal Sisterhood is temporary because it ignores all the differences between women, their historical and cultural backgrounds, the women of Western world and the Third World. However, it is observed that the ongoing sisterhood, dominated by western feminists is strategic and it does not exclude the variety of alternative visions of female groups. She summarizes her paper by saying that many of the famous literary texts and research papers are evident of this fact that feminism as a whole does not satisfy women of multi-diverse societies and nations.

Similarly, Spivak (2003) also criticizes the UN women's rights movements. She particularly talks about Beijing conference based on inequalities of representations of women to address their problems. According to Spivak, the Beijing conference couldn't answer to Third world women's problem. But unfortunately, instead of getting chances and addressing their concerns, they are further victimized internationally. She says that all groups of women need to be addressed in order to secure their dignity. The women's representative of elite feminist groups cannot represent women of marginalized societies. They will have to speak for themselves and they will have to raise their voices for their rights

Likewise, Wagner (2009) opens a debatable topic that anti-feminists have been additionally marginalized in regard of literary developments and are considered as underestimated. It is because they seek to draw new attention and do not promote feminism and so called universal sisterhood but talk about the significance of anti-feminist 16 representation of literary developments. Like other fields, in the novel, one can find a lot of literary pieces as well as authors victimized and highly neglected for antifeminist ideas.

Interestingly, Tungohan (2010) says that representation of Black women in UNO is nominal. She is totally ignored in the highest forum of nations. The intersectional analysis of women on separate levels is not being observed even in the highest organization— UNO. She also questioned the concept of Universal Sisterhood as how can these women's rights are universal and then what is the purpose of this entire movement. The ground realities have been ignored because women belong to a diverse range of groups cannot be globally unified and considered as a single body. She suggests that UN based women's rights movements or organizations should simply realize that there is a complete absence of attention given to women from subnational groups. The developing projects of UN must pay attention to this neglected group of women— women of the Third world. However, the researcher does not discuss how to prompt the literature of women of the Third World in the highest forums.

Likewise, Hooks (2011) examines that within the feminist movement, racial conflicts



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between white women and Black women continue and it is never ending process. She says that more work and attentiveness are required to address the issue of racism and to strengthen solidarity among the women from different backgrounds. . Hook insists that 1980's feminism was racist and it ignored interwoven issues of race and class. She claimed that if women utilize racial and class power to dominate other women then sisterhood cannot be realized and it will not address their issues. According to her, the idea of sisterhood originally emerged from a womens liberation which was initially based on the idea of common oppression which denotes that women do share certain areas of oppression like gender discrimination and lack of basic human rights therefore, many women felt a sense of boosting a universal sisterhood and this in return shaped into further classifications. She mentions that feminist movements are highly politicized. They no longer strive for mutual goals but contort each other. Therefore, they are facing difficulties in strengthening their relationship.

Lastly, Zaytoun & Ezekiel (2016) opined that how can women hope for achievements of their collective goals without knowing one another, their desires and their problems. Without the sense of connection and believe in true sisterhood, universal emancipation of women is not possible. The term sisterhood needs solidarity. However, women across the boat do not get what they pay for. She further argues that critiques of sisterhood are not only coming on front from the anti-feminist parties but from the feminist parties themselves. Therefore, these movements should bring harmony among all the groups of women. These movements should collectively advocate a pure sisterhood not rooted on the basis of physical or cultural differences.

The above discussion leads to a conclusion that the novel Jane Eyre has been analyzed from different perspectives on different levels, including feminism. The reviews of literature show how Universal sisterhood has been addressed, criticized, evaluated and praised. However, the majority of scholars, researchers and prominent literary writers, mostly from Third World countries, seem to agree that Universal Sisterhood does not address the issues of Third World Women.

