Chapter I

Cosmopolitanism: A Study of the Select Poems of Rita Dove

Introduction

Rita Dove’s Early life and Brief History of African American Poetry.

African American poetry is an energetic flux in the contemporary world of art. Poetry and theater are the dominant genres of the African American Literature. African American poetry had an orderly History. Changing and growing, it was created for the whole not by native men and women, but by artists who knew something about the tradition of poetry in English. Their poetry did not develop wildly or spontaneously but rather evolved slowly, painstakingly. Its history begins in the eighteenth century and at the end of the colonial period.

The birth of African American written literary tradition can be traced back to the last part of the eighteenth century. To begin with the Black Americans struggled to get release from slavery to prove their talents. Later on, they intended to get financial freedom and also to get their identity. In the third phase, they
tried their political freedom to bring about their rights. Lastly, they came out with intellectual development to claim their uniqueness as African American writers. African slaves, “remarkably, sought to write themselves out of slavery by mastering the Anglo-American ballistic tradition” in order to “demonstrate that persons if African descent possessed the requisite degrees of reason and wit to create literature, that they were, indeed, full and equal members of the community of rational, sentient beings, that they could, indeed write” (NA,xxvii,xxviii). “In his great effort for a better way of life, the Negro has, through inevitability made his literature a purposeful thing born If his great desire to become a full-fledged citizen of the United States” (NA,xxxv).

Then the African American folk forms remained only oral, their individuality in the literary world became a question mark. In spite of their humiliation, the slaves worked hard to acquire the standard written English. “The slave wrote not primarily to demonstrate humane letters, but to demonstrate his or her own membership in the human community” (Gates, Signifying 128). The written literature of slavery and freedom produced a number of great writers
including Lucy Terry, Olaudah Equiano, Phillis Wheatley, David Walker, Harriet Jacobs, William Wells Brown, Frederick Douglass, Frances E.W. Harper, and Harriet E.Wilson. They came out with the dictum that “color is no barrier to black ascension to spiritual heights” (NA 127) as it was the main theme in one of the poems of Wheatley.

Phillis Wheatley at the age of seven or eight years, who arrived to Boston as a slave from Africa. Cheered up by a kindhearted lord, Wheatley’s wrote a book, Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral (1773), which is published in London is the only second book of verse ever published by an American woman and the first by any black American. As a devoted Christian, she engaged both conventional themes and others that related to her life as a black. She wrote seemly, according to the practices of her day, about subjects such as reason and imagination; she wrote several elegies. A poem celebrates the heroic grandness of George Washington, who received her as a visitor to his camp one day during the revolutionary war; however her work also touches on African slavery, the efforts of blacks in art and religion and on the paradox of the black American poet.
The poem *The Hope of liberty* written in 1829 is the first black poem which is written against the slavery by George Moses Horton. It probes protest and ensures that black poetry would be a common platform for union, although black poets sought a deeper definition of their role.

Francis Ellen Watkins Harper is the important representative for the black writers of the nineteenth century, protested against slavery. She has written in volumes such as her *antebellum, Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*, but was also a pioneer in writing about black women. Other Skilled and representative writers arose after the civil war. James D. Corrothers in extending verse wrote both in dialect and Standard English, helped to establish one of the persisting tension in black poetry. Dialect verse, based on stereotypes of black character arising only from an idealized vision of slavery, was the most popular development in Black American poetry in the later nineteenth century.

Paul Laurence Dunbar of Ohio, became the first black American poet to achieve a national reputation, with volumes such *Oak and Ivy (1893)*, *Lyrics of Lowly Life*
(1896) etc. His brilliance towards literature, vernacular culture makes him one of the major figures in African American Poetry. Du Bois was the most well-known writer and the leader of African Americans who discoursed about the plight of the double consciousness of black Americans which is mentioned in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) is insisted as,

... the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true selfconsciousness, ... this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world ... One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (30)

Despite 'twoness' being innate in their soul, the African Americans struggled very hard to produce their literature. They fought firmly for their rights to bring out their literary talents.
Other representatives of poetry emerged in the first two decades of the twentieth century. James Weldon Johnson, William Stanley Braithwaite, and Johnson offered three different versions of the modern black poetry. James Weldon Johnson bridged the old and new, in which he wrote in both dialect and standard verse. He was also the first true anthologist of black poetry. The Book of American Negro poetry (1922) is also emerging during the Harlem Renaissance. William Stanley Braithwaite of Boston ignored race, as some black poets who have always done, in favor of a "universal" vision of the poet.

Poets Harriet Munroe and Braithwaite set the path to the first outpouring of Black American Literature - The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's. This movement was dominated by music Jazz and blues, performers such as Basic Smith, Armstrong, and Duke Ellington, and also included fiction, drama, painting sculpture and poetry were also prominent role in African American Harlem.

