Chapter-VII

Conclusion

If one talks about the whole social world, the evidence of history is there that there has always been a big gap between the two ends: the haves and the have-nots, the privileged and underprivileged ones. It hardly makes any difference to who stands at the lowest end and who is there at the top. The basic fact is that it is the gap between the exploiters and exploited. In this research project, the researcher has talked about different forces of resistance borne out of crude social realities in two different milieus. Literature has been proved to be a very strong medium to work as a discourse of resistance. The researcher has focused on poetry only. Afro-American and Dalit movements are in true sense cognates. Both sections are looked down inferiors to their fellow human beings. The poets of both the sections have viewed their societies within the broad spectrum of democratic values and humanity. They have quite vividly portrayed the rigid pattern of inequality in society. Both of them have raised their voice not to terrorize somebody but to make the society realize their right to equality and justice. They want their brethren to be free, live independently, sharing all the elements of nature equality with the other.

So the poetry of the writers of both the groups is similar in terms of the shared idiom, which expresses their wish to dismantle the established canon. In short, the poetry of the Afro-Americans and the Dalits develop a new consciousness in the minds of their people and try to make them aware of themselves and the social history. They also try to play the dual role of both an author as well as spokesmen of their dumb communities. Through their poetry they aim to expose their enemies’- the White Americans and Brahmin upper castes-social and cultural stupidity and the destruction of the society based on their suppression and exploitation. Thus both Gujarati Dalit and Afro-American poetry is the voice of voiceless and powerful revolt against the dominant Brahminical and White ideology and their cultural supremacy. The poets have become the public voices of community consciousness, especially through the sense of urgency, experimentation imbued in their works. Through their poetry, they have created a new, egalitarian world that is free of caste-based and racial biases and lead towards a liberating vision of the
society. The poetry by both the groups of writers, in real sense, is an institution in themselves as well as a movement which is firmly committed to reflect their respective culture, tradition, heritage, aspirations, deep-rooted desires and dreams. This is how they confront with the imperfections of their societies. Theirs is a quest for identity, demand for equal share in the development and progress of their nation’s culture, religion and social life.

As mentioned earlier, the Afro-Americans were not originally Americans, but they were forcefully brought to America as slave to work in the fields. They neither displayed any indication of going home back nor did they want to stay in a foreign land. They were pitilessly kept captivated like animals for gratifying the needs of White people. They remained helpless lot suffering from the evils of slavery in the hands of their cruel masters. Theirs was a very miserable condition as neither they could go back to their homeland nor they could live with dignity within the White camp. They were deprived of their basic rights. The only thing the Whites could never deprive them of was their homeland, Africa, from their hearts. It was not merely their land of origin, but a land of their deep-rooted culture, religions, ethos and traditions. Had they continued living there, they would have lived a very comfortable and merry life. When slavery was finally over, the Afro-Americans got opportunities to shape their creative power to the melodies of Africa- a land of their own. But during the slavery period, these fellows were the victims of inhumanity, illiteracy, dehumanization and ostracism. Soon they realized that their unity might save them, so they followed the principle: ‘liberty, equality and fraternity’. So they won their war through ineffable struggle, but racism was yet to be faced and fought. The innate struggle they have undergone from their goal of abolishing slavery to that of fighting has shaped their poetry. In the early phase of their literature, they turned to the subjects related to Africa- a land of their dreams for seeking pleasure. Slowly they started realizing the pangs of racism that they experienced on the name of their skin-color. For this reason, their art was then dedicated to a cause. And this cause was to destroy the discriminating policies the Whites were formulating to harm their life and they wanted to raise their voice against this. So the tone reflected in their literature has been different to that of the one found in the world literature.
If one talks about the Dalit in India, then their reality was also bitter than that of Afro-Americans. This is because that at least the Black’s rivals were identifiable, while the enemies of Dalits were invisible. They are invisible, because it lies in their collective unconsciousness, in their traditions, customs, the age-old social system and in the Hindu scriptures. The Dalits in India have many fronts to fight against. According to ancient Hindu society, the Brahmins were the priests, the upholder of religion; the Kshatriyas were warriors who had to ensure the safety in the society, the Vaishyas who were the traders, and the Shudras who were believed to be the lowest of all performing menial duties. The hierarchy was designed on the base of the purity of the profession. The Shudras’s profession was not regarded the ideal one in compared to that of the profession of high castes. So they were considered to be the untouchables. Caste–system took birth from this baseless ideology which gave Dalits no happy life, offering no solace, but injustice, inequality, torture and inhuman treatment. They have been facing all this till today due to this evil design of the social structure. They have got marginalized from the mainstream society despite the fact that like Afro-Americans, they also contributed a lot in making their nation strong.

