CONCLUSION

African-American literature is quite old, vast and varied as that of African literature, or Dalit literature in India. America, as a young nation began its existence in the 1620s. The white settlers established their colony first in Jamestown and then in Virginia, and then in the rest of the vast continental nation. Britain gradually took hold of America as a New World. America, as a colony grew, and it made use of labor force in its plantation agriculture.

Slavery began in the 17th century in Europe. The British, Spanish and French powers began slave trade and America was the biggest slave purchaser. The first slave-purchasing was done in 1620s, when a Dutch ship sold 16 slaves in Boston. Then the colonial government began a brisk business. When Americans became independent from Britain in 1776, the institution of slavery was established firmly.

The 1776 War of Independence gave the blacks a taste in slavery when it freed those blacks who fought in the war. Benjamin Quarles thinks, “The American Revolution brought some gains to Negroes. Those who had joined the Army upon the promise of freedom usually obtained it. Moreover, since the war had been fought in the name of liberty, many Americans were led to reflect seriously upon the propriety of holding men in bondage. The feeling that slavery was inconsistent with the ideals of the war cropped up in many quarters, becoming manifest in the formation of abolitionist societies, in the concern for Negroes displayed by religious groups, and in the antislavery activities of the state and federal governments.”

American slaves began to awake about freedom and equality in the first decades of 18th century. The so called abolitionists pressed for it by the 1840s. The literary renaissance of 1840 to 1860 quickened the process of slave emancipation. Such great writers as Whittier, Emerson, Thoreau, Lowell and Stowe had taken part in this awakening. Already northern and western states had banned slavery. It was very badly established in the south. Already a number of abolitionist societies emerged.
The Pennsylvania Society, first formed in 1775 at Philadelphia, was revived in April, 1784. Less than a year New York organized a society, with John Jay as president. New Jersey came next, and by the end of 1790 Delaware, Maryland, Connecticut, and Rhode Island had followed suit. Supplementing these state-wide organizations were numerous local societies.

Abraham Lincoln banned slavery in 1862, and then a kind of socio-economic transformation and reconstruction stared in America. The African American struggle for emancipation and empowerment continued throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

African American literature has been old, vast and varied. The whites, particularly the Quakers began to show this. Samuel Sewall was the first to write an anti-slavery pamphlet. John Woolman's *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* (1754) is remarkable. Olaudah Equiaano and Jupiter Hammon are also the early writers. Phillis Wheatley is said to be the first African American author of importance in American.

The Romantic Movement from 1820 to 1860 was important for the black writers, as it underlined the spirit of democracy. This age also produced the first golden age in American literature. Great writers – Poe, Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Dickinson, Hawthorne, Melville, Stowe, Mark Twain and the Boston Brahmins produced a remarkable body of literature. Abolitionists like Whittier, Lydia Child, the Grimke Sisters, Sojourner Truth, Stowe, Harriet Jacobs, Harriet Wilson, William Garrison, Richard Douglass and feminists intensified the ensuing Civil War (1860-1865) itself, which gave a lesson to the world. Many of these black writers like Douglass produced slave narratives, which exerted a great influence on American literature.
The literary achievement of African Americans was one of the most striking literary developments of the post-Civil War era. In the writings of Booker T. Washington, W.E.B Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Charles Waddell Chesnutt, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and others, the roots of black American writing took hold notably in the forms of autobiography, protest literature, sermons, poetry and song.

Many historians have characterized the period between the two world wars as the United States traumatic ‘coming of age.’

The 1920s America witnessed Harlem Renaissance. The black people gathered their all kinds of genius – in art, music, literature and socio-politics. Great geniuses of the times were Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, Richard Wright, and others. This is how, the African-American literature came of age. The first chapter of the thesis “African American Fiction: A Critical Survey” has a threadbare description of all this.

Chapter-II is about Paul Laurence Dunbar’s novel The Sport of the Gods. As we know, Dunbar was a great poetic genius. He also wrote four novels, and his last and best slave narrative is The Sport of the Gods. Dunbar’s famous novel The Sport of the Gods is known for its poetic quality and then for its depiction of a hapless black family that moves from the South to New York. The novel is rather a tragedy in its nature. The story is full of lyrical lilt, easy reading and romance like descriptions.

Chapter-III is about Richard Wright. Wright grew up in Natchez, Miss. He began to write fiction quite early. Then he settled down in Chicago and finely moved to Paris. Wright was an ambitious writer. His early book Uncle Tom’s Children (1938) is a genuine piece of reflection of black life. Black Boy, as an autobiographical narrative, captured the heart of the readership. His masterpiece Native Son (1940) is still one of the best 100 books of American literature. Native Son is a tense and moving study of a young Chicago black, convicted of murder,
sympathetically portrayed as a victim of social and economic injustice. Wright’s fame rests upon his championing of the black cause.

Chapter-IV is a critical analysis of another African American writer Zora Neale Hurston. Hurston herself a victim of both color and sex reflected the black suffering in her numerous books ranging from autobiography to fiction and folklore. *Mules and Men, Tell my Horse, Their Eyes were Watching God* and Dust Tracks on Road are her masterpieces.

Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* begins with a description of the text as a figuration of male struggle: “Ships at a distance have every man’s wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men.” In a different, less metaphorical voice we confront Hurston’s answer to this voice, the construction of a female authorial and narrative voice. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* focuses on a middle class and middle-aged woman’s quest for fulfillment in an oppressive society.

This is how African American slave narratives are the most powerful works of genuine life and reflections. In this line, anyone can appreciate not only Dunbar, Wright and Hurston, but many others before and after them. Precisely the fictional narratives of Olaudah Equiano, Harriet, Jacobs, Frederick Douglass, Rita Dove, Alice Walker and Tony Morrison are some of these most representative writers. The following observations/probings can be done in the thesis.

1) African American literature is an old, vast and varied body of literature.
2) African American literature has its own *locus standi* – genuine base in race, gender and deprivation.
3) African American literature is very rich in folklore.
4) African American literature upholds eternal human values.
References: