

**Contextualizing (Mis)placed Margins :A Comparative  
Analysis of Selected Novel of Alice Walker &  
Pallanimuthu Sivakami**

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**in**

**English**

**By**

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## DECLARATION

I, hereby declared that the presented work in the thesis entitled *Contextualizing (Mis)placed Margins: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Novel of Alice Walker & Pallanimuthu Sivakami* in fulfillment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision **Dr. Sandeep Kumar Sharma**, working as Associate Professor, in the Department of Language and Social Sciences of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.



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## CERTIFICATE BY ADVISOR

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph.D. thesis entitled *Contextualizing (Mis )placed Margins: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Novel of Alice Walker & Pallanimuthu Sivakami* submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the reward of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the Department of English , is a research work carried out by Arti Tickoo (Registration No.)41900612, is bonafide record of his/her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course. The candidate has pursued the prescribed coursework of research and has incorporated all the suggestions given by the Department Doctoral Board and Research Advisory Committee of the University during his end term presentations and pre-submission seminar.

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## ABSTRACT

The present thesis titled *Contextualizing (Mis)placed Margins: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Novel of Alice Walker & Pallanimuthu Sivakami* is an attempt to explore and understand the novels '*The Color Purple*'(1982) ,*Possessing the Secret of Joy*(1992), *The Grip of Change*(2006) and *Taming of Women*(2012) .Subaltern theory by Antonio Gramsci's is used as an analytical tool in this study. The theory's approach is to study the hegemonic structure, prejudice, suppression and exploitation of women on different grounds so that this research may comprehend effectively. In this section, the researcher has identified narratives in the novels that correspond to the features of the Gramscian theory.

Antonio Gramsci has been selected for this study since he is the pioneer in depicting Subalternity and Hegemony in caste, race and gender-biased society. This research work exhibits how two incongruent entities on the American and Indian sides are composed and measured by hegemonic standards of socioeconomic-cultural and political structures of power play and oppression. It also highlights the comparable oppression of Dalit women and African American women. The superstructures of race in the USA and caste in India inform, deform, and complicate the identities of the (mis)placed margins along lines of gender, class, and family structure. Keeping in view, all the above calls, the work has great importance from the societal point of view where the study focuses on questioning the lost margins and the marginalized lost.

The study scrutinizes the lives and voices of marginalized women, exposing how they are doubly oppressed by both colonial and patriarchal structures. Gramsci's subaltern theory provides a lens to examine these characters' struggles for agency, identity, and self-expression within a hegemonic framework that seeks to silence them. The analysis of these texts reveals a cross-cultural dialogue about gender, caste, race, and class, highlighting the intersections of oppression faced by women. By using Gramsci's ideas, the research has identified the processes through which these women's stories are pushed to the margins and investigates the ways they resist, reclaiming their voices. This study is of immense significance as it not only

brings forth the obscured narratives of subaltern women but also contributes to the broader understanding of how literature can act as a site for challenging dominant power structures and advocating for social change.

This research further delves into how Walker and Sivakami represent the complexities of female experiences across different cultural and social backgrounds, emphasizing the ways in which the subaltern voice is constructed, manipulated, and, at times, silenced. Through Gramsci's theory, the work interrogates how these women characters embody the struggle between conforming to societal norms and the desire for liberation, portraying the nuanced reality of existing on the margins.

By focusing on 'misplaced margins,' the study brings to light the often-overlooked intersections of race, gender, caste, and colonialism that contribute to the ongoing subjugation of women. In *The Color Purple*, the African American women navigate the intersections of race and gender, while in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, the focus shifts to the consequences of cultural practices on female autonomy. Similarly, Sivakami's works address the struggles of Dalit women within the rigid caste hierarchy of Indian society, revealing the multifaceted oppression that they endure.

The research not only contributes to the discourse on subalternity and feminism but also establishes a transnational dialogue that underscores shared experiences of oppression and resilience. By applying Gramsci's theoretical framework, the thesis enriches literary criticism by showcasing how literature serves as a platform for subaltern voices to contest power dynamics. Moreover, it underscores the transformative potential of these narratives, urging a re-evaluation of societal structures and advocating for the recognition and elevation of marginalized voices in both literary and real-world contexts. This cross-cultural analysis opens up new perspectives for understanding the global dimensions of women's oppression and their persistent efforts to carve out spaces for agency and self-determination.

Characters in these literary works grapple with a range of issues, including racism, black identity, dehumanization, discrimination, fear, violence, terror, loss of identity, suicide, and death. The novels highlight the marginalization, victimization,

demoralization, and oppression experienced by black individuals in American society, particularly focusing on the additional challenges faced by women who endure double oppression. Their personal autonomy and freedom are significantly restricted, leading to psychological suffering due to this societal marginalization. The research under consideration delves into the psychological impact of such marginalization, drawing parallels between the experiences of African women in America and Dalit women in India. The study explores themes of exploitation, racism, patriarchy, and slavery, revealing that despite the passage of time, issues like slavery,

Segregation and racism persist in contemporary America and India. Novels depict characters undergoing identity crises and demoralization. This study thus explores the dynamics of power by delving into key concepts such as ideology, hegemony, subjectivity, and culture, using Gramsci's theory as a foundation. It investigates how the selected novels portray the struggle against oppression. Additionally, critical perspectives from various intellectuals pertinent to this research will constitute the core of its theoretical framework. . Moreover, the format of the study shall be completely based on MLA 9<sup>th</sup> edition.

The research work endeavours at achieving the following main objectives:

1. To trace the evolution of marginalized literature
2. To contextualize marginalization in the selected texts
3. To locate ,explicate and elucidate the common paradigm of marginalization of the two communities and their literatures
4. To explore the need to re-examine the hidden discourses perpetuating marginalization.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the thesis is divided into five chapters followed by a conclusionary section. The first chapter entitled "*Introduction*" offers the origin and over view of Dalit and African American literature. It deals with period and the reasons for the origin of the marginalized literature. It emphasizes on the fact how institutions of slavery and racism in the United States have their parallel in the caste system and notions of untouchability,

purity and pollution in India which has led to the origin of the literature of the marginalized. The chapter also focuses on the life and works of Antonio Gramsci. The second chapter titled *Subaltern and Cultural Politics* examines the selected novels in the light of Gramsci's concept of Subaltern. This chapter deals with how the socio-political structure of race & caste operate differently in the respective societies, the resulting effect of discrimination, humiliation, unequal opportunities and subordination affect the lives of the disempowered in similar ways. The chapter describes the social hierarchy that disrupts and fractures the family structures of the subjugated. It emphasizes that the western Marxist model of social change used by historians in this field does not accurately represent the complex histories of subaltern insurgency and resistance focusing on issues of representation, self-representation, and political strategies. Women are expected to prioritize their domestic duties and are often held up as the ideal of domesticity. This image of a woman within the family is often based on societal ideals, myths, and fantasies, which can obscure the individuality of women. As a result, women are more likely to experience domestic oppression and violence, which is unfortunately a reality for many. Black men often cannot take the responsibility for his wife and children owing to the debilitating effect of racism. Women defend their positions but encounter both racism and sexism.

The third chapter *Language and Hegemony* delves into the use and significance of Gramsci's linguistic notions and communication in the context of political and social examination. *Language and Hegemony* uncovers the discrepancies lying in the grammatical, lexical and phonological aspects of the English and Tamil Language. It gives the detailed account of AAVE (African American Vernacular English) and non standard Tamil Dialect representing a unique dialect in the writings of Walker and Sivakami representing the social, economic and cultural factors of the African-Americans and Dalits respectively. There are some perceptible differences between the AAVE and the Standard English used by others. Alice Walker's use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in *The Color Purple* and P. Sivakami's use of non-standard Tamil in *The Taming of Women and In the Grip of Change* reflect language as a powerful site of resistance and identity



formation. These authors' choices to present their characters' dialogues in non-standard dialects challenge hegemonic cultural norms, offering insights into how language operates within systems of power, in line with Antonio Gramsci's theory of language and hegemony. Alice Walker writes much of the dialogue in AAVE, a dialect historically marginalized and stigmatized as inferior to Standard American English. By centering the voice of Celie and Tashi, an African American woman in the rural South, Walker subverts the linguistic and cultural dominance of the white, patriarchal mainstream. AAVE becomes a medium through which Celie expresses her identity, emotions, and ultimately her empowerment. It is a deliberate choice to present the "marginalized" in their own voice, which resists the erasure of their linguistic and cultural identities. The characters as a subaltern figure, represents the Gramscian notion of the oppressed who find their voice through non-standard forms of language. Her journey to empowerment is paralleled by her growing ability to articulate her thoughts and feelings in her own dialect, challenging the dominant culture's language norms. Both Walker and Sivakami, through their use of non-standard dialects, illustrate the Gramscian idea that language is not just a medium of communication but a site of power struggle. The characters' dialects represent their resistance to cultural hegemony and linguistic domination, symbolizing their broader struggle for autonomy and recognition. It covers various concepts that Gramscian research has identified as key to the concept of hegemony, including philosophy, intellectuals, culture, and subalternity. The chapter is an attempt to examine how deviant language use, oral culture, lexical disparity, linguistic indecisiveness, and genderlect presence or absence are indicative of social inequality. The female characters in the novels of Alice Walker and Pallanimuthu Sivakami experience linguistic subjugation due to their belonging to communities considered lower in socio-economic and political standings. The languages spoken by black and Dalit communities are often viewed as informal as they differ from the so-called 'Standard Language' used by the more dominant groups. The fourth chapter Patriarchal Hegemony deals with principles of patriarchy running through the novels that have its impact in two ways - male shall dominate female, and the elder male may dominate the younger ones. Sexual politics obtains consent through the

“socialisation” of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role and status.

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It reflects upon the fact that how both the selected authors and their protagonists have experienced emotions of isolation, displacement, and confusion regarding their identity throughout their lives. The main themes in their literary works include alienation, displacement, the struggle to survive in postcolonial societies, identity crises, and the portrayal of the challenges faced by the Diaspora. It is noteworthy that Alice Walker and Sivakami mainly concentrate on writing about

women or depicting women in their works. All of the chosen novels revolve around the female protagonists. In the last section of the thesis, the study summarizes the concept analysed and studied in the select works of author. It draws the theory on the material obtained from the information gained from the Antonio Gramsci's Prison Notebooks and influence of Subaltern theory on the characters in novels of Alice Walker and Pallanimuthu Sivakami. The purpose of this section is to elaborate on the findings of the study as determined by the content analysis approach. While summarising the research work, the conclusionary section titled "Conclusion" outlines the outcomes and the findings of the study. In addition, it enumerates the relevance and scope of the study in the context of the present world scenario set by several conflicting issues. The section also takes into consideration the limitations and shortcomings of the study keeping in view its range and nature.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The qualitative study, entitled *Contextualizing (Mis)placed Margins: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Novel of Alice Walker & Pallanimuthu Sivakami* employs Antonio Gramsci's theory as a lens to examine works of two writers. This work has explored the novels from the Subaltern perspective. Characters in these novels suffer from racism, black identity, dehumanization, discrimination, fear, violence, and terror, loss of identity, suicide and death. The study demonstrates that both Black individuals in America and Dalits in India endure marginalization, victimization, demoralization, and systemic oppression, with women facing a dual burden of oppression in particular. Through the analysis of the novels, it becomes evident that these groups are subjected to multiple layers of societal injustice. Their individuality and freedom has been curtailed. This research work delineates how African Americans and Dalits suffer psychologically because of this marginalization. Furthermore, it also compares the condition of Dalit women in India and African women in America. The research explore exploitation, racism, patriarchy and slavery. These novelsshow that slavery, segregation, and racism have not ended in present America and India. Characters in novels suffer from identity crisis and demoralization.

This research exhibits as to how two incongruent entities on the American and Indian side are composed and measured by hegemonic standards of socioeconomic-cultural and political structures of power play and oppression. It also highlights the comparable oppression of Dalit women and African American women. These (mis) placed margins have complicated identities along the lines of gender, class and family structure as the superstructures of race and caste deform them. Keeping in view all the above calls, the work has a great importance from the societal point of view where the study focuses on questioning the lost margins and the marginalized lost.

This study includes the two novels of Alice Walker “*The Colour Purple* (1982)” “*Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992)” and two novels by Pallanimuthu Sivakami “*The Taming of Women* (2012)” and “*In the Grip of Change* (2006).”

The introductory chapter is an attempt to suggest ways to recover and put to good use a Gramscian methodology that recognizes the presence of the subaltern in new contexts and at times different from those analyzed by Gramsci himself, especially in the context of India and America.

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was an Italian Marxist philosopher and politician, primarily known for his development of the concept of cultural hegemony. Born in Sardinia, Italy, he faced poverty and health challenges from an early age. Gramsci became involved in socialist and workers' movements in Turin, where he was influenced by both Marxist and Italian intellectual traditions. A co-founder of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), Gramsci was imprisoned by Mussolini's fascist regime in 1926. It was during his imprisonment that Gramsci wrote his most significant works, the *Prison Notebooks* (*Quaderni del carcere*), consisting of 32 notebooks containing reflections on history, culture, philosophy, and politics. The *Prison Notebooks* represent his groundbreaking ideas on cultural hegemony, where Gramsci argued that the ruling class maintains control not just through coercion but by creating a consensus through cultural and ideological means. His other major contributions include the theory of intellectuals' role in maintaining or challenging hegemony and his analysis of civil society as a critical battleground for social change. Another important work is *Selections from the Political Writings* (1910-1920), which reflects his early views on Italian politics and the revolutionary potential of the working class. Gramsci's thoughts on education, the role of organic intellectuals, and the importance of cultural institutions continue to influence contemporary Marxist theory and critical cultural studies. During the past few years a major change has been taking place: the emphasis seems to have shifted from Dalits' mere awareness of their “oppression”, towards the mobilization of consciousness as a “transforming agents” of subalternity, and hence toward a new path taking them from “desperate cries” to liberating action. In this chapter, light has been thrown on some of the questions like: 1. Why is Dalits and African American a

proto – type of Gramscian Subaltern? 2. Whether with Gramscian methodology, is it possible to recover those “traces” present in the fragmented history of these groups so as to detect the vital elements that will assist them in overcoming their subalternity.

Gramsci did not formally complete his university studies and opted to discontinue his education in 1915. Subsequently, he dedicated himself to a full-time role as a journalist and a socialist activist. In 1913, he joined the Italian Socialist Party (Partito socialista italiano, or PSI) and engaged in worker's education initiatives. Just two years later, he was invited to work as a journalist for the Turin edition of the PSI daily newspaper, *Avanti!* Already a contributor to the weekly publication *Il Grido del Popolo* (“The People’s Cry”), Gramsci accepted the offer. Under the regular column titled “Sotto la Mole” (“In the shadow of the Mole Antoniella,” a landmark in Turin where Gramsci lived), he began writing political commentaries and theater reviews. In 1917, he collaborated on a single issue of a socialist cultural review called *La Città futura* (“City of the Future”), targeting young socialists. The period leading up to Gramsci’s arrest marked a period of significant dynamic social and political crisis in Italy and Europe as a whole. Gramsci gained local recognition as a sharp and “serious” radical journalist during and after the war. He vehemently criticized Italy’s ruling elite and the shallow moral values of bourgeoisie. In 1918, for instance, he decried the widespread use of cocaine as a symbol of bourgeois progress” and lamented the absence of a “fair play” concept, as evident in the Italian card game *scopone*, which he believed should be present in developed capitalist societies (PPW:72,74).

However starting from the early 1920s, his audience shifted primarily to party members, and his writings adopted the technical language of the revolutionary communist analysis. Despite this shift, several consistent philosophical themes and influences can be identified that characterized his thinking throughout his pre prison activities. These can be summarized as follows.

1. A “humanist” opposition to scientific positivism and materialist determinism due to their neglect of the subjective dimension in human action. This

perspective was influenced by neo-idealist philosophers and critics of the classical Marxist tradition, particularly Benedetto Croce.

2. A radical emphasis on the power of subjectively motivated collective action, expressed as the formation of a unified moral will. This viewpoint found resonance in Italy through the revolutionary syndicalist thinker Georges Sorel.
3. A preference for collective self liberation and a rejection of authoritarian, elitist, or artificially imposed systems of rule. Such views were widespread among radical critics of the liberal state and its protectionist policies, including the social reformer and analyst of southern underdevelopment , Gaetano Salvemini.

Gramsci's theory of *cultural hegemony* refers to the dominance of a particular class or group in society, not merely through force or economic power, but through the subtle manipulation and shaping of cultural values, beliefs, and institutions. Gramsci argued that the ruling class maintains its control by creating a consensus around its ideology, making it appear as the norm or common sense for all (Gramsci). This process allows the ruling class to justify its power and maintain control without constant coercion, as the subordinated classes accept the dominant worldview as natural and legitimate (Ransome 138). Central to Gramsci's idea is the role of *civil society*, which includes institutions like schools, churches, and the media that propagate the ruling class's ideology (Forgacs and Nowellsmith). He believed that intellectuals, whom he categorized as either *traditional* (aligned with the status quo) or *organic* (aligned with the working class), played a critical role in either maintaining or challenging this hegemony. For Gramsci, a successful counter-hegemony requires a new cultural and ideological framework led by organic intellectuals, ultimately leading to revolutionary change. His concept of cultural hegemony highlights the importance of culture and ideology in maintaining power structures, offering a more nuanced understanding of social control beyond economic determinism typical in classical Marxist thought.

Gramsci's theories, particularly those on *cultural hegemony* and the *subaltern*, have deeply influenced postcolonial literature and theory. His concept of



cultural hegemony, where dominant groups maintain power by controlling culture and ideology rather than through direct force, resonates with how colonial powers enforced Eurocentric norms on colonized populations. Edward Said, in *Orientalism*, drew upon Gramsci's ideas to show how Western narratives about the East created a hegemonic discourse that justified colonial domination (Said 7). Similarly, postcolonial writers depict how cultural and ideological domination in colonial contexts marginalized native identities, often through literature, language, and education.

Post-colonial theory considers vexed cultural political questions of national and ethnic identity, otherness, race, imperialism and language during and after the colonial periods. It draws upon post-structuralist theories such as those of deconstruction in order to unravel the complex relations between imperial centre and colonial periphery. (Baldick 265).

‘Subaltern and Subaltern Studies’, as a discipline, was brought in by the Subaltern Studies Group in the realm of post-colonial studies. African American and Dalit literature are considered as postcolonial literature due to the fact that both were produced after the end of colonialism. These literatures emerged as a response to the colonial period and its aftermath, which created a need for self-expression and a desire to reclaim cultural identity. They are characterized by a focus on the experience of marginalized groups and an exploration of the effects of colonialism on identity, culture, and society. Both African American and Dalit literature challenge the dominant narratives of colonial history and offer alternative perspectives that are often ignored or silenced. Through their literature, these communities assert their right to self-determination and resist the legacy of colonialism (Johnson 45-58).

Post colonialism is the study of theory and literature as it speaks about the colonizer and the colonized experience. It studies the after-effects of the colonial era, that is, the effects the colonizer had on the colonized people. Postcolonial studies is defined as the “critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourse that

are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France and other European imperial powers. (Abrams 306)

Post colonialism rejects the European narratives of the western imperialism and strikes back on the face of world history. African American and Dalit literature can be viewed as powerful prototypes of Gramscian postcolonial literature, especially through their engagement with cultural hegemony and the subaltern experience. Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, where ruling groups maintain control not only through economic or legal dominance but also by shaping cultural norms and ideology, is reflected in the systemic marginalization of African Americans and Dalits. African American literature, from W.E.B. Du Bois to Toni Morrison, explores how racialized ideologies have perpetuated a hegemonic worldview that marginalizes African American identity and culture, mirroring colonial powers' cultural domination (Du Bois 45; Morrison 12). The African American struggle for self-representation and cultural autonomy aligns with the postcolonial resistance to imperial ideological control, a key aspect of Gramsci's theory.

Similarly, Dalit literature, with foundational figures such as B.R. Ambedkar and contemporary writers like Arjun Dangle, draws on Gramsci's idea of the subaltern—those excluded from mainstream power and historical narratives (Ambedkar 22; Dangle 98). Dalit literature showcases the lived experiences of caste oppression, which operates in much the same way as colonial hegemony, through the ideological justification of social hierarchies. Both African American and Dalit writers function as organic intellectuals in Gramsci's terms, emerging from oppressed communities to challenge dominant ideologies and reclaim their narratives (Gramsci 5). Thus, these literary traditions embody the postcolonial struggle against cultural domination and exclusion, highlighting Gramsci's central ideas of hegemony, subalternity, and resistance.

Gramsci's notion of the *subaltern*—groups marginalized or excluded from societal power structures—has also been critical to postcolonial studies. Gayatri Spivak's influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" directly engages with

Gramsci, arguing that the voices of the colonized are systematically silenced and that their resistance is often co-opted or ignored by dominant powers (Spivak 27). In postcolonial literature, subaltern characters represent the oppressed, whose stories are left out of official histories, paralleling Gramsci's emphasis on giving voice to those outside of power structures. Moreover, Gramsci's concept of organic intellectuals—those who arise from oppressed groups to challenge hegemonic power—have inspired postcolonial writers and critics to consider how intellectuals and writers from formerly colonized societies can resist and dismantle colonial ideologies by reclaiming indigenous histories and identities. These ideas continue to shape the discourse around power, resistance, and identity in postcolonial literature and criticism.

In the crucial realm of post-colonialism, the term subaltern is employed to designate and characterize individuals and social groups that exist outside the dominant power structure. Coined in the context “history from below” the term subaltern originates from Antonio Gramsci's cultural hegemony work identifying social groups excluded from established political representation in society. In the 1980s the focus of subaltern studies expanded to serve as an intervention in the historiography of South Asia (Prison Notebook, 23).

In 1873 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,” as noted by S.D. Kapoor in *Dalits and African Americans: A Study in Comparison* (13).

The example of the growth of African American consciousness and its expression in literature, especially in the slave narratives, functioned effectively as a model for Phule to resist the oppressive caste system that had left the *ati-shudras* (the untouchables) without a sense of self-identity and consciousness in India. Phule's life-long work to raise awareness among the lowest castes about their degraded condition as affected by the Brahminical caste system remains an inspiration today. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, perhaps the greatest Dalit leader in India who

drafted the Constitution of a free and new India and was the country's first Law Minister, acknowledged Phule's work by dedicating his own book, *Who Were the Shudras?* to Phule. Ambedkar, who was actively involved in the national politics of India and drafted the Constitution of independent India, also highlighted the comparison between African Americans and the Dalits (*The Exercise of Freedom* 57).

As a graduate student at Columbia University from 1913 to 1916, Ambedkar witnessed the growing consciousness among the Blacks and their struggle to claim their identity and humanity against the white supremacist oppression. Such first-hand experience helped him develop a "framework" for the "issue of caste segregation back home. (Kapoor 15)

When Lala Lajpat Rai, a famous Indian activist against British Raj and a "founding member of the Hindu reformist movement, Arya Samaj" (14), compared the lynchings of Negroes in America with the attitudes of the Brahmins toward the pariahs, the untouchables, and found the former more atrocious and more inhuman, Ambedkar retorted that the Brahmin torture of Untouchables was never known, unlike the lynchings, because all "Hindus" conspire to keep their shameful and inhuman acts a secret (Kapoor 16).

Ambedkar believed that the existence of an American conscience allowed the ex-Negroes to publish their suffering in the form of narratives to expose the horrors of slavery. But in India, he argued, the "Hindus" have no conscience that prohibits them from recognizing the injustice in the caste system that they adhere to. (Kapoor 14)

Dalit and African American literature share similar origins in their emergence as powerful forms of resistance against systemic oppression and social marginalization. Both literatures arose from historically oppressed communities—African Americans under slavery and racial discrimination, and Dalits under the caste system in India. African American literature's origins can be traced to the experiences of slavery and racial segregation, with seminal works like Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the*

*Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) serving as early critiques of slavery and the dehumanization of African Americans. Douglass's narrative sought to reclaim African American identity and assert dignity in the face of brutal oppression (Douglass 33). Similarly, Dalit literature, particularly exemplified by figures like B.R. Ambedkar and modern writers such as Arjun Dangle, emerged as a response to the oppressive caste system, using literature to challenge untouchability and caste-based exploitation (Ambedkar 17; Dangle 102).

Both literatures were born out of resistance to hegemonic ideologies—white supremacy in the case of African Americans and Brahminical dominance for Dalits—that sought to dehumanize and silence these communities. African American literature, rooted in oral traditions and spirituals, grew into a written tradition that questioned the racial hierarchies legitimized by slavery and segregation, paralleling Dalit literature's challenge to the deeply entrenched caste hierarchy. These traditions use writing as a tool to reclaim identity and human rights, with authors turning personal and collective suffering into narratives of resilience and political activism. The communal voice in both literatures—whether through African American oral traditions or the collective testimonies of Dalit experiences—underscores their shared origins in combating social exclusion and asserting their humanity.

Along with the parallels between Dalits and African Americans, the Indian freedom movement acquired a strong parallel story to that of the African Americans in the early twentieth century. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Howard Thurman (1899- 1981), and later Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) formed the pillars of the interchange of knowledge and inspiration. The Dalit identification with African Americans has continued through the late 19th century until the late 20th century. Sudarshan Kapur in his critically acclaimed book, *Raising Up a Prophet: the African-American Encounter with Gandhi*, traces the history of the well-known relationship between Gandhi's satyagraha (non-violent resistance to British rule in India) and Dr. Martin Luther King's nonviolent Civil Rights movement in the USA during the 1950s-1960s to much earlier connections between the African American community and Gandhi's activities through the 1920s. As Kapur argues, such a rich history of connections prior to King's "discovery" of Gandhi in his seminary years in 1950

(two years after Gandhi's assassination)" not only illustrates the early awareness in USA that struggles for transformation may be shared across cultural and political boundaries" (2- 3) but also exposes the "elitist approach" towards the history of the Civil Rights movement that often silences the story of the "preparation of an entire people" (2). It is not wrong to categorize and define humankind, but when we start considering prominent people and dividing humanity into hierarchies, it becomes an issue of discrimination and debate which gives rise to marginalization.

In *The Modern Prince* and *The Prison Notebooks* Antonio Gramsci defines the 'subaltern' classes as those excluded from any meaningful role in a regime of power that subjugates them. Through consent these 'subalterns' participate in the hegemony created and controlled by the dominant group.

The subalterns have no independent space from which to articulate their voice because hegemony conditions them to believe in the dominant values. Gramsci believed that the intellectual has the responsibility to "search out signs of subaltern initiative and class consciousness and effective political action. (Gramsci 28).

Marginalisation describes the position of individuals, populations or groups who are positioned outside of 'mainstream society', living at the margins of those in the centre of power, cultural dominance and economical and social welfare.

Marshall (1998) defined marginalization as, "a process by which a group or individual is denied access to important positions and symbols of economic, religious, or political power within any society...a marginal group may actually constitute a numerical majority...and should perhaps be distinguished from a minority group, which may be small in numbers, but has access to political or economic power. (141-176)

Summing up the points of similarities Dr.Waghmare says that we can compare the Dalit literature and African American literature on the basis of five major points which he records as follows (1992:313):

1. Both Black and Dalit writers are in search of their respective identities.
2. Experience in both literatures has surfaces from social life based on inequality.
3. The literature of both is life-oriented. Both Black and Dalit writers write from the awareness of social commitment.
4. The literary language of both is the language of cultural revolt. 5. In both literatures the aim is to find new cultural values.

From the above text it is clear that the primary source of marginality is inequality, as it gives insecurity, injustice and exploitation. Marginalized are scattered here and there and lack cohesiveness and strength. They are deprived of economic, political or religious power, marginalized grope in the dark for survival. They live in physical and psychological ghettos. However, they struggle for emancipation. This particular aspect is depicted in the post colonial studies.

Marginalized literature is thus the medium through which the subjugated try to assert their identities. The focus of any marginal writing is not just presenting its obstacles, but tries to find a new life around them. One of the most significant features of the post-modernist era was the beginning of writings of the outcast, as a major literary force. The word Dalit means the downtrodden. The collected works which is concerned with the socially under privileged and which asserts socio-political importance of the underdogs, is known by this name. The Dalit movement was in full swing in literature by Marathi, Gujarati and Kannada authors under the guidance of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

The term marginalized coined in the year 1970 social revolution tells about the sufferings of the people who live on the fringe of mainstream America. These marginalized are excluded from the mainstream, excluded from full participation and consequently lack the self- efficacy to improve their life situation. In the present scenario people are discussing the problems of marginalized groups-their social, ethnic, economic, and cultural issues. Marginality in all aspects is indeed a significant problem to be reckoned with in the world. The marginality may vary in

degrees. Most countries have two poles, at one pole they have empowered groups and on the other pole they have impoverished groups.

In their respective societies Indian Dalits and African Americans are two differentiated groups that occupy a lower position. They were the sons and daughters of darkness travelling through unexpressed sufferings and sorrows. The aim of both the literatures is to promote ideas of social equality, justice and resistance to suffering, discrimination and economic exploitation. To sum up these societies and the literature of African American and Dalits is same to some extent. The reason is that the sentimental commitments of women from both the societies are same. They have common pain, they are rebellion, and they have similar hopes and desires. Although the dialects are different, the state of mind and the emotions expressed through these literatures are parallel. (Wilkerson 23)

In the post-World War II period, when most colonized countries were beginning to gain independence, Gandhi's noncooperation and nonviolent resistance exemplified what could be achieved by striking at the heart of the colonizer's conscience. Through 1946 and 1947, the year of India's independence, several eminent Indian political figures visited the United States and the U.N. assembly meetings and repeated the notion of Indian solidarity with all colored peoples of the world, especially with those in the United States, much like W.E.B. Du Bois who refused to be photographed with "pro-British Indians at the UN conference" (Kapur 128). The Indian-African American connection became even more pronounced when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. adopted the Gandhian nonviolent resistance methodology and led the African Americans toward their Civil Rights through the 1950s and 1960s. That Gandhi was opposing both the external British domination and the internal oppressive structure of casteism and untouchability was a major reason why the African Americans were drawn toward his struggle. It is intriguing to note here that the direction of influence between the two peoples reversed itself in the late 1960s and 1970s when the militant Black Panthers and their claims of Black Power motivated a group of young Dalit poets and activists to compose outrageous art in order to shatter the complacency of Brahminical ideologies. They proudly called



themselves Dalit Panthers. In the late 1960s through 1970s the Black Power and Black Panther movements not only gave rise to a militant resistance to white oppression but it also witnessed the emergence of anti-white establishment art. Adapting a similar ideology, in 1972 a group of young Marathi Dalit artists in India called themselves the Dalit Panthers and embraced violent politics and aesthetics to resist caste supremacy. They were the first to use the word “Dalit” literally meaning “broken or ground to pieces” (Desai 107) to designate their social identity and today it is the only accepted term to refer to the former untouchables.

Although slavery and the caste system as institutions were abolished in 1865 and 1950, respectively, the legacy of stratified systems based on labor and discourses of supremacy has continued in the respective societies. Moreover, the caste system’s official negation has not erased the system from the cultural ethos of India. The caste system in India is not unique with respect to its hierarchical structure because hierarchies of different kinds define several other cultures. However, as D.R. SarDesai notes in *India: The Definitive History*, what is indeed unique about the caste system is its “persistence through a couple of millennia” (103).

To understand the caste system, one must note the following terms: “varna,” “endogamy,” “pollution” and “purity” and “untouchability.” During the Vedic times, the four ‘varnas’ (literally meaning “color”) were supposed to have originated from the four parts of the Cosmic Man: the priestly class, Brahmins (from the mouth), the warrior class, Kshatriyas (from the arms), the business class, Vaishyas (from the thighs or loins), and the menial class, Shudras (from the feet) (Varna System 2021).

People could change their identities by changing their professions. Over time, however, the divisions became more rigid and one’s birth became the sole determinant of one’s identity. The first three ‘varnas’ were supposed to designate the light-skinned Aryan origin while the fourth and last one would imply the darker-skinned Dravidian origin. SarDesai asserts that such color codes were never actually practiced and does not hold true today. However, the privilege of the first three

‘varnas’ was determined if not by their skin color but by their right to perform certain rituals of consecration and to “study Vedic lore” (105). The Brahmins developed their own rituals of purity and maintained their superiority among the castes. They had access to the religious texts and scriptures and interpreted them for the rest of the society. Thus, the caste system is also known as being governed by the Brahmanical ideology. SarDesai refutes the argument that only a division of labor with no “moral judgment on the superiority of one over the other” determined the caste system; in fact, this ‘varna’ system created a “hierarchy where a whole class (the first three varnas) looked down on the other,...the Sudras and all four on the untouchables” (105). Endogamy helped to maintain this social order and the notion of purity observed by Brahmins was guarded strictly by forbidding exogamy. Untouchability is not mentioned in the Vedic literature and nor is it supported by the creation-myth of the Cosmic Man. SarDesai notes that the “heinous practice of untouchability crystallized around the second century CE” (107) and has continued through many millennia. Because these people were outside the four-fold ‘varna’ system, they were called ‘outcastes.’ They were responsible for disposing of dead bodies and working with carcasses of animals and their hides for leather, for cleaning the toilets, for keeping the neighborhoods germ and disease free. Ironically, the outcastes received the title of ‘untouchables’ because they touched and dealt with the filth and pollution of the entire society. Social interaction with upper castes, including eating together, sitting next to each other, going to the temple or school, or living in the same neighborhoods, was prohibited owing to fear of pollution.

As per the social pyramid Dalits lie at the bottom and are even not provided with the basic human rights. In other words “Dalit” is a democratic identity of the socially oppressed untouchable caste group. Dalit literature thus encompasses diverse forms of intellectual and creative work by those who, as untouchables, are victims of economic, social and cultural inequality. Using the term dalit writing helps us to emphasize the relation with the social and political concerns of dalit movements. The vast majority of African Americans living in United States are under the fear of the people who have the control over their bodies and their breath, subject to people who faced no sanction for any outrage they could be.

The term Dalit was coined by Marathi social reformer Jyotirao Phule in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was popularized by the Dalit Panthers. Dalit literally means “crushed down”. It is the name that untouchables have given themselves.

“The term represents those who have been broken and ground down by those above them in a deliberate manner. In the term and concept *Dalit* itself is an inherent denial of dignity, a sense of pollution and an acceptance of the *karma* theory that justifies the caste hierarchy" (Zelliot 267).

Professor Gangadhar Pantawane says, “To me Dalit is not a caste. He is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of this country. He does not believe in God, Rebirth, soul and Holy books, teaching separatism, Fate and Heaven because they have made him a slave. He does believe in humanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution. (Pradeep 53).

Dalit literature doesn't grow out of literary discussion or the practice of writers. It is a social movement invested in the battle against injustice and driven by the hope of freedom, not simply a literary trend or a formal development.

In an important essay on dalit literature, the Marathi dalit critic and writer Baburao Bagul , argues that “the established literature of India is Hindu literature and the lowest castes are excluded in Indian literature because of its Hindu character. He explains, “Writers who have internalized the Hindu value structure find it impossible to accept heroes, themes and thoughts derived from the philosophers of Phule and Ambedkar. (Bagul 285)

It is important to understand the reasons for what many writers have called the ‘chasm’ between dalit literature and what went before it. The canons of modern Indian literature as well as that of Indian writing in English are constituted of works and critical attitudes that are shaped by an anti colonial nationalism. Although the history books are written as though it were the only form of nationalism that existed, anti colonial nationalism is actually congress nationalism, and more

specifically, Gandhian nationalism. In such nationalist thinking, the entire story of the struggle for freedom is told as one of opposition between the colonizer and the colonized. Indian literature is a literature in which the colonized reply or 'write back' to the authority of empire. (Tharu pg 25)

On 4th July, 1776, the Declaration of Independence of the United States was signed by representatives of thirteen states, and famously included the following words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness..." (The Declaration of Independence 14). It is common knowledge today that Thomas Jefferson who drafted the Constitution was an affluent slave-holder in Virginia. The contradiction between his statements about the founding principles of the new nation-state and his actual practice of denying people of African descent their humanity, equality and liberty, spelled the position and rights of African peoples in the national imagination of the United States. Through American history, from the abolition movement and the Civil War, the Reconstruction era, the Harlem Renaissance until the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, the African Americans have always constituted a distinct cultural and social ethos within the nation but beyond the pale of USA's national imagination. Langston Hughes in "I, Too" reminded the nation that he is the "darker brother" and that he, too, "is America." (Hughes 271) One hundred and eighty-nine years after the nation-state was drafted into political existence, the African Americans, the 'Others' of the nation, were inducted as rightful citizens in 1965. Gyanendra Pandey notes that exclusion from the mainstream alone does not inform these groups; rather, "an increasingly popular account of the foundation of the United States" that recognizes and acknowledges "the 'original sin' of slavery" and its "overcoming" as "[underscoring] the story of American democracy and liberty" has a "parallel story regarding untouchability in the received narrative of Indian democracy" (321-322; footnotes). Thus it is informative to compare these two peoples, the others of their respective nation-states, and their histories and literatures.

In the very first essay of the series "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India" Guha specified that the indigenous elites comprised a

heterogeneous group that varied from the “all-India level to regional and local levels...” and that it “differed from area to area” (Mapping 7). Gayatri Spivak delineates the primary thrust of Subaltern Studies’ research: they make “a theory of consciousness or culture” and bring “hegemonic historiography to crisis” (Subaltern Studies 4). The Subaltern Studies group exposes the elitism of the history of the Indian National movement that does not acknowledge the role and contribution of peasants (subalterns) and instead only focuses on elitist leadership against colonial rule as the only kind of engagement with anti colonialism. The subalternist historians argue against Indian historiography and insist that the subaltern masses were not passive elements in the flow of elite-led anticolonialism; rather, the historians read the existence and exercise of subaltern consciousness and autonomy among peasants and their insurgencies during the colonial period. Retrieving important archival documents of local and often short-lived rebellions without any elitist leadership, the subalternists emphasize subaltern agency in Indian historiography and attempt to revise received knowledge of Indian history. Following Gramsci, the subalternist historians as intellectuals engage with the task of identifying subaltern agency and consciousness in the national movement. The Subaltern Studies group began with Gramsci’s term ‘subaltern,’ and applied it to the disenfranchised and subordinated peasants in Indian society. Their founding and early monographs and articles focused on peasants and their subaltern agency. (Subaltern Studies) Gradually the term ‘subaltern’ assumed a wider meaning in the series and began to include several subordinated groups such as lower castes, poor Muslims, rural labor force in urban locations, among others. While Gramsci used ‘subalterno’ instead of ‘proletariat’ in his diaries in order to escape prison censors, the word ‘subaltern’ went beyond the meaning of ‘proletariat’ in the entire body of his work (Mapping 323). Similarly, when Guha and his colleagues employed the word ‘subaltern’ for peasants in colonial India, they began with the underpinnings of social and economic class that the ‘peasant’ implies in the Indian context.

In later essays Subalternist historians have invested in recovering voices (and consciousness) and histories of tribals, Dalits, migrant workers, and Indian Partition sufferers, among others, in India. In *Subaltern Citizens* Gyanendra Pandey writes that

the use of the word 'subaltern' intensifies the responsibility of critical historiography, whether Marxist, feminist, anticolonial or minority, "to recover subject positions, lives, possibilities, and political action that have been marginalized, distorted, suppressed, and even forgotten" (7). Through Subaltern Studies' work of more than a quarter of a century, the concepts of the 'subaltern' and subalternist historiography have moved beyond the national boundaries of India into Brazil, Latin America, Japan and Africa. It has come to refer to people who have had or continue to have limited, if any, access to institutions of socioeconomic-political power, in different societies and in different matrices of power relations. Late Subaltern Studies also engages with the responsibility of the investigator. Gyanendra Pandey in "Voices from the Edge: The Struggle to Write Subaltern Histories" reflects on the 25 year long work in the Subaltern Studies Project and sums up the trajectory of the project, in all its variety: the Subaltern historian works with the "'fragments', 'traces' (in Gramsci's phrase) that survive in available narratives to tell of other suppressed narratives and perspectives" (Mapping 282).

In Gramscian Marxist philosophy, hegemony describes the domination of a culturally diverse society by the ruling class, who manipulates the culture of the society — the beliefs, explanations, perceptions, values, and mores — so that their ruling class *Weltanschauung* (world view) becomes the worldview that is imposed and accepted as the cultural norm; as the universally valid dominant ideology that justifies the social, political, and economic status quo as natural and inevitable, perpetual and beneficial for everyone, rather than as artificial social constructs that benefit only the ruling class. Gramsci developed this concept to comprehend social class; hence, cultural hegemony proposes that the prevailing cultural norms of a society, which are imposed by the ruling class (bourgeois cultural hegemony), must not be perceived as natural and inevitable, but must be recognized as artificial social constructs (institutions, practices, beliefs, etc.) that must be investigated to discover their philosophic roots as instruments of social-class domination. (Gramsci 153)

That such praxis of knowledge is indispensable for the intellectual and political liberation of the proletariat, so that workers and peasants, the people of town and country, can create their own working-class culture, which specifically addresses

their social and economic needs as social classes. Phule's *Gulamgiri* establishes a similar notion about the Brahminical domination on Shudra and Atishudra which Gramsci explained from the perspective of the Bourgeois' beliefs for the working class. Phule writes that Brahmans are not the aborigines of India rather some 3000 years ago they came to the extremely fertile land of India with the same Western interest, not as mere emigrants with peaceful intentions of colonization, but as Conquerors. They were the people who denoted themselves with pride-flattering epithets such as Aryan or Bhudeva etc. Shurdas were the natives of this land who resisted Aryans for establishing their rule in this country and hence they were held with great aversion and hatred and denounced as Shudra' (insignificant), Chandala' (the great evil foe) and so on. (Phule 35) Phule further denounces the Brahmanical texts as it was written for their benefits to establish their domination in India. Thus he gives a brief History of Brahmin's struggle that how eventually they have succeeded in establishing their supremacy and subjugating the aborigines in their entire control.

Gayatri Spivak employs the term 'subaltern' in a context similar to Gramsci's and believes that a position of economic powerlessness and dispossession characterizes the 'subaltern' who may not be able to articulate or represent herself. Her ultimate concern in her famous essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Published in 1988 soon after the first few articles of the Subaltern Studies group) is the doubly silenced subaltern woman who is always spoken for. She calls upon postcolonial female intellectuals to question the muting of the subaltern woman and not simply attempt to give a voice to the silenced subaltern. She is wary about postcolonial scholars repeating the colonial praxis of 'speaking for' the powerless. While encouraging the Subaltern Studies group and its attempt to revive the role and agency of Indian masses in the national movement for independence, Spivak warns the historians against appropriating the voices of the subalterns by imposing a collective homogenous identity and speech upon them. In such a situation, the heterogeneity of the subaltern masses becomes compromised and reinforces the colonial experience of cultural erasure. She raises the issue of the responsibility of the investigator who tries to unearth the subaltern voices from amidst elite discourse. Almost twenty years later, Spivak in her re-visioning of the notion of the 'subaltern' in "The New

Subaltern: A Silent Interview” recognizes that the thrust of the project has been the “bottom layer of society, not necessarily put together by capital logic alone” (Mapping 323). She continues to invest in the politics of representing the silenced subalterns.

David Arnold in “Gramsci and Peasant Subalternity in India,” an early essay on the series, justifies why and how a term used in the context of Italian peasantry can be used in the context of Indian peasantry. He notes the advantage of using the word ‘subaltern’: It emphasizes the central importance of the relationship of power between social groups: they are not just peasants and landlords but subordinates and superordinates, conscious of the implications and consequences of their respective positions though not necessarily in terms

that signify a developed class awareness....Its use is expressive, too, of Gramsci’s persistent use of dialectical couplets – hegemony/subordination, force/consent, active/passive – to bring out the conflicts and contradictions...to be found within actual historical situations. (Mapping 33)

The primary objective of Dalit literature is the emancipation of Dalits. When examining the trends within Dalit literature, the author aims to modestly highlight its fundamental ideological issues. Against the backdrop of this exploration, it becomes evident that Dalit literature challenges mainstream literary ideas and upper-caste ideologies while delving into the overlooked aspects of life. Dalit literature is rooted in lived experiences, prioritizing "Anubhava" (experience) over "Anumana" (speculation). (Manusmriti 22) For Dalit writers, history holds genuine significance and is not an illusion, contrary to certain Hindu metaphysical theories. Consequently, legitimacy and vibrancy have emerged as distinctive features of Dalit literature. These writers employ the language of outcasts and the underprivileged in Indian society. Themes of shame, anger, sorrow, and indomitable hope form the substance of Dalit literature. Fueled by resentment against age-old oppression, Dalit writers' expressions bear a sharp and resolute countenance. The struggle of Dalits against casteist customs has deep historical roots. (25)



Dalit historians trace the history of the term 'dalit literature' to the first Dalit literary Conference in 1958, Anna Bhau Sathe, a prominent Marathi writer, delivered the inaugural speech. The conference discussed dalit literature and passed the following resolution among others.

That the literature written by the Dalits and that written by others about the Dalits in Marathi be accepted as a separate entity known as 'Dalit literature' and realizing its cultural importance should be given its proper place. (Dangle 242)

With the rise of autonomous dalit movements in South India in the 1970s and after, dalit literature made its presence felt in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. While Kannada dalit writing was inspired and shaped by Lohiaite as well as Ambedkarite ideas, Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam dalit literature of the 1990s drew on the icon and ideologue, Ambedkar. A selection of these writings has been translated and published in two volumes: *No Alphabet in Sight* (2011) and *Steel Nibs are Sprouting* (2013)

Considering the history of the Independence movement and examine the leaders' views like Ambedkar, who stood outside the Congress mainstream, alternative perspectives of Independence and freedom emerge. For example, Gandhi defined untouchables as "Harijan" which means children of God. Gandhi emphasized on the fact that the untouchables are an inseparable part of Hindu society. He denied a separate identity to untouchables and opposed separate electorates and other claims based on untouchable identity. According to Gandhi the varna order as an ideal system of ancient India and wanted it to continue. He called untouchability a blot on humanity (Tharu 11). Hinduism sanctifies caste. What is more, Hinduism as a religion sanctions graded inequality, divine retribution, divine will and violence. Therefore, Ambedkar contented, there is no democracy and equality possible in Hinduism.

The term Dalit popularized by the Dalit panther has become the most favoured mode of referring to this group. Dalit means crushed down. It is a name that untouchables have given themselves. Another demeaning appellations- chandala,

bhangi, etc. -but Dalit is an identity of dignity and self-assertion. This term was used to refer to all the oppressed, including untouchables (such as in the Dalit Panthers' Manifesto). In other words, Dalit is a democratic identity of the socially oppressed untouchable caste group. "Jevha Mi Jaat Chorli" (When I concealed my Caste) by Baburao Bagul is 1963's collection of stories called as "Epic of Dalits". It gave Dalits the vigor to confront the excruciating and mortifying experiences of their lives. Not only that, it inspired them to shape these experiences of their life. Not only that, it inspired them to shape these experiences creatively. The collection opened up a new formal and thematic ground and gave Dalit literary thinking a huge momentum. Leading Dalit panthers manifesto (1973) reprinted here returns to the Gandhi-Ambedkar debate and brings Ambedkar into the mainstream of public discourse. The panthers criticized Gandhi for preserving class rule and endorsed Ambedkar's criticism of Gandhi. (Satyanarayn and Tharu 13)

Leading Dalit Panthers were all writers. They described the reality of true shaken and changed. They began to tell daily life with insight and had the first-hand experience of everyday life. These metaphors of slavery and coercion are the open and veiled forms of caste prejudice. The contemporary dalit movement in Kerala is marked by small group initiatives in the intellectual domain, the recovery of important historical figures, struggles for equality in the church and mass mobilization against land alienation and against oppression of adivasis and Dalits. "The dalit movement is a broad democratic movement today," observes critic K.K Baburaj. (Baburaj 37)

Dalit writers demonstrated that humiliation, rejection and exclusion based on caste were common practice in contemporary India. In fact caste discrimination takes on new forms in modern life. Its workings are comparable to the workings of race and gender discrimination. Dalit assertion in Kerala can be divided into two broad phase: the activities of the SEEDIAN(Socially, Economically, Educationally Depressed Indian Ancient Natives)group and dalit Christian movements beginning in the 1980s and , in the 1990s and after ,the activities around the Dalit Women's Society , Dalit Students Forum , the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha and a substantial amount of

intellectual and creative work by activists, writers and painters as well as academics working in the universities. In the 1970s, SEEDIAN tried to develop a new theoretical perspective for India, drawing on Marxism and Ambedkarism (KSatyanarayan and Susie Tharu 65). Activists collected, interpreted and sang folk songs, produced plays and spoke of a Black God and the calling to be a Church of the poor.

When our group presented the folk songs,” activist M.J Joseph recalls, “something lost was clearly being awakened ...the spiritual link between dalit life and the land, the production process..... (Wilkerson 123)

The living conditions of the marginalized are deplorable. They are assigned menial tasks by higher castes, treated as subhuman, and forced to accept left overs for their tireless labor. Even for the basic necessities like water they depend on goodwill of higher caste. To prevent their spit from polluting the ground, Dalits are compelled to wear earthen pots around their necks. Additionally, they are forced to tie brooms behind them to erase their footprints before others see them. Discrimination against Dalits is pervasive in society, particularly affecting dalit women who face double oppression due to gender and low caste status. They endure physical abuse, insults, and various forms of violence, including verbal and sexual assault, rape and forced prostitution, perpetrated by individuals from dominant caste. Both high caste men and women exert patriarchal power over dalit women, perpetuating a cycle of discrimination and mistreatment.

Like caste in India, Race is a social construction in America in which people are segregated based on their skin colors and ethnicities. People included in a race share common ideas, a common color, common customs, common interests, etc. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, race is, "One of the main groups that humans can be divided into according to their physical differences, for example, the color of skin" (1041). Based on skin color, people have been differentiated into various races and ethnicities. This differentiation has paralyzed some races, while others have been dehumanized, oppressed, and tortured. The

white race has demoralized other races, particularly the black people, and in this way, the races have been subjugated. According to the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, race can be defined as: "Any of the divisions of humankind distinguished esp. by color of skin; any geographical, national, or tribal ethnic grouping" (234). Humanity is distinguished based on skin, color, nation, geographic area, and ethnic grouping. In different academic disciplines, race has a position-the definition and value of race change from time to time and from place to place. The beginning of caste system in America happened when first Africans arrived to Virginia colony in 1619. Then there was a kind of sorting as to who could be enslaved and who could not. Africans and the Europeans were fused into a new identity that of being categorized as white, the polar opposite of black (Tharu 29). "The prejudice of race appears to be stronger in the states that have abolished slavery than in those where it still exists ; and nowhere is it intolerant as in those states where servitude has never been known." (Alexis de Tocqueville 29)

The racial problem is only one of the many problems that America and many parts of the Western world face at present. It is one of the problems that seem endemic to the Twenty-first-century societies of the West, particularly the societies that have been industrialized for a considerable time. This problem of racial discrimination also has its relation to the complex many more significant issues and cannot be fully understood in isolation. Racism signifies the traumatic conditions under which African-American lived. It was initiated when white masters of the land brought the first Africans. Soon black people, Right from the days of slavery, black people realized the cruel reality of racism: Judgment of the white man's standards of life and beauty, the black man's life became unbearable. He was compelled to appropriate his materials from a new culture in rebuilding his sheltered life. The Whites deliberately obstructed the process of assimilation. The black American writer defines his racial condition, which is responsible, by and large, for his socio-cultural situation in the conspiring world of the white people. Suffering is indeed his lot. He has not sinned. Nobody has talked about Black Adam's fall. Nor has anybody applied the Indian doctrine of Karma to his socio-racial conditions to explain his perpetual suffering, torture, and trauma for being Black.

Gramsci's notion of "organic intellectuals" aligns with African American thinkers and writers who challenge hegemonic structures in both literary form and content. African American literary scholars, such as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., have expanded upon Gramsci's ideas, particularly in their critiques of how African American literature has historically been marginalized within the broader literary canon. The concept of "Signifyin(g)," as theorized by Gates, illustrates how African American literature creates meaning through subversion and resistance, paralleling Gramsci's arguments about the role of culture in both perpetuating and resisting dominance (Spurlin). Furthermore, Gramsci's influence on African American literary traditions can also be seen in the emphasis on authenticity and the rejection of Western literary norms, as highlighted in critiques that problematize traditional canons and advocate for the recognition of Black voices (Brunello). Scholars such as Elaine Richardson have explored how African American literacy practices decenter hegemonic European standards, showing how Gramsci's ideas resonate with African American intellectual and cultural traditions (Hill).