The novel has been discussed from feminist perspective but there is still 2 gap to study the novel through the lenses of Blackfeminism and Spivak's — Can Subaltern Speak! in order to deeply analyze the idea and need of criticizing universal sisterhood which measure all people on the same scale. The marginalized voice of Blackpeople represented by Bertha is yet fully explored. Likewise, the research has found that oppression does not always come from opposite gender but females themselves treat other people badly. They are also not on a single point. To support my argument, the character of Jane, Bertha and Reed are analyzed to reveal the fact that one woman is responsible for the sufferings and agonies of another woman. Hence, research gap serves the purpose to pay attention to the issues of third-world women and their lacking representations on the platform of feminist movements highlighted in the novel.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Jane Eyre as a critique of Universal Sisterhood

Critics and academia are raising the question of women's generalization in the "Third World" as a monolithic and consistent group. Instead of being a binary division between the women of "First World" and "Third World," Mohanty argued that the diversity of social elements affecting women in a complex way must be examined. We need to also open up the chance to share experiences with some women in the Third World in some Western countries. Women are usually portrayed as victims in the "Third World," regardless of their class, origin, or religion. Some of scholars are concerned with



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changing the way western feminists portray "Third World female women" as a homogeneous group. For instance, some of them have made clear that all "Third World women" are generalized and stereotyped as under some common "religious oppression" (Jessica and Malin; 2013). The applause of women in the third world does not allow them to take advantage of the concept or movement of feminism as desired. The alignment of West and Third World women is becoming increasingly stringent every day. The Western women's researchers are focused only on the problems of White women, only Western women benefit, and women in the Third World are highly disregarded and regarded as worthless. To say that there is much exaggeration is not embellishing.

Another side of analysis also reveals that only through similar oppression, sisterhood can be created. This truth is important to note because it is defective that not all women are oppressed in the same way. The idea that women are life friends, always 31 supporting themselves and giving priority to friendship was not clearly seen in the feminist movement which shows that oppression does not always come from the opposite gender, while women themselves are not on one point. Sisterhood idea is that all women suffer from the same oppression and can thus easily unite and form a living bond based on this oppression.

In her capacity as a character that represents the female perspective of the 19th century, Jane Eyre presents strong feminist arguments among her male counterparts concerning the role of women in society. In particular, Jane directly confronts and debates the idea that equality is determined by age or on the basis of gender or sex, noting to Mr. Rochester, -your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experient (Bront& 157). What we see in Jane's audible expression is a manifestation of her beliefs as a female character implying that her own experience and use of time rivals that of Mr. Rochester. Jane promotes an idea radical for the time that claims to superiority are dependent not on the basis of sex or gender I ' but rather on how we make use of our own resources as a part of this greater fabric that is society.

In the novel, Jane Eyre, one can see that Western literary circle has represented Black women as Black as possible. 40 Charlotte Bronte is known as an ardent and serious champion for Victorian woman. She was an advocate for women, however she was not considered to be a feminist. There is a distinct difference between advocating for women' matters and being an advocate for women' rights and being a feminist. The proof is that an advocate could be male or female. The novel Jane Eyre is an illustration to prove this idea (Suliman, 2015). Charlotte Bronte invented the novel out of the fabric of her own inner psyche and her own passions. Jane herself , Charlotte's resolute character, and also the protagonist of the novel. Character Jane Eyre is "Charlotte's avatar within her fictional world" (Mirriam, 1973).

The novel's reading shows that the text of literature has complicated interactions with the political, historical and social circumstances of the period, in which colonialism is a central factor throughout the 19 century and 20 century century. Jane Eyre not only explores the changes in the social landscape that were taking place in England during the first decade of the 19th century, but also the background of colonization and the resistance to it. Charlotte Bronte denigrates the current and current historical background of British slavery by referring to an ephemeral time of Roman actions of enslavement. Jane calls at John Reed in the opening chapter: "You're like murderers, you are similar to a slave-driver. You are the Roman Emperors. (Brontg, 2001, p. 6)

In Jane Eyre, through the character of Masons, we are introduced to the plantation—owning community in West Indus (Jamaica). This novel can be interpreted as references to the history of the Great Britain and its colonies. Rochester_s first marriage to Bertha



