



# The Achievers Journal

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## **Siamese Twins: Dalit Literature and Afro-American Black Fiction's Literature, Culture and Society**

**Dr. T. SASIKANTH REDDY**

M.A., B.Ed., SET., Ph.D. (S.V.U.) PGCTE, PGDTE (EFLU)

Lecturer in English, S.C.N.R Govt. Degree College

Proddatur Town, YSR Dist, A.P. India, 516360

### **Abstract**

*Basically, the literatures of the Dalits and African Americans are the literatures of the people who were denied access to knowledge and knowledge systems. Since they were deprived of having access to knowledge, they were deprived of everything including having ideas about one's own self. Since the African Americans and Dalits were deprived of having access to knowledge, quest for knowledge is one of the major themes in African American and Dalit literatures. It is revealed very poignantly in many Dalit and African American narrative and autobiography. As they suffer from the loss of their self and also are the victims of self-hatred, self scorn and self denial, quest for regaining one's own self and an attempt to reclaim it is one of the recurring themes in their writings. Hence, through their art and literature they try to define their own self and attempt to explore their social, economic, political, cultural and religious history and the past. In addition to this, their literature is also a literature of consciousness. These writers, while speaking about themselves or their communities, try to reveal that they are victims and try to understand as to why they are being victimized. They know that they are oppressed not because they are lazy, not because they are ignorant, not because they are stupid, but just because they are either African Americans or Dalits. An awakening and awareness about their own state and condition of victimization generates in them a kind of consciousness which could be called as African American or Dalit consciousness. It also generates in them a feeling of dividedness such as subject and object, self and other, private and public, oppression and resistance, domination and sub-ordination, hegemony and marginality, sameness and difference and so on. They provide a critique of the white or the upper caste domination. Through their writings these writers go for consciousness-raising of their oppressed brothers and sisters; they project that the oppressors - whites and upper castes - are everything not because they are powerful but because they have constructed the society and value system that enables them to subjugate others and through these values and ideology' they perpetuate their own domination. They try to highlight the sources which enable the oppressors to oppress them. Therefore, they attempt to alter the consciousness of the oppressed. They delineate certain social contradictions, seen*

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*and observed in the life of the oppressor and the oppressed; they reveal that certain features of social, realities as intolerable and unbearable and turn social fact into contradiction. Hence, they project a picture of the social reality to manifest what they are in contrast to what they are not yet. They try to build in their oppressed readers a consciousness of victimization and try to convince them to apprehend themselves as victims so as to make them aware of the alien and hostile forces and circumstances responsible for the blatant unjust treatment, demonstrating that the victimization is in no way earned or deserved. Hence, they display the sufferings of their people in such a way that the victims understand and realize that like them others are also made to suffer in the same way. Thus, the real are made to suffer and develop a sense of solidarity with other victims. Thus the writers force them to see a larger society based on oppression not in the same old way but from a new awakening and consciousness and generate a feeling among them that while one has already sustained an injury, one is also exposed to other injuries as well; and at the same time they try to also make them aware of their power so that hitherto untapped sources of energy could be unleashed. Hence, they develop an anticipation of the possibility of attack, of affront or insult. It produces a feeling that one must always be an alert and be ready to suffer from both ethical and ontological shocks. It enables the oppressed to understand the truth about one's self and one's society. These people start by posing questions as to why many of them lack any genuine conviction of personal worth and try to create a unity among the oppressed groups of society on the ground that their unequal and inferior social status is unjust and needs to be altered. They create a feeling that justice requires freedom and equality and they give a new interpretation to the familiar realities. In short, the literatures of the African Americans and Dalits develop a new consciousness in the minds of their people and try to make them aware of themselves and the social history-both on its positive and negative nature.*

*Thus, both Dalit and African American literatures are the voice of the voiceless and are powerful revolts against the dominant Brahmanical and white ideology and their cultural hegemony and thus become like Siamese twins which are not separated. The paper highlights the similarities of the Dalit and Afro-American black fiction thereby focusing on their literature, society and their culture.*