Harlem Renaissance manifested an era of extraordinary creativity and unusual cultural productivity in the North. Harlem Renaissance focuses on the black people for the
growing popularity of blues, jazz, and dance. James Weldon Johnson exactly calls it "the Negro capital of the world." Houston A. Baker, Jr. in his *Afro-American Poetics: Revisions of Harlem and the Black Aesthetic* elaborate on the importance of Harlem Renaissance. Three important proceedings led to a highly intellectual frame of Harlem Renaissance:

(i) the meeting of W.B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Alain Locke, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen to celebrate the first novel of Jessie Fauset,

(ii) the ‘civic club dinner’ which was the birth place of ‘The New Negro’

(iii) the publication of "Fire!!".

The poets of the Harlem Renaissance expanded the range of Black poet the Jamaican born, Claude McKay began with dialect verse, but later he uses his art to protest vehemently against the justice. Georgia Douglas Johnson wrote mainly of genteel women and genteel love. Arna Bontemps’s strong Seventh Day Adventist background led him to create meditative verse. Anne Spenser was perhaps the most avowedly modernist poet of the movement. The
depression saw little poetry, except for the work of Langston Hughes and sterling Brown, a Howard University professor who also valued blues culture and its strong black men and women. Now Hughes emphasizes poems about radical socialism in which he indicted imperialism and capitalism. In 1940’s, however poetry flowered again, Margaret Walker won the annual Yale University Younger poets prize for her splendor volume *For My People* (1942). The title of the poem is a mixture of Whitman and Hughes, a rhythmic praise to the black masses and their culture, as well as an exhortation to them to rise up and assert their freedom.

Gwendolyn Brooks, a modernist was determined to write about the urban black experience from a woman’s point of view and produced an admirable body of work. At 1950, African American Poetry reached a milestone when she became the first black writer to win the Pulitzer prize for poetry for *Annie Allen* (1949). Later, 1950’s with the civil rights turmoil and the rise of the separatist Black Arts Movement of the 1960’s and early 1970’s, black poetry underwent a revolution. A hundred and thousands of volumes of poetry was sold, as blacks radically re-examined their place in
American society. The most talented poet was probably Leroi Jones of Newark, New Jersey. First a young poet, editor in mainly white “Beat” movement centered in Greenwich Village in Manhattan. As a leader of the Black Arts Movement, he repudiated white culture. Moving from him to Amiri Baraka, he wrote poetry of such vituperation and sardonic wit that he influenced a generation of writers. Poets separate sensibilities, styles and degrees, skill, unified by their surging new racial consciousness emerged. These included Don.L. Lee later Haki Madhubuti, Sonia Sanchez, Etheridge Knight, Mari Evans, Nikki Gio, Carolyn Rodgers and Audre Lorde.

In the late nineteenth century, the global collocation of liberation and realm enthused the social reformers in the United States. Starting from 1917, the movements Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement also makes a social revolution and the same time effect in Poetry too. The period in African American literary history popularly known as the Harlem Renaissance ushered many themes by new generation black women writers. This era provided black women writers with the space they needed in order to explore in their poetry, such intraracial concerns as apart
from discrimination based on caste and color, the prevalence regarding the Universalism and the impact of the great Negro migration on an emergent urban black bourgeoisie.

Women of African Origin in the United States have always been intensely aware of the impact of race, class, gender and oppression upon their lives. Because of slavery, they have struggled individually and in groups. Instinctively and in formal organizations they have tried to eradicate the multiple injustices that they and their communities face. It is only the memories of the painful and agonizing activities experienced by their people in America, which makes us accept the violence and bitterness that has characterized black writing of the recent past. The black writers are now speaking for the people as never before.

The explosion of black women’s writing emerged after the Civil Rights Movement. It was characterized as the African American women’s literary movement. Apart from many male writers during that period, some of the female poets started publishing their works after 1960s which can be
traced in the poetry by Rita Dove. African American women poets have become a part of the poetical elite penetrating into politics. To sustain their writing, many African American poets have been awarded many scholarships and many honorable prizes.

Rita Dove, as a contemporary writer explores the core themes of feminism, racism, cultural mulatto that is bound with the term cosmopolitanism, uses in the poetry of the contemporary writer Rita Dove. Rita Dove written skill following in four decades respectively, this thesis has the opportunity to trace the changing themes, symbols and voice employed in her works. The allied emphasis on individuality and the shift from subjective to objective voice reflect the changes in contemporary American society.

**Cosmopolitan in literal context:**

Cosmopolitan has a long tradition and takes many forms. It is possible to discern within its manifold genealogies three broad strands and which can be divided for the purpose of illustration into strong and weak forms. These are moral cosmopolitanism, political cosmopolitanism and cultural cosmopolitanism. The dominant conception of cosmopolitanism can be termed moral cosmopolitanism due to
the strong emphasis in it on the universalism of the cosmopolitan ethic. In the most well known version of this, which goes back to antiquity, the basis of cosmopolitanism is the individual whose loyalty is to the universal human community. This has generally been identified with the Cynics and the later Stoics and is reflected in the philosophy of Plato. This tradition is based on a strong notion of a universal morality, which can be seen too as reflecting the decline of the closed world of politics and the rise of the universal empire of Alexander. While having resonances in later western thought, this kind of cosmopolitanism has been revived in recent times.

