Chapter Six

Summation

No subject will readily volunteer to become the object, the inessential; it is not the Other who, in defining himself as the Other, establishes the One. The Other is posed as such by the One in defining himself as the One. But if the Other is not to regain the status of becoming the One, he must be submissive enough to accept [Otherness]. (Beauvoir 14)

The centre-margin paradigm of post colonialism has provided possibilities for the silenced subalterns to articulate through literary writings. The suppressed people, who remained voiceless and occupied the margin for ages, have started moving towards the centre. Literature, being a reflection of life, the movement of the voiceless and silenced sufferers from the margin to the centre is explicitly seen in the literary works of postcolonial writers, who ardently highlight the experiences of the subalterns in their writings.

In this study, the term “others” is used in a broader sense and it includes the coloured, women and immigrants. The shackles and restraints made by the occupants of the superior rank have driven the blacks, women and immigrants to accept the status of the “others”. The privileged
considers the “others” mere instruments, take advantage of them to serve their ends, exploit them, squeeze their individuality and force them to subjugation and inferiorization. Being made contemptible, spineless and faceless, they are ostracized, humiliated, isolated and made invisible. Many a time the “others” have to be satisfied with their servile role for they cannot lay claim on any status and they have to carry on with their pigeonholed status, piercing experiences, anxieties, restlessness, empty dreams and blasted hopes.

The theme of “otherness” continues to occupy the attention of writers devoted to the study of the history of the Caribbean, African-American and African diaspora and Danticat and Nunez are no exception. Their fictional canvas covers some of the worst atrocities humans perpetrate on the less privileged - the universal devaluation of the coloured people, the all-encompassing globalized patriarchal violence against women and children and the hurdles as well as the nightmares faced by the immigrants in an alien place. Both are anti-colonists and anti-imperialists and they depict the dehumanizing and degrading treatments meted out to the marginalized people and have diagnosed their problems in a poignant and emotive manner. They are deeply and sensitively aware of the subalterns’ tricky situations and seek that the stereotyped images of the stigmatized must be broken through and a new concept should be evolved so that the marginalized will be able to confront the challenges of the world.
and exist as autonomous, independent beings. They desire that the oppressed should be freed from the web of enslavement and the distinction between the ‘dominant’ and ‘subordinate’, ‘self’ and ‘other’, ‘centre’ and ‘margin’, ‘touchable’ and ‘untouchable’ ‘powerful’ and ‘powerless’ should be wiped out and the neglected should be brought from the ‘periphery’ to the ‘centre’. This study analyzes how the blacks, women as well as immigrants have been relegated to the position of “others” and how the hereditary “otherness” wrecks the lives of the Caribbean peoples.

The introductory chapter discusses the diversity of American Literature, in particular the position of Caribbean-American Literature in it. Then, it introduces the authors and their works. It also lays bear the significance, objective and relevance of the study, review of literature and methodology applied. The plots of the chosen fictional works as well as the chapter-wise summary of the study have been outlined as well.

The West treats the inhabitants of the third world countries, including the Caribbean territories as mere objects and believes that they have neither a history nor a voice. Chapter II entitled “To be a Black” has addressed the ill effects of the inherent superiority and dominance of the whites over the blacks. It showcases how racial bias is entrenched and deep-rooted and it encompasses various prejudices, including European
colonialism, American imperialism, the undefeatable racialism in the US and the unsolved ethnic crisis between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

In this chapter, Danticat and Nunez initially unearth the aftermaths and hard realities of the Caribbean peoples, who were cleaved by European colonization. The colonial powers considered the Caribbean wild, savage creatures, who know nothing about civilization. Danticat and Nunez, in particular, demonstrate how the colonial powers exploited the colonies and their inhabitants to generate economic wealth for their mother countries. Danticat examines the nightmarish existence of the Haitians in the sugarcane fields of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Even after decolonization, the Caribbean countries are not free as they have become victims of American imperialism. The imperial power treats the Caribbean peoples as stagnant mass and thereby inconsequential. The former does everything with colonial and utilitarian motives and trivializes the latter and renders them inconspicuous. They do a lot of harm to the Caribbean citizens; mainly women bear a lot of hardships.

The United States is a multi-racial and multi-cultural society, but still xenophobia and ingrained irrational prejudices and abhorrence exist. The Haitians, leave their homeland with high hopes, but their aspirations are shattered when they reach the US. Danticat in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* depicts the agony and devastation encountered by Sophie and her mother,
Martine in the US. In *Krik? Krak!* and *The Dew Breaker*, Danticat delineates how the Caribbean immigrants have to grapple with hatred, subjugation and demoralization. In *Beyond the Limbo Silence*, Nunez analyses the racial and cultural differences between the whites and blacks amidst the backdrop of the Civil Rights Era. The whites castigate anything related to the blacks as primitive and ignorant.