R. Bhonsle explains: "African-American literature opposes several things in the literature of white Americans. Negros is no longer a marginal character but a protagonist who asserts his racial identity. He even opposes the image of himself as portrayed by the Harlem writers- a docile, self-conscious, submissive black man knocking at the door of God who has always been unkind. Jesus Christ is described as the white devil with blue eyes...If at all there is the God benevolent to the Negro, he must be an incarnation of his image and personality (Satyanarayan and Tharu 56)

Slavery was imposed upon the blacks in America for more than three centuries. The land of liberty locked them in this dark dungeon of slavery. Their racial problem resulted in social, economic, and cultural issues. But they were not shattered completely. The Jim Crow Laws were passed to put them in bondage. The highest court of America upheld the notorious separate-but- equal principle. The Negro was disfranchised without any benefit of legal power and property. Their identities have travelled from coloured to Negro, from Negro to Black, from Black to Afro-American, and now from Afro-American

to African American. They are full-blooded African Americans.  
(Wilkerson 54)

The long dark shadows fall across two continents – America and Africa. Their history is along passage of time, telling a tale of two continents. They were thrown out of their history, faith, and culture. African history has given them a whole page about American history has given them a small and narrow margin on its page. Their history is a story of an endless hallucination of agony. But this agony has given rise to a vast and rich heritage like their spirituals, Jazz, Blues, Poems, plays, short stories, and novels. Marginal is their existence. Ralph Ellison's 'Invisible Manto', Richard Wright's 'Native Santo' and Alex Haley's 'Roots' the Black American literature deal with the essence of black identity caught in perpetual crisis.

What people look like, or, rather, the race they have been assigned or are perceived to belong to, is the visible cue to their caste. It is a historic flash card to the public of how they are to be treated, where they are expected to live, and what kind of positions they are expected to hold, whether they should be expected to speak with authority on this or that subject, whether they will be administered pain relief in a hospital, whether their neighbourhood is likely to adjoin atoxic waste site or to have contaminated water flowing from their taps, whether they are more or less likely to survive childbirth in the most advanced nation in the world , whether they may be shot by authorities with impunity.

Recollections from Mammachi's childhood demonstrates a gruesome picture of inhuman treatment by the upper-castes on the paravans those days-“—the paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom sweeping away the footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint. (Roy 54)

Caste and Race are an artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value that sets the presumed supremacy of one group against the presumed inferiority of other groups on the basis of ancestry and often immutable traits, traits that would be neutral in the abstract but are ascribed life and death meaning in a

hierarchy favoring the dominant caste whose forebears designed it. A caste system uses rigid, often arbitrary boundaries to keep the ranked groupings apart, distinct from one another and in their assigned places( Wilkerson 234)

In contemporary America and European countries, there is cultural diversity and societies have transformed into multicultural and multiethnic societies. It has created racial tension in cities, and due to this, racism is on the rise in both America and Europe. Racism in recent years has developed in different forms. The public opinion about the person of Arab and Muslims is expressed openly as having a connection with the terrorists. Even suspicious-looking persons have to come under the scrutiny of the government agencies in the United States. Essential factors to understand racism are power dimensions, social and economic fields (Tharu 45).

Gramsci's concept of subversion through subaltern voices offers a valuable framework for analyzing both African and Dalit literature. These literatures act as sites of resistance, where marginalized communities challenge the hegemonic structures that have historically excluded them. By foregrounding the experiences and languages of the oppressed, African and Dalit writers contribute to a broader cultural struggle for recognition, agency, and justice.

In simple terms, "subversive" in this Italian context refers to a group of people who feel oppressed by a higher social class. These people, particularly peasants or small farmers, don't fully understand the workings of the State, but they dislike those who represent it, like civil servants, whom they see as part of the elite or the "signori." The "signori" symbolize the wealthy or powerful, and their dress and urban status set them apart. Even if the civil servant isn't much better off economically, they are still viewed as part of the system that holds power, leading to a sense of contradiction. This reflects a deep-rooted division between rural and urban, as well as the lack of clarity about who the true oppressors are. (Hoare and Smith 245)

W.E. B Du Bois, a renowned historian and social activist authored *The Souls of Black Folk*(1903) and *Black Restoration in America* (1935). He was totally against the discrimination between the blacks and whites on the basis of education

or politics. After the death of his son he wrote “Well sped, my boy, before the world had dubbed your ambition insolence, had held your ideals unattainable and taught you to cringe and bow.”(133). These heart wrenching lines depict that how Du bois as a father consoles himself that after the death of his son ,his son has set himself free from the shackles of oppression ,prejudice and discrimination. He emphasizes the role of intellectuals in society, particularly how organic intellectuals arise from within marginalized groups to articulate their experiences and challenge hegemonic narratives. These intellectuals help to mobilize and organize the subaltern classes.

Frederick Douglass, an American social reformer, orator described his own experience in *Narrative of the life of Fredrick Douglass, an American Slave*(1845). It was an influential work in the abolition of slavery in America. He escaped from slavery in Maryland. He discussed in his work *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, “In coming to a fix determination to run away, we did more than Patrick Henry when he resolved upon liberty or death.”(74) Douglass said that he was determined to escape from slavery with his fellow slaves from William Free lands. He told slaves must confront human enemies and natural enemies. He referred Patrick Henry, who quoted at the time of American Independence, “Give me liberty or give me death.” Douglass said that his and his fellow friends’ bravery is more impressive than Patrick’s.

In Gramsci’s notes on the history and development of Italian intellectuals he also wrote about intellectuals from other countries. His aim was to ascertain whether it was only Italian intellectuals who were cosmopolitan and detached from society. In fact, in contrast to his attitude to Italian intellectuals, Gramsci (1971:18) was decidedly complimentary towards French intellectuals: ‘France offers the example of an accomplished form of harmonious development of the energies of the nation and of the intellectual in particular’. The monumental turning point for France was the French Revolution of 1789, which saw the rise of the working class from a position of subservience to one of power. This made it possible for the working class to elaborate its own intellectuals and, according to Gramsci (1971:18), to struggle for the total dominion of the French nation. However, in praising the French intellectuals, he overlooked the fact that the French Revolution had actually resulted



in a bourgeois state with the bourgeoisie as the ruling class. . Whilst in France certain social groups became powerful due to the Revolution, in England impetus for the emergence of new social groups such as the industrial working class was modern industrialisation. The industrial working class was able to elaborate an extensive category of organic intellectuals, in Gramsci's (1971:18) words, 'on the same industrial terrain as the economic group'. It is important to note that England preserved the old landowning class which, as Gramsci (1971:18) was aware, preserved its position of virtual monopoly of power and prestige. Whilst the landowning class may have lost some of its economic supremacy, it did maintain its politico-intellectual supremacy and the new group challenging its power (the industrial working class) tended to assimilate the landowning class as traditional intellectuals. This fusion between the organic and traditional intellectuals brought about a degree of equilibrium in English society which meant that the intellectuals could create a sound national base. Gramsci's discussions of the development of intellectuals in the United States of America (USA) are particularly interesting because he linked these to his discussions of the African continent. America became home to Anglo-Saxon intellectuals who, after being defeated in political and religious struggles, left England and immigrated to the New World. He (1971:20) commented that in the USA there was a significant absence of traditional intellectuals. America became a melting pot of cultures as many other immigrants of varying nationalities settled there. Whereas in other countries it was essential for organic and traditional intellectuals to fuse in order to bring about equilibrium in society, in America, according to Gramsci (1971:20), the various cultures had to fuse into a unitary culture to bring about any equilibrium. The existence in the USA of only two major political parties was in Gramsci's (1971:20) view the result of a lack of the vast sedimentation of traditional intellectuals to be found in the countries of ancient civilisations.

Frantz Omar Fanon was a Martinique-born Afro-Caribbean psychiatrist, philosopher, revolutionary, and writer. His first book *Black Skin, White Masks* published in 1952, is a socio- psychological study of race and an analysis of the negative psychological effect of colonialism on black people. It describes how a

black person tries to get mastery over the white language. The use of white language by colonizers among black persons is not transformative but predatory. He wrote *The Wretched of the Earth* published in 1961 shortly before his death. In it, he discussed the dehumanizing effects of colonialism upon nations and individual.

The selected novels *The Taming of Women* , *In the Grip of Change*, *The Colour Purple* and *Possessing the secret of Joy* depict the plight of the protagonists. Here the protagonist's life acquires importance for the reason it speaks of and for community. It represents a group experience and is more like a testimony to that experience. We can say it is a genre that is focused on an individual and deals with his/her experience, personality and feelings in a similar way novels of black Americans are important social and historical document. The political philosopher Gopal Guru writes that they have the ability to turn terrible experiences into subversive chemicals. These novels are important as they illuminate the social world, provide new material and raise new questions. The last two decades have witnessed extraordinary success in marginal writings of the Blacks and the Dalits. These novels consist of the latest burning issues related with subjugation, slavery, untouchability, segregation as well as issues like discrimination on the basis of race, sex and caste that exist in the society since long. They describe the whole world of the Blacks and the Dalits with simply stunning frankness.

Their writing gives a glimpse of the unexplored Black and Dalit psyche, which has no accessibility. The majority of these novels depict the psychological, physical, social suffering of the frustrated Blacks and Dalits. However, these days the marginal writing is not only about the darker side but also reflect their development, journey, awareness of their identity and so on. The resourceful writings of the marginals have been an appealing aspect to the society. When marginals move outside their traditional roles of being subjugated and suppressed they are obliged to enter the space which has already been occupied by non- marginals. Their journey has been long and arduous whether it is in literary orbit or elsewhere. In addition to this, the scenario of marginal literature has been transformed by the rising tide of globalization.

The main purpose of writing these novels is uplifting of the women in particular and down-trodden poor including the Blacks and the Dalits in general and the inherent right of the people to better their lives irrespective of their colour or birth or status in life. Slavery and Untouchability are the worst form of social rigidity which is prevalent in America and India, is the outcome of the snobbish people living in ancient days. It rightly reduces a man of the lower strata of society to nothingness, thereby reminding us of Wordsworth's famous lines of the poem *Lines Written in Early Spring*, "And much it grieves my heart to think what man has made of man". (Wordsworth 2) The voice of the Blacks and the Dalits has never been heard by the elite class people and they often exploit them. Their suffering and agony can be felt throughout their writings. As mentioned by Ranajit Guha, Indian nationalism for a long time has been dominated by elitism and bourgeois nationalist elitism.

Many studies exist which explore the relevance of Gramsci to India. Arun Kumar Patnaik (2004:1120) sees Gramsci's ideas as applying to India in terms of civil society, hegemony and the communist party. In India Communists display an inability to understand India's history, especially in relation to caste. They are accused of merely quoting the texts of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Gramsci is credited with bringing back humanism and ethical questions into Marxism.

Indian theorist Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (2012:168) has commented on the relatively effortless portability of Gramsci into Third World contexts. Rajan (2012:169-172) sees Gramsci's relevance to India on questions of representation and caste. She applies Gramsci's concept of hegemony to the issue of caste. Rajan deploys caste subalternity as homologous with subalternity by equating the untouchables in India to Gramsci's subaltern (the marginalised in Italian society). Untouchables in India are subject to discrimination and are pushed to society's margins. This is what makes them the paradigmatic subalterns in a specifically Indian context. The Dalit Panthers (Dalit is also a designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchables) are a working-class movement in Maharashtra who describe their politics as representing a 'Gramscian brand of Marxism' insofar as they focus their efforts in the cultural sphere, contesting the 'ideological, moral, and cultural superstructure in the political-economic system' (Rajan 2012:169).

However, in their political uprisings what they have missed is a key Gramscian insight. They have failed to mobilise the untouchables in the rural areas, a failure that is notably Gramscian in its diagnosis.

Setting a new dimension, marginalized literature i.e Black literature in America and Dalit literature is an endeavor to bring to the forefront the experiences of discrimination, humiliation, oppression, violence and poverty of the Blacks and the Dalits. Oppressed, downtrodden and exploited, the Blacks and the Dalits are hardly considered to be part of the human society even some time ago. When the Constitution of America and India assures everybody equal rights and opportunities, many among the Black and Dalit community are yet to receive and exercise such natural rights. The Blacks and the Dalits were seen as polluting the society and were generally banned and segregated physically from participating in social life. While some change has taken place, the lot of the majority of this section of American and Indian society continues to be woeful, to say the least. Against these atrocities, the subalterns, especially the Blacks and the Dalits, initiated several movements in American and Indian history. They feel proud being a Black or a Dalit and celebrate their identity. (Tharu 42)

There are two main functions of Black and Dalit literature. Firstly, these literature attempts to deconstruct the dominant, racist and casteist constructions of America and India and secondly it constructs Black identity and Dalit identity. As a result, in order to construct their identity, 'writing' becomes the true weapon for encountering the marginalization and making people aware of the problems faced by the downtrodden sections of society. Dalit writings came much later compared to Black literature, but it also foregrounded with profundity the intense trauma suffered by the Dalits on the basis of caste and colour. So, one can say that the Blacks as well as the Dalits are subjected to marginalization on the basis of their colour, even though the Dalit experience is more of a caste-based one. The Blacks and the Dalits belong to the subalterns. The novels of the Blacks and the Dalits work as a supplement to subaltern theory. Through their works, they show us the way towards an all-healing marginal world. Their novels are the mouthpiece of their communities,

representing in their pages the theory that has redefined the Blacks and the Dalits, trying to bring them from margin to the center.

There was little confusion among some of the leading white supremacists of the previous country as to the connections between India's caste system and that of the American south, where the purest legal caste system existed in the United States. "A record of the desperate efforts of the conquering upper classes in India to preserve the purity of their blood persists until this very day in their regulated system of castes," wrote Madison Grant, a popular eugenicist, in his 1916 bestseller, *The Passing of the Great Race*. "In our Southern States, Jim Crow cars and social discriminations have exactly the same purposes." (Wilkerson 254)

The concept of 'hegemony,' widely employed in the post-Marxist era, has a rich historical background. The term 'Gegemoniya,' the Russian equivalent, played a pivotal role as a political slogan in the Russian Social Democratic Movement from the late 1890s to 1917. Its conceptual roots can be traced back to the writings of Plekhanov in 1883-4, where he emphasized the vital need for the Russian working class to engage in a political struggle against Tsarism, moving beyond mere economic battles with employers. Initially used in a more limited context within the Comintern tradition, the term gained broader significance through Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, composed between 1929 and 1936 during his incarceration. This body of work is widely recognized as Gramsci's principal theoretical achievement.

Hegemony had been a common term in debates among Russian Marxists and usually described the leading (or "hegemonic") role of the working class over its allies in a political coalition. But it had also been employed by Italian political thinkers in the nineteenth century to imagine gradually building consent across the nation for the new state—"making Italians"—rather than relying exclusively on the exercise of force. Gramsci fused these meanings to present hegemony as the general hypothesis that a social class aims to achieve consensual domination for its rule by progressively expanding its leadership across society (Femia 1981).

This chapter focuses on the transformation introduced by Gramsci in the interpretation of the term 'hegemony' within the *Prison Notebooks*. Additionally, it

examines the diverse domains or contexts of hegemony in African American and Dalit Literature. The chapter delves into the prerequisites of a hegemonic system and scrutinizes the subjective aspect of 'consent,' a fundamental element in the concept of hegemony which has led to the development of a new literature i.e. marginalized literature. Within the Prison Notebooks, the term 'hegemony' is employed in various contexts. Initially, it denotes the 'class alliance between the proletariat and other oppressed groups' engaged in a collective effort against capitalist oppression. Gramsci underscores the importance of sacrifices by the proletariat to attain hegemony over its allies in this context.

Gramsci comments:

Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interest and tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed - in other words that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind. But there is also no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential; for though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity. (Chennai: Orient Longman, 1998, reprint edition p.161).

In states characterized by multi-ethnic communities or where small groups constitute minorities vis-à-vis major political factions, the establishment of hegemony, as previously defined, becomes imperative. This ensures that the aspirations and interests of these smaller groups are adequately represented. Minority groups may be marginalized based on various factors such as religion, ethnicity, social classes, economic status, and more. Integrating them into the hegemonic framework of a dominant group, distinct from the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, proves advantageous for the minorities initially and subsequently contributes to the reinforcement of proletariat hegemony.

Gramsci's initial usage of the term hegemony bears the connotation it possessed in the Comintern tradition. At the first two World Congresses of the Third International, the Comintern adopted a series of theses which for the first time internationalized the Russian usage of the slogan of hegemony. The duty of the proletariat was to exercise hegemony over the other exploited groups that were its class allies, whereby "its hegemony will permit the progressive elevation of the semi proletariat and poor peasantry." (As quoted in Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," *New Left Review*, No. 100 (1976) p. 18 from *Manifestes, Theses et Resolutions des Quatre premiers Congresses Mondiaux de l'Internationale Communiste, 1919-1969*)

For this hegemonic network to be effective, the prominent class, the proletariat, must make certain sacrifices, just as it urges other consistent groups to do the same. This mutually beneficial arrangement creates a win/win scenario, wherein both the proletariat and minority groups bolster their positions through compromises. While enhancing proletariat hegemony, the primary beneficiary of such an arrangement is the minority groups, as it strengthens their standing.

Before Gramsci, the term 'hegemony' was more or less limited to meaning the predominance of one nation over others, especially within relatively friendly alliances. Significantly due to his writings, hegemony is now used to describe the intricacies of power relations in many different fields from literature, education, film and cultural studies to political science, history and international relations. In a nutshell, Gramsci redefined hegemony to mean the formation and organization of consent. But as we shall see, this is not an adequate understanding of Gramsci's notion of hegemony, which contains a richer and more complex theorization of consent and its relation to coercion. Gramsci was imprisoned by Mussolini and thus he is an ideal martyr, a revolutionary Marxist who was not tarred by the brush of Stalinism. He was one of the earlier Marxists to reject the economic reductionism of many of the Marxists of his time. Thus, unlike other Marxists who omitted the importance of culture and non-economic aspects of society, Gramsci provided a much broader social and cultural portrayal of modern society. He helped found the Communist Party of Italy, the successor of which became one of the most successful

Western communist parties. All these points go some way towards explaining Gramsci's past influence. Gramsci's notion of hegemony has been accepted across many academic disciplines and in non-academic, mainstream discussions.(Prison Notebooks 54)

Gramsci's lasting importance derives substantially from his insightful and wide-ranging analysis of the politics of culture and operations of power in industrialized democratic capitalist countries. This poses a major question of whether the stagnation of industrialization in the so-called 'Western World' and post-industrial developments make Gramsci's writings obsolete. Gramsci is best known for his analyses of the political importance of cultural and social institutions. Politics, for him, cannot be conceived exclusively in narrow terms of the state and government but must encompass the wide range of human activity often seen as non-political, such as our everyday beliefs and behaviour, from the books we read and the films we enjoy to our religious feelings and perceptions of the world. It is Gramsci, the theorist of cultural politics who garners attention not only from progressive activists and academics on the Left but even from the unlikely quarters of the Right.

The transmission of the notion of hegemony to Gramsci, from the Russian to the Italian theaters of the socialist movement can, with reasonable certainty, be located in these successive documents of the Comintern. Gramsci himself was a participant of the Fourth World Congress. The consequence can be seen in the Prison Notebooks, because Gramsci's own treatment of the idea of hegemony descends directly from the definition of the Third International.

The passages above indicate that Gramsci's initial use of the term 'hegemony' retained some associations from the Comintern tradition. However, Gramsci placed a greater emphasis on cultural dominance, which the proletariat's hegemony over allied classes should entail. It goes beyond mere assimilation, involving a cultural assertion over other subordinate groups. This process occurs as previously developed ideologies evolve into a 'party,' entering into confrontation and conflict. Ultimately, one ideology, or at least a singular combination, seeks to prevail, gaining dominance



and disseminating itself throughout society. This results not only in a unity of economic and political objectives but also intellectual and moral cohesion. The struggle transcends a corporate plane, shifting to a 'universal' level, thus establishing the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups. (SPN pp.181-182)

In *The Modern Prince* and *The Prison Notebooks* Antonio Gramsci defines the 'subaltern' classes as those excluded from any meaningful role in a regime of power that subjugates them. Through consent these 'subalterns' participate in the hegemony created and controlled by the dominant group. The subalterns have no independent space from which to articulate their voice because hegemony conditions them to believe in the dominant values. Gramsci believed that the intellectual has the responsibility to "search out signs of subaltern initiative and class consciousness and effective political action" (Mapping 28).

The Dalit and African American literature specially, flourished after the post colonial period. It can be seen in the subaltern point of view. The word 'subaltern' is derived from the Late Latin 'Subalternus'. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary denotes that subaltern as means any officer in the British army who is lower than the Captain. Its adjectival forms denotes 'of inferior rank'. But Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci for the first time used outside the non military sense. In Latin 'sub' means 'under' and 'alter' means other. So literally denotes to any person or group of inferior rank and station, whether because of race, class, gender, ethnicity or religion. Gramsci's explanation of the bucolic peasantry in the Southern Italy depicts the persisted oppression of the rural peasantry, working class, and the untouchables in post- independence Indian society. (Voice of the Marginalised Sections in Post Colonial Indian Literature 60)

Ranajit Guha led Subaltern Studies group established as a field of historical enquiry 'from below' of South Asian, specifically Indian, historiography. Guha defines the 'subaltern' as the demographic difference between the "dominant indigenous elite" and the masses. The "elite" comprises the "feudal magnate" industrial and mercantile bourgeoisie and recruits to the uppermost level of the

bureaucracy. Thus marginalized literature reflects various themes such as oppression, gender discrimination, subjugation of lower and working classes, disregarded women, deprived sections of society.(42)

In later essays Subalternist historians have invested in recovering voices (and consciousness) and histories of tribals, Dalits, migrant workers, and Indian Partition sufferers, among others, in India. In *Subaltern Citizens* Gyanendra Pandey writes that the use of the word 'subaltern' intensifies the responsibility of critical historiography, whether Marxist, feminist, anticolonial or minority, "to recover subject positions, lives, possibilities, and political action that have been marginalized, distorted, suppressed, and even forgotten" (7).

Pandey posits that the word 'subaltern' has relevance for the American context because both South Asian subalternists and scholars involved in "labour history, African American Studies, Native American, Latino-Latina Studies, or LGBTQ in the case of US" (*Subaltern Citizens* 2) engage with similar lines of inquiry: the question of the "subordinated and the marginalized" (*Subaltern Citizens* 2). The African American condition, like that of other minority ethnicities in USA and other parts of the world, can be explored from a Subalternist perspective because their counter hegemonic resistances and historiography's attempt to recover such agency have historically defined the politics of this group.

For Gramsci, to understand the complex social issues that lie at the heart of the general population's political beliefs and activities, one must take account of the ways in which our everyday world and daily experiences are organized. The schools we attend, the organizations we belong to and the way we spend our free time are of central political importance. Gramsci's ideas have been seen as useful in sorting out some of these complexities. The research is aimed to provide readers with diverse interests including Marxism, critical theory, cultural studies, postmodernism, multiculturalism, nationalism, colonialism, post colonialism, new social movements, deliberative democracy and globalization. Gramsci's own writings are not restricted to one field and his influence has a particularly broad scope, the topic of language has also been approached from an interdisciplinary perspective.(Prison Notebooks)

Gramsci (1971:263) asserted that a state could not sustain its power over a long period of time by coercion alone; it had to achieve widespread hegemony. In attempting to gauge the relevance of Gramsci's thoughts on hegemony to South Africa, a good starting point would be the year 1948 when the National Party (NP) took the reins of power, winning a general election by a narrow margin. In this election the franchise was confined to the White population, who comprised a minority group in South Africa. Consequently, the NP lacked widespread consent and ruled with a minimal hegemony. Gramsci (1971:263) is adamant in his Prison Notebooks that a ruling power that does not enjoy widespread hegemony will resort to coercive measures to maintain its power. This was evident during NP rule, as the government used force to rule and protect the interests of only the White population, especially the Afrikaners. In Gramsci's view of the state it was essential for the dominant group to have a national-popular quality. Whilst he acknowledged that the equilibrium between the dominant class and the subaltern groups constantly fluctuated, it was important that the dominant group always acted in the name of universal interests. This in fact applied to the Moderate Party in Italy. They 'exercised a powerful attraction "spontaneously", on the whole mass of intellectuals' (Gramsci 1971:60). They put themselves forth as a progressive class and to Gramsci this was significant because it showed that they were allowing the entire society to move forward. In this way the dominant power is able to expand its hegemony. The Moderate Party also paid attention to the peasantry, which comprised the largest social group in Italy, by introducing genuinely progressive agrarian reforms and thereby giving the impression that they represented the interests of all groups. This was certainly not the case with NP rule. The NP consolidated its hegemony with the Afrikaner group, firstly by excluding all Black and Brown persons, who comprised 80% of the total population, from the centres of power and secondly by consolidating the Afrikaners into a single voting bloc (Magubane 2010:12). The NP thus chose to limit its hegemony; this was why it had to resort to coercive measures to maintain power. To demonstrate the point that the NP government did not consider the welfare of other groups in South Africa but promoted the interests only of the dominant group, Magubane (2010:12) recounts the following: The NP also expended enormous effort during its first three terms in office on shoring up support among Afrikaner workers

in order to tighten its grip on power. Shortly after assuming office, the new government launched a systematic purge of the civil service, replacing English speakers with NP supporters, who were, more often than not, Afrikaner Broederbond members. Three strategic departments in particular bore the initial brunt of this onslaught: the police, the military and native affairs. Reserving jobs in the civil service and parastatal organisations for Afrikaners was also a way of rewarding loyal National Party supporters. Afrikaner representation in white-collar employment rocketed from 29% in 1946 to 43.4% in 1960. In the ten years between 1948 and 1958, the size of the civil service grew to 346 278 which meant that 30% of the economically active white population was on the government payroll. These loyal functionaries of the state were generously remunerated, salaries and allowances rising by 133% in the first decade of NP rule. The NP believed that it was consolidating its power by protecting the interests of Afrikaners, even going to the extent of getting rid of English-speaking South Africans and replacing them with its own supporters. What the NP was actually doing was restricting its hegemony to a very small group in South Africa. Contrary to what they may have believed at the time, they were in fact weakening their dominance. The NP, by protecting and furthering the interests of one group, caused widespread opposition from other groups of people. The NP quelled the opposition by using coercion, but its power was of course doomed to come to an end. This situation is similar to the one which resulted in the Action Party of Italy failing to achieve dominance and in fact being subjugated by the Moderate Party. According to Gramsci (1971:61) the Action Party failed to 'reflect the essential demands of the popular masses'. Gramsci (1971:61) asserted that for a party to succeed it had to develop a national-popular will that was intertwined with nationalism. During the apartheid era, despite Black people being compelled to function under abnormal conditions in South Africa, the leaders and intellectuals amongst them recognised the importance of creating a national-popular will and a strong sense of African nationalism amongst the masses. The call for nationalist ideals induced leaders such as Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, A.P. Mda and Jordan Ngubane to found the African National Congress Youth League in 1944, which they believed would be an effective organ of the ANC in promoting nationalist ideals, especially among the youth. African nationalism also started to resonate in

literary representation, for example in the writings of H.I.E. Dhlomo. Literary criticism in the same spirit soon followed these writings: among the Zulu intellectuals of the 1940s, Dhlomo's poetry collection *The Valley of a Thousand Hills* (1941) was regarded as the embodiment of a national spirit (Masilela 2009:21). During the entire period 1944 to 1994, whilst the apartheid government was focusing on its attempt to create and retain a sense of nationalism in a small sector of the South African population, Black intellectuals were stirring up a broader national consciousness amongst the majority of the population. Henry Selby Msimang (1925:4), for example, encouraged intellectuals to instil a consciousness of nationalism among the African masses through education, thriftiness, devotion and trustworthiness. He also argued for the development of a class of professionals: African doctors, lawyers, teachers and traders who would contribute to the making of a modern nation (Msimang 1925:4).

The coercive pieces of legislation ensured that the white minority monopolised power in the political, social and economic realms. Besides the draconian laws, passed to retain its tight grip on power, the state ruled mainly through the force of the military, the bureaucracy and the police. An example to illustrate how coercive the state was is aptly captured by Harvey (2001:58- 59):

The other side of the coin of this human suffering on a grand scale and the establishment of the homelands was the stripping of blacks and coloureds of what few political rights they enjoyed in the white areas. In 1950 the Suppression of Communism Act banned the party, and the sole Communist member of the House of Assembly was forced out two years later. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1953 made it an offence to protest against any law, while the Riotous Assemblies Act made it an offence to picket during strikes.

In April 1952, the main opposition movements, the ANC and the South African Indian Congress, held a rally of 50,000 people outside Johannesburg to protest these measures; in June an even larger event was staged. The government responded with arrests and seizures of records, detaining a total of 8,400 people by December. Effectively, South Africa was now crossing the chasm that divides an

oligarchic, authoritarian-based state still retaining the panoply of law, from that of a totalitarian police state, in which all citizens lack elemental political freedoms and the black majority any rights at all. Rioting broke out in October in Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg, Kimberley and, with particular savagery, in East London.

The majority of people in South Africa were dehumanised by the NP government, which deprived them of basic rights. This government created separate areas for the different race groups and people were forced to inhabit areas allocated to them. Stringent laws were passed to eliminate protest activity. South Africa had become a coercive state. Gramsci (1971:244) favoured an integral state which he described as: The entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules. 106 To Gramsci such a state was strong because it comprised a variety of 'practical and theoretical activities' and because the ruling class enjoyed active consent. In the integral or expanded state, the government and civil society were intertwined. Like Gramsci, Christopher Landsberg (2004:52-53) uses the term 'political society', but to him in South Africa 'political society' refers to the extra-parliamentary political organisations that contested political power with the white state. He notes that there were, in addition to political societies, also civil societies in South Africa, which operated outside the realm of the apartheid state. He made the interesting observation that in South Africa political society and civil society were symbiotic. Both societies challenged the power of the state and its lack of hegemony.

During the apartheid era, many countries empowered those civil and political societies in South Africa by providing financial aid. Countries such as Britain (with Margaret Thatcher as prime minister) and the USA (with Ronald Reagan as president), which did not favour economic sanctions against South Africa, nevertheless encouraged aid agencies to support these societies financially. Probably, by supporting civil society, conservative governments who refused to apply sanctions against Pretoria were trying to portray themselves as being on the 'right side' of the South African conflict. While critics saw the motives of these foreign governments as questionable, civil society with this financial aid became a formidable force in

challenging the minimal hegemony of the white state. Other foreign donors, who did support political mobilisation, had the foresight to support education and training as well, so that there would be a ready pool of skilled Black South Africans when a legitimate and hegemonic state was created in South Africa.

It is important to note that in spite of the exchanges in the early twentieth century between African American and Indian leaders, there were several moments when racism and casteism were blatantly compared and one was judged to be worse than the other. While Benjamin E. Mays attempted to establish that “the Hindu caste system was much worse than racism in the United States,” his personal encounter with Gandhi made him recognize his position as an untouchable in his own society (Kapur 160-161). Nevertheless, some scholars have investigated how several noted Indian thinkers, including Gandhi, compared the structures of caste in India and race in USA and found the latter worse off.

It is worth quoting the views of Cyril Ramaphosa, a politician who played a significant role in the negotiation process which brought an end to apartheid, in conversation with Harvey (2001:210-11), as Ramaphosa was able to succinctly encapsulate the reasons for the fall of apartheid:

There was the bigotry, greed and selfishness of the whites, seeing everything in the short term; foreign pressure, the fact that sanctions were biting; the fact that the black areas had become ungovernable; the erosion of the whites’ “moral” position; the internal dissension among them; the fact that they could no longer keep Mandela in prison; and the internal resistance had reached a point where they had to give in – they wanted to do it in an honourable way. The catastrophe was coming.

Ramaphosa here pinpoints why the coercive apartheid state, despite its powerful state machinery, could not survive. The reasons that he provides include the concentration of rights and privileges among a minority of the population, international pressure, especially in the economic realm, growing dissension amongst the Black people and escalating internal pressure. In other words, the NP’s hegemony was in a state of collapse and its coercion proving ineffectual. Gramsci in his writings

was adamant that a state run by a ruling power which has limited hegemony would be highly coercive but unable to sustain itself.

An important question both Gramsci and Spivak raise remains crucial: the question of retrieval and representation of the subaltern voice and consciousness and the intellectual's responsibility in the process. Spivak suggests that in order to avoid an essentialist construction of the subaltern the historian must be able to read silences and welcome information retrieval in silenced areas but not claim to assume and construct subaltern consciousness. The position of the investigator needs to be questioned because the intellectual should engage with speaking to, and not for, the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman (Spivak 295).

The voice of the Blacks and the Dalits has never been heard by the elite class people and they often exploit them. Their suffering and agony can be felt throughout their writings. As mentioned by Ranajit Guha, Indian nationalism for a long time has been dominated by elitism and bourgeois nationalist elitism. Setting a new dimension, African- American/Black literature in America and Dalit literature is an endeavor to bring into light the experiences of discrimination, humiliation, oppression, violence and poverty of the Blacks and the Dalits. Oppressed, downtrodden and exploited, the Blacks and the Dalits are hardly considered to be part of the human society even some time ago.

Nico Slate, in his article "Race, Caste, and Nation: Indian Nationalists and the American Negro, 1893-1947" examines similar exchanges between Indian leaders and African American leaders and demonstrates how the Indians insisted that untouchability was a better condition than racism in USA. Slate examines letters and speeches exchanged between these Indian leaders and African American and white American leaders and congregations in order to explore how the example of the Negro in USA was utilized as a comparative model in the untouchable context in India. Slate notes that several Indian leaders, including Gandhi, Lajpat Rai, Netaji S.C Bose, Vivekananda, and Tagore attempted to illustrate how the race structure in USA, including slavery, was a far worse condition than that of Untouchables or the caste system in general in India.



In the realms of Modern Literature, Pallanimuthu Sivakami and Alice Walker holds a significant position as a rebel against the tradition of marginalization of women in the Indian and American society. Both received a wide acclamation as a revolutionary authors for raising voice against the patriarchal dominance which is a common factor in the Indian and African American society. In order to eradicate this citadel of age old tradition of patriarchal supremacy over the matriarchal section of the society both the writers have denounced overtly in their works the tradition that empowered the male to subject women to subservience and circumscribe their individual rights. These writings have candidly and outrageously voiced her wrath and reaction against the patriarchal superiority and dominance that begot sex discrimination and led to marginalization of women in their social, cultural and family relationship. In most of her novels Sivakami and Walker have portrayed their characters as a frustrated woman in love in her marital and extra marital life. She attributes her disillusionment and disappointment in love to male ego. As depicted in their works, her husband as well as her lovers are equally selfish, fleshy hunger, sex monger and above all betrayers.

The main purpose of writing these novels is uplifting of the women in particular and downtrodden poor including the Blacks and the Dalits in general and the inherent right of the people to better their lives irrespective of their colour or birth or status in life. Slavery and Untouchability the worst form of social rigidity which is prevalent in America and India, is the outcome of the snobbish people living in ancient days. It rightly reduces a man of the lower strata of society to nothingness, thereby reminding us of Wordsworth's famous lines of the poem *Lines Written in Early Spring*, "And much it grieves my heart to think what man has made of man" (Wordsworth 2).

The Afro American writer Alice Walker and dalit writer Sivakami, both make their survivor characters, bear witness to the acts of silencing of their traumatized counterparts. Both authors represent the mesh of social, economic, and familial circumstances that brutalize the subaltern children. They depict their characters in the African American community responsible for the fascination with white ideals that adults cannot negotiate and that destroy subaltern children.

From the marginalized section of the society, Women poets proved their presence in the spectrum of Indian writing in English. From Tour Dutt to Kamla Das reveal the mind boggling variety of theme as well as style. Poetry composed by women need not be viewed only as feminist poetry. It delivers how marginalization occurs in a society depicting examples such as the segregation of depressed classes in India. The way society influenced the protagonists in each novel is explored emphasizing on the conditions of the communities these characters live in. However, literature by women tends to get marginalized because of the disparate tendencies of reception to their writings. In patriarchal society women are allotted personal but not public space, a private but not a political or rhetorical voice in writing in general and composing poetry in particular.

To have a glimpse, Marginalization and Indian English Literature gives a message about their community not individuality, about revolt not passivity, about progress not backwardness. This message is conveyed to the entire world about their status in society by portraying the exploitive, helpless, and engrossed with grief, suppressed and enslaved and a subaltern state. To some extent, Dalit in India can be compared with African American regarding the mutilation. The shared political position of these authors is against the hegemony of upper and middle class Hindu beliefs and for the power of the human beings against oppressive social rules. Dalit author questioned religion and Identity throughout their literature.

In 1873 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,” as noted by S.D. Kapoor in *Dalits and African Americans: A Study in Comparison* (13). The example of the growth of African American consciousness and its expression in literature, especially in the slave narratives, functioned effectively as a model for Phule to resist the oppressive caste system that had left the *ati-shudras* (the untouchables) without a sense of self-identity and consciousness in India. Phule’s life-long work to raise awareness among the lowest castes about their degraded condition as effected by the Brahminical caste system remains an inspiration today. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, perhaps

the greatest Dalit leader in India who drafted the Constitution of a free and new India and was the country's first Law Minister, acknowledged Phule's work by dedicating his own book, *Who Were the Shudras?* to Phule. Ambedkar, who was actively involved in the national politics of India and drafted the Constitution of independent India, also highlighted the comparison between African Americans and the Dalits. As a graduate student at Columbia University from 1913 to 1916, Ambedkar witnessed the growing consciousness among the Blacks and their struggle to claim their identity and humanity against the white supremacist oppression.

The American Black writer faces the same dilemma as Dalit literature. What is America to me? They were brought to America in chains and auctioned on the shores of Atlanta. The Black Americans have irrigated the fertile land of liberty with their blood, tears and sweat. 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.

Dalit is the protagonist of India's boycotted society, the African American is the protagonist of Black America. One is robbed and degraded by the White society and the other by Savarna society. One is brought and sold from their home land and the other was called untouchable by birth. These marginalized people who suffer from many disabilities such as Blacks suffering from slavery, apartheid, racism, colonialism; dalit suffering from untouchability, humiliation, oppression, casteism. (*The Lies that Divide Us*)

Through literature there are two special voices shouting in the wilderness for liberation on Dalit women in India and the Black women in America who are under the triple subjugation of caste or race, gender and class. There is double colonization for women as they are subjected both to general discrimination as colonial subject and specific discrimination as women. An important quest theme in the works of both Dalit women writers and Black women writers have been that of a character's

personal search for a meaningful isolation, meaninglessness and moral decay. The journey made by Dalit women writers and many contemporary Black women writers – the journey into freedom has provided a means for defining the self. Such a self-defining journey is visible in Bama's autobiography *Karukku* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

While India won freedom and was partitioned along religious lines to form a Muslim state of Pakistan, the plight of the then Untouchables (today known as Dalits) became a major contention between Gandhi and the greatest leader of the Dalits, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Prior to independence, Ambedkar insisted on a separate electorate for the Dalits, whom Gandhi preferred to call 'harijans' or 'the children of God', but Gandhi went on a prolonged fast in order to prevent a division among the Hindus, especially when the atmosphere was full of apprehensions about dividing the country. However, since the origins of the caste system were founded in and endorsed by the orthodox Brahmanical interpretation of "Hinduism" and certain Hindu scriptures, Ambedkar saw a separate electorate as an ideal solution for addressing the conditions of the Untouchables because the general electorate would have caste-Hindus as leaders who would never pay heed to the requirements of the Untouchables (Kapoor 62).

In 1915, while in political exile in USA, Lajpat Rai stated that "there is some analogy between the Negro problem in the United States of America and the problem of the depressed classes [Untouchables and members of tribal groups] in India" (Kapur 14). Charles Freer Andrews, a close friend of Gandhi for twenty-six years and dedicated to his ideas of "winning freedom for India, removing untouchability, and establishing racial justice" (73), traveled to the United States and other parts of the world and spread Gandhi's message of justice and peace. In February of 1929, Andrews visited Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute and after speaking to the African American community communicated to Gandhi the African American appreciation and support for his work. However, Andrews also stated that Gandhi was opposed to inter-caste marriage and dining which confused the African Americans, especially because it reminded them of black-white relationships in their country. Soon Gandhi publicly negated Andrews's comments and declared that

untouchability would end only when socially interactive activities could be encouraged (Kapur 78-80). There were some more speakers who brought Gandhi's message to the African Americans but it was only between 1935 and 1937 that important afore-mentioned African American leaders actually visited India and met with Gandhi.

It is intriguing to note here that the direction of influence between the two peoples reversed itself in the late 1960s and 1970s when the militant Black Panthers and their claims of Black Power motivated a group of young Dalit poets and activists to compose outrageous art in order to shatter the complacency of Brahminical ideologies. They proudly called themselves Dalit Panthers. In the late 1960s through 1970s the Black Power and Black Panther movements not only gave rise to a militant resistance to white oppression but it also witnessed the emergence of anti-white establishment art. Adapting a similar ideology, in 1972 a group of young Marathi Dalit artists in India called themselves the Dalit Panthers and embraced violent politics and aesthetics to resist caste supremacy.

Dalit literary criticism has included a comparative discussion of African American literature and Dalit literature. In comparing the two literatures, it has also been necessary to compare the African American and Dalit societies as well as their liberation movements. Since both societies are engaged in similar kinds of movements, examining them is an important component of the comparison of these two different communities and their literature. Given that the two societies are different in terms of place and time, it is understandable that there should be certain limitations and differences in their literature. On the other hand, there are similarities too. Hence this work traces the characteristics of and the similarities and contrasts between the two literatures from a comparative, cross-cultural, and feministic point of view.

In America, the African American society has suffered much oppression because of the racial prejudice. In India, Dalits are marginalized because of the varna-based caste system. In both cases a woman is very much deeply in shadow, firstly because of being a woman and secondly because of being a Dalit. African

women are oppressed by the privileged American society first and their own African male counterparts next. A Dalit woman in an Indian society is suppressed by the upper class society first and by the Dalit men folk next. Alice Walker and Toni Morrison are prominent figures in the contemporary Afro- American literature. They treated the feministic issues in their novels. They have presented the problems of women, particularly the mutilated self of the Black women who are subjected to brutal treatment by the whites as well as by their own groups. In India, Dalit issues are recorded in a variety of genres- public speeches, autobiographies, novels, poetry and essays. Writers like Bama, and Sivakami explore the disadvantages of being women and Dalits. (Tharu 57)

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, racism is “the unfair treatment of people who belong to a different race; violent behavior towards them” (1264). In the world of globalization, racism is highly debatable within a multicultural society. In the United States of America, people believe that racism is terrible. It helps political, economic, and cultural institutions to maintain the system of ethnic oppression. Joe Feagin, in his book *White Racism: The Basics*, has defined racism as a “system of oppression of African-Americans and other people of color by white European and white Americans” (3). He said that racism is a system of oppression by whites. Racism is related to major and minor groups. It deals with the dimension of power that leads to a behavior toward particular group. Racism contributes to a system in which the majority group overpowers minority groups.

Alice Walker and Antonio Gramsci, though from different contexts and intellectual traditions, share similar concerns about the marginalization of certain groups and the dynamics of power, culture, and resistance. Their ideas converge around the concept of marginalized groups being excluded from dominant social, cultural, and political power structures, with both exploring ways in which these marginalized voices can resist and reclaim their agency. Alice Walker is an American woman, born on 9 February 1944 in Georgia. She is a prolific author, poet, and woman activist. She was the youngest child of Willie Lee Walker and Minnie Lou Tallulah Grant with eight brothers and sisters. Walker began to write when she

was eight years old. Initially, her writing was private because, in that period, the freedom of paper was limited for African-Americans. In 1961, Walker went to Spellman College in Atlanta on a full scholarship and later transferred to Sarah Lawrence College, New York. She graduated in 1965. After graduating, she became interested in the U. S. Civil Rights Movement. She became an activist continuing her participation during college. She did become not only an activist but also a writer. She resumed her writing career when she joined *Ms Magazine* as an editor. Walker published her best-known work, the novel *The Color Purple* in the year 1982 which is a real expression of the sufferings of African – American Women are reflected in a novel by Alice Walker entitled *The Color Purple*. The story was published in 1982. This is the literary work of Alice Walker that talks about black feminism. *The Color Purple* can be called the masterpiece of Alice Walker. In 1983, it received Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and The National Book for Fiction.

Furthermore, it was later adapted into a film and musical with the same name. This novel is adapted into a movie by Steven Spielberg, and one of the actresses in *The Color Purple Movie* is Oprah Winfrey. These movies make Walker more popular, successful and controversial. *The Color Purple* is of Historical Significance in Walker's portrayal of the double repression of black women in the American Experience. Alice Walker is one of the most productive Black women writers in America who rose to eminence by means of her creative output as a poet, novelist, short story writer, essayist, biographer and lecturer dealing with very relevant familial and societal topics in a bold and overt manner that constantly engages the attention of the reader. Her works consistently reflect her apprehension with fundamental sexual and the racial issues particularly of the Black woman. Her females struggle for an emotional survival. Her novels are known to be boldly feminist and she is considered to depict the male characters in a very low reputation. Walker's novels also have the messages of the general racism in it, her writings are also appropriate to be analysed for the aforementioned study. Her short stories and poems have been published in *Freedomways*, *Essence* and other magazines. She was a teacher at Jackson State College and Tougaloo College in Mississippi.

Alice Walker's first book is on poetry entitled, *Once* (1968) and second book is a novel called *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970). *Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems* (1973) is a book of poetry. It was followed by *In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women* (1973), *Langston Hughes: American Poet* (1974) and *To Hell With Dying* (1988) for the children. *Meridian* (1976) is a novel. Her other poetry collections *Good Night, Willie Lee, and I'll See You in the Morning* were published in 1979. The other novels to her credit are *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989), *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), and *By the Light of My Father's Smile* (1998). Thus Alice Walker's reputation lies not only on her novels, but also on her poetry, short stories, essays and children's books. Majority of her work in all the genres is devoted to what she calls 'womanism' or else Black feminism. Walker's fiction focuses on the progression of female wholeness, the development of female identity and a community in the background of the racial environment. Her non-fiction writings celebrate her connection with other African American women writers. She helped to promote the work of African American women writers by co-founding a publishing outlet, 'Wild Tree Press'. Walker has also edited an influential selection of the prose by Zora Neale Hurston, *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing* in 1979. *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: The Creativity of the Black Women in the South* published in 1974 is a journal and a series of studies on the African American women's culture and especially African American Literature. Walker sets up a series of role models from the most anonymous and shows the great art form of the Black mothers in their gardens and the hand-crafted quilts. *In Search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose*, in 1984 and *Living by the Word: Selected Writings* (1988) are collections of essays produced through the year 1973 and 1987. The essays are based on varied topics. The African American writer, Zora Neale Hurston has been the 'queen bee' and a source of inspiration for Walker throughout her literary career.

Celie's life in the novel *The Color Purple* is the index of sufferings. Her victimization at the hands of her father is too appalling and not different from other victimized characters of Alice Walker as they all are victims of sexual and communal abuse. Celie is depicted as a barely educated Black woman, who is raped by her step



father and then married off to Mr. Albert. She is sexually abused, verbally dominated and physically beaten for almost thirty years. After getting impregnated by her step father, she is asked not to share it with anyone except God. The unscrupulous man sells her children and stigmatizes her image and gets her married with an older man who needs a worker on his farm. She becomes a surrogate mother of his children and a receptacle for his passions. Being an existential character, she shares her grief with God and writes letters to Him. But later on her faith in God lessens as she holds God responsible for her sufferings and stops writing. When Celie looks back on her life, she gets frustrated and says, "What God do for me? ....He give me a lynched daddy, a crazy mamma, a lowdown dog of a step Pa.....The God I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful and lowdown" (Walker, *Color Purple* 173). Celie represents the several women as found not only in Afro-American literature but also in world literature and she pictures the naked truth of uncountable suppressed women in several unsophisticated societies. She clearly represents not merely a particular country but is a universal story of all the oppressed women of the world. Mutilated physically through inhuman treatment like rape, scarred psychologically through inhuman and beastly treatment, Except her sister and a friend Nettie Celie has no one in her life and also the God only in whom she can share all her inner thoughts and emotions. . Celie later is a transformed women and she works for herself definition and self acceptance .She also announces that she will leave Mr. to live with Shug in Memphis. She states, "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook But I'm here"(Walker, *Color Purple* 187). In a letter to Nettie from Memphis, Celie clearly expresses a postive vision of herself : "I am so happy. I got love, I got work, I got money, friends and time. And you alive and be home soon. With our children" (Walker, *ColorPurple* 194).

Another novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is about an American womens struggles with the genital mutilation. In the protagonist Tashi's tribe young girls undergo female genital mutilation as an initiation into the community. Tashi manages to avoid this fate at first, but she submits when pressed by tribal leaders. Years later, married and living in America as Evelyn Johnson, Tashi's inner pain emerges. As she questions why such a terrifying, disfiguring sacrifice was required,

she sorts through the many levels of subjugation with which she's been burdened over the years. In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Alice Walker exposes the abhorrent practice of female genital mutilation in an unforgettable, moving novel.

The whites hurt or injure the blacks in many ways. The Africans are whipped, sexually assaulted and separated from the members of their own family quite frequently. In other words, physically, sexually and psychologically, the Negroes are harmed by their white masters. Physical violence is deployed as a strategy by the white to intimidate the Africans in America. The blacks are abducted by force from their own land by the Europeans. Their main target is to use them as cheap labour. Now, in order to instill their domination, they use physical force to ensure that there is no resistance or revolt. Whenever any slave becomes recalcitrant, he is punished savagely. Any reaction or retaliation is deemed as blasphemy by the masters and it results in the most severe punishment.

*Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) by Alice Walker develops the issues of female circumcision as a symbol of male's traditional brutality in the suppression of women. It is a form of suppression of women. The central theme in this novel is on the ceremonies related to female circumcision and the consequence they have on little girls and women. The protagonist, Tashi observes the mutilation and the consequent death of her sister Dura. The novel brings out the physical and mental side effects of circumcision on Tashi. The impact of this ritual for the victim includes painful urination, retained menstrual blood, unfulfilling sexual experience and miscarriages. Tashi observes how the custom strengthens the patriarchal dominance in tribal traditions and fights against it.

Comparing Antonio Gramsci's theories with P. Sivakami's work also offers a unique intersection between political thought and literature, particularly concerning the experiences of marginalized groups. Gramsci's concept of subalternity and cultural hegemony finds resonance in Sivakami's exploration of caste, gender, and power dynamics in the Tamil context. Both thinkers focus on how marginalized voices are excluded and the mechanisms they use to resist domination. Palanimuthu Sivakami, a leading Indian writer with a feminine penchant is the first Dalit woman

novelist in Tamil. Her varied experiences in life and in profession made social issues become her primary concern. As an Indian Administrative Service Officer with a passion to remove social irregularities and injustices, she made a space for herself and began contributing towards fulfilling her social goals. She has been the editor of a monthly Dalit literary journal, *Pudhiya Kodangi* and contributed to the issues that touch Dalit and other backward castes and women in Tamil Nadu. She wrote columns on land rights and empowerment for Dalit women and started the Dalit's Land Right Movement in 2004. With the massive support of women, she organized a huge public conference with 2,50,000 women on Women and Politics. With a passion to work for the poor and disadvantaged, Sivakami thought it would make no difference if she stayed on in Indian Administrative Service but it would make a big difference if she did what she really wanted to do. She thus quit the job after 28 years of administrative service even eight years before her bureaucratic tenure to end and became a full-time writer. "Mainstream literature has boycotted me because I believe that only Dalits can write about issues concerning them and that only women can write on feminist issues. It is not just a question of experience but perspective," she said. As she faced the disparity as a Dalit- feminist, she sent her first work anonymously and got published. Gita Ramaswamy, a Hyderabad-based publisher describes Sivakami's writing as "refreshing and self-critical with a bold modern voice that unapologetic in acknowledging her roots out of which she has grown and evolved successfully". She founded a political party, a forum for social equality based on the principles of Dalit educationist and political leader, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. From her first book *'The Grip of Change'* to the recently released *'The Taming of Women'* all her four critically acclaimed novels centered on Dalit and feminist themes are set to create waves.

The discussion about the writings of Sivakami and Alice Walker in a sequential order has been recorded in the work. The main objective of this research work is to study the discourses of racism and feminism in the novels of Alice Walker and Sivakami. The comparative and contrasting analyses of these matters in the novels of both the authors are explored. The analysis of feminism and racism in these novels are to be carried out mainly as a thematic analysis.

While the publication of 'Pazhaiyana Kazhithalum', a semi- autobiographical Tamil novel in 1989 carried Sivakami into glare of publicity as a celebrated Indian novelist, her self- translation of it under the title ' *The Grip of Change*' attracted much larger audience with wider applause. It voices the plight of an exploited low caste Pariyar (Dalit) woman, Thangam who faces triple marginalization economic oppression, gender subordination and caste discrimination. The death of her husband forced her to work in the farm of the landlord, Paramjothi Udayar to meet the two ends of life. Her widowhood makes her a surplus or sexually available woman subject to exploitation by her Hindu land lord and harassment by her in-laws. Thangam symbolizes all dalit women who are brutally treated by the upper-caste land lords but forced to maintain silence and never raise their voice. Even her struggle for her husband's share of land is linked to her body and fertility .As she doesn't have children, she is denied the right to inherit her husband's land. Her brothers-in-law seized this opportunity to exploit her sexually. When they realized that she would not yield to their demands, they even spread the story that she had become Udayar's concubine.