**Keywords:** *Dalit, Brahmin, black fiction, equality, reality*

Dalit literature forms an important, yet distinct part of Indian literature. Dalit literature is always marked by revolt and negativism, as it is intimately linked with hopes for freedom of a group of people who, as 'untouchables', are unfortunate bunches of social, economic and cultural



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inequality. Dalit is a self-designation for a South Asian group of people traditionally regarded as untouchables (outcastes) or of low caste. Dalits are a mixed population of numerous caste groups all over South Asia and speak various languages. It is impossible to differentiate between Dalits and the various other caste groups on the basis of phenotypes or genetics. The caste system is a social construct among South Asian people and has no genetic basis. Dalit literary movement therefore is just not a literal movement but is the logo of change and revolution where the primary aim was the liberation of dalits. Indian Dalits during post Independent India had sought new avenues of liberation, which was to later turn into an integral part of the Dalit theology. One of the best representatives of this new wave of Dalit liberation and literary movement was the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra, which made the term 'Dalit' a household name in nearly every Indian region. Further, as has been witnessed before, there was also seen a rise in Dalit literature during the 1960s. Black American Literature indeed had immensely influenced Dalit literary movements. One of the salient features of the Dalit theology is that it is an out-and-out theology about the downtrodden, 'the theology which they themselves would like to expound'. One of the major generators of the Dalit theology is the Dalit experience of torment and ache. The theology has a twofold function. Firstly, it acts in harmony with the aim of liberation. This liberation is emancipation from both the religious-cultural and socio-economic bondages. The theological movements, secondly, also possess a lot of psychological dimensions which are of equal importance.

Black literature, also called African American literature, is literary work created by Americans of African descent or literary work written about the African American experience. Black literature reflects the development and history of the United States through the eyes and perspective of African Americans. The term Black literature covers a wide range of works, from slave narratives of the 19th century to contemporary Black literature. Black literature is generally traced to the late 18th century. Two hundred years later, the field of Black



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literature has evolved to the point where there is no questioning its role in American history and culture. In America, Blacks were deprived of all the opportunities and fundamental rights which would have been theirs as human beings. What they got from their new owners is the bestial treatment and deprivation of human dignity. They were not only denied their African culture to pass it to their children but were also not given a chance to absorb the American culture. They were denied access to education, laws and social institutions of their New Land. They were not allowed to participate in politics and were thrown to live in social and cultural limbo that eliminated their past and offered them neither present nor future. Being slaves in America they were not allowed to follow their native religion and were branded and abused as heathen and uncivilized. They were wrenched from their native country, enslaved and forced to subscribe to damaging notions about their culture, their heritage and religion which resulted in 'double consciousness'. Somehow they survived and continued to cherish their own faith in their own religion beside Christianity. Afro-Americans developed their belief system vis-a-vis religion. Pagan rituals, deities and superstitions were part of the folk life of Afro-Americans. By and large black community is a group of illiterate, uneducated people forming a nation within a nation. Prospects of education were very bleak for the black Americans. There were laws against teaching the blacks in America. They suffered racial discrimination in every sphere of life. They were merely fulfilling the labour demands in plantations and in industries as unskilled and unprofessional workers. There were no schools for coloured people and they were not allowed to join white men's institutions.

Afro-American literature developed not merely as a branch of the Euro American literature but also as a development of the Afro-American oral traditions. Socio-cultural differences shaped the double consciousness, socialized ambivalence and double vision among blacks, as the prominent characteristics of Afro-Americans. There was a cultural and social boundary in America beyond which the black American could not go. As a marginal people of American culture and society black American novelist began exploring the literary possibilities of the residue oral Afro-American forms. Social and cultural boundaries



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are, therefore as important as social and cultural changes in shaping the form and content of black literature. In the struggle against slavery, the literature was a means of exposing its evils. Blacks were much eager to produce literary works, since one of the most hurtful accusation made against them by pro-advocates was that black people were culturally inferior and had not produced and never would be capable of producing work of art.