A much discussed essay by Marta Nussbaum can be seen as a contemporary example of cosmopolitanism as a moral universalism (Nussbaum 1996). Habermas’s communication theory too can be seen as an example of an approach to the social theory of modernity that is strongly informed by a moral universalistic kind of cosmopolitanism (Habermas 1996, 1998). A weaker conception of cosmopolitanism might be found in liberal communitarian approaches to multiculturalism as in the idea of universal recognition of the moral integrity of all people. Moral cosmopolitanism
suffers from a major drawback in so far as it lacks a nuanced sociological dimension and assumes a too strong universalistic sense of universal humanity. It has been criticized for failing to see cosmopolitanism as ‘rooted’ and not necessarily universalistic (Breckenridge et al., 2002).

The second strand in the revival of cosmopolitanism in recent times is due to the rise of an explicitly political conception of cosmopolitanism relating to citizenship and democracy. Strong and weak versions can be found.

Strong conceptions of cosmopolitanism can be found in notions of world polity as advocated by John Meyer or notions of cosmopolitan democracy as put forward by David Held and others (Held 1995; Meyer et al. 1997). Such approaches, in particular, the proponents of cosmopolitan democracy have revived the Kantian notion of a cosmopolitan world order of the republic states (Archibugi 1995). These approaches generally take globalization as the basis for a new conception of a transnational democracy beyond the nation-state.

Weaker conceptions of political cosmopolitanism can be found in theories of citizenship. Here the universalistic
assumptions of cosmopolitan democracy are more nuanced. Where for T. H. Marshall full citizenship had been achieved with the rise of social rights associated with the welfare state, theorists of citizenship today have identified a wide range of new challenges to citizenship.

Marshall's trajectory of civic to political and to social rights must now be complemented by cultural rights, a sphere of rights that incorporates the cosmopolitan dimension. Cultural rights concern in least three areas like in place of the individual as the bearer of rights, the emphasis shifts to rights largely for minorities, but also lifestyle rights including consumer rights, and rights relating to new technologies and environmental concerns.

It is in reconciling the universalistic rights of the individual with the need to protect minorities that the cosmopolitan moment is most evident. In this context cosmopolitan citizenship is understood in terms of a cultural shift in collective identities to include the recognition of others. Cosmopolitan citizenship is marked by a decreased importance of territory - as measured by the place of one's birth - in the definition of citizenship rights as well as a lesser salience on an underlying
collective identity, in other words a political community does not have to rest on an underlying cultural community.

Cultural rights are thus possible in the space that has been created by multiple and overlapping identities. As Seyla Benhabib, has argued: “Cosmopolitanism, the concern for the world as if it were one’s polis, is furthered by such multiple, overlapping allegiances which are sustained across communities of language, ethnicity, religion, and nationality” (Benhabib 2004: 174-5). Such developments have arisen as a result of cultural pluralization arising from migration, ethnic multiculturalism, cultural diversity of all kinds and the growing demands for the recognition of different life choices. Mainly the significance of cosmopolitanism goes beyond post-national membership, but this is inadequately brought out in the existing approaches concerned with the political dimensions of cosmopolitanism.

The third strand in cosmopolitan theory can be termed cultural cosmopolitanism to distinguish it from the previous models. In current theory, this takes a largely strong form, in contrast to earlier forms of cultural cosmopolitanism which could be related to enlightenment notions of the ‘Citizen of the world,’ whose
cosmopolitanism consisted in travel. Several social theorists have attempted to reconceptualize the idea of society in a cosmopolitan direction, although this is not always explicitly stated. These developments concern major changes in the cultural fabric of society, leading to the erosion of the very notion of a bounded conception of the social (Gane, 2004). The key to all of this is the notion of societal pluralization. Examples of cultural cosmopolitanism are to be found in theories of mobilities and forms of consumption, hybridities, networks and even modernity itself.

Cosmopolitanism critical moves beyond cultural pluralism by parallel benefiting differences. The authors Jean Toomer, Jessie Fauvet, Langston Hughes and Albert Murray, Rita Dove have applied the term cosmopolitanism in their works to meet its own theoretical rationales in the dealt arena of racial discourse while remaining integral figures in a larger tradition of cosmopolitan thought. Relatively it goes into categorical distinctions, and their cosmopolitan perception which values the pluralist belief in the distinctiveness of different cultural groups while allowing for the possibility of interethnic biases,
intercultural relationships and change in any given mode of identification. This understanding blow outs cosmopolitanism as an important ideal for like-minded critics and academics of today who clamber with contemporary debates about multiculturalism and Universalism in a brisk, yet unequally globalizing world.