The basic difference between the Dalits and Afro-Americans was that the Dalits did not come from anywhere to India. They have been the original inhabitants of India. They have every right to claim for the Indian citizenship. Even Indian constitution has granted them the equal rights. But like Afro-Americans they have not won their dignified life, even though they won the legal battles. So it becomes clear that there is nothing like ‘Dalit’ or ‘Black’, but only and only the so-called Indian social system and the White society have segregated them on the base of the caste and the skin-color. The Hindu scriptures justify the Dalits as sorrowful citizens which they are passing through due to their sinful life in their past lives. Even the Dalits had started using the literature and folk culture as their weapons to fight against this oppression right from the medieval period. The reformers like Kabir and Chokhamela on their behalf started their revolt through Bhajans and padas.

Nevertheless, their revolt did not become strong till India got independence and Ambedkar’s inspiring struggle for the betterment of his lot. After this, the Dalit literary
writers began to take the literature as their movement. They also became familiar with the Black movement and their literature. They realized that the way the Afro-Americans led their movements through not only literature but also through political front, they would also march though creating political parties. Being highly influenced by the Black Panther Party and Black Arts Movement, they also created the Dalit Panther Movement in 1972. They also started sharing their hopes for freedom through literature. The way poetry had been the dominating form of African-American literature in their initial period, the same had been the case of Dalit literature. Gujarati Dalit writers first started writing a swarm of poems under the influence of ‘Dalit Panthers’ representing the Indian Dalit life. Theirs was also repressed class as that of Afro-Americans and like them they too have portrayed their hopes, aspirations and the fight for survival. There had been no difference between the position of Blacks in America and Dalits in India. Both had been the victims of imposed social structures. While race is the natural phenomenon, the caste is a man-made. Neither the Blacks can change their color of skin nor can Dalits change their caste. Both these oppressed groups did not continue enduring their pain. They started projecting their humiliation in the form of literature. The dream of equality, freedom and brotherhood has been shared by the Afro-Americans and Dalits in India. They have led fierce struggle socially, politically to assert their identity against the hegemony of their society. The world of both the Afro-American and the Dalit poets has been painted with different shades of agony.

So far as the Blacks are concerned, they have been successful in echoing their voice through literature. They mastered every form of literature. Even in folk also, they remained unsurpassed. While in the case of Dalit struggle, they started writing only after they got inspired by Ambedkarite philosophy. The reason behind the development of Afro-American literature is worth to be understood. The Black movement gained drive after the Second World War when America became the supreme power. With this came new knowledge, scientific advancements, technology, and job opportunities. This booming economy broke the traditional lines and prejudices that separated Blacks and Whites. This situation provided them a new intellectual enlightenment which gave rise to new literary expressions, while India, being a third world country, has been engulfed in poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. The illiterate middle and lower class people have
not only been able appreciate the Dalit literature, but even any work of literature. The important thing here is to know the mass readership the Black literature enjoyed was lacking in India. So howsoever intelligent and sharp the Dalit literature would have been, it cannot transform the orthodox ideologies of the people. One another thing is to be noticed here is that the afro-Americans had one common language, while in India one finds a variety of regional languages. So, the Blacks even could decode any poem even in oral form, while the same is not true in the case of Dalits in India. Due to variety in dialects, even they cannot understand the songs or poems written in different regional languages. Thus in India, the Dalit voice has not reached every corner with the same intensity as it reached among the afro-Americans. Even the Dalits have not reflected through the folk art as it is found in the case of Afro-Americans. The folk art and culture has been rich among the Afro-Americans in compared to the Dalits in India.