Many great works of Black literature focus on the Black experience, and depict race relations in certain times and places. The slave experience is examined in many of the best known works in this field. The novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* written by a white woman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, is often regarded as a landmark work in Black literature because it so profoundly affected race relations in America. Mildred D. Taylor's 1976 novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* describes one tight-knit family's experiences in Mississippi in the 1930s. Another major work of Black literature, published in 1937, is Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which is set in Florida at the beginning of the 20th century. Written in dialect, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was controversial in its day, but was rediscovered in the 1970s and deemed a classic. Black literature is often divided by era. These divisions serve not only to describe the periods from which the works come, but can also be used as shorthand to describe the cultural perspectives from which the works come. The slave narratives of the late 18th and 19th centuries describe the movement of Blacks from Africa to their new positions in the United States. After the Civil War, when the slaves were emancipated, begins the post-slavery era, noteworthy in literary terms for non-fiction works by W.E.B. DuBois and poems by Paul Laurence Dunbar. In the 1920s, the Harlem Renaissance was the first movement in Black literature that appealed to an audience wider than the Black community of its time, and works from this period remain very popular today. The civil rights era of the 1950s-1960s was another period of expansion for Black literature. Gwendolyn Brooks became the first Black person to win a Pulitzer Prize with her book of poems. Annie Allen, Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison won wide acclaim for their novels, which addressed cultural and political realities, and the Rev. Martin Luther



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King, Jr. composed his sermons and speeches, which are familiar to most Americans today. Novelists, playwrights, and poets of this era paved the road for the movement that would come in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, when Black literature became mainstream, material that is part of American culture at large.

The Afro-American writers seek to define, chronicle and celebrate the experiences of black people in America as victims of societal, physical and ideological racism. They try to expose the consequent impact on the development of their distinctive culture and consciousness. Their quest was to record the longing of their people to attain self conscious manhood. W.E.B. Du Bois explains the black man's longing: "To merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanise Africa. . . . He would not bleach his negro soul in a flood of white Americanism . . . He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American"(Du Bois, 1903: 16-17) This feeling has been repeatedly expressed in their novels. They wanted to preserve their cultural legacy while adopting white traditions. The major literary dilemma of the black novelists was how to be true to their own vision of reality and yet catch the attention of white readers. In the twentieth century, black novelists were more enthusiastic to express their feelings and reveal their souls. They were not ashamed of their race or colour. Black colour proved to be a spur for their creativity. They did not tuck blackness as a badge of inferiority or shame. It became a sign of their distinctive cultural identity. In the 1970s, African American literature reached the mainstream as books by Black writers continually achieved best-selling and award-winning status. This was also the time when the work of African American writers began to be accepted by academia as a legitimate genre of American literature. As part of the larger *Black Arts Movement*, which was inspired by the Civil Rights and *Black Power* Movements, African American literature began to be defined and analyzed. A number of scholars and writers are generally credited with helping to promote and define African American literature as a genre during this time period, including fiction writers Toni Morrison and Alice Walker and poet James Emanuel.



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*Toni Morrison*, meanwhile, helped promote Black literature and authors when she worked as an editor for *Random House* in the 1960s and 70s, where she edited books by such authors as Toni Cade Bambara and Gayl Jones. Morrison herself later emerged as one of the most important African American writers of the 20th century. Other important writers in recent years include literary fiction writers Gayl Jones, Rasheed Clark, Ishmael Reed, Jamaica Kincaid, Randall Kenan, and John Edgar Wideman. African American poets have also garnered attention. Maya Angelou read a poem at Bill Clinton's inauguration, *Rita Dove* won a Pulitzer Prize and served as Poet Laureate of the United States from 1993 to 1995, and Cyrus Cassells's *Soul Make a Path through Shouting* was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1994. Cassells is a recipient of the *William Carlos Williams Award*. Lesser-known poets like Thylia Moss, and Natasha Trethewey also have been praised for their innovative work. Notable black playwrights include Ntozake Shange, who wrote *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf*; *Ed Bullins*; *Suzan-Lori Parks*; and the prolific August Wilson, who won two Pulitzer Prizes for his plays. Most recently, Edward P. Jones won the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for *The Known World*, his novel about a black slaveholder in the antebellum South. Young African American novelists include Edwidge Danticat, David Anthony Durham, Tayari Jones, Kalisha Buckhanon, Mat Johnson, ZZ Packer and Colson Whitehead, just to name a few. African American literature has also crossed over to genre fiction. A pioneer in this area is Chester Himes, who in the 1950s and 60s wrote a series of pulp fiction detective novels featuring 'Coffin' Ed Johnson and 'Grave digger' Jones, two New York City police detectives. Himes paved the way for the later crime novels of Walter Mosley and Hugh Holton. African Americans are also represented in the genres of science fiction, fantasy and horror, with Samuel R. Delany, Octavia E. Butler, Steven Barnes, Tananarive Due, Robert Fleming, Brandon Massey, Charles R. Saunders, John Ridley, John M. Faucette, Sheree Thomas and Nalo Hopkinson being just a few of the well-known authors.



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Finally, African American literature has gained added attention through the work of talk show host Oprah Winfrey, who repeatedly has leveraged her fame to promote literature through the medium of her Oprah's Book Club. At times, she has brought African American writers a far broader audience than they otherwise might have received.

Dalit literary movement has a long history which ideally unfolds the secret struggle against casteist tradition. The history of Dalit literary movement goes back to the 11th century. One of the first Dalit writers was Madara Chennaiah, a cobbler-saint who lived in the reign of Western Chalukyas and who is also regarded by some scholars as the 'father of Vachana poetry'. Later poets of Kannada literature such as Basavanna (1160), who was also the prime minister of southern Kalachuri for King Bijjala II (1130-1167 CE), held him in high regard. Another poet who finds mention is Dohara Kakkaiyah, a Dalit by birth, six of whose confessional poems survive. In the 12th century the Dalit poet, Kalavve challenged the upper castes in the following words:

'Those who eat goats, fowl and tiny fish:

Such, they call caste people.

Those who eat the Sacred Cow

That showers frothing milk for Shiva:

Such, they call out-castes'.

In the modern era, Dalit Literature is the literature of the Untouchables of Maharashtra, of those who are looked down upon even by other workers. Dalit is Marathi for 'the spurned'. The term was first used for the Untouchables in 1930. It is a comprehensive expression which now includes Harijans (such as Mahars), Mangs, Mallas, Chambhars and Pulayas. Dalit is a protest literature against all forms of exploitation based on class, race, caste or occupation.

Dalit literature received its first impetus with the advent of leaders like Mahatma Phule and Ambedkar in Maharashtra, who brought forth the issues of Dalits through their works and writings; this started a new trend in Dalit writing and inspired many Dalits to come forth with





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writings in Marathi, Hindi, Tamil and Punjabi. However, the history of Dalit literary movement is century old, yet in its formal form the movement sprouted out as an immediate effect of the historical movement called the Little Magazine movement. It was a type of seditious expression against the establishment of the educated youth of those days. The Dalit youths gained motivation from the black movements of the far off land of North America. Their literature, Black Panther then became the role model for them. The protest of the Dalits against establishment gained the very first expression amidst the Dalit literature. In the midst of the cobweb of poems, fiction, novels and autobiographies the age-old questions of Dalit identity was addressed. Although started in an unorganised way, Dalit literary movement gained pace with the active support of B.R. Ambedkar. History bears witness that it was Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who is still esteemed as the pioneer of Dalit literature. It is thus no twist of fate that the Dalit literary movement sowed its first roots in Maharashtra, the birthplace of Dr. Ambedkar's movement. His revolutionary ideals stirred into action all the Dalits of Maharashtra and lent them with self-respect.