The concept of “cosmopolitanism” fetches the notion of connections between many people everywhere in the world. A general description of the word “Cosmopolitanism” stresses the interdependence that people diagonally geographical boarder and cultures share based on their conjoint gratitude of their humankind and ability to experience love, happiness, sadness, hurt and similar emotions. This type of communion duties will generate a better world for themselves. In this vein, Walter D. Mignolo defines that Cosmopolitanism is “a set if projects toward planetary conviviality” (The many faces of Cosmo-Polis, 721).

The word “cosmopolitanism” has various meanings according to their social group. African Americans often add the adjective “black” to the term cosmopolitanism to indicate their particular historical experiences of Western powers for the past years.
Black Cosmopolitanism highlights the inequalities among the western world and African that developed from the significances of Slavery, imperialism, colonization, classicism, racism, sexism and other injustices. Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo utters regarding Black cosmopolitanism as imperialism is the form of cosmopolitanism.

Additionally, it is against the Western Complete in extent view of cosmopolitanism. Moreover, black cosmopolitanism is an opposition to a Western totalizing view of cosmopolitanism as a theory that adopts the reality of incontestable values, principles and cultures such as the benefits of education, science and other information to all the peoples of the worlds should seek. This important Western notion of cosmopolitanism is spacious in the ways in which the late eighteenth-century German philosopher Christoph Martin defined the calibers of “ideal cosmopolitans” in universalistic terms.

Kwame Anthony Appiah states in *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006), perceived that ideal cosmopolitans is about all the people of the earth. It has been compared to the many branches of a single family, and the universe as a state, with innumerable cogent beings
called citizens. Even though it offers chances for Western and non-Western nations to be dissimilar from one another, Martin’s concept regarding this term is Universalist and essentialist. Finally, this term cosmopolitanism connate resistance to imperialism. Black cosmopolitanism and anti colonialism are two contiguous forms of resistance against the domination of whites.

Of all of the poets mentioned below, it is Rita Dove, who expresses the most self-hatred resulting from her appearance. Rita Dove’s poetical writing focuses on the term cosmopolitanism. It has been universally acclaimed to hold a unique place in the world of poetry. Her statement has broken fresh ground in the Concept of Universalism and it also manages to uphold the Black Tradition. It is interesting to note in what ways she works to break away from the normal terms and features the notion of Cosmopolitanism.

Since the theme of the thesis is not very common in our environment, there occurred some difficulties in obtaining primary and secondary sources relevant to the topic. Being an editor of a literary periodical Callaloo, Rita Dove has published several poems and critical works there. One of
the helpful sources for thesis is interviews with Rita Dove. The aim of the thesis is to explore the term concerning about the Cosmopolitanism.

Rita Dove is the Pulitzer Prize winner at the age of thirty-five, United States poet laureate at the age of forty. Rita Dove was born in 1953 in the center of a tyre production country Akron, Ohio, as the daughter of the first Black research Chemist who broke all the color barriers. Rita Dove grew up in a house full of books. Rita Dove was delighted in going to the library where she was the first to discover a particular author. She excelled in school, came as a National merit scholar and attended Miami University in Ohio and graduated in 1973.

Rita Dove was invited to the White House in 1970 as a Presidential Scholar as one of the hundred most outstanding high school graduates in the United States that year. Before attending Miami University in Oxford she was the recipient of National Achievement Scholarship at Ohio. She graduated summa cum laude (as well as Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi) with a Degree in English in 1973, followed by two semesters as a Fulbright scholar at University Tubingen in Germany. She then joined the University of Iowa
Writers' Workshop, where she earned her Master of Fine Arts degree in 1977. In 1976 she met the German writer Fred Viebahn, who was a Fulbright fellow in the University of Iowa's International Writing Program that year; they married in 1979, and their daughter Aviva Chantal Tamu Rita Dove-Viebahn was born in 1983.

Rita Dove taught at Arizona State University at Temple, then at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia, where in 1993 she was named Commonwealth professor of English. For several years, Rita Dove quietly and regularly wrote and published her poems into the spotlight. The honors afforded Rita dove

“a platform from which to talk about something that’ very near to me, about a very intimate art. It’s the combination of the intimate and the public I find so exciting being poet laureate.”

(Interview:Rita Dove, Former Poet Laureate of the United States June 18, 1994 Las Vegas, Nevada)

She said theses in a 1994 interview found on the Modern American Poetry website. Rita Dove has received many prestigious awards and has been honored with fellowships
from the National Endowment of the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation. Her first collection of poetry, *The Yellow House on the Corner* was published in 1980. The poems in this book deal with such a topic of adolescence, romantic encounters and glimpses into slave history. This book was followed by the publications of *Museum* in 1983 and *Thomas and Beulah* is a collective narrative poems that are loosely based on the life of Rita Dove’s grandparents. It gives their viewpoints regarding each other love and life, covering the topics that range from a marriage to their experiences as African American. Rita Dove insists this:

She speaks with a direction and a dramatic intensity that commands attention ... Rita Dove fashions imaginative constructs that strike the reader as much by their rightness as their originality.

