1.1) Place of Autobiography in the History:

There has been a long discussion as to the place of Autobiography, Biography as a genre in relation to disciplines like History, Psychology and Sociology. Literary critics have viewed autobiography, biography as an unreliable source for historians because of its subjectivity. It was therefore, classified along with popular fiction. However there too it was rejected on the ground of factuality. Autobiography and Biography are non-fictional forms of literature, which are very much intimate in tone and in several ways unique in nature.

It has a long history, though historically speaking, from the 17th century onward Samuel Johnson and Roger North received attention with their essays and letters. In the 17th and 18th centuries Autobiography, biography began to emerge as a separate literary forms distinct from History. In the 19th century Autobiography received the status of a master discourse. The standard for writing Autobiography in the 20th century generally looks back to the pattern set by James Boswell in his work on Samuel Johnson. Mostly they were political and didactic.

It was only in the mid-20th century with the emergence of the so-called ‘new-history’ that the experiences of working classes, women and other ‘minorities’ were incorporated into these genres. Even historians accepted Autobiography, Biography with its subjectivity on the ground of its factuality. Moreover, they considered Autobiography, Biography as a better source of information about the given period. William Spengemann in a study of The Form of Autobiography 1980 (xvi- xvii) points out: --
‘Autobiography as a literary form may resort to a limited range of modes of expression. It can be historical self-explanation, philosophical self-scrutiny, poetic self-invention or self-expression.’

It is presented with all its singularities that is personal perspective and also multiplicity that is social, psychological perspective. It is a journey from ‘innocence to experience’. It would be fruitful to turn to a historical survey of the emergences of biography and autobiography.

Generally a literature is equated with a collection of stories, poems, plays that revolves around a particular topic. It is broadly said that Literature is symbolic record, which can include images, sculptures as well as letters and to some literature means everything that has ever been written. Anything from the earliest poem of Homer to today’s web pages can be considered literature. There are various kinds of literature depending upon the purpose, language and culture. It is considered as fine -arts and it means more than printed words. Through literature, people meet characters they can identify with and sometimes find solution to their problems. It has linear plot structure and a text with a physical form. Philosophy, History, Journalism Legal and Scientific writings have traditionally been called literature. Historical writings, which are known as creative non-fiction can be still called literature.

1.2) Classes of Literature: --

There are two main classes of literature-Fiction and Non-Fiction. Fiction is the writing that an author creates from his imagination. He may include personal experiences or facts about real life and events. Most fiction is a narrative writing e.g. novel, drama, short stories, and poetry. Non-fiction is factual writing about real life situation, which includes essay, biography, autobiography and diary. Different historical periods have emphasized different characteristics of
literature. Early works had religious or didactic purpose. The 20th century brought demands for symbolism or psychological insight in the delineation and development of character.

1.3) Biography:

In 1683 Dryden used the term ‘Biography’ for the first time. He defined it as ‘the history of particular men’s lives’. At that time it was just a collection of varied details not designed artistically. The Oxford Dictionary defines Biography as ‘history of the lives of an individual man’ as a branch of ‘literature’. But Harold Nicholson says ‘Biography is a truthful record of an individual, composed as a work of art’. (1928, 34) Dr. Johnson prefers Autobiography to Biography because he said, “every man’s life is best written by himself.” St. Augustine’s ‘Confession’ is an example of full and frank self-analysis. By the end of the century, three notable autobiographers appeared in the English literature. Those were David Hume, Edward Gibbon and Benjamin Franklin. Each of them had entirely characteristics style, a clear and well-planned convincing account of their lives. Gibbon’s Autobiography (1911), Franklin’s The Autobiography (1950), have shown us the skilled and competent writer can make his autobiography a perfect work of art. Sir Osbert Sitwell, De Quincy, Benjamin Hayden, Shelly’s friend Trelawny, J. S. Mills, Ruskin, Morley, H. G. Wells, Lloyd Georges, Rudyard Kipling, George Moore, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi, and Pandit Nehru had already made their mark on literary era.

The word Biography has its origin from Greek language. ‘Bio’ means- life and ‘graphein’ means- write. It is a genre of creative literature and other forms of media like the film, which is based on the written account of individual life. Biography highlights different texture of personality including details of experience. According to Harold Nicholson in his, Development of English Biography, (1928,P.14)
...’It remains for me to differentiate biography from the cognate arts of self-portraiture, memoirs, diaries and confessions’. It must be admitted that these engaging branches of literature furnish a response closely analogous to that provoked by all but the very purest biographies. They stimulate curiosity; they awaken intense psychological interest.”