Dalit literature is nothing but the literary expression of this consciousness. The Dalit Literary movement however, was not one that had begun with a bang and also had faded into the curtain call without anybody taking heed to the cry of sensitive response. This very movement is still very much on and moving with great momentum; however with one that possesses its roots in the then Indian society of 1970s. For instance, during 1970, the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra began to egress forth, only to champion the cause of dalit in creative interests and hobbies, established by writers like Namdeo Dhasal and Raja Dhale. The Panther Movement had borrowed its moral support from the writings of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who was firm to lay his accentuation that 'the root cause of untouchability lies in a pronounced cultural or racial difference of contempt and hatred coupled with a close dependence of the inferior society on the superior one.' The term 'Dalit literature' bears its first trace to the first Dalit Literary conference in 1958, which had passed a motion defining the exact term. However, this conference had passed



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off almost unnoticed, thus establishing that the Dalit class was indeed facing cases of neglect and desertion. The sixties for Dalit literary movement was a decisive and crucial time, with several things happening in Marathi literature (the Dalit community is an integral part of the state Maharashtra

and hence, a group of Marathis). For the first time a poet, Narayan Surve, had penned about the quandary of workers. The Little Magazine Movement, yet another inherent pressure group activity for Dalit movement, had made its acquaintance with the concept of 'Angry Young Man' in the then recovering Indian populace from the shadow of Indian Independence and its ensuing Partition. In Dalit literature, Anna Bhau Sathe and Shankarrao Kharat were already established, but the dalit literary movement had gained colossal momentum from the short stories of Baburao Bagul. His collection of stories, *Jehva Mee Jaat Chorli Hoti* (When I had Concealed My Caste) had created such undulating rhythm in the Marathi literary world, that a group of critics hailed it as the epic of the Dalits, while others compared it to the jazz music of the Blacks'. Baburao Bagul's stories had taught Dalit writers to give creative rendition to their experiences and feelings.

The Dalit movement has emerged in response to the numerous injustices suffered, mostly in silence, by Dalits for centuries. The Dalits are treated worse than animals. Their presence is usually banned from upper-class localities. Even then they are bound to hang clay pots from their necks so that they may not pollute the streets of the privileged by their spittle. They carry brooms tied to their bodies so that while passing through such 'upper lanes' they can wipe away their footprints. The term 'Dalit' itself represents their struggle for humanity. Before this term, Dalits had to endure the stigma associated with the patronizing names imposed on them by caste-Hindus. These included 'Pariah', and 'Untouchable'; even Gandhi's term 'Harijan' (children of God) was negative, disguising the subordination of Dalits. Many Dalit writers, comprising Omprakash Valmiki, M.D. Naimishray and Bandhumadhav, take active participation and endeavour to become part of the Dalit literary movement, identifying themselves with pride as



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being 'Dalit'. While the Dalit movement has emerged in response to Dalit oppression, much continues to be fulfilled. Indian Dalits during post Independent India had sought new avenues of liberation, which was to later turn into an integral part of the Dalit theology. Dalit authors presently are able to show not only the hostile circumstances in which Dalits live, but also their struggle for emancipation from caste. However, non-Dalit authors-such as Premchand (a high-caste Hindu) and Khushwant Singh, are authors based more on a benevolent level as opposed to one urging change and abolishment of caste. Religion has role-played a decisive part in the writings of both Dalits and non-Dalits. In one short story (called *The Poisoned Bread*), a young boy enquires from a Brahmin man supporting Hinduism's caste system, 'if a religion can't tolerate one human being treating another simply as a human being, what's the use of such an inhumane religion?' Millions of Dalits have precisely wondered the same thing. Thus, in the hope of breaking away from their inferior status, millions of Dalits have converted from Hinduism to other religions, yet again leading to a series of Dalit literary movements perhaps ending in no fruitful consequence. Arjun Dangle in his article 'Past, Present and Future of Dalit Literature' writes: "The creation of Dalit Literature is inevitable until the structure of society changes and as long as exploitation exists." (Arjun Dangle, 1992: 266)