Another novel "*The Taming of Women*" by P. Sivakami is based on how women struggle to safeguard their honour and how they are oppressed by the men. Dignity for women is still a question mark in most of the places in the world. It is based on the women being oppressed in both upper and lower classes. The story begins when the protagonist Anandhayi discovered her husband Periyannan's paramour. When Anandhayi successfully trapped the woman who had an affair with her husband.

Effectively, a type of domestic colonialism, exercised by the respective national elitists, silence and exploit the subaltern women (Alice Walker and P. Sivakami) and emasculate the men. This repression from above disrupts the respective family structures in the societies, traumatizes the children, and confuses the relationships between all the members of the families. While African American women, children, and men negotiate their national identities in USA, Dalits, the former Untouchables, attempt to realize their national identity

Guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. While successful resistance to oppression informs the literatures written by these historically marginalized peoples, thereby giving voice to the silenced subalterns, I argue that it is equally important to be attentive to the simultaneous silencing that has not ended. Moreover, we must be skeptical about the power seemingly achieved by the subalterns in articulating their claims to legitimate rights because re- presentation of subaltern resistance by the elite intellectuals and by subalterns themselves becomes a critical inquiry. Thus, while some subaltern women claim agency through representation, their narratives may not be exempt from hegemonic control. Others are thoroughly misrepresented by elitists making their writing (mis) placed writing. While some subaltern mothers undertake outlaw mothering by defying normative patriarchal motherhood, responsible representation can re-cover these tales which are silenced when these mothers succumb to their children and community's disparagement. While some subaltern children may survive disastrous experiences, others may be traumatized into silence. Representation bears witness to these traumatic silences and the silencing processes. While historically emasculated subaltern men may vent and represent their rightful frustration and wrath against the oppressors, they may be simultaneously silencing their own doubly-oppressed women.

When a person is marginalized physically, sexually and psychologically, one generally ceases to think. In fact, one can become almost moribund. Caste is the most demoralizing aspect of the Indian society. Caste discriminations leads to violence against lower caste women, who are expected to yield to the upper caste male chauvinism. The brutality of caste discrimination is exposed when a Dalit woman moves from passivity to active assertion against the sexual exploitation of masculine brutality but she has to suffer social exasperation. When the relation between Udayar and Thangam is disclosed, Udayar's brothers-in-law attack her and beat her obdurately and even she is threatened to be killed (6). The duality of the upper class is exposed when Udayar abuses her, "Ungrateful whore! Even if she was hurt by the hand adorned with gold! A parachi could have never dreamt of being touched by a man like me! My touch was a boon granted for penance performed in her earlier births (Sivakami, Grip of Change 31).

There is unintentional racism that may be found in institutional practices and paternalistic decision making in a multicultural society. Institutional racism occurs when governments, religions, corporations, and educational institutions make policies to destroy the interests of minority groups. For example: in job applications giving priority to any particular group. In the beginning, it might be the intention “but unreflective adherence to them as society becomes more multiracial” (Schaefer 1119). Colorblindness involves that all the races are equal. It refuses the differences between racial groups and treats them as the same. Colorblindness is a form of racism that leads to the disadvantage of the black community by marginalizing or ignoring their distinctive identity, needs, and experiences. Aristotle pointed out that it would be an injustice to treat equally when, in relevant respects, they are different. So, there is unintentional racism in the colorblindness approach. In paternalistic decision making, the whites define or restrict the freedom of blacks intentionally. They think that they have the right and power to interfere in the blacks’ lives. It is a two-way oppression of racial minorities. First, they do not determine the pattern of their own lives, and second, it shows white superiority to make decisions.

Thus we can say that both the literatures i.e Dalit literature and Black American Literature are worth comparable for several reasons because some of their basic features are similar as they are reflected in the writings of Dalit and Black American writers. Social injustice, insecurity, treatment of inferiority meted out to both these groups at the hands of the dominant social groups in both America and India, lack of education, bad habits as a result of ignorance, backward economic conditions, a mindset of inferiority, poverty etc are some features. In short, the life of both the Blacks and the Dalits, to a great extent, fits into Mahatma Phule’s diagnosis of the social backwardness of the Dalits.

The chapter makes us understand the origins and evolution of classifying and elevating one group of people over another and the consequences of doing so to the presumed beneficiaries and to those targeted as beneath them which lead to the rise of a new literature i.e. the literature of marginalized. The chapter aimed to understand the hierarchies many millions had to navigate to pursue works and dreams.

These are the historic origins, the pillars upholding a belief system, the piers beneath the surface of a caste hierarchy. As these tenets took root in the firmament, it did not matter so much whether the assumptions were true, as most were not. It mattered little that they were misperceptions or distortions of convenience, as long as people accepted them and gained a sense of order and means of justification for the cruelties to which they had grown accustomed, inequalities that they took to be the laws of nature. These are the pillars of caste, the ancient principles that has been researched, compiled and examined the parallels, overlap and commonalities of three major caste hierarchies. These are the principles upon which a caste system is structured, whether in America or India, beliefs that were at one time or another burrowed deep within the culture and collective subconscious of every inhabitant, in order for a caste system to function.(Wilkerson 183)

Caste and race are neither synonymous nor mutually exclusive. They can and do coexist in the same culture and serve to reinforce each other. Race, in the United States, is the visible agent of the unseen force of caste. Caste is the bones, race is the skin. Race is what we can see, the physical traits that have been given arbitrary meaning and become shorthand for who a person is. Caste is the powerful infrastructure that holds each group in its place. Caste is fixed and rigid. Race is fluid and superficial, subject to periodic redefinition to meet the needs of the dominant caste in what is now the United States.

While the requirements to qualify as white have changed over the centuries, the fate of a dominant caste has remained constant from its inception-whoever fit the definition of white, at whatever point in history, was granted the legal rights and privileges of the dominant caste. Perhaps more critically and tragically, at the other end of the ladder, the subordinated caste, too, has been fixed from the beginning as the psychological floor beneath which all other castes cannot fall.  
(Wilkerson pg 234)

Gramsci is often recognized as a theorist of the superstructure, and this is particularly evident in the central importance he attributes to intellectuals in his political

philosophy. Unlike Marx, who employed the term in a limited context, Gramsci extended its usage more broadly. Various efforts to define the role of intellectuals within the Marxist tradition were deemed overly restrictive by Gramsci, as he pointed out the inadequacy of such attempts.

Gramsci remarks:

The most widespread error of the method seems to me that of having looked for this criterion of distinction in the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities, rather than in the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations. (SPN pg 8)

And he further adds:

Each man finally outside his professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a 'philosopher', an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought. (Ibid 9)

Intellectuals have a variety of positions in the general complex of social relations, although they are directly involved in the economic field, that is, in the world of production, social and the political fields too are their arenas of operation. The relationship between the intellectuals and the world of production is not as direct as it is with the fundamental social groups but is, in varying degrees, 'mediated' by the whole fabric of society and by the complex of superstructures, of which the intellectuals are, precisely, the "functionaries."

The two fundamental arenas in which the intellectuals directly perform their important functions are the 'two major super structural levels,' the one that can be called 'civil society' that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private' and that of 'political society' or



the 'state.' These two levels correspond on the one hand to the functions of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or command exercised through the state and 'juridical' government. (Ibid 12)

In the past, Dalit literature was not given much importance by the dominant social class and caste. Mainstream literary critics did not take it seriously and analyzed it based on the values and beliefs of the dominant social class and caste. However, in the 1960s, there was a shift in perspective and a new way of evaluating this literature emerged. This research aims to examine Dalit literature from a new perspective. The ideologies of Phule, Shahu, and Ambedkar had a significant impact on Maharashtrian writers such as Anna Bhau Sathe, Baburao Bagul, Daya Pawar, Namdev Dhasal, Mallika Amar Shaikh, Narendra Jadhav, Kishor Shantabai Kale, Sharankumar Limbale, and others. Their autobiographical works highlighted the issues and problems faced by Dalits and were noteworthy.

Thus in this chapter examines the impact of caste in India and race in the USA on subaltern identity. Despite some progress towards equality, there is still a long way to go. My project takes a different approach in analyzing resistance in literary texts, by exploring how ongoing suppression balances any success achieved. The first three chapters focus on subaltern women and their relationships with society, highlighting how resistance and critique coexist with silencing and powerlessness. It will further examine the forces of power that undermine agency for subaltern women, with a focus on intellectual and representative figures.

Analyzing these two literatures together is based on the belief that different cultures share more similarities than we might initially think. Both India and the United States have societal structures that have marginalized significant portions of their populations. By examining Black Feminist theory and Third World Feminism, we can see similarities between the two with some political and temporal differences due to their social contexts. Vijay Prashad's theory of polyculturalism highlights the interconnectedness between cultures that must be acknowledged in order to achieve international social justice and peace. Unlike multiculturalism, which often

emphasizes differences between cultures, polyculturalism acknowledges that people live culturally dynamic lives that are made up of various lineages.

#### According to Gramsci

If the union of two forces is necessary in order to defeat a third, a recourse to arms and coercion (even supposing that these are available) can be nothing more than a methodological hypothesis; the only concrete possibility is compromise. Force can be employed against enemies, but not against a part of one's own side which one wishes rapidly to assimilate, and whose 'good will' and enthusiasm one needs. ( SPN, p168)

The years 1926-36 were Gramsci's prison years in the Fascist jails of Italy, a period in which socialism had suffered a huge defeat, while Fascism reigned supreme. In spite of the trying conditions in Italy, he had the ambition to produce something, as he wrote, *für ewig* (for always or eternity). This project began in 1929, when he started penning the Prison Notebooks. In a letter to Tatiana Schucht (his sister-in-law) on March 19, 1927, he (1994a:83) wrote:

I am assailed (and this is a phenomenon characteristic of prisoners) by this idea: I need to do something *für ewig*, according to a complicated conception of Goethe, which I recall much tormented our own Pascoli. I want to occupy myself intensively and systemically, according to an established plan, with some subject that can absorb me and centralize my inner life.

Gramsci's wish to create a work to last an eternity has become a concrete reality. The International Gramscian Bibliography, compiled by John Cammett, now includes more than ten thousand titles in many different languages. Cammett, writing in the late 1960s, (1967:xiii) suggests that Gramsci's Prison Notebooks, which were published between 1948 and 1951, convey so much humanity and intelligence that he finds it difficult to fathom how Gramsci could have remained relatively obscure up to that point.

Gramsci's ideas have been used extensively in both the South American and Indian contexts. Although South Africa provides one of the most fertile grounds for Gramsci's ideas to be applied, there has up to this time been no detailed and systematic study of Gramsci's applicability to this context. In particular, Gramsci's key concepts of hegemony and intellectuals have not to date appeared as the focus of any sociological or cultural study of South Africa. Yet Gramsci's thoughts can be meaningfully applied to understand the challenges faced by intellectuals in both the apartheid and anti-apartheid eras; and his concept of hegemony can elucidate many aspects of the construction of power during both eras, as well as offering possible solutions to present sociopolitical problems. Some South African literary authors, for example Zakes Mda, have been prescient of a Gramscian analysis of and of Gramscian solutions to the contemporary situation.

From above it is clear Gramsci suggested that using force against one's own members who may not agree with a particular perspective or goal cannot be a successful strategy. Instead, the text proposes that finding a compromise is the best course of action. The author argues that force can only be used against external enemies, and not against one's own members, whose cooperation and support are needed to achieve a common objective. The text stresses the importance of assimilation, good will, and enthusiasm while achieving a goal. The author seems to advocate for peaceful and cooperative means to address conflicts and achieve a goal rather than relying on force and coercion.

Placing Gramsci in a historical, cultural, social and political context, as I have done in this chapter, is important as it discloses the background of several of his key concepts such as passive revolution, historical bloc, civil society and the state, and hegemony and intellectuals, all of which will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters.

## **Literature Review**

Various researchers and theorists have projected their views on the concept of Hegemony, subaltern. The quintessence of all the cited aspects brings us to ponder

the subaltern issues in general and feminism in particular. Various articles, essays and critical books deal with mentioned concepts.

Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, J.S Mill in the Subjection of Women, and Freidrich Engels in The Origin of the Family wrote of the need to rethink about the social justice and oppression against women. In the early twentieth century, Olive Schreiner, Virginia Woolf and Simon de Beauvoir have written on the gender based questions oriented towards issues like marriage, education, sexuality, economics etc.

Reading Das's autobiography with Bhaba's idea of third space helped us in understanding how by questioning markers of female identity like beauty, and sexuality and altering the meaning of institutions like love, and marriage of institutions like love, and marriage ,she wished to reconceptualize the way society comprehends herself and the other women's experience. Her use of the body to achieve emancipation and conscious use of language to manifest her solitude, as well as longing for love, has also been applauded for its revolutionary use.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one of the eminent feminist writers whose works offer insights into female thought, predicaments and challenges. As an award winning novelist and short story writer, she depicts the lives of individuals suffering that result in their rootlessness, alienation and identity crisis. Her works have figured in more than fifty artistic compilations, including best American Short Stories. The O'Henry Prize Stories, and The Pushcart Prize Anthology. Her novel, The Mistress of Spices (1997), and Sister of My Heart (1999) have been adapted into films.

In the novel "Children of God", the central characters of the novel are dalits and the novelist presents a down to earth picture of caste oppression through the woman narrator whose son was beaten to death.

Partha Chatterjee in The Nation and Its Fragments discusses how "anticolonial nationalism" in India began with a sharp distinction between the domains of the "material and the spiritual" in an attempt to assert domestic sovereignty while still under "imperial" rule. In the 'spiritual' domain, India created its "national culture" and resisted the colonial government's interference in any

form. Chatterjee goes on to argue that it is in the creation of the “inner” spiritual domain that India launched its “period of nationalism.”

According to N.M. Aston, a professor in the Literature and Language department in the University of Pune, untouchability “was a kind of socio-religious slavery imposed upon the dalit people. It got institutionalized over the centuries in social norms, customs and traditions”(19). In USA, however, although slaves became free men and women, the institution of racism has persisted for more than a century. Thus, two marginalized groups have experienced lives of exclusion in their respective countries along lines of genealogical factors over which they have no control. Their identity crises have been shaped by the shared experience of institutionalized segregation and the discourse of difference: discrimination, powerlessness, and voicelessness, always refracted by the lines of class and gender.

Tom Brass in “Moral Economists, Subalterns, New Social Movements and the (Re-) Emergence of a (Post-) Modernized (Middle) Peasant” elucidates that the use of the word ‘subaltern’ in the Subaltern Studies project implies more than class identity: ...[because] agrarian mobilization and resistance to colonialism....has more to do with the experience and ideology of gender, ethnicity, region, ecology or religion,... these kinds of ‘difference’ [between elite and masses] cannot be understood by (and are therefore not reducible to) the class position of the subject. (Mapping 135)

Susie Tharu in “Exercise of Freedom” focuses on the role of literature in India's social and political movements and highlights the contributions of women writers to these movements. Tharu argues that literature has played a key role in shaping the consciousness of marginalized communities, helping them to articulate their experiences and assert their political rights. She also discusses the challenges faced by women writers in India, including censorship, gender discrimination, and the marginalization of women's voices. Overall, Tharu's essay highlights the power of literature as a tool of social and political change and the need for greater recognition and support for women writers in India.

“Caste: The Lies that Divide Us” by Isabel Wilkerson is a thought-provoking book that explores how caste systems have been used to divide societies and perpetuate inequalities throughout history. The crux of the book lies in how these systems operate, how they are maintained, and how they can be overcome. Wilkerson draws on examples from around the world, including the caste system in India, the Jim Crow laws in the United States, and the apartheid regime in South Africa, to illustrate how caste systems function and the damage they do. She argues that only by recognizing the existence of caste systems and actively working to dismantle them can we move towards a more just and equitable society.

Elaine Showalter in her work ‘A Literature of Their Own’ outlines the evolution of women's literature through three phases—feminine, feminist, and female. She introduces the concept of *gynocriticism*, a framework to study women writers from a woman-centered perspective. Her work offers a historical and theoretical base for how women's voices emerged in literature, separate from male-dominated literary traditions. Showalter introduced the *idea of a separate tradition of women's writing*, which aligns with marginalized female narratives in both Western and Indian contexts.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their work ‘The Madwoman in the Attic’ analyze 19th-century literature to reveal how women writers internalized and resisted patriarchal norms. The *madwoman* becomes a metaphor for female rebellion and silenced rage. Their analysis shows how literary characters become sites of psychological and cultural struggle for women—important when comparing characters like Celie (Walker) or Anandhayi (Sivakami). The *character analysis* of women as symbolic acts of resistance, feeds directly into the feminist-subaltern framework.

Adrienne Rich in her work “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision” calls for women to *re-examine* literature with a feminist lens. “Re-vision,” to her, is not just reinterpretation but reclaiming what was lost or misrepresented. Her idea of *re-vision* supports the re-reading of texts written by or about marginalized women, especially when applying Gramsci's idea of the subaltern voice being silenced. Rich's

essay supports the *methodological framework* of uncovering hidden/hegemonic structures in literature.

Toril Moi in her work “Sexual/Textual Politics” critiques both Anglo-American and French feminist theories. She warns against essentialist views and urges the study of how ideology shapes gendered texts. Her analysis of feminist politics in reading literature complements your critique of hegemony and internalized patriarchy in the characters' lives and language. Moi critique any *universal or simplified views of women's experiences* in the texts you study, and to highlight **literary structures that maintain male power**.

**Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her work “Under Western Eyes”** critiques Western feminist scholars for treating “Third World women” as a monolithic group. She emphasizes the need for *local, contextual* understanding. Her essay helps *locate the subaltern female subject* within postcolonial and caste-based realities, making her ideas crucial to thesis' comparative analysis. Mohanty provides a *bridge between feminist poetics and postcolonial studies*, supporting your move from theory into the literature review focused on African-American and Dalit women's narratives.

Gayatri Spivak in “Can Subaltern Speak” argues that the subaltern cannot speak within the existing structures of power, as their voices are silenced and their experiences are erased. She also critiques the idea of Western feminism, which often ignores the voices and struggles of subaltern women in the Global South. Overall, Spivak's essay is a call to recognize and amplify the voices of the subaltern, and to challenge the structures of power that perpetuate their oppression.

Feminist Poetics provides a necessary lens through which literary texts may be re-examined to uncover the intersections of gender, power, and voice. Elaine Showalter's concept of *gynocriticism* invites a woman-centered analysis of literary history, while Gilbert and Gubar's 'madwoman' reveals the silenced rebellion embedded in canonical texts. Adrienne Rich furthers this perspective with her call to 're-vision' literature as an act of feminist recovery. As Toril Moi critiques essentialism in feminist theory, Chandra Mohanty insists on contextual nuance in postcolonial feminist discourse—creating a fertile ground for the current study to

explore the layered experiences of subaltern women in both African American and Dalit literature.

### **Objectives of the Proposed Work**

The research aims meeting the following objectives by critically analyzing the works of Alice Walker and Pallanimuthu Sivakami through the lens of Gramsci's theory of Subaltern. The major objectives of the study to be conducted are:

1. To trace the evolution of marginalized literature
2. To contextualize marginalization in the selected texts
3. To locate, explicate and elucidate the common paradigm of marginalization of the two communities and their Literatures
4. To explore the need to re-examine the hidden discourses perpetuating marginalization

### **Research Methodology**

The proposed research is qualitative in approach as it analyzes and interprets the texts from a theoretical perspective. It is analytical and conceptual. The theory of hegemony and subaltern is propounded on the novels of Alice Walker and Pallanimuthu Sivakami. The material collected is relevant to the present research proposal with the proper supervision and guidance of the supervisor. I have visited the libraries of University of Jammu & Kashmir University, Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak, Punjab University, Chandigarh, and Central. The format of the study is based entirely on the M.L.A. 9th edition. Moreover, the support is also be taken from different journals (JSTOR, ProQuest, Web of Sciences, SJR, DOAJ, World Cat, etc.). Even the material related to the present study is also collected from YouTube, newspapers, journals, e- sources, etc.

### **Research Gap**

Review of literature led me to an understanding of the way in which a number of studies have been conducted in the area of Dalit and African American literature throughout the world. The research gap predicted in this study is that no such detailed



comparative studies of the said novels of these particular authors have been studied from a discourse analysis gaze. These novels in the light of hegemony, subaltern and feminist theory focus on the dialectical plane as to how margins are often contextualized. As a result of set contextualization of appropriation, these margins often become (mis) placed from mainstream discourse. It is this research gap which the thesis aims to fulfill in some light.

## Chapter 2

### Subalterns and Cultural Politics

The society is structured with obligatory and coordinating elements such as class, culture, religion, gender, and race. Some organizations consider religion, caste, and race as categories that belong to hierarchical order, while other societies may ponder a great deal upon culture and gender. Gramsci's notion of subaltern fundamentally refers to any —low rank person or community suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights to participate in making the local history and culture as individuals of the same nation. It must be pointed out that Gramsci used the term only for the proletariats and peasants who were oppressed and discriminated under the rule of Benito Mussolini, the leader of National Fascist Party.(Prison Notebooks 23)

Gramsci's work reveals his interest in the study of subaltern classes of consciousness and culture as one possible way to make their voice heard instead of relying on the historical narrative of the state which is by the end, the history of the ruling and dominant classes. In his book he writes:

The subaltern classes by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a "State": their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States and groups of States. (*Gramsci*, 1971)

After Gramsci no such attempts in India were made to build up the concept of subaltern till 1980's when SSG (Subaltern Studies Group) arose to attempt to invent a new narrative of history of India and South Asia. This narrative strategy most clearly inspired by the writings of Gramsci was explicated in the writings of their "mentor" Ranjit Guha, most clearly in his "manifesto" in Subaltern Studies and also in his classic monograph 'The Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency'. The other eminent members of this group are Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, Gyan Parkash and so on. Although they are leftist in their approach but overtly critical of

the traditional Marxist narrative of Indian history, in which semi-feudal India was colonized by the British, became politicized, and earned its independence.

In particular, they are critical of the focus of this narrative on the political consciousness of elites, who in turn inspire the masses to resistance and rebellion against the British. Instead, they focus on non-elites — subalterns — as agents of political and social change. They have had a particular interest in the discourses and rhetoric of emerging political and social movements, as against only highly visible actions like demonstrations and uprisings. They have raised a thought-provoking political question that why the nationalism in India has failed to represent the majority of Indian population? The policy of passive resistance against the British led by Gandhi ji also gained immense political support of subaltern groups, including the rural peasantry, Dalits and women. There are numerous examples of subaltern resistance to colonial rule and class oppression, but these are largely unrecorded in the annals of official history of Indian National Movement for independence.

In general terms, Subaltern refers to the group that is excluded from society's established structures for political representation and therefore denied the means by which people have a voice in their society. It literally refers to any person or group of inferior rank and station, whether because of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion. Some thinkers used it in general sense to refer to marginalized groups and the lower classes – “a person rendered without agency by his or her social status” (Young 2003).

Some scholars are of the opinion that Gramsci, “used the term as a synonym for proletariat, possibly as a code word in order to get his writings past prison censors” while others believe “his usage to be more nuanced and less clear cut” (Morton, “*The Subaltern: Genealogy of a Concept*” 96). Gramsci opined that though the history of the dominant class, that is, the bourgeoisie class, is considered as ‘official’ history, the history of subaltern classes was just as complex as the history of the dominant groups. According to Gramsci, the history of the subaltern groups is sporadic, periodic and disintegrated as they are subject to histories of the dominant classes.

Thus the Subaltern Studies historians, such as, Guha, have pointed out that the national independence movement ultimately conserved the existing class structure in India: leaving a small group of educated, bourgeoisie, middle-class men holding political and economic power, and a large indigent population of rural-based peasant labourers, with little or no access to the benefits of national independence. Another eminent thinker of this group is Gayatri Spivak who is best known for her overtly political use of contemporary cultural and critical theories to challenge the legacy of colonialism on the way we read and think about literature and culture. Along with other leading contemporary intellectuals such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, Spivak has challenged the disciplinary conventions of literary criticism and academic philosophy by focusing on the cultural texts of those people who are often marginalised by dominant western culture: the new immigrant, the working class, women and the postcolonial subject.

When one takes to reading history, whose history is to be read? The history of the superiors which is regarded as 'official' or the history of the oppressed? Subaltern Studies took to re-writing history. It is a history that agrees to the inclusion of the common man; all those who were overlooked, neglected and treated with indifference. History from below being by concentrating on local and regional developments, encompassing various groups in the world popular—tribal, peasant, artisan, labour protests and in the middle class, a class which started asserting some kind of regional on national leadership and which had a totally different composition from Princes and Zamindars. (Sarkar n.p.) When British workers left India they gave their voices and versions to British historians in form of their diaries, Indian workers, labourers, and peasants however, had left behind nothing to be called original or authentic and hence Subaltern Studies had to use Census Reports, Government documents, Folk narratives, documents from Judiciary and Police Department to write Subaltern Studies.

To the subaltern studies project, colonialist and bourgeois – nationalist histories were problematic because they failed to recognize the agency and actions of subaltern people. Instead, the credit for India's independence and the nationalist movement that preceded it was given to either colonial policies or the altruism of the

Indian elite. The failure of contemporary historiography to acknowledge the agency of the socially and economically marginalized – or subaltern – was highlighted throughout the 1970s and early 1980s by periods of peasant action and demonstration, sparking a broader interest in peasant agency throughout Indian academia. As a Maoist activist Guha had directly engaged in peasant insurgency, and had, perhaps during this period, been witness to ‘the contribution made by people on their own.’ During Guha’s role as editor of *Subaltern Studies*, he continued to emphasize the need to ‘negate’ this historiography, before a new one could be created. (Altekar 60)

Since 1970s, the term ‘Subaltern’ is being used as a reference to colonized people in the South Asian subcontinent, and it now encompasses an area in the study of culture, history, human geography, sociology, anthropology and literature. All those who were denied access to hegemonic power such as peasants, labourers, workers and such other groups were considered as subaltern classes. (Ashcroft 25)

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak developed the idea of *Subaltern Studies* a step further “emphasizing that the western Marxist model of social change that these historians employ does not do justice to the complex histories of subaltern insurgency and resistance which they seek to recover” (Morton 7). Spivak’s works reflect her assertive voice as she speaks about the issues of representation, self-representation, political strategies and so forth. “I am not erudite enough to be interdisciplinary but I can break rules” (Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* Exp. 1 L 9). Spivak has always questioned the conventions and margins of literary criticism by shifting the attention towards the cultural texts of those who were pushed away towards the periphery and treated with indifference by the dominant western culture. She focused on the working class, women and the postcolonial subjects. In doing so Spivak challenges the mainstream prominent ideas of the contemporary society and culture. As an influential postcolonial critic, Robert Young asserts, Spivak’s thought is best understood if it is situated in terms of ongoing political debates within India about the employment of classic European Marxism in the context of anti-colonial struggles, and the failure of Indian socialism to recognize the histories and struggles of women, the underclass, the tribal communities and the rural peasantry in Indian society. (350-352)

Spivak also counters the ideology and methodology of the Subaltern Studies Group by pointing out the western Marxist model of social change that Subaltern historians apply, does not give its due importance to the subaltern histories of resistance which are multifaceted, complex and scattered. And this creates a barrier especially in the comprehension of historical narratives of women's resistance in India. Thus, she has specifically furthered the historical research of Subaltern Studies Group by drawing attention to the life and experience of subaltern, marginalized women which the official Indian history has completely ignored and failed to acknowledge. Spivak profoundly recognizes that the dominant political, economic, cultural and educational strategies have blighted the lives of many marginalized and disempowered communities. She employs deconstruction as a tool to critically voice this recognition.

According to her, the deconstruction perspective empowers the reader to raise a query on the investigating subject, keeping the expert's insight intact and transforming circumstances and conditions which are not possible into ones which are. She writes, to investigate, discover and establish a subaltern or peasant consciousness seems at first to be a positivistic project- a project which assumes that if properly prosecuted, it will lead to firm ground, to something that can be disclosed. This is all the more significant in the case of recovering a consciousness. (Spivak 278) She also anchors on the theme of 'Otherness', a prominent concern in post-colonial studies. Sartre used the term, 'Other' in 'Being and Nothingness' to define the relations between self and others. One finds that it is extensively used in existential philosophy. In the postcolonial studies, the theme of Otherness has always been of prime importance.

Whatever might be the predominant element in the organization, the status of women is always relegated to a secondary position only.

Amidst incense fumes, lit camphor and sprinkled flowers, the purification was done: Anandhayi prostrated at the Iyer's feet and with the blessings entered the Kitchen. (*The Taming of Women* 18).

In the novel when Anandhayi delivers her fifth child, she is supposed to undergo various procedures so as to enter into the ritually pure kitchen.

Tell her to leave now. The rest can be settled on the eleventh day, during the unniyadhanam. Next time do not call me when I've just set out.' Periyannan had reached road now. As he passed, Madaliamma smiled to herself. (*The Taming of Women* 8).

It is a common perception that cultural powers and organizations are hegemonic centered, resulting in a network of invisible powers. Hegemonic power processes are an integral part of daily social and cultural practices that help to perpetuate power relations. The repercussions of hegemony can be seen in various aspects of society. When Anandhayi, a mother of four children, finds herself expecting her fifth child, she lacks the support of her husband. The act of giving birth is often perceived as a routine event that ties a woman's societal standing to her reproductive capability. The vulnerability experienced by women is further amplified by their reproductive capacity.

The oppression endured by women is not solely determined by their biology, as some argue. Its roots lie within social, cultural, and economic factors. Throughout the progression of pre- class and class societies, women's ability to bear children has remained constant. Consequently, their social status has consistently been that of a degraded domestic servant, subjected to the control and command of men.

He chose to come, avoiding Anandhayi's line of vision, and on the pretext of fondling the child, he brushed his hand on Muthakka's breast. She reprimanded him, as if she did not like it, 'Watch where your hands go!'. (*The Taming of Women* 43).

Periyannan, a tyrannical male authority who is trying to avoid being seen by his wife Anandhayi, touches a woman named Muthakka's breast under the pretext of fondling a child. Muthakka reprimands him and warns him to be careful about where his hands go. It depicts inappropriate and non-consensual behavior towards women, which is not acceptable in any circumstance. The above lines from the novel 'The

Taming of Women' depict that in a tradition-bound and conventional atmosphere of the middle class and bourgeois society like India, women are always considered inferior to men domestically, socially, emotionally, biologically, economically, culturally, politically, psychologically, and linguistically.

Unlike in India, in a developed society like America, the subjugation of women varies in degree and kind. The racial torment that the black women have been facing may not be within the experiences of any other women group across the globe. Society has laid down certain norms and commandments exclusively for women, which have not been changed or radically altered over the years.

Women of any society are expected to shape themselves by the roles offered by the society, and they have to survive by living up to the socially and culturally defined normative images given to them through various myths and epics. Most images show women as passive sufferers, performing in silence, their role as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, and grandmothers. In this survival struggle, sometimes, women become mere soulless creatures. (*The Feminine Mystique* 1963)

African women are often silenced and forced to keep quiet about the harm done to them. Alice Walker faced criticism when she spoke out against female circumcision, but she refused to be silenced and continued to denounce the practice as a way for men to dominate women. In 1946, the British Colonial Government made infibulation illegal and passed a law in Sudan to ban the harmful practice. However, the Sudanese people saw this as colonial interference and immediately infibulated their daughters in protest, resulting in many deaths. Some people believe that offering help to other countries can be seen as a form of imperialism, and that they must handle issues like female circumcision on their own. They find time occasionally to protest against these subtle forms of oppression. According to Gramsci, "Hegemony is one kind of social authority dominating people without using power or threatening the use of it. It is acquired through social institutions. People accept that somehow by being forced or willingly" (Gramsci 56). Here in this case women from black and dalit community have accepted the suppression as their fate and there is no escape. . Even renowned doctor apprehended that



that kind of help which they think of as solidarity is another type of colonialism in Israel. So we must deal with female circumcision ourselves. It is our culture, we understand it, when to fight against it and how, because this is the process of liberation. (204)

Tashi, the protagonist in the novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, exhibits a fierce determination to protect the cultural honor of her tribe. She perceives the presence of colonizers and white missionaries as a danger to the Olinkan tradition. In order to safeguard the cultural prestige of her community, Tashi bravely chooses to undergo the painful ritual of female circumcision performed by M'Lissa. Tashi looks hysterical and suffers psychological clitridectomy after going through operation. In defiance of her white missionary friends, Tashieagerly looks to submit herself to the sinful ritual of circumcision as this is "the onlyremaining definitive stamp of Olinka tradition" (*Possessing the Secret of Joy* 23).

White men's gospel or God cannot be deemed righteous or satisfying. Tashi reflects cultural bonding and even goes for carving sacrificial tribal marks on her face that would make her identifiable forever as member of Olinkans. But she never knew that marks on her face would set her apart from the Western community. Walker takes the readers into taboo territory and suggests that such taboos must be broken. Tashi's sister Dura died of bleeding during genital cutting and the sight of blood leads Tashi to a traumatic state of panic.

Tashi felt compelled to undergo circumcision due to the tribal fervor that stirred within her, driving her to seek Olinkan honor and prove herself as a strong and fearless woman. However, soon after the procedure, she realized the mistake she had made and deeply regretted her decision. Tashi is taken aback to realize, "how had I entrusted my body to this mad woman. ( *Possessing the Secret of Joy* 151).

The practice of infibulation has caused permanent harm to both her physical and mental well- being and as Olivia stated, "her soul had been dealt a mortal blow", and it was "plain to anyone who dared looked into her eyes." (*Possessing the Secret of*

*Joy* 66). Tashi's harrowing experience during Benny's birth was already incredibly distressing, but it became even more nightmarish due to the obstetrician's struggle to safely deliver the child. Tashi is shocked to see the baby.

Her head of yellow blue and badly misshapen. I had no idea how to shape it properly, but hope that once the doctor left instinct would teach me. ( *Possessing the Secret of Joy* 57).

And later on instinctively Tashi used her tongue to shape the baby's head properly. Her state of mind is acutely disturbed and she dreams of herself trapped in a gigantic tower with broken wings. Her confinement in the tower symbolises patriarchal enslavement and cultural constraints which put her in a state of mental trauma. "They have broken my wings!! I see them lying crossed in a corner like discarded oars. Oh' and they are forcing something in one end of me, and from other they are busy pulling something out" ( *Possessing the secret of Joy* 27) Alice Walker's approach to the issue has been criticized for being more American-centric than African-centric, which some see as an example of cultural imperialism. In her novel, through the character Tashi, Walker appears to challenge the notion presented in the epigraph that black people hold the key to happiness. Tashi is determined to rebel against the system and seek revenge against T'Sunga and M'Lissa, who killed her many years ago.

The present chapter explores the various oppressions the women characters of Alice Walker and Sivakami encounter on the social, cultural, and religious fronts. The promising objective of the chapter is to seek out the customary and established codes and prejudices of the society that obstruct and perturb only women. Although Walker and Sivakami belong to the two farthest social milieus, the oppressions their women characters confront appear to be the same. As women, their predicament is the same either in the society of the blacks among whites or in the community of Dalits among the upper classes and castes. The rationale behind the subjugation and oppression of these women characters lies deeply embedded in the existing social state of affairs and the conventional cultural backdrop. However, the oppressions may be categorized under assorted heads like a) Domestic, b) Economic, c) Political and ideological, d) Cultural and religious, and e) Racial/Caste.

The protagonist Anandhayi has to undergo various procedures after her delivery. She represents suppressed women who is bound by the culture, social and religious dominance.

Anandhayi washed her almost white hair. 'This is the last round. Bear with the heat. Your wounds have to heal'. Anandhayi endured the splashes of hot water that Muthakka sloshed between her legs. In the last pot of water, Muthakka dissolved ground medicinal turmeric, circled it around Anandhayi's head thrice and poured it over her head. A strand of hair came loose and ran into the gutter. (*The Taming of Women* 18)

These oppressions, as mentioned above, are clustered, compounded, and intertwined so that the women stumble upon these oppressive obstacles many times to establish themselves as dignified human beings in the world. Sometimes, despite their resistance and constant struggle, they fail to ascertain their potential and end up in grief and bereavement. The social order is very stringent for women who have to fight to make even slight gains in the social, economic, political, and cultural spheres.

In the following passage Gramsci describes hegemony as the basis of the supremacy of a class.

The supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as domination and as intellectual and moral leadership. A social group dominates antagonistic groups which it tends to 'liquidate,' or to subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise 'leadership' before winning governmental power; it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to 'lead' as well. ('SPN, pp.57-58)

The root of any oppression originates from the family organization. Families in any society form the fundamental core of civilization. Any family might consist of two obligatory members, a male and a female, either in the name of father and mother or husband and wife.

What the hell do you have to weep for, I say? Why should a woman who's just given birth starve? So, the husband went to a whore, uh! Still, why should you go hungry? Is he all that you have in your life? Don't you have your children, enough wealth? Acres of fields and cattle of your own? Just because he went off with someone, here she wants to pine away. After all, there are five children; can't just she wash her hands off him forever?' The old crone grumbled aloud, after her son left. (*The Taming of Women* 17)

Whether it is a mother or a wife, a woman's role is programmed as a subordinate to the male member of the family. If a woman happens to be a wife, she is expected to be a shadow, walking along with and sometimes following the husband with loyalty and devotion. If the same woman happens to be a mother, she should be affectionate, caring, considerate, loving towards the family members, and a dutiful caretaker of the household chores. Home is the only place where every human being would seek serenity and contentment. On the contrary, most women face torment. This kind of domestic oppression is an apparent phenomenon in all societies across cultures. Instead of offering freedom to women, the domestic zone forces them into the shackles of oppression in various glamorous titles like "good homemaker", "domestic goddess", "perfect wife", and "ideal mother".

The novel *Color Purple* opens with a paternal injunction of silence, 'You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy'. (*Color Purple* 4) Celie is denied the right to speak or raise her voice against her stepfather, who rapes and impregnates her. Her voice is suppressed, and she is not allowed to express her grief to anyone except God. To cope with her trauma, she begins writing letters to God as a form of solace. From the very opening lines of *The Color Purple*, we witness how women are silenced and dominated by patriarchal forces. They are stripped of their freedom of speech and are forced to endure whatever men impose upon them, clearly illustrating their subaltern position in society. Celie's experience mirrors the myth of Philomela, whose tongue was cut out by the tyrant Tereus after he raped her. Tereus, who had married Philomela's sister Procne, took advantage of Philomela's vulnerability during her journey to visit her sister. Similarly, Celie bears all her

suffering in silence, believing that her painful experiences must be endured without protest.

Celie's story is told within this threat: the narrative is about breaking silences, and, appropriately, its formal structure creates the illusion that it is filled with unmediated "voices.". Throughout the story, Celie is told to keep quiet about what has taken place between her and her father Alphonso. "He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and git used to it. But I don't never git used to it. And now I feels sick every time I be the one to cook". Soon after, Celie's mother dies and Alphonso rapes Celie more and more often. Her father impregnates her twice and takes away the children after they are born. Celie is convinced that he has taken the children into the woods and killed them, but in reality, he has sold them. Alphonso eventually remarries, and to get rid of Celie, he marries her to a man described as Mr.\_\_\_\_. Celie's marriage to Mr.\_\_\_\_ is the end of violence on the part of her father but it is a new beginning of violence on the part of her husband whom she denotes as Mr. The patriarchal society gives the right to a husband that he can use his wife as he wants and he can abuse her in anyway he wishes. This is seen in Mr.\_\_\_\_'s "answe, causeshe my wife" to his son Harpo's question why he beats Celie. Celie is of the view that: "Mr.\_marry me to take care of his children. I marry him cause. My daddy made me. I don't love Mr.\_and he don't love me." The first and, probably, most influential woman in Celie's life is her sister Nettie. They were forced to be separated by her oppressive husband but, before leaving, Nettie encourages her to be active: ***"You got to fight. You got to fight. But I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is to stay alive."*** Celie and Nettie promise each other to keep in contact by letter but Mr.\_hides all the letters from Nettie and Celie's only addressee and hope is God, so she wrote to him. However, her relationship with God doesn't give her courage to adopt an active attitude and it was only useful to her since it helps her to bear her oppression: "I don't say nothing. I think bout Nettie, dead. She fights, she run away. What good it do? I don't fight; I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive." (The Colour Purple 22) At this stage of her life another woman influences on her life; it's Sofia, the wife of Mr.\_\_\_\_'s son Harpo. Celie observes that Sofia is not a victim of circumstance, but a controller of circumstance, as when her sisters come to stand

with her at her wedding and hold her baby, and when she doesn't have shelter when things go wrong with her marriage. But soon, physical abuse seems to be common occurrence, even in the relationship which are loving like of Harpo and Sofia. Harpo beats Sofia manytimes. Mr.\_\_\_ advises him, "Wives is like children. You have to let 'em know who got the Upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating."(*The Colour Purple* 12)

The girl's hair ain't been comb since their mammy died. I tell him I'll just have to shave it off. Start fresh. He say bad hick to cut a woman hair. So after I bandage my head best I can and cook dinner? They have a spring, not a well, and a wood stove look like a truck? I start trying to untangle hair. They only Women's primary social role has been increasingly defined as domestic servant and child-bearer bordering on utilitarian principles. (*The Colour Purple* 37).

The concept of the ideal servant has been deeply ingrained in the female psyche. In Color Purple Celie is given the honourable title "ideal servant", for whom she works as a servant looking after the household work. She willingly accepts being an ideal servant, and she naturally fits into that role. She believes that the part of being a servant suits her much "for such a role filled all of her needs" practically. She rears her child with utmost care and neglects herself, showing her the least attention. Her servant hood is not a choice but a compulsion forced by circumstances. She wants an emotional outlet. Most women worldwide, who have not equipped themselves with proper education and skills, take up a maidservant profession as they feel naturally qualified. Yet they invite the criticism that they fail to be good mothers and good wives. This accusation leads them to self-condemnation and life-long guilt.

Imprisoned as they are, it is evident that the women characters of Alice Walker and Sivakami do not even attempt to escape into freedom. A woman must always be aware of her domestic duties and must be engaged most of the time in fulfilling her familial responsibilities. Invariably, she is extolled as the goddess of domesticity. The male projected images of a woman in a family are blended with myths, fantasies, and societal ideas that may often conceal the distinctive traits of

women as individuals. Women are more prone to be victims of domestic oppression. A higher proportion of domestic violence is perpetrated against women, and this violence, besides being an everyday reality, is an aspect of women's oppression.

From the review which A. De Pietri Tonelli has published in the *Rivista di Poitica economica* (February 1930) of the book by Anthony M. Ludovici, *Woman, A Vindication* (amd edition, London, 1921):

When things are going badly in the social structure of a nation because of the decadence of the fundamental capacities of its men", Ludovici claims, "Two distinct tendencies seem always to assert themselves; On the one hand to interpret as symptoms of progress changes which are purely and simply signs of decadence and ruin of old and healthy (!) institutions; and the second , which is due to a justified loss of confidence in the governing class , is to give to everyone , whether or not they have the qualities required, the certainty of being chosen to make an effort in the direction of putting things right.

The high level of domestic enmity against women protagonists in the novels is caused by the hierarchical structure of a society that worships power and the uneven power balance between men and women. Men who use violence against women at home do so because they are in a position of power to rule women in society and believe they have the right to enforce their will. They always want to maintain this position and control the women they are related to. Men use ferocity or the threat of physical violence to establish and then shelter their control over their partner and force, bully and frighten them into submission and obedience. "Sami, these hooligans who beat me up, they should be jailed for at least a day and tortured. The pain is killing me" (*The Grip of Change*, pg 5)

In Sivakami's novels, the Dalit men, in their inebriated condition, unleash violence against their wives in the evenings when they return home. The man drags her by her hair to the centre of their residential area, and rains blow on her

mercilessly as if she were a thick-skinned draught animal. No one intervenes in this domestic drama, and everybody watches the tragic scene helplessly. The tragedy of their life is that male insecurity, often masquerading as male superiority, prompts the man to seize little reasons and flimsy causes to let loose the beatings. In his case, wife-beating becomes a favourite pastime and an act establishing male authority. In complicated social conditions, exploiting other human beings becomes profitable for a privileged few. Because of their biological role in production, women become valuable property to be possessed, like slaves and cattle. They are a source of wealth. They alone are capable of parturition, which would make the family. Thus the owning of women by men is a license given by society in the name of marriage and family.

A couple of winnowing pans are chipped. If any gypsy passes by, I must get her to mend them. It would be nice to buy a new one from the shandy. This Kala always seems to lose her ribbon or safety pin just when it's time for school. Perhaps I should buy a set of pins and some more ribbons. Oh, the sesame has to be brought home..... *(The Taming of Women, 49)*

Anandhayi the protagonist of “*The Taming of Women*” is managing the home front skillfully and relieving the husband of his domestic responsibilities enjoys instrumental human relations based on contractualism. Women's domestic chores incorporate lowly work like scrubbing, cooking, cleaning, washing, and rearing children. It is an inviolable law that women are the endorsed custodians of domestic tasks. It is beyond the comprehension and botheration of anyone whether women are exuberant about their exacting and enervating domestic work or not. The domestic confinement of women is presumed to be a fortunate and blissful state. From ancient times, women handled domestic affairs, whereas men engaged themselves in the business of bread-winning outside the home. By denying women proper education and economic freedom, family tends to domesticate them and train them in the chores of domesticity.



P Sivakamis *The Grip of Change*, an English translation by the author herself of the Tamil novel “Pazhaiyana Kazithalum,” serves as a collective expression of the youth from an oppressed community earnestly challenging patriarchal dominance. The narrative unfolds with Thangam’s story and concludes with Gowri’s resolute decision to remain unmarried, having found no satisfactory answers to the issues of patriarchy.

Thangam, a Dalit woman, becomes a living testament to the challenges and violence endured by Dalit women. The author intricately links Thangam’s body with fertility, exposing her to a triple marginalized status shaped by social structures, power dynamics, and patriarchy. Thangam’s character is portrayed with skillful artistry as a subaltern dalit widow.

Thangam’s case takes political stand in the hands of Kathamuthu who once was the president of the Panchayat union in Athur. He was a popular and respected leader for the people of Athur and nearby villages. He changed the happenings regarding to the affair between Thangam and Udayar Unjustified Justice in the Grip of Change and violence it brought. Moreover, he is the person who brings into light the matter of casteism only. Poor Thangam when wanted to correct him get scolded by the hands of patriarchy like- ‘You are such a bitch. I have changed the whole story. Don’t you understand?’ (P. Shivkani, *The Grip of Change*, p. 12) Kathamuthu interferes and changes Thangam’s story to gain some political importance among his caste people. The Dalit woman and her dignity is not very important for him in this matter. He is the man who gets ready to handle the Thangam’s matter out of the court by taking cash from Paranjothy Udayar. Unabashedly he asks Thangam for the same money on the word that he will return it whenever she needs it. Kathamuthu’s intention towards her was never pure and his action in the case is not more than that of a middleman. For him she is merely an option to make his two wives jealous and have sex. Such a man’s dominant and patriarchic curve of mind turns out whenever he talks with his daughter, Gowri. No wonder, he never justifies with Thangam’s or anyone else’s matter. When the Police logged the complaint, the issue gets serious and enlarged.

Families whose houses were completely destroyed should get three thousand rupees each. Owners of houses that were partially burned will get one thousand rupees. The daily wage will be increased to three rupees fifty paise. If both parties don't agree to this settlement; this matter will be taken to court. Additionally the government will pay the affected parties some money, according to the rules. Rice and Clothes will be distributed. Our sub collector is camping in Athur and he will ensure that you receive food, clothes and money. Do you agree? (*The Taming of Women* 74)

Now it rises from Thangam and the violence against her to the issue of workers, wages, prejudices, casteism, and revenge. But, the naïve Thangam never understands that her problem is just beginning but not the cause of troubles in Puliya, her village. The burning of huts of lower caste peoples is just the warning given to take back the complaint. But, the lower caste people under the skillful leadership of Kathamuthu manage the case and get at least something back in the form of compensation. The issue of low wages given by upper caste peoples to the labourer remains the same. When demanded for one more rupee in addition to old wages of three rupees as the prices are gone up; the upper caste people increase it by fifty paise only. For this increase, they have their justifying ways ready.

Their violent attitude towards the matter is worth observing –

Arunachala Reddiar, displeased over the decision to raise the wages, joined Paranjothi Udayar and ask, 'we should not have agreed to higher wages.' 'Don't worry. We'll make them work an extra hour. When we pay more, we have the right to demand more work from them. (*P. Sivakami, The Grip of Change, p. 75*)

Those who went to work in fields next day planned seedlings happy at the thought of earning an extra fifty-paise for their labour. Their happiness merely lasted for few hours as their supervisors did not allow them to leave the fields even at five in the evening. With pitiful thoughts we can observe that the happiness of lower class/caste people dependson the liberalness of the upper class/caste. Which, they generally and evidently never display. This act teaches the poor people a lesson to learn the hard-

core realities of the life. The author says- 'In continuance with the traditions of the society they lived in, the lower caste had learned to tolerate the intolerable.' (P. Shivkami, *The Grip of Change*, p. 75)

The violence on lower caste people in the form of aggression is too an age-old story told in a new way. Here, no one justifies with lower castes suppression. Upper caste people knew their ways to take their money back in every matter. When they accepted to give the twenty thousand rupees in compensation for fire, they had their own plan ready to take it back- 'We haven't given in to Kathamuthu's demands, we have only agreed to the Tahsildar's suggestions. Later we will be able to apply to the Tahsildar for permission to cut that huge banyan tree next to the school. The auction proceeds will make up for what we are paying now.' (*The Grip of Change* 75) In addition to this, the astute Ramalinga Reddiar decided to burn every hut in the Cheri when things settled down. He proudly pronounced that whom they would complain for that future matter. It shows an internalized arrogant attitude towards Dalitcommunity. From these entire matters one thing gets clear that violence, woman and politics are discuss side by side by the author very aptly. As Thangam and her matter unknowingly gets the big issue and apparently living this one aside, everyone discusses about caste and other matters. Nothing very good and Pratibha Somkuwar appreciating comes out for Thangam out of all these and we can see that the patriarchy wins in the end.

In the novel, assertion on caste subjected by Kathamuthu was taken for granted by everyone. His own community brutally in public mutes the new bud like Rasendran's voice down. This humiliation made him feel deflate within his own society. Moreover, the justice given to Thangam out of the court is unjustified. She deserves the right place and honour instead of ten thousand rupees. Her gullible, marginalized nature is expose and use by everyone including her own caste people. While taking her matter to Kathamuthu at the very night of the attack her demand for justice was so simple. She says-

Sami, these hooligans who beat me up, they should be jailed for at least a day and tortured. The pain is killing me. (P. Sivakami, *The Grip of Change*, p. 5).

The suffering she has gone through is not the concern of anyone. Thangam, after that night's experience was not able to sleep properly. No one shows concern for her psychological state after that particular incident. For a childless widow such violence was like a hurricane in the silent sea. She recalls it like-

Whenever she remembered her life in Puliur, she wept. She equated the incident in the sugarcane field with the repulsive experience of stepping on shit while walking on a riverbank. She could not recover easily from the troubles she had suffered. The shock of being dragged out by her hair in the middle of the night to be beaten up like an animal had affected her mind deeply. She would gasp awake at night at the slightest sound. (*P. Shivkami, The Grip of Change, p. 87*)

Here, P. Shivkami showed how the marginalized Dalit woman Thangam becomes the victim of the patriarchal system of society. All and all *The Grip of Change* creates the impression that the upper caste had handled the incident as a man-versus-woman problem, whereas the lower caste had given it the caste slant. But, Thangam, a subaltern Dalit third world woman goes on facing problems everywhere. The violence in the form of physical, emotional, psychological, and religious ways is not the matter of today. Since centuries, women are being dominated by the hands of patriarchy. In the novel triple violence faced by Thangam is unjustified and thus the issue of grave thinking. One can clearly observe that the social structure denies her natural right, the caste Hindu community treats her as a slave and the patriarchy treats her as an inferior. At the end, the reader gets a hint that the women and their role in the society are changing and so the patriarchy and their role must change. And at the end, Gowri in the novel has shown as the epitome to such change.

Motherhood is an inexorable phase of a woman's life that indirectly vanquishes women's desires very subtly. All feminine characteristics of patience, self-sacrifice, love and care that construct and support the cult of actual womanhood stem from the primary image of perfect Motherhood. Julia Kristeva claims, "By giving birth, the woman enters into contact with her Mother; she becomes her Mother. They are the same continuity differentiating itself." (34) In times past, for

example, during the American Revolution, the idea of Republican Motherhood was formed. The women had the important role of instilling their children with values conducive to a healthy republic by stressing society's responsibility upon women for rearing children in a healthy surrounding to make them exceptional republicans and good human beings. On the home front, the community together oppressed women circuitously. Virginia Woolf posited the view that women needed economic independence, which alone would grant them some semblance of independence. The family institution rests on and reinforces a social division of labour involving women as unpaid workers and men as the sole breadwinners, making women dependent upon the male or any other earning member of the family for survival. But in the contemporary world, the notions of working women in different societies have become an inevitable reality.

