Chapter VI

Conclusion
Blacks in America and Dalits in India are two distinct identities of two countries celebrating democracy as the guiding principle for political, economic, social, legal and cultural sphere of life. However, there exists a ‘domestic colonialism’ which demarks the Blacks and Dalits as ‘Others’ in their own countries. Thus, the issues of marginalization, subjugation, oppression, and exploitation connect these two. The plight of Blacks and Dalits are culturally divergent, yet same in essence and attitude. The threads of race and caste weave the structure of the respective societies and deform the identities of the others or marginalized along the border of gender and class.

Both Blacks and Dalits have been denied dignified status in their respective societies. Blacks have confronted slavery in America as they were brought to the USA to work as slaves in a situation of oppression. Dalits have been weighed upon by untouchability in spite of being native in their own country. In both of the cases, a person’s ancestry and appearance manipulated his/her position in the society. People are judged solely on external biological aspects of race and (by) birth in particular segment of the social structure. Moreover, these have determined their destiny and life. Such an oppressive structure of society not only hinders their economic growth but also leaves them in emotional and psychological trauma. In both of the cases, one group denies another group access to the resources of society and places them as ‘others’. The intimidating and brutal attitude of ‘the other’ is incorporated into each facet of the life of Blacks and Dalits. This attitude results in the mistreatment, oppression, and abuse of the women by the men in their respective societies.
The study is a progressive study which begins with reading the historical marginalization of the Black Americans in America and Dalits in India in socio-political and literary milieus. The literary discourse of Black subalterns and Dalit subalterns viewed from historical perspective reflects a persistent striving and struggle to claim the equality and unburden the discrimination. The four hundred years of slavery and its ramifications have the conceivable imprint on the history or tradition of African American literature making it a socio-political document stating oppression written along the problems of colour line in the American society. The province of literary history imparts the comprehension of both changing and persistent thought-provoking and pragmatic trends within the vicinity of African American literature. These trends range from slavery and its effect, emerging ethnic identity, dialogue on race and apartheid, to acclamation of democratic ideology. The account of Dalit literature in India consists of a longer history of composition writing exploitation dating back in 6th century though initially flowing intermittently, eventually gushing in huge upsurge. The seeds of Dalit consciousness were planted back in the 6th century.

The trade of slavery and practice of untouchability are two perennial connecting elements of two geographically distant and culturally different identities respectively, African American and Dalit. The trace out their history (ies) reflects a persistent effort to convert these structural negativities within the caste order and social order into positive political content. An effort to make historic suffering and humiliation, the traumatic experience of being ‘ground down’ and ‘broken’—central to the identity of Dalit and African American is also palpable in the evolution of the literatures written by the African American and Dalit writers.
The study has explored Morrison’s work and select Dalit writing to perceive and comprehend the trauma of slavery and repression inflicted by unjust social oppression to check the common trait if there is any. The oppression results in creating havoc in their life with no access to dignified life and relegating them to the fringes of existence. Race, class and gender discrimination throng to cripple women’s identity. This current of oppression exercise corporeal as well as psychological effect on the victims in the form of identity crisis and emotional turmoil in both the cases Morrison and Dalit writers.

The work of Morrison and texts of Dalit writers correspond to the Critical Race Theory as the investigation suggests. The theory puts forth the social construction of race, initial submission of the victim and later, refuting the subservient life with the changing dynamics of life. Black Americans and Dalits, as the prey of hegemonic social norms, have been submissive and complacent. Later, as the theory postulates, they start challenging and refuting the stereotypes of fractured identity and the idea of supremacy in both the cases. The authenticity of experience is another link to connect Dalit forbearance with Black ordeal as seen in Morrison’s fiction and nonfiction.

