Chapter I

Introduction
Introduction - In search of self.
Autobiography as a literary genre has always enjoyed a significant position in the history of different literatures. Its importance as a valuable means of self-examination, self-creation and self-regeneration has been recognized by critics as well as creative writers. Autobiography provides a tremendous scope for self-evolution. It furnishes us with ‘models and mirrors that can help us to accept, celebrate, and transform our lives as individuals and as participants in the cyclical drama of incarnation and the dialectical drama of historical evolution. The term autobiography was first used according to Oxford English Dictionary, by Robert Southey in 1809. Semantically, ‘autos’ means ‘self’, ‘bois’ means ‘life’ and ‘graphe’ means the ‘act of writing’. It is literally, a person’s recording of his won life and through introspection and self analysis. By reflecting and interpreting, the writer tries to create a meaningful pattern out of his varied past experiences. Broadly speaking, Autobiography presupposes that an individual possessess a unique identity. The development of his self is projected as occurring in time: the narrative is in chronological order and is a factual retrospective account of the writer’s life. Autobiography, in fact, comes into being when the individual becomes conscious of his ‘self’, the subjective, thinking and feeling entity distinguished from everything objective. This ‘self’, the ‘I’, as it becomes consciously aware of its own existence, shapes and determines the nature of autobiography and in doing so, half discovers, half creates itself.

The word self can be subjected to various levels of interpretation and therefore the nature of the autobiographical writing depends, to a great
extent, on how one defines it. There can be two broad possibilities. The self which knows, suffers, desires, remembers etc. may be termed the lower self or the historical self which is also a person’s individuality or identity in time and space. And the self may be termed as the higher self or the historical transcendental self when it is concerned with pure consciousness. Autobiographies then can be broadly classified into two types: 1) those that concern themselves with the historical self or the writer’s identity in time and space and 2) those that deal with the historical self but which at the same time attempt to transcend historicity.

In the later, writing becomes a process whereby the historical self is affirmed and eventually negated to give way to an expansion of consciousness. To ‘know’ the individual ‘self’ which is a limited whole is to become the knower on another level. The autobiographical act thus becomes a positive effort to hint, to suggest and to evoke the self to those aspects of the ‘self’ that do not make it into the text that resists transformation and idealization in the narrative closure. As this ‘self’ is not an element of personality, the writer takes his stand beyond the phenomenal world. In his essay ‘Autobiography and Historical Consciousness’ – Karl J. Weintraub argues:

> Autobiography as genre developed its full potential only when western man acquired a thoroughly historical understanding of existence.1

When viewed as a process of unfolding and self-improvement, life is narrated only in relation to the outside world.

Self-examination enables the writer to seek an essence beyond temporal existence and thereby transcend historical circumstances. The act
of writing one’s life involves a detachment, a standing part or standing behind, the flux of narrated experiences. In his role as an observer, by taking the stand of the observing ‘self’ the autobiographer steps out of history. The autobiographical mode being temporal enables him to narrate his personal history. But the narrative itself turns out to be an attempt to transcend personnel history. By talking about his life, by recollecting and ordering his experiences the autobiographer simultaneously asserts the presence of the self that takes note of the life process.

Autobiographical writings can take various forms like diaries, letters and journals. While the diary is an intimate record of an individual’s personal history and affirms inner-realities of the writer, the letter concerns itself with a larger social context as it involves a relationship between two individuals. The day to day entries in a diary try to ‘catch the calms and tempests of a life, to see the stories it tells as they develop or disappear, to see the patterns and images it evokes and sometimes repeats. Like the diary, the journal too is a record of events performed, happening or recurring everyday. The writer is concerned with the thought-process and the mind’s immediate reaction to the outside world. In scope, it extends beyond the personal confines of the diary to relate itself to the world at large. This makes the journal from impersonal while the diary is not. The journal is closer to lived experiences as mental states are recorded as they occur. More than analysis or patterning or conclusion, what we get is a sense of life process, of fact- in-the- making. Thus the autobiography tries to interpret life in totality; the journal writer presents the fragments that go to make up the whole. George Gusdorf in his essay Conditions and Limits of Autobiography points out:
The author of private journal, noting his impressions and mental states from day to day, fixes the portrait of his daily reality without any concern for continuity.2

Autobiography on the other hand, requires a man to take a distance with regard to him in order to reconstitute himself in the focus of his special unity and identity across time.

The journal is thus episodic and fragmented in structure as no attempt is made, as in autobiography to select and organize events and experiences in terms of a unified vision and with fixed perspective. While the autobiographer reviews life, the journal writer presents life. The writer of journal being closer to the events and experiences with regard to duration can present them with greater accuracy.

Biography on the other hand is essentially objective, it is moulded out from outside inward, from information no guess work.

Autobiography is the individual’s most reliable view of himself, whereas biography is the view of an individual’s by another. It is autobiography and not biography that may give us the truthful transmission of personality. D. G. Naik stated autobiography as: the first hand information about the individual.3

Nicolson has realized the truth when he points out that:

Autobiography has made a further and greater advance on biography in giving us the truth of human personality.4

Maurois feels conscious that:

a successful autobiography would be the most wonderful work of art.5

Autobiography is primarily subjective. It is built from within. The invisible world within the individuals revealed to the readers and that by no less an
authority than the individual himself. It is therefore, first hand and direct information and no guess work. According to Herbert Leibowitz:

The autobiography contains no intimation of neurotic behaviour, no dreams or nightmares, no crises of the spirit, scarcely any inwardness.6

According to William C. Spengemann:

Autobiography itself is two hundred years old (see jacques voisine ‘Nalssane it evolution du terme Litteraire autobiographie’ in La Literature comparee on Europe orientable Budapet(1963)) and the intellectual foundation for the genre as we know it were fully laid at least by the end of 17th century.7

Nevertheless, it was only in the closing decades of 19th century that the idea of autobiography became sufficiently widespread to generate the kind, if not the degree of popular, critical and scholarly interest that we take for granted today.

D.G. Naik points out that autobiography:

…….offers an ideal scope for satisfying human urge and curiosity about human nature. This form more than any other form of literature transmits a mirror image of the individuality of the writer in his immediate life experience. It gives the reader a sense of sharing in actual human experience. It offers scope to estimate and judge it at the same time. There is an opportunity of coming in touch with living persons, not with legendary figures and of realizing that each character, each destiny is moulded by influence of heredity environment and circumstance outside individual control.8

According to William Spengeemann:

Autobiography made its way from the realm of historiography to that of literature by a slow process that began years ago. The first step in this removal may be seen in studies of biography as Waldo H. Dunn’s English Biography.9
The form of autobiography offers an unlimited scope for releasing the personality of the writer. In other branches of literary art there are many formal restrictions and many times the artist finds it oppressive and tyrannical to have to submit to them. The form of autobiography though full of formidable hurdles is free from this particular handicap. It presents no conflict with the writer’s personality on the contrary; this form of art is exceedingly suitable for the releasing of that very personality.

An autobiography is a profitable form of art not only because it affords unlimited freedom to the author for the liberation of his personality, but also because of the great search light, it may throw light on the autobiographer’s entire life. The saying that certain autobiographies enable us to know the history of certain periods as a far better way than the actual source of knowledge of the human race and indications are there that enable us to presume that this form of literary art would be put to its fullest possible uses in the immediate future.