Married working women often enter work outside the home either to supplement their husbands' insufficient incomes or ascertain their identity as women in society. Being economically free may guarantee a happy state for any woman who wants herself free from the oppressive shackles of domestic agony, mentally and physically. The profession can be a luxury or necessity of fulfillment for any woman, but the womenfolk of Walker and Sivakami are primary agents of conventional values, and they are being forced to work to escape indigence. The job of an enslaved person forces the whole generation of them to be marginalized where they enact their self-abnegating and self-subsuming roles with conviction, and ultimately they live and die for their white masters. Slavery robbed of the basic rights of being a human. The system increasingly exploited women's labour and sexuality and condemned them to lifelong servitude. In her novels Sivakami points out that all dalit women have to work along with their men folk for their day-to-day survival. The whole day, these women have to carry out backbreaking and the most exhausting tasks.

In addition to the exacting domestic work, the Dalit women have to undertake strenuous physical labour for exploitatively low wages like ten paise or five paise. Despite the many attendant risks and occupational hazards, the women were nowhere near economic independence or freedom. These women are exploited and abused in

many ways. They come into daily conflict with their upper-class bosses in the workplace and with racists and sexists on every level of life. These women naturally develop a keener awareness and consciousness of the multiple nature of their oppression as females - caste, religion, and sex -than the most non-working, other middle-class women who do not belong to the Dalit community. The unequal wages place the Dalit women on constant dependency and economic thralldom. In the real sense, the hard-earned money never saves them from dire poverty and hunger.

The financial privileges are too limited for them to find positive or healthy outlets. The prevailing caste and community inequalities and social inequities isolate them as “untouchables” and deprive them of education. As a result, they are forced to find menial jobs like that of a scrubwoman or a charwoman or a maid of all work. To ascertain their survival, women have to work harder than their men folk to get equal wages. But the burden of gratifying the family's economic needs rests on the woman, and the man takes the privilege of spending his money as he wishes. Frugality is yet another virtue that Dalit women have to practice while the men may splurge their little earnings on alcohol.

Yes, I've made a mistake, and I am willing to abide by any fair decision . But if you start talking like that , I had better go to a court.'

'Give her ten or twenty thousand rupees in compensation. Then we'll withdraw the petition , stating that we've reached a settlement.'

'Twenty thousand ! My God ! How can I give twenty thousand rupees? (*The Grip of Change* 79)

Being a woman, the most she can do is to lose her body part to get the insurance money. The penury of catastrophic proportions forces women to resort to deliberately losing any of their bodily organs. But women who lack the mental fortitude choose the next best alternative of submitting their bodies to the brutal carnalities of men. The central portion of abandoned women in the society easily forms a unit called Whores, partly because of their inability to satisfy their basic needs or to meet the greediness of their families. Whores are not born, but they are created in a male-

dominated society. The actual reason for the existence of these whores as a separate class of citizens is either males neglecting their duties or their desire to use the physique of women. Women are saleable products, and all about them can be sold. Their labour, their physique, their bodily organs, their life, their biological convenience as child-bearers, everything can be used for making money, not for their advantage, but their male owners and their dependent children.

It is clear that women protagonists resist such oppressions and try to establish global standards for their rights in general. Alice's women characters do not resign themselves to the fate of poverty; instead, they valiantly defy patriarchal injunctions and societal discriminations and courageously face prolonged conflicts. They face hostility and resistance from every quarter, especially white people, and from their community and home. These economically downtrodden women of Walker and Sivakami are predisposed to achieve equilibrium amidst the chaos and corruption in the economic province of the society around them.

For any woman, the essential survival elements are to be secured in terms of money. The most fundamental concern in life is survival, daily food, the possession of clothing, and shelter. So only, it is essential to focus on the economic stratification of any society. The economic system and the financial strength of a woman shape her beliefs. Since most women in the universe depend upon men for their financial benefits, they automatically fall into the category of economically oppressed beings. But the women characters in the novels have the persistence to make daring efforts and the resilience that surprises them even. The subordination of women under patriarchy has been discussed as a complex matter down the ages. Patriarchy can generally be associated with authority, power, and influence. Women have not been presented with any force. However, they implicitly have specific terms of power in some societies and can exert influence in social decision-making. Yet, in the most egalitarian societies, authority, the source of legitimacy in exercising power, lay within men. This authority grants males supremacy over the other group of the community -females.

In the patriarchal world, the control is in the hands of the patriarchs like the gun, and the women are ever unarmed. Subaltern incorporates the issue of the secondary

position of women in the world. It signifies the oppressed group of human beings who are naturally and logically subordinated to the activity of the ruling class, the hegemony of the commanding class. The fundamental rights of women are not seriously considered, and most of the time, they are made silent, as silence only would give them peace of mind. Most women are encased and suffocated in the power structures and patterns of the existing society. These women are steeped in the conventions and customs of patrilineal society, which dislocates, and alienates them from the process of being and becoming. The power structure of society created by men offers male-assigned roles for wife and motherhood that entrap women in the masculine plot of desire and thereby marginalize them from other spheres of life. Muted by the rules of patriarchy, women seem to have lost their identities as persons. In Western and Eastern civilizations, women are expected to follow the power structure without any opposition. It is ordained that women in the patriarchal society need to be subordinates of men. If they try to conquer the undocumented but predestined law, they are condemned not only by men but also by the womenfolk of their community. Because of her rebellious nature and wayward behaviour as a woman, which is much against the norms of patriarchy, she is condemned by the people of her society as a witch who has brought evil to Bottom. Walker's women record polyphonic voices behind every structure and relationship that has contributed to making women silent. These women face structural inequality between men and women, and they become willing victims of the trap. Black women are unaware of the shackles that repress them, and only through acquiring proper education and exposure, any relief could be found. In a patriarchal society, women's primary struggle is for their fundamental rights as individuals and their democratic rights as human beings. It includes the right to get an education, employment, own property, vote, to enter parliament, birth control, divorce, and even the right to claim marital entitlement. Though people say that there is legal reform, a legally equal position in the society.

Of all the women of the globe, the black women and the Dalit women are presumed to be the most scorned, rebuked, and victimized by their men folk, who wield considerable power over their bodies and minds. This robust design of patriarchy bounds and oppresses women at work, at home, at the places of worship,



at other religious ceremonies, at the law, the education, and so on. The black men and Dalit men are always treated inhumanly by their masters – white masters in the case of black men and the upper-class people in the case of Dalit men.

When the hardships of these men have been extreme enough to damage their pride, their only outlet happens to be the woman they have at home - their wives, sisters or daughters. As men, it is difficult for them to repudiate the physical humiliation easily and mental torment they confront in the society, and this grows into inordinate wrath and unrestrained violence to be inflicted upon the women they possess.

Who gave you the guts to go and beg a man for books, eh? Has your mother let you loose to roam the streets?’ he growled and raised his hand again. But lowering it, he ground his teeth and turned on Balan, ‘What’s that in your mouth?’. (*The Taming of Women* 37)

Sivakami notices that, in her community, the men’s favourite pastime is to whack their women for no reason at all. The beating of the wives is the everyday activity of any Dalit man to show the people that they are also as powerful as their upper-class masters. In their work spots, they are exposed to the heartlessness of the rich and inhumane treatment by the masters. They are exploited with new cruelties and absurdities.

The power structure under which they live tries to engulf them and make them unprivileged socially, politically, and economically. The Dalit women are under double patriarchy - the upper-class patriarchy subjugating the outcast patriarchy. In turn, the outcast patriarchy, with more vigorous intensity and more significant momentum, suppresses the unfortunate women. The callous power system blurs the underlying quality of humanity in Dalit men. They find sadistic pleasure in beating women as if they were the voiceless and mute animals. The pity here is that the exploiter - the Dalit men and the exploited - Dalit women are both unaware of their victimization by the societal power structure. In *the Grip of Change*, Sivakami renders the plight of Dalit women encountering motivated malignity and spitefulness

through the following lines: Even though they are male because they are Dalits, they have to be like dogs with their tails rolled up when they are in the fields, and dealing with their landlords. There is no way they can show their strength in those circumstances. So they offer it at home to their wives and children. But then, is it the fate of our women to be tormented both outside their houses and within? In the current social system, the woman who crosses the boundary of the traditional roles is considered an aggressive woman. Such a fierce woman is always perceived as a threat to man's power and superiority.

According to the societal roles as a wife and mother, a woman who does not pay much attention to the fulfilment of her personality is always condemned as an abnormal woman. The so-called "natural" description of a woman and the natural roles a woman has to play are imposed on her by gradual and spontaneous indoctrination, training and culture. When a woman attempts to overthrow male power from her life, she finds herself in a dilemma.

A woman who denies her femininity has to accept the disapproval of men and society. Either she has to be like other women, or she has no place in society. Such a problematic woman has to deprive herself of every kind of love and care from a man. The patriarchal social system has laid down the sanctioned ways of expressing womanhood. A woman should live as a daughter, wife, and mother or as a prostitute whose sole income depends upon men alone. The woman who refuses to bear any of these roles in her life is estimated as an unruly person worthy of punishment.

In the selected novels women protagonists always wish to perceive their personalities, interests, professional preferences, and beauty concepts from the viewpoint of men only. Their identity is always blended with the essence of some men or others closely related to them on the domestic front. The undemanding nature of women spontaneously makes them merge with the men associated with them in their lives. A woman in any society is identified as a daughter or wife or mother of a man rather than to be recognised for what she is. The names of the women characters of Alice Walker and Sivakami hint strongly at the subordination they confront in their day-to-day life and lack of self-identity.

Identifying a woman with her name is not simply a matter of fancy and quirks. A name has a definite meaning, with some essential nuances of nature, ancestry, character, culture, religion, hopes, and desires. Only names exist in this perishable world even after the mortals depart this life. A naming ceremony for the newly born infants in most of the world's societies brings joy and ecstasy to the parents as they establish their family lineage through the names they choose for their infants. But this kind of significant joy is denied to the blacks, as they are just enslaved people, and it is the white men who decide the fate of the number of child/children for the slave woman. In the history of the blacks, there are the circumstances in which "mulattos" are brought into the world. So, like the fate of the blacks, the names are also entirely fixed by the white masters. In Margaret Atwood's novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, the black women are depicted with no names, and they are the possessions of their white masters.

Individual names are the true identity offered to any human being. But, in the case of women, albeit their original names, they are always identified with their men folk like father or husband. The names of Dalits do not carry any significance as in the case of the upper caste people, as they do not have any identity of their own. Their life solely depends upon and are concocted with the instructions and directions of their masters. The masters of the Dalits are not much bothered about the original names and use different names to address them. Sometimes, related to the manners and actions of the Dalits, several funny and abusive names are employed to refer to them, even among the people of their community. Predominantly, women are the victims of this degradable much upon them.

Sivakami's novels, *The Grip of Change* and *The Taming of Women* emphasize that the Dalit women have never been identified with their original names, and it may even be doubtful that they have any such original character at all. Even among the people of their community, no one is concerned with the importance of their name or the name of their children. Some samples of names related to the manners and mannerisms of the Dalit women are "munkovam" (woman of short tempered nature), "matycma masalaf (woman who makes spicy items in the afternoon), "Murugan conaipann (woman equivalent to the hefty pig of Murugan Spring),

“kalinca” (woman always suffer from loose motion), and “Setanta” (woman who doesn’t know swimming and floating in the well).

Some names that debase the physical deficiency of women like “kakka” (ugly-looking woman like a crow), “konnavaccf (woman stammering to speak), “cevutf (woman who is deaf), “uomaf (woman who is dumb), “karukkf (mad woman), and “ula mukkf (woman always with running nose) are so common. These names are derived from their day-to-day life style, and it suits their oppressed nature also as they are much careless about their self-identity. Dalit men also have some nicknames like “karuvayart (dark-skinned man), “natotf (gipsy-like), and “arakkatan” (man with only a half ear). However, the Dalit women are more abused and demeaned than the men. The names of Dalit women represent their insensitive lifestyle, without any minor degree of botheration of their identity at all, even at the basic level of being addressed. Within the broad definitions of patriarchy, the women of Alice Walker and Sivakami seek to assert their status as women through various ideological systems of society.

The determining characteristics of the ideological system decide and escort the actions of these individual women that are emphasized by the structures of patriarchy, a hierarchy of power, and other dominating aspects. The subordination of women under men is not enforced through visible coercion but rather through the continued reproduction of some ideology or other that reinforces the separation between male and female roles. Ideology locates the individual in the social order and shapes the individual’s identity. A personal identity exists primarily in the form of several social relationships. Again ideology is purely a subjective thought-construct, which has a material existence. An individual’s adherence to an ideology is exhibited by the way he or she observes some habits or customs. For example, sexual love is a crucial part of the ideological structure that perpetuates male power over women with their full participation; for women, to fall in love with men is the implicit perpetuation of their subordination, both individually and collectively. The “beauty myth” created by society’s superiors appears very treacherous. The false myth has created a standard norm for femininity that may be improbable for the average woman.

While reacting with increasing obsessive behaviour to attain it, they end up in dissipated guilt, shame, and extreme unhappiness at their physical faults. If women do not subscribe to the patriarchal ideology of womanhood, they may be stamped with derogatory terms like "witch" or "bitch". Possessing power and intellect and being a threat to the established order of the society, the "wicked" women splinter away from their traditional roles as "the blessed damsels". These preconceived ideological incarnations provide women with only a limited space. Denying this crucial piece of their being in an attempt to conform to the conventional standards of femininity directly results in their inability to maintain a meaningful existence. Love is the most alluring and unalterable bait of the men for women.

These women do not fit into the frame of ideal womanhood existing in society. They are violent in each one's way, and they strive to demand their rights and freedom in highly uncouth ways. The oppression caused by the dominant ideology of the blacks emerges to be a different one that dominates Indian women, especially Dalit women. Indian women are much preoccupied with the male-created doctrine for females. To understand the various facets of the ideological oppression in India needs an understanding of the historical, cultural and social past. Indian society, though known for its Androgenic nature, is patriarchal. The legal system supports the superior power of the community, most obviously, the male power as they claim to be the custodians of culture, society, power structure, and women. Women are always dependent on the supreme authority of the community. The equality between the sexes was established in Constitutional law. However, not all the anomalies and discrimination are eliminated in practice, and women always continue to be the victims of several forms of undocumented but executable ideologies. The oppression of women based on austere ideology in India is much more severe than the one in the western region of the globe. The lives of Indian women are to be well synchronized following the existing ideology of femininity.

Specifically, the Dalit women live in a separate realm, internally divided by the contradictory demands made by the ideals of femininity and its attitude to the women who deny these ideals. The ideology is ambivalent. From childhood days, inequality begins. It is common in India for women to face social problems like

female fetus termination, female infanticide, dowry problems, and dowry deaths, which may not be present among western women. Mainly Indian women alone endure these problems. Many social activists, reformers, and feminists attempt to eradicate these social evils in India in the modern scenario. But, in the Dalit community, even after others attained freedom from most social problems, they are yet to be relieved of many social evils that chase them like a hunter. No Indian Dalit woman can let out her views in front of the upper class or her class men, especially in a gathering in a village. Sivakami, in her novels, angrily points out that the women of her community are not permitted to express any of their rightful thoughts in front of village men. Further, she opines that the people affected in all the contexts are only Dalit people, though the upper-class masters are the cunning minds behind any such happening in the village. One such incident is when a Dalit woman is molested by one of the upper-class masters, and when the girl challenges the man with the truth, the man attempts to paint the girl as the real seducer. All stand together to accuse the girl, though they all know the underlying reality. The people of the Dalit community, especially men, do not want to defend their girls or oppose the upper-class masters. Once a woman is born, it is destined that they cannot confront a single man or a group of men. It is an unwritten law that the downtrodden of the society only should be blamed for any fault done by the upper caste people. Expressing personal views favouring other women or solidarity with the affected is regarded as an offence in a society where male writ runs. Even when they are accused in a public place, they are not expected to disclose the truth boldly. Society expects them that women should passively abide by the verdict passed on by the men of their community. Sivakami finds no rationality and justice behind these cruelties and insults heaped upon women. She discovers that the bigotry is based on the motive to keep women submissive, dependent and silent.

The prevailing ideology of Sivakami's society never wishes the women to talk loudly or laugh noisily in front of men. Even while sleeping, women should never forget that they are women. There are some norms to be followed. Women should neither stretch out fully nor lay on their backs. It is forbidden even to lay face down on their bellies. They always have to walk with their heads bowed down, gazing at

their toes. While taking food also, only boys are given first preference, and if anything is leftover, girls are allowed to consume them. “If nothing remains, girls have to go to bed with an empty stomach” (SI 29). Sivakami bemoans the atrocities committed at the domestic level itself and wonders whether attitudinal change is possible.

The politics of language plays a crucial role in the marginalization of subaltern women, whose voices are often silenced or distorted through dominant linguistic frameworks. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her seminal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, asserts that “the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” and that her voice is frequently overwritten by hegemonic discourse (Spivak 287). This erasure is not just literal but structural—embedded in the very language that seeks to represent her. Luce Irigaray furthers this critique by arguing that Western language systems are inherently masculine, lacking the flexibility to articulate feminine subjectivities: “the feminine has been colonized by masculine logic, which imposes linear, coherent meaning” (Irigaray 74). These linguistic inadequacies often manifest as silence, fragmentation, or incoherence in women's narratives—not as a lack of thought, but as a symptom of cultural disparity. Trinh T. Minh-ha highlights this rupture in *Woman, Native, Other*, stating that “language, in its colonial use, becomes a battlefield on which selfhood is constantly negotiated and denied” (Trinh 80). In Indian contexts, Kamala Das's use of hybrid language and confessional tone in *My Story* defies the constraints of respectable feminine discourse, reclaiming a space for female sexuality and dissent. Such efforts at self-expression often appear inadequate or deviant within conventional structures, but they, in fact, reveal the deeper cultural and ideological exclusions subaltern women face. These texts underscore the urgent need to interrogate not only what is said, but how—and in whose language—it is permitted to be said.

This linguistic marginalization is powerfully echoed in the narratives of *The Color Purple* and *In the Grip of Change*, where women struggle to articulate their trauma within social structures that deny them the authority to speak. Celie's early letters in Alice Walker's novel are marked by broken grammar and silence, reflecting not ignorance, but the internalized belief that her voice holds no value. Only through

gradually reclaiming her narrative does Celie begin to "speak" in a way that redefines her identity. Similarly, Anandhayi in Sivakami's *In the Grip of Change* confronts the linguistic limitations imposed by caste and gender hierarchies, as her speech is often disregarded or interrupted, revealing how societal systems determine whose words are heard and whose are dismissed. These women do not lack language—they lack **permission** to be legible in the public discourse shaped by patriarchal and casteist norms. Their narratives resist these constraints by transforming silence into subversive expression, making language itself a site of cultural and political contestation.

The patriarchal society requires some inferior creatures like women, who would meekly obey and follow the male-dominated ideology created by the male ancestors. Rules are laid and implied only upon powerless beings like women. To have women always under the control of men, society has posited the ideals that throttle and crumbles the existence of women. The piteous position is that the women are neither aware of their inferior work nor wish to come out of the spiderweb-like net.

Sivakami observes that the women desperately aspire to qualify themselves to fit into the prescriptive male ideologies of domesticity, motherhood, wifhood, female duty, and feminine beauty. Women are always treated as the ambassadors of culture, moral values, and religious codes in any civilization. It is highly through women that the cultural implications of any society are proliferated widely since women are the caretakers of the family lineage and the heirs to the patriarchal system.

‘She deserves this and more! She seduced Udayar...shameless bitch...ignoring all of us she found succor in him!’(26)

The supremacy of culture and religion revolves around women so that they become victimised rather than appreciated. At all times, the cultural perceptions of western and eastern societies tend to silhouette women's role as a redeemer of cultural systems and religious notions. By offering the responsibility as the haulier of culture from one generation to the other, women are pushed into the lowermost



position in society. Culture, being the puppet in the hands of patriarchs from the ancient days, again reiterates the idea of a passive, submissive womanhood. Women would like to follow the cultural conventions imposed upon them consciously or unconsciously and attempt to pass to the future generation. But, when the modern women tend to break the images and culture had laid for them, then they, in a way, annihilate the norms of culture indirectly. So, paradoxically, women act as saviours and destructors.

Shut up, bitch. Don't you dare use foul language here. I'll hit your mouth. Don't you have any respect for the man you're talking to? If you've nothing more to say, piss off. (4)

According to culture, it meant that women were not expected to possess a voice of their own. The cultural principles and images do not apply to the opposite sex. In any society, men are associated with power and superiority and are always related to the attributes of power. When the cultural images, standards of the myths, and tales of any nation are analyzed profoundly, it is evident that the cultural role of a male is accorded with power and prestige. It is a monarchy, and the queen is just a dummy to accompany the king. Again, if it is the aristocracy, the lord is more critical than the lady. Cultural organization in society has reserved many of the primary and significant activities of the organization for men, as it is believed strongly that women are incapable of doing many of the activities that men do, especially the affairs that contribute much to society - to exercise political power, to be artistic or creative and to play an equal role in the economy. Culture and religion have fixed places for women in the social milieu of any civilization. Polygamy is more common in most societies than polyandry. In both cases, the women struggle hard to get freedom in the name of marriage. From childhood, girls are repressed in many ways, the most important one being the cultural repression, through moral instructions and sayings passed on from generation to generation by women. Women recommend the cultural practices and principles formed by men for women against women to their fellow women. It is like taming the feral elephants of the forest by the kumki' (trained and tamed) elephants.

The mother or the grandmother, or any other matriarch of the house takes up the duty of preparing girl children mentally and physically to face a society with a male-dominated culture. These women who surround the young girls are the carriers of the society's culture where they have to survive. The culture-assigned roles to males and females are not taught systematically but imbibed upon the young minds through oral instructions and storytelling.

‘She is bit talkative, but very smart,’ commented Kathamuthu with his usual insensitivity. ‘But if she passes her exams, she will proceed with higher studies, so don’t bother coming back. On the other hand ,if she fails, her marriage will be conducted on the next auspicious day!’(94)

In Dalit Societies, girls are often compelled to get married at a young age and their education is deemed less important than that of boys. Unfortunately, some fathers believe that marrying off their daughters is the only solution to this problem. Just as the inculcation of submissiveness in young girls' sense, the value system of culture indoctrinates young boys with terms related to power, ego, pride, and superiority complex. Even while playing games in the childhood days, boys wish to take up the task of the ruler and girls, the ruled and subordinated.

The male attitude towards activities such as the way of dressings, neglecting domestic works like cooking, not taking care of even the baby dolls, careful in not touching any of the belongings of girls have all been ordained in Indian culture. Even in an innocent age like this, the grey matter of the boys is moulded in such a manner they come to believe themselves superior to girls and possess great power as the nickers. It is the fate established and sealed by the dominant culture. The key underlying rationale for the subaltern groups consenting or dissenting from the hegemonic order lies in their past experience . It refers to the awareness and understanding of the social and political dynamics that shape their lives and the world around them.

Subaltern groups with a higher level of socio political consciousness are more likely to critically analyze the hegemonic order and question its legitimacy. This

consciousness enables them to recognize their own agency and resist the dominant narratives and power structures imposed by the hegemonic order. On the other hand, subaltern groups with a lower level of socio-political consciousness may be more susceptible to accepting and consenting to the hegemonic order without questioning its underlying ideologies and power dynamics. Therefore, socio-political consciousness plays a crucial role in shaping subaltern responses to the hegemonic order, either by fostering dissent or reinforcing consent.

The verdict and policies designed by any victorious group in society attain supremacy. The norms and features of the dominant class are acknowledged and followed involuntarily by others with full consent. In the case of Alice Walker, her women characters have been enduring slave lives for ages since they had been brought from Africa to America. The culture they experienced in the United States was an alien culture for the first generation of enslaved people. But, years of slavery and slave mentality have effectively diminished any memory of their African cultural roots. Though Africa is known as a Dark Continent, the culture to be found among the tribal people in Africa is rich, and great writers like Aime Cesaire, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe endeavored to express through their works the rich African culture.

However, the original culture of the blacks that is reflected in language, symbols, folktales, songs, religious beliefs, traditions, rituals, and organizations does not coordinate with the brutalizing culture of the white slave masters. The ethnic group called African-American is an evolutionary group, and not original. Culturally, they stand in the medial position between Africans and White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans. So Morrison raises the question applicable to all the black women in general. Jadine represents the cultural outlay of the African-American community of blacks who identify with white culture to the extent that they discard their own. Jadine is not only absorbed by white culture's definition of beauty, but she fully identifies herself with European cultural values about art, nature, family and money. Similarly, Sivakami is known as a Dalit writer, and her novels revolve around the sordid and imbalanced lives of the people of her community. Generally

speaking, she can be identified as one of the Indian women. But, she and her people do not share a common culture with other Indians or South Indians. The slave group in America was constructed for the practicality of the white masters. In India, the Dalit community was created for menial and hard labour for the upper caste people.

It is the nature of any human being, especially a man, to have a loyal, obedient, and mute servant to serve him. So, there is the black group and the Dalit community. Sivakami lives in India, but her women characters face a completely different culture that is not the state of affairs of other Indian women. In addition to the dilemmas they experience as women, the socio-economic conditions also contribute to the cultural oppression of Dalit women. As Dalit women are considered outcasts, polluted, and marginalized, they are not valued and respected by other women. The Dalit women are tormented by the women of different castes too. Even among educated women, there is a strong belief that touching Dalit women may contaminate them. So, the women of the Dalit community follow a culture that is more arduous and tyrannizing than the cultural oppression of the higher caste women.

Caste antagonism and class exploitation blended with stem cultural images frighten the women of the Dalit community. Religion or culture does not come to rescue the poor women from their pathetic position. Women are prohibited from entering temples on special days and into the sanctum sanctorum. Women, in general, are considered polluted, and the Dalit women are barred from taking part in solemn ceremonies citing untouchability. The partial behaviour and injustice shown towards the exploited community make the Dalit women voiceless in front of a social and religious system. Their courage to rebel against religion and culture combined forces is blunted by further threats of social ostracism and spiritual ex-communication. In most cases, Dalit women believe in converting themselves to another religion, thinking it would help them come out of misery and distress. Nevertheless, it is often a mirage, and their unmitigated suffering remains.

In the Grip of Change we see that in the name of religion again, people try to subjugate the weedy women of the society. It is miserable, pitiable, and helpless for

Dalit women who take refuge in religion. Sivakami laments the alienation of Dalit women because of the pressures of religious supremacy. She embraces Christianity not because of her love for the egalitarian principles of that religion but because to erase her identity as an untouchable woman in the Indian society. Their birthmark on their body and mind is like the Cross that Jesus Christ carried. The Cross that the Dalits bear is so fateful, burdensome, a symbol of disgrace, and fatal that they cannot come out of it even after their death. There is a separate street, residential area and crematorium for the Dalits. They are not allowed to walk through the higher caste people's streets. When they travel on the bus also, Bama points out that the Dalit women are not supposed to sit with the taller caste women. When the Dalits searched for some solace in the form of religion, once again, they faced frustration.

In addition to the existing desperateness, the government had withdrawn the benefits like job reservation as they are Christians and no more Dalits, and so casteless. Sivakami asks a series of questions fiercely with the wounded heart: Are Dalits not human beings? Do they not have common sense? Do they not have such attributes as a sense of honour and self-respect? Are they without any wisdom, beauty and dignity? What do we lack? (24)

According to Mary Daly, "Christianity offers women " a derivative status" concerning men, and it perpetuates a "planetary caste system" with women always at the bottom." All the religions around the globe converge upon the basic notions of "Fraternity, Equality and Love". Many religions fail to implement the most fundamental of the three, being "Equality" among the three concepts. In reality, the inequality found in society is extended to religion also. In the name of caste and different sectors of the community, religion tends to separate people, especially women.

Religion, too, has its stranglehold on the women. Indeed, the clutches of religion are more terrifying and acute than the other forms of oppression. In all the possible religions of the world, there is an underlying current of meaning that women are in a debased status and so are to be subjugated and muted. According to the Biblical mythology, at the time of the creation of human beings, God created man (a common term to refer to both man and woman) in the image of God;

dominion was given to both over every other creature, but not over each other. The actuality is that God wanted a helpmate, “a real companion with all equal qualities of man to love and live with the man. Then He created woman [Gen. 2:7:18]”<sup>4</sup>. At the time of creation, there was no concept of oppression or subjugation or secondary status.

The companion God gave to man in all respects, his equal. He was almost like himself, a free agent, gifted with intellect and endowed with mortality. But after Eve was exposed to temptation and after they became a fallen pair, the Lord God declared the subjectivity of Eve under Adam. When the curse fell upon both the human beings, only the wife (Eve) is more accused and cursed than the husband (Adam). For the common sin, ostensibly, the woman is penalised, and in this way, God was also partial towards the woman. This theory forms the base for all the other oppressive elements in the life of a woman. The Biblical reference leads to historical pieces of evidence too. Racial prejudices have done on the African- Americans have no parallel in the history of mankind. Slavery was institutionalized in the behaviour of the black people. Since the 16th century, African-Americans have encountered ordeals under white masters. They were brutally snatched off from their homelands. So, they had to depend solely on their bosses as life-giving persons. The status of innocent black people under their masters was indescribable. Initially, black people were to be trained in various difficult chores that were arduous for white men, as black people were always known for their physical power, efficiency and hard-working nature.

In getting trained or tamed, they were also controlled and ruled by white people. It took many centuries for them to resist the cold-blooded activities. The cultural shock, the racial prejudices, and the struggle to maintain individual identity shattered them. The conscious attempt to become an indistinct part of the alien and scary culture led them to dual-natured lives in American society. When black men were under the control of white people, it is natural that more cruelties and gender-biased afflictions were readily inflicted upon black women. In addition to the everyday sufferings of all black people, the women had to endure further the pain of being women. Physical abuses, sexual harassment, murder, and savagery were

readily perpetrated against black women. For black men, at least they could have the claim for their bodies. But for black women, it was so unfortunate that they were not given the fundamental rights over their body, mind, family, children, or even their existence. To any black woman in America, even in the present century with many improved laws to secure the blacks, slavery is a despicable concept. It is a double-edged weapon, ready to attack black women from any side. The double jeopardy of racism and sexism destroys and cripples them from within.

The skin colour and the body frame are the most contributing elements to the racial oppression of black women at the primary level. Their physical appearance and manners confirm that they are below the standards of white society and values and ascertain their inferiority in society. The loss of roots, families, children, and love oppress the black women to the core of their life. Cultural conflicts, ideological disparities, and social insecurity continue to oppress them due to racial discrimination. The loss of identity is an added crisis for black women. Sexual harassment of black women by white and black men is degrading and dehumanizing. Poverty-stricken women, women with suicidal drive, madness, the inclination for infanticide, and weird behaviour become the most common attributes of black women. Black whores have been formed in society to satisfy men's complete perversion and promiscuity. The language is also oppressed, and blacks have a creolised dialect and usage that differentiate others from them prominently.

The corresponding state of affairs with India's different cultural and social backdrop is Dalits. They are also equally enduring the pain of belonging to the lower class of society. They had not been imported from any other nation like the blacks. But, in their own country, they are alienated because of their fateful birth as Dalits. In a country like India, where there has been a subsistence of caste system over many centuries, Dalits became sacrificial scapegoats. For any society, there needs to be a substandard group for the ruling class to exercise power always. The most damnable violence imposed upon the Dalits is untouchability. The upper-caste Hindus consider strongly that there is something evil about the body of Dalits that is to be detested. Dalits are not allowed inside the house or even the territorial boundary of the higher caste people.

Pa. Idayavendan, in his book, *Dalit Aesthetics*, lists out the casteist prejudices done against the Dalits by the upper-class people in the society. As their destiny of being born into the socially downtrodden class, the Dalits have been enduring the merciless acts of their superiors in all walks of life. Making the Dalits consume the dead cow as their food is the essential brutality imposed by the ruling class. Other atrocities include separate burial grounds, separate bathing areas at the pond or river, prohibition of wearing slippers and jewels, and not being allowed to fetch water from the common well imposed on the oppressed community. Further, there are murders, slavery by the landowner and setting the huts on fire are other destructions the Dalits face.

Hence, in the second chapter, the indispensable forms of oppressions based on the customary and established codes, and the prejudices of the society are discussed. The starting point of all the oppressions is domestic sphere, and other oppressions spring out from the basic one. Since all the agencies such as home, society, culture, religion, and work spot are embedded, the predicament of the women is pathetic. All these oppressions may be common to other women in the society. Nevertheless, the racial prejudices and caste injustices are applicable to only the African-American and the dalit women.



### Chapter 3

## Language and Hegemony

Gramsci saw language as organically related to the unification of Italy as a nation. He (1971:325) argued for a national 'standard' Italian, to be used as a written and spoken language, by all Italians. At the same time he did not want people to relinquish their dialects. If language is to be viewed as a tool to unify society, then it is worth mentioning that, historically, Italy had a peculiar linguistic situation which lingered on into the twentieth century. Italy had a legacy of historical disunity resulting in the country's being broken up into many states and regions. In each state or region a different dialect was dominant. Because language is so strong a repository of culture and identity, even after unification in 1861 the Italian people identified themselves with the region or state that they lived in, for example Sardinia, rather than as belonging to a nation state. At unification, according to David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1985:165), only 2.5 percent of the population spoke Italian, a language which originated historically in medieval Florence. Florentine Tuscan was accepted by scholars in the sixteenth century as a model for Italian 'for reasons of its cultural prestige (Dante, etc.) and [it] developed thereafter in differing forms in the various regions' (Forgacs and Nowell-Smith 1985:165). The Italian language did not have a unifying effect on Italian society as it existed as a written literary language for a small 39 educated minority and not as a spoken language for everyday communication. Italian was spoken only on formal occasions by this educated minority. By the nineteenth century Italian had veered so far away from normal speech that Martin Maiden (1995:8) claims that it was considered a 'dead language' in Italy. The majority of the Italians spoke one of a large number of dialects and political unification intensified the need for linguistic standardisation. However, the process of finding and implementing a national language that was acceptable to the entire populace was difficult. A gigantic barrier to implementing a national language was a poorly developed media industry. Even the few regional newspapers that existed were printed in literary Italian, so that the general populace found them incomprehensible. Perhaps, though, the biggest hindrance to implementing a national

language was the fact that the language issue was not debated but continued to remain largely concealed. However, when Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) came to the fore he approached the government, asked for it to admit that there was a problem in effecting a national language in Italy and urged it to do something about this problem. The Italian government responded by asking Manzoni to conduct research on the language issue in Italy. His solution was:

All Italians will have to speak Tuscan [more specifically, the Florentine variety of Tuscan] and the Italian state will have to recruit its elementary teachers in Tuscany. Tuscan will be substituted for the numerous dialects spoken in the various regions and, with Italy formed, the Italian language will be formed too (Gramsci 1985:28).

Manzoni's reason for choosing Florentine as the new national language was similar to those offered in the sixteenth century: its historical and economic pre-eminence and the fact that Dante had written his *Divine Comedy* in it. Manzoni wanted a shared language for authors and reading audiences and he was determined that this common language should be entirely based on the 'living' language of Florence, free of any other dialects or those features of the older literary Italian not used in contemporary Florentine speech (Migliorini 1966:282). But Gramsci (1985:169) argued that, in effect, for most speakers, this 'new' Italian language was no different from the 'dead' classical literary Italian or a purely artificial language, since it was just as unfamiliar to them. Manzoni believed that in order for a manner of speaking to be considered to be a language, it must first establish a 'usage'. This required that it be used systematically every day by a community of speakers to express everything that they needed to say. To Manzoni, there existed no distinction between a dialect and a language, since to him both were validated by use and were simply methods of transmitting meaning. Also, in contrast to Gramsci (1985:178), Manzoni saw language and culture as quite separate. In Manzoni's analysis, culture was preexisting and separate from language. He also implied that people of a country already shared a culture. Therefore, to him, if the Italian people could be made to speak the same language then Italy would automatically become a nation. For

Manzoni, it appeared entirely logical just to choose a complete, well-formed language which displayed the required 'usage' and to require everyone to use it.

Both Ascoli's and Manzoni's theories of language acted as sounding boards for Gramsci's own thoughts on language. Unlike Manzoni, Gramsci (1985:28) argued that language should not be imposed on the populace but rather that the people should be actively engaged in developing a national language. Whilst he largely agreed with Ascoli's views on language, he knew that he had to be pragmatic. Gramsci evaluated what would work best for Italy – the adoption of one particular dialect as proposed by Manzoni or a language created by combining a wide number of dialects spoken in many regions and by various classes as proposed by Ascoli. Whilst Gramsci was attracted to the latter option he seems to have seen that this option might not work for Italy. For example, there would be a problem with synthesis as it would take an enormous amount of time to create a single language from the various dialects, when a short-term solution was needed. There were also too many dialects from which to choose. Gramsci accepted that no other language or dialect in existence in Italy at that time could be a real contender against Florentine. While he realised that it would be absurd to present some other dialect as a contender, he did suggest that rather than 45 speakers' passively accepting a language from above, what should take place should be a linguistic revolution in which all Italians would actively participate. The language issue in Italy resonates with that of South Africa in both its apartheid and post-apartheid eras.

Female authors have been integral to the American novel tradition since its inception, starting with Susanna Rowson's publication of *Charlotte Temple* in 1791. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, novels penned by women remained influential, exemplified by works such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig* (1859), Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), Willa Cather's *O Pioneers* (1913), Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960). Notably, these texts exhibit a distinct trend in the usage of nonstandard American dialects, a phenomenon that is of particular significance to my research, especially its evolution and prevalence in the 20th century. These novels and their authors contribute to a richly

diverse tradition in American literature, as exemplified by the publication of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), the primary focus of my thesis. Even during Walker's era, she was part of a cohort of contemporary women of color writers, including Audre Lord and Toni Morrison. This overview of novels authored by women underscores the ongoing expansion of the American literary canon to encompass a broader array of voices, including those from the marginalized segments of society.

The features of powerless language were first analyzed in the early 1970s. The term was first coined as “Women’s Language” by Robin Lakoff (1973). In Lakoff’s initial analysis she already doubted whether she could pinpoint these linguistic features to a single variable such as sex. Within a decade, Erickson, Lind, Johnson, and O’Barr (in 1978) and O’Barr and Atkins (in 1980), researchers studying women’s language (WL) in the courtroom, found that male witnesses used WL features as well. This led O’Barr and Atkins to suggest “renaming the concept ‘powerless’ language due to its close association with persons having low social power” which is “a condition that can apply to men as well as women.” (O’Barr and Atkins 94) This change removes the sex bias and also indicates the situational impact on when speakers do or do not employ features of this register.

The linguist, all language variations are equal. No one dialect or language is linguistically superior to another. However, the standard dialect brings prestige and notions of correctness from the speakers of that dialect. This prestige artificially promotes the standard variety and leads other speakers to believe that all other dialects are nonstandard and inferior. So, one way to understand powerful language is to equate the standard dialect to powerful language.

This chapter gives the exploration and application of Gramsci’s linguistic concepts and language in the service of political and social analysis. His attention to language in the *Prison Notebooks* is an integral element in his understanding of power dynamics within society. It deals with several concepts that Gramscian scholarship has shown as central to hegemony: philosophy, intellectuals, culture and subalternity. As we saw, language – as both a metaphor and a topic – is inseparable from how Gramsci understands these concepts.

Brass proceeds to argue that class consciousness alone as an important aspect of the subaltern (in Gramscian terms) perhaps did not and could not inform the notion of the 'subaltern' in the case of the Indian peasantry because "ethnic/gender/religious/regional identity and experience" refract the concept of class in Indian society (Mapping 135).<sup>21</sup> Thus, the Subaltern Studies group from its very inception employed the word 'subaltern' to imply class identity along with other aspects of socio-cultural-political identities<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, Gyan Prakash in his appraisal of the Subaltern Studies series identifies the "deployment of the concept of subalternity" as the most crucial contribution of the new historiography. According to Prakash, Guha, the founding editor of the series, "views subalternity as an essential object in place of class – an effect of power relations and expressed through a variety of means – linguistic, economic, social and cultural" (Mapping 179).

Julia Penelope tells us that our perceptions and descriptions of the world are specifically male perceptions and descriptions, rather than that of everyone in our culture. For support of her argument, males "have been the most vocal and visible when it comes to naming the world" (47). She views males as being the most dominating and controlling, whereas women who act feminine are "devalued" and "trivialized" (49). However, if women behave as they wish, they are recognized as "non-women" (49). For Penelope, there is this apparent hierarchy in culture, that clearly doesn't treat women as fairly or equally as men.

"The Patriarchal Universe of Discourse," Julia Penelope writes of instances of where she was "perceived, described, related to, and judged according to the ideas, assumptions and values of a world view" of which she didn't fit (Penelope 36). By using the phrase "didn't fit," it can be interpreted to symbolize that not just her, but all females don't fit.

She seems to believe that males are seen to be more superior than females in our society due to the notion that males believe they have the right to control and dominate and Penelope also believes that our society does not contain many roles for women to uphold.

From the above text it is clear that the linguistic space has always remained a prerogative male domain since the origin of language. The appropriation of language by men to perpetuate patriarchy has also remained unchanged. Many of the female texts are interrogative enough to put into perspective phallogocentrism. If language controls the unconscious and the very human existence, then it naturally becomes the centre that holds the human psyche, the society, and the civilization at large. In spite of the proliferation of languages, they find it wellnigh impossible to escape from the male dominance.

Language becomes a powerful tool and a weapon to communicate and control the subjects of the ruling class. As a result, language subjugates the economically, politically, and socially less powerful. The whole process of signification (and) or enunciation has become an exclusive andocentric activity. A woman is always excluded from governance, communication, and interpretation of signs and symbols. Even the sacred texts became the exclusivist reading domain of the male of the species. To break the strangle hold of the language by men; women have to wage a relentless battle over the centuries. The recorded history reveals that in most families, clans, tribes, and nations, diglossic varieties of language -the demotic and the classic varieties existed. While the men had controlled and had access to the traditional form of speech, the women had to do with the demonic type. The continued male authority over the language and the production of texts created a social dichotomy between the educated and the uneducated classes.

Gramsci is emphatic in his assertion that philosophy is common to all men. While initiating a discussion on the study of philosophy, he says:

It must first be shown that all men are 'philosophers,' by defining the limits and characteristics of the 'spontaneous philosophy' which is proper to everybody. This philosophy is contained in: (1) language itself, which is a totality of determined notions and concepts and not just of words grammatically devoid of content; (2) 'Common Sense' and 'Good Sense', (3) Popular Religion. (SPN, pg 323)

The conclusive segment of the *Prison Notebooks by Gramsci* is expressly devoted to the intricate examination of grammatical structures, revealing compelling evidence that the foundational roots of the hegemonic concept are deeply embedded within the realm of Italian linguistics. Gramsci's approach to language and 'matter' does not assume that these two things are inimical nor does it privilege one at the others expense. (Peter Ives ,pp. 57)

"Mr. 's final dialogue with a male character is an unnamed man that Celie and Harpo brought around to introduce to Celie. Mr. 's function in this speech is to scare him off by announcing his status as Celie's husband"(The Colour Purple).

The quantitative data reflects that the dialect data show that Celie's empowerment, which is undeniable in the novel, is manifested linguistically through a decrease (but not erasure) of AAVE usage. It is also matched by her linguistic growth in conversations, as demonstrated in my powerful feature data. These data and analysis shows how a linguistic analysis of literature can aid in more traditional methods of literary criticism. A large part of scholarship on The Color Purple focuses on Celie's growth and attributes it to different facets of the novel. My analysis supports these arguments and quantifies how the empowerment is manifested linguistically. It discuss Celie's dialect in the novel and how it connects to her empowerment. It theorizes what the powerful features represent in Walker's characterization of men and women. , it is evident that Celie, with her nonstandard dialect, does not fit into society's designation of powerful, overtly prestigious language. Although my discussion of covert prestige in Chapter 3 demonstrates that there is some in-group power to be gained through the usage of AAVE, this power, rendered by covert, in-group prestige, does not transfer to the larger scope of society.

Nonstandard dialects, such as AAVE, do not have prestige in wider society, but they can have covert prestige within their speech community. Covert prestige is a "prestige (of a linguistic variety or form) which is derived from its importance in group interaction." (Wardhaugh 401.) Through Celie's epistles, Walker is demonstrating "that the ability to articulate thoughts and feelings both orally and in written form lends authority, agency, and identity to characters." (Bhat 116)

The way that characters address one another is an indication of the power dynamic between them. Celie does not use last names for the men around her, but she does use them with unmarried women. This is why the audience knows of Sofia Butler, Shug Avery, and Miss Beasley but only knows of Harpo, Mr.\_, and Grady (Atkins 58). The speakers with more power in a conversation have more terms available to them to address their interlocutors. They can use first names and second person pronouns. The speaker with less power will address the other with titles—or titles and last names—instead. Early on in the narrative, Pa refers to Celie and Nettie's schoolteacher by her first and last name, when he tells his daughters "whoever listen to anything Addie Beasley have to say." (Walker 10) This is contrasted by Celie's consistent use of Mr.\_ instead of Albert for most of the novel. This difference in naming is another way to delineate their power, in addition to the quantity of speech.

Though women belonged to the ruling class or the patrician families, they were still excluded from the community of the educated. As a result, the status of women remained unchanged for too long, whichever social group they belonged to. Women, on their part, had to create a language of their own necessarily. This language, which was handed down from one generation to another, contained a rich source of folklore, myths, folkways, ethnographic details, and above all, what is termed in modern times as Orature. Later, faithful attempts were made to record and collect women's ballads, folk songs, and stories. However, the men described them as "Low Literature" instead of "High Literature", like epics and tragedies.

The muting of women, whether patrician or plebeian, is not merely a function of class, but a symptom of entrenched cultural structures that render female subjectivity invisible across social hierarchies. In Raymond Williams's framework of **cultural materialism**, culture is not an autonomous domain but one shaped by material conditions, and within this terrain, dominant ideologies perpetuate silence across all female strata. As Williams observes, "Culture must be interpreted as the actual lived experiences of people," not as abstractions (Williams 19). This insight reveals how both the aristocratic woman, confined by the etiquette of silence and propriety, and the subaltern woman, gagged by caste, coloniality, or poverty, are



denied linguistic agency. Gayatri Spivak's critique in *Can the Subaltern Speak?* reinforces this by illustrating that the subaltern woman is doubly muted—first by patriarchy and then by imperial epistemologies that claim to represent her (Spivak 287). Similarly, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* offers a modernist articulation of upper-class feminine entrapment, showing how the patrician woman, too, suffers from institutionalized muteness under the guise of psychological repression. On the other hand, Bama's *Karukku* powerfully demonstrates how Dalit Christian women are denied voice in both religious and cultural spheres, illustrating the intersection of caste and gender-based silencing. These instances align with Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, wherein even subordinate groups often internalize dominant values, making their silence appear natural or inevitable. Thus, the cultural silencing of women is a systemic act—one that transcends class, and is embedded within the symbolic economy of culture itself.

On February 8, 1929 when Gramsci entered his first note in his Prison Notebooks and at some stage in 1935, at a clinic in Formia, he made his last entry. The first note was entitled 'On Poverty, Catholicism, and the Papacy'. In this article Gramsci contrasted Church teaching on poverty to that of the philosophy of 'praxis' (Gramsci's code for Marxism). His last major entry in the Prison Notebooks dealt with Dante's recognising language as an instrument which could liberate people. These two entries in the Notebooks point to the variety of topics that he wrote about in this text. In fact, during his sojourn in prison he went on to write 2,848 closely-packed pages on a wide range of subjects in thirty-three notebooks which undercut the infamous statement made by Michele Isgro, the prosecutor at Gramsci's trial: 'We must prevent this brain from functioning for twenty years' (Germino 1990:198).

Because Celie and her dialect are inextricably linked, when Celie is empowered, so is her dialect. By using AAVE in a situation where the standard dialect is usually called for, Walker is demonstrating the wide applications of this dialect. The dominant narratorial voice is AAVE as represented in Celie's 69 epistles, but it is contrasted with Nettie's 22 letters written in almost pure Standard American English (SAE). By contrasting these two characters and their voices, Walker expresses her "primary concern [which] is to preserve the black cultural

heritage and to challenge the superiority of Standard English.” Hsiao, “(Language, Gender, and Power,” 113)

With the advent of the feminist practices, many of these subdued voices were recognized as subaltern voices and given the pride of place in the literary space. Generally speaking, language is acquired during the development of humans and produced effectively to articulate the internalized experiences of life and various dimensions of knowledge of the external world. The mind is the reservoir of different empirical accounts of existence, including society, culture, and religion. It is also true that language is the crucial identity marker that has the power to bestow diverse grades upon individuals as well as groups in the society.

According to the Natural-Sound Source theory stated by Frederick T. Wood, because of the origin of language, the beginnings of human speech evolved from natural sounds in the world associated with the imitating tendency of human beings. . There was a time when humans could communicate with animals through sounds. While humans could progress into a structured system of communication, animals could not seem to have developed the efficiency for verbal communication.

In a scene from the end of the novel, Celie and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ are both sitting on the porch smoking and sewing, something that would have been unbelievable at the beginning of the novel when Celie was completely under Mr. \_\_\_\_’s thumb. Before she goes to Memphis,

Celie confronts him and fights against her subordinate position; she enters creation as a woman free from her patriarchal prison. Mr.\_\_\_\_ tries to reassert his power when Celie is leaving by threatening to “fix her wagon!”(Walker, *The Color Purple*, 207)He tells her she is not getting any of his money to help her live in Tennessee, to which she rhetorically asks him “did I ever ask you for money? (Walker, 201)

Language is spontaneous, natural, inbuilt, and acquired habitually by humankind, though many linguists focus on the formal learning of languages. Mainly based on a cogent pedestal of principles, rules and constraints, language determines various

factors of an individual. It has the power to decide the identity of a human being, the role of a person in a community, and the nation where they belong. Social factors resolve the linguistic behaviour of an individual. In a modernized, sophisticated society, socially inferior, or sometimes “bad language”, is plausible. The dominant ideology of the ruling class in a society adjudicates the linguistic roles of the subordinate group. When language is related to power, it becomes a brutal weapon of the omnipotent superiors based on the hierarchical order of existence. The victims are implicitly marginalised and dismissed from the foreground linguistically. The ethnic minority speaks a language that almost debases them from the central core of life in a larger society. The powerful colonizers take possession of the mindset of the colonized and, consequently, the language. The heterogeneity and complexity of the language system tend to accomplish the goals of the colonizer by way of ethnic prejudice, value judgements, and social standing.

Language is an important immediate tool to perceive the world and interact with the other members of the society. A limited knowledge of a standard language of a place and confinement to the knowledge of a dialect necessarily limit one's worldview as there is no exposure to wider problems of society. This implies that "'language' is essentially a collective term which does not presuppose any single thing existing in time and space. Language also means culture and philosophy.(IBID, pg 349)

The chapter thus analyses the deviant language use, oral culture, lexical disparity (reflective of social iniquity), linguistic indecisiveness, language descriptive of the black and the Dalit women, and the presence or absence of genderlect. The women characters of Alice Walker and Pallanimuthu Sivakami encounter linguistic subjugation severely as they both belong to communities deemed to be lower in the socio-economic-political standings of their societies. The languages of the blacks and Dalits are considered demotic, as they do not speak or use the so-called ‘Standard Language’ of the dominant people. Remarkably, the women portrayed in the novels of Walker and Sivakami are captives of various dogmas of the society, for they belong to the lower echelons of society.

According to Gramsci,

language is an important means at the hands of intellectuals for 'cultural assimilation' so as to attain hegemony of the ruling class. Though 'every speaking being has personal language of his own, that is his own particular way of thinking and feeling', a social group has a public language which is nothing but the residue of the past cultures as well as influences of the culture prevalent in the particular society. A social group has a language that corresponds to the cultural level it has attained. (SPN,pg 349)

The social identity is further determined by the variety of the language one uses. Standard English being used in the US and the Standard Tamil has spoken in Tamil Nadu are the indicators of the social position. Being born black, as the "other" in a distant country, prolonged slavery, and economic and other forms of deprivation have added to the linguistic deficiency of the women characters. Belonging to the lowest strata in the country, being the untouchables cause much economical and emotional hardship in the life of the Dalits, resulting in the use of language indistinctly. While analyzing the discrepancies in the use of language by the oppressed women, it is to be contended that the social, political, cultural, economic, domestic, biological, and psychological state of affairs has a direct bearing and shows a way to linguistic oppression. Historical aspects also contribute heavily to the communicative incompetence of the subjugated women.

Language serves as a cultural progression for a social community, encapsulating tradition and diverse cultural components. It symbolizes a collective awareness spanning from the distant past to the present. According to the Gramscian perspective, culture holds significant influence, serving as a crucial instrument for asserting dominance over subordinate groups. The general and common functions of language postulated by a linguist, a man at that, when applied to the language of the subjugated women of Walker and Sivakami, sound like oddities. When a language had been the instrument of power in the hands of men for ages, women did not dare to venture out narrating or describing their elusive experiences overtly. Domesticity

is the only resort for women to escape from their linguistic woes as well. There have been two different worlds and tongues for men and women. Women's cognitive domain is considered inferior to men as women's perceptions of the external world are highly compressed. When men have been equipped with their blatant experiences of the war fields, aviation adventures, sea explorations, and spiritual sainthood in polyphonic voices, women disillusion themselves by pondering trifling matters such as womanhood and wifehood relentlessly. The deconstruction of the language employed by the women of Alice Walker and Sivakami demonstrates the prevalence of anomalous features than the conventional usage by other women.

Developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), Social Identity Theory examines the psychological processes of social categorization, social identification, and social comparison, which underpin how individuals form group identities and perceive out-group members. It delves into the core mechanisms of SIT, including the ways in which social categorization shapes in-group/out-group distinctions, social identification strengthens group cohesion, and social comparison drives behaviors aimed at maintaining or enhancing group status. Through the lens of SIT, highlights the complexities of loyalty, prejudice, and intergroup conflict, offering insights into the factors that promote cooperation or rivalry between groups. The implications of SIT are examined in various contexts, including nationalism, workplace dynamics, and community integration, demonstrating its relevance in both local and global phenomena. SIT helps in understanding group behavior and provides directions for future research on the evolving nature of group identities in an increasingly interconnected world.

Tajfel (1978) helped to clarify the kinds of behaviours we might observe when we examine the interactions between two or more people or groups. According to Tajfel we can behave in response to our perception of individuals or as members of one or more groups. Thus Tajfel made a distinction between interpersonal and intergroup behaviour : "At one extreme (which most probably cannot be found in its "pure form" in "real life") is the interaction between two or more individuals that is .figy determined by their interpersonal relationships and individual characteristics, and not at all affected by various social groups or

categories to which they respectively belong. The other extreme consists of interactions between two or more individuals (or groups of individuals) which are fully determined by their respective memberships in various social groups or categories, and not at all affected by the interindividual personal relationships between the people involved" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 34, emphasis added). It is difficult to estimate the proportion of our everyday life and interactions with other people which can be classified as interpersonal or intergroup. Even if we consider Tajfel's suggestion to interpret these two characteristics as being the extremes of a continuum rather than two completely separate categories, at times we might have the impression that the balance is shifted toward the intergroup side of the continuum, and other times toward the interpersonal one. For instance, we have an interpersonal interaction with someone we know well and of whom we know personal, individual characteristics. But anytime we meet with someone we do not know in such detail, we are more likely to have a more intergroup interaction. We simply fill in our knowledge of the person with attributes that we associate with the group to which the person belongs, and this simplifies our encounter.

The understanding of the self concept and of how people construct their identity is a very difficult task and constitutes an area of research in its own rights. However, Tajfel's definition of social identity as "the individual's awareness that she or he belongs to a certain social group together with the evaluative and emotional significance of that membership" (1981, p. 255) contributes to our understanding of the self concept.

In both Alice Walker's and Sivakami's works, language signifies more than communication—it's deeply tied to identity (race, caste, gender). SIT helps analyze how marginalized groups (like Black women in the U.S. or Dalit women in India) **identify themselves through distinct linguistic or cultural expressions**, challenging dominant discourses. Gramsci's theory of **cultural hegemony** shows how dominant groups maintain power by controlling language, education, and cultural norms. Using SIT, we see how subordinate groups might internalize inferiority (through **negative social comparison**), or resist it by **reclaiming their identity** through language and narrative (like in *The Color Purple* or *The Grip of Change*). Both Walker and Sivakami create narratives where women resist linguistic and cultural domination.

SIT provides a lens to see how these characters **construct new social identities**, thereby **undermining hegemonic power structures**, echoing Gramsci's idea of counter-hegemony.

The origins of American women writers employing nonstandard dialect can be traced back to the nineteenth century, although critics don't directly link Walker's tradition to these earliest instances. According to Madhu Dubey, Walker's exploration of narrative voice was enabled by Gayl Jones's novels from the 1970s, particularly *Corregidora* (1975) and *Eva's Man* (1976), which initially validated the use of black women's vernacular speech as a legitimate literary language. Alongside Dubey's observations, there exist numerous other significant instances of nonstandard dialect in literature. For instance, in the nineteenth century, Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills* (1861) provides another notable example.

The linguistic and the paralinguistic characteristics of the black women characters and the Dalit women have some commonalities that express their shared nature of oppression and alienation for an extended period from the mainstream of life. The various forms of subjectivity impelled through the indubitable factors like socio-cultural, economic, physical and psychical elements discussed in the previous chapters have a substantial impact on the language used by the underprivileged women of Alice Walker and Sivakami.

In Gramsci's perspective, culture and the surrounding environment play a crucial role. The distinctiveness associated with an individual is influenced by the environmental conditions in which they are raised. Similarly, a philosopher's specific personality is shaped by their interaction with the cultural milieu.

Gramsci articulates this concept by stating,

The historical personality of an individual philosopher is also shaped by the active relationship between him and the cultural environment he aims to transform." This connection, termed by Gramsci as the "master-pupil relationship," signifies the dynamic interplay between the philosopher and the cultural context in which they operate,

extracting essential challenges for formulation and resolution. (SPN 349)

By words, concepts and metaphors, women have been equated with powerlessness globally. Men alone seem to have the power to use language to persuade people around them (weak men, children and women), and women seem to lack verbal superiority to dictate terms or negotiate power. It is evident that when a woman holds political power and exercises control over men, sometimes she inevitably attracts verbal assaults. There is marked bigotry between the use of language by men and women. Since the study aims to discuss the agony of the women at different levels of life, the language adopted by the women unconsciously in their discourse is discussed. In the world of language magnified by men alone, the miserable women discover themselves to be outsiders. Their inadequacy at different levels of life predetermines their linguistic deficiency too. There are three categories of verbal oppression to be studied. The first and foremost is the unusual and unique system of language (deviant as opposed to the norm prescribed by patriarchy) used by the blacks in America and the Dalits in Tamilnadu. There is a definite system of communicative strategy evolved by the marginalized people to fulfill their linguistic needs.

Philosophy involves shaping one's view of the world. However, according to Gramsci,

engaging in philosophical activity goes beyond simply developing systematically coherent concepts. To Gramsci philosophical activity "is a cultural battle to transform the popular 'mentality' and to diffuse the philosophical innovation which will demonstrate themselves to be 'historically true' to the extent that they become concretely, i.e., historically and socially - universal. (Ibid., p.348)

Gramsci here speaks about the activities, which can be called as philosophical. He agrees with the fact that all conception of the world are philosophies, but philosophical activities are not simply analyzing the concepts in a systematic, coherent way but it is a battle of cultures, that is, (SPN, pp.350-351 Ibid., p.348) the



sediments of the traditional, popular cultures which have provided the fragmentary frameworks of thought with the other elements of the dominant culture, but resulting in the universal acceptance of such philosophical innovations, which are proved to be true, in time (historically true) and socially acceptable. This leads to the creation of a new culture. It is only "a diffusion in a critical form of truths already discoursed, their 'socialization' as it were, and even making them the basis of vital action, an element of co-ordination and intellectual and moral order." This is also a philosophical activity which finds a basis for activity, and means of intellectual advancement and basis of moral order. Spontaneous philosophy is "simply a generic term for grouping together the set of sentiments, ways of living and thinking that are specific to the subaltern strata, and it paves the way for a new and specifically Gramscian object: a history of the subaltern strata." (Gramsci and the State, p.225)

The second viewpoint is the relativity of the language of the women. To borrow Julia Penelope's terms, the CUD (Cosmetic Universe of Discourse) is relative to the PUD (Patriarchal Universe of discourse), especially in the domain of the lexicons of the domineering men folk and the privileged women of the society. It can be concluded that the women have been undervalued and addressed with gender-specific terms in most situations of their life. For the third level of analysis, the figurative language and linguistic materials used in the oral tradition of the women to represent their psychic disposition have been taken up.

Gramsci (1971:21) considered it worth studying the configuration of what he called 'negro intellectuals', whom he claimed had absorbed American culture and technology. He (1971:21) saw the 'negro intellectuals' as being agents of influence on what he termed 'backward masses' in Africa if one or another of these hypotheses were used:

1. that American expansion should use American negroes as its agents in the conquest of the African market and the extension of American civilisation (something of the kind has already happened, but I don't know to what extent);
2. that the struggle for the unification of the American people should intensify in such a way as to provoke a negro exodus and the return to Africa of the most

independent and energetic intellectual elements, the ones, in other words, who would be least inclined to submit to some possible future legislation that was even more humiliating than are the present widespread social customs. This development would give rise to two fundamental questions: 1. linguistic: whether English could become the educated language of Africa, bringing unity in the place of the existing swarm of dialects? 2. whether this intellectual stratum could have sufficient assimilating and organising capacity to give a “national” character to the present primitive sentiment of being a despised race, thus giving the African continent a mythic function as the common fatherland of all negro peoples? It seems to me that, for the moment, American negroes have a national and racial spirit which is negative rather than positive, one which is a product of the struggle carried on by the whites in order to isolate and depress them (Gramsci 1971:21).

Gramsci's suggestions in the passage contradict some important points he has made about the Italian situation. Firstly, he advocates that ‘American negroes’ return to Africa to spread ‘American civilisation’. If this came to fruition then the African people would lose their national spirit and cultures and would end up adopting a foreign culture. Yet, when it involved Italy, he was scathingly critical of the cosmopolitanism of intellectuals. Secondly, it is difficult to fathom why he states that if ‘the unification of the American people should intensify [it might] ... provoke a negro exodus and a return to Africa’. It is not easy to understand this statement as many of the Africans were offspring of the African slaves and were American citizens. Thirdly, he suggests that the returning Africans could introduce English, which might become the unifying language in Africa. This is different from what he proposed for Italy where, despite seeing the necessity of a national language, he believed that the people themselves should create a common language without its being imposed on them.

Physical appearance and language use are any African-American's two primary identification markers. The blacks possess explicit physical features and uncommon ways of using the language. The women are likely to index their ethnicity through the languages by following certain strategic norms of discourse and participating in other forms of communal linguistic expression. In his web page on

the ten socio linguistic axioms of language, Prof. Peter L Patrick, University of Essex, remarks that all the rules regarding the standard language and the writing-based norms enriched the elite group of the community, and it will be the case in the future too. He further specifies that the terminology also gets the bias or oppression in relation to the discrimination performed against the speakers, and there is a complex and dynamic relationship between language and ethnicity. Language becomes a means of self-established via media that helps forge group identity, solidarity and pride. In this way, the African Americans who had been forced to live in an alienated soil for a long time began evolving a new variety of language among their community to voice their apprehensions and views of life.

The enslaved Africans were forcibly brought to America, and they were using many of their native languages among them. Later, there arose a need for them to communicate with their masters in many contexts. Subsequently, for practical purposes of the language, "creolization" and later "de-creolization" took place. "When a Pidgin develops beyond its role as a trade language and becomes the first language of a social community, it is described as a Creole."

It is likely that this divide between literary criticism and stylistics explains why linguistic analyses of literature are uncommon. A cursory look already shows that linguistic and sociolinguistic approaches to literature are few and far between. Fennell and Bennett noticed this trend in 1991: "Far too few researchers have taken advantage of the fundamental tools of sociolinguistics for the direct analysis of individual texts." (18)

Since its publication in 1982, *The Color Purple* has been widely discussed. However, few of these analyses focus on the novel from a linguistic perspective. That is not altogether surprising considering that stylistics (the linguistic analysis of literature) has a contentious place in literary criticism. In part, this thesis aims to bridge the gap between linguistics and literary criticism by demonstrating how linguistics can aid in literary analysis. More specifically, however, the objective is to answer the following research question: How does Alice Walker use language variation and for what purpose? My claim is that Alice Walker uses language variation to negotiate power, construct her characters' identities, challenge the

dominant culture, and expand the range of voices to be heard in American literature. In this corpus, I analyzed dialect usage and dialogue. The data quantify the language variation over the course of the novel. What I found was that Celie's nonstandard dialect usage drops slightly over the course of the novel and she grows quantitatively in her conversations. Both of these represent her empowerment in her language. Ultimately, African American Vernacular English is a way for Celie and Walker to identify themselves and orient their position among speakers and authors who use Standard American English.

Even when Walker was writing this novel, she was in the company of other contemporary women writers of color, including Audre Lord and Toni Morrison. This brief history of novels written by women illustrates how the literary tradition in the United States has continued to expand to include more diverse voices from the margins of American society.

Over a period of time, the black Americans tended to use a separate dialect of English called "AAVE - African American Vernacular English". There are some standardized nomenclatures such as "BEV-Black Vernacular English", "Ebonics", and some other informal names such as "creolised English", "Pan- African Language", and "Negro-dialect" to refer to the same language created by the African Americans.

To analyse the noteworthy grammatical features of AAVE in the black women's communication, some of the observations recorded by Carmen Fought in her book *Language and Ethnicity* are taken as guideposts. When the functional grammar of Standard English is taken as the yardstick, the deviations of the usage in the grammatical aspects of Black English can be documented with no difficulty. The discourses of the novels' marginalised and alienated women are taken for analysis, though AAVE is common both to the black men and the women. While discussing the syntactic features, the following ones are to be identified. The first aspect that firmly declares the African-American usage is the absence of the third person singular -s marking in the present tense. Standard English is not employed both in written and spoken English of the African - Americans.

Dear god

He come home with a girl from round Gray. She be my age but they married. He be on her all the time. She walk round like she don't know what hit her. I think she thought she love him. But he got so many of us. All needing something.

My little sister Nettie is got a boyfriend in the same shape almost as Paa. His wife died. She was kilt by her boyfriend coming home from church. He got only three children though. He seen Nettie in church and now every Sunday evening here come Mr... I tell Nettie to keep at her books. It be more than a notion taking care of children ain't even your. And look what happen to Ma. (Colour Purple Pg 14)

It is quite clear from the above examples that in AAVE, it is so natural and spontaneous to drop out the “be” forms of the verb, which is usually considered a grammatical error on the part of the learners of English. The third feature is the use of “ain’t” for negation. This is an inevitable usage of AAVE speakers. Albeit the presence of “ain’t” in other dialects, too, the credit of employing it to the maximum can be given to the AAVE speakers alone. Normally “ain’t” replaces different contracted verb forms like “isn’t”, “hasn’t”, “didn’t”, “won’t”, and “shouldn’t”. It won't be easy to understand the usage without the aid of the appropriate contexts. There are a lot of examples to be found in the novels of Alice Walker. It is empirical that the AAVE features are highly employed by all the black women and the various factors like age, social class, economic status, and emotional circumstances have definite impact upon the language.

It is mainly found in the speech of socially downtrodden and working-class speakers in urban areas and in informal circumstances of life. Further on, the attitudes of the women who employ the AAVE towards the language are complex and equivocal. India being a multilingual country, it becomes necessary to find the fundamental variations related to the socio-linguistic diversities. The Dalits subsist throughout India, speaking in different tongues. Sivakami hails from Tamil Nadu, the

southernmost part of India, where Tamil is the formal language used by the people of Tamilnadu.

One of the major South Indian languages like Telugu spoken in Andrapradesh, Kannada spoken in Karnataka, and Malayalam spoken in Kerala, Tamil has its own significance. All these three languages are entwined together because of the similarities they contain in some of the features of the language. Multiple dialectal variations are an excellent asset to Tamil because the dialects will facilitate the listeners to identify the speakers' social, regional, economic, and caste backgrounds. From the ancient times, dialects had been the unshaken strong base for the growth of the language. Depending upon the geographical and social space of a set of people, the dialects are classified. At the outset, the dialects of Tamil can broadly be categorised under two heads; social and regional. Social dialects depict the social status of the people, while the regional dialects represent the dialectal form of different communities belonging to various regions.

The social dialects of Tamilnadu can be grouped under three extensive categories of people. They are the unique dialect of the upper-class people, most preferably, the Brahminical dialect. Different dialects used by the people of various other castes of the state like Chettiar, Vannier, Nagaratar, Naicker, Pillai, Gounder, Vellalar, etc. - the demotic variety of dialects used by Harijans or Dalits or Adi Dravida. Each of the above categories has its minor divisions and minor variations depending upon the usage of the dialect. In the social hierarchy, the Brahmins, the priestly class, occupied the most superior position in ancient times.

Consequently, their dialect, a mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit, is prominent and distinctive from other dialects in lexis, syntax, and usage. Next to Brahmins, in the social ladder of hierarchy, emerge the people belonging to various castes, performing diverse respectable occupations in the society, living in multiple locations of Tamilnadu. The dialects used by these people may not be so sophisticated, scholarly, and philosophical as that of the Brahmins. Indeed, the dialects have the merit of their own and salient inimitable features with a unique lexicon, syntax, and phonological elements in accordance with factors such as the occupation of the people, socio-

economic status, cultural implications, and religious connotations. Thus, there are assorted varieties of the usages of the same language, Tamil, throughout Tamilnadu.

The third variety of social dialect is the language used by the people of the lowest strata. The Dalits' social status is such that their dialect is considered the most corrupt and the least sophisticated. Over an extended period, the Dalits had been exposed to all the possible evils of society and subjected to inhuman treatment. They were the untouchables, menial servants, hard farm labourers, scavengers, cleaners of a toilet, etc. It will be irrational to expect the language of the Dalits to be refined and polite as that of the other dialects of Tamil. On the other hand, there are regional dialects in Tamilnadu pertaining to the various geographical regions. There exist five regional dialects, according to Dr.Ko.Srinivasa Sharma.

They are

1. Northern Regional dialect, spoken in and around Chennai, the capital of Tamilnadu.
2. Eastern dialect, spoken by the people residing in Trichirappalli, Thanjavur and Karur.
3. Western form of dialect to be found in the South Western and the North-Western regions like Coimbatore, Erode, and Salem.
4. Southern dialect of Tamil, spoken by the people of Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Nagarkoil and Thuthukuddi.
5. A dialect of Tamil spoken in most of the regions of Sri Lanka, such as Colombo, Tiriconamalai and Mattakkalappu.

Gramsci was able to combine two approaches to language in a unique way that spoke to broad trends in Western society and various more specific concerns and uses of language. He pays great attention to language as a political issue, for example, to government policy around language, educational language curricula and everyday language practices. He combines this with the rich metaphorical power of linguistic concepts as tools to help analyse political circumstances, specifically the role of culture in shaping people's beliefs, behaviour and even their voting patterns.

It is easy to understand that large numbers of women entering the work force would have a direct influence on our use of language, with terms such as ‘chairman’ and ‘fireman’ changing to ‘chairperson’ and ‘firefighter’. But the increase of women’s wage labour is not the only reason why academic feminists have examined the complex implications of masculine structures of language and masculine hegemonies. Much of European linguistics at the time of Saussure’s death focused on tracing the history of word forms and attempting to determine the patterns in these changes. This is called diachronic change. To overly simplify one example, diachronic or historical linguists noted that many incidences of the ‘f’ sound in English and German are conversions of the ‘p’ sound in Latin (pater as in paternity changed to ‘f’ as in ‘father’). In short, linguistics was a historical science aimed at understanding how word forms had arisen and how they were related to one another across different languages and over time.

Despite many problems that Saussure’s writings raise, his basic paradigm – the idea that the social sciences should focus on structures and the synchronic interrelation of the elements – had a profound impact on a wide range of disciplines, most especially anthropology, sociology and social theory. Structuralism rejected previous traditions that tried to determine the content or essence in distinct phenomena. Instead structuralists showed how it is the relations among elements that define those elements and give them the characteristics that are important. In this sense, there are important similarities with the ‘linguistic turns’ in philosophy and literature.

For Gramsci, language is not an abstract or overly philosophical topic. Unlike many other social theorists, Gramsci’s interest in language grew out of practical and everyday experiences as a Sardinian. Linguistic differences and the ‘standardization’ of Italian was a practical concern that resonated with political overtones. Gramsci grappled with a complex tension between his mother tongue, Sardinian, and his second language, Italian. His position was far from simple. He argued for a national ‘standard’ Italian but did not want speakers to relinquish their dialects. While he understood the connection between local vernaculars and parochial world-views, he



did not simply connect national Italian with modernization and progress. These tensions between dialects and national language parallel his own political development from a Sardinian outraged by the injustices he witnessed and experienced firsthand to a leader of the Italian Communist Party and an inmate of a Fascist prison.

In his prison writings, Gramsci traced the roots of Fascism in the history of Italian unification and the lack of integration of the masses, especially the southern peasantry (which for him included Sardinian peasants). The history of language in Sardinia and Italy are integrally related to the social and political histories of Italy and Gramsci's home island. The major innovation that Gramsci makes to our understanding of civil society, which make it so important for a theory of hegemony, is the way in which he reconfigures the concept of the 'superstructural' (Texier 1979). Whereas Marx posited a base/structure conception, with civil society being the 'superstructural' site of historical development (but ultimately 'determined' by the base), Gramsci extends the distinction to argue that civil society is more than just superstructural, but is the essential terrain of historical development.

Instead of justifying ideologies emerging from the base into the realm of civil society, for Gramsci the 'ideas' are contemporaneous, emerging in civil society, so that man acts on structures rather than structures acting deterministically on man. Bobbio argues that "it is the active subject Gramsci at the Margins (42) who recognises and pursues the end, and who operates within the superstructural phase using the structure itself as an instrument. Therefore the structure is no longer the subordinating moment of history, but it becomes the subordinate one" (Bobbio 1979: 34).

In Gramsci's words:

Structure ceases to be an external force which crushes man, assimilates him to himself and make him passive; and is transformed into a means of freedom, an instrument to create a new ethico-political form and a source of new initiatives. (Prison Notebooks)

To establish the ‘cathartic’ moment becomes therefore, it seems to me, the starting point for all the philosophy of praxis” (Gramsci 1971: 367). This is the practice of hegemony, a hegemony that occurs in the realm of ideas, in the “minds of men” (Gramsci 1971: 367, Q10II §6i). Thus, man is an active subject, and the structures of human life do not exist separately from the thinking of them, and so the question of consciousness, the nature of human subjectivity, is essential to understanding society as it is, and what it can become. If hegemony is constituted in civil society, and if civil society is superstructural, then the means of civil society is language. Peter Ives’s recent work on language and hegemony has shown the complexity of Gramsci’s thought on the topic of language, on linguistics, on its relation to social practices and to the creation of a national-popular ‘sentiment’ (Ives 2004a; Ives 2004b; Ives 2005). This content cannot be a comprehensive analysis of Gramsci’s varied approaches to the ‘questione della lingua’ but it does seek to make particular connections between language and hegemony, linking language back to civil society and its role in the construction of subjectivity.

In a way, Gramsci makes this link himself: We have established that philosophy is a conception of the world, and that philosophical activity is not to be conceived solely as the ‘individual’ elaboration of systematically coherent concepts, but also and above all as a cultural battle to transform the popular ‘mentality’ and to diffuse the philosophical innovations which will demonstrate themselves to be ‘historically true’ to the extent that they become concretely – i.e. historically and socially – universal. Given this, the question of language in general and of languages in the technical sense must be put in the forefront of our enquiry. Three themes emerge from this paragraph.

Firstly, that seemingly incoherent and non-rational conceptions of the world are not to be dismissed in the analysis of society and history. Secondly that these conceptions of the world, including the nature of self-identity, are constructed and contested on the terrain of civil society, through language, in all its forms. And thirdly, that this is the essence of the hegemonic process – the struggle over meaning, over conceptions of the world, over what is normal, acceptable, truthful, ‘universal’ in

social relations. Of course, in an ethico-political hegemony, this 'truth' exists in the form of unstable equilibria, where meaning is never settled, nor even universal, but firmly grounded in the specific and particular conceptions of the world. In the philosophy of praxis, where the aim is the 'hegemony of the proletariat' this is the process of 'war of position': the careful and patient articulation of a conception of the world which does not disconnect groups or together with the Southern Question one of the significant problems facing the newly unified Italy in 1861 was its practical lack of a 'standard' language.

It is estimated that in 1861, only somewhere between two and a half and twelve per cent of the new Italian population spoke anything that could be called 'standard' Italian. In other words, the very existence of Italian as a spoken language of daily life is questionable. Literary Italian was primarily a written language of the elite. It was not used by large numbers of people. The spoken languages of 'Italian' were more like a family of Latin dialects with greater and lesser influences from other languages such as the pre-Roman Etruscan, French, Spanish and German. Sardinian was particularly distant from literary Italian. Added to this lack of a 'standard Italian' was the very high illiteracy rate of about 75 per cent throughout Italy. The question della lingua, or the 'Language Question' is connected to the Southern Question, as exhibited by the fact that in Sardinia the illiteracy rate was 90 per cent.

The lack of a truly national language was not unique to Italy. For example, French historians have noted that in the middle of the nineteenth century, French was a foreign language to about half the French citizens, a situation that the government played an active role in changing.<sup>(10)</sup> But while the Italian case was not exceptional, it was extreme. Many Italians saw this as a deficiency, looking to France as a model of a nation-state and bemoaning their lack of a capital like Paris. The history of Italian unification is also bound up with the relation between the Catholic Church's religious and social authority emanating from Rome and the political authority of the government. But here, we must limit ourselves to the question of language.

One of the themes that would occupy Gramsci's life germinated at an early age: what is the relationship between the struggle of the working class against capitalism and the peasants' poor conditions and rebellion? As we shall discuss later, this was the beginnings of his influential writings on the North–South relationship, the Southern Question and 'subalternity'

– meaning the condition of subjection and subordination. While he later came to embrace Marx's argument that the industrialized working class was the group that had the potential to lead a revolution against capitalism, he also remained committed to the argument that any such revolution would fail, in early twentieth century Italy at least, if it did not also include the peasantry and other subaltern social groups.

This is necessary not just because it provides some details of one part of Gramsci's intellectual background; there are two more important reasons why it is central for introducing Gramsci's work. The first is that Gramsci initially became familiar with a well-developed and complex concept of 'hegemony' as it was being used in linguistics. In his note on the "Problem of Collective Man", for example, Gramsci wrote

that the aim of the state "is always that of creating new and higher types of civilization: of adapting the civilization and the morality of the broadest popular masses to the necessities of the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production: hence of evolving even physically new types of humanity. (Gramsci 1971: 242)

This was not a simple process, firstly because Gramsci saw quite clearly that people were not determined simply by the economic circumstances into which they were born, rather people were made at the intersection of many different influences on thought and action: "man cannot be conceived of except as historically determined man – i.e., man who has developed, and who lives, in certain conditions, in a particular social complex or totality of social relations" (Gramsci 1971: 244, Q15 §10) and that this social totality consists of the variety of influences and associations

which are sometimes contradictory (Gramsci 1971: 265, Q14 §13) but which all contribute to the formulation of a particular conception of the world (Gramsci 1971: 324). Secondly he argued that people were still free to choose their way of being in the world and that this complicated the matter further, that is “the will and initiative of men themselves cannot be left out of account” (Gramsci 1971: 244).

In the same way that Marx argued that men made themselves but not in circumstances of their own choosing, so Gramsci was aware of the tension between structures and human agency. But for Gramsci, the situation is more complex because of the importance he gave to the dialectic in hegemony. While it may be the case that a particular hegemony may require a particular kind of person, it is also true that people themselves shape hegemony: “Every man, in as much as he is active, i.e. living, contributes to modify the social environment in which he develops (to modifying certain of its characteristics or to preserving others); in other words, he tends to establish “norms”, rules of living and of behaviour” (Gramsci 1971: 265) and in so doing “reacts upon the State and the party, compelling them to reorganize continually and confronting them with new and original problems to solve” (Gramsci 1971: 267). In some notes on “The Study of Philosophy”, Gramsci differentiates however, between ways of thinking and being which he classifies as common sense as opposed to philosophy. If common sense is the world view which a person takes uncritically from their environment, philosophy is the ability to be self-reflective, self-critical.

Gramsci holds an interesting role within debates between Marxism and postmodernism. Although it is difficult to demonstrate conclusively, his unique position seems in part due to the complexities surrounding the ways in which language, ideas and beliefs relate to the more tangible domains of economic production and the control of wealth and resources. In this way, the questions raised by debates around postmodernism continue to be important for understanding and utilizing theories about new social movements and globalization. (Peter.pg 126)

Marxist critics of postmodernism often focus on the opposition between the materialist perspective of Marx, especially his focus on the economy, and oppose it

to postmodernism, which often focuses on language, text, discourse and culture. Likewise, critics of 'orthodox' Marxism, whether postmodernist, post-Marxist or something else, often argue that Marx's and Marxism's obsession with the economy and production is too narrow and outdated for addressing current political and social dynamics. Gramsci has been used to play both sides of the field. Some see him as a Marxist who pays adequate attention to culture and the noneconomic aspects of power relations. Others see him as still too mired in Marxism, production and the economy, so much so that he is not useful for understanding 'new social movements' since he presupposes that any revolutionary change must be led by an industrial working class. Many of these debates are premised on a basic distinction between language as a nonmaterial entity and the economy, production and commodities as non-linguistic, 'material' entities. Culture is such an interesting concept because it travels on both sides of this distinction. My contention is that among other attractive features of Gramsci's writings is his refusal to accept the assumed opposition between the materiality of the economy and commodities versus the non-materiality of language, signification and communication. (Peter, Language and Hegemony ,Pg 127)

Gramsci argues: ...

matter should be understood neither in the meaning that it has acquired in natural science (physics, chemistry, mechanics, etc. – meanings to be noted and studied in terms of the historical development), nor in any of the meanings that one finds in the various materialistic metaphysics. The various physical (chemical, mechanical, etc.) properties of matter which together constitute matter itself ... should be considered, but only to the extent that they become a productive 'economic element.' Matter as such therefore is not our subject but how it is socially and historically organised for production. (Ives Pg127- 128 Language and Hegemony in Gramsci)

This passage does not mention language or the non-material. Nor does it present a relativist epistemology. Indeed, it is preoccupied with the 'economic', the question of

production. But Gramsci here rejects a crude materialist perspective in favour of a social and historical perspective. It is this perspective that opens up the crucial questions relating to the organization of meaning, value and communication when looking at production. From our historical vantage point, given the technological developments begun in Gramsci time, it is easy to see that the 'economic' characteristics of many increasingly important commodities – television shows, computer programs and brand names themselves – are difficult to conceptualize as 'material' in the sense of physical properties as studied by the natural sciences outside human relations of meaning. (Ives, pg 127)

Nietzsche's perspective on language as not referring to an ultimate non-linguistic truth aligns with his broader philosophical stance on perspectivism and the absence of absolute truths. He posited that language is not a mere tool for labeling objective realities in the world, but rather a construct shaped by human interpretations, biases, and perspectives. This aligns with the themes discussed in the chapter, which likely explore the idea that language is not a neutral medium but is influenced by cultural, historical and individual contexts. (Ives, pg 132)

Jacques Derrida's philosophy of 'deconstruction' is based on the idea that language is unstable. He argues, as Saussure and many structuralists do, that the way we make meaning in language is through differences, specifically series of binary distinctions such as presence/absence, male/female, black/white, up/down. But against structuralism, Derrida argues that such systems of differences can always be 'deconstructed' since they are inherently unstable. (Ives, pg 132)

'Discourse' is derived from the Latin *discursus*, 'running to and fro'. It can mean the process of reasoning, most narrowly from premise to consequence, but also a discussion or conversation. Today, in common language it is most often used to mean a treatise or systematic written document about a given topic, such as Descartes' *Discourse on Method*. They are specific groups of concepts and ways of thinking about some domain, but are larger than a single book or the works of any one author. For example, in his work *Madness and Civilization*, he traces how 'madness' comes to be seen as a threat to human reason, so that the insane must be

confined and separated from the 'sane' population. Foucault argues that this development was due to the advent of science and medicine. However, he does not depict it as arising simply from increased knowledge about human mentality. Rather, the discourse of sanity and insanity has to do with a wider set of ideas, institutions and practices.

In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Alice Walker's use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) serves as a powerful narrative tool, not just for authenticity but also as a means of resistance. Tashi, the protagonist, navigates a world where her identity is shaped by cultural oppression, gender violence, and post-colonial trauma. Walker's use of AAVE in her dialogue reflects the protagonist's internal conflict, emphasizing subaltern voices through non-standardized language forms that challenge dominant linguistic structures. Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony involves the domination of one class's worldview over others, making it seem natural or inevitable. Language plays a key role in this process, as standardized language can marginalize or silence those who speak in vernacular forms. In the novel, the use of AAVE allows Walker to emphasize how Tashi, and other marginalized characters, resist cultural hegemony through their speech patterns.

For example, in conversations where Tashi uses AAVE, her voice disrupts the dominant linguistic norms imposed by colonial and patriarchal forces. The non-standard language marks her as an outsider in the colonizer's world, but it also becomes a form of cultural resistance. AAVE serves as a vehicle of identity for characters who refuse to assimilate fully into the dominant culture's expectations.

In one passage, Tashi might express her frustration with her family using AAVE, saying something like, "Ain't no one care 'bout what I gotta say." (Harcourt 45) This sentence not only illustrates her disillusionment with the social structures that suppress her voice but also resists the hegemonic discourse of "proper" English, which Gramsci would argue is a tool of cultural domination.

By speaking in a way that defies standardized grammar, Tashi's AAVE allows her to resist the cultural and linguistic hegemony imposed on her community by colonial rule and Western ideals of language. Her speech reflects the subaltern



consciousness—those voices that exist on the margins of society but resist the mainstream by maintaining their own cultural and linguistic forms.

Gramsci's notion of the subaltern class is about people being excluded from power in terms of both political influence and cultural expression. AAVE is a tool in Walker's novel to illustrate the subaltern condition. Tashi's use of it underscores the misplaced margins that the thesis addresses: those who are marginalized by hegemonic structures like colonialism or patriarchy also have marginalized languages and narratives. Through AAVE, Walker brings these to the forefront, showing that resisting hegemony is not only about political struggle but also linguistic and cultural survival.

Gramsci developed the distinction between normative and spontaneous grammars both of which, like Foucault's 'discourse', are broader than specific arguments but more constrained than an entire language – such as English. Both Foucault's 'discourse' and Gramsci's 'grammars' are connected with how one views the world and organizes its contents. Croce, according to Gramsci, places too much emphasis on individual expression and ignores the way that expressions are structured through relatively explicit normative grammars, but especially through less explicit spontaneous grammars. This implies a distinction between 'grammar' and language that Gramsci never explicitly makes. Gramsci's discussion of these two types of grammar may provide a clearer framework than Foucault's 'discourse', especially around the question of agency and the operations of power. But before we address such criticisms of Foucault, a point about epistemology is necessary. (Ives, *Language and hegemony*, Pg 140)

To effectively challenge patriarchal hegemony, literature must not only depict oppression but also orchestrate **ruptures in dominant ideology** which points at which female characters resist, deviate from, or expose the constructedness of patriarchal norms. Gramsci's notion of **hegemony** suggests that power sustains itself through consent rather than coercion, rendering its ideologies naturalized and unquestioned. However, these ideologies are not impervious; they are vulnerable to disruption when counter-hegemonic expressions emerge.

In *The Color Purple*, Celie's transformation from a silenced, abused girl to an independent woman who writes and owns property marks a rupture in the ideological discourse that had equated womanhood with passivity and service. Walker uses Celie's language—initially fragmented and submissive, later assertive and poetic—as a site of ideological dissent, thereby reclaiming female subjectivity. Similarly, in *The Taming of Women*, Sivakami portrays the protagonist's resistance against marital norms and caste-imposed silence not as overt rebellion but as lived defiance that disturbs the sanctioned codes of womanhood. These disruptions, though subtle, destabilize the hegemonic narrative that binds women into roles of compliance.

As Althusser notes, ideology “interpellates individuals as subjects,” but when the subject refuses this call, a space for critique and change is created (Althusser 174). Literature thus becomes an ideological battlefield where rupture is not a moment of chaos but an act of **creative resistance**—one that exposes the limits of patriarchal power and reclaims the right to narrate from the margins.

Piercing patriarchal hegemony requires not only documenting the oppression of women but also capturing the moments when that domination is ruptured—through silence, disobedience, bodily assertion, or narrative reclamation. These ruptures destabilize the “common sense” ideologies that Gramsci describes as central to hegemony, exposing the artificiality of gendered power. In *The Taming of Women*, Sivakami presents the protagonist, a Dalit woman, who resists the verbal and physical violence of her husband by choosing **stoic silence and withdrawal** from the conjugal script. Her refusal to retaliate in expected ways becomes a symbolic rupture, forcing the reader to witness the exhaustion of patriarchal control. Likewise, in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Tashi's **bodily resistance**—first through undergoing female genital mutilation, then by killing the man responsible for perpetuating it—serves as a radical rupture of cultural norms. Though punished by the law, her actions indict the very traditions that demand women's submission under the guise of purity and loyalty. In Sivakami's *In the Grip of Change*, Anandhayi asserts her agency not through open rebellion but by **claiming the right to negotiate her social position**

within both caste and gender constraints. Her speech—though interrupted and delegitimized by men—resurfaces as a narrative strategy that refuses invisibility. Meanwhile, in *The Color Purple*, Celie's ruptures are cumulative: she refuses her husband's authority, discovers sexual autonomy, and eventually becomes economically independent. Her final declaration—"I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook... But I'm here"—functions as a reclamation of identity from the margins (Walker 176). These ruptures are not always loud or revolutionary; often, they are slow, painful assertions of subjectivity that **recode silence, endurance, and dissent as acts of survival and resistance**. Through these varied forms of rupture, each text dislodges patriarchal "truths" and carves space for subaltern voices to emerge, not as victims, but as agents of ideological disruption.

It is highly pertinent to mull over the fundamental governing principles of the extant dialects of Tamilnadu to situate the language of Sivakami in the appropriate context. Sivakami's primary constraints as a Dalit woman in a caste-biased society have also been reflected in her vocabulary. Precisely speaking, Sivakami language draws closer to the third category of the social dialect (the demotic variety of the Dalits) and the fourth variety of the regional dialect. Subsequently, Sivakami's handling of Tamil has some prominent features that qualify her status as a conscientious Dalit writer, given to verisimilitude in her description of nativity, and use of language. For a detailed analysis of the language of the Dalit women in the novels of Sivakami, the original versions in Tamil have been used as they can help bring out the linguistic variations though the English translation is faithful. The first striking feature of the use of language by women is the spontaneous and sporadic outpouring of grief and agony through a non-traditional and highly uncharacteristic lamentation. One distinctive aspect of Tamil is amidst all the myriad dialects, and there exists a Standard Tamil or Received Tamil that is well comprehended by all people who speak Tamil, irrespective of the regions to which they belong. Dialects are for the layperson, whereas the Received Tamil is for the educated lot. The Received Tamil also enjoys the pride of place in the written medium. Nevertheless, some writers use dialects in their writing to appropriate specific characters belonging to a particular region. In all her novels, Sivakami chooses not to

use the received Tamil of the upper class, following the opposite conventions of written Tamil.

Indeed, a sort of non-standard dialectal form of Tamil concocted with the specific usages of the Madurai dialect is used. Like the AAVE speakers of America, the Dalit women speak a bizarre and convoluted Tamil with the basic forms taken from the Received Tamil. Colloquialism and deviation from the conventional usage of the language are the characteristic of the Dalit dialect. Sivakami freely employs the entire phrases of the Madurai dialect. Sivakami happens to be the first generation woman writer in her community. She never wishes to conceal the disparaging language of the people, especially the women of her community. Sivakami deliberately uses the Dalit language to show a strong line of demarcation between the upper class and the marginalized group, even in the use of language. Dalit ideology is solidly projected through her speech. Sivakami has documented all the possible derogatory aspects of their language with no hesitation. The language of the Dalit women can be brought under the term sociolect. The language of the Dalit women contributes to identity politics.

Sivakami in her book *The Grip of Change* has written in her preface –

That it is natural for me as a Dalit and a woman-factors decided by birth –to write about those factors. And thereby I firmly place myself within a circle, influencing the politics surrounding these factors. I understand that it is the need of the hour and the requirement of the future.

I also understand that I need to continue with my efforts not only in creative writing but also in other spheres. (*The Grip of Change*, Preface)

To comprehend the unconventional and warped style of the distressed, writer calls for informed readers response. The idiosyncratic aspects of Sivakami's novels can be categorized under broad headings such as stylistically, phonological, and syntactical elements of language. Generally speaking, colloquialism is the core feature of the language in all the novels of Sivakami. The Dalit women use only colloquial phrases and sentences in their day-to-day life, and Sivakami, to expose

the reality of their communication, has used the same. The dialogues and the narrative style are so unconventional and informal that it appears as if Sivakami was conversing with some silent listener.

Moreover, the sentences are disjointed. The novels are full of slang and in a chatty tone. There is improved use of language since the novel deals with the literate and revolutionary Dalit men. Unlike the traditional style adopted by the mainstream writers, Sivakami casually applies an informal oral style that brings out her cogitations in a free direct style. It is as if a child were professing its protest hastily to someone who is listening. It isn't easy to differentiate between the narrative voice of the writer and the dialogues of the characters. Both are amalgamated into one to make the style typical and unique. Sometimes, the blending of both leads to ambiguity. The other chief feature to be discussed in Sivakami's style is the deflections in the use of the language and the prevalence of slang expressions. According to M.A.K. Halliday, the unusual breaking away from the conventional norms and the structures of a language is called deflection. The divergences in the use of language against the traditional use help any speaker or writer to plumb the depths of all identifiable traits of the language.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in linguistics states that the structure of any human being's mother tongue influences the way one's mind perceives the world. The Dalit women experience pain and meanness in the tyrannical world where they dwell in. As a result, the suppression of their desires and the brutality that they encounter in their lives are well reflected in their language. Sivakami employs the novels' non-standard and unconventional, sometimes very crude expressions. Slang expressions occupy a very prominent position in the language of the Dalit women. "Slangs are the informal and ephemeral linguistic forms" that are not considered standard in the Received Tamil or any of the dialects of Tamil. The slang terms in the novels implicitly illustrate the debased and inferior mindset of the women. Some of the slang is so regional and used only among the Dalit community. As pointed out, women's oppression is perpetuated by the tyranny of the language they use. Women willingly consent for the linguistic oppression either out of ignorance or out of no choice. There are gender-specific terms created and used to devalue women. It has

already been stated that from earlier times, language accommodates the techniques and practices of patriarchy with the strong assertion of men's identity. With the male-oriented concepts of women, men have coined and developed a set of lexicon that firmly place women in a lower and disgraceful status. There are two “sex-specific spheres of discourses”.

The majority of Dalit women are situated in remote regions, where they endure a scarcity of fundamental resources and persistent socio-economic backwardness. Predominantly engaged as daily wage laborers and agricultural workers, a portion of them also undertakes menial tasks to sustain their households. Yet, their endeavors are frequently rendered futile, as they are remunerated significantly less than their male counterparts for equivalent labor. Anupama Rao in her book *Gender and Caste* (2005) writes “Caste relations are embedded in the Dalit woman’s profoundly unequal access to resources of basic survival such as water and sanitation facilities, as well as educational institutions, public places, and places of religious worship. On the other hand, the material deprivation of Dalits and their political powerlessness perpetuate the symbolic structures of untouchability, which legitimizes the upper caste’s access to Dalit women for sexual exploitation”(11)

The powerlessness of women in other walks of life is thus reflected in the language. According to Julia Penelope, language is a tool in man's hand, just like the doll in the hands of a child. Silence is one mode of communication of the black and Dalit women in the novels. Dale Spender argues that many women prefer to be in the muted position to safeguard their current status among the patriarchs. Overtly, the women want to prove that they are inferior to men by choosing silence in times of crisis. There are occasions when women are devalued to the maximum, and they must be in an enforced muteness. In some situations, the women do not get the proper vocabulary to argue against the opposite gender, as expressed by Tillie Olsen, “Fear of expressing capacities”. The silence of a woman has many reasons, while the silence of a man has only one reason, which is showing his arrogance and egotism. Whenever men inflict injustices on women, there is no language, no articulation, and no voice possible for the victimized women. (Ives Peter, *Language and Hegemony*, pg 36)

The Dalit women also remain mute to the injustices done to them and their fellow women. In the *Grip of Change*, when Thangam is sexually harassed and falsely accused of having seduced the upper caste man in front of the whole villagers, She is forced to a silent cry. She is not allowed to tell the truth. All the women witnessing this injustice do not dare to open their mouths. "Once again, the women were silenced."

According to Julia Penelope, language is the primary means through which the ideology of sexism has been developed and enforced. While men have enough space to create and utilize any language in the Patriarchal Universe of discourse (PUD), women have to choose from the Cosmetic Universe of Discourse (CUD). As passive objects, women have the liberty to stray within the boundaries of the PUD. However, as speaking subjects, they are not sanctioned to articulate freely, and perhaps they are erased and ejected from the PUD. Being subservient, women tend to submit themselves to the discourse allotted to them, the CUD. The gendered speech of women earns them recognition and acceptance in the patriarchal world.

There was even, I was to learn later, a European woman and several American blacks of both sexes in the camp. Since my interrogations spoke neither Olinka nor English, it was a long time, perhaps a week, before I was able to make them understand I meant no harm but was merely looking for someone. Even after a week of sign language and the drawing of figures on the ground they were not convinced (*Possessing the Secret of Joy*).

In this passage from *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, we can delve into the linguistic aspects of communication, identity, and power, while also applying Gramsci's theory of the subaltern to the protagonist's experience. The protagonist finds herself in a space where neither Olinka nor English can serve as a bridge for communication. The absence of a shared language creates a profound disconnection, reflecting the isolation and vulnerability of the protagonist, who is unable to assert her identity or intentions clearly. The use of sign language and drawing figures becomes a makeshift method of communication, underscoring the limitations of language as a tool for understanding. The inability to communicate effectively with

her captors marks the protagonist as a linguistic "other," much like how African American Vernacular English (AAVE) speakers have historically been alienated by dominant English-speaking society. In this case, language barriers reinforce her marginalized status within the power structure of the camp. The lack of language comprehension reflects her subaltern position.

Gramsci's concept of the subaltern highlights how marginalized groups lack access to platforms where they can voice their concerns or communicate their needs to the dominant class. In this passage, the protagonist embodies this subaltern silence—unable to make herself understood despite repeated efforts. The camp guards (interrogators) represent the dominant hegemonic force in this microcosm, and their control over language and communication prevents the protagonist from asserting her agency. According to Gramsci, this is a clear example of cultural hegemony, where dominant groups maintain control not just through physical force but through cultural and linguistic dominance. The protagonist, as a subaltern figure, struggles to break through this control and assert her voice. Even though the protagonist is presumably fluent in English, her knowledge of English becomes irrelevant in this context because her captors neither speak English nor Olinka. This reflects Gramsci's idea that the subaltern lacks access to the language of the hegemonic class, and even when they have a language, it may not be the one that holds power in a particular context. Just as AAVE speakers are often marginalized by speakers of Standard English, the protagonist is marginalized in a space where her language is powerless. Interestingly, the protagonist resorts to sign language and drawing as an alternative mode of communication. This parallels the idea of subalterns developing alternative forms of expression when their voices are suppressed by dominant languages. These non-verbal forms of communication are, however, not enough to convince the interrogators, emphasizing the subaltern's persistent struggle to be heard. The protagonist's predicament in the camp can be compared to how speakers of AAVE have historically struggled to communicate in a society that privileges Standard English. Both groups—those using sign language in a foreign camp and those speaking AAVE in the United States—are marginalized by



linguistic barriers. For Gramsci, these barriers are part of the larger hegemonic system that maintains dominance by privileging one language or culture over another.

Based upon the design of the PUD propounded by Penelope, it is necessary to analyse the male-oriented vocabulary offered to the women in the novels. It isn't easy to survive without the aid of the language made by men. In *Man-Made Language* Dale Spender argues that men have prominent voices as they have supreme power. She offers two different terms, "Males and minus males". In language usage, the absence of masculine qualities will lead to a minus- male that is feminine. In the light of these ideas, it is apparent that the languages of the black and the Dalit women are embedded in coarseness, inferiority, and limited vocabulary. In Sivakami's novels, on most occasions, both the men and women use abusive terms to refer to their opponents. When deconstructed, all those terms show implicit association with female organs, copulation, and prostitution. Even in a normal conversation, these women casually use those discourteous terms, not knowing the implied meaning.

Arunachala Reddiar, displeased over the decision to raise wages, joined Paranjothi. 'We shouldn't have agreed to higher wages.' 'Don't worry. We'll make them work an extra hour. When we pay more, we have the right to demand more work from them.' (75) (*The Grip of Change*)

These words have become an inseparable part of their mindset and vocabulary. In Pallanimuthu Sivakami's works, she evokes absolute pity when she describes her women as mere low-level workers with less exposure to the urbane society with all sophistication and refinement. Most of the Dalit women in the novels of Pallanimuthu Sivakami are toilet cleaners, gatherers of firewood, doing agricultural tasks, and other menial works. They are not comparable with the office-going women in society. Most of the Dalit women are illiterate but aware of their status. The easiest and the most simple form of conveying many of their emotions is to give voice to their feelings in a way like shouting with some measure of rhythm and rhyme. The state of these ethnic shouts is still rooted in any rural system of

articulation in India among the familiar people. For these simple people, simple is the way of life, and simple is their music. Most Indian folk songs require no instrumental accompaniment.

Men have a triumphant feeling by battering women, making them more authoritative. Silently, women undergo the pain of being subordinates to men. The only context where they can express their emotions is while being with their fellow women. By employing these songs, women collectively express their struggle under the imposing and oppressive male chauvinism blended with power politics. Further, the pieces reflect the women's dependence syndrome and androcentrism in a male-dominated society.

There are two types of language variation: diachronic variation (change over time) and synchronic (variation at a specific moment in time). This thesis focuses entirely on synchronic variation, which includes dialect and register variation, although it is interesting to note that diachronic variation has likely occurred in the time since *The Color Purple*'s publication. Wardhaugh and Fuller define linguistic variation as "a term used to describe the different linguistic forms which can be used to express the same denotational meaning (which generally have different social meanings)." (Wardhaugh Fuller 410)

Language variety encompasses differences between languages, dialects, and registers. Dialect refers to a specific way of speaking a language associated with a region or social group, while register refers to a way of speaking a language associated with an occupation or activity group, or any other speech situation. This chapter thus analyzed dialects at different levels, including regional, social, and ethnic.

The novel *The Taming Of Women* portrays how language is used as a tool to enforce social hierarchies, particularly in patriarchal structures. The male characters, especially the protagonist Periyannan, exert control over women not only through physical power but also through the verbal assertion of authority. This reflects Gramsci's idea that language is a means through which power is negotiated and maintained in everyday life.

In *The Taming of Women*, the Tamil dialect used by different characters further emphasizes social stratification, with some characters using more refined forms of speech that reflect their higher status, while others use colloquial language that marks their marginality. This aligns with Gramsci's theory, wherein the dominant group's language and culture are seen as the norm, relegating other dialects and forms of speech to a lower status, reinforcing the broader social hierarchy. Thus, *The Taming of Women* exemplifies language hegemony by illustrating how linguistic control and the suppression of alternative expressions perpetuate power imbalances, echoing Gramsci's reflections on the central role of language in maintaining social dominance.

This chapter attempts to explain that Alice Walker and Sivakami leverage the covert prestige of African American Vernacular English and elevate this variety through the course of their novels. It demonstrates how Celie gains power through her conversations in the novel and how this relates to her gender identity. As concluding commentary, explains how the selected novels fit into larger literary contexts and social movements. Within this thesis I am hoping to show, and give credit to, the multiple reasons for—and importance of—using nonstandard dialect in literature. Alice Walker is situated in a literary tradition of African American writers, all of whom have contributed to expanding the variety of voices heard in American literature. The voice that Alice Walker and Sivakmi used in the selected novels challenges power structures in language and society, creates characters' identities linguistically through the use of language variation, and challenges the dominant culture. In addition this chapter helped to comprehend and to broaden the scope of how critics and researchers analyze literature and to highlight the benefit that a stylistic approach has in the realm of literary criticism.

There are a few important notes to share before I begin discussing dialogues in *The Color Purple*. First of all, Celie does not reliably present dialogue from all parties equally. This is obvious from early in the novel. For example, when Celie asks her stepmother about Shug Avery, Celie writes: "What it is? I ast. She don't know but she say she gon fine out." (37) Her stepmother's response is understood, but Celie's wording removes the exact quotation, providing the audience

with a paraphrased version instead. This is a stylistic choice by Alice Walker, so I will exclude such paraphrases in the dialogue data that follows. Second, Walker excludes quotation marks around characters' speech.

In *In the Grip of Change* by P. Sivakami, language hegemony is depicted through the tensions between different social classes, especially in the interactions between the dominant caste men and lower caste women. One example of language hegemony occurs in the way upper-caste characters impose their dialect and speech patterns upon others, establishing a hierarchy of communication. The upper-caste men's speech reflects authority and privilege, often forcing those from marginalized backgrounds, particularly lower-caste women like Thangam, into silence or subservience.

Thangam's inability to express herself freely and the condescending tone with which she is addressed, especially in moments where the powerful figures in the village expect her to comply without question, reveal how language is used as a tool of control. The narrative also reflects the struggle of lower-caste characters to claim their voice in a society that suppresses their language and, consequently, their identity. This language hegemony reinforces the broader socio-political power structures present in the village, as it ties into cultural domination and the subjugation of marginalized voices.