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Mason—the Jamaican-born— gains him a fortune of thirty thousand pounds, which makes it possible for him to lead a serene and peaceful life. It highlights how Westerns exploited the Black for their vested interest. Women in the novels have different problems and they cannot be grouped under one category. Jane was more looking to gain grounds for project herself as a lady who can speak for herself. Bertha Mason often violently as she has is voiceless creature who is presented as dehumanized figure. So, Sisterhood does not take account of the fact that not everyone has the same problems as all other women or people. Sisterhood is just a facade not covering all of the sides. In particular, a white woman like Jane will not be faced with the same problems as 41 Black woman like Bertha. It would be highly unlikely that they would build a sisterhood based on oppression. Within this context, Meyer (2007) affirms that Jane's inheritance of twenty thousand pounds has a colonial source:

It comes from her uncle in Madeira, who is an agent for a Jamaican wine manufacturer, Bertha's brother. The location of Jane's uncle John (Eyre) in Madeira, off Morocco, on the West African coast, where Richard Mason to stop on his way home from England, also indirectly suggests, through Mason's itinerary, that John Eyre's wealth is implicated in the slave trade (, Meyer ,2007, p.93).

It is evident that, without the wealth accumulated by colonialism, Rochester would not have been able to enjoy the luxury in Thornfield Hall. Also, neither would Jane be able to assist in the marriages that were reputable for her close relatives. It is evident that, without the colonial riches, Jane Eyre and her cousins were bound to be as humble governesses of wealthy family members within English society. The reason why white men aren't interested in being in any other job that the one they're currently, is because of the advantages they have. The world for them is a secure place with all the amenities and comforts and where the tribulations of life do not have any relationship to their lives, which is protected by their white-dominated governments. It is worth being observed that White men are not afraid to assume any position when they are offered the chance to increase their income and gain wealth. To achieve this, their pride is stifled and they may end up in the worst form possible when they're involved in the land-grabbing industry. The same notion has been reported in the novel when Rochester becomes rich by depriving Bertha of her money. She is exploited not only physical and mentally but also finically.

In this novel, Edward Rochester's revelation of Bertha Mason following the interrupted marriage is characterized by misrepresentation based on race and dehumanization. The character of Bertha Mason is portrayed as being bestial and monstatic, hence, the borderline between the human and the animal is erased, and her specific violence is associated with her Creole background and Jamaican extraction. she loses her voice and agency. she appears in the text only via distorted representation and voice. According to Spivak (1985), the text gives the subject status and moral power to the character of Jane Eyre at the expense of Bertha Mason, and this occurs because of the racial and colonial hierarchies. According to Black feminist theorists, Western feminist theory does not address this particular form of oppression based on races and instead needs to address the implicit bias (Lewis & Mills, 2003). Moreover, the novel links the Jamaican West Indies to madness, inferiority, and devils, while the continent of Europe is portrayed as a site of order, progress, and salvation.

The Third World in the globe is represented as a timeless place, static and trapped in antiquity. However, Third world women are represented by the West as the creatures of a male power—fantasy. The women in these countries express unlimited sensuality as they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing (Said, 1978; p. 207). This may



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account for Bertha Mason's attempt to set fire to Rochester's home while he is asleep and her eventual destruction of Thornfield Hall. Bertha's revolt against her confinement and setting fire to Thornfield cannot be seen as an act of suicide rather she was forced to commit suicide. In fact, it is a revolt against colonialism in all its negative manifestations and representation. Meyer (1996) says in this regard, ~the story of Bertha does make an indictment of British imperialism in West Indies and the stained Wealth that came from its oppressive rule (71). So, ————— 43 Bertha's death is seen as a protest of the people who were colonized against the colonizer and a quest for freedom that ended with the death of a loved one. Bertha's suicide is a testimony to her opposition to colonial rule and its negative representation as the novel doesn't allow her to tell her personal story. The readers hear her story told and told by Rochester and the main character Jane Eyre. Bertha's outspoken presence can be seen as a resistance to the role played by people who view her as not human. Through the entire novel, Bertha seems to resist any representation of the narration of Jane Eyre. Her voice has been snatched away from her and she talks through violate actions.