The beginnings of autobiography can be traced to the impulse to write about vital religious experiences to record the stages by which the individual looses his identity to celebrate God’s divine power. The entire justification and exemplary instance of writing one’s life to signify the self and its history, according to James Olney (memory and narrative) are offered for the first time in Western literature in Saint Augustine’s *Confessions* written in 399A.D. The *Confessions* are commonly accepted as the first major attempt to narrate individual experiences which revolve around or eventually lead to a vital religious experience or conversion. The book is organized into sections, each dwelling upon one particular stage in Augustine’s life. After the conversion, experience as a mature man he tries
to recreate imaginatively his life through the stages of infancy, adolescences, youth and adulthood. He narrates the story of a quest, the story of the individual soul aspiring for Truth / God-culminating in the experience of conversion / illumination when the individual soul realizes its full potential in God. Accordingly the work speaks of a process which involves the surrender of the individual will to the will of the God. But Augustine also coincide his personal experiences to be exemplary, something which could have a cosmic dimension.

*Saint Teresa's life of Herself* like Augustine’s *Confessions*, is confessional in origin. It tells the story of her inward experiences and her encounters with the outside world. She subjects herself to a relentless self-examination. But self analysis is valued not for its own sake but as a means of exposing the fallibility of humanity and affirming the ultimate authority of a divine knowledge.

Autobiography, as distinctive form of a literary confession, first emerged in the 18th century which was the rise of ideologies like Individualism and Romanticism. Gudasdorf remarks that:

> ideological mirror of the Christian soul is a deforming mirror that plays up without piney the slightest faults of the moral personality. 10

With the Renaissance and the Reformation, the writer started seeing himself as he is without any taint of the transcendent. The individual self is conceived as a psychological crisis. The writer gave free play to his personality without referring to a transcendent authority. The notion of God only served as an extension of the individual self’s aspiration to infinity what the Romantic autobiographer does is to give a picture from a scientific view point, of a coherent shaping of an individual past, reached
by means of introspection and memory wherein the self is seen as a developing entity, changing by definable stages and where knowledge of the self links with knowledge of external world.

By glorifying the individual, romantic autobiography aimed at transforming the truth of a unique individual to a universal truth. Roy Pascal in *Design and Truth in Autobiography* points out:

> Wordsworth is the first autobiographer to realize that each man constructs out of his world a unique framework of meaning events and that the deepest purpose of Autobiography is to compose the account of life as a projection of the real self on the outer world’.11

American Literature began with the rough objective records of the explorers and settlers. Mainly, they were documents of politics and religion. Predominantly Protestants, these early writers, believed that man’s duty was to glorify God and serve him. Thus early American writings were based on the notion that the primary values of life are theological.

Autobiography is now one of the most popular and powerful mediums of self-expression and all sorts of persons, from a president to a peddler are rushing into print with their lives. It is the fashion, people are crazy about it, they feel impelled to write their lives, this craze is symptomatic of man’s inner need to unburden his heart to share his experiences with others on the level of practical life too. Its need is now being felt most acutely. In communist China, a detailed dossier is kept on every party cadre. On joining the communist party a member has to write an autobiography and a self criticism and his supervisors add to the document over the years. This dossier called a chien ting shu or paper of review, governs cadre’s life. This worldwide craze has also infected the Indians who have taken to this
genre with gusto and vigour. The genre is not altogether new for them, though in modern India in the period after the coming of the English with their new ideas and a new system of education. There has been a bursting forth of the autobiographic impulse that had expressed itself only intermittently and spasmodically in the past. It may be said that the autobiographical element commands human interest in the study of any literature. It is the autobiographical element in literary writing that forms the center of importance and interest especially for a student of literature.

The subject of autobiography has a past, a present and a future. The autobiographer has to liberate and reveal his personality by marshalling the details of his life into some kind of narrative. Human life has to pass through certain inevitable stages like birth, childhood, youth and old age. Thus our life itself has a kind of form or order. The details of any general life therefore, when accommodated in a story or narrative inevitably take a shape or form, which in literary terminology is called the form of autobiography. Autobiographers, invariably begin their narrative with the ancestral history. This supplies an essential background to the writer’s life story. The next stage naturally happens to be the birth of the narrator. Then follow, in order the family surroundings, childhood, youthful exploits and pursuits of nature age. The art of the autobiographer lies in marshalling these details of his life so as to present a coherent convincing life story and to reveal thereby his interior self of personality.

We have seen the desire for self-exhibition is almost universal and the natural form, through which it can be satisfied, happens to be the form of autobiography. We have seen that there has been an abundance of men who have indulged in self-revelation. The desire for self expression is almost universal and the form of autobiography has been very natural and
handy for this purpose. But the talent for effective expression, whereby the inner self of the writer could be revealed in a delightful and convincing manner is very rare. Hence the difference between a perfect or real autobiography and other attempts in personal literature, such as memoirs, reminiscences, confessions, diaries, that are usually called autobiographies. Of course, the name does not matter, if the work aims at self-portrait, it becomes an autobiography by whatever name it may be called. We are concerned here with autobiography as a work of art or an artist writing his life story. Some autobiographies are chiefly concerned with the problem of ‘Ego’. The writer must feel sufficiently interested and curious about himself that is his own process of thoughts, and yet must possess a degree of detachment at the same time.

St. Augustine, the father of Autobiography (Although the term autobiography was introduced for the first time by Robert Southey as late as the 19th century) in the 4th century, wrote his confessions. The various details about the life or personality of the writer, while being marshaled into the story or narrative, take a particular shape or form, e.g. the historical background come first then family surroundings, birth of the individual, the early childhood, education, youthful exploits and finally the external and internal conflicts. The life story which has got to be in the first person thus invariably approximates to some such order or form. But all the formal life stories or autobiographies are not necessarily work of art, because in most of them the artistic representation or revelation of the writer’s life or personality is absent. In such cases the motive is of self-exhibition and the aesthetic or artistic urge is entirely lacking. Real or perfect autobiography gets born when an individual is prompted by the
aesthetic urge that is to say when an artist happens to write his own life story.

The autobiographer is faced with the difficult task of writing about himself which happens to be the subject in this case. Having the requisite curiosity about himself, he must further have the power of leading a dispassionate inquiry into himself, and of faithful expressing the findings of that inquiry. This performance demands a combination of artistic qualities which is rare and that is why real autobiographies have been also rare.

Literary artists find the form of autobiography natural and suitable to the releasing of their personality in all its shades. It may be seen that through the relevance of an individual’s personality, human nature in general all its casts and shades can also be revealed for an individual whoever and whatever he may be self-conscious unit of human nature, which essentially remains the same everywhere, therefore, one cannot simply escape from the common destiny of mankind.

The autobiographer artist is not smothered by outside influences and enjoys absolute freedom in releasing his personality. Intellectual giants and active leaders of society who cannot help releasing their internal ferment find autobiography a very suitable and natural form for self-expression. The modern age is deeply interested in psychology- understanding a right of the highly complex composition of man’s personality. Honest autobiographies are bound to be a great help in this direction, it is here we may be able to discover man in his nakedness.

The analysis of autobiographical work has now made it fairly clear that man is described and is required to submit to the tyrannies of forms and conventions, if he is to live easily and happily in his society. Each of
the autobiographies we have examined has been grounded in the assumption of an absolute, in conditioned self or soul that transcends and hence justifies all conditional experience. Each of these autobiographies has its central concern the realization of that absolute self, either by explaining it or by discovering it, or by enacting it symbolically. But whatever means are employed the autobiographer seeks to possess the self consciously on the assumption that self consciousness is consciousness of universal principles.