*Thomas and Beulah* earned Rita Dove the Pulitzer Prize in 1987 pushed her career into international prominence. This volume made her second African American poet ever to receive the prestigious award after Gwendolyn Brooks. The poem is about the narrative sequence based on the lives of her maternal grandparents.
Rita Dove’s fourth book *Grace Notes* was published in 1989. The poems in this prestigious Book, Rita Dove use humor and irony to describe elements of her own life. The poems in *Mother Love* 1995 explore family life and motherhood with the framework of the Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone. In 1999, Rita Dove published the poem *On the bus with Rosa Parks*, which looks at a wide range of human experiences and includes a poem about U.S. civil rights activist Rosa Parks. In 1994, Rita Dove was invited to read her poem *Lady Freedom among Us* at the ceremony commemorating the bicentennial Years of the U.S Capital and celebrating the restoration of the Freedom Statue on the Capital. Her poetry has earned fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the National Humanities Center, among others. In 1993, she was named one of the Ten, Outstanding Women of the year by *Glamour magazine* and the NAACP honored her with its “Great American Artist” award.

In addition to her many collections of poems she also wrote short stories, *Fifth Sunday* (1985); a novel, *Through the Ivory Gate* (1992).
Rita Dove’s first novel *Through the Ivory Gate* settles her as cosmopolitan stand to acquire equal power with the white writers both rationally and physically. This is about a narration of a young African American woman’s growing up, learning to use her varied artistic abilities in spite of obstacles, and the beginning of her career. Virginia King, the central character of this novel is a gifted musician, a devoted teacher, an artist, and a puppeteer, Rita dove has produced a heroine who is educated and talented. Rita Dove’s memories are recollected as she works in an elementary school in her home town of Akron, Ohio. Virginia is a good scholar, and a Cellist. "The book aims to present the richness of a life and its connections to family and friends, culture, place, seasons and self" (Ryman, The New 12).

Rita Dove incorporates the heroine’s childhood memories in *Through the Ivory Gate*. Rita Dove’s aesthetic signification flourishes in each of her contribution emphasizing specific themes to tell her message. *Through the Ivory Gate* offers eloquent proof that she is a gifted narrator capable of twining a highly understandable narration and a book of her laureate lectures entitled The
Poet’s World in 1995 and a verse drama The Darker Face of the Earth (1994).

Rita Dove moves on international as well as a national ground in her poetry, dominated by the white feminist movement on the one hand and by the male black power on the other. This thesis attempts to study Rita Dove’s experience of her race, colour, gender and nation.

Arnold Rampersad observes that Rita Dove’s “racial indignation” is “more discreet” because “indignation tends to destroy art” and she “apparently believes, especially black art; a confrontation with racism appears to open the world, but often only opens a void that gapes deceitfully between the poet and her possession of the wide world” (Rampersad 56).

Rampersad talks over the real dream of Rita Dove in his “The Poems of Rita Dove” saying that “Rita Dove wishes nothing less than possession of [the] wide world; she longs for the complete freedom of her imagination” (56). Rita Dove proclaims to the world her acceptance of her black identity through the character Virginia in her
fiction. Her acceptance of her race is the main reason for her becoming the poet laureate of the United States at a very young age. When she was studying at the University of Tubingen with her Fulbright scholarship, she was in a very comfortable position and she confessed: I realized that during my rather sheltered college years at Miami University, in the rural setting of southwestern Ohio, I had filled the role of the striving, gifted Black student extremely well, but without much concern for the outside world. And now, suddenly, in Germany I was on display in a strange environment where some people pointed with fingers at me and others pitied me a symbol for centuries of brutality and injustice against Blacks. So I felt simultaneously alienated both from my home country and from the place I was in. On the other hand ...serious travel can heighten the awareness a writer needs to see many sides of a story. (Taleb-khyar 349)

Critic W.E.B. Du Bois insists that "The Souls of Black Folk" brings out the "new vision" of the African Americans,
"to replace the dream of political power—a powerful movement, the rise of another ideal to guide the unguided, another pillar of fire by night after a clouded day" (1903). And W.E.B. Du Bois computes:

It was the ideal of "book-learning"; the curiosity, born of compulsory ignorance to know and test the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man, the longing to know. Here at last seemed to have been discovered the mountain path to Canaan; longer than the highway of Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life. (1903)

Rita Dove holds the chair as Common Wealth Professor of English at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, where she currently lives with her husband and their daughter, Aviva. Many writers dealt with many themes. Rita dove is welcomed by both white and black world people. She was also enriching African American Literary community.