Jane Eyre seems to reject the idea of universal sisterhood as Bertha was tortured in the presence of her fellow sisters. Jane Eyre depicts Bertha's character as black as] possible. The concept of universal sisterhood scatters in pieces when Jane Eyre uses words like _savage face' for Bertha. Though, Jane shows some sympathy for the Bertha. But at the end, one comes across that when she gets married to Rochester, a 'white woman in the form of Jane supersedes a negro woman. The Blackwoman is deserted and her existence is denied. Rochester ignore his wife and tells Jane -You will when you are out of the country: when you get back to Spanish Town, you may think of her as dead and buried— or rather, you need not think of her at all (Bront&, 2001, p 323). In the novel, Bertha character has been revealed as a mad woman. In fact, she is painted as black as possible. The narrator describes her character and actions in an offensive way as she says: I was physically influenced by the atmosphere and scene, and my ears were filled with the curses the maniac still shrieked out; wherein she momentarily mingled my name with such a tone of demon-hate, with such language — no professed harlot ever had a fouler vocabulary than she: though two rooms off, I heard every word—the thin partitions of the West India house opposing but slight obstruction to her wolfish cries. (Brontg, 2001, p469)

Jane representing the white race and seems ignore the Black woman Bertha. During 19 Century, race conflict among white women and Blackwomen continues to be one area of fighting within the feminist movement. The Sisterhood ideology expressed by modern cultural feminist activists showed no recognition of the fact that racist discrimination, oppression and exploitation against multicultural women by white women had prevented both groups from feeling that they had common interests or political concerns. Hooks (1986) mention that in history, many feminist movements had white women as the most directly dominant members representing white supremacist mind set up. They were thought to be more brutal and dehumanizing than racist white men (Hooks, 1986). So the presence of these white women, universal sisterhood could not be maintained. Black women would suffer at the hands of white man. In the novel, Jane consistently uses of derogatory words for Blackwoman, Berthas reflect the white supremacist mind set up of Europeans.

Through the character of Bertha, Charlotte's Jane Eyre negates the concept of Universal Sisterhood and supports the views of Mohanty who criticizes Morgan for his concept of "universal sisterhood based on the common opposition of womenl . Women's liberalization view of Sisterhood was based on the idea of common oppression.



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Apparently, the beliefs in the notion of common oppression were primarily highlighted by the capitalist white women, both liberal and radical. According to Hooks (1986) and Montany (2003), the idea of "common oppression" was a false and corrupt platform that masks and mystifies the true nature of the diverse and complex social reality of women.

It is true that women unite in marches, protests and coalitions for just causes of women. However, sisterhood does not take account of their facts that not every woman has the same problems. Sisterhood is just a facade not covering all the sides. In fact, the women in the novels are separated from one another by sexist behavior, racism, class and privileges. For instance, Mrs. Reed has been presented as harsh woman who tortures young Jane. Likewise, Bertha, the Black has been separated on — e e — 45 the basis of racism. So sisterhood as slogan of unification no longer evokes the spirit of power in unity as depicted in the novel. In the novel, the white woman, Jane attacks the white women supremacy and thus participates in the fight against sexist oppression simultaneously. Though Jane challenges the supremacy of white women like Mrs. Reed but cannot fight for cause of Bertha. Even Jane declares the matches between Mr. Rochester and Bertha as -unequal matches! — unequal matches are made every dayll (Bronte, 2001, 242). This shows that colour division will not end until women have the responsibility to unite their cultures and share their knowledge.

Bertha has been ignored even by her own gender- women of her society. So splinting into various groups has created unnecessary barrier to sisterhood. If white would give up their prejudice then these women can all live together. The feminist movements were composed of such women who were ignorant about racism and problems that women of color faced in the real world. Bertha Mason faces same problems and she expresses her anger before Rochester who challenges and tries to prove her mad and unequal. In fact, Bertha is described as -a clothed hyena: A fierce cry seemed to give the lie to her favorable report: the clothed hyena rose up, and stood tall on its hind-feet. _Ah! sir, she sees you!*(Brontg, 2001, p .447).