The chief function of autobiography is the liberation of personality. An autobiography thus a profitable form of art not only because it affords unlimited freedom to the author for the liberation of his personality, but also because of the great search light it may throw on the autobiographer’s contemporary life. They say that certain autobiographies enable us to know the history of certain periods in a far better way than the actual books of history.

Widely various as the available definitions of autobiography are they appear to have several things in common. In the first place, they are generally stipulative, the definition in any case is not derived from an examination of all texts which might conceivably be about the person who wrote them, it is formulated a prior and used to select the texts that will be examined. In other words, while these definitions usually purport to be statements of fact, they are really explanations of how the word Autobiography will be used in particular instances. As a result, the only arguable definition of autobiography would be a full account of all the ways in which the word has been used.

Second, the definition stipulated in each case is primarily a function of the use to be made of the works it designates. People, who make lists of
autobiographies, for example tend to restrict the definition quite severely for purely practical reasons. Those who wish to extract from autobiography, information about the writers life and times will regard the genre as comprising only works that contain this sort of information, while those who feel that our essential being is unconscious usually extend the definition to cover many forms of symbolic expression. Similarly those who wish to demonstrate the artistry of autobiography have no difficulty including poems and novels in the genre. And of course, those who maintain that writing refer primarily or solely to itself will find all writing to be autobiographical by definition.

Third, however, autobiography is defined in any instance, that definition is normally assumed to hold true for autobiographical writing in all periods. Indeed, the recent proliferation of definitions is at least partly attributable to this static character. Since definitions of autobiography – like those of poetry and fiction normally arise from contemporary practice in the genre, and since the tendency in criticism, as Gregory Lukacs once put it, is for each ‘new manifestation of literature immediately and uncritically raised into a criterion which is binding on all literature.

When these similarly stipulative utilitarian and historical definitions are arranged chronologically, they reveal yet another significant pattern, an increasing acceptance of the idea that autobiography may employ symbolic as well as biographical materials.

I would add fourth- a language that can only be called allegorical in that whatever the explicit, sensible referent of any linguistic figure may be its ultimate and principal referent is always the otherwise ungraspable self. The language of autobiography has been allegorical in this sense from the
beginning the biographical metaphors of Dante, Benjamin Franklin no less so than the fictive metaphors of De Quincy and Carlyle.

It is perfectly true that the allegorical tenour of autobiographical language becomes more noticeable when self becomes a mystery to memory and conjecture and available only to the imagination when autobiography gives up trying to explain the self historically or to discover it philosophically and attempts to reveal the self in fictive metaphors whose explicit referents are not events from the writer’s past life. Nevertheless, this change from biographical to fictive metaphor should not be taken as a change either in the ultimate purposes of autobiography or in the linguistic means of achieving those ends.

While this allegorical language remains constant amidst the several alterations that mark the evolution of autobiography the relation between the figures used and allows, the ‘other’ thing to which they refer, changes perceptibly with the modulation from historical and philosophical.

Before the 1930’s virtually everyone, except a few journalists and German scholars considered autobiography a subcategory of biography. On the other hand, the earliest English studies of the autobiography (1909) and Religious confessions and confessants (1914) had justified separate treatment of this literature on primarily psychological grounds, and a large share of credit for the subsequent growth of critical interest in the genre belongs to English translations of Freud’s work—especially an autobiographical study. In so far as these psychological interpretations of autobiography emphasized its deep structures and author’s unconscious self-revelations, they directed attention to the text and simultaneously, blurred the destination between factual and fictive statements, treating both as symbolic expressions of psychic energy. As a result an increasing
number of critics came to associate autobiography with fiction rather than with biography.

In an Autobiography, the life of the author appears to be the shaping spirit and the experiences narrated rally round him. In memoirs, however, prominence may be received by certain objective attitudes towards situations and events and other people may become the subject of the writer’s observations.

An autobiography tends to be a continuous and connected narrative of the author’s life and becomes predominantly subjective. Memoir, on the contrary, uses a subjective process and tends to become reflections of the time in which the authors lived. Celebrated memoirs such as St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, Pepy’s *Diary*, and Rosseau’s *Confessions* are known all over the world. With the increasing democratic consciousness in the modern world and radical change of values of life the creative writers in the lowest strata also have found that the memories of their lives are meaningful enough. The significance of their experiences revealed in their memoirs has as much personal as social and cultural value.

In the 20th century the literature of the downtrodden came up with great power which it derives from the agency and the suffering crystallized into protest and anger. These confessions reflect inevitably a feeling of protest of those suffering from a persistent sense of neglect and persecution. The exploitation and the repression inflicted upon the downtrodden, as a matter of fact, tend to extinguish the element of personality which apparently appears to be necessary for personal revelation. Even then the tales of misery told by the writers like Richard Wright, Laxman Mane, Kishore Kale, Washington and others become
gripping because what we come across in these revelations is a shocking phenomenon of social injustice, caste tyranny or racial hatred. The whole community, in these autobiographies, becomes a person-wretched and suffering yet defiant and bold hence its wider appeal. These are autobiographies which transcend the restricted personal world and attain a wider significance.

As pointed out, the writings of these authors have valuable social and cultural context apart from the personal tragedies that it depicts whole strata of society that by mutely suffering for ages has found a voice in these works. It is the suffering of the mute millions who have suffered along with them. Through the narrators can be heard the undertones of those who lived and died in suffering. If suffering is permanent, the anguish of the ordinary attains an extraordinary lasting and universal significance.

Many scholars found autobiography-subjective and too self-serving to be a trustworthy source of information. On the other hand, these were the very qualities that make autobiography popular and all the while that the scholars were dissociating it from biography, the literary journalists were treating it as a more or less distinct literary form, lying somewhere between biography and fiction.

Autobiography is not a simple recapitulation of past, it is also the attempt and the drama of a man struggling to reassemble himself in his own likeness at a certain moment of his history.

Autobiography is the representation and product of full consciousness and memory that is, possession of the past. The autobiographer through his autobiography not only describes the past but also the struggle. The
struggle for achieving the desired goal and in terms of the Dalit and African American autobiographers is to obtain the identity and dignity in the society from which they were intentionally kept away from hundreds of years. They, along with struggle picture the contemporary social, cultural and economical condition. This information proved very important to study the contemporary social, cultural, economical, political conditions of contemporary India and America.

The value of autobiography is seen to lie in its insider quality – the autonomous status of autobiography is based on its separation from forms of history-writing, where history was and is defined as an objective, documentary approach to lives and events. Psychological and philosophical issues filled the space left by the rejection of history. Freedom from the structures of positivist historiography has led, however to other cognitive straitjackets. For example, idealist theories of autobiographical truth as coherence, the only absolute truth being the whole, set in opposition to positivist theories of truth as correspondence have perhaps to an excessive emphasis on the need for unity within the autobiographical work. But there are other equally important, reasons for the valorization of unity. In philosophical terms autobiography is seen to secure at one level at least, the much desired unity of the subject and object of knowledge. In aesthetic terms, the elevation of autobiography to the status of literary genre has involved its endowment with the properties of the unified work of art. In the broader terms the ideal autobiography may be seen as expressing humanity’s approaches to totality and to a full harmonious perfection.

