

DALIT AND AFRO-AMERICAN WOMEN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY



THE THESIS SUBMITTED TO
KARNATAK UNIVERSITY, DHARWAD
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy
IN
ENGLISH

By
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June 2018

Conclusion

The present study has attempted comparison to find out the base of discrimination i.e. Caste in India and Race in Afro-America in the writings of Bama, Baby Kamble, Urmila Pawar, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Maya Angelou. The works of these writers represent literary resistance not only to the caste system and racial system, but also to patriarchies. The social institutions of religion, politics, law, etc. dominate the thought of caste and race. However, after centuries of repression, Dalits and Afro-Americans are now finding their voice in literature and through political, social and economic activities. In many ways, as a support to the downtrodden Dalit and Afro-American women, literatures of these have become an effective implement in expressing the protest of these communities against the domination and discrimination. The Protagonists of these works take the major step of rejecting and identifying themselves primarily as Dalits and Afro-Americans. The present study has also explored the status of women and their construction of an identity in their respective lands. Here the idea of literature is more about assertion of human rights, self-pride, revolt against social injustice, chronicles of personal and collective suffering, and hopes and aspirations for a new society devoid of discrimination. It is definitely a weapon for the struggle for personality development.

The research is an attempt to discuss the similarities and differences between the lives of Afro-American women as portrayed in the Afro-American and Dalit Indian literature produced by women. The process of emancipation of both marginalized groups with the struggle over the nature of truth finds focus here. The terrible experiences of caste and race had awakened these six writers to explore into the history and culture and forced them to rewrite, reproduce, and celebrate Dalit and Afro-American values.

The study has explored downtrodden Dalit women in India and Afro-Americans in USA. Dalit and Afro-American women faced similar problems; exploitation, suppression, marginalization, oppression and humiliation but differences lie in religion, land, people and race. The study has found out that still women are suffering in all fields - economic, political and social. Such lives in selected works are portrayed as strong and weak women characters; the works of Dalit and Afro-American women awaken these groups towards progress. The aim of the marginalized women writers is to investigate their experiences, which are unique.

Bama, Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar, the Dalit women writers, find fault with the Indian society. Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Maya Angelou criticize the American society, which is not compassionate towards the coloured native people i.e. the Afro-American. Cruelty

towards the downtrodden, colour and gender discrimination, casteism, and classism, cause struggle in gloominess. The writers' intent implicit hope for its abolishment through awareness and education is discerned in their works.

Marginalization is the social process of becoming or being made marginal, to relegate and imprison to a lower social standing, to outer limit or strip. Marginalization positions, gaps and silences a person or group. In its extreme form, marginalization could exterminate groups, and it refers to segregation. Thus, marginalized people are not considered as a part of the society. Many communities experience marginalization, particularly on the basis of colour, class, caste and gender. The marginalized or subaltern groups are forced into a new system of rules, face social disgrace from the dominant groups in society, which further marginalize and reject them.

Bama, Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar deal with the sufferings of the Dalits and Dalit women due to caste, class and gender. The Dalits in India are debtors to the high caste and are bonded laborers. They are obliged to save money and provide free labour for the Naiker's houses and during festivals. The Afro-American writers portray the hurting pain and traumatic experiences of the Afro-American women in USA. The works, as stories, narrate the writer's own life; the experiences of Toni

Morrison, Alice Walker and Maya Angelou the views, perceptions and the fears they faced during segregation.

Doubly oppressed are the oppressed women. Women are physically and mentally harassed due to their caste and colour and are ‘the second sex’. They are barred from the labour force, and their work in the homes is not valued. Afro-American women in America are the oppressed of the oppressed, and suffer both as Afro-American and as women. Similar to the Afro-Americans, the Dalit women are degraded as Dalits of the Dalits because their isolation has varied forms, and they suffer as women, and as Dalits. Their lives are characterized by subordination, violence, labor and sexual abuse. The Dalit and the Afro-American women are subjected to sexual harassment. In the works selected for study, an effort is witnessed on the part of the Whites and the communalists to destroy the self-respect of the Dalits and the Afro-Americans.