Biographer relies on wide variety of documents and viewpoints of others. By the late 20th century this creative form of literature was more focused on the lives of celebrities and politicians. With the technological advancement in the 20th century, multi- media, form of Biography became much more popular than literary forms. Visual and film images were able to elaborate new dimensions of personality that written forms could not e.g. The Biography Channel, The History Channel and History International. According to Nicholson Harold the faculties of supreme biographer: curiosity, acute psychological observation, humour, sympathy, immense synthetic force, and a genius for selection. It is equally applicable to autobiography also.

1.4) Autobiography: --

The word ‘Autobiography’ also originated from Greek ‘Auto’ means- ‘self’ ‘bios’ means ‘life’, ‘graphein’ means ‘write’. Writing of his/her own life story, from the viewpoint of the subject. It is entirely based on writer’s memory. Autobiography focuses on the ‘life and time’ of the writer. Looking back at a life and analyzing critically that ‘how I have lived’? And describing how he/she has changed from what he/she was into what he/she is now. According to Paul John Eakin, identity formation is difficult to pinpoint because it is an ongoing process. This form perfectly expresses the democratic faith in the individual, his importance right to be heard. The writer creates a cozy atmosphere and speaks directly to the reader, which has universal appeal. The personal pronoun ‘I’
invites more Intimacy than 'he' and 'she'. It is not only the graph from birth to death but also the manifestation of emotions of experiencing such incidents.

1.5) Status of Autobiography: --

One question is often raised is about the status of Biography/Autobiography as forms of literature. Generally the distinction made between fiction and non-fiction, literature, -non-literature is on the grounds of factuality. For instance history or journalistic writings, if it is not factual it is not worth reading or writing. Anything as a piece of writing, Edward Gibbon’s 'The Decline and Fall of Roman Empire' stands or falls as history; if it is filled with factual inaccuracies, no stylistic beauties are going to save that book. Where as in the literature factuality is not a factor for its validation. To take a celebrated example, The Sonnet of John Keats' On First Looking Chapman Homer is a case in point. In that poem Keats speaks about what he felt after reading Homer in the English translation by Chapman. He says he felt like some watcher of the sky who has discovered a new star or planet or he felt like 'Stout Cortez' after he had discovered the Pacific. As we all know it is not Cortez but Balboa who discovered the Pacific Ocean But this historical inaccuracy does not invalidate the point Keats is making. The point remains valid as Sydney reminds us in 'Apology' that poetical tools are always allegorical and not literal. This has all along been the line of thinking about literature and therefore there are different schools of thought regarding Auto/Biography literary form.
1.6 Scope of Autobiography: --

Keeping in mind the wider scope of the topic, the discussion will be based largely on the views expressed by Andre Mourois in his Art of Biography (1929) Saukville West in her biography of Saint Joan, (Introductory chapter) Pascal Roy’s Design and Truth in Autography (1960) As well as D. G. Naik’s Art of Autobiography (1962) the study will look at these works from a social point of view rather than the aesthetic one. There is always a scope for studying biography and autobiography more as a social documents than as aesthetic objects. This does not mean that such works do not have aesthetic dimensions. In fact they may have- but such a dimension is an incidental bonus, they exist primarily as documents subject to factuality.

Here the main questions to be considered are: How is Autobiography, Biography as forms of literature? What is the drive for writing autobiography, biography by women in general? And why are autobiography, biography written by the African- American women and Dalit women?

1.7 Autobiography as a form of literature: --

It is a European invention of comparatively recent date. As per the American Heritage Dictionary the definition of autography is “the story of a person’s life written by that person” The Cambridge History of English & American Literature believes autobiography to be “held together by the personality of the author ”. An autobiography is a recollection of one’s life told by that person including personal accounts, family heritage, daily references and personal creative style. It makes an exclusive story of their lives that only they can tell. It contains not only the story but also a significant message of life.
1.8 Andre Mourios's objections: ---

He has discussed some defaults or objections (p.26), which I prefer to put into his own words: --

1) -the first is the fact that we forget... for many of us, childhood is a complete blank ...we do not forget other periods so completely as we forget childhood... In particular, we forget our dreams... In fact, both dreams and reality are lacking in our narrative...

2) --'Deliberate forgetfulness on aesthetic grounds. If an autobiographer is also a gifted writer, he is tempted whether he wishes it or no, to make the story of his life a work of art...Memory is a great artist. For every man and for every women it makes the recollection of his or her life a work of art and an unfaithful record.'