Morrison’s literary and critical production explores from invisible to visible, subtle to blatant, hidden to prominent and inter to intra forms of racism. In her work, the documentation of racist approaches clarifies the impact of racial behaviour not only on the victims but on the oppressors also. However, Dalit writing delimits itself in reading the affected lives of Dalits only, not the oppressors. The dismal of repressive scene of Indian society and American society has enunciated both the
anguish and questioning spirit in the oppressed hearts to the oppression entrenched in social structure for generations.

A point of difference emerges in the course of comparison between Dalits and Blacks. While Dalits in India are natives and the product of intra-racism system, Blacks are imported and victim of inter-racism. The vast majority of African Americans were brought to the United States to work as slaves in a situation of oppression during British rule. They faced devastating effects of various forms of oppression in a foreign land. Whereas, untouchability got institutionalized in the social structure and Dalits in spite of being natives were locked in the problem resulted in social, economic, and cultural distancing and othering of them in their own land. Dalits, the native sons of India, have been disowned by the social hierarchy and marginalized in all respects for centuries together. Yet the similarity of their (Blacks’ and Dalits’) experiences connects them and they live in physical or psychological ghettos.

The invisibility, mistreatment and exploitation of the Blacks and Dalits due to oppressive structure of society result in devastating effects to the individual incurring emotional and psychological trauma. And this peripheral existence exists not only in their social milieu but also in the literary phenomenon. Consequently, there is a hunt for the cause of this traumatic condition outwardly as well as inwardly among Blacks and Dalits.

The study is informed by this comprehension of Blacks and Dalits and their representation in Morrison and Dalit writers. Just as the study of Morrison’s fiction and non-fiction has established that it is impossible to ignore the making of racial as well as gender consciousness, similarly, the Dalit consciousness has been emerging
in the expressions by Dalit male/female writers. The awareness of being ‘other’ and ‘absent’ in the mainstream literature marks these writings. The reading of their composition, explicitly, defines their effort to fill this literary vacuum or lacuna through the representation of true core of Blackness and Dalitness and presents their unquestionable success in this trial. During this effort, Morrison has spawned a world of such African American characters who face hardships both as individuals and members of Black community shaping and rejuvenating Black identity.

Similarly, Dalit writers sustain their robustness and determination to reclaim their existence as human beings, retrieve their historical legacy and cultivate their culture. Morrison’s purpose and commitment for this responsible act of reviving Black essence is to discover and there after intimate her people with the device to combat the heinous reality of their life—racial segregation. Her non-fiction reflects her continuous endeavor to reshape and redefine the Black existence in American literature at the same time not avoiding White presence. The issue of African American and Dalit women identity draws yet another parallel strand indicating a striking resemblance between African American and Dalit consciousness. The realization of being at the lowest rung of society instigates Black and Dalit women to erase the feeble and mute picture of them through infusing life into models of female insight and intelligence to preserve the essence of their culture. They step further to add energy and give leadership to their cause of justice, to function as the culture-bearer and to construct their identity. The concepts of Blackness and Dalitness, once perceived in negative shades even by themselves, of course, swayed by the impact of dominant culture, interestingly, now fill the sense of belonging and pride, thrill of social and political transformation, and respect for their culture. They are informed by both Black aesthetics and political ideology, respectively. The
The thesis has sought to study the tendency to introspect their life, beliefs, culture, rituals and all the more their community as the thematic substance in the work of Morrison and Dalit writers. An examination of the social awakening of the inner self with outer reality explains how these writers, Morrison and Dalits, communicate the relation between individual and community. The construction of the personal identity consists of the individual aspect of spiritual quest for self-recognition and this search relies on social identity for its fulfillment and completion. Through the relation between individual and community, these writers look not only into individuals in their journey of self-realization and self-examination but also dissect the perceptions, assumptions, beliefs of their community. This act of introspection rescues their work from being merely a document of lamentation and attaches a universal value addressing the cause of all humanity—search for personal and/or communal wholeness and fulfillment.