Double humiliation pours out of the sufferings of the Indian and the African American; doubly suppressed are the women delineated in the works of Bama, Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar in Dalit literature, and Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Maya Angelou in Afro-American literature. Afro-American women writers portray their feelings and emotions through their women characters: how they struggle as women trying to liberate themselves from race prejudices and slavery. Dalit

women writers, in their works, picture caste based slavery in India that is stamped upon the wretched population by the institutions, quite harmful to women. These writers expose the sufferings of women who are used as objects and are necessary to men for sexual fulfillment. Dalit women writings have opened their literary careers by first narrating their life-story that is making autobiography an institutional space through which they can first enter the literary field. Their narratives are based on the insight of the common identity. Baby Kambe demonstrates how caste and patriarchy converge to continue exploitative practices against women. Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar treat of child marriages and the tortures by mothers-in law. The Dalit women, such as Baby Kamble in *The Prisons We Broke*, and Urmila Pawar's sisters Shanta and Manjula in *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoir* and Bama's grandmother Paatti in *Karaukku*, are mute in their life because of their birth as Dalit women in lower strata. Bama's grandmother Paatti continuously works at higher caste houses from morning to late night as a slave. However, Baby Kamble comes out from her slavery and torture through her strong character, self-confidence and education. *The Prisons We Broke* draws the progress of the Mahar community from pre-Ambedkar days to its immediate version through education and mass conversion. *The Prisons We Broke* is a social critique of the Hindu social system as well as the patriarchal order of Mahars. Baby Kamble's frank analysis has made her

autobiography very different from the autobiographies of higher caste women as well as Dalit male autobiographers where the presence of Dalit women as an independent human being is rarely felt. In *Karukku* Bama gives an awful picture of the female subaltern and the marginalized. The central theme in her works is the status of Dalit women and condition of Dalit women. It is portrayed through the protagonists' struggle against patriarchy; *Karukku* was well received by the readers and critics: The autobiography moves from the village to convent with the harrowing experiences of a Dalit child and some childhood memories, which throw light on Dalit identity formations within South Indian cultures. They are similar to the Afro-American women in USA.

Such characters as Pecola and her mother in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* intend to criticize the hazardous effects of the superior white beauty ideals over the mind of the eleven-year's old Afro-American girl who is humiliated as the ugliest. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* has a well-built bond of female friendship among Pecola, Claudia and Frieda. The story turns around the difference and comparisons of the lives of two black girls by name Pecola Breedlove and Claudia. Celie and her sister Nettie, Shug Avery in *The Color Purple*, all the women characters in Alice Walker's novel are not weak. They are no more in the purple color now. They survive physically and spiritually, they are matured mentally and emotionally. They are full, solid and independent, enjoying all the

colors of life. The colour ‘purple’ symbolizes the strong-minded female spirit. Celie, a black poor and uneducated African-American girl, is able to change her situation. Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* is a novel that wonderfully portrays the gradual forming of a new black woman. Celie evolves from patriarchal oppression to awakened, independent, self-emancipated, empowered having self-identity. In fact, Alice Walker’s true intention of writing this novel is not only to give voice to black women but also to provide them with a path to follow for self-emancipation. The novel *The Color Purple* is lesbian in the much broader sense, indirectly expressing Adrienne Rich’s concept of ‘lesbian continuum’, which spans the whole spectrum of women’s friendships and sisterly solidarity. Alice Walker’s own term ‘womanist’ is clearly influenced by Adrienne Rich’s and in this womanist text, the eroticism of women’s love for women is at once centralized and incorporated into a more diffuse model of woman identifying women. Shug Avery is the first person to love Celie and through her Celie comes to love herself. In Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*, Mrs. Henderson, Maya Angelou and her grandmother, who work hard to keep their families together. Maya Angelou discloses the ways she is duped by the men of her own community. They portray Afro-American woman as suffer due to male prejudice, her sufferings as a young mother, deceived by men under false pretences of love and the hardships of bare economic

endurance. Afro-American women use maternal themes in their narratives to communicate their memories of home, in the arrangement of their identity “Identity narratives, deal with becoming, which is primarily linked to the source of home and mother, which in turn suggests one’s origins-the start of one’s being” (Laura & Stacey 545). While recollecting memories about their mother’s home, the female characters display a series of strategies that allow them to move towards personal and collective empowerment. They are also seen reminiscing of what it means to be deprived of a home and mother. The way patriarchal forces initially distort female identity, at the motherly home, is brightly portrayed by the female characters. Both Indian Dalit and Afro-American women suffer a lot under the systems of higher caste in India and racism in USA.