It is clear crystal that many black women experienced white women as the most direct white supremacist group. These groups are more brutal and racist than racist white men (Meyer, 2007). -Jane Eyre was written in an ideological context in which white women were frequently compared to people of nonwhite races, especially blacks, in order to emphasize the inferiority of both to white men (Meyer, 2007: p. 43). Because the social status enjoyed by non-white races and white women was in a different league from white men within the hierarchy of social status,, it was a must for white women to preserve their status within the colonial system by dissociating themselves from the hierarchically inferior "Others" which is evident in the homogenous 'Othering' of Indians in Jane Eyre.

In fact, she is painted as black as possible by Rochester. But in reality she is not that much violent in nature . One of the accounts of Bertha Mason which drew most attention of the readers, was the scene of Bertha Mason emerging into Jane Eyre*s bedroom on the night before Jane and Rochester*s wedding day. Analyzing the 46 scene, Bertha did not react violently and she did not throw herself to Jane Eyre, nor did she scratch Jane as she always did to Rochester. However, Bertha just — thrust her candle close to Jane’s face and — extinguished it |l [5], then she left the room quietly without hurting Jane. -she thrust up her candle close to my face, and extinguished it under my eyes. I was aware her lurid visage flamed over mine, and I lost consciousness: for the second time in my life— only the second time—I became insensible from terrorl (Jane Eyre, p. 443). In fact, the protagonist, ~Jane Eyre, represents British Colonialist issues more outstandingly than most of other 19th century domestic novelsl (Gao, 2013; p. 9). Bertha Mason's screams are told as a comparison with the wild and exotic condor. It is juxtaposed with bird of



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prey. In addition, I believe the readers are able to look through this picture to another one that hints at returning to the suppressed: Bertha Mason and beyond the fact that Jane Eyre herself.

Similarly, the universal sisterhood's notion has not only violated in Bertha's case but also in Jane's case as she is badly treated by her own fellow sisters and motherly figures— Georgiana, Eliza and aunt Mrs. Reed. Montany (2003) mentions that women are natural foes and there will never be solidarity among them. In the novel, readers come across that Jane is either treated badly by her own female relatives or she is tortured by men in her female relatives. For instance, Jane has been beaten by John in the presence of her female relatives. She screams, — *Wicked and cruel boy!** I said. *You are like a murderer— you are like a slave-driver—you are like the Roman emperors!* (Brontë, 2001, p. 12). No female member of the family came to rescue her from the clutches of Jane who used to bully her most of the time. It is the irony of the fate that motherly figure, Mrs. Reed confined her to Red Room instead of punishing her own son for wrong doings. It was the room where Mr. Reed died some years ago. In fact, it was such a room where a young girl could not find herself at ease. Therefore, she fainted because of fright.

...seeking for equality is another important theme through Jane Eyre's struggle for self-realization as a feminist. People in Victorian age have the idea that people are not born equally, people in high rank despise people in low rank and men are superior to women. Consequently, women like Jane | - I are treated unequally in every field. When Jane realizes the unfair situation, she rebels constantly for the basic right of equality. It well reflects Jane's resolution and persistence in struggle for self-realization as a feminist woman (Gao, 2013, p. 10).

Mrs. Reed is depicted as harsh lady who can go to any level to punish and humiliate Jane. Jane knew her evil nature and shows her real face to the world by saying that | *~People think you a good woman, but you are bad, hard- hearted. YOU are deceitful!* (Jane Eyre, 53). Mrs. Reed violates universal sisterhood as she has kept | the will of Mr. John secret as he has bequeath all his property to Jane in Maderia (West Indus). Mrs. Reed said that she had kept the letter secret because she could not see her happy. She died that night without feeling any repentance over her past of ill- treatment of Jane.