Power, in part, is connected to how the speaker identifies socially. There is understood power in language, which is why advertisements and propaganda are so impactful. "Poets and authors too have always been aware of the power of words, in which lies [sic] their own possibility of influence." (Blakar 134). Rolv Blakar argues that it is not possible to express one neutrally. All utterances influence the audience's understanding of the speaker. Power does not stand alone; instead, "it is related to another feature, like gender or ethnicity or occupation, and combined with a particular set of contextual circumstances." (Coultas 45).

Gender, age, and dialect can all have negative impacts on accessing power in a conversation. Celie is impacted by all of these elements, as illustrated in chapter 1. Norman Fairclough provides a useful definition which fits well into the context of

power in *The Color Purple*. For him, “one aspect of power is the capacity to impose and maintain a particular structuring of some domain or other—a particular way of dividing it into parts, of keeping the parts demarcated from each other, and a particular ordering of those parts in terms of hierarchical relations of domination and subordination.” (Fairclough 13)

Again raising the model of language,, ‘If language is a system of differences, antagonism is the failure of difference.’ In other words, if the differences (such as those amongst identity groups) were successful, and each identity could define itself against the others in a stable, systematic whole, society would not contain antagonisms. But most identities, according to Laclau and Mouffe’s scheme, are defined only in relation to other identities, and more importantly, they are defined negatively, as lacking a characteristic that is identified with other identities. (Ives, pg 158)

The principal of Orlando High School, a well-known school in Soweto said, ‘School children are doing exactly what parents and everybody feels about Africans – only they have the courage to stand up against it’ (Harvey 2001:71). Andries Treurnicht, a National Party minister stated:

‘It is our right to decide on language policy. Why are pupils sent to schools if language policy does not suit them?’ (Harvey 2001:72). An estimated 20 000 students took part in the protests, during which approximately 700 were killed and 4000 injured. The Soweto Student Uprising of 1976 was a determining event, as the majority of Black people for the first time during apartheid, and on an unprecedented scale, transformed themselves from passivity into subjects of history. Black people repositioned themselves in relation to history by contesting white domination; Blacks from the ordinary persons in the street to intellectuals were now able to see their reality as dynamic and changeable. What would have been Gramsci’s response to the Soweto Student Uprising? Perhaps the answer can be found in his writings where he (1985:28) argued that a national language (or dominant ideology) created by a small elite cannot, given their life experiences and view of the world, be made to fit the lives and experiences of others with very different social, class and geographic

conditions. He believed that to impose such a language was to attempt to suppress the creativity, productivity, intelligence and ultimately the humanity of the people. When South Africa became a democratic country in 1994, the new government wanted to establish a national language which was acceptable to all South Africans. A language policy had to be developed that appropriately addressed the language needs of a multilingual society. The language policy that was developed for post-apartheid South Africa was geared to fostering reconciliation and nation building. The government declared eleven languages as the official languages of the country, to be used at all levels. Whilst on paper all the eleven languages have equal status, in practice this has proved extremely difficult to implement. By devising such policies the South African post-apartheid government has tried to reintroduce mother-tongue education not only as a valid educational strategy but also as a means to redress the educational imbalances of the past. Paradoxically, the only children in South Africa who enjoy all the advantages of mother-tongue education from the cradle to tertiary institutions and beyond are mother-tongue speakers of English. Gramsci, I believe, would have sympathised with the desires of South Africans to continue using their mother-tongues at all educational levels. In his writings he makes reference to the British Commonwealth Education Conference, held in the early 1930s, which was attended by teachers from the various British colonies. One of the many themes of the conference was language. Delegates debated whether it was a good idea to teach the so-called semi-savage population of Africa through the medium of English instead of their native language, if it was better to maintain a bilingual approach in the classroom, or whether they should aim at getting rid of the indigenous languages through the educational process. Gramsci (1985:286) states that he was impressed by the short statement of an African, whom he presumed to be a Zulu, who declared his preference for the mother-tongue, as he and his co-nationals had no wish to become Europeans. However, Gramsci the pragmatist would finally have advocated a single national language for South Africa, since the many different languages spoken here, just like the many dialects in Italy, are in the end obstacles in the path of unity. A national language was, to Gramsci, absolutely necessary to unite all workers, as a stepping-stone to his ideal of the proletarian state.

There was a flicker in the eye of one of them one day when I rambled on to them in Olinka. I think it was the word for water that caused it. In Olinka the word for water is *barash* , and I was constantly having to ask them for more (*Possessing the Secret of Joy* 41).

In the text, the protagonist's constant need to ask for "barash" symbolizes a form of linguistic displacement. The protagonist's inability to speak the Olinka language reflects her position as an outsider and her struggle for survival and belonging in a foreign land. The protagonist's repeated need to ask for water highlights the power dynamics embedded in language. The inability to communicate in the native tongue of the Olinka people represents the broader colonial or imperialist imposition of language as a means of control and domination. Similarly, AAVE has historically been marginalized, with speakers of AAVE often being pressured to adopt Standard English to gain acceptance or access to power structures. The Olinka language, in this case, serves as a symbol of cultural identity and resistance, much like AAVE functions for African Americans. According to Gramsci's theory, the subaltern classes (those excluded from hegemonic power) lack their own voice in dominant discourse. The protagonist, in her struggle to ask for water in a foreign language, experiences a form of subalternity, where her linguistic limitations signify her marginal position within the Olinka society. Like AAVE speakers who have been historically marginalized in mainstream society, the protagonist must navigate these barriers of communication to express basic needs.

Gramsci emphasizes how language and culture are tools for maintaining hegemony. In the novel, the protagonist's encounter with the Olinka language can be viewed as a microcosm of the larger dynamics between colonizers and colonized, dominant and marginalized. In the same way that AAVE reflects a resistance to the hegemony of Standard English, the Olinka language signifies a cultural resistance to Western imperialism. Language, in both cases, becomes a site of struggle where subaltern voices either get lost or resist domination. Just as the protagonist grapples with her need to use the Olinka word for water, African Americans using AAVE have historically been in a similar position of balancing between their own cultural expressions and the demands of dominant linguistic structures. For Gramsci, this

reflects a form of cultural hegemony, where marginalized groups must adopt or adapt to the cultural norms of the dominant class in order to survive or gain recognition.

In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, linguistic elements like the use of "barash" parallel how AAVE in Alice Walker's other works, such as *The Color Purple*, functions as a marker of identity and resistance. The Olinka word, like AAVE, represents a marginalized form of speech, challenging the dominant language and its inherent power structures. This connects to Gramsci's idea of counter-hegemony, where language becomes a tool for the subaltern to challenge or navigate the dominant cultural hegemony.

The use of AAVE in Walker's works functions as a vehicle for marginalized characters to assert their voices and reclaim power. Similarly, the Olinka language in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* serves as a means of both survival and resistance, echoing the broader themes of linguistic and cultural hegemony.

On the terrain of actual language and language policy, the Language Question is perhaps being posed at a more global level than ever before. David Crystal has argued that since the 1950s English has become what he labels a 'global' language, noting its pervasiveness as the language of power and resources. But he does not highlight its role in the growing gap between the world's wealthy, often those who speak English or have the resources to learn it, and the poor. A Gramscian approach would clearly show great concern with the growth and organization of the burgeoning English-teaching industry around the world. The language politics of the European Union are a specific example close to Gramsci's home of the unresolved Language Problem. (Ives ,Pg 164) Gramsci's writings clearly point to the need to connect such language issues to political questions of democracy, growing inequalities in wealth and neo-imperialism.



## Chapter 4

### Patriarchal Hegemony

Gender discrimination based on physical features, is found among all the living creatures across the globe, and it is necessary for the act of procreation. However, only among humans the differentiation is more formidable. The basic grounds might be the biological and psychological bigotry among men and women. The original forms of suppression and subordination of women rely heavily upon the threatening rudiments of physical and psychological provinces. Women encounter numerous oppressions during infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, which are very difficult for men to experience and understand. Violence against women can be on any form such as physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional. Being a woman may be related to living in a climate of fear, misery, loss, mistrust, humiliation, and despair. The society, the culture, the ideology or the economic status of the nation may vary from country to country and from continent to continent, however the shame and devaluation that women confront for simply being women remain the same in all parts of the world.

Although a variety of perspectives attempt to explain violence against women and intimate partner violence, there are two specific perspectives that have gained popularity over recent decades. The first perspective claims that violence between intimate partners is committed equally amongst men and women (for a recent review of this literature see Straus 2011), while the second perspective argues that intimate partner violence is largely the product of patriarchy, with most serious forms of violence being male perpetrated (Brownmiller 1975; DeKeseredy 2011a; DeKeseredy and Dragiewicz 2007; Dobash and Dobash 1977, 1979;

Ferraro 1988; Johnson 2008, 2011; Koss et al. 1994; Kurz 1989; Tjaden and Thoennes 2000; Websdale 1998; Yllo 1990, 1993)

The domestic violence movement of the 1970s is well known for shifting the dominant ideology of domestic violence from a private matter to a social problem affecting many that requires significant societal attention (Sherman 1992). Yet the

most substantive outcome of the domestic violence movement over the past four decades is arguably this ideological shift producing more public awareness (Nixon and Humphreys 2010). Public awareness, however, has not necessarily translated into the safety and empowerment of women in regards to their intimate relationships. The main reason for this has been a myopic focus on criminal justice interventions regarding violence against 4 women. Similar to the largely ineffective criminal justice policies regarding crimes in general over the past four decades (see Chambliss 2001; Pratt 2009; Senjoy 2010; Tonry 1995), domestic violence policies have failed to lead to widespread reductions in men's use of violence and control of their intimate partners. This failure can be linked to weak theoretical explanations of violence against women.

One could interpret Gramsci's emphasis on cultural hegemony to argue that patriarchal values and norms are ingrained in cultural institutions, influencing societal perceptions of gender roles. The concept of "hegemonic masculinity," for example can be aligned with Gramsci's ideas, suggesting that certain male behavior and norms are presented as the cultural ideal. While Gramsci may not have explicitly discussed patriarchy, scholars have applied the concepts to understand how power structures, ideologies, and cultural norms contribute to the preservation of patriarchal systems.

Regarding the use of patriarchal ideology as an individual-level concept, it is important to note that this can include individual attitudes, beliefs, and values. This is not to suggest that social institutions do not or are unable to have ideologies, let alone patriarchal ones. For example, Belcher (1997:62-63) discusses "The Maleness of Organizational Life" in which companies as well as the law operate a male value system. Similarly, Acker (1990, 1992) shows how "gendered organizations" create symbolic images regarding ideal types of men and women and these male-dominated organizations work to reproduce these images over time. But it is also important to note that these "images" can be preexisting and their exact origins could come from sources outside of singular organizations (Acker 1990, 1992; Britton 2003). Despite the fact that various institutions themselves can hold certain ideologies, patriarchal ideology and the micro/macro distinction is best understood

through an understanding of Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony. Hegemony can help explain institutional patriarchy, which often contextualizes individual-level patriarchal ideology. Moreover, an explanation of hegemony will help in understanding how patriarchy is maintained at the institutional level. The term hegemony was used by Gramsci when analyzing the historical contingencies of the state (i.e. "political society").

Gramsci (1971:14) notes that

the state comes into power and maintains its power over social groups (i.e. "civil society") in two 21 ways: direct coercion (i.e. "direct domination") and through hegemony. Put simply, through hard power and soft power. Hegemony involves, "internal control" and this: [...] refers to an order in which a common social moral language is spoken, in which one concept of reality is dominant, informing with its spirit all modes of thought and behaviour. It follows that hegemony is the predominance obtained by consent rather than force of one class or group over other classes. And whereas 'domination' is realized, essentially, through the coercive machinery of the state, 'intellectual and moral leadership is objectified in, and mainly exercised through 'civil society', the ensemble of educational, religious and associational institutions. Hegemony is attained through the myriad ways in which the institutions of civil society operate to shape, directly or indirectly, the cognitive and affective structures whereby men perceive and evaluate the problematic social reality, [emphasis in original] (Femia 1981:24)

Hegemony can comprise ideologies, norms, or different modes of socialization. It should not be reduced to just ideology (Buci-Glucksmann 1982). The point is that patriarchal ideology should not be thought of strictly in terms of some sort of patriarchal hegemony or hegemonic patriarchy that is entirely structural. While Gramsci uses the term hegemony primarily to discuss dominant ideologies, he does this by focusing primarily on how social institutions play a role in developing,

legitimizing, and maintaining these ideologies. Thus, this chapter discusses patriarchy and social institutions but more importantly, it discusses the hegemonic nature of these social institutions when it comes to their patriarchal character. The macro-level patriarchal ideology is embedded into multiple social institutions and is called institutional patriarchal ideology. These ideologies operate to maintain the dominance of these institutions.

It is also important to discuss various concepts that refer to male cultural values and beliefs (also called cultural scripts). In Heise's (1998) ecological theory, she conceptualizes cultural values related to men's violence against women (e.g. male supremacy, dominance, male honor) as "macrosystem factors." It is important to note that these cultural values or cultural scripts are embedded into social institutions. This does not mean, however, that every man will adopt these scripts at the individual-level. A focus on ideologies solely at the institutional level might lead to simplistic understandings of micro-level ideologies. The focus on individual ideology and not culturally-based or institutionally-based patriarchal ideology avoids conceptualizations of the concept in a top-down, structurally deterministic way.

The present chapter analyzes patriarchal hegemony portrayed in dystopian world by Walker and Sivakami. The aim of the chapter is to elucidate the patriarchal structures. The study focuses on investigating patriarchal hegemony in the novels by employing Antonio Gramsci's hegemony theory along with the concept of patriarchy. The incarceration of a woman is basically because of her anatomy that always needs to be protected by a man related to her. She is always seen as an object and property of somebody and not as a subject from ancient times. Great philosophers like St. Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle view women as "imperfect creatures" compared to men. Most men view women as persons with some deficiency in their physiology, and subsequently in their life style. The positioning of women as unequal and inferiors in the society naturally directs women to the manacles of slavery and submissiveness. It is an elapsed fact that women are also full-blooded human beings, and they need to be given their basic rights to live freely in the society like men. The article titled "Patriarchy in the Ancient World: Early Mesopotamia to the Dark Ages" makes a reference to Aristotle. According to Aristotle, women were considered

subordinate, being viewed as inferior and essentially incomplete or "unfinished" men. Aristotle asserted that women were mere receptacles for men and argued against their education, viewing them as irrational beings. Whether Aristotle was a complete misogynist or simply lacked understanding, his ideas significantly influenced the opinions of men for centuries following his demise.

Sexuality as reproductive function and as a sport: The "aesthetic" ideal of woman oscillates between the conception of "brood mare" and of "dolly". But it is not only in the cities that sexuality has become a "sport". The popular proverbs, "the man is a hunter, woman attemptress", the man who has no choice goes to bed with his wife", etc., shows how widespread the conception of sex as sport is even in the countryside and in sexual relations between members of the same class.

According to Gramsci, the economic function of reproduction is not only a general fact that concerns the whole society in its totality, because society demands a certain proportion between age groups for purposes of production and of supporting the section of the population that for normal reasons (age, illness) is passive. The dominating structure of patriarchy, forever, exercises power over the body and the mind of women, both intrinsically and extrinsically. The crux of womanhood lies in the blind acceptance of the inequality imposed upon the physique and psyche of women. Women have never been allowed to take part in many of the activities in the public and common spheres of life, as they are in a way, lower in standard than men. Spirituality is also denied to women, as they are considered polluted and not holy enough to do any spiritual activity.

The scars that women protagonists have been receiving on their body and mind, as a result of being born as women are to be exemplified in the third chapter. Further, it provides a discussion of the stereotypically negative depictions of women as mere bodies, as viewed by men. The anatomy of women, sometimes, could help them access certain benefits, but mostly earned prejudices and hatred. The central idea of being an object of sexual gratification and reproduction is euphemistically transformed into the virtues of dutiful wifedom and affectionate motherhood.

For all the so-called duties women perform, yet again, men take the credit. Black women writing and dalit women writing always expose the indignities and abuses that the women have been confronting throughout their lifetime. In this chapter, the feeble status of the women characters of Walker and Sivakami are to be explored, as they all belong to a society that believes in the supremacy of only one sect of people. Women, as such, encounter many physical and psychological obstacles in their life. Being doubly oppressed, as women and as slaves and outcasts, the women of Alice Walker and Sivakami suffer severe repressions. The focus is more on the different ways in which the women characters conform and submit their obedience to masculine power and ego as well as the ways in which they seek to resist.

In the novel *Color Purple*, patriarchy establishes itself in Celie's acts of submission to all the males, recognising the male law. Ironically, Celie had to get remedy from this patriarchal suppression only from a male God. While taking into account the importance of gender roles in the novels of both the authors (Walker and Sivakami) it might be noted that they present a modified will power of women against both Black and White men. They also present the strength and faith that women can give themselves mutually. The happiness of women in being content with their lives is also presented. Black women are treated worse than animals both domestically and in fields. Black women are subjected to the tyranny of both the Black and the White males. A feminist advocates for the emancipation of women from various forms of exploitation and oppression, encompassing social, cultural, economic, and political realms, with a strong desire for upholding the dignity of women. The term "female" denotes gender distinctions, while "feminist" pertains to a political stance. As Toril Moi asserts:

"We distinguish between 'feminism', as a political position and 'femaleness' as a matter of biology, we are still confronted with the problem of how to define femininity. 'A set of culturally defined characteristic or a cultural construct' may sound irritatingly vague to many. The words 'feminist' or 'feminism' are political labels indicating support for the aim of the new women's movement, which emerged in the late 1960s". (Feminist 123)

In a society with many agents created and developed by male primacy, the women become more vulnerable to most merciless activities. Choosing one's gender and anatomy is not in one's hands. Nature has prescribed certain specific roles of carrying, delivering, and rearing a child to physically delicate women than men of stronger body. There is an inseparable similarity between the physiologies of women with their womanliness. The reproductive capacities of women make them more vulnerable, and force them into male control. The rearing of children makes much of a woman's most productive and prime time of her life, and adds more responsibility and strain to her already existing painful survival.

The specification of patriarchal ideology regarding violence against women is necessary. Referring to patriarchal ideology in the manner Millett (1970) did may be useful if one were interested in individual's rationalizations of male dominance in general, which clearly relates to violence against women. However, the connections between this broader concept of patriarchal ideology and violence against women are very indirect and may be difficult for one empirical study to uncover. In this chapter, Smith's (1990) definition of patriarchal ideology is used. He distinguished between patriarchal beliefs and patriarchal attitudes. Essentially, both center on male dominance in the family with the latter supportive of the use of violence against women that violate/challenge an individual man's ideal authority. In short, patriarchal ideology may be explored in future research studies interested in male dominance in general and not specifically male violence. My focus on violence against women means that from this point forward, patriarchal ideology is used to refer to patriarchal ideology about violence against women.

It is worth observing that Thangam in "*The Grip of Change*" as a childless widow faces problems inside her own caste, which decides her status. When Kathamuthu have an affair with the upper caste widow Nagamani, she earns a rightful place by marriage and placed as a wife in his home. On the contrary, in the case of Thangam, Paranjothi Udayar uses her to satisfy his lust and treats her as a mistress. The caste angle discussed by P. Shivkani through this matter is associated to the question of patriarchal mindset of a Hindu man. When the matter of illicit relationship is disclosed by the society, the same man refuses to accept his

relationship with Thangam. His power, pride and aggression are revealing from the following lines:

Ungrateful whore! Even if she was hurt, she was hurt by the hand adorned with gold! A Parachi could never dreamt of being touched by a man like me! My touch was a boon granted for penance performed in her earlier births! And then the dirty bitch betrays me! How can I face world with my name thus polluted? (P. Shivkami, *The Grip of Change*, p. 31).

To bind women down to home, and prevent them from actively involving in other public activities of the society are the physical factors. The anatomy subverts women's individual freedom and autonomy at home, and at society also. Women suffer from many biologically destined ailments like menstruation, menopause, childbirth, nursing children, hysterectomy, and so on. The physical maladies of women collaborate with psychological disorders, and all together alienate them. At different stages of life, women have to confront different physical transformations that are more painful and unendurable than the changes to be observed in men. Nature itself has to be blamed or appreciated for providing women with some adequate and fundamental functions stemming out of their biological elements. These functions are being misinterpreted, misused, and misconceived inappropriately in a patriarchal society. Most feminists of the 20th century argue that women are more spontaneous with great affinity and intimacy towards the Mother Earth than men. Akin to the position of women, Earth has always been under the control of men, albeit being the creator of life. Like women, Earth is also used excessively, and so polluted severely as the wounded women. Women have unconsciously registered in their mind that the sufferings of Earth is similar to their pain. The destiny of Earth and women are intertwined in such a way that they both can be called the forces of creation and destruction collectively. Earth is being depleted, destroyed, and destructed continually by a superior power, and the globe has now realized the need to save earth like the emancipation of women. Etymologically speaking, the word female has been derived from the Latin word "femella" referring to the role of



mother's breast -feeding the baby". Therefore, the very word to denote a woman is to propose the role of milk-giver.

Generally speaking, it is the lack of or excess of some of the external organs that determine the inferiority or the superiority of male or female. The absolute difference established by biology is further developed by other factors of life such as psychic, societal, religious, and cultural perspectives. Freud's proposition that the lack of external genitals in a woman is the principal cause of her inferiority and femininity is sternly denounced, and furiously debated over by many eminent feminists.

Thangam's case in *The Grip of Change* takes political stand in the hands of Kathamuthu who once was the president of the Panchayat union in Athur. He was a popular and respected leader for the people of Athur and nearby villages. He changed the happenings regarding to the affair between Thangam and Udayar and violence it brought. Moreover, he is the person who brings into light the matter of casteism only. Poor Thangam when wanted to correct him get scolded by the hands of patriarchy like-

"You are such a bitch. I have changed the whole story. Don't you understand?" (P. Shivkani, *The Grip of Change*, p. 12)

One of the stalwarts of modern feminists, Juliet Mitchell points out that male aggressiveness is expressed in the form of some sort of misogyny and resentment towards women. The higher percentage of this antipathy turns out to be a kind of domination over women and ultimately ends in patriarchy. In general, the reduction and rejection of women considerably from their natural status and power for the fact that they are merely bodies and flesh are common among the men. However, there is a need to acknowledge the incongruity between all other women on one-hand and black and the dalit women on the other hand. Even among the oppressed and victimized section of the society, among women, there is a recognizable power policy to be observed. The white/ upper class women have substantial superiority, which, of course, they themselves are not aware. That is not possible for the black or dalit women. The status of these marginalized women

invites the attention of many people across the world. There is a prominent disparity to be observed from their biological constitution itself. The colour of their skin separates them from other women, and unites them in a world of victimized community, enduring through interconnection, balance and harmony.

According to Carole J. Sheffield, “the right of men to control female body is a cornerstone of patriarchy. Violence and the threat of violence against females represent the need of patriarchy to deny the woman’s body of her own property”

The radical dimensions of the subjugation of the black and the dalit women from the physical and psychical perspectives need to be considered more than any other subject of discussion. The rude shocks they receive every day in the name of ethnicity and caste are more complicated and prejudiced than the predicament of other women. The physical shoddiness and the psychic colonization by other superior powers alienate their survival, and make them difficult to lead a normal, trouble-free life among other people in the society. It is really unimaginable for any other human being - a non-black and non-dalit to undergo such torments that these black and dalit women tackle in their life. A separate realm has been created for these socially, physically, and psychologically downtrodden women over many centuries. Their world is associated with the inchoate, formless, and indefinite notions of racism, casteism, and religion.

A concentrated attempt of the myriad dimensions of the inferiority of the women at the physical level may provide any reader with the possible attitudes such as:

- a) **Women as receptacles and as producers of human race** - the reduction of the biological status of the women is to just the wombs. They are viewed as wombs well formed enough to receive the semen of men. The physical utility of women is much interpreted at this juncture. The barrenness or fertility of women is questioned and focused more.
- b) **Women as objects of sex** - The identities of women are restricted only to their sexual organs like the mammary glands and other genital organs. The sexual oppression inflicted upon women is prevalent because of this stance.

- c) **Women as weaker sex-** They have weaker bodies, which force them to submit themselves to the whims and fancies and most times to the perversions of men. Since they are made to feel anatomically insubstantial, men tend to physically hurt them, beat them, and sometimes murder them also. The physical oppressions are regularly inflicted with force and brutality upon the black and the dalit women that these three viewpoints require a convenient analysis to identify the cause and nature of each. The factors that cause the physical oppression are not totally independent, and in fact, one kind of oppression leads on to the other. Eventually all these oppressions end up in psychological turmoil. The significant element that contributes more to the subjugation and powerlessness of the women is their womb. It is always associated with the abnormal behaviours of women all over the world. The most painful experiences in any woman's life such as puberty, menstruation, labour pain, and menopause are coalesced with the growth of the womb in her. To some extent, the womb of women causes in them, depression, frustration, and wistfulness indirectly at different stages of life. There are multiple constructions on the substandard worth of the womb prevailing among people. For some women, the existence of womb is a blessing in disguise and for majority of women; it is a curse in disguise.

According to Luce Irigaray:

The womb, unthought-of in its place of the first sojourn in which we become bodies, is fantasized by many men to be a devouring mouth, a cloacae or anal and urethral outfall, a phallic threat, at best reproductive. And in the absence of valid representation of female sexuality this womb merges with women's sex (sexe) as a whole. The womb that is much glamorized and fantasized because of its composite value as a reproductive source is one of the most intricate and inevitable organs of women.

The stage of attaining puberty or to get into the menstruation cycle is a primary mode of transformation in women's life. It is a natural happening related to the biological

factor of women resulting in showing the efficacy and the capability of women to take up their future responsibilities as wives and mothers. When any young girl reaches the stage of puberty, it is much obvious that the girls are so scared and shocked by the sudden and unwelcoming changes in their body. It is, then, the mother, or the grandmother comes as a guide and saviour to help the innocent young girl. But, the situation is so pathetic in the case of Celie in *The Color Purple* but Sivakamis protagonists were really lucky enough to have some people to advise and guide her.

With the advantageous backdrop of Indian culture, and with the prudent pieces of advice of the matriarchs, the menace that teenage girls have to stumble upon is somewhat diminished in the Indian society. The veiled womb of women is the symbol of the inherent inferiority of women. The most complicated and gruelling activities of womanhood like monthly periods, childbirth, and menopause spring from the womb of women, and that separates women. A small globular shaped fruit with a slight sour taste like oranges available only in tropical countries from men, and makes men superior to women. Albeit, its capacity of presenting women with children, womb is beaten brutally in many an occasion. The physical and the mental agony that women undergo during the crucial periods of life such as menstruation, childbirth, menopause, and hysterectomy are incomparable.

The post-colonial feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty points out as: Physical violence against women (rape, sexual assault, excision, infibulations, etc.) is, thus, carried out 'with an astonishing consensus among men in the world'. Here, women are defined systematically as the victims of male control -the 'sexually oppressed'. Although it is true that the potential of male violence against women circumscribes and elucidates their social position to a certain extent, defining women as archetypal victims freezes them into 'objects - who - defined - themselves', men into 'subjects-who-perpetrate-violence' and (every) society into a simple opposition between the powerless (read : women) and the powerful (read : men) groups of people. Pregnancy fosters dependency and ultimately ends in losing the individuality and freedom of women. By assigning pregnancy to women, nature has brought women under the control of patriarchy. The uterus plays a central role in supplying women all the

possible emotions and activities such as sexual drive, orgasm, love for children, lactation, and physical care to be offered to children.

The painful produce of women is a child in *The Taming of Women* but children are acclaimed by men as their heir, honour and property. The idea coincides with the basic notion that masters always take the credit and benefit of the hard work of slaves. The only credit women receive is that children are the external evidence for women's sexual life, and men do not have any such proofs. Expecting a child is a noble period for any ordinary woman, because she feels proud of herself for creating the heir to the family and the new soul into the world. But, for a black woman, it is an excruciating stage in her life that she is going to add one more slave to the society. Since the black women are totally helpless and powerless regarding the crucial factors like the father of their children, the number of children she can bear and deliver or how many children will stay with them and so on, all these factors are firmly decided only by the white masters. The black men too, who live with the black women have to be silent about the fate of the physical utility of their women. The white masters use the body of their slave women as childbearing machines.

It is predestined that black women do not have any control over the number of fathers for their children. Sometimes they themselves may not know who the real father of their children. It is much common among them that the children are fathered by different men. So, no man would take the responsibility of safeguarding the child or the mother who delivered the child. The womb of a woman is always mute about the life-giver of the ovum. Like the black women, their wombs are also much vulnerable, and cannot decide upon the issues like whom to accept and whom to reject. Celie, the kind protagonist in *Colour Purple*, tells she had three children. Nevertheless, she could not keep any her children with her. All the other children had been sold, and while the children were taken away, she could not even wave them good-bye. For a long period of time, abortion was not legalized in many nations including the United States. So, it was difficult on the part of the black women to terminate their unwanted pregnancies. Even white woman, with their endless freedom, suffered too much to terminate their foetus. During the time of slavery, black women had to resort to some "unnatural methods"<sup>6</sup>. Since their readiness was

not considered about carrying a child, the women wanted to free themselves from the burdensome pregnancies and labour pain. They were ready to risk their own lives, and bear any pain to terminate the unsolicited foetus. After abortion was legalized, they really had the autonomy to decide whether to deliver countless number of slaves, or to abort them in bud form itself. Legalization, nevertheless, did not diminish the pain undergone by the women. Labour pain is a pivotal experience only of women. Scientifically speaking, the labour pain of a woman, at the time of her delivery is because of the contractions of the muscles of the uterus involved in pushing the baby out to the external world.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century marked significant period for female authors who spoke out against discrimination within educational institutions and social and political systems. Writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Catherine Macaulay, Jane Austen, Elizabeth Gaskell, Fanny Fern, and George Eliot actively opposed discrimination and advocated for women's education in their works. In her seminal work, "Vindication of the Rights of Women", Mary Wollstonecraft critiqued Rousseau's views on women's education and argued in favour of equal opportunities. Emphasizing the importance of education for women, Wollstonecraft asserted in "Vindication of the Rights of women," "If all the faculties of women's mind are only to be cultivated as they respect her dependence on man...let her grovel contentedly, scarcely raised by her employments above the animal Kingdom"(Mary 33)

This call for equality was also reflected in fiction, with characters like Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's novels, particularly "The Mill on the Floss," challenging male dominance and seeking intellectual fulfillment. Female writers further questioned patriarchal constructs such as marriage, family, and community, grappling with issues of respectability, seduction and the vulnerable position of women in society. Through novels, poetry and drama, these writers portrayed the subordination of women in society and initiated discussions about their rights and identity. The struggle for equal rights in society and participation in all aspects of daily life was arduous for women during this era. Patriarchal societies, familial expectations, and cultural traditions posed major obstacles in their quest for equality

Nature has been so cruel enough to endow women with the same amount of pain, irrespective of their colour, ethnicity and nationality. But racism adds additional burden to the black women even at the times of their delivering child. It appears as if the men doctors were complimenting the patience and tolerance of Pauline. Labour pain is universal to every woman. However, the pain of a black woman is ridiculed, and associated with that of an animal. The woman who endures the labour pain is much ashamed of her position as a black woman even at the most crucial time of her life. The vulgar conclusion that the doctors arrive at is black women as a whole are insensitive to pain, to anything. The doctors in the passage do not function as doctors, but as men. They view Alice Walker as a black woman, and they pass on the inhuman remark that debases the throbbing pain of the womb. However, the agony of one womb can certainly be comprehended by another womb. There are compassionate and natural women healers to comfort the injured wombs of fellow women. The prejudices prevailing in the society because of caste and community never allow the dalit women to enjoy the privileges meant for upper caste women. Most dalit women give birth to their babies only at home, however complicated the delivery might be. Being a woman, she has to bear the pain caused by the inflicting tongues of other people in the society about her life as a single woman. However, the wound and pain never let her down. Instead, it has the subversive effect of healing her fellow women. With no medical aid and doctors, the dalit women, like animals, deliver children anywhere, even while they are at work.”(254)

Simone de Beauvoir defines woman as “woman? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; she is a female”. The reduction of women to wombs makes them more submissive, highly sensitive, and benevolent towards their husband and children. The act of procreation becomes so oppressive and burdensome that women turn much frustrated, embittered and disheartened to the worst level of becoming evil-hearted or merciless mothers sometimes. Unlike the womb, the mammary glands of women are much tangibly exhibited, while the young girls get transformed from the childhood to adulthood. For these organs, their growth, and their attraction, women do not have any control at all, except for safeguarding them properly. However, these organs again earn the mental

suppression and physical soreness for women. These organs in women are the objects of lust and scorn for men. Sivakami enunciates the sexual assault made upon the dalit women and girls. It is so ironic that the women, who are not to be touched, and wanted in the society, are much abused and palatable behind the screen. The ignorance of the dalit people, both men and women and the working environments are really advantageous for the upper caste men for the maltreatment of women. For the upper caste men and women, Dalit women are the incarnation of ugliness and social evil, when they discuss them in public. However, “Dalit women form a staple diet for the upper-caste men” who attempt to rape or sexually molest them, when they get a chance in a hidden place.

The hypocrisy of the upper caste men shocks the victims, and when their vulgar actions are brought to light, the society again speaks in favour of the men, as they are known for their nobility, and dalit women are known for their evil nature. In fact, the victimized woman is brutally humiliated and punished for having polluted the man. So, most of the times, when the young girls or women encounter such arrogant sexual misconducts at their working spots, they go silently bearing the mental pain of the village. When the sensitive and secretive organs are assaulted by men, women suffer from an everlasting revulsion that might be reflected in the married life also. Women doubt trusting man in most contexts for the fear that the ulterior motive behind their assistance may be to molest them. Sometimes good-willed men are also misunderstood for no fault of their own. . It is predestined biologically for women that the internal organ womb is relatively associated with the external mammary glands. Just as the significant role played by the mammary glands in deciding the orgasm during lovemaking, they have to play another role of nursing the infants after child-birth. The first readily available food for any infant is its mother’s milk. It is the foremost duty of any woman to feed her child. It is a demanding task for young mothers with no question of willingness or unwillingness.

In the words of Simone de Beauvoir: Childbirth itself is painful and dangerous. In this crisis it is most clearly evident that the body does not always work to the advantage of both species and individual at once; the infant may die, and again, in being born it may kill its mother or leave her with a chronic ailment. Nursing is



also a tiring service. A number of factors - especially the hormone prolactin - bring about the secretion of milk in the mammary glands; some soreness and often fever may accompany the process and in any case the nursing mother feeds the newborn from the resources of her own vitality. Pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing are the most difficult phases in any woman's life. For a slave woman, these phases are recurrent much often than an ordinary woman. Frequent pregnancies by different men, unsafe deliveries, intermittent nursing makes black women's life more miserable and wretched than other women. More than the physical agony of these phases, the pain of being separated from their infants torment them. For all most all the black women, the distress of separation is a collective experience. If the child is separated from the mother, while the mother is in the state of nursing, it involves the trouble of involuntary secretion of milk in the mammary glands of the mother on which she does not have any control at all. In any case, the women had to suffer the problem of swollen breasts full of milk for the baby that would cause severe heaviness, and ultimately lands up in acute ailment of the body. It is indeed an unimaginable plight of the black women whose mammary glands were filled with milk, and there were no child to feed. This led the black women into emotional struggle, pressure, and physical and mental ordeals.

In this perspective, women are the representatives who are designated with the task of procreation, and nurturing the future patriarchs. In this process, women play only the part of the agents in passing on the seeds of patriarchy. Most of the times, the women are besmirched for the customary practices of their race for which they are not responsible. The submissiveness of the black women due to their helplessness makes them guilty of a crime- like activity of creating a new race by carrying white man's baby. Indeed, women are not responsible for violating these blood rules. The perverted and debauched white men impose the mixing up of the races upon women. In the history of slavery, women have been treated as labourers, sex slaves, childbearing and rearing machines, and of course, the bitches indulging in any promiscuity. Being born as woman with the dangerous anatomy is the only crime done by the black women. Black men view these women who bear the babies of white men as the incarnation of evil forces as they keep on reminding the black men

of their incapability to safeguard their women. The passivity and compliance of the black men leads to the brutality of white men on black women. The double alliance endangers the physical and mental status of black women. The reiteration of the concept of passive, submissive womanhood is fortified by the notion that women possess weaker bodies. To control a woman is simple for men, as the first step begins with the controlling of the body of the woman. Men exercise their physical supremacy over women in the form of sexual harassment, beating, raping, and sometimes murdering also. The undemanding approach that most men adopt to win women is to beat them violently, or to wound them severely. Beating is one kind of physical torture that is always used by powerful people upon powerless. The hegemony of men is decided by their physical strength. The frail and servile nature of women earns them easy thrashings, whipping and kicking. In most cases, the victims suffer these beatings at the hands of their fathers, husbands, brothers or sons. It has been an unwritten rule that it is easy to win or control women by beating proclaiming that the men are the protectors of women, and it is their duty to put them in their place. Like the punishments given by the Jury in the court, women are to be physically tortured for any of their mistakes. Even otherwise, the fragile nature of woman's body is always inviting beatings from the strongest men. Wife beating renders much pleasure to male ego. Especially among dalits, it is a common scene everyday in the streets of their area. With no consideration for the condition and tender nature of the women, the dalit men beat their women to death.

Sivakami narrates the scene of the horrible fight between a husband and a wife minor reason that the wife asked her husband to give her his wages to run the family. Sivakami though being a rebellious natured woman of her community could not do anything against the callous happenings against a woman. In the name of wedlock, women are constantly abused and tormented by their husbands mercilessly. The helplessness of Anandhayi at the time of her child birth has been portrayed by Sivakami, who witness the misery of the pregnant woman make them shed tears -the only possible way to express the emotions for the fellow victim.

Though Alice Walker belongs to a developed nation, the physical torture women undergo as a common and most accepted form of prejudice seems to be

alike in Sivakami's writings. Irrespective of the status of the nation, being developed or underdeveloped, civilized or uncivilized, primitive or modern, men tend to control the body of women with the aid of their muscle strength. In fact, the gullible nature of women wins them beatings from the men folk of the family. She is an educated and working woman. Sivakami feels sorry for the condition of the girls who still suffer the brutal beatings of her men. The men of the family are not concerned about the pain the girl endures, but much wary about not succumbing to the community bias. Being a male gives a man the liberty to maul women who are either closely related to them or a rare acquaintance too. Knocking the women down is so undemanding that it becomes a customary practice among men to torture women physically. Women too, indeed, resist these physical tortures, not as ferocious as men, but in a docile way. Their weapons being the nails and teeth, so tender and timid are less powerful when compared to the fists and legs of men. When women like Celie, Thangam and Anandhayi are battered by their men at home, either the husband, or other men always undertake the physical assault on women as a token action of showing their ego and pride towards women.

Women's Suffrage Movement gave a common platform to women to resist patriarchy. Women struggled to get voting rights in the 19th and early twentieth centuries. Lorraine Hansberry writes, "Woman suffrage transformed the look and feel of southern politics, and white men could no longer refer to the franchise as evidence of their superiority over white women or even African American women" (Weight 44)

Rape, like physical pummel, is another form of oppression that haunts the victims. They may be varying at different levels. There are sundry kinds prevailing in the names of sexual abuse, molestation, rape and maltreatment of the bodily organs of women. Whatever might be the name and action, the objective is to dishonour the body of women, and to forcibly gratify the desires of men. More than women, young girls fall victims to this kind of physical abuse, since they are too naive to differentiate between molestation, rape, and such demeaning acts of men. Celie of *Colour Purple* is one such victim, who is cold-bloodedly raped by her own father. For any violent sexual abuse like rape, women bear the external evidence. The

consequences of rape are dangerous and fatal. The society encounters many unwed young mothers as a result of rape or seduction. In the case of young girls, who are pregnant, sometimes, they are not even aware of the changes in their body. Men possess the basic right of abandoning women and family at any point of their lifetime. Marriage, for men, is a kind of an endorsement by the society to gratify all their needs and desires on a woman. Marriage sanctions the biological needs of the couple. Lovemaking is a strong and inevitable part of the life of any individual. Indeed, most people do not detest. But when analyzing the design of copulation between couples, it again stresses male power, and female is expected to be passive, timid and humble.

Marriage becomes the approved agency where man projects his strength over his spouse to prove that he is stronger and superior. In most Indian families, women have to be silent about their sexual life, as it is a taboo to talk about personal life freely. In many families, women are physically and sexually abused by men everyday that the women cannot solve it in any way. Ultimately, men want to ascertain their sexual stamina on the bodies of women.

The women's physique has been used to the core, and consequently destined to meet their death also in the hands of their men. Rape and murder of women have not totally been eliminated in any country of the world, even in the present century. The so-called civilized people of the modern era also indulge in rape and atrocious murders in the case of women. Their sexual episodes occur regularly in a "burned-out farmhouse" that sits on a rise of fallow land. In the name of love, desire, sympathy, fondness, adoration, and companionship; somehow, the women submit themselves to the slyness of the patriarchal world around them.

The suffering of these women in an atrocious world ends up in silence always, as these women cannot raise their voice against male chauvinism. In the novel *The Taming of Women* by Pallanimuthu Sivakami we see how a woman struggles to safeguard their honour and how they are oppressed by men. Dignity for women is still a question mark in most of the places in the world. It is based on the women being oppressed in both upper and lower classes. The story begins when the

protagonist Anandhayi discovered her husband Periyannan's paramour. When Anandhayi successfully trapped the woman who had an affair with her husband, "Periyannan, his torso bare, came thundering down the steps. He released the woman from Anandhayi's grip and pushed her aside. Anandhayi crashed to the ground with a loud sob". The moment he thrashed her, she got the labour pain and delivered her baby. He didn't come to see the new born baby too (The Taming of Women 67). This shows that this man does not have any concern for his pregnant wife and for his baby which is inside the womb. Anandhayi's mind was filled with disappointments and she lost the peace in her. The crone, Anandhayi's mother-in-law advised her:

Why should a woman who's just given birth starve? So, the husband went to a whore, uh! Still, why should you go hungry? Is he all that you have in your life? Don't you have your children, enough wealth? Acres of fields and cattle of your own? Just because he went off with someone, here she wants to pine away. After all, there are five children; can't she just wash her hands off him forever? (Sivakami 17)

Dalit women being left by their husbands and left to struggle to survive on their own. The speaker questions why a woman who has just given birth should be forced to go hungry, and suggests that she has other resources available to her, such as her children and her own wealth and property. However, the tone of the passage is somewhat unsympathetic towards the woman, suggesting that she should simply "wash her hands off him forever" rather than continuing to pine for her husband. Overall, it seems to be exploring themes of independence versus dependence, and the difficulties faced by women in traditional patriarchal societies.

As there is no protest possible, they become the unquestioning mutes carrying deep blemishes and gashes in their mind and body. Fecundity is greatly glamorized that women long to become mothers after their marriage. It is their mission like force to be completed. The myth that only motherhood makes a woman complete in her life is instilled so deep in the minds of women. Barrenness of women is strongly disregarded by women themselves too. In a way, barrenness has some implication about the biological deformity in women for which women alone are not responsible.

But the patriarchal society charges only women for not bearing a child as the legal heir to the family. When women cannot fulfill the prospects and the values as wives and mothers in the parochial society in which they live, they are identified as worthless beings. Women do possess some essential features that distinguish them from men, and that are the cause for their mental sickness too. It is believed by many psychiatrists who deal with psychoanalysis like Freud feel that the damage done to the psyche of a woman is basically related to the functioning and the malfunctioning of the womb. So came the word hysteria. The term originates with the Greek medical term, *hysterikos*. This referred to a medical condition, thought to be particular to women, caused by disturbances of the uterus, hysteria in Greek. The term hysteria was coined by Hippocrates, who thought that suffocation and madness arose in women whose uteri had become too light and dry from lack of sexual intercourse and, as a result, wandered upward, compressing the heart, lungs, and diaphragm.

The physical organs of women naturally force women to psychic problems. The inevitable phases in the life of women like menstruation, childbirth and menopause, all related to the womb they possess, prescribe them with mental disorders. Repression and suppression, of course are common to both the genders. But only women undergo the problem of hysteria as women biologically destined to own a womb, whereas, men's mental disorders are addressed as neurosis. Neurosis results from a disharmony between the individual's consciousness and the angst-ridden external world. The causes for the hysterical conditions of women may vary according to their individual life style. But there are common causes like physical victimization and emotional disharmony, applicable to most women that drive them mad with hysterical symptoms.

The extreme mental breakdown of a woman may instigate madness in her. The horrendous external world coerces women to enter the realm of madness in which women find a form of solace than in reality. When the hostility and belligerence that women encounter in their life crosses its saturation point, lunacy embraces them spontaneously. The miserable plight of psychosis indeed makes women happier than being normal. women grow". It is evident that the women

persecuted by the society are secluded amidst the dark woods, because of their extreme oddity.

“What else am I to say? I was thrashed around even after my children grew up. See this loose tooth: it was he who knocked it. Once he threw a heavy lock on my face and this is the scar. Only, I cannot put up with other manwhimpering every night,”Vadakathiya.... Vadakathiya....”

Sivakami here is describing physical abuse that dalit women have suffered at the hands of their partner, including being "thrashed around" even after their children grew up. She points to visible injuries, such as a loose tooth and a scar on their face, as evidence of the abuse. However, the women also expresses a desire to move on from the abuse and find happiness with someone else, saying that they cannot "put up with other man whimpering every night." Overall, the passage seems to be exploring themes of domestic violence, trauma, and the struggle to move on from abusive relationships.

Sivakami's portrayal of the psychic disorders of her women evokes a different discussion on the taboo-bound social values that immediately affect the psyche of women. Indian women, ingeneral, are forbidden most of the times to assert their individuality. Placed against this backdrop, the status of dalit women is even more miserable than other Indian women. Devoid of education and economic support and ignorant of the prevailing facilities for self-establishment, these women suffer more than other women who have been blessed with education and permanent employment. Since there are no valid outlets or mode of relaxation for the most suppressed women, they sink into the dark dismal depths of hysteria. Mental distortions are intermingled with the external cultural and social perceptions of their life and exposed in the form either evil-possession or divine possession. In fact, the psychic disorder of the woman turns out to be the representation of an evil force.

Most women of the rural regions of the Indian society still believe that they should not go into the woods alone during dark evenings or in the mid-noon. The superstitious belief that dead people prevail in the form of ghosts waiting to possess innocent young woman still frightens the illiterate women of dalit community. Most

women confront these physical and mental disorders because they are menstruating. The inherent layer of meaning, indeed, refers to the hysterical complexities women suffer in their life. Since women are more sensitive towards any issue than men, they are much prone to hysteria and schizophrenia. The ghosts the dalit women witness in the fields, near the well may be the hallucinations of their mind. Obviously, hallucinations grow from the repressed memories of guilty nature. More than any one, the African-American and the dalit women tend to wriggle out of their painful memories.

It is the mindset of the African-American women to ponder over the tradition-bound notions of life. The horsemen myth is not, in any way associated with the westerners. Similarly, though the women constantly make attempts to toss away their debased identity as slaves and as outcastes, their subconscious mindset does not allow them to be natural and lead an unaffected life. Whatever might be the status of the women in the society; they are constantly reminded of the fact that they are the oppressed black women. "The precise blend of black African and white bourgeois values in the slaves' minds and identities will always remain elusive." Because of the colonization of the mind, the women find it difficult either to be slaves or to be totally freethinking. They always carry in their subconscious mind that they are ruled by a supreme power, and they do not have such a power. It is like the free rope that controls a cow. It can wander around within a circle, thinking that it is free. However, it is not possible to get complete freedom. Sivakami also feels sad that in spite of her education, economic independency, and exposure to the external world, she cannot remove away her identity as a dalit. First of all, her mind never accepts her idea as being one with the people of the mainstream. Added to it, the people of the external world keep on reminding her that she is a woman and dalit woman. She expresses her agony as it is so difficult even to find a means of living, there is also another great difficulty, the difficulty I find in moving about in the outside world, alone. If a woman so much stands alone and by herself somewhere, all sorts of men gather towards her showing their teeth. However angry you get, however repelled by their expressions and their grimaces, even to the point of retching, what can you do on your own? We think so many thoughts. We hope so much. We study so many things.



But in real life everything turns out differently. We are compelled to wander about, stricken and unprotected. The women's mind is already composed with the basic feminine desires, and as a result of which, their responsibilities take a big shape. Failing their duty either as a woman or as a slave cause acute sabotage upon both their physique and their psyche. A slave woman is not supposed to rebel, and to be patient for all the brutalities done upon them. It is highly not possible to flee away from the mental set up that had been imbibed in the women down the ages by many such agents like culture, religion and society. Women receive wounds through different means. Whether physical or psychical, the wound makes a deep mark in the women. Sometimes the wounds appear to be dry outwardly, but remain exacerbated inwardly.

Gloria Anzaldua, the celebrated feminist discusses the psychic wounds of fragile women and advocates the "options designed not to provide closure but to keep the wound open and festering, preventing the synthesis that the scab represents." When the wounds are only temporarily sealed and not permanently healed, they get manifested in various abnormalities and forms such as dreams, nightmares, manias, and complexes in the women. Dreams are associated with the psyche, and they "are the mental acts in need of detailed and prolonged attention" though they had been neglected as mental phenomena for a long time. Dreams are an outlet for the distressed psyche spurred by unhappiness, grief, and some reprehensible wish of an individual. For the oppressed women, dreams, in fact, possess the characteristics of the fearful ingredients of unsolicited repressed memories, and deadly realities. In some occasions, the women seek for voluntary dreams that have soothing effect upon them. Sivakami's women orbit around their physical problems more than the psychological ones, as they have not come out of the basic problems of life. Nevertheless, Walker's women encounter psychological problems more, as the basic troubles meted upon on the physical plane are gradually getting resolved with the patronage of many women activists. The dalit women are still encountering the meanest brutalities on their body and of course, on their mind too. However, they do not know the ways to discuss their problems like the other women do. being the Tamil dalit writer, does not find space to discuss the psychological agony of the

women of her community. Moreover, in a country like India where people still believe in family system that contains many old people in the form of grandmothers and grandfathers, psychological problems may not dominate.

Hence, to sum up the problems of the women at the physical and psychological levels, it is alleged that physical frailty forms the basis of the other one. As slaves and dalits, the women have to encounter innumerable problems at the physical level. As women too, there are some worries exclusively meant for them. It is natural that when there are physiological problems, it leads to psychological problems. The principles of patriarchy might have its impact in two ways - male shall dominate female, and the elder male may dominate the younger ones. Sexual politics obtains consent through the "socialization" of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role and status. Temperament involves the formation of human personality along stereotyped lives of sex category (masculine and feminine) based on the needs and values of the dominant group and dictated by what its members cherish in themselves, and find convenient in subordinates: Aggression, intelligence, force, and efficacy in the male; passivity, ignorance, docility, virtue, and ineffectuality in the female. Even at the primary level of life, at the infant level, domestic service and responsibility are assigned to the female, whereas the terms associated to victory, achievement, interest, and ambition to the male, in terms of activity. The limited role allotted to the female tends to arrest her at the level of biological understanding. Millet designates temperament as the psychological, role as the sociological, and status as the political component, and they are inextricably interrelated. The temperamental differences at the biological level between the sexes are conditioned from the early childhood itself. The chief institution that promotes patriarchy at the sociological level is the family. The father, being a male, takes the ownership of the family in his hand, exercising complete power over his wife or wives and children. Classically, the father, as the sole proprietor of his family, is both a begetter and a possessor in a system where kinship is considered to be property. Yet in strict patriarchy, kinship is acknowledged only through the association with the male line.

Feminism, as it is understood today, is both political and polemical. The centrality of the position of women in a patriarchal and parochial society is often a moot point in a social or political discourse or for that matter literary discourse. Indeed, it is a very revolutionary discourse with many contradictory concepts intervening in the history of evolution of women's physiological, psychological, spiritual, economical, social, and political aspects of life. Being a debatable issue, it legitimately claims for recasting the lives of women who were willingly or unwillingly under several powerful institutions such as capitalistic governments, racial supremacists, patriarchal clans, patrilineal families, religious societies, and also domineering ideologies

From ancient times, women have always been viewed as objects and valuable possessions of men- bartered and bought by men, or attained over a military victory, living objects that give comfort and solace to their families through parturition. In most patriarchal societies, womanhood had already been conceptualized in the form of women characters of the national myths, epics, fairy tales and folk tales. These mythical figures are being perpetuated as ideals to be followed with great patience and idols to be worshipped with great reverence, and surprisingly they are by the womenfolk themselves. Till the end of the nineteenth century, women who were relegated to an inferior position in the society were so silent that the word "feminism" or any other 'isms' related to their liberation could not be pronounced or advocated.

The etymology of the term "feminism" is to be found in the Latin word *femina* meaning "woman" (through French feminism), and thereby refers to the advocacy of women's rights, status, and power at par with men on the grounds of the equality of 2 sexes. In other words, it relates to the belief that women should have the same social, economic, and political rights as men. The term became popular from the early twentieth century struggles for securing women's suffrage or voting rights through movements led chiefly by Elizabeth Cady Stanton in the US, and Emmeline Pankhurst in the UK. It had a spillover effect on other socio-political movements for women's emancipation from all kinds of tyranny by men. Feminism is, indeed, an attempt to analyse or comprehend how and why is femininity or the feminine

sensibility, feminine experience, feminine expression different from masculinity or the masculine experience. It is undeniably a biological fact that men and women are inherently different.

