CHAPTER VI

SUMMATION

Why you look good in every color!

.................I’ve always loved

my skin, the way it glows against
citron and fuchsia, the difficult hues,
but the difference I cause
whenever I walk into a polite space
is why I prefer grand entrances—
especially with a Waltz,
swoon. (Dove American Smooth 23)

Rita Dove, a poet and a creative artist, dominates the American literary landscape of the present century. Dove transmutes the African American history, and of the integration into mainstream America with her radical poetic techniques and subject matters. Her poetry expresses the African American literary greatness with the innate talents of singing and dancing, and emphasizes her vision of integrating both cultures to bring a transformed African American literature. Dove, a cultural mulatto, is very comfortable with these two worlds, sharing her views as a writer, and giving less importance to race and racism. She feels more empowered to set right “the New Black Aesthetic” in myriad styles in the United States of America.

A literary tradition gets established by the contribution of writers of a particular country who produce canonical works of art. These works show the social, political, and historical events of the past, and present, and most of the writers rely on the conventions used by their literary predecessors. Dove as “the New Black Aesthetic” artist tells stories that are deeply entrenched in
exploring the world of the African Americans without violating the white narrative. Dove moves through the spaces in which she ignores the old themes of misogyny, materialism, suppression, and slavery. Dove chooses individuality and freedom as her two weapons to remove all the discrepancies in her literary development. Dove’s identity as a world poet emerges as an outcome of her “magical influence of poetry.”

Hughes’ remarkable achievement of his blues poetry, Hurston’s use of the folk-voices, and Ellison’s jazz-modulated fiction constituted the general shifts in African American writing. This incorporation of African American cultural idiom led to the development of African American literature in the twentieth century. Dove has also contributed for the further improvement of African American literature with “the New Black Aesthetic” themes in the new millennium. She has placed the African American cultural mulatto figure, a mixture of both cultures, at the centre of American mainstream culture, with her cosmopolitan outlook. The term “mulatto” was used in a derogatory sense by both the Africans and the white Americans earlier. Dove has given a new and a positive life to this “mulatto” figure in her works. Dove with her means of rendering American and European cultural experiences enriched with African American heritage, gives a paradigm shift to the next phase of African American poetic tradition in her works.

The present study highlights Dove’s rootedness in African American literary tradition and her unique contribution of universal themes as a woman poet, entering into mainstream America. Dove’s greatness as a poet is exemplified in all the volumes of her poetry. She has supreme mastery over her style. Her works are thematically vibrant; stylistically aesthetic; and structurally vivacious. Her poems breathe the joyous spirit of African American cultural aesthetics coupled with her passionate love for freedom and individuality. She brings a
harmonious blending of music and rhythm in her works. She integrates the African American idiom with her free verse style. For Dove “poetry unfolds at the heart of the language” and it “is the noblest of the arts.” She declares in her interview with Dungy that “poetry is one thing I can do alone” and “poetry is my first real passion” as “it’ll always be my first love” (1038-39).

The findings of this thesis highlight Dove’s deviation from the African American themes of “black separatism” and “black purism” to universal themes of womanhood, friendship, love, music, dance, childhood nostalgia, marriage, separation, nature, beauty, natural ecstasies, and art. Dove acknowledges the importance of “blackness,” but she never compromises her treatment of themes to narrow down her poetic explorations within the confines of “blackness” which becomes a hindrance to bringing diverse aspects and themes into her verse. Many of her poems reflect the experience she gained in Germany, and during her travel in Western countries, which have little to do with the specificity of black experience. As a poet, Dove is an individualist, and a traditionalist, both in terms of her content and form.

Her artistic talents and her creativity help her overcome the African American consciousness of “blackness” in her works. She openly points out the narrow mindedness of the Black Arts Movement for having focused only on “blackness” in their works. No writer can write only with the precepts of the remote times and without following the trends of her own times. Dove shows a wider view of modern America than the Black Arts Movement writers depict. She moves beyond racial themes and makes a clarion call to other African American writers to come out of their “racial self” to give “improvisation” to their themes and forms. She does not walk hand-in-hand with white writers but she does create a new path in between these two, which has evolved as “the New Black Aesthetic.”
The whole research highlights how African American tradition and “the New Black Aesthetic” get manifested or inextricably infused in Dove’s works. Dove willingly accepts the new order moving from the formal innovations and standard themes in the works which are already part of the canon of the African American tradition to highlight “blackness” alone. She tries to assert her cosmopolitan identity. Her cosmopolitan identity welcomes all the changes for creating a better African American literary world. She appreciates the strength of black speech essential to the American way of expressing. Dove as a black poet seems to have taken the ideas of the white literary world and incorporated them in the culture of the black people.