3) 'that perfectly natural censorship which the mind exercises upon whatever is disagreeable...If the childhood has been discontented or shameful, it is virtually impossible for it to be sincerely related. We remember things when we want to remember them; we consign to oblivion anything that has hurt us-we change it, consciously at first, we make our narrative a little more pleasant, a little more lively, a little more exciting than the actual event...There is a touching *naiveté about such falsehoods; none the less they change the face of truth'

4) --Censorship..... Operated by a sense of shame. Very few men have had the courage to tell the truth about their sexual life....

5) -- 'In many instances we discover lofty, heroic motives for actions which we have performed unwittingly and unconsciously. Is it true that Caesar deliberately wished to cross the Rubicon? Read the memoirs of generals and
compare the magnificently clear piece of construction, which a battle becomes in the memoirs of the man who directed it with what the battle actually was...

6) --the perfectly legitimate desire to protect those who have been our companions in the actions which we describe…"

Such obstacles can affect this as a form of literature. Harold Nicolson felt that in every work of art, we can’t and shouldn’t expect ‘all the fact or details as science. Scientific interest destroys literary interest since autobiography is a delightful source of knowledge of human race. The honest autobiographies will also serve as an important tool for studying human psychology and the finer aspect of it in the development of the human race.

Andre Maurois suggests that it is not ‘form of art’ but a ‘work of art’ due to its unique quality of ‘artistic transference of reality.’ So these literature should be analyzed by its sociological criticism but it is the ‘art of society’ and life can not exist without ‘Art’. Social awareness can’t be the obstacle for its aesthetic and literary values, which are supported by truthfulness. Enrichment of experience and depth of thoughts are very important. Dr. D.G. Naik says: --

“Autobiography is delightful profitable source of knowledge of human race and indication are there that enable us to presume that this form of literary artists would be put fullest possible use in the immediate future and literary artists find the form of autobiography very natural and suitable to the releasing of their personalities in all it’s aspects. The subject of each and every writer is of his /her own, he/she holds his/her own personality which demands self-expression; he/she advocates his/her own character and conduct. “It is a difficult task something like balancing or dancing on a tight rope-a delicate job indeed.” (Dr. Naik, 1962, 30),
Of course, the motives of writing autobiography are different as Dean Inge in one of his ‘Outspoken essays’ enumerates some motives as vindication, self-exhibition, self-defense, black-mailing, putting forth complaints of disgruntled souls. (P.32). Some trifle motives such, as moneymaking of publisher and writer, ventilation of grievances or allegation or argument of defense can’t be ignored. But the autobiographer with the sincere desire to reveal as and how he/she is. It is the honest depiction of human being, milieu and that particular moment which collectively contribute to the creation of a great work of art. In fact universal concern and compatibilities are an artist’s motivating norms to transcend the specific and also to see beyond the visible and the empirical.

1.9 Similarity and differences between novel and an autobiography: ---

In the 19th century the ‘novel’ became the dominant form of literature. Autobiography is extended work in prose, usually in the form of story. Novel ends at some definite point but autobiography is a continuous progress of the life of the autobiographer. Literary critics of insight have thrown light on the similarities between the autobiography and fiction. Novel progresses with a full swing of imagination and impartiality and ends at some definite point while foundation of autobiography is Truth and it is a continuous process and development of the life of the autobiographer where all the experiences that is real life situation with the context of his own life. Every human being is unique. It is a basic urge to share the first-hand experience with others. By exchanging the feelings, thoughts, and emotions happiness increases and mitigate the pains. It is the manifestation, representation of self and trauma.

Autobiography helps in analyzing the experience and attitude of a person. It is a social, sociological documentation of subjective experiences. It is the product of the surrounding in which the writer has grown up.
It is the exploration of self in cultural context to time and space. The writer being the sensitive part of the society peeps into past, present as well as into future. It is the study of human identities, which examines social, historical, psychological, philosophical and cultural construction of that personality. Johnson says that himself should best write every man’s life only. Andre Mourois has given some qualities of an autobiographer. He needs to possess the analytical mind, genius and a perceptiveness of Proust, a sense of oneness of humanity as that of Fernandez, and beyond all this, an impartiality and an objective attitude in relation to his own life which would enable him to review it in the same detached way as Bergotte (Proust’s hero) reviewed the lives of his commonplace character.