Autobiography is not one thing but many. There are indeed almost as many senses for the word autobiography as there are
autobiographies, for every instance of the mode tends to establish its own adhoc conditions and form. Autobiography is not outright apologia; there is nevertheless an element of apologetics inevitably present in the writing of it. The very act of writing a life down constitutes an attempt on the writer’s part to justify his life and implicit in every act of autobiography is the judgment that his life is worth being written down. Moreover, the autobiographer always knows the end of his story— or rather; he is the end of his story at the moment of writing. There are two inescapable facts about autobiography that it contains an element of apologetics and that writer is ever aware of where the story is going because he is situated there at the end. Secondly, autobiography makes it a body of writing hardly more manageable by the historian than by the literary critic.

The concept of autobiography can be stated as—‘autos’, ‘bios’, ‘graphein’.

  autos - the self or himself
  bios - life
  graphein - to write.

Now each of these elements or terms is in itself sufficiently complex and in the interplay setup by throwing them together in a single word and single act they become vastly more complex.

Consider the term bios – this could signify the historic past, whether from the beginning of memory up to the present, or a piece of that past large or small, or even no more than a moment of the past it could signify the writer’s present life – his psychic configuration as he writes, it obviously could be and no doubt often is a combination of life as history and life as present quickness, again it could be life not as an individual property and possession but life as the mythic history and the psychological character of a whole people – that communal life that gives
its impress to the life of every individual within the group and finally though this is not really – finally since there are other possible senses of bios – it could be signify as in C.G. Jung’s memories, Dreams, reflecting it does signify, psychic development or what Jung calls the story of the process of self.

Those very qualities of autobiography that make it so problematic as literature or history conversely make it a uniquely valuable kind of writing for anyone concerned with the comparative study of civilizations. That there are so few or no conventions guiding and constraining the autobiographer may distrust the literary critic in search of a corner of literature that he can define in generic terms and can appropriate as his own special area expertise, but this openness, this freedom, this flexibility of the mode lending itself to every sort of variation in form and substance this is very much to the study of comparative civilization, for the assumptions, the preconceptions, and preoccupation of a culture will determine to a very great extent the shape of the story that individual members of that culture tell about themselves and their lives. The same is true of those qualities in autobiography that the historian must be wary of the compartivist will positively rejoice in them. Of course there is an element of apologetic in every autobiography and the comparativist will find an autobiographer revealing in that which he seems to feel the need for apology. Likewise that the autobiographer is ever aware of where his story is going because he is situated at the end of it is a virtue rather than a defect for the investigator of cultural similarities and differences.

Bios- may or may not refer to an historical past, but it must inevitably, willy-nilly reflect and reveal the present time of writing, it
cannot fail to reflect and reveal the autobiographer as he is and understands himself to be and wishes himself to be as he sets pen to paper.

Hence in autobiography – normally we have dual access to the cultural matrix in which the autobiographer locates himself, access by way of what the autobiographer reveals, for the most part consciously of the past, access by way of what he reveals, for the most part unconsciously of the present.

The whole logic of African American and Dalit autobiography and the nature of the ‘bios’ around which African American and Dalit Autobiographies forms itself are there in the notion that ‘a person is what he is because of and through other people’ or in the notion that the Sonja people hold ‘I am because we are and since we are therefore I am.’ An autobiography that takes its orientation in this premise will not say, as Jung’s book says “I am as I am” but will say instead ‘I am as we are’, There is collectiveness, a union among the citizens of a state, a class of tribe, formed according to class, caste. The African American and Dalit autobiographer executes a portrait of the life shared by the group one lived countless time before, shaped by the ritual stages of birth and naming, initiation, marriage, parenthood, eldership and death that have given form to the life of this people for as far back as the legendary, mythic memory of the people extends. Thus even memory the chief faculty of the man who would write his own life of this people for as far back as the legendary, mythic memory of the people extends.

Thus even memory, the chief faculty of the man, is not a personal faculty but a collective one for the Dalit and African American Autobiographer and about the myth that he tells the myth that is the formative fact of his bios.
After India’s independence the spirit of nationalism gained strength in the hearts of the people. Due to emergence of a democratic form of Government people became aware of their rights. They felt that independence set them free, and all the issues facing the Indian people would be resolved. But the problems were increased. Unemployment, poverty, growing population, communal conflicts, corruption in public life and the din of Hindutva forces led to a loss of faith in Independence. Education and the idea of democracy reached many sections of society including Dalits, Adivasis and nomadic tribes living in remote areas. The idea of the equal worth of all people was widely expressed, but social conditions did not change. There was revolutionary transformation in the life of people due to consciousness of humanistic values as equality, liberty, fraternity and justice. On the other hand, sentiments of pain and revolt were also kindled because of dissatisfaction with an inequitable system. These sentiments expressed in post-independent literature.

New writers emerged from various sections of society. They have presented in their writings, their own language, environment, condition and views on various issues. Dalit Literature attracted considerable discussion because its form and objective were different from the post independence literature. Its presence and importance was noted in India and abroad.

The writings of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar influenced the political and social system to a great extent. He argued the case of untouchables from villages to Round Table Conferences held by the British Empire. He fought against the powerful forces, the Hindu gatekeepers of god, for their rights. As a result, the Dalits began to praise his thoughts and actions. The writings of several Dalit poets can be asserted as examples. Through their writings, they raised consciousness in the society about the need for
struggle. The writing through this period propagated the main theme of revolution in the society. This phase of Dr. Ambedkar is called as the renaissance period in the history of Dalit movement. Bandhumadhav, Shankarrao Kharat and Annabhau Sathe were some of the prominent writers of this phase.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar gave the message of Unite, Educate and Struggle to the Dalit society. Dr. Ambedkar founded Siddhartha College in Mumbai in 1946 and Milind College in Aurangabad in 1947, for the higher education of Dalit boys. The first generation of Dalit students educated in these colleges were influenced by Babasaheb’s writings, thinking and started expressing their sentiments in writing. The annual publications of Milind College during this period bear testimony of this growing awareness.

In the early period, Savarna publishers and editors did not publish the writings of Dalit writers and did not pay attention their work. But Dalit writers persisted writing and making every possible effort to be heard. Thus, the first conference of Dalit writers was held in the auditorium of Bengali High School, Dadar on 2nd March 1958. At this conference the resolution was passed to the effect that cultural importance of Dalit Literature should be acknowledged and it literature given due recognition.

Ancient Marathi Literature dwelt on the soul and the supreme soul. It could not progress beyond the binaries of desire and devotion. Ancient Marathi Literature does not portray the actual life and struggle of Marathi people rather they reflect the influence of erotic and romantic aspects of Sanskrit and English Literature. The emergence of Dalit literature causes a great disturbance in Marathi Literature. Dalit writers began to write their literature unconcerned about any literary theories.
In Modern Marathi Literature, Dalits have been portrayed from a middle-class perspective, which expresses sympathy for Dalits from a reformist standpoint. The new literature is limited up to Mumbai only. The new writers wrote in an oppositional voice about the work of those who were published and promoted in literary magazines like Satyakatha. They demonstrated their dissatisfaction by burning copies of Satyakhata.