The slavery sequence of *The Yellow House on the Corner* has a number of poems which focus on their theme of slavery, and African American freedom. Dove maintains a sharp focus on the slave past of the African Americans, which is one of the pronounced racial determinants among the blacks. It is an example of the narrative form as historical [re]search, and photographs the adversities and hardships faced by the African Americans in the form of slave narrative. She has included many historical figures to create authenticity in her portrayal. Dove in “The Fish in the Stone” states her mingling of past and present. Dove feels that the fossil-fish represents the connection between “nature and culture” and it is the shift from constant flow to “fixity” and “nature” to “culture” and the dead fossil becomes the object of transformation. Even the “skeletal blossom” having lived remained in its dead state becomes the subject of culture, history, and a moral force within the present and the past. In the same way, Dove’s works are fossilized in history to carry out her message to the future generation with her artistic creativity. The fossil image is both a throwing of time of life and the forming of carved architectural style. The fossil speaks through silence and it is a record in Braille, which only when stroked with sensuous fingers renders meaning. The entire book keeps a real record of African American culture,
tradition, and Dove’s personal experiences in a Museum. Dove doesn’t forget the past but she keeps all the events as a special historical record for the younger generations to read for ever about their slave past.

In *Thomas and Beulah* Dove creates a new trend to preserve her grandparents’ identity in the history of the United States. Dove’s cultural syncopation has more complex purposes of recovering African American culture within the very framework of America. Each individual poem acts on its own and gives a significant fusion to the whole collection. Dove’s narrative talent of the African American cultural tradition is intertwined with Thomas’s individual story, twentieth century black history. The literary part highlights the aesthetic sense of Beulah’s canary’s music, and her dreams of “China.” Hence the individual is connected with each moment of history in the United States of America. These two wishful grownups had great scope and values beyond their country and beyond each other.

In *Mother Love*, Dove remythologises not only African American history with her *revision* of the original myth of Demeter and Persephone but also welcomes the changes in nature and its blessings. The sonnet form was disowned by modern writers. Dove uses this structure as an effective form of communication to show “an intact world where everything is in sync, from the stars down to the tiniest mite on a blade of grass.” *Mother Love* reveals the relationship between mother and daughter in the common American scenario. It mainly talks about the abduction and re-formation among all three women: “mother-goddess, daughter—consort and poet” (ML Fwd). There is a complete change in the tone and voice of the writer from the original myth and the intensity of the writer which may be termed as remythologising history in terms of content and form.
The poems in *Grace Notes* are largely autobiographical. Dove’s lyrical quality is frilled at ease in this collection. Dove also brings in the middle-class black life with originality. She is determined to probe into the ordinary language of the black working class people. *Grace Notes* also speaks of Dove’s experiences in her childhood. In *Grace Notes*, her roles as a mother, daughter, sister and wife are perfectly intertwined. Her portrayal of the modern African American women with “invisible wings” and “the faith to step into blue” is a remarkable achievement. She insists on the “invisible wings” to reach the goal of any African American woman.

*On the Bus with Rosa Parks* convincingly portrays the common history of liberation and freedom. It is a revolutionary poem which depicts the reason for the civil rights movement, and the resilient nature of the black women. This historical achievement led to female emancipation acts. This volume foregrounds the political suppression of the black people since the Civil Rights Movement. The poet analyzes the critical moment when Rosa Parks whose name is associated with the Civil Rights Movement stepped into history. Here Dove makes this event an example to inspire other African American women, to come out with courage and revolutionary ideals creating very bold and responsible woman characters.

Dove’s optimism touches the zenith when she dreams all men are equal before God. Dove’s use of symbols give her new hopes and future promises. “Sightseeing,” Dove’s signature poem, tells the aftermath of World War II with double vision. She could see as a citizen of that country and a writer too. The persona looks “at a bunch of smashed statues” (SP 11) the only remains of the war. But she has hope that someone comes back to see the remains. It is a positive point to have their revival. Dove believes the prediction in the Bible that all the broken bones will come alive on the Judgment day, according to Isaiah. Dove’s double sightedness is evident
in looking forward to that Judgment day when all black and white people are the same in the
eyes of God. On that day all people will be judged by their deeds and not by their colour or race.