1.10 Importance of Autobiography

So autobiography as an important form of literature of human expression crosses many divisions of race, gender and class. We get the exact personal knowledge and information. The strong emotions and feelings, the stress and strain, good and bad and the first hand experience of human nature and psychological insight are reflected vividly in the autobiography. It presents history as well as human nature. It outlines the history of mankind and of civilization. It is the most intimate and interesting form of literature for its specific reference to real people in the real world. Since self-revelation is the motive of writing of autobiography, it lacks artistic presentation and aesthetic urge. So all the autobiographies are necessarily not work of art. With the power, curiosity of self-examination and self-analysis, the writer can be the successful autobiographer.

Nicholson Harold had noted that due to lack of introspective attitude, he has not come across any real autobiography. The 20th century confirmed a great revolution in human thought. The sensitive, honest people became more thoughtful, watchful turned them into curious minds which can not helped
urgent need to express their inner self, conflicts, turmoils and then they took ‘autobiography’ as a natural and suitable form of literature. With this view, the ‘form’ of this work of art was immaterial in revealing the ‘self’; to follow the formal conventions are also not necessary. Writer has an absolute freedom of expressing his personality with all its shades. Pandit Nehru very significantly calls it a ‘World Within World’.

Autobiography as an important form of literature’ Even historians accepted Auto/Biography as subjective in nature and having ground of factuality. It is expressed with all its singularities that is personal perspective and also multiplicity that is social, psychological perspective. It is the honest depiction of human being, the milieu and the particular moments, which collectively contribute to the creation of a great work of art.

Their writings are a direct reflection of the society in which they live and for whom they write. Of course in many matters namely tolerance, patience and sacrifice the Indian women are far superior to males. Women play vital role in transforming the egalitarian society. They speak not as an individual, but as members of the society. It is not the story of their own life alone but is the picture of collective consciousness (W.B.E.DuBois, 1903, Preface), which conveyed through specific locale and language. These women with the depiction of social sensibilities, consciousness, commitment through discrimination asserted their identities and proved their creative potentialities. These women are emotionally attached to their life experiences and their communal identity. Some upper caste writers have criticized that Dalit writers are emotional, rebellious and aggressive. They should be neutral while writing. On this Mr. Sharankuar Limbale reacted that ‘if we remove consciousness and commitment from Dalit writer, he/she no longer remains the Dalit writer hence he/she cannot remain neutral while writing about his own life or about his own community. (Mukharjee, 2004, 158) In these writings of Dalit women the conventional aesthetics of literature has been replaced by the picturesque, factual narration of
their own lives in their own dialect, which they spoke in their childhood and formative years.

As per the Rasa Theory mentioned by Sharankumar Limbale in his Marathi version Sahityache Saudaryashastra, (1996) the addition in the number of ‘Rasas’ must be done namely i) revolt ii) cry (Mukherjee, 2004, 115-6) as proposed by Mr. Yadunath Thatte and Mr. Acharya Jawadekar is necessary in order to describe Dalit literature completely. This indicates the incompleteness and inadequacy of the present and conventional Rasa Theory. The existing Rasa Theory cannot explain the feelings, emotions, pains, anger, rejection, protest, injustice, struggle, discrimination and untouchability of Dalit life. (Aachval, 1972,7) The Dalits are the mankind of one kind but were always treated and discriminated as mankind of different kind.

These writings are more of an outburst of their experiences than a literary act. Is it appropriate to expect pleasure or beauty, instead of inspiration for social transformation, from a literature that has been written primarily to raise awareness? It must be kept in mind that any aesthetic consideration of Dalit literature is based on Ambedkar’s thoughts, and this literature’s literary value is embedded in its social values. (Mukherjee, 2004, 19- 20) It has a bigger role of inspiration and a message of self-empowerment hidden in it. It goes beyond aesthetics as far as the human values are concerned. These autobiographies are based on the stark and naked realities of the discrimination, oppression and slavery of thousands of years similar to the jail sentence of their lives supported only by factuality and independent without any ornamental, beautifying and analogies of the conventional theories are adequate or necessary to define this kind of literature. Only after observing the ground realities, the desire to impart wisdom, knowledge and actions in the right directions to make the life and the world better and beautiful is possible only.
Dalit literature does not require any support of aesthetic theory or other ornamental or standard language. The sorrow and agony is so deep therefore just as no ornament or cosmetics could help a diseased or a dead person, same is with Dalit literature. As Honorable P. L. Deshpande puts in his letter to Shantabai Kamble’s son about her life and book. He says this autobiography has been written with integrity and honesty in her personal and social life. It is very picturesque exactly as she lived her life. That could also be the reason for the title ‘The Picturesque Story of My Life’. Hence these autobiographies should be read not for finding or counting aesthetic purpose observed in the conventional writings but to study and understand ground realities of the inhuman agonizing life of these women.

