INTRODUCTION

Dalit Literature:

Dalit writing is a post-Independence literary phenomenon. The emergence of Dalit literature has a great historical significance. The causes and effects leading to the age-old existence of oppression and despair of the lives of marginalized class of nation’s vast population are also observed in many other parts of the world.

Arjun Dangle has defined Dalit literature as: “Dalit literature is one which acquaints people with the caste system and untouchability in India… It matures with a sociological point of view and is related to the principles of negativity, rebellion and loyalty to science, thus finally ending as revolutionary.”

Most of the marginalized groups all over the world have a similar system of oppression but the titles are different as per the class and class divide. In India it was under the pretext of the Cast and in the western World it was under the name of the Race. Inequality was the main source of this marginality which led to insecurity, injustice and exploitation. Marginalized sections were always on the periphery and distanced from the power centers. In this research work the main objective is to draw similarities between the politics of Caste and Race in Indian Dalits and the American Blacks.

Dalits were always on the marginalized ‘other’ side of the Indian society. So when they started voicing after centuries of silence, about themselves, we have the literature depicting assertion of human rights, self-pride, revolt against social injustice, chronicles of personal and collective suffering, and hopes and aspirations for a new society devoid of discrimination. Dalit Literature is literature about Dalits that are about Dalits. Dalit (Oppressed or broken) is not a new word. It was used in the 1930s as a Hindi and Marathi translation of ‘depressed classes’, a term the British used for what are now called the Scheduled Castes. In 1970s the ‘Dalit Panthers exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion. So Dalit is not a caste. It is a symbol of change and revolution. The Primary motive of Dalit literature is the liberation of dalits, the struggle against casteist tradition has a long history. Some of the important writers whose writings will find a place are: Mahasweta Devi, Namdeo Dhasal, Daya Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Sachi Rautray, Rabi Singh, Basudev Sunani, Bama, Abhimani, Poomani, Imayam,
Sharankumar Limbale has stated, “Dalit literature is precisely that literature which artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule and poverty endured by Dalits. This literature is but a lofty image of grief.” This trend started in 1873 when Jyotirao Phule, a Marathi Dalit (then known as an Untouchable), published his book *Gulamgiri* (Slavery) and dedicated the treatise to the then Negroes in America as a ‘token of admiration for their sublime disinterestedness and self sacrificing devotion in the cause of Negro Slavery’.

In the year 1992, Indian Literature virtually started a new chapter, with the publication of Arjun Dangle’s *Poisoned Bread*, which was the first ever attempt to anthologize Dalit writings in English. He involved all the genre available in Marathi Dalit literature-poetry, short stories, essays, autobiographical excerpts and public speeches. As a result, today we have several collections of Dalit writings coming out in both Indian languages and English. Following are some of the most widely read writers of Dalit literature that are available in English translation-Bama's Karukku and Sangati, Dr. Narendra Jadhav's Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India, Sharankumar Limbale's The Outside: Akkarmashi, Joseph Macwan's The Stepchild, Om Prakash Valmiki's Joothan: A Dalit's Life, Baby Kamble's Our Existence and Imayam Beats of Burden, Urmila Pawar's The Weave of My Life. Some of the prominent Dalit writers are Daya Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Baburao Bagul, Rabi Singh, Namdeo Dhasal, Dutta Bhagat, Lakshman Mane, Neerave Patel, Palamalai, Sudhakar. There are number of other writers writing Dalit literature but do not share the Dalit writers' category as the latter are not Dalit by birth as the other Dalit writers by birth. Mahasweta Devi, Sara Joseph, Kumaran Asan, Mulkraj Anand and Premchand are some of the well known names writing in diverse Indian languages.

**Black American Writings:**

Racism and classicism signify the traumatic conditions under which African-American lived in White America. It started when white masters of the land brought the first Africans in chains and used their labour to enrich their coffers. As a result, black people soon ceased to exist as human beings in the white world. Racism is a system of societal and psychological restrictions that has critically affected the lives of blacks. Right from the days of slavery, the blacks have
realized the cruel reality of racism: Judgment from the white man’s standards of life and beauty, the black man’s life became unbearable.

The oppressive story of racism in America brought with it pain, sorrow, bloodshed, death, and above all, the negation of an entire race. The African-American race was ghettoized, persecuted and viciously outlawed from all avenues of decency, hope, progress and livelihood. The basic myth of racism is that white skin brings with it cultural superiority— that the white are more intelligent and more virtuous than the black by the mere fact of being white. On psychological level, whiteness is automatically equated with beauty and culture and blackness with ugliness and slavery.

When the African slave was torn from his homeland and brought to the New World, he was quickly denied his native culture. Tribal organizations, languages, family structure, religion—all were systematically extirpated. In rebuilding his sheltered life, he was compelled to appropriate his materials form a new culture. But his master permitted him access to western culture on a very restricted basis. The process of assimilation was deliberately obstructed by the Whites. The other side of this coin is an unconscious self-hatred likewise appropriated from the dominant culture. Hated by Whites and being an organic part of the culture that hated him, Black man grew in time to hate himself what others hated him. An unconscious desire to be White coupled with feelings of revulsion towards the Negro masses may produce an assimilationist pattern of behavior at the purely personal level.

As African Americans' place in American society has changed over the centuries, so, too, have the foci of African American literature. Before the American Civil War, African American literature primarily focused on the issue of slavery, as indicated by the subgenre of slave narratives. At the turn of the 20th century, books by authors such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington debated whether to confront or appease racist attitudes in the United States. During the American Civil Rights movement, authors such as Richard Wright and Gwendolyn Brooks wrote about issues of racial segregation and black nationalism. Today, African American literature has been accepted as an integral part of American literature, with books such as Roots: The Saga of an American Family by Alex Haley, The Color Purple by
Alice Walker, and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison achieving both best-selling and award-winning status.

**IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC**

Dalit and Black American communities have had similar experiences of historical marginalization which gave rise to their cumulative shame as well as anger. The contribution of Dalit literature has been immense: (i) First and foremost, it effectively threatened the Brahmanic hegemony from literature (ii) Second, is concentrated Dalit masses for assertion, protest and mobilization. (iii) Third is stirred up thinking in Dalit intellectuals and catalyzed creation of organic intellectuals of Dalits. (iv) Fourth, given that the level of literacy been particularly low among Dalits, the emergence of Dalit literature where both the writers and readers are mostly Dalits, is itself an evidence of a profound change taking place in Indian society.

Similarly, the ever changing nature of American life and the vigorous versatility and all encompassing spread of a written record are the marks of American literature. It is an accepted fact that social forces do make a distinct imprint on literature, especially in America where the democratic processes bring the people into immediate familiarity with cultural forces and American literature has responded admirably to such pressures.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY IN PRESENT ERA**

Concepts like ‘race’ and ‘caste’ are as old as the history of civilization. Here are some grounds to compare and contrast. Both are marginalized literature- one arising out of the ‘literature of Slaves’ and the other from the ‘literature of untouchables’. Similarity is extended to the Black American Writings for whom the history of slavery is not illusionary or unreal. The liveliness and authenticity of their expressions are captured all across their writings. Shame, anger, sorrow and indomitable hope are the trademarks of this marginalized people and literature created by them. As the world moves toward becoming a global village, some past experiences and lessons learnt become precious and crucial to understand the common sensitivity and sensibilities. This research would provide a base for the common ground of discussion for the marginalization of various communities in two different parts of the world and some of the commonalities to deal with them in long run.