The route of self-discovery and self-inventing is punctuated with hurdles thrown by race, caste barriers and in case of women burdened with male domination. Morrison dissects Black community and pinpoints the tendency of self-loathing prevalent among many of the Blacks eventually resulting in self-destruction. Her work carries a message to eradicate this self-hatred from Black psyche, eliminate the aloofness from their native culture and class tension, poising balance between modern concept of freedom and Black traditional life (Tar Baby), and thereby revive their worth and esteem. Similarly, Dalit writing reflects both the tendencies self-critique and appraisal in the course of introspection. Dalit writers
critically approach their community’s life and depict in the real terms the internal conflicts, superstitions, the tyrannical approach of males, and family strife with a directive wake up call to broaden their outlook through education and to unite. The inter-dependence of community and its unit-an individual is a common trait of Morrison’s work and Dalit writing. These writers perceive the agony of their people as their own and get the complete access of identity through collective identity only.

Apparently, the continued agony and pain generate a conscious thought of self realization, self-assertion and self consciousness leading to self introspection among them. In both of the literatures, the introspection and self-criticism come only after spread of education; Blacks developed it when they claimed the right to enter in academic and intellectual world; Dalits has started assessing their community only in recent decades.

Despite many similarities, Morrison’s work differs from Dalit work being not the replica of her life. However, her work carries the references from her personal life. Dalits as depicted in Dalit writings differ from Blacks as they appear to cherish and love their culture instead of assimilating to mainstream culture, a commonly seen tendency among Blacks. In spite of blaming Whites as sole responsible for the plight of Blacks, Morrison peeps deep into her society also, dissects it and examines Black individual’s inner self and Black community’s form. In their works, Blacks and Dalits the extent of consciousness reaches beyond gender and race to a general creed of humanity. The purview of the study is to study more similarities and less difference between Black experience (with particular reference to Morrison) and Dalit experience in Dalit writers.
With an aim to examine the relevance and importance of Morrison’s work in the Indian context, the thesis has explored and applied Dalit aesthetics on Morrison’s fiction adding an intercontinental milieu to it. The important components of Dalit aesthetics- the concept of equality, liberty, freedom and justice and vision of discrimination-free society have been underlined in the reading of her fiction. Her work has been composed as the pursuit of these human values in the American society. The striving of these concepts lends the trait of realism to her fancied fiction. Realism is considered as a hard core element of Dalit literary ethos. Dalit aesthetic is, in fact, the projection of real life discarding the imaginative utopian concept of society. Morrison’s work underscores the realism as she takes the real life experience, character and incidents as the stirring source for her novels *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved*, respectively; her work centers around the stark realities of Blacks’ life and takes place in the gamut of sociopolitical struggle that has historically characterized Black American experience.

An important element of Dalit aesthetics, the note of social commitment and responsibility marks the composition of Morrison’s literature. Her work is not just an artistic expression, but corresponds to social and political need of her community, in particular and country, in general. The discovery of past and nourishment of myths, legends and folklore of Dalit literary ethos has been an earmark of Morrison’s opus. The use of myth is a device to rejuvenate Black literary tradition and store a central place to it. Her work conforms to Dalit aesthetics’ rejection of traditional literary genres, forms and language and evolving new literary genres- fiction, myths and real life overlapping one another. As in Dalit literary ethos, Morrison’s novels vocalize her community’s language and the use of colloquial language lends her work more realistic characteristic.
The chief constituents of Dalit aesthetics, as propagated by Dalit critic, Sharan Kumar Limbale, can be applied successfully on Morrison’s fiction. The artist’s social commitment motivated by their life experience, conveying life-affirming values, crossing provincial boundaries through strength of expression and all-time relevance are such components of Dalit aesthetics that form the crux of magnitude of Morrison’s oeuvre.