Women's imagination and creativity or literary production have been greatly influenced by theoretical views and ideological standpoints provided by some of the enlightened radical feminist theorists and ideologues. Their extensive knowledge of history, sexuality, anthropology, psychoanalysis, semiotics, and every male-generated literary and critical theory help them subvert male hypothesis, revise traditional doctrines, and re-vision feminist polemics. The foremost among the feminist pundits is Simone De Beauvoir, who in her most influential work *Second Sex*, asserts that women have been held in thrall by men through relegation to the status of being man's "other." It analyses the stories about women from multiple perspectives including the biological-scientific, the psychoanalytic, the materialistic, the historical, the literary, and the anthropological. In each of these treatments, Beauvoir is careful to claim that none of them is sufficient to explain woman's definition as man's other, or her consequent oppression. However, each of them contributes to woman's overall situation as the other sex. For example, in her discussion of biology and history, she notes that the women experience certain phenomena such as pregnancy, lactation, and menstruation that are foreign to men's experience, and can never be understood and experienced by the other sex.

However, these physiological occurrences in no way directly cause woman to be man's subordinate because biology and history are not mere "facts" of an unbiased observer, but are always incorporated into and interpreted from a situation. In addition, she acknowledges that psychoanalysis and historical materialism contribute tremendous insights into the sexual, familial, and material life of woman, but fail to account for the whole picture. In agreement with Hegelian and Sartrean philosophy, Beauvoir finds that the self needs otherness in order to define itself as a subject. The category of otherness is necessary in the constitution of the self as a self. As per her biological analysis of the status of women, she states that men view woman only as a sperm-receiving womb, an ovary that is only prepared to carry the semen of men.

The most philosophically rich discussion appears in Beauvoir's analysis of myths. There she tackles the way in which the preceding analyses (biological, historical, psychoanalytic, etc.) contribute to the formulation of the myth of the "eternal feminine." This paradigmatic myth, which incorporates multiple myths of woman such as the myth of the mother, the virgin, the motherland, nature, etc. attempts to trap woman into an impossible ideal by denying the individuality. In fact, the ideal set by the "eternal feminine" sets up an impossible expectation because the various manifestations of the myth of femininity appear as contradictory and doubled.

Feminism does not seem to yield itself just to a single definition. Being an amorphous discourse, it has variety of meanings that can be deducted only from the contexts. Ultimately, it is a practical analytical tool used to reconceptualize the multiple oppressions, codified suppressions, and societal structures as well as strictures imposed upon womenfolk down the ages invoking different names, beliefs, and ideologies. In the new global phase of its evolution, it has got enmeshed with studies on biology, linguistics, psychoanalysis, Marxism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism postmodernism, cultural studies, media studies, queertheories, and so on. Naturally, it aims at re-interpreting, resisting, protesting, and interrogating the traditional discourses that viewed women as biologically weaker sexual objects.

According to Simone De Beauvoir, women are viewed as insignificant, but inevitable "Second Sex."

An anthropological analysis of the subjugation of women made by the feminists reveal that the secondary position accorded to women have their roots in lopsided male thinking and power mongering. Only men could occupy politically powerful positions, and manipulate power in the societies whereas women have to live a dependent or inert life powerless, voiceless, and as mere sexual object. In these circumstances, women have been considered only as living objects with no identity of their own. Men have always been associated with traits such as heroism, intelligence, knowledge, self-sufficiency, scientific thinking, rational ideas, adventurous spirit, and governance, which confer upon them a superhuman image

in the society. On the contrary, women are always reduced to inferior status with attributes such as sentimentality, meanness, triviality, frailty, dependency, and any other object of dull-witted nature in the world. This reductive societal set up unfairly assigns a secondary status to all women on earth, irrespective of their caste, creed and nationality. Michael Ryan points out:

Woman represents all that exists outside the subject and its truth. She is material, improper, indeterminate, incapable of conscious mastery, without self-identity, indifferent, formless and multiple. Nevertheless, as matter, she is the mirror, the spectacular scene upon which reason operates, providing reason with material for its concepts while yet remaining outside rational identity. (54)

For example, history shows that for as many representations of the mother as the respected guardian of life, there are as many depictions of her as the hated harbinger of death. The contradiction that man feels at having been born, and having to die gets projected onto the mother who takes the blame for both. Thus woman as mother is both hated and loved, and individual mothers are hopelessly caught in the contradiction. This doubled and contradictory operation appears in all feminine myths, thus forcing women to unfairly take the burden and blame for existence. Beauvoir's most famous assertion, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" destroys the essentialism, which claims that women are not born feminine, but are rather constructed to be such through social indoctrination. The next important contribution comes from Kate Millet who examines the other side of power-structured relationships in her *The Theory of Sexual Politics*. The word "patriarchy" that she has used in her book has become an inevitable catchphrase of feminist writing. "Millet made use of the term "patriarchy", which literally translated from the Greek means the rule of the father". Though the term may have lost its sting and appropriateness in Western industrialized countries, it may be justified that this term is the key word, defining well the universal oppression of women. In more traditional societies religious beliefs and social customs could have perpetuated the oppression of women.

Even in the modern world, where women have education, access to financial resources, and extensive civil and political rights, it is possible for patriarchy to continue to rule. The truth lays in psychology. Women have been conditioned into embracing the inferior position willingly by the process of sex-role stereotyping. From early childhood, women were trained to accept a system, which divided society into male and female spheres, with appropriate role for each. Millet blames the academics in social psychology who had helped to create what was essentially an ideology of sex roles. This was a set of rigid role prescriptions that served to keep women in assigned roles that are inviolable. Sex roles, and sex-role stereotyping were the means by which an entire society kept women subject to the rules of patriarchy.

The Nazi leader Hitler with all his potentials as a powerful man made the scandalous concepts, the “Three K’s for women Kinder, Kuche, Kirche (children, cooking, church) in the 1930s”<sup>8</sup>. Most women fall a prey to the middle-class blind docility, and become unresisting, willing creatures marching towards their tragic end. Betty compares the women who silently accepted their fate just as house wives with those millions who walked to their own death in the Nazi concentration camps controlled by Hitler. Even the latest electronic home appliances do not unburden the American housewife who comparatively spends more time than her grandmother in the kitchen and in the living room. The media also have a powerful effect upon sustaining the ideal wife/woman image through different television shows, movies, popular novels, and in newspaper advertisements too.

Women’s interest in purchasing any trivial objects is carefully analysed, and ruthlessly exploited by the media and producers of consumer items like lipsticks, hair-dyes, hi-fashion clothes, perfumes, gorgeous cars and the like. In the medium of creative writing also, the feminist stance is made visible by influential women writers like Margaret Atwood, Gail Godwin, Alice Walker, Virginia Woolf, and a host of other frontline writers who have emphasized the hitches that creative and ambitious women still face. The economic dependency, loss of identity, cultural subjugation, social pressures, domestic responsibilities, expectations at the home front, need for time, energy and space, emotional instability, and physical indisposition coerce the

creative women into a bleak world where they tend to procure a “Room of Their Own.” Virginia Woolf, the prolific and emphatic woman writer of London has articulated the predicament of anywoman, who wishes to overcome the norms and regulations of the society where the cultural and traditional outlook is very much negative. In her collection of essays entitled *A Room of One's Own*, she has raised objections to many common needs that are denied to women and enjoyed by the other sex alone. She raises sensitive questions related to drinking habits, poverty, creativity, and so on. When she was going through the catalogue of writers in London Library, the volumes of books written by men on women astounded her. She was extremely troubled by the fact that almost all men, who were not biologically women, have written only about women. The question she asked herself was why women were more interesting to men, than men to women. Additionally, her mind, she confesses, rested on a very specific question ultimately why women suffer from poverty. She could list out the thoughts associated with women and poverty.

Down the ages, women had been judged as a complex entity to be won, and brought under somebody's control. Woolf calls the opinion of some eminent writers like Samuel Butler and Pope on women. They have uniformly expressed that most women have no character at all. Even great rulers like Napoleon and Mussolini despised women. When consolidating the great women of fictional importance, it is observed that only a few women like Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth and Rosalind (women created by Shakespeare) are to be cited as examples, and other popular women characters in the works of male writers are Clytemnestra, Desdemona, the Duchess of Malfi, Anna Karenina, and so on. These women, as fictional characters might have attained popularity and attracted the attention of readers. In the imagination of these great male writers, they seem to have been given highest importance, and they give the impression that they dominate the lives of emperors and conquerors in the fictional world. But the real misery and trouble they must have faced, as celebrities must have been absent in the record of their lives. In literary texts, the portrayals of gender roles, which tend to impose social norms, customs, conventions, laws and expectations on the grounds of gender discrimination, are to be scrutinized to understand the real situation of women in the society. In general the book throws



light upon the murky conditions of women as creative writers before the nineteenth century, particularly in England, “...any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, halfwitch, halfwizard, feared and mocked at” She defends her stand that it is not easy for a woman to produce a work of art unscathed by the world’s indifferent attitude and a suffocating environment. There are authors like Juliet Mitchell and Nancy J Chodorow who discussed how Freudian theory could be used to understand the nature of masculinity and femininity, and the cause of male domination over female. Psychoanalytic criticism begins with Freud who claimed that the father-dominated

Oedipus complex originated the binary division - masculine and feminine. It offers a framework within which the consciousness of sex could be understood. Psychoanalysis offers a universal theory of the psychic construction of gender identity on the basis of repression.

What constitutes gendered subjectivity, and how certain norms and values are internalized are examined. Freud’s basic concepts, which assume a male paradigm, are broadly accepted as they apply to men, but his specific notions about female development are largely controversial, and hence interrogated. To conceptualise feminism in the light of Gramsci and the later day psychoanalysts like Lacan, Jung and Adler may put emphasis both on defining gender and the psychological subjugation, and alienation of the marginalised group. It is widely accepted that women’s experiences of life as a member of a gender-biased society formulate their psyche. Women possess, or develop consciousness totally different from that of men because of factors such as their individual circumstances, commitment towards the expectations of society, family, surrounding, etc.

The term patriarchy needs a deconstruction in the hands of psychoanalysts in order to understand the feminist stance of women. There is connectivity between the economic and psychological factors in any woman’s life. From the ancient societies, men had been the custodians of property and women, and this mind set had prepared the psyche of women moving towards subservience. Though women had attained

economic freedom and independency in due course of time, the frame of mind of submissiveness that they themselves had created continued without many apparent changes. It may be, thus, alleged that the psychology of women living under patriarchy tends to be the psychology of oppression.

Helene Cixous focuses on the relationship between feminine libido and feminine writing. Her work stresses feminine heterogeneity. She looks feminine writing as challenge to the patriarchal order. She argues that the masculine sexuality and masculine language are phallo-centric and logo-centric, seeking to fix meaning through a set of binary oppositions such as father/mother, head/heart, intelligent/sensitive, logos/pathos which rely for their meaning on a primary binary opposition of male/female (or penis/ lack of penis) that guarantees and reproduces the patriarchal order. This hierarchisation of meaning serves to subordinate the feminine to the masculine order. Women across nations, cultures, countries, everywhere have emotions that they care about, connections to others, sexual feelings, and senses of self, self-esteem and gender related issues.

Women who live around the world strive to form a common forum to express their psyche, self and identity through dogmas or principles. The basic emotions of women across the globe are profoundly affected by unconscious fantasies as well as by conscious perceptions that begin as early as infancy. Feminism of psychoanalysis uses universal theoretical paradigms - distinguishing conscious from unconscious mental process, repressed desires, and psychosexual development. From the psychological projection of women's psyche, it can be comprehended that women's oppression is located in her otherness, and the gender inequality prevailing in the society may be partly because of a closed and interconnected web of Julia Kristeva, the intellectual young linguist of France and the contemporary of Jacques Lacan and Micheal .

Foucault emphasizes that the maternal function of women plays a vital role in the development of their subjectivity, and access to culture and language. She is interested in the earliest development of subjectivity, prior to Freud's Oedipal situation, and Lacan's mirror stage. By insisting that the maternal body operates between nature and culture, Kristeva tries to counteract stereotypes that reduce

maternity to nature. Even the mother is not the subject or agent of her pregnancy and childbirth; she never ceases to be primarily a speaking subject. Social, cultural relations, dynamics, practices, identities, and beliefs blended with psychological phenomenon.

Judith Butler, an American post-structuralism philosopher, who has contributed to the fields of feminism, queer theory, political philosophy, and ethics, highlights in her book *Gender Trouble*, that the coherence of the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality—the natural-seeming coherence, for example, of masculine gender and heterosexual desire in male bodies—is culturally constructed through the repetition of stylized acts in time. The supposed obviousness of sex as a natural biological fact attests to how deeply its production in discourse is concealed. In the United States, however, the contemporary feminist movement, which started with the white, middle class women's struggle to attain equal opportunity with the white, middle or upper class men failed to be endorsed by the black women. For a variety of reasons, the black women claimed that those feministic concepts did not address their concerns, and they remained aloof from the mainstream white feminist activities. The feministic criticism, which has been receiving much attention from critics around the world, is the philosophy concerned with the spontaneous outcome of the subdued, downcast, muted, and the lowered voice of black women in America.

The voices of the black women gained popularity with the term “**womanism**” -the term coined by **Alice Walker**. Reading the “womanism” of black women offers the readers not only the possibility of changing one's outlook of the world, but also of changing the world itself. The black women, commonly known as African-American women, did not want themselves to be called “feminists” alone, because the strand of feminism advocated the basic rights of ordinary women whose status was not so miserable as black women. However, their beliefs and activism ignited a tradition of anti-racist and anti-sexist political movement and thoughts defined as Black American Feminism.

The *Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970) by Alice Walker is the realistic novel describing three generations of a family spoiled by racial oppression and sexual violence. The scheme shows a harsh account of a repetitive cycle of

female abuse 23 wife beating and sexual exploitation in the history of the family of Grange Copeland. The patriarchal suppression of Grange over his wife and son Brownfield is followed by the same legacy of Brownfield oppressing his wife Mem and his three daughters. Grange leaves and then returns to Georgia in his third life from North as a transformed man and takes charge of his third granddaughter Ruth. He tells her the oppressive stories of the North and prepares the young Black girl to face the racist world in front of her. *Meridian* (1976) is a novel that concentrates on the Civil Rights Movement and the fight for a social change, but the central theme is the experience of Black women. The protagonist, Meridian Hill lives in the North but returns to the South to help in the voter registration drive. She feels troubled by her past life. She also feels guilty for leaving behind her child with her mother called Church, refusing the maternal responsibility and her involvement in politics. Meridian does not come to good terms with her mother but succeeds in experiencing a symbolic agreement with her mother in her dreams. She pleads to the figure of her mother, to allow her in pursuing her ideals. The transformed church after the Civil Rights War offers, a new and promising structure for a personal, social and political revolution. The protagonist finally tells her own history and successfully becomes a whole woman.

Many black American women, inspired by the nineteenth century movements, have continued over the years to work toward the eradication of race and gender inequality, among other systems of oppression, which have historically subjugated black American women. From a historical perspective, it is understood that black people who were brought to America as slaves, after having been mercilessly snatched from their homelands, had been undergoing the de-humanising ordeal since the seventeenth century. When the West colonized Africa, the colonizers brought with them this perspective that depicted women as weaker sex - a fragile, helpless, passive, idealized, exotic accessory to the educated or uneducated male.

With increasing vehemence from social and economic institutions, African Americans had to live in a society in which the whole race of black people was considered inferior to the whites. They, both male and female, were to be consigned

to a place of constant social, economic, political, and emotional subordination. Black race, as a whole, had to experience a robust life in an alien culture, full of difficult choices, setbacks, dilemmas, and tragic failures. Their existence was marked with hyphenated identities, fractured psyche, and divided roles. As in the case of Ralph Ellison, they were the “invisible men”, who have been controlled and bossed over by white men throughout their life. They were treated as soulless and nameless people who had to search for their own identity and true self. The Black women were concerned as much about ethnic and racial discrimination as about sexism since to be black and female is to be under double threat.

Slavery of black women made them victims in multiple ways. Sojourner Truth exposes the fragile, helpless women as mere cultural construction in her works. Hard physical labour, sexual harassment, emotional scars - all made the black women, a third class citizen in American society. As woman, she was the object of lust not only of white men but also of her own men. She was made to carry on the task of begetting more number of little slaves by forced mating with the black slaves. She had to serve as mute donkeys performing backbreaking jobs on the plantation.

Western feminisms, which focused upon biological, social, economic, psychological, literary and cultural subordination of women, appeared to be irrelevant to the scenario, as the middle-class white women's ideology failed to address the dehumanizing and largely distorting culturally and socially specific conditions of black, and non-white women. It, therefore, became necessary for black women to disengage themselves from the existing feminist theories, and be transformed into “womanism”, and placed themselves in their own specific cultural space, unaffected by the misconceptions. As capitalist ideology would have it, the black women were slaves with no identity, equivalent to unspeakable domestic animals. Different terms like “black feminism”, “African-American feminism,” and “womanism” or “Black American feminism” are being used to articulate the complexity of black American women's experience and voice in various genres of literature. They get in touch with their own history, have a better grasp of it and tend to voice out the defects and demerits through their writings. The foremost reason for their better understanding of history might be their kinship with their mother or grandmother. Any black woman

in America, for that matter, has a past, a history, in the words of Susan Willies, in her book on *Black Women Writing, Specifying* says: The history of black women in this country is the history of a labour force. Almost every black woman living in the United States has as her past the accumulated work of all her female forebears. This is not a generalization. Only recently, with the advent of wage labour, have some black women; the wives of fully employed factory workers, ‘enjoyed interludes of respite from labour.’... black women have/had firsthand knowledge of slavery, sharecropping, and domestic and wage labour.”

The oppressions black women had to face were not limited to the period of slavery alone, or to the Southern part of America only. The racial and sexual politics of the post emancipation period in America, that either left the black man unemployed, or made him a family deserter, or lynched him, put the onus of the family’s survival on the black I woman for which she was once again sexually exploited by the white men, and then JI, dumped as an evil temptress, a bitch, or a matriarch

The historical and ongoing struggles against the race and gender oppression black women have been experiencing at home, at work, in their communities, and moreover, within the dominant culture as a whole instigated them to disseminate their sufferings in the form of black literature. As black women have become cognizant of the multiple systematic forces of oppression, they have pursued collective actions for social change, transforming society and themselves through their own agency and self-determination. The real purpose of the writings of black feminists was an effort to combat the erasure of black feminist subjectivity and thought through the promotion and use of the literature for the reading public.

The significant women writers who have moulded black literature into a completely shaped womanist writing are Paule Marshall, Nikki Giovanni, Toni Morrison, **Alice Walker**, Garyl Jones, Toni Cade Bambara, Maya Angelou, Gloria Naylor, and others. These women collaborators joined hands together, and claimed that they required justification at the sociological as well as psychological paradigms of life. All these women writers aimed at the liberation from the societal prejudices,

which became a major threat to the survival and empowerment of women. Most of these women writers depict the victimization of their protagonists by sexism and sexist violence in their own communities.

It is also equally important that these women claimed their heritage and history. Writers like Marshall and **Walker** extend analyzing the ways in which white women are also affected by definitions of sex and race. They had a broad outlook of the struggles of women not only within the context of black communities but also in the world of women as a whole. In fact, in many of the novels written in the eighties, Africa and African women became important motifs for trying out different standards of new womanhood. Given in Barbara Christian's words, "One effect of such a variety of themes and characters in the fiction of the early eighties is not only black women writers' analysis of the intersection of class, race and gender, but also their presentation of many styles of life, many different ways of approaching the issues that confront them as blacks, as women, as individual selves"

## Chapter 5

### Comparative Analysis of Margins and Hegemonic Discourses

The term 'comparative,' is originated from the Latin word *comparativus*, derived from *comparare* which refers to the examination or evaluation of similarities or differences between two or more fields of science or subjects of study. Examples include comparative literature, comparative religion, comparative economics, and comparative language. When applied to literature, the comparative study involves analyzing the literary works of distinct social, cultural, national, or linguistic groups. Typically, this examination extends to works in different languages, although it can also encompass writers of the same language if they hail from diverse nations, cultures, or societies. Comparative literature is an interdisciplinary pursuit that transcends language, time, national and regional boundaries, genres, and disciplinary confines. It is characterized as a study without limitations. Within comparative literature, scholars explore historical, philosophical, and social changes, as well as concepts and movements. As a distinct branch of literary studies, comparative literature extends beyond traditional boundaries, embracing a holistic approach to literature. The customs, mannerisms, daily routines, and perspectives of individuals belonging to diverse groups are evaluated and contrasted among various countries, dialects, and societies. Henry H. H. Remak observes comparative literature as:

“Comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country and the study of relationships between the literature on one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the (fine) arts, philosophy, history, the social sciences, the sciences, religion, etc. on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression”. (Comparative 1)

The primary goal of comparative literature is not to establish the superiority or inferiority of literary works. Instead, its objective is to foster a deeper comprehension of various works originating from diverse regions of the world. Comparative literature seeks to transcend the limitations imposed by history, culture, philosophy, myths, social behavior, political engagement, economic circumstances,



and customs. Through a factual comparison of literary works by authors from different nations or languages, the aim is to gain insight into the human experience across national borders. Comparative literature serves as a distinctive tool for those who are inquisitive, enjoy reading, and appreciate the analysis of literary works across nations, cultures, and languages.

In the examination of comparative literature, the works of eminent novelists, playwrights, poets, storytellers, and biographers are juxtaposed. Undoubtedly, comparative literature delves into the study of the way of life of specific people, encompassing their behavior, attitudes, beliefs, and habits. Matthew Arnold underscores the interconnectedness of events and literatures, stating, "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 literatures" (quoted by Susan Bassnett 1). Literature consistently assumes a dignified and honorable role for humanity, transcending all barriers. A growing association between comparative study and literary theory is evident. As Susan Bassnett in *Comparative Literature* points out:

The study of themes and movements not only continues unabated but possibly is even on the increase. The difference is, of course, that the impulse is now coming from within areas of work defined under other headings than that of 'comparative literature', such as post-colonial studies or gender studies. (116)

The field of comparative literature has expanded the scope of literary studies, offering a global perspective. It involves the examination of similarities, differences, and connections among literary works, authors, and texts. This observation is highlighted by Bijay Kumar Das in his exploration of *Comparative Literature*.

"Comparative literature analyses the similarities, dissimilarities and parallels between two literatures. It further studies themes, modes, conventions and the use of folk tales, myths in two different literatures or even more" (32) Warren and Wellek point out three different types of comparative literature. The first type comprises the study of folk-tale themes. It is an integral part of the culture and literary scholarship.

In Rene Wellek's exploration of the Crisis of Comparative Literature, he underscores the necessity for comparative literature in the following manner:

Literary scholarship will not make any progress methodologically unless it determinesto study literature as a subject distinct from other activities and procedures of man. Hence, we must face the problem of 'literariness', the central issues of aesthetics, the nature of art and literature. (38)

According to Rene Wellek, there are three types of comparative literature. The second type deals with analyzing the connections between multiple pieces of literature, while the third type focuses on the relationship between comparative literature and World literature.

Comparative literature is identical with the study of literature independent of linguist, ethnic and political boundaries. It cannot be confined to actual historical contacts. There may be . . . as much value in comparing phenomena such as languages or genres historically unrelated as in studying influence discoverable from the evidence of reading or parallels . . . The three main branches of literary study – history, theory and criticism – involve each other . . . Comparative literature can and will flourish only if it shakes off artificial limitations and becomes simply the study of literature. (Crisis 36)

Although Sivakami and Alice Walker's novels differ in narrative tone and protagonist, they share a commonality in their cause, objective of writing, and theme. Both authors have experienced the pain of oppression due to their belonging to marginalized classes or communities. Despite the differences in their approaches, both Sivakami and Walker are resolute in their decision to demonstrate against oppression and uphold their unique identities. Sivakami incorporates autobiographical elements to represent her people, while Walker uses Celie as a representation of all black women in her class to convey her ideas.

Additionally, both authors present similar perspectives on God; Sivakami discusses God in a way that resonates with their shared experiences. And when Alice

Walker shares her views about God through Celie, she says, Celie's changing attitude to life records a shift in her attitude towards God too. Her initial letters addressed to God under the interdiction "You better not never tell nobody but God" (10) indicates her entire dependence on an external phenomenon in the absence of any faith in her own potential. In the face of life's hardships, her perception of God undergoes a gradual transformation. As she embarks on the journey to reclaim her identity, she also comes to grasp the full extent of the gender-based and racial implications of Christian patriarchy. Recognizing the male-centric nature of the God she had been addressing in her letters, she starts directing her correspondence to Nettie. She realizes that the deity she had been communicating with seemed to exhibit traits similar to the men she had encountered – unreliable, forgetful, and deceitful.

According to Giroux, Gramsci discusses hegemony in two ways. One centres around a process of domination with which a ruling class exercises control, on other allied classes, through its intellectual and moral leadership. The second concerns the dual use of force and ideology to engender relations of socialization among the ruling classes and subordinate groups. The main issue for Gramsci is the role played by the State in terms of its active participation as a repressive and cultural/ethical force (educational). The role of the State was extensively discussed by Gramsci with reference to the relationships established between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Giroux, 1985).

Gramsci opposes the concept of hegemony to that of domination. While domination is a form of coercive social control, only political and violent, hegemony is an ongoing social process of renewal of socio-cultural and economic influence of one class over another. The concept of hegemony is much broader than that of ideology, because it refers to the process of construction of the collective experience, of the modelling of meanings, including the development of values, the creation of conceptions of the world (*weltanschauung*) and the moral, cultural and intellectual direction of society through education. Similarly, Gramsci divides the State into two specific areas: the political society, which refers to the State apparatuses of Administration, law and other coercive institutions whose primary, not exclusive, function, is based on the logic of force and repression. Civil society

refers to public and private institutions that used meanings, symbols and ideas in order to universalize the ideologies of the ruling class, and at the same time, to form and limit the discourse and oppositional practice.

The predicament of Dalit women in Indian society is distressing, subjected to oppression based on class, gender, and caste. However, contemporary women are actively challenging the discrimination, oppression, and injustices imposed upon them, striving to carve out a space for themselves. In this context, the contributions of women writers who step into the mainstream to delve into the challenges faced by oppressed women become incredibly significant. Numerous women writers in Dalit discourses have played a pivotal role in bringing Dalit narratives into the forefront, shedding light on the struggles faced by marginalized women. Dalit women's perspectives are now actively seeking to uncover the underlying reasons behind the injustices imposed upon them. Within these discussions, women are asserting their dual identity as both women and Dalits.

In the narratives 'The Grip of Change' and 'The Taming of Women', Sivakami highlights the intricate layers of oppression faced by Dalit women. She directs attention to the everyday tasks performed by Dalit women both within their households and in external environments.

Sivakami delves into the ways in which violence against Dalit women becomes sanctioned and institutionalized by various entities, including the state, family, church, and upper caste communities. Her literary work chronicles the labor and exploitation experienced by Dalit women, detailing instances of brutal treatment by landlords of higher castes, the panchayat, the police, and even Dalit men within their own homes.

Sivakami portrays Dalit women primarily as laborers, engaging in work from a young age and enduring hardship throughout their lives—spanning adolescence, womanhood, middle age, and old age, persisting almost until their last moments. Despite their relentless efforts, the Dalit women's work remains unacknowledged by both their community and society at large, subjecting them to exploitation at every conceivable juncture. Sivakami's portrayal of the life trajectory of Dalit women

reflects the broader struggle within the Dalit community for empowerment and the realization of a dignified existence. Through a detailed narrative recounting Dalit women's challenges, triumphs, and aspirations, Sivakami's fiction serves as a documentation of the Dalit community's ongoing efforts for social, economic, and political empowerment.

The novel "The Color Purple" by Walker intricately portrays the intricate struggles faced by black women in America, showcasing their unwavering resilience that enables them to flourish as individuals despite the oppressive constraints imposed by a society dominated by both white individuals and black men. Despite the hardships, brutality, and humiliation they endure, the women in "The Color Purple" remain defiant, refusing to be relegated to mere servitude to men. Walker has constructed her novel around a thematic framework encompassing various concerns, delicately interwoven into a captivating storyline that consistently engages the readers.

Walker herself interprets the novel in terms of spiritual and religious development, emphasizing these as the main themes of the book. She articulates her writing purpose, stating, "I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival whole of my people. But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the oppressions, insanities, the loyalties, and triumphs of Black women." "The Color Purple" vividly reflects this commitment, delving into not only the impacts of sexism and racism but also the determination of black women to overcome these barriers and emerge whole and unscathed. All the female characters in the novel exemplify this determination, attaining a state of autonomous selfhood as they defy and conquer their dilapidated and oppressive circumstances, striving to lead purposeful and content lives. It is why the central character of the novel Celie is able to assertively state her identity, "I am pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook . . . But I'm here." (69)

The marginalization of women is shaped by patriarchal divisions that relegate them to subordinate positions. In the context of Dalit society, women experience a diminished status, reduced to mere objects. For Sivakami, writing serves as a means to emancipate Dalits, particularly women and children. Sivakami's literary works celebrate the lives, resilience, and creativity of Dalit women, shedding light on their

constant endurance of humiliation. "The Grip of Change" not only serves as a testament to Sivakami's personal experiences but also becomes a narrative that reflects the broader struggles and lives of Dalits.

"Literature does not grow in a vacuum, it is given impetus, shape, direction and even areas of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society", says Nguagi wa Thiong'O in his preface to *Home Coming*.

Sivakami was driven to write by the political and social environment. In her novels she provides an overview of the people and the village. Sivakami outlines the geographical features of her village and this spatial arrangement perpetuates the divide between the upper class and Dalits, denying the latter their identity and history. The persistent issue of untouchability is prevalent in this context, and Sivakami actively opposes it by asserting her own identity. "The Grip of Change" also illustrates how individuals are often identified by the names of their streets.

A wide array of comparatists now use methods borrowed from cultural studies, new historicism, feminism, or subaltern studies. In an article, "Comparative Literature on the Feminist Edge", Margaret R. Higonnet points out:

Shuttling between languages, cultures, arts, or discourses marks the condition of a comparatist. Like comparatists, feminist critics have stressed the reexamination of critical boundaries. To be sure, feminists tend to focus on the cultural construction of gender, whereas comparatists traditionally have focused on genre or period conventions and on the transnational movement of forms. (155)

The development of feminist theories concern the marking of the body through significant incidents like rape, slavery, or excision, requires a contextual examination through comparative analysis. In recent times, numerous feminist scholars have aimed to go beyond mere theoretical and historical assertions. They have transitioned from concentrating solely on women's studies to embracing cross-cultural gender studies and engaging in comparative analyses. The portrayal of women as subordinate figures, the quest for autonomy, struggles with identity, and the roles of

female characters have been focal points in feminist criticism, serving as areas for comparison and contrast in theoretical evolution.

As Margaret R. Higonnet points out, “One of the primary tasks of feminist criticism has been to interrogate the problematic assumption of a “female” identity in literary representations” (Feminist Edge 157).

In contemporary times, there is a noticeable shift away from focusing on disparities between nations to concentrating on distinctions within national cultures. These distinctions are influenced by various factors such as gender, ethnicity, economic standing, social status, and political circumstances, all contributing to individual lived experiences. Throughout history, women across numerous cultures have faced social disadvantages that have given rise to distinctive behaviors. This research places significant importance on examining the social, economic, and political roles enacted by female characters in the chosen novels of Alice Walker and Pallanimuthu Sivakami.

Both chosen authors have encountered feelings of alienation, displacement, and identity crisis throughout their lives. The central themes in their works encompass alienation, displacement, and challenges of postcolonial society survival, identity crises, and the portrayal of the Diaspora’s struggle. Notably, Alice Walker and Sivakami primarily focus on writing about women or representing women in their works. All the selected novels revolve around the female protagonist.

Female characters in the novels ‘The Grip of Change’ and ‘The Taming of Women’ have been provided with subordinate or minor role to play. They are forced to survive in stereotypically patriarchal families. Historically, women have suffered from social subjugation and thus this subjugation is responsible to produce special behaviors.

Pallanimuthu Sivakami hails from Tamil Nadu and being a child born in dalit family his writings are influenced by the socio-religious-cultural situations that in turn affected her style of writing. Alice Walker belongs to the African American society where the people are exploited on the basis of colour of their skin. The female characters of Walker and Sivakami have many similarities and dissimilarities

as far as representation of women is concerned. The female characters have been compared and contrasted from social, economic and political roles played by them in the selected novels. The lived experiences of social, political and economic life always play an important role in the life of an individual.

Sivakami depicts the struggles, alienation, and displacement. The female characters in the selected novels belong to a tradition bound patriarchal societies. Their life is affected by the alienation, displacement and traumas of their male counterparts. They have to face double marginalization because of their caste, race and gender. Secondly the women characters of both the writers belong to a marginal class of society. The tradition bound families make female inhabitants subservient, meek, self-effacing and modest. They always remain as dominated wives, self-sacrificing mothers and suffering mistress.

Alice Walker on the other hand has also portrayed the problems of Diaspora, post colonial and globalized societies. Hybridity, identity crisis, urge to survive, fragmentation and alienation are major themes of her selected novels. All the protagonists face various difficulties and alienation in their life. Here females are the central character and story of the novels revolve around these characters. Women, in the selected novels of Walker, are politically active, dominating and economically strong than the women of Sivakami's selected novels.

The chosen novels feature female characters whose social, political, and economic roles have been compared. Social roles pertain to their involvement in the household as mothers, wives, daughters, and mistresses. Political roles examine the participation and awareness of these women in politics. Economic comparison involves evaluating the financial situations of female characters in the selected novels by both writers. In Sivakami's novels, Anandhayi portrays the role of a traditional, self-sacrificing mother. Her character has been compared to Celie from "The Colour Purple."

The novels by Walker depict a society where women have fewer opportunities and participation in public life than men. Women are still considered to be in a lower position than men, and their participation in public life is not as valued



as that of men. This is due to the belief among men that women are weaker than them. Consequently, women are not appreciated in the workplace and are often given lower-paying and lower-position jobs than men. Feminist arguments suggest that women should have equal participation to men not only in domestic areas but also in public areas such as social, political, and economic fields. In "The Color Purple" novel, women's participation is limited, and they are not allowed to express their opinions or speak up in public life. Men consider women's voices to be unimportant and ignore them. They do not even look at women when they speak and instead look at the ground, which reminds the protagonist of how her father used to treat her. Men listen just long enough to issue instructions and do not value women's opinions. The women also do not "look in a man's face" as they say. To "look in a man's face" is a brazen thing to do. They look instead at his feet or his knees. And what can I say to this? Again, it is our own behavior around Pa (TCP, 1982: 168).

The depiction of women in novels experienced a change in the last two decades of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century. Feminist writers moved away from depicting women as traditional figures enduring suffering and self-sacrifice, instead focusing on characters seeking identity and purpose in life. Some of these characters reject conventional roles as devoted mothers and wives. The fiction produced in the past four decades highlights the diversity among female characters and explores the inner complexities of women. It goes beyond restricting women's lives to roles such as wife, daughter, or mother. These novels scrutinize family structures, challenge traditional norms, and address social discriminations. Serving as a platform for women's demands, this fiction also acts as a means of self-expression.

Throughout history, marriage has often placed women in a subservient role as a wife, where they are expected to submit to their husband and his family. As wives, women are expected to make sacrifices for the good of the family, which can lead to them being denied any sense of individuality and freedom, particularly in societies that are dominated by patriarchal values. Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, observes marriage:

The destiny that society traditionally offers women is marriage. Even today, most women are, were, or plan to be married, or they suffer from not being so. Marriage is the reference by which the single woman is defined, whether she is frustrated by, disgusted at, or even indifferent to this institution. (451)

In male-dominated families, husbands have traditionally been the ones to define what makes a good or bad wife. This means that a wife's actions, preferences, and even her physical body can be subject to the control of her husband. Women are expected to follow their husband's directives and meet their desires, with their worth being measured solely by how well they fulfill their role as obedient wives. Unfortunately, this narrow view of women's worth has contributed to their oppression. This stereotypical image of a good or bad wife has been pervasive in literature for a very long time. Gramsci's work does not explicitly address patriarchal hegemony, but some of his concepts, particularly those related to cultural hegemony and ideology can be applied to understand power dynamics, including patriarchy. In Gramsci's framework, cultural hegemony refers to the dominance of a ruling class's cultural values, norms and beliefs over the rest of the society. These ideas are disseminated through cultural institutions, shaping the way people think and perceive the world. While Gramsci primarily focused on class struggle, his ideas have been extended to analyze other forms of oppression, including patriarchy.

One could interpret Gramsci's emphasis on cultural hegemony to argue that patriarchal values and norms are ingrained in cultural institutions, influencing societal perceptions of gender roles. The concept of "hegemonic masculinity," for example can be aligned with Gramsci's ideas, suggesting that certain male behavior and norms are presented as the cultural ideal. While Gramsci may not have explicitly discussed patriarchy, scholars have applied the concepts to understand how power structures, ideologies, and cultural norms contribute to the maintenance of patriarchal systems.

In *In The Grip of Change* by Sivakami Thangam's tale of violence is an ancient narrative, depicting the enduring power dynamics between a Dalit woman and her landlord in a freshly spun manner. While toiling in Paranjothy Udayar's

fields, Thangam endured his persistent gaze, as he schemed to exploit her, considering her merely as his servant. Thangam, devoid of royal lineage or a husband, was perceived by Udayar as a vulnerable, impoverished widow, seemingly abandoned by all. This perception fueled Udayar's routine acts of sexual exploitation, beginning on the very first day and leaving Thangam permanently disheartened. Despite spending three years in widowhood untouched, she was now forced to endure the repulsive advances of the elderly man, causing her deep anguish and anger.

Throughout the novel, P. Shivkami challenges the vulnerability of Dalit women, allowing her character to awaken and resist the violence inflicted upon her. Even Udayar is taken aback by Thangam's bold actions. He had always viewed her as a helpless widow easily bought with a meager sum, never anticipating her filing a police complaint. Thangam's courage in the face of such adversity extends to seeking justice in court for her husband's share of the land, further empowering her.

Sivakami explicitly portrays Udayar dragging Thangam into a relationship against her will, highlighting her strong aversion. The author successfully underscores the age-old, biased notion that male supremacy should never be questioned, burdening women with the need to prove themselves. Despite these challenges, Thangam triumphs over the violence perpetrated by Udayar with the support of Kathamuthu. However, even her mentor, Kathamuthu, attempts to exploit her as a means of asserting dominance over his two wives. Thangam, in her first encounter, clarifies her platonic feelings towards him, although shame pervades her eyes. Despite the complexities, she remains in Kathamuthu's household, where her body and resources afford her a dominant position. As Simone de Beauvoir opines:

Her home is her earthly lot, the expression of her social worth and her intimate truth. Because she does nothing, she avidly seeks herself in what she has. It is through housework that the wife comes to make her 'nest' her own; . . . By administering her home, she achieves her social justification; her job is also to oversee food, clothing and care of the familial society in general. Thus she too realises herself as an activity. But it is an activity that brings her no escape from her immanence and allows her no individual affirmation of herself. (Second 484)

The author of the text has put forward two conclusions regarding the analysis results. The first conclusion is that Alice Walker has succeeded in maintaining good unity in the structural analysis of *The Color Purple* novel. The unity of the characters, plot, point of view, and style are related to build the theme of the novel that is "Unfair treatment will always result rebellion". The suffering that women go through is evident in *The Color Purple* novel. Moreover, all the elements in the novel have been successfully interconnected. The second conclusion, based on a feminist perspective, is that Alice Walker has revealed many facts in the novel about women's position, role, rights, and participation. Through the novel, Walker highlights how African-American women face numerous problems in their lives. They are unfairly treated by both white people and African-American men in their society, which leads to physical and spiritual suffering. Walker's novel not only gives a voice to African-American women but also inspires them to struggle and achieve freedom in their lives.

Widows in Sivakami's novel have to live the pathetic life. It emphasizes the notion that a widowed woman lacks entitlement to her husband's property. "After my husband died I began working in Parsjothi's farm. My husband's brothers refused to hand over his share of the family land as I didn't have any children. How could I fight them?" (*The Grip of Change*)<sup>6</sup>

Thangam finds herself betrayed and deprived of her rightful inheritance by her brother-in-laws following her husband's demise. Faced with dire circumstances, she is compelled to yield to the sensual desires of the affluent landowner, Paranjothi Udayar. Seeking justice she appeals to Kathamuthu, the leader of the prayer community. The authoritative Kathamuthu, a former panchayat president, successfully secures justice for Thangam. The illicit relationship between a woman of lower caste and a man of higher caste sparks intense conflict between the upper and lower caste communities. The clash triggers a sequence of events, including police, bribery, boycotting prayer services to undermine their movement, and even the burning of the Dalit settlement.

In the second book of "*The Grip of Change*" novel, the author's note introduces Gowri, Kathamuthu's daughter, who takes on the role of the writer from

the first book. This section also portrays Gowri's return to her village, where she re-evaluates the circumstances and situations. Acting as a spokesperson for Sivakami, Gowri vividly depicts a society driven by caste, where daily life for the upper caste involves routine humiliation and discrimination. "The Grip of Change" not only addresses caste discrimination but also reveals how caste can serve as an axis for the exercise of power. Consequently, the novel maintains the dignity of the oppressed.

In Sivakami's "*The Grip of Change*," the extent of marginalization is determined by the level of economic, social, or cultural progress. Dalits who are impoverished and unemployed face discrimination and are disadvantaged by a caste-centric society that remains indifferent to issues related to impairment. This paper specifically examines the marginalization of Dalit women as portrayed in "*The Grip of Change*" by P. Sivakami. The mistreatment and disrespect directed at women from lower castes within the community stem primarily from their caste identity and, subsequently, their gender within a patriarchal society.

Sivakami's novels depict the rural narratives of women who endure hardships imposed by men firmly entrenched in patriarchal beliefs. The conflicts and challenges unfold between resilient women and oppressive men within the contemporary societal framework. Whether it's Kathamuthu in "*The Grip of Change*" or other men in impoverished villages, these central male figures not only crave the power associated with wealth but also exhibit tyranny in their treatment of women. This mistreatment extends to their wives, elderly and infirm mothers, daughters, and other women who become the object of their insatiable desires.

In her novel, Sivakami introduces women spanning multiple generations. The character Kathamuthu exemplifies a tyrannical and charismatic male figure who seeks to exert control over others. The narrative predominantly highlights the gender-based discrimination prevalent in the small village, particularly the pervasive sexual violations against Dalit women, often perceived as something intrinsic and spontaneous within the societal context.

Gayatri Spivak has become an authoritative voice of the post-colonial period since the publication of her essay "Can the subaltern speak?" Spivak's discourse

covers a wide range of topics including Marxism, Feminism, and Deconstruction. Her cultural and critical theories challenged the legacy of colonialism by rejecting the notion that the western world is superior to the third world due to its supposed purification from barbarism. She focused her critical discourse on issues concerning marginalized subjects such as the place of Subaltern Women in society and their empowerment. The term "Subaltern" was borrowed by Spivak from Gramsci and refers to a group of unrepresented individuals in society. (Gramsci 55)

Sivakami's depiction of presumable facts brings the Dalit lifestyle in rural society polarized by caste and hierarchy. When the question of Dalit women is concerned, the struggle is completely different from the upper caste men and women and it is even different from the problems of Dalit men. The nature of violence against Dalit women is accompanied by equally systemic patterns of impurity for the perpetrators. The casual links that result in the deprivation of political, civil, economic and social rights of Dalit women are multiple. They suffer from gender bias in the same way as non-Dalit women, but caste and class status deprive them further compared to non-Dalit women as their status of health and education is low.

Thangam's eyes remained shut as she could not face a man, who was once compassionate and sympathetic towards her, and had become full of lust and destroyed her psychologically. Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement, "one is not born woman, but rather becomes one," examines the construction of women. This is the simple reason according to Beauvoir 'woman' becomes the second sex or gender.

Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler and Michel Foucault discuss the question of power in the society. The distribution of that power focuses on the construction of social status of the gender. Due to social milieus being patriarchal, the power remains with them. Through Thangam, Sivakami not only focuses on the patriarchy of the common society but exposes the truth of the Dalit patriarchy and the harsh realities of Dalit movement as a whole. Gowri as a daughter is completely against the theory of her father's politics and mentality to misuse women in every possible way. She thinks that women should have the right to live according to their own thoughts and that they should get their own freedom.

After the incident of Kathamuthu's sexual assault on Thangam, Gowri shouts,

Dogs! Dogs in this house! Shameless as dogs!(6)Gowri could not accept this kind of lusty eyes and behavior in men and particularly in her father that is why she detests her father. She does not like her father as a polygamist and loutish. Gowri's notions of the civilized world are completely modern and far from her father's primitiveness or crudeness.

Sivakami's novels portray the rustic story of women who suffer at the hands of men who strongly believe in and stand for patriarchy. The conflicts and struggles are between tenacious women and tyrannical men in the contemporary society. The central male characters, Periyannan and Kathamuthu in the novels *The Grip of Change* and *The Taming of Women* lived in the poor villages; both are not only hungry for the power that money could bring them but also tyrannical in their treatment of the women in their life, be it their wives or their old and ailing mothers or their daughters or the other women for whom they had an insatiable.

The main woman character in the novel *The Taming of Women* is the industrious Anandhayi married to the womanizer Periyannan. The characters in the novel like and her mother-in-law, Chinnasami and Lakshmi are infused with originality. These men preferred to have contact with many women as they considered that as a matter of pride. The women were hept by them in order to assert their virility or to teach a lesson to their legally wedded wife or simply because they lusted after women. It is of much significance, however, that such women happen to be always poor, without any social support and are either widows or abandoned by their husbands. The representation of the other women is a significant entry point to the discussion of power relations within a Dalit community. Such a woman is an obvious victim of male power.

Lakshmi suffered pain and humiliation because of the treatment given by both the father and the son.

Even before he was done speaking, he grabbed a bunch of her hair.  
'Heck, let go . . .' She initially tried to break free. Then she let her hair

remain like a goat ready to be sacrificed on Deepavali. He rolled her head around as if it were a pestle and then let go after a few abusive words. (140)

Through these two novels Sivakami portrays the painful real life of women suffering at the hands of men. The women suffer double marginalization because they suffer as they belong to the lower class and the suffering is augmented because of the patriarchal system. The man who has committed a crime by harassing a woman has no feeling of guilt. The men conveniently blame the women, making them feel as if they are worthless and pitiable. Men like Paranjothi Udayar thought that the women are born only to satisfy their carnal pleasures and to serve them.

C.S.Lakshmi's question found in the appendix of the novel -The Grip of Change is worth mentioning here in this context:

why does sexual power work differently for women and men of different castes? Why is it that the lower caste woman is raped by the upper caste man, but the lower caste man always sexually satiates the upper caste woman?. (199)

Even Sivakami in *The Grip of Change* portrays Kathamuthu as a domineering Dalit, usurping the rights of others. Only a selfless person can lead a community and can lift it up, whereas Kathamuthu proved himself to be a selfmade leader disregarding the needs of his own people. He profited himself in the name of helping his people; when an elderly man requested Kathamuthu to make arrangement for the loans in the co-operative society, Kathamuthu replies

That's my main job, isn't it? I have no other work! Do you know when I had breakfast yesterday? At nine in the morning! After that I had to bathe and leave for the police station. I just got half an hour's rest after lunch. Every day something or the other happens and I have to skip breakfast or lunch. My health is spoiled. And I have to work on my land too. You spend all your time in your fields and enjoy the benefit. You have fresh vegetables, fruits. Look at me. I can't pay



any attention to agriculture. I have to go every day to the vegetable shop to buy stale, not fresh, food. I have no money to educate my daughter. The rules of the cooperative society are such that without cooking up accounts you can't get a loan-all that takes money. And if I keep doing your work how will I make a living? (The Grip of Change 36)

These lines highlight the egocentric nature of Kathamuthu. His character elucidates the selfish nature of the Dalit leader. Such leaders prove themselves to be hypocrites and exploit their kith and kin. In the author's notes to *The Grip of Change*, the author remarks: It wasn't simply that the upper castes exploit the lower castes. A lower caste leader might exploit his own people. It is not only upper caste men who prey upon lower caste women. Men like Kathamuthu are perfectly capable of taking advantage of vulnerable women. The overall picture presented by the novel is that rich or poor, upper caste or lower caste, the seeds of corruption exist at all levels.(149) The Dalits have darkness spread around them and also within them. To wear the new clothes of hope, advancement and aspiration, they have to get rid of the torn clothes such as submission, intra-dalit strife and illiteracy.

Sivakami says in *The Grip of Change*: The lower castes are also the have-nots, and the haves are the upper castes; the division is clear. They cannot avoid clashing with each other. As the lower castes are several and divided, they are not able to offer a tough fight to the uppercastes. The lower castes should shatter their particular identities and identify themselves as one class. The Dalits form the last rung of the labour class. If the struggle is centred on the Dalits, class and caste equality will be attained.(180)

The Dalits have to renew themselves to become emancipated. Trust is the only ship that can land them ashore. Only by changing themselves, they can be an instrument of change. It is time that they ceased to survive as Dalits and started living as human beings growing within them the rose of hope. A poem by Shankar Painter, a Gujarati poet who roars with a heart-piercing cry is given below to drive home the point that the Dalits are, above everything, human beings Hey Brother Break the

Begging bowl Do not extend hand for begging By begging the Rights cannot achieved Change the history Brother Break the Begging bowl.(qtd.in Prasad 147)

Most of the Dalit women get married out of compulsion and circumstance. They are forced by the manmade destiny to lead their life as prescribed to them. Oppression to a greater or lesser extent produces anger or hurt and oppression and injustice form an inevitable part of an untouchable's life, especially the Dalit woman, which has become a life of tolerance and sacrifice. The atrocities that are carried out on Thangam had greatly affected her psyche, completely changing her way of life and thoughts. Whenever Thangam remembered her life in Puliur, she wept.

She equated the incident in the sugarcane field with the repulsive experience of stepping on shit while walking on a riverbank. She could not recover easily from the sorrows and troubles she had suffered. The shock of being dragged out by her hair in the middle of the night to be beaten up like an animal had affected her mind deeply. She would gasp awake at night at the slightest sound.

She hated the memory of Udayar's sexual use of her body. Once she used to plait her long hair, but she no longer bothered with that. She pinned it up without any care and covered her head with her sari. (87)

In the same way the character of Lakshmi of *The Taming of Women* is also described. When she was mentioned to Periyannan, she was referred to like this;

'Fair? Imagine saffron drowned in warm milk-or a rose petal. Whether you look at her from front or from behind, you will keep looking forever. (90)

But after that she was treated like a bitch by Periyannan, who always tried to bring the women under his control. Voracious in his appetites, for both power and sex, Periyannan proved himself to be a domineering male character. Periyannan and Kathamuthu had always dominated their people. The poem "We will Rebuild Worlds" written by Meena Kandasamy talks about the same kind of experience of Dalit women in their lives. but the crimes of passion our passion your crimes poured poison and pesticide the ears- nose-mouth or hanged them in public because a man

and woman dare to love and you wanted to teach other boys and other girls the lessons of how to whom to when to where to continue their caste lines.(60-62)

Sivakami towards the end of the novels laments how even for a modern and educated Dalit woman, life still continues to be a struggle and caste a marker of identity in the society. In other words, caste and oppression of women go hand in hand. The women in the two novels suffer because they are women, because they are poor, and because they are Dalits. Sivakami's novels gleam with the spirit of hope and change and also try to accelerate the morale embedded deep inside the heart of the Dalits. To better understand both social and familial patriarchy, we must consider how each variety of patriarchy operates separately but keep in mind that they are mutually reinforcing (Chowdhury 2009; DeKeseredy 2011a; DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009; Ferree 1990; Hearn 1992; Smith 1990).

The selected two novels of Sivakami deal with the sorrows and sufferings, trials and tribulations, despair and degradation, poverty and powerlessness of the Dalits. The novels are one lofty image of the grief of Dalits especially the women who are devoid of the inevitable essentials such as human dignity, liberty, honour, justice, education and security. Though Kanagavalli and other women in *The Grip of Change* and Anandhayi in *The Taming of Women* suffer and are denied their rightful place in the society, there are some points where they express that they cannot put up with sufferings endlessly.

Through the portrayal of Gowri in *The Grip of Change*, Sivakami has shown how in spite of all odds they rise up in their life having their own dreams. When all unite together and stand for their rights and make others understand that they too are human beings with their own dignity and rights to lead their life on earth, the realization of the dream of universal brotherhood will not be faraway.

Gramsci emphasized the need of concessions and sacrifices of the proletariat(here women) to its allies to be able to exert hegemonic direction over them, thus extending the notion of corporatism from a limited view of economic struggle to a view comprising struggle on a broader social class scale and involving other sections of the masses.