Dove’s hope is the main undercurrent of “the New Black Aesthetic” ideas. Dove transforms the mythical theme of Abduction as the African American-Abduction from their homeland Africa but with a positive viewpoint. The Abduction results in positive performances of many African American people becoming writers, revolutionists, freedom-seekers, and award winners. Dove accepts this diasporic experience. Dove as a woman African descent has accepted the United States of America as her home. She has to adjust with all kinds of crisis which arise in her life. Dove considers her country her second home. She lives there with her positive relationship with the people of her place whether they are whites or blacks. *Mother Love* is a good example to convey the message when Persephone adjusts with Hades and the underworld happily.

The next positive view is expressed with the symbol of a snail. The African American theme of homelessness is highlighted but with an answer in it. The snail can never lose its home wherever it goes. This is the message Dove proclaims through her symbolic representation of the snail figure and her universalism as an individual artist. In the second place, Dove believes that even in her nomadic condition she can achieve greatness. This nomadic experience brings diasporic experience too. Though Persephone had fallen into a great pit, she managed with her cultural experiences, learnt about the world, and its way of life. She had met with the challenge in her life and taken to a new world, a diasporic experience of the next world, and their custom. After the marriage the women have to accept their husband’s home as their home, a real diasporic experience. Dove as a modern woman writer presents this kind of diasporic experience
in *Mother Love*. This diasporic experience is presented as the universal theme. All women of all countries have been undergoing this experience in their life.

*Mother Love* also touches the inevitable theme of death. Dove goes along with the cosmic regulation that everything comes to an end when a new life is about to start. The theme of *Mother Love* depicts the universal truth that the new plants sprout on the death of the older ones. The same theme is elaborated with her use of the “Phoenix” imagery in *On the Bus With Rosa Parks*. In the poem “Incarnation in Phoenix,” the title suggests the emergence of a new life and a new tradition in the destruction of the old one. Her reference to “dear Sophie, / littlest phoenix” also strengthens her idea of new beginning and a fresh start of their new African American tradition with new challenges and capabilities.

Dove’s “the New Black Aesthetic” views are announced to the world in *American Smooth*. When the fire swept away her entire house, Dove was still hopeful of renovating her life with her dance. The outcome of the fire incident is her extraordinary *American Smooth* volume. Dove as a dancer gives her personal experiences to have “improvisation” in her thoughts, movements, relationship, creativity, and execution. It demonstrates inspirational and adventurous endeavors at ground-breaking technique as well as a broadening historic measure that has altered Dove’s genre in the past with distinction. Her world of poetry exists in graceful movements with the elegant sense of purpose, changing even the ordinary into an extra-ordinary theme. There are a number of poems that make us leap again and again into her world of ecstasies, with her dance movements. These are experiences central to the life of Dove, and closely follow her rhythm, mood, gliding and synchronizing movements; the readers are made to dance along. She believes in the liberty of the individual, which is beautifully integrated with her dance performances.
Dove’s cultural freedom is expressed in “Sailor in Africa.” In “Sailor in Africa” a multicultural crew of sailors comes to Africa to revive their cultural space as they decide that cultural space is the only home for the displaced. Dove makes it clear that ‘Art’ is the only source to create the cultural space for the displaced. Dove’s later poems show her maturity in the handling of themes and forms. We see a superior boundary crossing by Dove in the greatest possible degree of unification of cultural realms and she envisions her cultural ideal of freedom embracing all the peoples of the world with what Steffen calls “transcultural en-spacements”: “The sky is wired so it won’t fall down. / Each house notches into it neighbor / and then the next, the whole row scaldingly white, / unmistakable as a set of bared teeth (GN 28, 17-20). Dove highlights her cosmopolitan identity with a beautiful comparison “a set of bared teeth.”

The collections of poetry chosen for a deep analysis have undoubtedly numerous examples of snippets from Dove’s life and the experiences of those whom she has chosen to project, which in turn hold the key to the history of their race, but she highlights her contribution of cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, the New Black Aesthetic, and cultural mulatto identity with originality. Dove’s new cultural mulatto identity is combined with individuality, universality, and acceptance of multiculturalism. According to Dove, a person need not be a cultural mulatto by birth to accept the freedom of an individual, but if the person accepts any culture and lives with his freedom of expression, then he/she is also in the world of cultural mulattos, enjoying a cosmopolitan outlook like her.