Race conflict between white and Black women remains the focal point of tension within feminist movements, and it is impossible to speak of political and social differences only at variance with the concept of universal sisterhood. In Jane Eyre, English society is represented as seeking racial concord, but the novel discloses that racism demolishes such an ideal. The fire in the house of Rochester embodies the chaos that racial discrimination creates, meaning that injustice because of color brings destruction to society and family. While all women are said to have joined hands in tussling for rights, there is still a Bertha Mason who does not have a voice, and this represents how Victorian feminism turned a deaf ear to specific oppression of Black women. In the absence of Black feminist movements during the nineteenth century, women of color were 'deprived of agency' and the dowry that Bertha brings with her cannot save her from the clutches of racial and patriarchal oppression.

Bertha Mason's role is offered up as a form of propitiatory sacrifices in the name of white feminist advancement in the form of Jane Eyre. Bertha Mason is shown in terms of monstrous imagery that is more demonic in nature—a term that describes her in relation to being compared to a “foul German spectre,” “a vampire,” exemplifying that she occupies the territory of the social “other” (Brontë, 2001). That white feminist success in the form of “Jane Eyre” requires Bertha's necessity illustrates that the idea of the success



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of the white female in her own marriage and social standing requires the negation of the Black female, something that occurs in the form that Black women throughout history have played an integral role in feminist causes in which white females derived the greatest benefit (Palmer, 2012). That Black females are relegated to a form of secondary regard in relation to their relevance in relation to “womanhood” is exemplified in that they are “less representative,” something described in Coles & Pasek (2020).

As a conclusion, the above analysis establishes that the idea of universal sisterhood will never come to pass unless the need to consider women of different races, cultures, and circumstances in individual contexts is recognized. The character of Jane Eyre comes out as a representation of individualism and resistance against patriarchy, and she acquires the power to voice herself in the novel (Brontë, 2001). On the other hand, the resistance of Bertha Mason comes out as her madness and criminal acts, instead of a voice expressing herself, and she is consequently silenced and omitted from the novel, posing a critical question of whose voice will feminism protect in the novel.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

To sum up, this paper has explored the darker side of feminist literature by examining the repression of black or third world women, specifically through the portrayal of the figure of Bertha Mason in the context of Jane Eyre, a feminist novel. The conclusion that arises from this analysis is that women are part of the oppressive apparatus when it comes to other women, specifically when it comes to classed differences correlated to race. While the white female protagonist, Jane Eyre, manages to overcome societal hindrances due to her determination and status as a white female, the status of the black other, Bertha Mason, despite having more advantages in terms of class but differing in race, is gradually dehumanized to the point of death. The female other is depicted as a devilish, bestial, uncivilized figure through the stereotyping of the non-white, non-white female figure.

The study further illustrates that universal sisterhood is mainly an illusion since it does not take into consideration the differences in race, culture, and class that exist among women. Feminist theory, especially Western, falls short of representing Black women, who also have voices that should be represented in feminist discourse. The novel reinforces colonialist ideology in the way it constructs hellish and savage West Indies and India, yet justifies their exploitation. The character of Bertha has been sacrificed to achieve a happy ending for Jane; white female advancement has always rested on the marginalization of women of color.

Although Jane Eyre can be read as the unconventional heroine who speaks for herself and resists patriarchal constraints in articulation of Spivak's idea of the subaltern insisting to speak for herself, her empowerment does not translate into solidarity with Bertha. This selective empowerment underlines the fact that common oppression cannot be a ground for genuine sisterhood. Racism is a major impediment to women's solidarity; white women in the novel, like Mrs. Reed and Jane Eyre, uphold white supremacy and sometimes show more cruelty than men do (Hooks, 1986).

Ultimately, the conclusion of the study is that a universal sisterhood will never be realized without taking into consideration the histories, identities, and experiences of women who come from different racial and cultural backgrounds. If a truly inclusive and transformative feminism will be actualized, then the oppression of women in particular must be considered. This study recommends further investigation into contemporary feminist movements with emphasis being placed on subaltern women as well as Black women. It is imperative to identify literary as well as critical studies focusing on giving



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voice to marginalized women as well as educating them on laws of protection, systems of security, as well as human rights.

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