One another factor which distinguishes their intensities is that while Afro-Americans were forcefully taken to America, the Dalits belong to India itself. They are not from somewhere outside. It becomes more challenging and all the more difficult to fight against the people of one’s own land than fighting against the people of foreign land. This creates hurdles for the Dalits to raise their voice against the dominating forces. There is also a huge difference between the lengths of history of both the nations. So far as India is concerned, it has a long history. The origin of Varna system is lying in ancient Hindu religion and religious scriptures. On the other hand, the origin of racial discrimination as faced by the Afro-Americans is not found in America’s ancient history or in their Christian religion. In fact, the Christian religion believes in the humanitarian principles like brotherhood, compassion and charity irrespective of color or race. On the other hand, the Hindu religion considers the Dalits as sinners who are believed to be polluting others human beings and so they are regarded as the untouchables. So the Dalits in India have not been able to eradicate discrimination from the psyche of its citizens as much the Afro-Americans could racial differences.

One another point is to be noted here that the strong unity is required to fight against any evil. What happened to the Dalits in India is that they adopted the same hierarchy as that of the dominant class structures. For this reason, one finds conflict and discomfort within
the community, which is not found among the Blacks in America. In Black community, every Black has been considered to be an equal, irrespective of the state of his origin. This notion of being together provided them the strength of unity which was required to achieve the desired result. Talking about the Dalit art and literature, they have not extensively used other forms of literature like drama, folk culture except poetry so as to reach their mass. The problems they faced were that their art and culture are so closely related to that of mainstream art and culture. So they could not create a distinct identity of their culture as the Blacks could do. Due to not having their distinct identity, they could not project their own art and culture to the dominating forces. The Afro-Americans were lucky to frame their own unique folk culture, tradition and music that they inherited from their motherland. In addition to this, they also could attain support from some of the major White literary artists like Harriet Beecher Stowe whose novel titled *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* became the social document for the eradication of slavery from the entire nation. While in the case of Dalits in India, similar kind of support was not achieved from the mainstream writers. Thus, it implies that the success path for the Dalits is more tough to go on than that of Afro-Americans’. They have a long distance to travel on to enjoy the fruits of equality and freedom.

Both these communities were the victims of discrimination, humiliation and physical and mental torture. Both these communities had no means of income therefore they were economically exploited, politically isolated and socially segregated, due to their under representation and repression through discriminatory cultural practices in their respective societies. Both these groups suffered humiliation and social segregation due to their caste and race origins. These conditions encouraged them for the angry protest and a sustained resistance against inhuman exploitation and social slavery. They made efforts to fight against such socio-cultural discrepancies in their respective societies.

Turning towards the poetry by Afro-American and Gujarati Dalit writers, it has proved to be an important tool for the social justification. Its macroscopic view has continued to be inspiring many individuals about the lessons of humanity and compassion. A close analysis of the socio-cultural, political, economic and literary background to the poetic creation of both African American and the Dalit poets reveals a strong social protest
through their feelings of disgust, disillusionment and derision. It is obvious that their poems are an angry enunciation of their desperation, despair and rebellion. The reasons for the frustration and disillusionment of the Dalit poets lay in the contradictory and paradoxical social condition. Though the constitution of India sought abolition of untouchability, the mindset and tendency of the highborn people to discriminate on the basis of caste still persists. In America too, the racial discrimination has not been completely eradicated even after making provision for its legal abolition. The caste discrimination and untouchability have been defined as India’s hidden apartheid. The polarization of various arguments discussed here shows that the marginalized and socially segregated the Blacks and Dalits are deeply involved in a decisive battle for their survival in their respective countries. Their ceaseless efforts to carve out a social, political, economic space and legitimize their new enlightened ‘self’ or identity are explicit in their poems.

These poets are the representatives of the social outcaste communities. Their poems show eternal truth and an abiding sense of commitment. It would be a meaningless endeavor to label their horrifying experiences, perceptions and insights as political statements or nationalistic exhortations. Their poems are their genuine aesthetic response to the world of the reality inhabited by them.