As we know man in the quest of happiness and better life style has not only used science and technology but also art, culture and literature are equally important and necessary. The actual, factual realities of the Dalits reflected in these autobiographies add value to the literary canon. This new dimensions of this literature will impart knowledge and wisdom to understand the plights of Dalits to overcome the mental, psychological blockages and barriers. It will induce sensitivity, consciousness and commitment and compassion in the minds of people to help them to come out of their agonies. Then only in the true sense it will bring about the social awakening and social transformation. Dalit literature in this sense will serve as a tool or instrument to make the world better place to live in. Dalit and African- American women are the first educated representative of their plight and community. So their works also serve the purpose of showcasing the problems correctly and will help to find the appropriate solution, which reflected from their lives.
1.11) Why Women Writers? --

Right from the history of civilization, the existence of man and women has been put forth. From that time the idea of 'freedom' or 'liberty' was in discussion. Even Plato did not ignore the thought of 'freedom of women'. As far as state is concerned, there is no difference between man and women. Since the ancient time whatever bindings and restrictions were accepted unquestionably up to the 19th century. With the opportunity of education in the beginning of 20th century, there was awakening for setting free from this bondage, which was the harbinger of women-sensibilities and feelings to attain freedom from the social exploitation. They never denied 'womanhood', but they had started protesting against the roles imposed upon them. This was possible due to their strong desire of 'self-identity', independent thinking and will to set free from the social exploitation. Since the ancient time many bindings and restrictions were imposed on women were accepted unquestionably.

Autobiography as a form of literature crosses many divisions of race, gender, class and caste. It is an amalgamation of work of art and social history. Memories occupy the central part, daily routine life, different characters and society in which the writer lives. It is the writer's contemplation about religion, culture, history, society, morality and human behavior. With his/ her own unique creative style it becomes a nice piece of work of art with social documentation. Women autobiographies are not just 'of the women by the women & for the women', but it pervades the whole universe in her writings.

Lord Buddha, Karl Marks, Lokhitvadi, Agarkar, and Mahatma Phule were the strong source of inspiration and great impact of existentialism and socialism. It was the search of 'Self'- who am I/We? How and why do we live these lives? Why do we live this type of life? These questions perturbed these women. Entertainment or just to pass the time or aesthetic urge was not the purpose of
their writings but ‘self’ and other than the ‘self’ should be free from the clutches of tradition and culture. For her thoughts were important rather than emotions of suppressions and oppressions, in both types of women writings ‘human being’ acquired the central position and freedom from gender, racial, physical, psychological kind of exploitations.

It is a life history of the individual. With his/her own style and particular diction of his society he/she tries to make it artistic and curious. He/she observes his/her own personality critically at a distance inwardly and outwardly. This typical nature of this form of art makes it unique in the domain of literature. It is the generalization of individual character along with social contemplation. It gives the highlights and glimpses of the agonies, mental trauma and wretched situation through their writings. Since it is an account of a continuous, it is more than the drive to achieve excellence and creativity. It is her motive to share her agonies so that thousands in the same situation would inspire and kindle to achieve a minimum status of the human being in the socially deprived class.

It is a great feeling to be accepted in the society as an equally contributing person. When he/she retrospects curiously and critically, he/she ponders over why this is to me? Why to my people? The writing for them is a means against the social struggle, a commitment with the world. The entire horrifying, dehumanizing situation due to social strata was inevitable but now it is a high time to come out of that situation. This awareness of their agonies and identities are at the core of their writings. It is not only about him/herself but it is about the stark realities of social aspect hence it is social, sociological and psychological documentation. He/she becomes an instrument to change the mentality of people with whom he/she stays.

In the 20th century this form of literature was welcomed wholeheartedly at the same time there was a fear that with the same horrifying depiction of classicism and casticism, it can become monotonous. But sheer poverty, ignorance,
superstition, exploitation of the social strata and to get redemption, freedom from these is the main purpose of this writings. So repetition of these dehumanizing experiences is indispensable. But every writer is different and unique with his/her own experience.