Dalit literature is the literature where we see sorrow, suffering, maltreatment, exploitation, degradation and poverty of Dalits. It is the true picture of grief. Liberty, honour, security and freedom is the right of every human being and Dalits through their literature always demanding these. The essential characteristics of Dalit literature is that it is not originally and essentially a literary exercise. The writers were not involved in achieving aesthetic performance in literature as an art but to depict agonies and sorrows which they experienced from since and from one generation to the other. Before that we must understand meaning of Dalit, and who is a ‘Dalit’?

Explaining the word Dalit, one has to keep in mind that Dalit is not a particular caste. It is the situation, position one has to face, lived and experienced. The term Dalit describes all the untouchable communities living outside the village, Adivasis, land-laborers, criminal and nomadic tribes, landless farmers, the suffering masses, and also the people who are economically poor.

According to Dr. M.N. Wankhede:

Dalit includes not only Buddhist and Backward classes but also who were oppressed and exploited. 13

Dr. Sada Karhade defines Dalit:
….is not a caste; it is a class, which is formed on the basis of social and economical condition including farm workers, ostriched and strugglers for livelihood. 14

A well known thinker of Dalit Literature Dr. Bhalchandra Phadke says:

It is not proper to define Dalit on the basis of class, because Dalit word possesses its own identity that was ostriched by the Hindu caste system. Dalits have received power due to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar’s social reform movement. Dalit is the invisible class who has experienced sufferings and sorrows and exploitation mutely. 15

Dr. Prabhakar Mande critic and a writer states:

Dalit can not be defined as a class or a caste. Dalit means a particular social group who experienced suffering and sorrows.16

Namdeo Dhasal included all the nomadic tribes and labourers in Dalit. For him Dalit:…….means scheduled tribes, Buddhists, tribal castes, Adivasis.17.

Ghanshayam Shah also includes all the nomadic tribes in Dalit Community. He states:

Dalits are the poor and downtrodden. Generally, Dalits includes those termed in administrative parlance as scheduled castes (SCs), Sheduled Tribes (STs) and other backward Classes.18

A well known Dalit writer and thinker Yogendra Meshram defines Dalit:

…. are those who are suffering from thousands of years and the literature produced by these classes of people is called as Dalit Literature.19

The term Dalit literally signifies the depressed and suppressed groups of various social formations. Now a days, Dalit is understood as a comprehensive revolutionary category specially designating those social segments of Indian society which are culturally, socially and physically
repressed by dominant sections and maintained by virtue of a traditional iniquitous and a hierarchical socio-cultural state of subservient subalternity called untouchability.

Like Dalits African American literature is also traced on the literary level.

Africans became the solution to the New World’s labour problems when Indians and indentured servants proved unsatisfactory. Soon there were so many Negroes in the Spanish and English colonies that fears developed that they might revolt.

By the time of first census in 1790, the United States had 7,60,000 Negroes (7,00,000 being slaves and rest are free). One out of five Americans then was colored. But in the South, where most of the Negroes lived, one third of the people were colored. 20.

Laws were passed to keep the Slaves under control and to make their escape more difficult. These codes greatly restricted the freedom of slaves and of free Negroes. By law and custom, restrictions were placed on their movement, their contacts with other humans and their education. Many slaves never travelled more than a few miles off the plantation in their entire lifetimes. They were kept illiterate by laws forbidding the education of slaves. Free Negroes too were generally cut off from the intellectual of their communities whether they lived in the southern, middle or New England colonies and states.

It was difficult enough to develop a free atmosphere. The skills and talents they had known in Africa soon forgotten. Colonists would have paid little heed anyway, convinced that Africans were savages who must be taught Superior western ways. White Americans, thus, were unable to recognize the capabilities of Negro Americans, and it is remarkable that any Negro could succeed in such a setting.
During the revolutionary era, Americans became more conscious of the wrongs of slavery in the land of the free and the brave. Seeking freedom from British oppression for themselves, more and more colonists noticed the plight of the slaves and spoke out against slavery. Northern states began abolishing slavery. Southerners planned for ways to end slavery and to send the Negroes to live in Africa.

In the Revolutionary generation, people talked of all men as being created equal and of God who had given rights such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. For the first time, Americans began to look at Negroes as Individuals. This led to the recognition and encouragement of exceptional members of the race and appeared as the first contribution to American culture credited to the talented individual Negroes. Few Negroes began to excel. This promising beginning by skilled slave craftsmen in colonial and later times and by the talented Negroes of the Revolutionary period did not continue. There were discouraging setbacks in the next century.

The Negro, in both the North and the South was held back for much of the 19th century misled by minstrel shows and plays about Uncle Tom. White Americans thought of Negroes as lazy, irresponsible, ignorant and foolish, seeing themselves through the eyes of Caucasians, many despised their colour and tried to imitate white culture. Some talented Negroes, thus, cut themselves off from the coloured masses, Negro life and the African heritage. Their cultural contribution tended often to be imitative rather than rooted in the life of their people and ancestry.

Negroes courageously fought back against slavery. The open revolts led by men like Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner had little chance of success. Nonetheless these Negroes tried and there
were hundred of other uprisings, plots and cases of open defiance. In addition thousands of slaves fled and established camps in places like Florida. These runaway slaves boldly raided and harassed nearby plantation. A quite and stubborn determination not to submit was seen in the day to day resistance to slavery. Rebelling against a system that robbed them of the fruits of their labor, many Negroes hurt plantation operation by slowing down, by doing careless work and by destroying tools and machinery. Slaves deliberately damaged crops and livestock. They also stole their masters belonging because slave owners bought their goods with profit of the slaves' unpaid toil. Many slaves escaped to freedom in the North over long and dangerous routes. Slavery was a testing time that prepared the Negro for the spirit of courageous determination to overcome the issues as seen in today's civil rights revolution.

Even while fighting back, the Negroes were wise enough to bend with the wind in order to be able to survive for a day of freedom. They developed Sorrow Songs (spirituals) to help them molding these out of Biblical materials. Since they had come from a continent where wars and conquests were frequent, Africans had a habit of adopting the gods of their conquerors to victory. Africans were able though to fit these new gods in with their own religious views. In addition they had a great gift of music:

In 1790, every fifth American was a Negro. Today, every ninth American is a Negro. In 1790, most Negroes were slaves and even the free Negroes were greatly restricted. Most had little chances to develop their talents, to continue the skills they had known in Africa and to contribute to American life. Although Phillis Wheatly fell into the hands of kind slave owners, dozens of other gifted Negroes had their talents crushed by slavery. The story of Negro in the United States is the history of a struggle to overcome barriers. As his chances have improved, America’s ninth man, the Negro, has made his mark more and more. This can be seen in the many
outstanding figures in recent decades in contrast to the few in earlier periods.21

Over the years, America has paid a terrible price in wasting the talents of countless colored Americans who might have contributed ably. Now that the nation is attacking the problems of discrimination and segregation, this shameful waste of Americans' ninth man may end. The dreams and hopes of colored youngsters will rise after overcoming segregation laws, discrimination in hiring, prejudice in upgrading unequal educational facilities, neglected housing and erosion of families. All are products of decades of shabby treatment of Negroes. While the anti-poverty and aid-to-education programs, the public accommodations and voting right laws are important step in the status of America's ninth man which has grown worse in recent years in one respect. Automation is rapidly wiping out the semiskilled jobs that many Negroes once held. Negro unemployment is double that of Caucasians and the in crime gap between white and colored Americans is widening. The despair of slum dwellers that live on welfare, into three and four generations, creates a vicious and explosive circle of poverty and poor education.