Besides, Nunez in *Beyond the Limbo Silence* explores not only the cleft dividing the whites and blacks, but also the fissures among the black diasporic communities in the US. The native-born blacks do not encourage the non-native born blacks to join the Civil Rights Movement. Danticat, in addition, chronicles in *The Farming of Bones* the longstanding hostility between the former French colony of Saint Domingue (Haiti) and the former Spanish colony of Santo Domingo (the Dominican Republic). In the 1937 Haitian Massacre, the Dominican President, Trujillo resorts to ethnic cleansing by slaughtering the Haitian emigrants, who form the backbone of the workforce that cuts sugarcane during the *zafra*, the annual harvest in the Dominican Republic.

All over the world women are still trampled upon and considered fragile and negligible and often crimes against them are covered up or tacitly condoned. Chapter III termed “To be a Female” has interpreted the fatal dimensions of gender bias. The creative outpourings of Danticat and
Nunez prove that their female protagonists’ lives are suffocated by the harsh realities of living. Like the characters of Alice Walker, Toni Morrison and Paule Marshall, the existence of most of the women characters of Danticat and Nunez are threatened and they are brutalized, abused and scarred for ever.

Initially, this chapter shows how children are bombarded with brutality and their physical safety is under threat at every moment of their lives. Parents become impediments in their children’s lives and they maltreat and abuse them and the child victims are forced to carry on the agonizing and traumatizing memories. The agony faced by Danticat’s Sophie, Ka and Celianne as well as Nunez’s Zuela, Rosa, Virginia and Sara are unimaginable as their victimizers are their parents. Then, the embittered marital relationships between pairs of incompatible individuals have been analysed. In the patriarchal structure of a family and society, a married woman becomes a victim of ill-treatment, cruelty and deprivation. The wives in the novels of Danticat and Nunez undergo devaluation, low self-esteem, lack of confidence and a feeling of helplessness. In *The Farming of Bones*, Valencia knows very well that her husband is not sincere in his love, but she does not have the moral courage to go against him. No one can visualize the extent of the agony of the dew breaker’s wife, Anne. The barbarity shown by the husbands of Zuela and Rosa in Nunez’s *Bruised Hibiscus* leave them shattered and devastated.
The chapter further portrays how patriarchy as an obstructive force thwarts and stifles women’s voices and depreciates them with its superstitious morality, horrible beliefs, atrocious rituals, vicious and harmful customs and practices and provides women a subordinate position on the gender hierarchy. Danticat, in particular, shows how the patriarchal and sometimes matriarchal moralities encumber women with challenges and vulnerabilities and how they have to put up with a range of social, cultural and economic constraints. Lastly, the harm done to women because of the asymmetrical and unbalanced relations of power between men and women have been unearthed. Brutal regimes and men are against women’s individuality, sensitivity and feelings. Danticat depicts chilling details of the atrocities committed by the *tonton macoutes*, a militia group of the Duvaliers. They are heartless criminals and involve in crimes in broad daylight and their victims are incapacitated physically as well as emotionally. Her short stories lay bear the commonalities of the experiences that the Haitian women suffered under the barbarity of the Duvalier regime. Nunez in her novels reveals how life is vicious to women as they bear mental, sexual, psychological and economical abuse. Nunez’s women cannot claim individuality and they have to endure everything and submit to insults, injuries and humiliation with stoic patience and they struggle to bring their fragmented selves together.
Feeling insecure or devalued in their native society due to man-made or environmental disasters, people normally navigate from their own land to an unfamiliar world with high hopes, but in the alien land, they have to forget their individuality and become “others”. Chapter IV titled “To be an Immigrant”, gives a graphic account of how the dislocated has been made the “other” and thereby rootless and faceless. As objectified beings, the immigrants are forced into obscuresenes and they lose their identity. They seek to be one with the alien culture, but they remain distinct and reclusive. They are not at home in their adopted country as well as in their country of origin, which is no longer a place of memory or nostalgia. On account of their diasporic experiences, Danticat and Nunez are aware of the challenges an immigrant undergoes. So, they explore realistically diasporic maladies, such as, rootlessness, homelessness, displacement, isolation, alienation and the inability to assimilate with the alien culture.

Haitians risk dangerous voyages to the US aboard rickety, crowded boats to escape the choking grasp of poverty, vengeful regimes or natural disasters. Very few get the immigration clearance and most of them drown; some are detained by the US immigration authorities and the remaining is sent back. The lives of those Haitians who get a chance to stay in the US are in no way blissful. Breath, Eyes, Memory unfurls how Sophie, like Danticat, struggles to cope up with a new life in the US. In Krik? Krak! and The Dew Breaker, the expatriates strive hard to reinvent themselves in
the US by forgetting the past haunting experiences. Again Danticat explores how migration changes family structures as mothers and daughters involve in inevitable clashes. Mothers cling on tenaciously to the culture of their home country whereas daughters desire to assimilate with the ways of their adopted country. In The Farming of Bones, the Haitian cane cutters or domestic helps in the Dominican Republic come to the realization that they belong nowhere. They feel neither at home in their native Haiti nor in their adopted one. A desperate Amabelle chooses the line in between the two worlds, Haiti and the Dominican Republic as she cannot alien herself with either of these countries.