The first sentence of Morrison’s Nobel speech addressed to the members of the Swedish Academy clarifies the prime aim of her writing, “Ladies and Gentlemen: Narrative has never been merely entertainment for me” (Morrison, Nobel Lecture 1). Storytelling or narrative assumes an important or significant function in both African American and Indian Dalit literature having the context of cultural and political domination. Raymond Williams supports the view that stories (literature) are not just to be told but they perform a critical function as he observes that literature is part of “a whole social process, which, as it is lived, is not only process but is an active history, made up of the realities of formation and of struggle” (210).

Reading of Morrison’s work leads to an assessment of recurring themes of the treatment and characterization of female and male characters, of the emphasis on community and friendship--- and specifically which is known as a ‘community of women’, and of the significance of the historical past. Her effort to (re) create her own lore by offering variations on more familiar tales necessarily invites reading her work in the perspective of Dalit literary works as conceptually and thematically. Black characters and Dalit characters are marginal figures that lack social, psychological, historical, geographical or genealogical place or centre. Through their characters, they force readers to see the value of a life that is authentic because the
individual assumes responsibility for community. “They express either an effort of the will or a freedom of the will” (Morrison qtd. in Taylor-Guthrie 164). Although Black and Dalit writers do not suggest that one can avoid life with others, they constantly talk about the importance of self as Morrison tells the significance of “flying without ever leaving the ground” (Song of Soloman 340).

Other deductions made on the basis of the study:

- The trauma of racism has affected both the victim (Blacks) and the oppressor (Whites) in the form of “the severe fragmentation of the self” as Morrison states in her lecture, *Unspeakable Things Unspoken* (16). In Dalit writing, the study has found no evidence of this ideology. The reading of Dalit texts under study shows that other than Dalits are not seen affected physically or psychologically by the caste system.

- The practice of slavery in the colonial America had its beginning in the first quarter of 17th century and the notion of Black consciousness assumed a defined shape in the 19th century. In case of Dalits, the process of gaining awareness of their plight has been prolonged, comparatively, having its inception in 6th century and visibly bloomed only in twentieth century with the arrival of light of education by social reformists -Jyotiba Phule and Dr. Ambedkar.

- In the course of introspection, Morrison does not find Whites as sole responsible for the predicament of Black Americans. She anatomizes and scrutinizes Black people’s life and surroundings and exhorts for their self undermining and internal clashes. Whereas Dalit reading confers that “it was the system that was responsible for their miserable state and not the Dalit themselves as they had been made to believe” (Kapoor 69). However, Dalit
progressive writers Bama, Urmila Pawar and Baby Kamble have gauged their community finding the need for self-correction by educating and shunning superstitions and internal clashes to ameliorate their status.

- The perception and expression of Morrison and Dalit writers intend to vitalize and reclaim the legacy of their culture, traditions, customs and beliefs.

Black American writer Toni Morrison and many Indian Dalit writers have been writing on the dynamics of race and caste, personal autonomy in the girdles of assigned social role and predicament of Blacks and Dalits for more than a half century. Has the situation or predicament been informed or marked with any difference? Has any change been noticed in their conditions? The current scenario presents both positive and negative aspects. The election of Mr. Barak Obama as the president of America, the popularity of Oprah Winfrey, and the acceptance of African American writers in American literature hint some changes for betterment. However, what Morrison told proves that situations have not changed much in matter of race relations:

“I don’t pass without insults. Let me give you an example. I walk into the Waldorf Astoria in New York to check in. We’re going to have a drink, and then my friend is going to go home. She stands behind me, as I check in. Finally, the guy says, “Oh, are you registering too?” He thought I was the maid. My friend was trembling with anger. It was so personal. But the irony of it was that I was on the cover of a magazine that month, and there were these posters with my face on them all over New York” (Cooke, “America is Going”).

The episodes like, Eric Garner has been strangled by White policeman on Staten Island; Michael Brown has been shot by a White policeman in Ferguson;
Walter Scott has been shot by a White cop in South Carolina; a Black boy named Trayvon Martin was murdered by Zimmerman, a White watch-leader, and many more infer the presence of racist setting of American scene. A very recent (18 June 2015) shooting of nine Blacks at South Carolina’s Charleston Church by a White named Dylann Roof brings the evidence to racial segregation still continuing and recalls Morrison’s words, “the system itself is protective embarrassing for my country…it hurts, it really hurts” (qtd. in Brockers).