1.12) Why Dalit and African-American women writers? --

The bindings and restrictions were accepted unquestionably up to the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. With the opportunity of education in the beginning of 20\textsuperscript{th} century, there was awakening for setting free from this bondage, which was the harbinger of women-sensibilities and feelings to attain freedom from the social exploitation. They never denied ‘womanhood’, but they started protesting against the roles imposed upon them. This was possible due to her strong desire of ‘self-identity’, independent thinking and will to set free from the social exploitation. Desire of self-exhibition is almost universal and natural; any common person can indulge in writing an autobiography. In 1935, Dr. Ambedkar declared that along with his people he would adopt Buddhist religion because Lord Buddha has great compassion for downtrodden people. He laid emphasis on non-violence in his teaching. Dr. Ambedkar was greatly impressed by two doctrines as follows: --

1) Eight-fold path [Ashtang - marg] i.e. proper attitude, balanced thinking, balanced speech, proper action, earning livelihood by proper means, proper exercise, proper memory and proper samadhi were his doctrine. And
2) Panchsheel that is asteya, control over the bodily (worldly or materialistic) desires, truthfulness and not taking intoxicants are the five rules. People of all caste, from all strata of society entered the Sangha in large number, as caste was no barrier. Lord Buddha established women’s sanghas too. He had glorified humanity and preached that all human beings are equal. Dr. Ambedkar found the right path of living human life with dignity, which glorified the greatness of humanity. It was the right step against the caste system, which denies the human
beings the very status of human being. This foundation of equality was logical and rational. In both type of women writings ‘human being’ acquired the central position and freedom from gender, racial, physical, psychotically kinds of exploitations.


The agonies, sufferings and literature have long association and this is well accepted and ubiquitous. These women have suffered due to ‘double exploitation’. That is 1) Gender 2) racial. Even after getting higher education, achieving higher status, she has often been cornered or faced the dilemma of choosing the right path. Their writings are the form of ‘protest’ against the conventions, which made her life dehumanizing, full of agonies. Strong foundation of thoughts and convictions are the driving force of her writing of autobiography, which gives the peace of mind and sense of achievement. As it is the natural, basic urge of human being. The life-story of women itself is only the tip of the iceberg. The uncontrollable drive to tell others the hardships of her life is the main reason of her writings.

At the initial stage the life of women was confined to the four walls of their houses and very much satisfied with carrying typical roles of daughter/wife/mother. Her progress was stunned by her sacrifices for the family. High-profile women autobiographies were full of typical description of housewives. But gradually with education, which led to self-awareness, it was possible to cross the threshold of the house. They stepped out into the society for taking out responsibilities/duties. This progress could give her confidence to explore her own identity and achieve greater scales of height/success in different areas and explore new avenues to conquer. The paradigm shift in her life and thinking was only due to education and opportunity to show her talent. The educated, independent, high profile women could make this bold attempt to write their autobiographies.
Whatever is the status and achievement of these women writers, it was very inspiring. In all walks of life women has made tremendous progress. They left indelible mark in the domain of literature. The study of changing women sensibilities, attitude, awareness, perception of her self-identities, her changing nature and perspective, her developing personality, her moulding development in an unfavorable social structure, the changing environment with respect to her own achievement is seen in her autobiography. The educated women are moving around and thinking freely and fearlessly. She has started expressing herself openly and boldly her compassion and passion, her pains and pleasures.

The Dalit and African American women autobiographies are not only the reflection of only ‘self’ but the reflection of society hence ‘I’ is projected in the form of ‘we/our giving better perception of individual life and social life as well. This is explicit right from the titles of all autobiographies such as Babytai Kamble’s Jeene Amche (1990) Shantabai Dani’s Ratrandin Ambha’, (1990) Anne Moody’s ‘Coming of Age in Mississippi’ (1968) and Sisters of Spirits (1986) edited by William Andrews. They have projected the hardships and struggles very strongly which they had to undergo by default or due to the unavoidable sufferings, poverty, ignorance, hunger, physical and social slavery. The Dalit women autobiographers- Babytai Kamble, Shantabai Dani and Shantabai Kamble stark, disgusting, was dehumanizing experiences full of agonies. Dalit Literature is a portrait of their agony, distorted identity and their Dalit sensibilities and fulfillment.

African-American and Dalit women in India share common horrifying, dehumanizing experiences in their respective societies. Owing to the nature of cultural differences, the plight of Dalit women is different than the plight of Afro-American women in the Post-independence era. Dalit women writers in India had suffered due to the hierarchy of four-fold caste system. They were kept at the lower wrung of the ladder of this man-made society and brutal caste-
system, where as Afro-American women had suffered in the past at the hands of White people. They become the victims of man-made slavery. American history itself reveals the fact that not only Black women but Black men were also the sufferers of the race.