Rita Dove concentrates on the painful and controversial aspects in her poetry. This research focuses on the term of cosmopolitanism which links with the Rita dove's poetry and
the cultural wars in 1980’s and 1990s. Rita Dove carries her multiculturalism notion in her poetry. She focuses on cultural range and aesthetic position which is merely connected to the Black Aesthetic Movement. As African American writer Trey Ellis addressed in 1989 about the features of NBA art as:

1. Artist borrowing and assembling across both race and class lines.

2. A paradigm relationship to the black arts movement.

3. A new, unflinching look at black culture, growth and all.

4. Artists comprising an elitist, Avant-Grade group, for now.

5. A belief in finding the universal in oneself and one’s experiences. (Ellis, 234 )

Rita Dove’s poetry has earned her fellowships from the International Working Periods for Authors in Bielefeld (1980), the National Endowment for the Arts (1978 and 1989), the Guggenheim Foundation (1983-1984), and the
National Humanities Centre (1988-1989), among others. She was approved for a Portia Pittman Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities as writer-in-residence at Tuskegee Institute in 1982; chosen by Robert Penn Warren—the the first U.S. poet laureate—for a 1986 Lavan Younger Poet Award from the Academy of American Poets; received a 1987 General Electric foundation Award, the 1988 Ohio Governor’s Award in the arts, and a Literary Lion citation for the New York Public Library in 1990; she was also awarded honorary doctorates from Miami University in Ohio, Knox College in Knoxville, Tennessee, Tuskegee University in Alabama, the University of Miami in Florida, Washington University in St. Louis, Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, and the University of Akron in Ohio. Honorary degrees from Arizona State University and Boston College followed in May 1995, and from Dartmouth College—with President Bill Clinton as commencement speaker on June 1995.

Spelman College in Atlanta and the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, as well as Columbia University and others, brought Rita Dove’s total of honorary degrees to sixteen as of Pring 1999. She was
named one of the “outstanding Women of the Years 1993” by Glamour magazine, and that same year the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People honored her with its great American Artist Award, in 1994 she received the Folger Shakespeare Library’s Renaissance Forum Award for Leadership in the Literary Arts, and the Carl Sandburg Award from the International Platform Association.

In 1996 she received both the Heinz Award in Arts and Humanities and the Charles Frankel Prize/National Medal in the Humanities. In 1997 she was honored with the Sara Lee Frontrunner Award and the Barnes & Noble Writers for Writers Award.

Rita Dove’s works and her Interviews critically acclaim among the literary world. Rita Dove was the president of the association of creative writers in American Academia. She is also the member of the advisory board of Civilization, the magazine of the Library of Congress. Rita Dove is represented in major anthologies and is widely taught. Critics examines that Rita Dove is interested towards history, displacement and fragmentation, her universal appeal. Her concerns include the reconstruction
of a familial and cultural past and the underside of History. Following Gwendolyn Brooks, Rita Dove, the multifaceted scholar, is acknowledged as a great poet with a world’s perspective. Rita Dove’s greatness can be compared with the declaration of E. Johnson in Euphemism, Understatement, and the Passive Voice:

A Genealogy of Afro-American Poetry: A people may become great through many means, but there is only one measure by which its greatness is recognized and acknowledged. The final measure of the greatness of all peoples is the amount and standard of the literature and art they have produced. The world does not know that a people are great until that people produce great literature and art. No people that has produced great literature and art has ever been looked upon by the world as distinctly inferior. (205)

Rita Dove is rooted in the black race, African American origins and African culture. In portraying the history of African American Literature in her works, she has played a very significant role. Rita Dove “is a different kind of youth” as prophesied by W.E.B. Du Bois in Criteria of Negro Art.
We black folk may help for we have within us as a race new stirrings, stirrings of the beginning of a new appreciation of joy, of a new desire to create, of a new will to be; as though in this morning of group life we had awakened from some sleep that at once dimly mourns the past and dreams a splendid future; and there has come the conviction that the youth that is here today, the Negro youth, is a different kind of youth, because in some new way it bears this mighty prophecy on its breast, determination for all mankind. (qtd in NA 982)

Critic Vendler much impressed and influenced by Rita Dove's writings highlights her talent; he observes her techniques of fierce concision and rhythmic pulse through modulated syntax and sound, her cross cultural elliptical jumps as her chief stylistic signature. African American poetry has exhibited the tension between African Modernism and Black Nationalism. The thesis goes beyond blackness and focus on the term cosmopolitanism which is examined through Rita dove’s selected poems.
Arnold Rampersad, in an essay modestly entitled "The poems of Rita Dove" (1986), does not try to move Rita Dove beyond her blackness at all but rather places her squarely within the African American poetic tradition while acknowledging her primary affiliation with the Afro-Modernists. Rampersad finds Rita Dove's work in the Black Arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s "as a point of radical departure for her in the development of her own aesthetic". He states that:

In many ways, [Rita Dove's] poems are exactly the opposite of these that have come to be quintessentially black verse in recent years, instead of looseness of structure, one finds in her poems remarkably tight control; instead of reliance on reckless inspiration, one recognizes discipline and practice, and long, taxing hours in competitive university poetry workshops and in her study; instead of a range of reference limited to personal confession, one finds personal reference disciplined by a measuring of distance and a prizing of objectivity; instead of an obsession with the theme of race, one finds an eagerness,
perhaps even an anxiety, to transcend—if not actually to repudiate—black cultural nationalism in the name of a more inclusive sensibility.(53)

Thus he insists that Rita Dove is against the Black arts movement. Vendler states of Rita Dove moving beyond Race.