Although slavery had been tacitly protected in the original Constitution of America through various clauses, the government of America took several pro-active actions; many slaves had been declared free by Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 by Abraham Lincoln; the senate passed an amendment to abolish slavery which applies also to private citizens. Though the reconstruction amendments legally and formally abolished slavery in December 1865 throughout the United States, Blacks continued to be subject of racist attitude. A parallel traced in the socio-legal scenario of lives of Blacks and Dalits indicates that casteism has neither been approved nor disapproved legally in India whereas; slavery was initially tagged as valid by the law in America. It is after the independence, India, as a sovereign and republic country, adopted its own constitution in 1950 and declared the discrimination against lower castes as illegal under Article 15 of the constitution. Prior to that there was not any law against it. As in the USA, many laws and social initiatives to protect and improve the socioeconomic plights of Dalits in India has been enacted since 1950-- admission quota, job reservations, welfare schemes run by the government, and other affirmative actions are in these initiatives taken up by the government of India. Despite of these facts, casteism has been one of the biggest maladies in India’s hierarchical social order. The Blacks feel the oppression, discrimination and exploitation persist.
nullifying the laws, rules and pro-active actions taken up by the American government. They have not attained the status of equality whatever is the case. The unseen waves of racism are still in the air. Even the American Hollywood is not untouched by this as the percentage of the Black Oscar winners is less than five percent so far. It is only in 2007 that five Blacks got nomination for the Oscar award for the first time. In the constitution of India, many provisions have been made for Dalits, still they feel that they have not been allowed to live a life of dignity and equality. The social hierarchy, somehow, mars the doctrine of liberty, equality and fraternity considered to be essential for human life and African Americans and Dalits have been kept at the lowest rung of the hierarchical structure of the society due to complexion, features and biological aspects of race things beyond their control. Apart from these subtle forms of racist discrimination, the heart rending incidents of blatant racism are not far to be seen. Blacks and Dalits have gained legal freedom but the abridging gap between gaining and claiming one’s rights is noteworthy. What Morrison writes in *Beloved* is still relevant and functions as a plea to the pertinence of the all gamut of Black and Dalit literary composition, “Feeling yourself was one thing; Claiming ownership of that freed self was another” (95).

Though the study focuses on Toni Morrison, what Toni Morrison gives us is the authentic picture of the Blacks in the circumstances with Whites around them. Her work represents the Black America i.e. Black females as well as males. In the same way Dalit writings taken up for the study represent Indian Dalit community. The depiction of plights and living situations of specific characters in Morrison and Dalit writers speak for the general kind of picture of their community. Hence, it becomes a general kind of picture.
The squalid, despicable, depraved, repellent and abominable plight of African Americans in the USA and Dalits in India turning into convalescent, recuperating and rejuvenating condition anticipates the change for betterment. The change in the status of Blacks and Dalits - not drastic yet implicit - has acquired a shape as the social psyche does not change fast. However, when Toni Morrison commenced writing, it was hardly assumed or imagined that a Black person would become the President of America. In current Indian scenario, many states in India have Dalits as their leaders in socio-political life. The current picture of the Lok Sabha Election shows that now it is not caste-politics the only deciding factor of political scene, and it indicates to the changing circumstances in India.

Where Morrison begins her work, ‘Playing in the Dark’, “My project rises from delight, not disappointment” (4), the study can be concluded with a note of hope. Dalit writers Bama and Urmila Pawar has witnessed the change, therefore are optimists. Pawar writes in the preface of The Weave of My Life, “The distance between the Dalit and non-Dalit communities fifty years ago (five decades ago) is reduced by approximately half today” (xi).
Works Cited


