CHAPTER-V

SUMMATION

"Our Nation is a rainbow? red, yellow, brown, black and white?
and we?re all precious in God?s sight." - J esse J ackson

Henry Remak explains the definition and function of comparative literature thus:

Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand, and other areas of knowledge and belief, ? on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression. (3)

Comparative Literature transcends political, cultural and social barriers, and brings out the universality of human experiences. Protest Literature and Literature of Liberation are the recent and rapid growth of comparative literature. This is the reason why feminists gain a significant place in comparative literature. The anger and agony of the oppressed ring through varied literatures build sisterhoods across boundaries. Comparative
literature creating literature without walls could be a powerful weapon in constructing a world without walls.

The introductory chapter opines with the reason for the researcher’s choice of Claude McKay the African poet and Gwendolyn Brooks, the African American poetess, as the themes that they had dealt with in the maximum number of poems are akin to the experiences of an Indian under the British regime.

A Knowledge of comparative literature therefore become inevitable. Hence, an introduction to literature has been dealt with in general and African American literature in particular. Black literature can be otherwise termed as protest literature, as the Black writers seized every opportunity to awaken Black Consciousness. In due course, they could not but have, correction of the wrong images of themselves, as portrayed by the Whites, their prime motive. English, the language of the oppressor, is considered the most potent medium to express their sense of rootlessness and at the same time preserves his age old tradition.

Next, a biographically detailed study of the two composers of poems in question, is taken into account. McKay, one of the major poets of the New Negro movement had been a lodestar in guiding young writers of the 1920s. He has authored a few novels, a collection of short stories, two volumes of poems in addition to two autobiographies. According to him, literature and art transcend
class and culture, thus breaking the narrow barriers and have a Universal appeal.

McKay, as a leading motivator of the oppressed Blacks up, being proud of his race and he was one of the major forces in bringing about Negro Literary Renaissance.

Gwendolyn Brooks, the grand dame of the twentieth century? began writing poems even at the age of seven. By the age of sixteen, she had more than seventy poems to her credit. Her involvement in the National Association for the Advancement of colore people (NAACP) paved the way for her interactions with ambiti us achievers like Margaret Taylor and Henry Blakely II, whom she married later. She has to her credit, three collection of poems, an autobiographical novel and a novel. She began associating herself with young poets in the Black Arts Movement. The result was that most of her poems were then Black Oriented. Honoured and awarded duly, she is ever remembered for the exposition of her ?self? through her autobiographies.

Next follow a brief account of the chapters, to be dealt with after the survey of the achievements of the two composers.

The second chapter entitled, Segregation, an Abominati n is on the yawning gulf between two races due to the superiority of one that leads to the inferiority of the other is indeed abominable as the latter is subdued and subjugated resulting in non-erasable
animosity between the two. Skills and competencies of the suppressors will reign supreme. The suppressed will be victimized for no fault of theirs. Such a ruthless behavior on the part of Americans lead to a sense of rootlessness and loss of identity among the African Americans. According to Martin Luther J r., the slaveholders of America have devised with at most scientific precision their systems for keeping the Negro defenseless, emotionally and physically? (106).

Discriminations due to gender or race only make the already suppressed and thereby dejected undergo inexpressible physical, sexual and psychological tortures. They are denied equal rights in restaurants, jobs, Churches, schools and transportation too. As he is branded ?Black? by his complexion, it is as if ?colored? is engraved on his psyche. One is deprived of one?s own rights in his land compared to an alien from a strange country.

So in order to enjoy the rights denied to him inter-relationships or miscegenation is considered the only way to acquire such rights and thus prove to be perennial threats to social order in white community. ?Mulattos? thus born had to undergo severe psychological trauma as the white father, out of fear, very often deserted their ?issue?. According to McKay, a society founded on hatred and injustice will undoubtedly be doomed forever Black labourers had to labour till dawn for which the reward was much
less. Small as well as young boys have been lynched. Young girls were pushed to prostitution due to circumstances.

According to Gwendolyn Brooks, the feminine psyche of Black woman is crushed as she is like a ?use and throw? object. Sexual harassment by their slave masters, led to such n heard of physical torments where the couples were burnt to death or that a part of their body was chopped off or that raw pieces of flesh were torn, in order to hush up their illegal acts. So it was a sort of love-hate relationships that existed between the races. Brooks? only suggestion is that the people of her race must be definers of their situations instead of being followers of directions.

Poverty is what had gripped the Black race. Despite their hard labour, they were not duly paid. Apart from these there were discrepancies in providing education and residential areas to them. The only jobs available to men were insecure menial jobs. McKay and Brooks, through their poems consciously endeavor to set right the wrongs done to their race by the whites.

As the title of the chapter is Masculinism versus Feminism, the researcher tries to prove how though the composers Brooks) give a clarion call for the human rights of Bl ks in general, they, in turn individually, demand for the rights of their own sex in particular.
In this chapter, McKay is branded a masculinist as he in most of the poems arouse Black men to fight back for equality. Gwendolyn Brooks, on the other hand is a feminist as known for her egalitarian views. Black women have to raise a hue and cry against the dehumanizing system of racism and from the manipulative control of a corporate society.