The 20 million Negroes in the United States today are a valuable but neglected resource. There number is greater than the population of Canada or of any Latin American countries except Nigeria, the United Arab Republic and Ethiopia contains a larger number. The 20 million American Negroes are more than the number of people in such countries as the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. Despite handicaps Negroes have played an important role for centuries in toiling to build America and in dying to defend this land. They have enriched the nation with their music.
They have given American hours of enjoyment by their performances on stages, in sports and by the works of art and literature they have created.

As scientist and inventors, as educators and businessmen and as religious leaders, Negroes have contributed to improving American life. Their deep faith has enabled them to survive unspeakable hardships and their courage to resist and overcome enormous injustices has inspired Americans and given a new meaning to democracy in action.

The dark days of depression helped to awaken a new social consciousness in the Negro and resulted in the birth of stronger and more stirring pieces of writing such as Autobiographies, novels, short stories. They produced their own literature which is called as African American Literature and it defines as:

writings by people of African descent living in the United States of America. However, just as African American history and life is extremely varied, so too is African American literature.22

That said:

African American literature has generally focused on themes of particular interest to Black people in the United States, such as the role of African Americans within the larger American society and what it means to be an American.23

As Princeton University professor Albert Raboteau has said:

All African-American studies, including African American literature speaks to the deeper meaning of the African-American presence in this nation. This presence has always been a test case of the nation's claims to freedom, democracy, equality, the inclusiveness of all.24

As such, it can be said:
African American Literature explores the very issues of freedom and equality which were long denied to Black people in the United States, along with further themes such as African American culture, racism, religion, slavery, a sense of home.25.

And more -

African American literature constitutes a vital branch of the literature of the African diaspora, with African American literature both being influenced by the great African diasporic heritage.26.

In addition, African American literature exists within the larger realm of post-colonial literature, even though scholars draw a distinctive line between the two by stating:

African American literature differs from most post-colonial literature in that it is written by members of a minority community who reside within a nation of vast wealth and economic power.27.

One frequently mentioned characteristic of African American literature is:

its strong tradition of incorporating oral poetry into itself. There are many examples of oral poetry in African American culture, including spirituals, African American gospel music, blues and rap. This oral poetry also shows up in the African American tradition of Christian sermons, which make use of deliberate repetition, cadence and alliteration. All of these examples of oral poetry have made their way into African American literature (and especially African American poetry).28

However, while these characteristics and themes exist on many levels of African American literature, they are not the exclusive definition of the genre and don't exist within all works within the genre. In addition, there is resistance to using Western literary theory to analyze African American literature. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. one of the most important African
American literary scholars, once said:

My desire has been to allow the black tradition to speak for itself about its nature and various functions, rather than to read it, or analyze it, in terms of literary theories borrowed whole from other traditions, appropriated from without.29.

African Americans have used autobiographies to reveal their past, their sorrows and agonies. These autobiographies are the mirrors of social, economic and cultural conditions. African American Autobiographies are the stories of maltreatment, exploitation.

Like African American autobiography Dalit Autobiographies are stories of agonies, past and their suppression.

The essential feature of the Dalit Autobiography is that they do not isolate the individual from his whole historical environment, family, community and society at large. The distinctive difference does not seem between the individual as an isolated subject and the context against which he/ she carves out his/ her subjective identity as a world by itself. The oppression, struggles, assertion and quest of identity of the individual who is not the subject matter or the ‘octant’ of the narrative seem never dissociated from the shape that the system of social relation and history has given him/her. The first Dalit autobiography published in Marathi Literature represents not only Mahar community but also nomadic, tribal and criminal communities.

In 1948, Vitthal Palvankar alias P Vitthal published autobiography Kridajivan. He was oppressed and exploited because of his caste. But, this autobiography is not accepted by the critics as Dalit autobiography because it lacks dalit experience of sufferings and sorrows, struggle against the injustices. In 1975, Balasaheb Suryawanshi came with Things I Never
Imagined. Balasheb Suryawanshi was a Christian Dalit. He brought out the problems of Christian Dalits. Experiencing heart rending poverty, inequality and suppression Suryawanshi became a writer, critic and journalist. With such background, roots of Dalit Autobiography can be found in the yearly issue of a college magazine of Milind College. P.E. Sonkable published an autobiographical article in the yearly magazine of Milind College. After that, he published a number of such articles and collectively published autobiography Aathwaninche Pakshi in 1969. Aathwaninche Pakshi received by every strata of society and received name and fame. Through this autobiography Sonkamble pictured miseries and sorrows of his whole life and his unpredictable struggle to get education. P.E. Sonkamble successfully overcame barriers of hunger and poverty. He was a lecturer in Milind College, Aurangabd. Before him, Daya Pawar published his autobiography Balute in 1978. Daya Pawar depicted the story of a low caste child who through hard work obtained education and became a successful person. Daya Pawar received Ford Foundation Scholarship, for Balute and NFDC produced a film Atyachar on Balute. Balute published in Hindi, Marathi, Gujrati, and Kannada and in foreign languages such as Japanese, German.

Along with the Mahar community, the Tribal and the Nomadic communities also published autobiographies. In December 1980, Laxman Mane came with Upara- An Outsider. Laxman Mane depicted the lifestyle, customs and traditions of the Kaikadi community. In the introduction to the autobiography, Laxman Mane describes his aim behind writing the autobiography:

If the readers succeed in understanding the sufferings of the nomadic tribals, who have been moving from one place to the
other for generations loading their hearth and home on the backs of donkeys, I would feel happy that Upra has achieved its goal.30.

It is very difficult to say whether Mane’s goal has been achieved or not but it is important that this autobiography has succeeded in underscoring the problems of Kaikadi community. The autobiography received the Shaitya Academy Award and published this autobiography in English. Uttam Tupe through his autobiography *Katyaverchi Pote* displayed the sorrows and sufferings of Matang community that earns their livelihood by skinning dead animals and begging in villages. Shridhar Lokhande marked this autobiography as ‘a story of a downtrodden’. In the same year, Shankarrao Kharat published *Taral Antaral*. Shankararo Kharat described the customs and traditions of Yeskar community – Mahar subcaste. He described his struggle for education. He graduated in law and became the Vice-Chancellor of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad. Nansaeb Jhodge, published his autobiography in 1982 entitled *Phanjar* - Pricking Thorn. In 1983 Dadasaheb More published *Gabal*. Through this autobiography, More has depicted the problems of a nomadic tribe – Pingla Joshi who earn their livelihood wandering from village to village.

Women writers also came forward with their life stories. They published autobiographies describing their sorrows and sufferings. Very low treatment was given to the women in Mahar and Nomadic Communities. In 1983, Mukta Sarvagond through her autobiography *Mitlelei Kavade - Closed Doors* disclosed the plight of the Dalit women to the world. Sarvagond raised voice against the people of her own community and also of those who are availing the facilities of being Dalit
for filling their houses and she attacked the pretence of Dalit leaders. She also pictured the exploitation of common Dalits at the hands of their own community members. In 1981, Kumud Pawade published her autobiography entitled *Antasphot*. Shantabai Kamble and Baby Kamble came with their autobiographies in 1986.