In The Darker Face of the Earth Dove remythologizes “the creative mutation of Sophocles’ tragedy” in the African American context by integrating both European myths and the dynamics of “cultural cross fertilization” by giving the cultural ethos of African American tradition. Dove’s The Darker Face of the Earth is surely in the tradition of Eliot’s concept of
tradition and historical sense. Through her hero Augustus Newcastle, Dove proves the natural cycle of destruction which brings a new creation and which is believed to be central to the Yoruba philosophy and the philosophy of many optimistic people of Africa.

The end of the drama highlights the real freedom expected by Martin Luther King who aspired for freedom in his “I Have a Dream.” He dreamt of the freedom in the following passage: “This will be the day when all of God’s children will be able to sing with new meaning—“my country ‘its of thee; sweet land of liberty; of thee I sing; land were my fathers died; land if the pilgrim’s pride; from every mountain side, let freedom ring”—and if America is to be a great nation, this become true” (NA 82). Having celebrated the same freedom in her mind Dove reflects it in her verse play with the same vigour. All the slaves were shouting “Freedom, freedom, freedom…” (DFE 150) by carrying Augustus on their shoulders. The torch bearing woman (the narrator) stands at the door as the indication of light and Scylla sets fire to the window’s billowing curtains to put an end to their cry. The fire cleanses the curse of the land and leaves a new domain to live as liberated souls.

Dove’s revision of The Darker Face of the Earth lifts the veil to provide insight into the darker side of the white woman (Amalia Jennings) too. Dove brings not only the darker face of the African slaves’ lives, but also the darker lives of the white women who are really suffering in the hands of the white patriarchal society. The displacement of the nigger child from Amalia has its effect in the play in the later part to bring freedom to the slaves in his mother’s plantation. There is scope for regeneration when he kills the white animosity (Louis). Augustus proves that his community can be uplifted to the next level of living when white superiority is killed. Augustus kills his father Hector, which is the mark of representing the age old “slavery.” He kills the old order of slavery (Hector) as well the cause of slavery (Louis). When Amalia comes to
know that Augustus is her son, she naturally gives way for his real freedom and accepts them as
the heir to her property by stabbing herself. He removes the curse as a champion by sacrificing
his own parents to give space to new hope and freedom. Dove as an optimist of new life has
created a curse which will lead not to any kind of destruction, but to the path of freedom.

Dove has proved her African American uniqueness and her personal magnetism by
waging an artistic war against mainstream America and has won an honourable position as the
Poet Laureate of the United States of America. She expects the younger poets also to participate
in such a creative combat to bring to light their artistic talents. There is regeneration and
reconciliation at the end of the story. Though Augustus brings a curse, he does not die out of it,
but lives to destroy the curse and to lead the mass into freedom. The final action of Scylla setting
fire to the house is designed in such a way as to leave a message that their sufferings come to an
end with their freedom. This can be compared to the very words of Martin Luther King’s vision
in front of the Lincoln Memorial on 28 August 1963, in “I Have A Dream” at the March on
Washington: “Free at last, free at last: thank God Almighty, we are Free at last” (NA 83). Dove’s
vision also joins with Du Bois in pursuing freedom for the African American people. Du Bois in
The Souls of Black Folk writes “Shout, O children! / Shout, you’re free! / For God has bought
your liberty!” She puts an end to the struggle in her play forecasting today’s freedom and
equality of her race in America with the swearing in of an African American, Barrack Obama, as
the President of the United States of America.

The short story collection Fifth Sunday is a fine example of cultural variations, and their
confined social set up. It justifies Dove’s extraordinary type of presenting the characters
distinctly. The word “intersection” allows cultural transaction of both the cultures. “Fifth
Sunday” opens the door in the life of African Americans dealing with life in varied settings. The
first story “Fifth Sunday” reflects the distressingly confined situation in which young people’s dreams crumbled. Dove is particular in exposing that Valerie’s teen age passions are suppressed due to the narrow constrictions of her social group.

Genetically, the African Americans carry their ancestral traits of singing, dancing, and mimicking in their DNA. If the DNA is inactive, the African American writer like Dove becomes the catalyst to activate the genes for the present appropriateness to create individual talents, or searching the roots for a purposeful cause. She has applied her genetic talents to suit the modern trend. In her short story collection, Zabriah is a mulatto who has the ability to check the white culture and treat the whites as her equals. There is no fear in her approach of the poetry meeting. Her pride in knowing the German and Russian languages gives her the strength to intersect the white world without hesitation and she criticizes them for their abusive language. Zabriah is an incredibly strong female creation of Dove. She is not weighed down by the problems of being a cultural mulatto. Instead she becomes an example to people.