Rita Dove’s poetry is characterized by a tight control of words and structure, an inventive use of colour imagery and a tone that combines neutrality and personal concern. Although many of her poems include black history and openly addresses racial themes, she also moves apart racial boundaries. Rita Dove asserted this: “Obviously as a black woman, I am concerned with race . . . But certainly not every poem of mine mentions the fact of being black. They are poems about humanity, and sometimes humanity happens to be black.”(70,)

Cosmopolitanism in Rita Dove’s collection of poetry is the most identifiable term of political governance but with a history that reaches the enlightenment and of classical antiquity. Cosmopolitanism is assuming a central major role in academic circles for several reasons, especially class
differences. Cosmopolitanism has a long tradition and takes many forms. It can be focused as moral cosmopolitanism, political cosmopolitanism and cultural cosmopolitanism.

African American cosmopolitan poets come from the graduate programs such as those at the University of Iowa, Brown University, and New York University and have bachelor’s degrees from institutions such as Stanford, Wesleyan and Yale Universities. They incline to have traveled widely and have lived in a foreign country for galloped periods, for example in Germany, France, Senegal, Italy and Vietnam. They have been appointed frequently at the prestigious universities extent to as Columbia University, and the University of Chicago, the University of Virginia. Their literary works have been popularized and published in various journals such as the American Poetry review, New England Review, Bread Loaf Quarterly and the Kenyon Review and also in the noticeable journal for African American literary arts and criticism Callaloo.

To date, only three book-length studies of Rita Dove’s works have been undertaken: Therese Steffen’s Crossing Color: Transcultural Space and Place in Rita Dove’s Poetry,
Fiction, and Drama (2002), Malin Pereira’s Rita Dove’s Cosmopolitanism (2003), and Pat Righelato’s Understanding Rita Dove (2006). Therese Steffen’s Crossing Color concentrates on “Rita dove’s Macro-Poetics of Space,” “Rita dove’s Micro-Poetics of Space,” Movements of Marriage,” “Transcultural Space, Place, and Movement in the Bildungs- and Kunsterroman,” “Myth’s Remakes,” and “The Voyage Out: On the Bus with Rosa Parks.” This is the first full length critical study offering a comprehensive biographic and literary portrait of Rita Dove and her work in the mainstream of American poetry.

Therese Steffen has validated the universality of Rita Dove’s works, since Rita Dove crosses cultures, races, geography, nationalities, color, gender, boundaries, and literary genres. She analyzes the linguistic features through which Rita Dove determines her transcultural spaces and places. She makes a clear point how Rita Dove travels through Italian Renaissance, Germanic romanticism, ancient Greece, ancient China, and Modern America to “move unfettered across boundaries and all facets of world culture” and “integrates these elements and fashions them into new coherence, healing the rifts and shifts in our own
divisive culture, weaving the fragments into a fabric with a pattern, texture, and voice of her own” (Steffen 164-65).

Each chapter of this thesis focuses maximum of a single volume of poetry which analyzes the cross currents and cosmopolitanism thematically giving distinct quality. Other writers commonly concentrate on Form of poetry, technique of poetry, the negative stereotypes of poetry, but this research topic full fledgedly focuses on the term cosmopolitanism. The present study focuses on her major volumes of poetry, The Yellow House on the Corner (1980), Museum (1983), Grace Notes (1988), Mothers Love (1995). Her Selected poems which have appeared in 1993 are the major primary source of the thesis.

The introductory chapter briefs the history of the African American poetry, and about the term cosmopolitanism which emerges popularly in twentieth century African American poetry. The variant changes occur by implementing the universalistic concept which makes popularized trend following in poetry.

The chapter focuses about Rita Dove’s short biography and her achievements towards poetry. Though Rita Dove
started her poetic career in the late 1960’s she was not much influenced by her predecessors rather she links her poetical concepts with Cosmopolitanism; encloses about the implementation of cultural, historical incidents, universalizing cultural mulatto feminism etc.

The impact of the early poets like Whitman, T.S. Eliot, Langston Hughes, can be felt in her poetry. Cosmopolitanism seems to belong to deconstruction, which is often associated with indenting, fragmentation, and critique of totality and universality, only as an intimate other, a foreign element grafted in the body by force, or by miracle. That is the reason why, perhaps, hardly any cosmopolitan refers to the issue of cosmopolitanism in Derrida or in deconstruction. After completing her Iowa’s writing workshop she deliberately published her books.