Gujarati Dalit poetry is the product of social compulsion, commitment and a reaction against injustice. This literature of social protest tried to subvert the established literary convention of the mainstream writers. In the early days of the Gujarati Dalit literature, it suffered cynicism as it was preoccupied with a vision of revolution and transformation. It rejected the established traditional canons of theme, subject matter, form and content, style and technique, and language with utmost hatred. Therefore, the mainstream literary critics were reluctant to acknowledge it was literature and give it its due space. Hence, the traditional literary, linguistic and stylistic standards cannot be applied to the evaluation of Dalit literature. It demands a totally new critical methodology based on socio-anthropological perspective and canons for its just evaluation.

The African – American poetry too had to pass through adverse scrutiny by the White critics in its initial period of flowering. However, it is due to their definite aims and their
preference for a firm commitment, dedication to a noble cause of human dignity and humanitarianism that both the Dalit and the Afro-American poetry have stood the test of time. The comparative study of these two literatures shows that the fundamental human response to the forces of suppression and repression aims at egalitarianism, liberation, salvation and emancipation from all human bondage. This is the central thematic concern and driving force behind these two literatures.

The sufferings of the Dalits in Hindu social structure are inevitable. The birth of human being in Hindu religion was a natural qualification for them. Manusmruti was the justification of the exploitation of lower caste people in India. Dr. Ambedkar’s visionary approach to Manusmruti was different from that of the traditional alone. The establishment of the British colony that introduced knowledge and technology in India played a vital role in the development of the Dalits. At the same time the work of Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule changed the approaches of the oppressed class.

The Afro-Americans were the victims of the racial discrimination and a system of slavery. The White South Americans practiced slavery for agricultural purpose. They misinterpreted the black color as the punishment of the God. The Blacks were humiliated and given the subordinate status. They were treated as inferior, weaker, dull and feminine. The racial discrimination was fully exploited to safeguard the economic interests and monopoly of the White people. In 1607 the first English colony at Jamestown was established by Virginia Tobacco Company in 1607. During this time the Dutch traders brought Black slaves from West African coast and introduced the slavery system. The Negroes felt nostalgic in the 18th century and thought of going back to his motherland. But at the same time the man like Frederic Douglas played a very important role by asking the Negros instead of going back to South Africa, they should fight with the Whites for the liberation in America itself. It was after Douglas’s advice and appeal that the Negroes started protesting against every kind of injustice and humiliation by living in America only. Thus both the Dalits and Blacks revolted against the injustices done to them.

Afro-American poets tried to overcome racial discrimination and dehumanizing factors. Their poetry is the celebration of the Black life and culture. It emphasizes on the self
respect, identity and self assertion of the Black. The ghettoized and marginalized life of the Blacks inspired them write something. They aspired for the freedom throughout his life. At every moment they wanted to feel like destroying the existing old order and create a new one. They were quite optimistic of the future of their race. Their dream world has been the world which must be free from injustice and exploitation. Their poetry presents cosmic dimension and futuristic vision. They were prepared to dedicate themselves for the creation of new Black Nationalism. They interpret the images to uplift their lot. The theme of emancipation of the Blacks, freedom and quest for black voice are expressed in their poetry.

The Dalit literature reflects the social reality of the Dalit masses. It challenges the contemporary socio cultural practices and rejects them. Poetry was the apt choice for the Dalit writers, through which they fought battles against the social injustice, inequality, stagnation and orthodox beliefs. Education and legislation created a new awareness in the minds of Dalits. All Gujarati Dalit writers have been highly impressed by Dr. Ambedkar’s revolutionary fundamental principles. They are not satisfied with the culture, conventions, hierarchy, God and stone idols of deities. They have lost faith in democracy because the Dalits are not free from caste ridden society. Therefore, they are called as realistic, committed and pro-active. They have observed that (the Dalit community around them which was languishing in) their community has been surrounded by the darkness of ignorance, poverty, untouchability and exploitation. But they have begun to come out of it after getting influenced by Dr. Ambedkar, who wished Dalit community to become mobile and dynamic.

The Dalits in India faced caste discrimination and caste conflicts whereas the Blacks in America faced racial discrimination and marginalized life. Both had become victims in human casteist and racist ideological practices of the high caste Hindus and the Whites. Both the communities were fully exploited by the established classes for their benefits. The awareness of injustice and the spread of education motivated Dalits and search for identity shaped the creative consciousness in them. They initiated the protest movement for the improvement of their socio economic status whereas the Blacks launched their protest movement against the established White racist social order. Both the groups
wanted to subvert the inhuman and discriminatory ideologies of the dominant classes. Both the groups revolted against the religious discourse in their respective countries.