The African American aesthetic tradition is beautifully presented in the novel Through the Ivory Gate through the blues heroine Virginia King with her different types of magical puppets. She is the classical musician concerned with high art. Virginia’s rejection of the doll as “an overturned crab” (IG 7) and throwing the “pickaninny” (IG 4) away from her shows her transformation. Virginia throws the hard plastic baby doll out into the street in order to get rid of preconceived notions of the black identity. Virginia, the mature woman, turns again to take her white doll Penelope which is stinking because it is water logged—that is her Epiphanic moment to “move on as an individual”. Any reader will realize the writer’s Epiphany to change those ephemeral thoughts into a work of art. In Dove’s life, this is a real commitment of her
“individual” self to get transformed from the black and white world and to create a new path in between the two which is “the New Black Aesthetic” path.

Virginia gets transformed from a small child in “seer sucker play suit” (IG 7) to a self-identified lady. This is her transformed self from the so called colonized self with the confusion whether she is a black woman or a white woman. Here Dove creates two worlds-keeping the black identity willingly, and rejecting the so called black figure (the cheaply made doll) of blackness specifically. Her rejection is symbolic of her allegorical (Europeans colonized Africa in the Seventeenth century) self colonization which is accepted by her parents and grandparents as their choice. She wants to forget the tyrannized past of her forebears. She wants to have a “funny doll” which resembles her childhood self. Hence she selects the light skinned flexible Penelope doll to be her friend, a gift from her aunt Carrie. Virginia lives in the second world with the air of freedom. Virginia carries the Penelope doll all the time with her to get stimulation from “Penelope the Model, Penelope the God-fearing Nurse, Penelope the Prize-Winning Journalist, Penelope the girl next Door” (IG 6). Virginia admires the transition. The light skin colour represents the mulatto identity. She is happy with that identity.

Dove’s search for her roots is ruminated when she refers to the Hopis Indian culture who believed in “Thunder Gods and pray to idols and stuff” because the Hopis “have an intimate relationship with the earth and the spirits that govern nature” and their belief is that “a man should never leave the land he was born on, lest his roots shrivel and die” (IG 137). Dove’s belief is also based on this supernatural virtue. She believes that her roots are in the United States of America and she tries to prove it in all her works with the history of her family. Her use of the “Kachina mask” for the transgression of the user’s self to a “Thunder Maker” or “Yellow Corn Maiden” with the spirit of the God. “A kachina” can represent anything in the natural world or
cosmos, from a revered ancestor to an element, a location, a quality, a natural phenomenon, or a concept. Her desire to wear such a mask is not only to get rid of her African or American identity but also to become a good spirit with universal appeal. The kachinas represent historical events and things in nature, and are used to educate children in the ways of life. Dove takes Kachina as a tool to teach humanity. Another belief is that when a man puts on his mask all “his troubles disappear” (*IG* 137). The transcendental self of Virginia is revealed as Dove narrates the incidents. Here Dove puts on the mask of a writer to throw away all her obstacles in her African American life. She insists that other African Americans also to put on such a strong mask to challenge their counterparts.

Freedom is the mantra of Dove which is expressed in every collection of poetry. She can affix her identity as a black persona very distinctly through her freedom of mind. She mainly prefers artistic freedom. “Finally, sunshine! A glorious Saturday afternoon lay before her unopened, the crisp air reviving in her the thrill of freedom, of exploration” (*IG* 133). Dove’s words are very clear that “clean and bright,” she rasped like a parrot,” (*IG* 142) in denoting her freedom even in the white world. Dove has made use of her double identity as her “strength” to establish her determination to assert her worthiness and uniqueness and has never meekly remained in acquiescence and a conformist.

Dove’s *Through the Ivory Gate* creates a hybrid blend of the American culture and the African culture. Virginia’s friendliness with Kelly, the white friend, reveals her acceptance of the white world. The mulatto character Virginia gets along fine with her white friend. According to Dove, America is her living country, her own home and the people are her neighbours and friends. Here, Dove proves her theory of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism very clearly. Virginia’s psychological journey along with her physical journey is in a circular form. The whole
family moves from Akron, Ohio to Phoenix, Madison as a child. As a young heroine she has made her journey back to Akron to search for her roots, to recall her childhood memory in Oberlin, and finally determined to reach New York, the place meant for art and life. This shows the final achievement of Virginia, travelling a very tough journey to reach the middle from the periphery. Her play doll is getting transformed as a moving life-like figure of a puppet. She has given life to it finally through her new vision, her own voice to the puppets while teaching the students, a kind of real fulfillment of finding a voice and an identity as an African American Woman “to reclaim” her past. Virginia feels that “she hated to fall into stereotyping, but it was true” (IG 25).