Dalit girls and women are especially vulnerable, experiencing not only the discriminations of caste, but also of class and gender triple discrimination as it is called here in Indian society leaving them in a vicious cycle of marginalization and exploitation. The burden of caste, class and gender has a strong influence on Dalit women autobiographical writings. The narratives of exploitation, humiliation and starvation are common to Dalit women’s autobiographies. The triple exploitation (caste, class and gender) is a common theme. The theme of resistance, against Dalit patriarchy in particular and social patriarchy in general, is also commonly seen. Thus, Dalit women suffer an additional layer of

discrimination and violence on the basis of gender both by people of higher castes and by their own communities.

India's Varnashrama system adds more trouble for the Dalit women who stand at the last rung as Shudras. They are also treated as untouchables. Dalits are kept out of all consideration of social life and are ghettoized in the name of caste. The case of Dalit women is still worse because along with being born in the lower/untouchable caste, they are born as a woman/secondary sex. Like African-American women their economic status, as poor, silences and subdues them. Completely neglected by the upper caste women and exploited by the upper caste men and Dalit men, Dalit women suffer more.

In America, the African American society has suffered much oppression and exploitation for centuries because of the racial prejudice. Similarly, in India Dalits are marginalized and discriminated under the *Varna* based caste system. The study focuses on the comparing aspects of Afro-American life in general and women's life in particular. Comparative study plays a very vital role in understanding two different cultures and ethos.

A serious study is undertaken here to compare women of two different nations, different cultures and different social system and yet mirror similarities in the status and the condition of the two marginalized groups of two nations - The Dalit women in India and African-American

women in America. The process of Dalit subjugation starts from school, which is supposed to be the place for the Dalit upliftment. Dalit autobiographies recognize the power of ideology that imprisons them and provides a critique of the paradigms that validate the social oppression. Dr. Chandrama S Kanagali quoted Dr Ambedkar: "... the untouchable, unlike the slaves are owned by the Hindus for purposes which further their interests and are disowned by them, when owning them places them under burden. The untouchables can claim none of the advantages of an unfree social order and are left to bear all the disadvantages of a free social order" (Kanagali 69). Dalit woman is triply cursed first by her gender, secondly by her caste and also by her class. These women even after earning the livelihood for their homes had to suffer at the hands of the drunkard husbands.

The study traces the journey of sorrow of such women who do not merely acknowledge the reality of crossroads of choices in life but evolve in the spirit of rebirth to explore an abstract meaning of various existing threshold models of patriarchy and beyond. These women who cross the boundaries of old patriarchal systems can be seen in the context of their restless, unending quest to understand and locate the identity of womanhood.

American society has created nightmares for African-American by imposing slavery. Until abolition though slavery was mandatory for all

African-American including men lost, women lost their most. The reason was African-American men were just slaves by the virtue of being blacks in the color of their skin but African-American women were not only slaves and blacks but also women who were identified as ugly, sexually aggressive, etc. Along with their status of being poor has caught out their hands, mind and soul to be submissive not only under their white slave masters but also by the white women and their own men (African-American men).

In case of Dalit and Afro-American women, their inferior status is badly hit in the name of caste and color. The then women and Dalits suffered a lot right from the ancient times up to the middle ages. After renaissance in India and civil wars in USA, the real awakening took place in the lives of Dalit and Afro-American women. In addition, the present scenario is breathtaking one for Dalits and Afro-American women. Writing has become a vital medium to voice the opinions and the writers have used this medium very effectively. Patriarchal/spouse support is playing a major role in case of the Dalit writers in India. Whereas in case Afro-American writers, it is the writers themselves who have raised their voice against exploitation and oppression.

The relevance of the study that is made of Bama, Baby Kamble, Urmila Pawar and Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Maya Angelou - the oppressed writers of Dalit and Afro-American women concerning their

community people - lead successive writers and inspire downtrodden women all over world. These six writers of different ages, countries and cultures, the thought is encircled by all manner of events with surprise and delight, their languages, narration and writings of native tongue hard, bright and clear.