Like Danticat’s Sophie, Nunez’s Sara learns how hard it is for a black female to succeed in the US in Beyond the Limbo Silence. The pressures are so much that she suffers a psychological breakdown. Nunez deals with a different kind of displacement in the other chosen novels. In Bruised Hibiscus, all the main characters are dislocated in one way or the other in Trinidad. In Prospero’s Daughter, Gardner and his daughter are found in the most alienating of environments, but while the daughter loves the forbidden island and adapts to it well, the father has nothing but hatred for the leper colony.

The fictional world of Danticat and Nunez is replete with characters that cannot evade or shirk the appalling days behind them and the uncertain ones ahead of them and their future seems a lot more alarming than the
past. Chapter V titled “Hope, Endurance, Survival” examines that amidst the profound losses and horrors, the protagonists stand testimony as they refashion their destabilized lives. Readers find massacres, rapes, sexual abuses, unimaginable mayhems and horrible nightmares in the fiction of Danticat and Nunez, but the heartening aspect is that their characters exhibit hope, endurance, perseverance and the indomitable strength of mind to survive amongst heavy odds.

Haiti is noted for its tremendous beauty as well as its tragic bloodshed. The width and depth of the agonies and torments gone through by the Haitians are intense and immeasurable. It seems impossible to write anything pleasant about Haiti, where politics is lethal and women are condemned to affliction. Hope indeed seems ludicrous but Danticat’s fiction soars above the throbbing aches, terror and deprivation. Writing is a testimonial and heartfelt process to Danticat and she states her people’s struggles, misfortunes and losses. However, even in the utmost thorny situations, they strengthen their nerves and continue to endure, survive and transform their oppressive existence. *Breath, Eyes, Memory* portrays the fortitude and frailties of four generations of Caco women. Though Martine’s attempt at freedom ends in suicide, for the other Caco women there is great hope, which is in the form of Brigitte. In *The Farming of Bones*, the Haitian émigré population encounters nothing but desolation and wretchedness in the face of overwhelming adversities in the
Dominican Republic, yet they display resilience, hope, endurance and survival. The characters of her short story collections apprehend that behind the mountains, which they face, there are more mountains, yet they believe that good exists in the world and their lives will get better.

Likewise, Nunez’s novels provide a series of portraits of women, who are physically and psychologically devastated, yet they hang on and are alive. The characters make a halting, but authentic breakthrough from their almost hopelessly trapped environment. The extreme circumstances, which they face, bring out the strength which they never knew they had. *Bruised Hibiscus* narrates the story of two enslaved women. The miseries, they face are unimaginable, yet they parade a lot of diligence and resilience amidst the greatest provocations and hardships. Unfortunately, only Zuela survives and Rosa succumbs. With a little bit of luck, Rosa too would have survived. Though Virginia, in *Prospero’s Daughter*, is deprived of all childish pleasures and endures agonizing and traumatizing memories, she shows a lot of fortitude and in the end she is safe and secure. Nunez’s *Beyond the Limbo Silence* bears witness to the strength and resiliency of a quiet, reticent, plain girl. Feeling depressed and insecure in Trinidad, when Sara gets an opportunity to go to the US, she grabs it, but the circumstances in the US are not so good as she has dreamt it to be. She has a mental breakdown; nonetheless she overcomes it and is healed.
The present study gains relevance as it brings to one’s attention the
demoniac power of ignominy, exploitation, marginalization and the
atrocities confronted by the blacks, women and immigrants. Nevertheless,
it has its own imperfections and limitations. Other parallel, possible themes
found in these two American diasporic fiction writers have been ignored.
There is no separate chapter dealing with their literary techniques and
stylistic features due to constraints of space and time. However, references
to the stylistic devices and techniques adopted by the authors are made
wherever essential along with the thematic discussion.

The fictional writings of Danticat and Nunez throw open numerous
avenues and ample possibilities for further research. Additional probe can
be done on themes, such as traumatization, burden of memory, troubled
familial relationships and alienation so that a better understanding of their
literary works can be achieved. An excellent systematic study can be done
pertaining to Haiti’s turmoil and agony, taking into consideration
Danticat’s works. Similarly, a research study can be attempted in relation
to the conflicts between the African or Caribbean cultures and Western
cultures vis-à-vis Nunez’s writings. The works of Danticat and Nunez can
be analyzed from the viewpoint of critical tools like modernism,
postmodernism, deconstruction and eco-feminism. Since the two writers
display great concern for the mute sufferers and voiceless victims, their
literary works can be studied in comparison with writers from the marginalized social groups, including the black authors, Canadian native writers, Australian aborigines and Indian Dalits.