Dalit Literature has its poetry, short stories and autobiographies. Some plays have also been written. In the coming years, Dalit Literature has to create its own myth and develop Dalit theatre to cross the boundaries of national literature and has to create a space in world literature. Dalits of India have found a voice in the form of literature. They are writing in almost all the genres to articulate their experiences. Namdeo Dhasal (Sahitya Akadami Award winner), Arjun Dangle (Padmashri), Daya Pawar, Narayan Surve, Keshav Meshram are writing evocative poetry. Writers like Sharankumar Limbale, Omprakash Valmiki, Narendra Jadhav, Kishore Shantabai Kale, Bama are using the autobiographical mode to express their agony and protest. Here it is appropriate to mention that writers like Mukraj Anand, Raja Rao, Arundhati Roy have also given voice to untouchables in their writings. Today's Dalit literature rejects the degraded Hindu social



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set-up. Dalit writers relentlessly expose the inhumanities and prejudices of caste, society and instill new social and cultural dimensions. The hopes and aspirations of the exploited masses, the problem of untouchability, the exploitation of Dalit women by higher caste men, are the themes of Dalit Literature. The aim of Dalit literature is to expose the evil of caste system and injustice done to them by higher castes. Dalit writers write what they see, feel and think in the social environment. Dalit literature is revolutionary. The writers who were at the periphery have got the opportunity to come into the mainstream. They have become aware of their existence. It is a paradigm shift that the production of literature on Dalits and literature by dalits has increased. The people who were once so detested are becoming the central focus of literary works. Dalit writers express their experiences in the most realistic way by using their native speech. Their language as well as images comes from their own experiences and their own observation of situations. Main stream literature presents the romantic view of life while Dalit Literature presents the realistic view of life. We don't find T.S. Eliot's theory of objective correlative or experimental use of myth and allusions in Dalit Literature. Valmiki writes: "Dalit literary movement is not just a literary movement. It is also like a cultural and social movement. Dalit society has been imprisoned for a thousand years in the dark mist of ignorance, deprived of knowledge. Dalit Literature is the portrayal of the wishes and aspirations of these oppressed and tormented Dalits." (Valmiki, 2001: 97)

Dalit literature is a protest literature against all forms of exploitation based on caste, race, class or occupation.. We find characters of great sympathy and humanity. Some of them are raising voices for their rights while some perishes. This literature is experience based and the primary motive of this literature is the liberation of Dalits. These writers are using realistic language, idioms metaphors, symbols and images. Sometimes their language may appear vulgar, but the fact should not be ignored that this is a language of revolt and protest developed from the age-old sufferings and crushing, by this language they give a realistic portrayal of the filthy environment where they have lived and where most of the population live. We can examine the



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comment of Limbale: “The event of the development of Dalit literature is not just a literary event. Therefore this literature should not be viewed only from a literary perspective. Unless this literary chain of events is seen from a sociological perspective against the entire background of the changes happening in society, its significance will not be grasped.” (Limbale: 92)

In short, most of these oppressed sections of humanity, the African Americans and Dalit Indians, over a time, were dehumanized and were enslaved by the ruling classes and castes with the help of their dominant ideology and were brought under the cultural hegemony so that they should never regain their humanity and selfhood unless they become conscious of the designs of social constructs subtly built by the ruling classes. Therefore, when these oppressed groups responded to their predicament through their art and literature, they made a radical departure from established white and Brahmanical literatures in terms of myths, symbols, images, fables, legends, resources in land narrative strategies used in their discourses. Despite these similarities, the literatures of the African Americans and Dalits cannot be studied as mutually analogous literatures, while they do have certain similarities of trends, at the same time each also has certain unique features and characteristics of its own.