The whole study is recapitulated, and the contribution of Bama, Baby Kamble, and Urmila Pawar from Dalit women writers and Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Maya Angelou from Afro-American women writers to their respective literatures are dealt with in some detail. Matters sharing several similar problems of Dalit and Afro-American women, their miserable experience and common mode of dialect, comparing their language and narration are brought out in the study, which has attempted to explain and bring out the untold sufferings of Dalit women in India and Afro-American women in USA in general in the name of untouchability and race. Some Dalit lower-class women, like Jyotibrao Phule's wife, played an important role in the shared struggle for gaining rights for the then untouchable women in the late nineteenth century, similar to African-American women's roles in USA.

There is general inclination of men to exploit, harass and neglect women. Both these literatures call for provisioning of conventional images of women in their texts and struggle to give them their due in terms of identity, position, power and emotional fulfillment. It is manifest

from the research that women in both Dalit and African-American literature portray a few essential images of subjugated women. Another reason for drastic images of Afro-American women in their literature is the survival of Afro-American writers. Another conclusion that may be derived is that African-American literature is a recognized canon while Dalit literature is struggling to make its mark.

Writers like Bama, Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar among Dalits in India and Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Maya Angelou among Afro-Americans in USA, through their writings endeavor to encourage such awareness. They can help their community women in their critical conditions as a sister, friend, and as mother; one woman can share and care for other women in the society. Dalit and Afro-American women writers have portrayed the characters, who struggle for freedom and have concern for their own community. One should see another Dalit and Afro-American woman as a human being without consideration of a caste and race. More importantly, every Dalit and Afro-American woman should develop an awareness of herself as the first step towards her emancipation. Thus, these women writers' are role models and icons for other downtrodden women. Both suffer on similar grounds. When we see these writers, we come to know that the status of Dalit and Afro-American women have almost changed. Yet there should be many efforts to wipe out all the discriminations and humiliations meted out to them.

These six women writers have supported emancipation and the weapon for this is education, participation in agitation and awareness. Dalit and Afro-American women who want freedom from all sides must find out a place and means to become independent.

Women's Search for 'Self'

The six select works of Dalit and African-American women writers make clear that all the six writers have dealt with a common theme in their respective works - their search for self in the world of their exploiters and oppressors. All have shown concern for their 'self' and their continuous struggle is to have an individuality of their own that was lost in the dominators' world. 'Self' according to the Oxford Dictionary is, "A person's essential being that distinguishes them from other people". (Oxford Dictionary 934)

In case of Dalits and Afro-Americans both have the desire to regain their self, to mark their individual personality in the world of their oppressors. Being Dalits and Afro-Americans are their first identity and then, doing what they want, like taking up any profession, is their second identity. One is their personal self, while the other is their public self. Both their personal identity and social identity are important for the oppressed as their struggle for identity is structured on these two concepts. In almost all the autobiographies novels and poems of Dalit and African-American writers, there is not only a portrayal of their life

stories, but a description of the community's life and struggle to which they belong to. They are not writing to achieve their own self, but that of their community in the world of the oppressors.

Dalit and Afro-American writers' novels and autobiographies have portrayed their personal and community struggle against exploitation and thereby have achieved success in reclaiming their self. Roy F. Baumeister, in his article "The Self and Society: Changes, Problems, and Opportunities" published in a book called *Self and Identity* edited by Richard D. Ashmore and Lee Jussim says there are three roots to achieve selfhood namely reflexive consciousness, interpersonal being, and executive function. He further says, "The self is a capacity for making choices, taking responsibility and exerting self-control" (Ashmore 193).

Though Dalits and Afro-Americans were not in a position to reclaim their self as they lacked means to make choices, take responsibilities and exert self control during their earlier stages owing to exploitation by their oppressors, they became aware of the importance of their self in the later part of their life that enabled them to lead a respectable life. To an extent, in the present days, the Dalits and the Afro-Americans are triumphant in reclaiming their self and the select works of the Dalit and African-Americans exhibit their achievement portrayed through their narratives.

Authority and self are what the Dalits and the Afro-Americans need. The life of Dalits is compared with that of the Afro-Americans as both share the same kind of exploitation and have experienced inhuman treatment in their respective countries. Though the kind of exploitation is different, the pain and suffering that both endure appears similar to a very large extent. Though many Dalits and Afro-Americans have been successful in their effort to reclaim their self and have risen to a respectable position, millions are still struggling in their search to carve a niche for themselves.