The ‘whites’ in America exploited these people physically as well as mentally. When these women stepped into literary field, they revealed themselves in a unorthodox way therefore their struggle for identity, self-respect and image building becomes extra-Ordinary. The dalit and African - American women are the most neglected component of the respective societies from two different parts of the world; yet it is undoubtedly the most important constituent of the family and healthy society. The civilizations, which made outstanding, progress in all the fields like from the European countries; the caste and the gender bias kept the women away from the main stream of progress.

The paradox of this situation is white and higher caste women got fair treatment but the black women in American society and the Dalit in India suffered maximum. This study will try to throw light on their plight and misery. The study also aims to explore the wish to rise above and develop in the most trying conditions and forget the self for the betterment of the family and try to achieve higher goals such as education, service self development and do something for the society. Instead of thinking about taking revenge the writers try to something for the family and society. What is the thought and Inspiration behind this nobility? The acute sufferings of these women have been called as the ‘Agony’ and the journey from this state to ‘self identity’ and ‘self realization’ is very incredible and inspiring for any human being.

This study is also an attempt to explore this perseverance, tenacity, self-developing, fighting spirit, self-confidence, and forgiving, tolerant and enterprising nature of these women. The quest to liberate goes on because today also there are millions of neglected and suffering women in the same situation in
which these were in the beginning of their journey. This war will serve as the
guiding light and inspiration. The most important gift by these women is the
confidence they plant in the minds of many women of their kind.

1.14) The Objectives and Scope of the Study: --

The present study will highlight the historical, social and cultural factors, which
have compelled Dalit/Afro- American women to live a subhuman existence. The
place of these women in the context of multi - culturalism and globalization will
be analyzed in the light of the selected autobiographies. The world has come
closer due to globalization but the irony of the situation is that the people are
drifting away from each other. The value system has been changing drastically.
Therefore it is high time that the ‘modern women’ came together and raised
their voice against injustice, exploitation, and malpractices and especially
against the dehumanizing existence in the male dominance.

The focal point of this study is to draw some similarities and differences between
the selected writers because there are many instances of social injustice,
exploitation at physical and mental level, sexual abuse and economical
regression etc. The Afro- American women’s autobiographies, the stress is laid
on the importance of stable family life. Similarly Dalit women writers have also
represented their concern about the peace and stability within the family. We
perceive that the typical roles assigned by the society to daughter/wife/mother
were a distant dream because the African-American male slave was unable to
protect his daughter/wife/mother from physical and sexual abuse by his ‘White
masters’. These women had to face poverty as well as the racism severely and
there were instances of ‘Slave-breeding centers’ run by the whites in America.

The women from African continent were brought to the plantation of white
masters and compelled to live in a cage like animals and to induce to breed
children like cattle or sheep. This gave rise to sexual promiscuity, which
eventually led to the destruction of family life. Loss of self-esteem is a result of dehumanizing institution of slavery. It is terrible for women than the double burden of racism & sexism. We see the impact of this practice in their family life even today after the abolition of the institute of slavery. On the contrary it has been observed that the family life of Dalit women has been less shattered. In the family the status of Dalit women is much better than her counter-part that is African-American women as she has to work hard to look after her family and as Babytai Kamble reveals that Dalit women is forced to surrender before her husband otherwise she has to undergo physical assault and trauma. Moreover they become the victim of the evils of untouchability, humiliation, poverty, hunger, illiteracy, superstition and the object of lust. We get the same picture of the racist and sexist bias of American society everywhere in the selected autobiographies.

1.15) The justification and paradigm shift as inspiration: --

These women writers are seen carving for Self-expression and their equal status in the family as well as in the society. Their writings speak volumes of their agonies of self-shame, self-depreciation and self-hatred. But they don’t give up the efforts to rise above these negative feelings. On the contrary they are seen striving to establish their identities and making their own respectable position in the society. Shantabai Kamble, (Education-officer) Marian Anderson (world-famous singer) Shantabai Dani, Anne Moody (social activists) are shining stars in their societies.