Since the African Americans and Dalits were deprived of having access to knowledge, quest for knowledge is one of the major themes in African American and Dalit literatures. It is revealed very poignantly in many Dalit and African American narrative and autobiography. As they suffer from the loss of their self and also are the victims of self-hatred, self scorn and self denial, quest for regaining one’s own self and an attempt to reclaim it is one of the recurring themes in their writings. Hence, through their art and literature they try to define their own self and attempt to explore their social, economic, political, cultural and religious history and the past. In addition to this, their literature is also a literature of consciousness. These writers, while speaking about themselves or their communities, try to reveal that they are victims and try to understand as to why they are being victimized. They know that they are oppressed not because they are lazy, not



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because they are ignorant, not because they are stupid, but just because they are either African Americans or Dalits. An awakening and awareness about their own state and condition of victimization generates in them a kind of consciousness which could be called as African American or Dalit consciousness. It also generates in them a feeling of dividedness such as subject and object, self and other, private and public, oppression and resistance, domination and sub-ordination, hegemony and marginality, sameness and difference and so on. They provide a critique of the white or the upper caste domination. Through their writings these writers go for consciousness-raising of their oppressed brothers and sisters; they project that the oppressors - whites and upper castes - are everything not because they are powerful but because they have constructed the society and value system that enables them to subjugate others and through these values and ideology' they perpetuate their own domination. They try to highlight the sources which enable the oppressors to oppress them. Therefore, they attempt to alter the consciousness of the oppressed. They delineate certain social contradictions, seen and observed in the life of the oppressor and the oppressed; they reveal that certain features of social, realities as intolerable and unbearable and turn social fact into contradiction. Hence, they project a picture of the social reality to manifest what they are in contrast to what they are not yet. They try to build in their oppressed readers a consciousness of victimization and try to convince them to apprehend themselves as victims so as to make them aware of the alien and hostile forces and circumstances responsible for the blatant unjust treatment, demonstrating that the victimization is in no way earned or deserved. Hence, they display the sufferings of their people in such a way that the victims understand and realize that like them others are also made to suffer in the same way. Thus, the real are made to suffer and develop a sense of solidarity with other victims. Thus the writers force them to see a larger society based on oppression not in the same old way but from a new awakening and consciousness and generate a feeling among them that while one has already sustained an injury, one is also exposed to other injuries as well; and at the same time they try to also make them aware of their power so that hitherto untapped sources of energy could



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be unleashed. These writers also try to generate a feeling in their respective communities that there are no places where they could hide and that one could be attacked anywhere at any time, virtually by anyone; they project that the systems of racism and casteism and their agents are everywhere, even inside their own minds since one can fall prey to self-doubt or to a temptation to comply. In response to this, the oppressed African Americans and Dalits become vigilant and suspicious of the things and circumstances as in war. Perhaps it is because of this situation of theirs that Richard Wright has written in his *12 Million Black Voices*: “Everywhere black people are on a war ... from day to day we live in the atmosphere of a war that never ends. Even when the sprawling fields are drenched in peaceful sunshine it is war. When we grub at the clay with our hoes, it is war. When we sleep it is war. When we are awake, it is war. When one of us is born, he enters one of the warring regiments of the South” (Wright, 1969 : 46).

Hence, they develop an anticipation of the possibility of attack, of affront or insult. It produces a feeling that one must always be an alert and be ready to suffer from both ethical and ontological shocks. It enables the oppressed to understand the truth about one’s self and one’s society. These people start by posing questions as to why many of them lack any genuine conviction of personal worth and try to create a unity among the oppressed groups of society on the ground that their unequal and inferior social status is unjust and needs to be altered. They create a feeling that justice requires freedom and equality and they give a new interpretation to the familiar realities. In short, the literatures of the African Americans and Dalits develop a new consciousness in the minds of their people and try to make them aware of themselves and the social history-both on its positive and negative nature.

Thus, both Dalit and African American literatures are the voice of the voiceless and are powerful revolts against the dominant Brahmanical and white ideology and their cultural hegemony and thus are transformed like Siamese twins which are not separated.



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