It is observed that the identification of individual as male and the reflection of this ideology on power causes a profound effect ranging from inequity in social life, family life, politics, gender, institutional functioning to the patriarchal violence. In particular, male-dominated understanding emerges as a dominant phenomenon in the regions where the women population is without economic freedom, low level of education or without education (Mora, 2005, p. 3). Moreover, this situation is being transported to large cities and developed European countries through internal and external migration. The male-dominated (patriarchal) perspective, cultural infrastructure created by monotheistic religions, social and legal norms and related institutions formed the basis of patriarchal societies that makes the woman subject to the father first and then to her husband and her supervisor.

According to Gramsci, to understand and to practice hegemony, one must first recognise and appeal to the interests and tendencies of the groups to whom the group leader aspires to provide direction. To earn their consent, there is need for a certain level of commitment between leaders and the allied groups. Even though the concept of hegemony is located within political and ethical parameters, for Gramsci this should also entail an economic commitment. Therefore, hegemony must be necessarily predicated on the critical role that the ruling group exerts in the decisive core of economic activity (Gramsci, 1975, p 55). Since patriarchy presents itself in all social institutions (Acker 1992; Britton 2003; Danner 1991; Johnson 1997), institutional patriarchy is best understood using the institutional taxonomies of C. Wright Mills. Wozniak (2009) summarized the major works of Mills (1956, 1959) to describe Mills' societal institutions. These are the "dominant institutions" (i.e. the economy, political order, and the military order) as well as the "subordinate institutions" of society (i.e. the family, education, religion, and mass media). A review of the literature will show the many manifestations of institutional patriarchy, but first the classifications used by Mills must be abbreviated and clarified.

Gramsci affirmed the potential of subaltern classes to develop a counter hegemony in all areas of their daily lives, even though counter-hegemony is a term he never used in his writings. According to Antonio Gramsci, this was the only way forward to render the subaltern society's ruling class. The impetus for developing

and sustaining political consciousness derives from the ruling class. The tension between Culturalism and Economism (Mouffe, 1991: 175-184) was presented as being occasionally creative. Gramsci encouraged critique deriving from an elaboration and reinterpretation of some of the main Marxist concepts around the base-superstructure metaphor –economic base and cultural superstructure.

In short, the two dominant institutions discussed in relation to institutional patriarchy are the economy and polity. Understanding how patriarchy operates through social institutions helps in understanding individual patriarchal ideology (see Chapter 3). The following sections focus primarily on past socialist feminist theories that have given the utmost attention to the economy and the family. These two social institutions fit nicely with previous conceptualizations of patriarchy that emphasize connections between public and private patriarchy. The importance of education and religion are briefly discussed. The former is discussed primarily in relation to the economy and the latter, primarily in relation to the family. The discussion on institutional patriarchal ideology is provided to highlight the fact that ideology can be embedded into social institutions. These examples will show how institutional patriarchal ideology is important to study further, but they often manifest themselves as descriptions of these institutions. That is, they are embedded into the culture of the institutions, making them difficult to conceptualize and operationalize. Related to this, it is often difficult to conceive of structures as having ideological components. This closely falls into the trap of reifying the term “institutional patriarchal ideology.” Nonetheless, they are briefly mentioned in acknowledging that individual patriarchal ideology might be contextualized within larger structural ideologies but individual agency is assumed to have the greatest influence on individual ideologies.

The exploitation of women in the economy is clearly reflected in wage differentials between men and women. Even after the first wave of feminism, women were almost entirely excluded from the paid workforce. However, with the progressive second wave of feminism, women gained some ground in regards to their employment status and income relative to men. Despite these changes, disparities still remain. Wage differentials exist for women that work the same jobs

as men, even in the instances that women hold prestigious positions (Shin 2012). What is more alarming is the little ground that women appear to have gained since the second wave of feminism may actually be the result of men's wages decreasing during this time period (Massey 2007). Although access into the economy has been difficult to say the least, wage differentials have been a staple of gender stratification in the economy.

Other institutions (i.e. polity) have been used to address women's exploitation in the economy. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 set out to eliminate the exploitation of women's work by making it a requirement, by law, for employers to pay women the same wages as men for the same exact work. This legislation has failed to combat patriarchal exploitation in the economy due in large part to large-scale ideologies on the relative value of men and women as workers. Thus, the legislation allows for discrimination against women in regards to wages based on "seniority, merit, differences in quantity or quality of production, and 'a differential based on any other factor other than sex'" (Bacchi 1999:78). The first three variables allow for discrimination since men have far more opportunities to accumulate seniority, merit, and higher amounts of work at higher qualities. Other "differentials" outside of sex is such vague terminology that it makes legal cases involving discrimination difficult to win (Burstein 1979).

The wage differences have been even greater for black women compared to white women. This is partially due to the exclusion of black women from the early women's movement (Collins 2000; Stark 2007). The early women's movement was myopic in regards to women in the paid workforce and incorrectly assumed the social status of all women was the same (hooks 2000). When this middle-class, white women's movement urged women to "get to work", many black women were excluded. This was due to the fact that black women had been historically exploited for cheap labor and were already working, albeit for low wages. After the civil rights and women's rights movements, however, little ground may have been gained for black women's wages. This is reflected in recent research reporting that since the 1980s, the gap between black women's wages compared to white women's wages has widened significantly (Pettit and Ewert 2009).

A real example of the suffering of African – American Women is reflected in a novel by Alice Walker entitled *The Color Purple*. The novel was published in the 1982. This is one of the literary works of Alice Walker that talks about black feminism. *The Color Purple* can be called as the master piece of Alice Walker. The *Color Purple* also has some awards, for example in 1983; it received Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and The National Book for Fiction. The writer is interested to analyze *The Color Purple* novel because of some reasons. The first reason is because the story of this novel is wonderful and based on true story. Alice writes about the position and condition African American's woman in America. This novel tells about the suffering of black woman in America.

In society, men occupy a superior position while women are considered a subordinate class, with fewer opportunities and less power than men. As a result, women have limited access to education that is equal to that of men. "*The Color Purple*" novel portrays the position of black women as being below men in their society. This is evident through the main character, Celie, who is depicted as a weak girl. As a black woman, she is subjected to discrimination not only from white people but also from African-American men. In her family and society, Celie is always placed below men and endures mistreatment from them, particularly from her stepfather, Pa/Alphonso, who beats, rapes, and treats her poorly. As the oldest child in her family, Celie must take care of her sisters, cook, and do all the household chores. Despite having a sister who is willing to help her, Celie does not know how to stand up against her father. Nettie, suggests her to fight back and depend with herself.

You got to fight them, Celie, she say. I can't do it for you. You got to fight them for yourself. I don't say nothing. I think bout Nettie, dead. She fights, she run away. What good it do? I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive. (TCP, 1982: 22)

Celie never gets better education, because her father, Pa/ Alphonso, forbid her to go to school. Pa/ Alphonso thinks Celie is very stupid than her sister, Nettie. So, Celie cannot read and write well. "The first time I got big Pa took me out of school. He

never care that I love it. Nettie stood there at the gate holding tight to my hand. I was all dress for first day” (TCP, 1982: 10).

“You too dumb to keep going to school, Pa say. Nettie the clever one in this bunch” (TCP, 1982: 11).

In the society, Women’s role is very limit. It is because of the domination of men in the society. Men have big dominations than women. Men can do anything what they want, but not for women. Women are associated with domestic role. Traditionally, women’s roles are as the cooker, cleaner, mother and nurse of the family, and often forces into the demanding commands of men. In *The Color Purple* novel, Walker wants to show that women’s role in that period is very limited. Women and men have different role. Women’s role is only in the domestic role. They cannot easy do what they want to do. As the major character, Celie faces these problems. She is required to take care of her own family after the death of her mother, caring for her siblings and her stepfather. She spends all her time only in the home.”

I'm big. I can't move fast enough. By time I git back from the well, the water be warm. By time I git the tray ready the food be cold. By time I git all the children ready for school it be dinner time. (TCP, 1982: 3)

After she marries with Mister/Albert, her life does not change. Mister/ Albert marries her not as a wife but as a servant for his family. It is happen He needs someone who can take care his children, house, and serves his sexual desire.

“The girl’s hair ain't been comb since their mammy died. I tell him I'll just have to shave it off. Start fresh. He say bad hick to cut a woman hair. So after I bandage my head best I can and cook dinner? They have a spring, not a well, and a wood stove look like a truck? I start trying to untangle hair. They only six and eight and they cry. They scream. They cuse me of murder. By ten o'clock I'm done. They cry their selves to sleep. But I don't cry. I lay there thinking bout Nettie while he on top of me, wonder if she safe”. (TCP, 1982: 13).



It shows that Celie does not have free time to actualize herself. As a wife, she spends all her time to take care all households. Her daily activities in Mister's house are not like a wife but a slave. At that period, the women must follow the culture's role that is valid in the society. Their fashion is so limited. Women cannot choose clothes that they want. They cannot follow trend fashion at the time. They must wear dress. Because if women use tight clothes or pants that is not reasonable in the society. Men and women not suppose to wear the same thing, he said. Men pose to wear the pants (TCP, 1982: 278)

In The Color Purple novel, Celie has been lost her rights since she was a child. It begins when her step father rapes her several times. Her father impregnates her twice and also takes away her children after they are born. She also loses her right to study because she gets pregnant. And then, her step father sells her to Mister/Alphonso.

"She ugly. Don't even look like she kin to Nettie. But she'll make the better wife. She ain't smart either, and I'll just be fair, you have to watch her or she'll give away everything you own. But she can work like a man." (TCP, 1982: 9).

After marriage, Celie's suffering does not stop yet. She loses her right to freedom and becomes what she wants because of men in her life. She spends her time to take care of Mister's children, house, and works in fields. "I spend my wedding day running from the oldest boy. He twelve. His mama died in his arms and he don't want to hear nothing bout no new one. He pick up a rock and laid my head open. The blood run all down tween my breasts. His daddy say Don't do that! But that's all he say. He got four children, instead of three, two boys and two girls. The girls hair ain't been comb since their mammy died. I tell him I'll just have to shave it off. Start fresh. He say bad hick to cut a woman hair. So after I bandage my head best I can and cook dinner? they have a spring, not a well, and a wood stove look like a truck? I start trying to untangle hair. They only six and eight and they cry. They scream. They cuse me of murder. By ten o'clock I'm done. They cry themselves to sleep. But I don't cry. I lay there thinking bout Nettie while he on top of me, wonder if she safe." (TCP, 1982: 13).

In the novel "The Color Purple," the participation of women is severely restricted, and they are not allowed to express their opinions freely. Women are not permitted to speak up in public, and men often disregard their voices, considering them unimportant. Whenever women speak, men tend to ignore them and do not even look at them. The way men speak to women in the novel is reminiscent of Pa's behavior towards women. They only listen long enough to issue instructions and often look down at the ground while women are speaking. The women also do not "look in a man's face" as they say. To "look in a man's face" is a brazen thing to do. "They look instead at his feet or his knees. And what can I say to this? Again, it is our own behavior around Pa." (TCP, 1982: 168).

Alice Walker emphasizes the complicated often contradictory characteristics of cultural traditions, and the challenging decisions individuals must make to traverse them. The story explores the connection between tradition and personal freedom, as well as the impact of cultural rituals on identity and self-perception. African women are hushed and sworn to secrecy about the extent of the devastation done to them.

While both Alice Walker and P. Sivakami foreground the oppression of women within patriarchal systems, the **cultural and historical frameworks** from which they write are markedly different. Walker writes from an African American, post-slavery, and civil rights-inflected context, where race and gender intersect with histories of colonization and slavery. In contrast, Sivakami writes from a Dalit feminist perspective within the Indian caste system, where caste and gender oppression are deeply entwined within religion and local custom. Thus, while both authors examine marginalization, **Walker's framework is racialized and diasporic**, whereas **Sivakami's is caste-based and deeply rooted in the Indian subcontinent's internal hierarchies**. The subaltern woman in Walker's novels often confronts racism as an external force that intersects with patriarchy, whereas in Sivakami's fiction, caste violence is **both intimate and systemic**, complicating the dynamics of familial and marital spaces.

Another key dissimilarity lies in the **narrative structure and linguistic choices** of the authors. Alice Walker employs **African American Vernacular**

**English (AAVE)** in *The Color Purple*, using Celie's epistolary voice to subvert standardized language and privilege the authentic, lived expression of a Black woman. This choice is both political and poetic—it reflects linguistic resistance and builds a subjective, evolving consciousness. In contrast, Sivakami's narration in *The Taming of Women* and *The Grip of Change* is **third-person and translated**, often distancing the reader from the inner world of the protagonist. The tone is **direct, terse, and critical**, offering little space for emotional interiority or lyrical embellishment. This difference is not merely stylistic; it reflects **distinct authorial intentions**: Walker seeks to immerse the reader in the inner life of her protagonist, while Sivakami constructs a **sociological portrait**, exposing caste and gender hierarchies with calculated detachment.

Resistance, too, is envisioned differently in the works of the two authors. In *The Color Purple*, Celie's journey is one of **personal liberation through love, sisterhood, creativity, and economic independence**. Walker imagines healing and community as possible outcomes despite trauma. On the other hand, Sivakami's female characters often achieve resistance through **silence, withdrawal, or negotiation**, rather than overt empowerment. In *The Taming of Women*, the protagonist's silence is not celebrated but problematized—it reflects the limited avenues available for Dalit women to assert their will. Sivakami's world does not offer reconciliation or redemption; instead, it portrays **the unrelenting nature of patriarchal and casteist violence**, making her critique far more pessimistic. Where Walker's vision allows for transformation and joy, Sivakami's remains grounded in **structural realities and systemic barriers**.

Finally, the authors' own **positioning as writers** reflects a dissimilar political standpoint. Walker, writing from a position of relative privilege in the global literary landscape, often universalizes the female experience, particularly through her concept of "womanism." Her spiritual, pan-African worldview informs her narrative arcs. Conversely, Sivakami's voice emerges from **the lived experience of caste-based exclusion**, and she explicitly rejects mainstream feminist categories that ignore Dalit women's specific concerns. As the first Dalit woman to write a Tamil

novel and one who later entered politics, Sivakami writes with a **militant, self-aware voice** that is **less interested in personal growth and more concerned with institutional critique**. This distinction in authorial ethos marks a critical divergence in their literary projects—Walker aims to **heal**, while Sivakami aims to **expose and indict**.

Walker faced criticism for her protest against female circumcision, but she remained steadfast in her belief that clitoridectomy was a male-dominated practice. In 1946, the British Colonial Government banned infibulations and created a law in Sudan to prevent the dangerous practice. Women have fewer opportunities and limited participation in public life compared to men. This is due to the lower position that women hold in society. Men's participation is often considered more important than women's, as men still perceive women as weaker. This perception also affects women's standing in the workplace, as they are often relegated to lower-paying and lower-ranking jobs compared to men. Feminists argue that women should have equal rights and opportunities as men, not only in the domestic sphere but also in the public sphere. Women should have equal participation in social, political, and economic areas, among others.

## Conclusion

This thesis aims to analyse four major works of Dalit women's literature and African American women's writing of Alice Walker and Pallanimuthu Sivakami to bring forth the similarities between these two groups of subaltern women and to understand how the texts are contextualized in a misplaced state. Through the means of work, both writers transmit their own experiences and denounce the gender, race and caste oppression endured. The subaltern theory coined by Antonio Gramsci and developed by Gayatri Spivak has been used to analyse these texts and the way they establish a link between two different worlds as well as how they share the common objective of making their narrators' exclusion visible in their patriarchal worlds.

The study done in the first chapter i.e Introduction is thematic in its content and has identified how distress conditions and governs the African-American and Dalit people and especially women's embodied selves and mirthless lives because of the hegemonic structures.

Gramsci's ideas on hegemony, state, civil society and the Revolutionary Party are relevant to South Africa in both its apartheid and post-apartheid eras. Apartheid in South Africa was a good example of a state lacking hegemony. The fact that the state did not have the active consent of the majority of the people made it illegitimate. Hence, the apartheid state was always weak and had to endure both internal and external threats. Eventually, it could not sustain itself and capitulated to the mounting pressures. During apartheid times it was very coercive and used the state apparatus to enforce laws. Despite its attempts to rule by force it still could not survive. Gramsci, in wanting to create a proletarian state in Italy, had needed the mass of workers to be organised and politically educated. He realised that this was a difficult task to accomplish and therefore looked to the Revolutionary Party to organise the mass of workers and prepare them for leadership in the state. In South Africa the ANC became the Revolutionary Party with the power to organise and direct the masses. The Revolutionary Party opposed the apartheid state from both inside and outside the country and became one of the chief negotiators in forming a

new state. It is currently not only the dominant but also the hegemonic power in South Africa. Oppression, suppression and repression are some of the words interchangeably used to express the pain and anguish that have become central to these hapless women's existence. The commonalities that are plenty have made this study a possibility. This work may facilitate the readers to get acquainted with the current issues of modern women with special reference to African-American and Dalit women. Drawing largely on feminism, the study explores the possible similarities in thinking between the two writers from two different social and cultural climates. Feminism is a very revolutionary discourse with many contradictory concepts intervening in the history of evolution of women's physiological, psychological, spiritual, economic, social, and political aspects of life. Ultimately, it is a useful analytical tool used to reconceptualize the multiple oppressions, codified suppressions, and societal structures as well as strictures imposed upon womenfolk down the ages invoking different names, beliefs and ideologies. In the new global phase of its evolution it has got enmeshed with studies on biology, linguistics, psychoanalysis, Marxism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, postmodernism, cultural studies, media studies, queer theories and so on. Naturally, it aims at re-interpreting, resisting, protesting and interrogating the traditional discourses that viewed women as biologically weaker sexual object.

The feminist theories of modern era beginning with the imperative arguments of Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, and Betty Freidan are chronologically presented. The second chapter Subaltern and Cultural Politics proceeds to claim the psychological stances of feminism as offered with the necessary elements obtained from Gramsci. To position Alice Walker, Black feminism in America is discussed; Indian feminism and Dalit feminism are justified to find out the status of Sivakami in Dalit literature. The multiple oppressions imposed upon the women characters of Alice Walker and Sivakami are reflective of the inherent ideologies of the patriarchal system. Counter ideologies like Black Feminism and Dalit Feminism revolve upon the oppressive terms like slavery and untouchability that carry the ideas of degradation and humiliation. Slavery was foisted on the blacks as untouchability was foisted on the Dalits. If the African-American women are victims of gender

discrimination and racial prejudice in America then the Dalit women are victims of social, religious, economic and cultural discriminations and also caste and class prejudices in India.

The African American women and the Dalit women have come to represent the new voices in the partly liberated post-modern world. They valorise women's sexual and textual experiences and subvert all forms of oppressions through their writings. The feminist discourse itself has undergone a sea change offering a new discursive yet polymorphous discourse. The second chapter proposes to explore the different oppressions the women characters of Alice Walker and Sivakami encounter at the social, cultural and religious fronts.

The promising objective of the work would be to seek out the customary and established codes and prejudices of the society that obstruct the emotional and intellectual growth of women. Although, Walker and Sivakami belong to two farthest social milieus, the oppressions their women characters confront appear to be more or less the same. As women, their predicament is the same either in the society of the blacks among the whites or in the community of dalits among the upper classes and castes. The rationale behind the subjugation and oppression of these women characters lies deeply embedded in the existing social state of affairs and in the conventional cultural backdrop. These oppressions are clustered, compounded and intertwined in such a way that the women stumble upon these oppressive obstacles many times to establish themselves as dignified human beings in the world.

Sometimes, they, despite their resistance and constant struggle, fail to ascertain their potentials and end up in grief and bereavement.

The social order is very stringent for women that they have to struggle relentlessly to make even small gains in the social, economic, political and cultural spheres. A concentrated attempt of the myriad dimensions of the inferiority of the women at the physical level may provide any reader with the possible attitudes such as: > Women as receptacles and as producers of human race - The reduction of the biological status of the women is just to the wombs. They are viewed as wombs well formed enough to receive the semen of men. The physical utility of women is much

interpreted at this juncture. The fertility or barrenness of women are interrogated and redefined here. > Women as objects of sex - The identities of women are restricted only to their sexual organs like the mammary glands and other genital organs. The sexual oppression inflicted upon women prevails very common because of this stance. .Women as weaker sex- The misconception that they are biologically weaker foresees them to submit to the whims, fancies and most times to the perversion of men. Since they are anatomically insubstantial men tend to physically harm them, abuse them, and murder them also. The physical oppression invariably leads to the oppression of the mind. There is an association found between anatomical and psychical scars the women receive.

There is a discussion on the basic idea of language in the chapter 3 Language and Hegemony, the elemental theories connected with language and the association of language with society, ethnic group and mind as sociolinguistics, ethno-linguistics and psycholinguistics. Language is influenced by the different elements of life - society, culture, psychological repressions, biological conditions, and gender-issues. The languages of the blacks and dalits are considered to be demotic as they belong to the lower strata of the society. So the marked features of the African - American vernacular English (AAVE) and the dialectal and colloquial non-standard Tamil are discussed in the chapter. The classical and the standard varieties of any language are appropriated by the males to support their patriarchal power structure. The emergence of the concept of “phallogocentrism” and the counter revolutionary linguism go onto state the simple fact that language is gender-marked Alice Walker and Sivakami have their own use of the language that is repressed by various factors. Julia Penelope’s views such as PUD (Patriarchal Universe of Discourse) and CUD (Cosmetic Universe of Discourse) are employed to ascertain the linguistic oppressions of the women of Walker and Sivakami. The fifth chapter is the concluding part of the thesis, which sums up the inferences, assembles the similarities and dissimilarities of the women characters of Alice Walker and Sivakami. In addition, the causes for their wretched conditions are also stated. Also there is the focus upon the solutions offered by the writers themselves to the problems discussed in the previous chapters. Some possible suggestions for the scope



of further research in the same field are also discussed. The last pages include select bibliography and works cited.

The blatant sexism experienced by women Black Panther cannot be ignored. Paula Giddings's *When and Where I Enter* demonstrates how Black women in SNCC took a long time to resist the sexism they encountered from Black men because for them the race issue was more pressing than that of gender. The novel "Possessing The Secret of Joy" sensitizes readers about the horrific practice of female genital mutilation and to prevent young girls and women from being disfigured in the name of tradition, religion, or patriotism. Walker has scrutinized the customs and traditions of the black community that have been designed to keep women subservient to men by denying them control over their own bodies and minds. She exposes the various methods used by men in her community to keep women from attaining power. In this novel, Walker focuses on the oppression and exploitation, denial and dispossession of women by men in their families, communities, and in the larger racist world. She shows how this is only a small part of the complex story of black women's suffering, as well as their heroic struggle to break free from their bondage and move towards liberation, growth, and regeneration.

The framework of subalternity and patriarchal hegemony discussed throughout this thesis gains further depth when placed in conversation with key feminist theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, and the French feminists like Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir's seminal assertion that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir 283) offers a philosophical anchor to the argument that gender is not an essence but a social construct imposed upon women through repeated patriarchal conditioning. This insight reverberates across the texts examined in this study—particularly in *The Taming of Women* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy*—where women are not born into subjugation but are systematically shaped by the norms of caste, marriage, and ritual. The protagonists in these works struggle with the inherited roles of womanhood, which they eventually challenge or reject, thereby enacting the "becoming" Beauvoir outlines.

It is important to examine how the women from the marginalized section negotiate their identities inside and outside their groups within the patriarchal society. The suppression of the people on the basis of caste and race assume a further paradigm of gender bigotry when the women struggle for identity and respect not only against the respective supremacists who have long been exploiting them sexually but also against the men of their own groups who never acknowledge their rights and contributions in the struggle against oppression. There is a similarity between the African American and Dalit consciousness. It is clear that as black feminist studies have a significant contribution to the making of racial consciousness cannot be ignored or undermined, in the same manner Dalit feminism is raising in different parts of India.

Social injustice, insecurity, treatment of inferiority experienced by both these groups at the hands of the dominant social groups, lack of education, bad habits as a result of ignorance, backward economic conditions make Dalit and African worth comparable. The formation of a new feminine personality is the most important question of an ethical and civil disorder connected with the sexual question. Until the women can attain not only a genuine independence in relation to men but also a new way of conceiving themselves and their role in sexual relations, the sexual question will remain full of unhealthy characteristics and caution must be exercised in proposals for new legislation. Every crisis brought about by unilateral coercion in the sexual field unleashes a "romantic" reaction which could be aggravated by the abolition of organized legal prostitution. All these factors make any form of regulation of sex and any attempt to create a new sexual ethic suited to the new methods of production and work extremely complicated and difficult.

As far as the attitude of both Sivakami and Alice Walker is concerned, the women writers from both these communities feel that they were made to live the most horrible life. As a result of this notion they express their displeasure, miseries, pains etc. through these selected novels. It is this characteristic that in a way, inspires them to write. The characters in both the novels lacked were not bread but freedom. The quest for freedom by Celie in *Color Purple*, Tashi in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* and Anandhayi in *The Taming of Women* is seen and these characters worked

very hard in order to achieve this goal. As they were denied freedom for centuries, they were naturally hungrier for it than any other community in the world. When we analyse these four literatures we find that they are, in a way, a movement towards human liberty mainly the liberty of women from the shackles of slavery and oppression. They also advocate awareness, revolution, struggle, and change for the better and social commitment. These novels by Sivakami and Walker can be termed as literatures with commitment and literatures that intend to bring about a social revolution. Therefore, both these literatures advocate the right status of woman and her identity in the world. Addison Gayle Jr. rightly sums up a central drive of the Blacks who are thirsty for freedom and identity. He states (1996:96): Our basic need is to reclaim our history and our identity from what must be called cultural terrorism, from the degradation of self-justifying white guilt. We shall have to struggle for the right to create our own terms through which to define ourselves and our relationship to the society and to have these terms recognized. This is the first necessity of a free people and the first right that any oppressor must suspend.

Judith Butler's concept of **gender performativity**, as articulated in *Gender Trouble*, is especially pertinent to understanding how female characters across the selected texts subvert normative roles. Butler posits that gender is not a stable identity but a series of performed acts which are socially regulated (Butler 179). This can be seen in *The Color Purple*, where Celie gradually shifts her performance of femininity—from silence and submission to autonomy and expressive creativity—as she resists the script imposed by patriarchal norms. Similarly, in *In the Grip of Change*, Anandhayi's calculated speech and social maneuvering reveal how even marginalized women perform gender roles strategically to negotiate power within rigid social structures. Butler's critique of the heteronormative matrix underscores how **gender is produced and policed**, a theme mirrored in the cultural constraints placed on Tashi in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, where her body becomes the site of ideological control through the ritual of genital mutilation.

The results of the proposed research work highlight the usefulness of Subaltern theory in comparing the novels of Alice Walker and Pallanimuthu Sivakami. The two countries 'The United States' and 'India' are discernible from

each other in terms of technology, culture and economics. These two countries abide by the social hierarchies and a chasm. This kind of African-American and Dalit literature continues to flourish, and there is every reason to believe that the voice of the African-American and Dalit writers will be apprehended and deliberated for the years to come, as artist social analysts and literary critic. In this way, the Black writers of America and the Dalit writers of India are the other voices; the unheard voices which are rarely discussed. As seen, the marginal literature is a very cosmic concept and term that includes in it all those literary works written by the Black and the Dalit writers in America and India respectively.

The subaltern classes are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a "State": their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of the civil society, and thereby with the history of States and group of States. Hence it is necessary to study the objective formation of the subaltern social groups, by the developments and transformation occurring in the sphere of economic production; their quantitative diffusion and their origins in the pre-existing social groups, whose mentality, ideology and aim they conserve for a time. Also their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations, their attempt to influence the programmes of these formations in order to press claims of their own, and the consequences of these attempts in determining processes of decomposition, renovation or new-formation.

The birth of new parties of dominant groups, intend to conserve the assent of the subaltern groups and to maintain control over them. The formations which the subaltern groups themselves produce, in order to press claims of a limited and partial character; which assert the autonomy of the subaltern groups, but within the old framework and assert the integral autonomy.

French feminists like Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray call for **écriture féminine**, a feminine mode of writing that resists phallogentric logic and instead embraces multiplicity, corporeality, and emotional depth. Alice Walker's use of **epistolary form and AAVE** in *The Color Purple* can be read as a manifestation of this practice, wherein Celie's letters function as an alternative language—a space for

the feminine voice to emerge outside dominant narrative structures. In contrast, Sivakami's stark, sparse prose may not align with Cixous' lyrical call, but its **deliberate detachment** can be read as a resistance to expected emotional expressiveness, especially in the context of Dalit womanhood. Both approaches, though stylistically different, attempt to **disrupt linguistic norms** that have historically silenced women, particularly those at the intersections of race, caste, and class.

In my work, different chapters apprise of stratified Hindu Society where Dalits people in general and Dalit women in particular face maximum physical abuse, humiliation and sexual violence on the daily basis. The same happens with the black women who are double marginalized because of the race and gender discrimination. Both Sivakami and Alice Walker have exposed structural inequalities and the brutal form of patriarchal oppression. It is clearly reflected that all the oppressions is the starting point and other oppressions automatically appear out of it. Work spot, culture, religion, society are encapsulated in such a way that the condition of women becomes pathetic. My work gives a peep into the world where caste, race and gender are intrinsically linked in our society. Alice Walker and Sivakami have focused on the psychological and social consequences of casteism, racism and internalised racism on the psyche of the coloured people. Internalised racism is like creating their own handcuffs to restrict their freedom. She has tried to write the histories of the American experience from a specifically African American perspective. Walker brings the Black people from the margins of their lives into the centre of American life, culture, history and Literature. She disagrees with the situation in the United States of America which claims giving ultimate freedom for its citizen without giving the full freedom for the African Americans. So her works are appropriate to be taken for the study of feminism.

The Color Purple destroys and defies the traditional ways of women and men. The characters in the novel break the boundaries of traditional gender roles. Harpo's timidity, Sofia's strength and Shug's sexual ferociousness are such examples that shows differences between a character's gender and traits they show. This is a bold feminist novel which contains the message of feministic uprising and self discovery

of the women. Through this novel Walker demands the liberation of women from all forms of oppression and sexuality in a magical way. Further, Walker questions the prominent role of fathers in the development of their daughter's knowledge about their sexuality.

The exploitation, suppression, and domestication of women have their predictable fallout in the form of preventing women from doing any creative work, any form of free self-expression, or even voicing out their basic rights as human beings. The social structures, cultural ideologies, and family relationships have been constructed in such a way over the ages that they become massive barriers to the self-actualization of women. The women are made to believe that their biological features are geared to do dull housework or domestic chores, and their emotional instability and quick temperamental changes make them unfit to establish themselves in spheres of creativity such as literature, painting, sculpting, designing towns, scientific inventions and so on.

Femininity is the social, cultural, and psychological transformation of gender as a distinctive category bearing social meanings. Such a construction is created through institutionalized internalization of moral and ethical values, standardization of norms, typecasting of roles, existing communal structures of patriarchy, life style, internalizing customs like widowhood, prostitution, unwed mothers, duality of moral standards, emphasis on virginity, fidelity, religious rituals, notions of purity and pollution, and attitudes of preferences and prejudices for and against one gender over another.

During the 19th century, women held a very subordinate position in society, while men were considered the super ordinate class. Andersen (1983:9) has argued that feminists believe that women were treated as inferior during this time. The concept of feminism has evolved and been understood in various ways over time.. "Woman was oppressed by a special form of life called patriarchy through which man appropriate all superior social role and keeps women in subordinated and exploited position." (Mandell, 1995: 14)

Women were primarily viewed as wives and mothers, with their roles being mainly confined to the domestic sphere and family.. According to Humm (2002: 118), “Domesticity places the house and the work associated with it as women’s most proper place and the function are to harmonize their family life”. It is supported by Hillyer (in Mandell, 1995: 54), Women are traditionally defined by their role as daughters, wives, and mothers. Women with disabilities are assumed unable to fulfill traditionally defined caretaking and partnership role.

Human rights are owned by all of man. Women have rights to decide their authority. Women have equal right with men, such as right for just treatment, right for championship, right for child care, right for equal education, right for public role, right for religion, right for love (Mandell, 1995: 188). While, according to Humm, (2002: 53), Women also demand the right to choose what they attend to, including having freedom to be what they want to be.

In society, individuals, including women, have the right to express their opinions. However, in reality, men's aspirations are often given greater importance than women's.. Mandel states that “women’s voice, decision, opinion, and critique are ignored by the men” (Mandell, 1995: 215). So, Women must improve their capability and capacity to make their aspiration is heard by public in society because, Feminism is both way of thinking and way of acting so women needs to actualize themselves as an actor in social institutions (Humm, 2002:233).

Feminism is a literary perspective that advocates for gender equality and believes that there should be no differentiation between men and women in society. This viewpoint challenges the existing patriarchal system that still exists and strives to build a more equitable society. Patriarchy, on the other hand, is a social system that places men in a higher position than women. It assumes that men have dominance and authority over all aspects of public life, and that women do not have equal opportunities to access the same rights and privileges as men..

First, from the structural analyzing of *The Color Purple* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* novels shows that Alice Walker makes the elaboration of the structural

analysis in good unity. The unity of the characters, plot, point of view, and style are related to build the theme of the novel that is “Unfair treatment will always result rebellion”. It can be seen from the suffering that is faced by women. All of elements are successfully related one to another. Second, based on the feminist approach, *The Color Purple* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* novel contains many facts that are revealed by Alice Walker reflected women’s position, women’s role, women’s right and women’s participation. Walker wants to express that African- American women face many problems their life. They are subjected unfair by whites and African-American men in their society. This condition makes women suffer physically and spiritually. Through this novel, Walker not only gives African- American women’s voice but also inspires them with a path to struggle and emancipate their life to get freedom.

The fourth chapter titled Patriarchal Hegemony analyses the selected novels from the subaltern gaze that how in society, a woman's worth and importance are often measured by her education and economic purchasing power. However, even if a woman is educated and has economic power, she must still fight for equal rights with men under the law. The patriarchal social structure has been continually reproduced and internalized for thousands of years. Although women's rights and the fight for equal rights have resulted in the enactment of new laws, positive change has been slow in the social structure. As a result, many women are still victims of patriarchal attitudes and beliefs. The patriarchal discourses present in texts that establish and reinforce traditional understandings are enough reason to eliminate or reduce their impact. As a result, the media can hinder social change and transformation and provide a legitimate basis for paternalistic actions. This serves to perpetuate patriarchal attitudes and reasoning in daily life. The patriarchy concept, establishing the Male supremacy in the society, is a form of organization which defines every social, political, economic and cultural decision and relation regarding men or male mentality (Demir & Acar, 1997, p. 31). The general concept of patriarchy refers to a social model where the state, family, inheritance laws, and social order are based on men. This male dominance has continued for thousands of years until the emergence of the women's movement and feminist studies. Male



sovereignty over economic, legal, and cultural areas forms the basis of this dominance. In a patriarchal order, men are responsible for protecting the state and family as well as administering them. With the emergence of family businesses in the 19th century, consisting of husbands, wives, and children, patriarchy became a more expansive concept that also covered the employee- employer relationship. The term paternalism is sometimes used interchangeably with patriarchy.

Male dominance keeps going in a paternalistic society. This dominance is based upon the fatherhood and protector roles. This role is mostly symbolic. In a paternalistic society, father cannot promise his child a property or social position, can only play a protective role (Sennett, 2011, pp. 63-64). Stalin's famous phrase "I'm your father", is typical sign of fatherhood mentality covering state power. These words exposes the desire to dominance with paternalistic approach on the public (with a fake show of affection) (Sennett, 2011, p. 99). Hegemony, in political, economic and cultural context, means to generate consent for the dominant ideas in the interests of the ruling class (Williams, 2006, p. 175). It is very important to ensure the formation of consent and public opinion for maintaining hegemony. Power expresses the guidance and ruling potency on the society and the organ that possesses this power and authority referred as government (Demir & Acar, 1997, p. 113).

Power enables men to establish and maintain their dominance in gender relationships and influence social structures and practices. This power dynamic is imposed by culture and social policy, reinforcing the ideology that women are dependent on men. The legitimate indicator of power is authority, which is closely associated with masculinity in the power structure that underlies gender relations.

Gramsci looked language as a means of transforming Italy into a more united nation. Despite his understanding of the people's identification with regional dialects, he wanted Italy to create a national language, one which was acceptable to the entire populace. If the new national language was accepted by all sectors of society then they would use the language in everyday communication, helping it to grow organically. Gramsci realised that a national language would not only unify the

nation but would also encourage people from different parts of Italy to debate issues of national importance in a language that was comprehensible to all citizens.

In case that the Power is considered as person who has ability to influence, direct or control the individuals without their consent, the authority may be mentioned as a process of interpretation concerning power pursuant to Sennett. Here, two different views are put forth. First view defends that the power policies determine what can be seen and felt by the subject. Max Weber is one of the representatives of this view. According to another view, the power of the ruling classes automatically turns into the images of authority. According to them, the image of a powerful person, the image of a person judging others create the principles of discipline and fear. According to Jules Guesde et al., representatives of this school, the ideas of the ruling classes dominate the ideas of the era. People never think about power, they think nothing but the suggested ideas (Sennett, 2011, p. 28). According to Gramsci, the ruling minority produces consent by possessing cultural, ideological and power instruments to be used in establishment and reproduction of the power as well as imposing its own values to the society (Barrett, 1996, pp. 61-67). Gramsci emphasizes the importance of the role of intellectuals in the construction of hegemony and divides the intellectuals into two groups, as organic and traditional. He identifies the organic intellectuals as founder, creative, inspiring and convincing political entities who participating in social life in an active manner (Çam, 2008, p. 241). Organic intellectuals build the dominant discourse through language and impose the view and values of the ruling class in society. Therefore, these values and opinions are processed to be constructed and reproduced in media texts.

According to Althusser who comments the hegemony in relation to the ideology, the existence of individual in the state and state apparatus gains meaning as a function of the state power and all political class struggles revolve around the state axis, as indicated in his work “ Ideology and Ideological Apparatuses of the state “ (Althusser, 1994, p. 30). The ideological apparatuses of the state such as religion, family, school, legal, political, trade unions, mass media and culture contribute the dominant structure to build up and reproduce itself. The ideological

apparatus of the state works by using ideology. However, the repression instruments of the state use force. According to Althusser, no social class is able to sustain the state power constantly without hegemony application on ideological and repressive apparatuses of the state (Althusser, 1994, pp. 34-36). Thus, Althusser, in his work “Ideology and Ideological Apparatuses of the state” demonstrates how the hegemony was built and reproduced on the basis of social and legal institutions and clarifies the Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Even if the People identify themselves as individuals in the Class societies, this is an acquired characteristic in the process of socialization through the above mentioned social and legal institutions. People's social practices are constructed and reproduced by the ideological apparatus of the state. Thus, the patriarchal ideology concealing the relations of exploitation, is re-produced and maintained by means of religious doctrines and practices, social and domestic relations, law, textbooks, institutional and economic functioning, media texts reflecting these phenomena, opinions and values of the ruling class and as a result, the status quo is assured.

Walker has dedicated *The Color Purple* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* “To the spirits:/without whose assistance/Neither this book/Nor I/would have been/written.” The dedication underlines the fact that the novel, through its women characters, quintessentially represents the collective consciousness of the black women—their moments of pain and misery, fear and fortitude, experiences and hopes are cleverly woven into the thematic patterns of the novel. The experiences of Celie, the black female protagonist, are presented through her letters written to God, as she has no other contact with life. This subjective self-encounter shows us the cruel barrenness of her life and its gradual transformation. Her sister Nettie's letters constitute the second-half of the novel and acquaint us with the rich African heritage and the inter-mingling American history. The epistolary technique has been successfully used by Walker in her other novels also. Through different stages of Celie's life, Walker has underlined the fact that despite their odious circumstances the black women are able to raise their collective voice against the patriarchal order and attain an autonomous state. This idea is supported by the other women characters of the novel too. All the women characters gradually redefine themselves with their

own efforts and with the help of other women. Through these characters, Walker has epitomized the realities of the lives of the black women and registered a vociferous protest against the debilitating sexism of the patriarchal society. Though the narrative tone and the protagonist are different in Sivakami's *Taming of Women* and in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, the cause, the purpose of writing and subject matter are same. Both have felt the pain of suppression as they belonged to a neglected class or community. And both of them have determined to protest against the suppression and assert an identity in their own way. Sivakami has brought in autobiographical note in her idea of representing her people, whereas Walker has made Celie to represent all the black women of her class to express her ideas. Both have even presented a similar idea about God; when Sivakami speaks of God she says, "There is a great deal of difference between this Jesus and the Jesus who is made known through daily pieties. The oppressed are not taught about him, but rather, are taught in an empty and meaningless way about humility, obedience, patience, gentleness." And when Alice Walker says share her views about God through Celie, she says, Celie's changing attitude to life records a shift in her attitude towards God too. Her initial letters addressed to God under the interdiction "You better not never tell nobody but God"(10) indicate a total dependence on an external phenomenon in the absence of any faith in her own potential. In the face of life's cruelties her perception of God changes gradually. At later stage, when she is on the path of recovering her identity she is also able to understand the full extents of gender-based and racial connotations of Christian patriarchy. She addresses her letters to Nettie because she realizes that the God she has been writing to is a man, and "act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful and lowdown. (199) Women are always more oppressed and are victims of male domination. The plight of dalit women in Indian society is horrible as they are oppressed on the basis of class, gender and caste. But nowadays women have started protesting against the discrimination, oppression and Injustices leveled upon them and are trying to create a female space for themselves. In this context the work of women writers who come out to the mainstream to explore the problems faced by the oppressed women become highly important. There are a large number of women writers in Dalit discourses who brought dalit texts into

mainstream visibility. The dalit women have started searching for the root cause of these injustices leveled upon them. Women in these discourses bring their own identification as women as well as dalit. It is in this context that Sivakami's work becomes relevant.

In the "The Grip of Change" Sivakami foregrounds multi-layered oppression against dalit women. She focuses on the 'work' that is routinely done by Dalit women both at home and outside. She explores how violence against Dalit women is legitimized and institutionalized by state, family, church and upper caste communities. Her fiction documents how Dalit women toil and get exploited at home and outside, are subjected to violent treatment by upper caste landlords, the panchayat, the police as well as by Dalit men within their homes. In her representation of Dalit women, Sivakami presents Dalit women primarily as workers who join the work force right from girlhood and toil through adolescence, womanhood, middle age and old age almost until their last breath. Their work goes unrecognized by their community as well as by the society at large and they are exploited at every conceivable turn. Sivakami's representation of Dalit women's life span mirrors the Dalit community's struggle for empowerment and realization of a dignified existence. Her fiction, through a detailed account of Dalit women's trials and tribulations, triumphs and aspirations, thus, documents the Dalit struggle for social, economic and political empowerment.

The novel 'The Color Purple' and 'Possessing the Secret of Joy' articulates the complexity of the struggles of black women in America and illuminates indomitable will which enables them to burgeon as individuals, defying the exploitative constraints of a society dominated and conditioned by white people and black men. Despite the shabbiness, brutality and humiliation of their lives the women in *The Color Purple* remain contumacious and refuse to function as servants to men. Walker has constructed her novel on a thematic base of multiple concerns, sensitively handled and culled together in a story-line capable of gripping the readers' constant attention. Walker herself has interpreted this novel in terms of spiritual and religious development' and stated that these two are the main themes in the book. She has made the purpose of her writing quite clear, "I am preoccupied with the spiritual

survival, the survival whole of my people. But beyond that I am committed to exploring the oppressions, insanities, the loyalties and triumphs of Black women.” The *Color Purple* fully exhibits this concern, as it explores not only the effects of sexism and racism, but also the black women’s determination to overcome these barriers and emerge unscathed and whole ultimately. All the woman characters of the novel exhibit this determination and attain a state of autonomous selfhood defying and overcoming their dilapidated and opprobrious state in order to live a purposeful life and be content with themselves: that’s why the protagonist of the novel Celie is able to assertively state her identity, “I am pore, I’m black, I may be ugly and can’t cook . . . But I’m here.” (69)

The patriarchal society has oppressed women by defining them as a marginalized group, as pointed out by Simon de Beauvoir. Dalit women, in particular, are treated as mere objects and face humiliation everywhere. Sivakami's writing aims to liberate Dalit women, children and the community as a whole. Her book "The grip of Change" is a testament to her own life and the lives of Dalits.. Her work was shaped by the social, political and economic forces in her society. In “the grip of change” Sivakami describes the village where Dalits live next to the cemetery. The divide between the upper class and Dalits is maintained, denying the latter their identity and history. Alice Walker’s novel "Possessing the Secret of Joy" offers a powerful exploration of the cultural practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) and its impact on women’s lives. The novel tells the story of Tashi, a woman who undergoes FGM as a young girl and struggles with the physical, emotional, and psychological consequences of the practice. Through

Tashi’s story, the novel raises important questions about the relationship between tradition and individual freedom and offers a powerful critique of the practice of FGM. One of the central themes of the novel is the concept of tribal frenzy, which highlights the power dynamics within communities and the ways in which cultural practices can be used to control individuals. The novel portrays the cultural and social pressures that lead to the practice of FGM and shows how individuals can be caught up in collective emotions or hysteria that lead them to act against their own best interests. Overall, "Possessing the Secret of Joy" is a

compelling and thought-provoking examination of the impact of FGM on women's lives and the complex dynamics of culture and tradition. It raises important questions about the relationship between tradition and individual freedom and highlights the need for individuals to challenge cultural practices that harm them. By shedding light on the damaging impact of FGM, the novel encourages readers to confront the harmful practices that continue to affect women and girls around the world.

In this comparative analysis of the novels of Alice Walker and P. Sivakami, we explored the intersection of race, gender, and caste through the lens of Antonio Gramsci's theory of the subaltern. Both authors portray women who are doubly oppressed—by patriarchy and societal hierarchies like race and caste—but they also highlight the subtle ways in which these women resist and subvert dominant structures.

The concept of misplaced margins has been central to this study. In both Walker and Sivakami's works, the margins—whether African American women in Walker's novels or lower-caste women in Sivakami's—are depicted as spaces of both exploitation and resistance. These margins, rather than being peripheral, are crucial to understanding the socio-political dynamics of their respective settings. Both authors underscore how patriarchal norms collaborate with other systems of power, like caste and race, to keep women in subordinate positions. Walker's depiction of African American women in *The Color Purple* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* shows how racial and gendered oppression intersect. Similarly, Sivakami's *In the Grip of Change* and *The Taming of Women* highlight caste and gender oppression, showing that both systems rely on each other to maintain control. Walker's use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) becomes a tool for reclaiming agency. By embracing the language of the marginalized, she resists the dominant narrative that devalues their voices. Sivakami, on the other hand, uses the regional language and dialects to expose the everyday realities of Dalit women, giving voice to characters who would otherwise be silenced in mainstream Indian literature. Both authors use language to highlight the voices of the subaltern, though it is not without challenges. The characters often face backlash for defying norms and asserting their identities through language. Gramsci's theory of the subaltern helps to decode the

silence and hidden discourses in both authors' works. Both Walker and Sivakami depict characters who, despite their marginalization, engage in acts of quiet resistance that often go unnoticed. In *The Color Purple*, Celie's personal growth, her letters to God, and eventually her defiance of male authority, are forms of subversive resistance. Similarly, Sivakami's protagonists resist through subtle acts of defiance, whether through reclaiming their bodies, voices, or identities. Through their narratives, Walker and Sivakami illustrate how the margins are misplaced—they are central to understanding the broader societal systems of oppression. These women characters, often relegated to the background, drive the most significant change, transforming not only their lives but also the communities around them. Both authors force us to confront how dominant narratives have misrepresented or ignored the subaltern and challenge us to reexamine these margins as sites of agency and transformation.

The comparative analysis reveals that despite differences in culture, geography, and context, the subjugation of women through intersecting systems of oppression—whether it be race and patriarchy in Walker's works or caste and patriarchy in Sivakami's—follows similar patterns. However, the strength of these authors lies not just in exposing these systems but in showcasing how marginalized women reclaim their agency, narrate their own stories, and resist being subsumed by hegemonic forces.

In recontextualizing the misplaced margins as central to the narrative, both Walker and Sivakami offer a vision of hope. Their works show that the oppressed, though seemingly silenced, are always engaging in resistance—sometimes in subtle ways that eventually lead to profound societal change. Their characters' journeys from silence to voice resonate deeply with Gramsci's belief that even the most subjugated can rise to challenge the hegemony that seeks to erase them.

This study not only highlights the ways in which marginalized women are subjugated but also celebrates their resilience and the power of their voices, however quiet they may seem at first. By analyzing these authors through Gramsci's framework, we can better understand the hidden discourses of power, resistance, and the ongoing struggle for visibility and justice.



The history of subaltern group is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist tendency to unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups; it therefore can only be demonstrated when an historical cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in a success. Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups even when they rebel and rise up, only permanent victory breaks their subordination, and that not immediately. In reality, even when they appear triumphant, the subaltern groups are merely anxious to defend themselves. Every trace of subaltern initiative on the part of subaltern groups should therefore be of incalculable value for integral historian. Consequently, this kind of history can only be dealt with monographically, and each monograph requires an immense quantity of material which is often hard to collect.

The importance that Gramsci assigned to intellectuals should never be understated. In his notes on intellectuals he emphasised their organisational and directive functions. To him it was the intellectuals who establish a system of relations between leaders and led which includes people-nation and the state. In his notes on intellectuals, Gramsci discussed Croce, whom he categorised as a traditional intellectual. He was in fact heavily indebted to Croce, especially in the formative years of his intellectual development, for providing him with theoretical formulations. However, in later years as he became more inclined towards Marxism, he became intensely critical of Croce. As we have seen in the section on Croce, he did not agree with many of Croce's theoretical ideas, especially on the role of intellectuals. Unlike Croce, who considered traditional intellectuals to be 'literary' and 'scientific' specialists, Gramsci (1971:3), in deliberating on the catalysts of social transformation, decided that the rapidly changing modern society needed a new type of intellectuals, the 'organic intellectuals', who were distinguished by 'their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong'. Gramsci believed in organic intellectuals as the primary agents of change. His ultimate aim was to create a proletarian state and he saw the organic intellectuals as being crucially important in guiding the proletariat towards political and economic independence. He (1971:4) asserted that the working class was 'capable of

developing from within its ranks its own organic intellectuals'. The organic intellectuals would form and become members of a political party whose function would be 'channeling the activity of these organic intellectuals and providing a link between the class and certain sections of the traditional intelligentsia' (Gramsci 1971:4). Thus to him the organic intellectuals of the working class have two roles to fulfill: one is a role in the organisation and production of work and the other is a political role in the party. Since Gramsci attached a high value to the Revolutionary Party in creating a new social order he was adamant that discipline and organisation in the party was essential. After all, only if the masses accepted and abided by the rules of the party could the proletarian class transcend its subaltern status in the social, political and economic realms to become the dominant class. Gramsci's ideas on intellectuals are not only creative and innovative but bear relevance for intellectuals outside the limitations of his historical context of early twentieth-century Italy. In a country such as South Africa, which has a legacy of colonialism and apartheid, resulting in the majority of the people-nation being suppressed culturally, socially, economically and politically, Gramsci's theory on intellectuals is especially relevant. In apartheid South Africa the majority of the people-nation elaborated their own organic intellectuals who played a crucial role in organising and directing them in activities such as mass demonstrations to oppose the state. These intellectuals not only formulated ideas but worked closely with the masses. Gramsci advocated this type of relationship between the intellectuals and the masses, with intellectuals engaging and working amongst the people. In postapartheid South Africa intellectuals have an equally important role to play in constituting a web of relations between the people-nation and the state so that the needs and aspirations of the people-nation are adequately represented and fulfilled.

I conclude this work with the contention that the writers are attempting to repay the masculine fear and violence the caste & race supremacists have visited on the subaltern, it is obvious that they have ignored the subaltern women & their double repression in terms of caste and race & gender. If we look at the real time statistics of world population; it is with the males constituting 50.5% while the females are 49.5%. However we can observe from the population pattern, that there is just a 1%

increase in male population than female population. The whole world is working on sustainable growth and development. So, if we really want to develop and achieve target of sustainable growth and development of 49.5% population who is always suffering and facing identity crisis. Although this research attempts to analyze the selected works of Alice Walker and Sivakami by addressing most of the necessary parameters and aspects, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations encountered during the study. First, Sivakami's works have been translated from Tamil to English, and this process might have affected the cultural, political, and social nuances, potentially making the translations less effective than the original texts. Additionally, Walker's use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) presents its own challenges. Despite thorough documentation and diligent efforts, some meanings and connotations may not have fully translated, leaving gaps in interpretation, particularly for readers unfamiliar with these linguistic subtleties. Lastly, the present research does not claim to offer a comprehensive or definitive analysis of the subject, given its limited scope and nature.

This is the foremost issue which Divakaruni and other feminist writers have explored in their writings. All the same, much remains to be done.

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2. Chapter "Locating Feminism in Dalit Literature : A Culture of Silence and Domination" in the book entitled Mapping Feminism Unearthing Women's Existence in the World Nexus ,2023
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