Virginia is an example of the “New Black Aesthetic” that Ellis champions as cultural mulatto. Virginia gained confidence in her quest for knowledge, excellence, and artistic achievement. As far as Dove’s hope is concerned, she is one who considers herself worthy of everything. In Through the Ivory Gate Virginia’s mother Bell admires Virginia and says, “Now you look elegant” and “you’re a fine piece of woman” (81). Dove tries to relieve her “self” from the past which is to be rejected in order to march ahead in every possible way on par with white people. She becomes optimistic to see what is good and bright in the given choices of the world: “May the world, in your hands … May you / sleep in sweet breath and / rise always in wonder … green gaze and silk cheek” (RP 71).

Dove has brought a meaningful shift in the mode of African American writing in her poetry volume American Smooth. There is progression in her work with her universal themes. Dove’s interest in presenting creative influence made her a perfect artist with her varied talents such as writer, dancer, trained musician and a teacher to train the students. She has accepted her roots as an African American writer happily and has proved her talents and uniqueness as a
poet-dancer. She delivers the spontaneity of African American musical talents in her works. She constantly reveals her identity as a black musician and a ball-room dancer in her *American Smooth* poems.

The dance form is a new technique introduced in her poetry. This thesis highlights this unique style of dance which helps the artist to improvise her poetry. Dove falls indeed into the category of those who are “educated by a multi-racial mix of cultures, can also navigate easily in the white world.” In the interview with Ratiner, Dove reinstates the importance of dance: “another way is to connect the act of writing or reading poetry with other kinds of art,” and “there is indeed music in poetry, and a kind of a dance of words” (Ingersoll 119). In the last volume of poetry, Dove becomes a dancer to move beyond her African American identity. When she dances she forgets her colour, race, and African American identity. She calls herself a dancer with her real happiness as dance energizes, captivates, and makes music get into her soul. Dance gives us total freedom from all the world’s worries, a real relief from stress and strain. Dance is a vital form of expression; a medium which can be used to convey a message effectively and powerfully. Combined with an emotive music score, dance is a powerful tool. Dove has adopted such a powerful form of poetry. She has admitted in her interview with Dungy that:

“I am in the moment; I’m filtering the moment through language and through my *self*, through my artistic heart, which may be 60 percent black, 40 percent female one day, but 10 percent black, 50 percent female, 40 percent dancer – whatever! – the next.” (Dungy 1036)

Here Dove is identified as a poet-dancer and “the New Black Aesthetic artist” whose “self,” “artistic heart,” and her “dance” forever improvise and leave her a transformed self. Dove has followed the roots of her ancestors but shines as an individual star with her different
conceptualization and expressions of life. Dove possesses both “timeless” and “temporal” senses to reflect her African American tradition with her integration of the Western themes. Dove’s “invisible wings” (GN 3), proclaim her cosmopolitanism to announce “this is my home, my knothole” (GN 17), and “the freedom of fine cages” (GN 47), with “rustling on brown paper wings” (YHC 12). Dove has “stepped / into the open. The wind / lifted – behind her, / fields spread their sails” (YHC 34) to claim her artistic freedom. Dove is one of the few persons who could envision what the twenty-first century would hold for African American people after their long years of marginalization and servitude.

Reading Rita Dove, one thinks of a basic similarity between an Indian situation and Dove’s situation in America. Such similarities are interesting to pursue. There is a common interest among scholars in India and abroad to compare the marginalized Indian Dalit literature with the marginalized African American literature. The Dalit community is discriminated against and suppressed in India as the African American race is suppressed in America. In India, the Dalits have to struggle due to their low-caste status. A few Dalit writers have come out successfully to voice their problems.

As Dove becomes one of the voices of African American literature, Bama, one of the pioneers of Dalit literature in India becomes a significant regional voice to spearhead the new Indian Dalit Aesthetic which reflects transformation in the life of the contemporary Dalit woman. Like Dove, Bama also links together caste and gender oppression, in the process of redefining women from the socio-cultural perspective. Bama succeeds in taking the position of the subaltern from the margin to the centre. So Dove can be compared with the Indian Dalit novelist Bama for her use of the theme of freedom for her Dalit woman.