The Second chapter entitled **Culture has no Colour: Cultural Amalgamation of Cosmopolitanism.** In *The Yellow House on the Corner* (1980), Rita dove anticipates her cosmopolitan poetic in the figure of the cultural mulatto. The poem is devoted about slavery and freedom. This chapter also explores Rita Dove’s following the “bliss of unfolding” in
and through all of her book history, autobiography, and myth. She asserts that the poetry in this volume depicted about the different cultures and the cultural mulatto persona which is mentioned in one of her interviews with Kenneth: “Rita Dove: I did conceive of [The Yellow House on the Corner] as a very domestic title, but one on the edge of domesticity. I mean the House is on the corner. There is a sense of something beyond that- outside the boundary there is something else.” (182,)

As depicted by Rita Dove, The Yellow House on the Corner (1980) is made up of disparate elements which are entitled as deals with the mythical, historical, familial and autobiographical that becomes the poet’s artistic capital”. (C,42). Hence her poems steers her readers away from her African American identity and deliberately foreground her cosmopolitanism.

The third chapter entitled Promoting Cosmopolitanism in Museum highlights the Rita Dove’s universal perspective of the volumes as originating in the worldview of a Cosmopolitan African American writer. Museum’s forty-one poems divide pretty evenly into four sections. Section One The Hill Has Something to Say contains twelve poems,
although two form pairs with two others, the two on Catherine of Siena and the two involving Boccaccio and Fiammetta thus make the section read like it has ten poems. Section Two, In the Bulrush has ten poems; section three, My Father’s Telescope, includes nine and section four Primer for the Nuclear Age contains ten. The two poems are most desperate to Rita Dove’s Cosmopolitanism project of finding the universal in herself and her experiences lie directly in the middle of the volume in section two: Agosta the Winged Man and Rasha the Black Rita Dove and At the German Writers Conference in Munich.

Museum plays past against present, European against African American embellishing and modifying motifs. Rita Dove’s vast group of various poetic traditions figures by using many principles include with the term Cosmopolitanism.

The fourth Chapter is entitled Promoting Universalism: The Theme of Motherhood. Mother Love 1995, European classical mythology is fused (1980) with contemporary American Culture. Spoken word poetry, with its connection to hip-hop popular culture, often urban and overtly political themes, and
frequent protest of racial and middle class. The aesthetic itself is slowly gaining academic and institutional recognition by teachers, scholars, and establish poetry organizations. It appears prominent in popular culture more students know it than know the work of Rita Dove.

The prominence of cosmopolitanism in academic culture thus may be born of privilege and the class schism in African American literature. In general, the younger poets who garnered academic attention during the 1990s—Elizabeth Alexander, Melvin Dixon, and the Dark Room Collective all seem to be from the half that “made it.” Poets such as Angela Jackson, who is committed to the people of Chicago’s south side, are almost completely unknown. When including more popular poetry in our sights, cosmopolitanism seems only one of several current threads in African American literature; that encourages scholars and institutions to broaden their understanding.

Today African American literature is enriched with the literary scholarship of both male and female writers. African American literature is a combination of both primitivism and modernism mingling both cultures, mingling
tradition with more curiosity and anticipations. The New Millennium is the new dawn of African American female writers. Rita Dove as one of the New Millennium writers, moves ahead of her time, space, public, international, racial, cultural, political, and social boundaries to ingrain her African American dreams of integration into the mainstream society in a deeper sense. Pereira cites the ideas of Ellis that the term cultural mulatto refers to the person who “has had a range and mix of cultural experiences” and the recognition of embracing the “complex cultural milieu” (Pereira, Rita 2) experiences. Ellis groups Rita Dove under the New Black Artists since she has articulated the new black aesthetic metrics. Her black aesthetic sensibilities are reflected with the ideas of Posnock in all her works with the new origin of “cosmopolitanism, as practised and preached in the black intellectual tradition, maintains that culture has no color” (qtd in Pereira, Rita 3) as W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray, and James Baldwin show.

As a beacon light of African Americans, Rita dove has accepted herself and has succeeded in her career as a
cultural mulatto. Jones in his *Rita dove, Dictionary of Literary Biography* features her rich themes: Rita Dove is not only the stereotypical woman writer, nor is she simply the traditional African American author. She appreciated the aesthetics of race and gender but does not feel the need to raise the color problem for mere color’s sake. Rita Dove writes because she enjoys creating word impressions as she wrestles with significant ideas. She defies the disabling pigeonhole or comfortable niche... Rita Dove sets most of her verse in the past, and she handles nostalgia well. In all of her works, she presents a variety and richness of theme and structure found in fine poetry the world over. (51)

The next chapter elaborates on the **Culture Amalgamation**

Though she is also a tradionalist, she is firmly rooted in her African American cultural mulattooo. Rita Dove’s creations of her African American history in her works, her handling of African American culture with real examples from her life are dealt with in the following chapter. Rita Dove’s influences from the African American tradition and also intsexuality on language and indigenous and international cultures content are elaborated.