The select works of Dalit and African-American writers explore clearly the struggle, which is also one of the themes of their works and thereby exposes their fight for self. This point of view focuses on the struggle of the Dalits and the African-Americans for their independence and identity of their own, in their respective lands.

As a child Bama's life fuses into the festivities and rituals of her family and community. But as she moves out of this largely self-consolidating world into school and then consecutively into the convent, she finds only the crudest self-interest an account of the caste prejudices that seem worse than anything she has encountered before. For the Dalits in modern India, especially in Tamil Nadu, whether they are Christians or not, the Church and its activities play an important role in their community.

Bama starts to look out for means to inspire herself and her community from the nailed existence. Her elder brother shows her the right path of education. Bama's elder brother's advice makes a very deep impression on her. She wants to prove herself. Ever since her brother spoke to her, she studies hard with all her might and being. Bama takes her studies very seriously. She sees to it that she always stands first in the class. Bama writes: "In fact, because of that, many people become my friends, even though I am a Paraichi" (*Karukku* 18). During her education, Bama finds that wherever she goes, there is a painful prompt of her caste in the form of untouchability. The government offers the financial grants and special education to the Harijans; but to her these grants and education were more of humiliation than support, mainly because it singled her out on the basis of caste.

Bama worked in a Christian religious order as a nun; but the Tamil nuns were treated as inferior and lower. Bama notices casteism in the convent. In addition, she had thought that convent was an exceptional place. She starts realizing that one can endure external discrimination in society; but it is very hard to face manipulation and casteism inside the convent. Bama continues to stay in the convent because of her strong determination and insistent concern for the poor and the Dalit children.

The life as portrayed in *Karukku* throws light on the most agonising and unfortunate lives of the Dalits. Bama's portrayal needs to

be understood as representative of the experience. It is indicative of the unfortunate situation bequeathed in a greater degree of self-awareness and quest for achieving loftier and nobler things in the lives of Dalit women. Though the process of self-discovery and sympathy in the journey is tedious, the encounters are painful and the experiences expose anguish.

Besides Bama, another Dalit woman writer who rose from a very low position to the status of a writer is Baby Kamble, she struggled very hard to get education against odds of the higher caste society and poverty.

Baby Kamle's father and brother were part of Ambedkar's socio-political activities and they used to closely discuss and follow everyday activities of Ambedkar. Kamble used to take part in all those discussions. Eventually she became an Ambedkarite. She has taken a pledge to educate her community and analyze the myths, superstitions and Hinduism. The mainstream students usually carry high opinion of the notions of the teacher god and Gandhi. But for her, these figures mean nothing in front of Ambedkar's image. She recollects the speech made by Ambedkar:

My brothers and sisters, all you folks, including the old men, women and children who have come to Jejuri from far off places.

You walked barefoot for eight to ten days to get here. While on the way, you were tired, your feet ached, you had nothing but a few

stale pieces of bhakri to eat, yet you kept on walking and finally reached Jejuri. Why? Because you wanted to see your family deity Khandoba. But tell me, did Khandoba see you? What did he say to you? Could he see your condition? Did he see your suffering? ...What good has this god ever done to you? (*The Prisons we Broke* 64).

Baby Kamble writes how the Dalits have been asked to follow a different path in the speech delivered by Ambedkar. She states that the Dalits must educate their children. They must divert the attention of the children from god and teach them good things and send them to schools. She views that when their children begin to be educated, their condition will start improving. She mentions what Ambedkar had told the Dalits:

Our women have had a major role in being superstitious but I'm sure they will now give up these superstitions and take a lead in educating their children. They will have the honour of being the first to take this step forward. I have full faith in you, my sisters. Go ahead, educate your children. Let all our women take this step. Discard all such customs that strengthen our ignorance. My poor dear brothers and sisters do not eat carcass. Don't clean the filth of the village. Let those who make the filth clean it up themselves. Let us teach them this lesson. This slavery, which has been

imposed upon us, will not disappear easily. For that we need to bring about a revolution (*The Prisons We Broke* 65).