In 1987, Laxman Gaikwad published *Uchalya- The Branded*. Laxman Gaikwad brought out problems of the nomadic Community - *Uchalya* who are branded as thieves from their birth. Because of this prejudice they were not able to earn anything and they turned towards thieving. Laxman Gaikwad has given a heartrending description of their poverty, hunger and struggle for education. Laxman received Sahitya Academy Award for his autobiography. This autobiography was published in English. Inspired by Laxman Gaikwad, Atmaram Rathod published *Tanda*- an autobiography of a person who is born in Banjara family and lives out of the town in separate colonies. People from these communities lived together, out of the society and earned livelihood by cattle tending, selling milk and farming. In 1994, Kishore Kale published *Kolhatyche Por - Against All Odds*. Kolhati is a tribal community. Women from these communities earn their livelihood by dancing in the stage shows and men enjoy their earnings lavishly. Kishore’s Mother was a Tamasha dancer. Kishore was an illegitimate child of a Tamasha dancer and had to go through severe problems at various levels. Through his autobiography, Kishore has drawn the picture of the Kolhati community, the sufferings of women in the hands of their fathers and brothers and society as well. There are numerous autobiographies published by Dalit writers depicting their past, suffering and sorrows. Many autobiographies are translated into
regional and foreign languages as well. Dalit autobiographies received larger canvass of world literature and status as Dalit literature.

African American literature also achieved an independent place in world literature. A subgenre of African American literature which began in the middle of the 19th century is the slave narrative. At the time, the controversy over slavery led to impassioned literature on both sides of the issue, with books like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) representing the abolitionist view of the evils of slavery, while the so-called Anti-Tom literature by white southern writers like William Gilmore Simms represented the pro-slavery viewpoint. To present the true reality of slavery, a number of former slaves such as Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass wrote slave narratives, which soon became a mainstay of African American literature. Around six thousand former slaves from North America and the Caribbean wrote accounts of their lives, with about 150 of these published as separate books or pamphlets.

Slave narratives can be broadly categorized into three distinct forms: tales of religious redemption, tales to inspire the abolitionist struggle, and tales of progress. The tales written to inspire the abolitionist struggle are more famous because they tend to have a strong autobiographical motif. Many of them are now recognized as highly literary of all 19th-century writings by African Americans, with two of the best-known being Frederick Douglass's *autobiography* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by *Harriet Jacobs* (1861). Frederick Douglass (c. 1818–95) first came to public attention as an orator and as the author of his autobiographical slave narrative; he eventually became the most prominent African American of his time and one of the most influential lecturers and authors in American history.
Born in slavery in Maryland, Douglass eventually escaped and worked for numerous abolitionist causes. He also edited a number of newspapers. Douglass' best-known work is his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, which was published in 1845. At the time some critics attacked the book, not believing that a black man could have written such an eloquent work. Despite this, the book was an immediate bestseller. Douglass later revised and expanded his autobiography, which was republished as *My Bondage My Freedom* (1855). In addition to serving on a number of political posts during his life, he also wrote numerous influential articles and essays.

After the end of slavery and the American Civil War, a number of African American authors continued to write nonfictional works about the condition of African Americans in the country.

Among the most prominent of these writers is W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963), one of the original founders of the NAACP. At the turn of the century, Du Bois published a highly influential collection of essays titled *The Souls of Black Folk*. The book's essays on race were groundbreaking and drew from DuBois's personal experiences to describe how African Americans lived in American society. The book contains Du Bois's famous quote: "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line." Du Bois believed that African Americans should, because of their common interests, work together to battle prejudice and inequity. Another prominent author of this time period is Booker T. Washington (1856–1915), who in many ways represented opposite views from Du Bois. Washington was an educator and the founder of the Tuskegee Institute, a Black college in Alabama. Among his published works are *Up From Slavery* (1901), *The Future of the American Negro*.
In contrast to Du Bois, who adopted a more confrontational attitude toward ending racial strife in America, Washington believed that Blacks should first lift themselves up and prove themselves the equal of whites before asking for an end to racism. While this viewpoint was popular among some Blacks (and many whites) at the time, Washington's political views would later fall out of fashion. Among the most famous writers of the renaissance is poet Langston Hughes. Hughes first received attention in the 1922 poetry collection, *The Book of American Negro Poetry*. This book, edited by James Weldon Johnson, featured the work of the period's most talented poets (including, among others, Claude McKay, who also published three novels, *Home to Harlem, Banjo and Banana Bottom* and a collection of short stories). In 1926, Hughes published a collection of poetry, *The Weary Blues*, and in 1930 a novel, *Not Without Laughter*. Perhaps, Hughes' most famous poem is "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," which he wrote as a young teen. His single, most recognized character is Jesse B. Simple, a plainspoken, pragmatic Harlemite whose comedic observations appeared in Hughes's columns for the *Chicago Defender* and the *New York Post*. *Simple Speaks His Mind* (1950) is, perhaps, the best-known collection of Simple stories published in book form. Until his death in 1967, Hughes published nine volumes of poetry, eight books of short stories, two novels, and a number of plays, children's books, and translations.

Another famous writer of the renaissance is novelist Zora Neale Hurston, author of the classic novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). Altogether, Hurston wrote 14 books which ranged from anthropology to short stories to novel-length fiction. Because of Hurston's gender and the fact that her work was not seen as socially or politically
relevant, her writings fell into obscurity for decades. Hurston's work was rediscovered in the 1970s in a famous essay by Alice Walker, who found in Hurston a role model for all female African American writers. The Harlem Renaissance marked a turning point for African American literature. Prior to this time, books by African Americans were primarily read by other Black people. With the renaissance, though, African American literature - as well as black fine art and performance art - began to be absorbed into mainstream American culture. African Americans began migrating in large numbers during World War I, hitting its high point during World War II. During this Great Migration, Black people left the racism and lack of opportunities in the American South and settled in northern cities like Chicago, where they found work in factories and other sectors of the economy.

This migration produced a new sense of independence in the Black community and contributed to the vibrant Black urban culture seen during the Harlem Renaissance. Migration also empowered the growing American Civil Rights movement, which made a powerful impression on Black writers during the 1940s, '50s and '60s. Just as Black activists were pushing to end segregation and racism and create a new sense of Black Nationalism, so were Black authors attempting to address these issues with their writings. One of the first writers to do so was James Baldwin, whose work addressed issues of race and sexuality. Baldwin, who is best known for his novel Go Tell it on the Mountain, wrote deeply personal stories and essays while examining what it were like to be both Black and homosexual at a time when neither of these identities was accepted by American culture. In all, Baldwin wrote nearly 20 books, including such classics as Another Country and The Fire Next Time. Baldwin's idol and friend was
author Richard Wright, whom Baldwin called "the greatest Black writer in the world for me". Wright is best known for his novel *Native Son* (1940), which tells the story of Bigger Thomas, a Black man struggling for acceptance in Chicago. Baldwin was so impressed by the novel that he titled a collection of his own essays Notes of a Native Son, in reference to Wright's novel. However, their friendship fell apart due to one of the book's essays, "Everybody's Protest Novel," which criticized Native Son for lacking credible characters and psychological complexity. Among Wright's other books are the semiautobiographical novel *Black Boy* (1945), *The Outsider* (1953), and *White Man, Listen!* (1957).

The other great novelist of this period is Ralph Ellison, best known for his novel *Invisible Man*, which won the National Book Award in 1953. Even though Ellison did not complete another novel during his lifetime, Invisible Man was so influential that it secured his place in literary history. After Ellison's death, a second novel, *Juneteenth*, was pieced together from the 2,000-plus pages he had written over 40 years.