Black community was not allowed to enjoy political rights like the voting rights or the civil rights like being seated in buses. These poets voice their protests through the poems. The psychological trauma, that is the result of the denial of these rights make the composers of the poems react to the situation differently. While McKay chooses the path of violence as an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth, Brooks on the other hand, chooses a defensive means by which the community can enjoy the rights without much of violence in it. For example, in the poems *The Ballad of Chocolate Mabbie*, *Ballad of Pearl May Lee* there are subtle suggestions as to have a Black and a White copulate.

Brooks as a woman, in several of her poems expresses her pessimism as she blames neither Whites nor Blacks but her *Fate*. In her poem, *The Mother* she confesses that her crime (abortion) was not deliberate. She wants to shield them from a painful existence. But she says that she knew perfectly well what their fate would have been.
You will never neglect or beat
Them, or silence or buy with a sweet.
You will never wind up the sucking-thumb
Or scuttle off ghosts that come.
You will never leave them, controlling your luscious s
Return for a snack of them, with gobbling mother-eye.

(5-10)

This may be owing to the double insecure feeling of women as they are discriminated not only due to the race, but also due to the gender. She also philosophises about a happy, blissful, harmonious wedded life to the Black couples, who could if they so willed to fight against war from without, by being one within. Brooks through her poem, ?A Black Wedding Song? wishes the couples continued strength for the social and personal battles ahead. She insists on the concept of ?the along?- ?Strong hand in strong hand, stride to/ The Assault that is promised you? (II 6, 7). She wishes them to have ?the daily forgiveness of each other? (15) and ?jewels of Black love? (21).

Gwendolyn Brooks lays emphasis on humanity, love and solidarity. She illustrates the unity of African Americans, in the poem ?Paul Robeson? from Family Pictures, ?we are each other's/magnitude and bond? (16, 17).
Frank London Brown in his article *Chicago's Great Lady of Poetry*, appreciates Brooks for her humanity and love for each individual regardless of race:

> Love is the rainbow she chases! love in the broadest sense: love of each man and woman, by each man and woman. She wants to show her readers the golden cord of humanity that unites every girl in a tattered dress and every girl in a gown of silk? (Kent 159)

Claude McKay instills courage and defiance in the minds of the Blacks and devil-may-care attitude to the dictatorial, offensive Whites. In the later years, a shift from protest to coöperation is traced in McKay's life. This change has been due to his extensive travelling and ever-widening experience. The following lines from the poem *Polarity* make it clear:

> Nay, why reproach each other, be unkind, For, there's no plane on which we two may meet? Let's both forgive, forget, for both were blind, And life is of a day, and time is fleet? (1-4)

Jean Wagner says, McKay is not an *out and out rebel* and explains further, McKay's hatred is a holy anger? (235). His hatred yields itself to be transformed, as Wagner states, into a tranquility
that is not indifference, but a deepening and internalization of racial feeling? (236).

Unlike Phillip Wheatley the forerunner, and McKay, her contemporary who resort to Christian love either at an early age or at a later stage, Gwendolyn Brooks resorts to violence after 1967, though majority of her poems are in a different note. It engenders a defiant attitude to the Whites who consider the dark complexion as abhorrible, by encouraging the Blacks that ?Black is Beautiful.? In the poetry of Primer for Blacks, she is celebrating the ?Blackness.? And through her own poetic voice Brooks provides her people both ?arms and armor? for social change.

The fourth chapter on Stylistics is a study on the stylistic features as depicted in the poems of Claude McKay and Brooks respectively. McKay, an activist skilfully uses his techniques in order to activate and enliven the dead minds of Blacks. He urges them by choosing apt words and phrase to suit his purpose. Brooks may not be that much careful in her choice of words as she is very emotional in giving vent to her suppressed feelings in sharp contrast to the perilous situations in which Blacks were.

McKay is very traditional, following a definite form a definite pattern and more often a definite rhyme scheme but is ever
determined to pay Whites back. These qualities can be seen in one of his poems, *The White House*.

Your door is shut against my tightened face,
And I am sharp as steel with discontent;
But I possess the courage and the grace
To bear my anger proudly and unbent. (1-4)

Brooks does not follow any particular pattern. She is in a way more modern than even McKay, as most of her ballads vary in length with no rhyme scheme. Choice of using small letters, capital letters and bold letters are according to her will and pleasure.

McKay and Brooks have displayed their artistry in their poems. Their verses vary in quality and power. Their poems are rich and loaded with colours. They have adopted all the necessary styles and artistic techniques, providing variety, pleasure and enjoyment to the readers. Though they are similar in their theme, they prove to be distinct and unique in their approaches and technical skills.

Being African American poets, McKay and Brooks have achieved a lot through their works. Amidst many challenges, they strive hard to produce an enormous consciousness about their deprivation of rights and heritage, and provoke their readers towards liberation. Thus, they utilize English language as a medium to voice their protests to create Black Consciousness among the Blacks. The marvelous contribution rendered by these
poets brought an excellent advancement and upliftment in the lives of African Americans.

It is noted that twentieth century progress ended with considerable gaps remaining between African Americans and white Americans in terms of income, unemployment, wealth, and life expectancy.

Matthew Arnold’s comment about the future of comparative literary studies runs thus:

Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration. No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literature.

(Park 205)

Future researchers may take the following directions of comparative study of Claude McKay with any of the American Activists like Langston Hughes, W.E.B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson. And Gwendolyn Brooks may be compared with any American feminist like Emily Dickinson. Aesthetic features or comparison of thematic analysis of their works can also be studied.

Each of these African American writers can very well be compared with any of the pre-independent Indian poets thematically as well as structurally.

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