A good number of Dalit writers, artists and activists have emerged out of this socio-cultural protest in the last half century in Gujarat. They have been all were influenced by the Black Panthers Movement started in America by Bobly Seal and Hucy P. Newton. The Dalits and Blacks had the same ideology of social commitment and patriotic fervor. They regarded their respective homelands as motherlands. They have been concerned with the fundamental question of freedom. They have attempted to present the negativism in an affirmative or positive mode. Both the Dalits and Blacks highlighted the intense craving for the creation of an ideal human world. They have tried to recreate common utopia by demolishing segregation and isolation.

The comprehensive study of Afro-American and Gujarati Dalit poetry can be summarized as follows:

A. Both the Dalits in India and the Blacks in America were the victims of inhuman and discriminatory socio-cultural discourse that wanted to perpetuate the practice of untouchability and racial discrimination. As a result, both these communities were thrown to the backwaters of their respective national life. They were forcibly taken away from the mainstream socio-cultural, political and economic exchanges and negotiations.

B. Both these groups were exploited and victimized in the respective repressive social structures by the dominant castes and classes.

C. The privileged higher classes crafted strategies to extract their services and hard labor of the Blacks and the Dalits for their own selfish enhancement and comfort.

D. Both the Blacks and Dalits were denied equal social status by the Whites and the high caste Savarnas in their respective countries in spite of the legal and constitutional provisions and political decisions.

E. As both the Blacks and the Dalits recognized the reasons for their miserable and subhuman conditions of life, they started expressing their protest against marginalization and their resistance to the oppressive strategies of the dominant classes. Poetry became a vehicle of expression of their intimate and personal
feeling. As the struggles became more intensified, the socio-political polarization gave birth to leadership in their respective social groups. These leaders acquainted them with their unjustified suppression, victimization and enslavement by the dominant classes.

F. Both the groups have suffered humiliation due to social slavery. Though the nature of their suffering is identical, they suffered due to different socio-political, cultural and geographical reasons. All these aspects are reflected in their poetry. Hence there is relevance and a need for the comparative study of their literature.

G. Both the poetry shows the struggles of these writers to carve out a concrete space or identity for themselves by asserting their separate ethnic, cultural and literary movements.

H. The creative artists of both these groups are the true representatives of their society even today, due to the intensity and integrity of their art and social commitment. Their contribution is still unsurpassed and unmatched having intensity and aggressive appeal.

I. This study is not concerned with the individual greatness of a particular text in the context of an actual experience, but it is essentially interested in the context, its impact on the experience of these sensitive artists and their aesthetic response to such experience.

J. The comparative study of the two cultures that gave rise to the poetry help in formulating a relevant literary discourse. It marks the similarities and dissimilarities in their social milieu and their aesthetic inspirations. Therefore, the present study postulates viability, plausibility and desirability of comparative study in literature.

K. The thesis offers a factual interpretation of unconventional, iconoclastic and subverting norms and a natural aspiration on the part of these creative artists to reestablish and reassess their cultural identity through introspection and retrospection. It attempts to explore the socio-cultural and literary ambience of the marginalized identities as well as of the subaltern identities.

Recognition of the distinct identity and dignity of the Afro-Americans and Dalits is very essential. It may play an important role in their struggle against the Whites and the upper
castes and in their search for human dignity and rights. The carving out of an identity of their own has paved way for the unity among the Afro-Americans and untouchables. The pronouncement of their separate identity has been the beginning of their ongoing journey towards emancipation. The plight of the Afro-Americans and untouchables is a unique story of oppression but their continuing struggle for liberation has much wider significance. From global level, it could be viewed as a new social movement for justice and equality or as a human rights movement with unique characteristics. The liberation movement of these outcastes is an essential anti-caste movement; as such it is significant course of action in the struggle for existence. It is in real sense the democratization of human society. They have a right to dignity; they deserve it and must be given their dues.