The Civil Rights period also saw the rise of female Black poets, most notably Gwendolyn Brooks, who became the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize when it was awarded for her 1949 book of poetry, *Annie Allen*. Along with Brooks, other female poets who became well known during the 1950s and '60s are Nikki Giovanni and Sonia Sanchez.

During this period, a number of playwrights also came to national attention, notably Lorraine Hansberry, whose play *A Raising in the Sun* focuses on a poor Black family living in Chicago. The play won the 1959 New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. Another playwright who gained attention was Amiri Baraka, who wrote controversial off-Broadway plays. In more recent years, Baraka has become known for his poetry and music.
criticism. It is also worth noting that a number of important essays and books about human rights were written by the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. One of the leading examples of these is Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. Number of autobiographies published to describe their past, sorrows and sufferings. African American writer’s mostly produced more than autobiographies such as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Richard Wright, Alex Healy, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Malcolm X, and James Bal.

The societies and literatures of African Americans and Dalits bear considerable resemblance because the emotional worlds they inhabit – constituting their pain, rebellion, hopes and desires – are similar. Hence similarities can also be found in the criticism of African American and Dalit Literature.

Dalit and African American literatures are mirror images of the lives, sorrows and poverty of the Dalit and African Americans. These literatures have been created through the chemistry of life and experience, society and problems, pain and rebellion.

Dalit and African American literary criticisms view literature as a form of movement for social liberation. Therefore, these literatures are discussed as vehicles for revolution, change consciousness, raising struggle and social commitment. The Black Arts movement subscribed to the ideas of Black power, and opposed the efforts to alienate Black people from their society. This movement resulted from the cultural needs of the African American society. ‘We are advocates of a cultural revolution in arts and ideas’ – was the proposal of this movement.

Dalit literature is the literary movement of Dalits, concerning the need of this literature; Yashwant Manohar says:
Establishing democratic socialism and determining the purpose of literature consistent with this is precisely the rationale for Dalit literature.32

Namdeo Dhasal observes:

The liberation struggle of Dalits demands a total revolution. We do not want partial change, we want complete revolutionary change.33.

Dalit and African American writers and critics consider their literatures to the weapons in the freedom movement. The fight of right of African American and Dalits can be compared in a number of ways. African Americans were slaves and they could buy their freedom by money and on the other side, Dalits were not technically slaves and they have no income source, hence they could not pay the rent of a house. Dalits were the societical slaves. The slavery was imposed on Dalits by Savarna. They have to perform degraded work. African Americans have to work hard but their labor was not considered undignified.

African Americans cannot hide their colour of skin but untouchables can hide their caste. There are similarities in the injustice committed against African Americans and Dalits as well as in the sentiments of resistance expressed. The language and religion of wrongdoers may be different, but their source is the same. They belong to different nationalities but share the same pain. Dalit and African Americans were treated as separate but equal. In 1863, the US government had issued order that all African Americans became free as of 1865, But in 1896 case of Plessy versus Ferguson, the US supreme court propounded the concept of separate but equal. According to this decision, it was not unjust to make separate or equal arrangements for African Americans in public life.
Dalits launched a movement to obtain entry into the Kala Ram Mandir, temple in Nasik. V. D. Savarkar then put forward a proposal to build a separate temple for Dalits. On June 1927, Babasaheb Ambedkar expressed his opposition to this separate but equal arrangement proposed by Savarkar.

In 1954, the US Supreme Court judgment on Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka overturned the 1896 Decision, declaring racial segregation to be constitutional. The law is a powerful weapon; it has been used extensively to protect African Americans and to obtain civic rights. The Dalit movement, too, has sought recourse to the law. The Mahad and Nasik agitations by Dalits were based on law.

African Americans since Gravey’s generations have ridiculed the word Negro and called themselves Blacks. Similarly, Dalits have ridiculed the term Harijan and named - Dalits.

Dalits abandoned the inauspicious and uncivilized names given by Hindus; African Americans too changed their names in order to give up the names received from their masters, as those symbolized their slavery. If the African Americans are the protagonist of Black America Dalits are the protagonists of India’s boycotted society. African American and Dalits both are slaves. The African American slave could live in the masters' house; white children could feed at a Black woman’s breast. But even the touch and shadow of the Dalits were considered untouchable by the touchable.

African Americans and Dalits have seen up and downs in their lives, their life stories are the saga of sorrows. Both the communities fought for their rights and human values. Dalits and African Americans have faced inhuman degradation and their struggle is against it. Despite belonging to
different countries, regions, conditions, societies and language the similarity in the experiences of the two communities derives from the fact that both were victims of injustice and slavery.

There are similarities in the feelings of ownership, entirety and superiority demonstrated by white and savarna society and revolt against slavery by African Americans and Dalits. Because of these similarities, Dalit writers see the pain of African American writers as their sorrows and pains through blues, ballads, stories, novels, dances and songs. Dalit writers have also communicated their pain through literature. Spirituality was the first expression of African American and Dalit literature. The spiritual creations of African Americans were born out of prayers for mercy and the same desire for mercy is also present in the Abhang of Dalit saints.

The tone of early African American literature expressing pain and arousing feelings of pity is perceptible in the early phase of Dalit Literature. Folk literature was the part and parcel of African American life during initial phase. Black folk poets brought out their work in their own dialects; humour and pathos are expressed in these creations. The creations of African American folk poets are playful, predominantly entertaining, and popular. The beginning phase of Dalit literature is replete with poetry, folk theatre and folk art. Dalit folk theatre is meant for popular entertainment.

In 1920, Babasaheb Ambedkar launched a weekly called Mook Nayak. The beginning of Ambedkariate consciousness can be traced to this event. This was also the period of the Harlem Renaissance movement. A good deal of Dalit Literature published during this time, was consciousness raising and Raja Dhale is an example of this trend in Dalit Literature. The
difference between these works and the writings of Bandhu Madhava, Shankararao Kharat, Annabhau Sathe and N.R. Shende, as white writer wrote, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* a novel on African American. Similarly S.M. Mate, a savarna writer published *Upakshitanche Antarang* (1941) on Dalit life. The flame of revolution in the person of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar lit up and spread into the life of boycotted society by the Hindu society. After independence, people's lives changed with the five year plans, elections, and decentralization of power, public welfare schemes and the spread of education. Because of democracy the common people began to understand the language of entitlement and rights. Due to unemployment, poverty increasing population, communal rights, corruption, communalization of politics, Hindutva forces, Dalits lost faith in independence. In order to find solutions to their questions the Dalit youth of Maharashtra launched their own organization, Dalit Panther in 1972,

Dalits and African Americans spoke and wrote about people who suffered injustices in their own society as well as out of society. Dalit and African American Autobiographies possess certain unique features such as the will to document their life stories as documents of history, writing as a way to lighten the burdens of their agonies, sorrows and sufferings. In these autobiographies, there is a urge to record the struggle for gaining liberty and quest for identity for which they have been continuously struggling against their society and high caste society at large. Dalit and African American autobiographers have faith in education. They sought education in unimaginable conditions. The autobiographers have an honest will to describe their cultural, social, economic and political conditions. They have described efforts to uplift the community and social welfare in their autobiographies. These autobiographers have penned their
struggle for creating space in the culture and society. The basic purpose of their writing is to represent their community as a group of human beings who need humane treatment.

REFERENCES