Marian Anderson is a contralto of the 20th century in acquired the respected status in the American history. She herself acknowledged the changing position of Afro-American women in America. She herself spoke out her heart before 75,000 people sitting in the Lincoln Memorial Hall (prestigious place, once was denied to her for her public show due to racial bias)
"...They have been fortunate in many ways. Best of all I have lived in a time of Change and the end is not yet. It has been good to see the changes taking place in our America, good for all of us. I have a great belief in the future of my people and my country". (P.245)

Her feelings speak volumes of her optimism in the future of these women’s life. Being a gifted singer, due to racial discrimination was humiliated, ill-treated by the Whites and was not allowed to take lessons in music in Philadelphia.

Anne Moody’s *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (1968) popular autobiography unfolds the agonies of impoverished conditions. Being fatherless and hungry, she witnessed the ordeal of being born Black. She was forced to baptize at the hands of her mother and pastor. Her early memories of church are not very pleasant. She struggled through the insecurities of being black and constantly faced racism and harsh realities of segregated life in the rural South.

The nature of Dalit women’s sufferings is different contextually but the plight remains the same. The educated Dalit women became aware of their fundamental rights and self-esteem. Many Dalit women, since 1942, came forward and took active part in educational, social and political activities. Through their autobiographies they have described their struggle for social status, freedom and self-identities they have become a milestone in Dalit Literary Movement.

Though all the women are from varied historical eras, locales, race and economic circumstances, they add texture and pattern to the fabric of women world as a whole. In many ways they are similar as both are contemporary and belong to minority. Both are cruelly exploited socially, politically, economically and culturally. Both are strong willed, identified with the communities in which they lived. The researcher has observed the fact that Afro-American women are
subjective through their writings while Dalit women’s objective attitude gave importance to society than to ‘self’. Personal aims, passions have no place before society.

Shantabai Kamble and Dani tried to secure education as a means of escape to a better life. Shantabai Dani did not marry but devoted her life as a social activist. Marian Anderson, to secure her place as a famous singer, she denies the basic right of giving birth to child. She prefers to be childless, as she did not want the child to suffer loneliness due to her hectic schedule. They sacrificed the roles of wife and mother to concentrate on service to the community. Dani served her apprenticeship in resistance and in community organization under Dr. Ambedkar’s leadership. These autobiographies are intimate portraits of individuals striving for survival and a decent way of life. They found within themselves the perseverance and courage to battle through to triumph.

Today also this struggle and hardship is still going on and millions and millions of Kambles, Danis, Moodys and Andersons are still struggling and fighting at the very initial stage of their journey. The study of these six women writers from different countries and cultures is an attempt to explore the commonalities and differences in between these two groups. Their life-stories will definitely inspire tomorrow’s successful women who are sailing in the same boat. As long as there is racial and gender bias, the women are facing in the male-dominated society this battle for millions of women goes on.

This study is a humble and small step for making their journey inspiring with great confidence to achieve the destination. The purpose to take up this particular study is what are the parameters, which helped them to come out as winners and achieve fulfillment in their lives? What were their common sufferings? How they overcome their hardships? What made their journey easy/difficult? The most important thing is even after going through all sorts of hardships and exploitations and attaining success what force kept them moving
/going on? Who/what inspire them to go beyond the ‘self’ and attain universal concern instead of taking revenge for the welfare and progress of thousands of deprived women-folk? Which urge is there to give back to the society, the very society that has given agonies and exploitations? How they can be inspiring and be the lighthouse for their predecessors, for the women-folk and for the entire world as well.

The study of the most unfortunate, deprived section of the society but perhaps the most important one is an attempt to get answers to all these questions. Moreover it is high time that the literary world recognizes the contribution of this neglected component of the society. This is an attempt to give them ‘international’ status and ‘global’ recognition. We can derive common universal theory of metamorphosis, Infinity-mother and self-actualization theory during these long journeys from agonies to identities and enlightenment.

The world is still in need of liberation from the agonies of racial and gender bias. The success story of each of these six autobiographies is that it serves as the call to every woman to awaken to this need. The present study is an attempt to give an international platform for their call the right frequency to reach every corner of the world. So that every woman will strive to liberate herself by following their footsteps confidently. The woman has to fight her own battle in the male dominated world or will continue to suffer for another thousands of years to come. Both men and women are not contradictory but complimentary for the progress of the society. Both are indispensable for the existence and progress of the society. So they should walk hand in hand in order to overcome all the adversities of life to make this world a better place to live in. That day is not long when every woman will soar very high in the sky of success but as we all know even an eagle needs a ‘push’. This is an attempt to give that ‘Push ‘to the 21st century Free Woman Birds to let her scale greatest heights in her new flights.