Kirtikumar R.Pimpliskari argues in his article ‘Ethnography of the Marginalised Self: Reading of Baby Kamble’s *The Prison We Broke*:

Self-recognition is the main motto of dalit autobiographies. There are many incidents which ultimately threaten the stability of the self ‘. Writers make query regarding the dominance of the upper caste and trace out the evolution of an individual self as well as depict the collective suffering of the community. Highly influenced by Ambedkar Movement, many Dalit writers in the post-Ambedkar period produced excellent works, who include, Urmila Pawar, Jyoti Langewar, Hira Bansode, Surekha Bhagat, Pradnya Lokhande, Mina Gajbhiye, Baby Kamble, Shantabai Kamble among others. Telugu has produced such stalwarts as Challpalli Swaroopa Rani, Gogu Syamala, Vinodini and Jupaka Subadra and Siva Kami, Bama and Veeramma have been writing powerful works in Tamil (Pimpliskari 2).

Baby Kamble presents in *The Prisons We Broke* (2008) the development of herself as well as her community. In an interview with her translator Maya Pandit, she says, “I wrote about what my community experienced. The suffering of my people became my own suffering. Their experiences become mine. So I really find it very difficult to think of

myself outside of my community" (*The Prisons We Broke* 136). Kamble raises certain important issues like caste discrimination, women subjugation and the influence of Dr. Ambedkar on Dalit women to get themselves educated both socially and culturally.

She speaks about her uneasiness towards the suffering of her community. When a Dalit woman offers a bunch of wood to high caste woman, the latter would say, "Oh! You, wretched mahar woman, take care not a thread of your cloth would come in my house. Otherwise, we have to clean everything of our house. Even we have to bathe our Gods. They will also become impure" (*The Prisons We Broke* 61). She bluntly illustrates her anger toward the Chaturvarna system of Hinduism as well as against the patriarchal order predominant among Mahars which gave a lower status to their women. The autobiography is a self-analysis of the patriarchy and superstition prevalent among Mahars. It is also a document which records the poverty and hunger of Mahars.

Urmila Pawar in her, *The Weave of My Life* reflects on her use of the category 'Dalit', arguing that it is a radical, rational-humanistic category developed in the rebellion of those oppressed and humiliated by the social system. She sees her awareness of becoming a modern individual emerging from the Phule-Ambedkarite movement and granting individuality to both men and women from the women's movement in Maharashtra. Sharmila Rege in her Afterword writes: "Memories of

humiliation and resistance delineate the reproduction of caste as a form of modern inequality both in the village and the city, people would first purify the Aayadan, the basket, woven by dalits by sprinkling water on it. At school, teachers would pick on dalit girls to clean the dung on the school veranda when it was the turn of their class to undertake the cleaning” (Rege 105). In *The Weave of My life* a woman can search for self herself, it is characterized by an honest, frank, and bold articulation of a Dalit woman’s experiences and may easily be compared with Afro-American women’s narrative. The focus of Urmila Pawar’s work is on the self as she talks about her personal life and her life experiences. Nevertheless, the community always becomes imminent in her autobiography as well as in her fiction. She admits: “What the writer writes about is social reality and not his/her individual life” (*The Weave of My Life* 342). She undergoes adverse circumstances and suffers perpetually because of her caste. The touching experiences of the deprival of identity portray not only the collective trauma of Marathi Dalit women of her time but also of all the Dalit women in general .In this frank and intimate memoir, Pawar not only shares her tireless effort to surmount hideous personal tragedy but also conveys excitement of an awakening consciousness during a time of political and social change. They are memories of Dananjaykeer’s biography of Dr.Ambedkar and the *Buddha and his Dhamma* written by Dr.Ambedkar and the process of putting

together thoughts and speeches. Urmila Pawar's use of earthly language is no longer new stylistic device. It is used in Dalit autobiography and, Dalit poetry. It is the introduction of the vocabulary of the Mahars and the Manga to delineate their world to most readers of literature. Urmila Pawar is aware that there is not much value for this vocabulary. But she gives us a taste of the women's cursing, the words they used in quarrel, open discussion of bodily functions and of the 'polluting' work that the untouchables do; for the raunchy language, the openness is also an integral part of Dalit culture. Her account of her romance with Harishchandra, the man she eventually married, does not shy away from discussion of physical aspects of their relation. Maya Pandit's translation retains the use of Marathi kinship terms that are part of family relationships and gives us a glossary to their meaning. It is always challenging to linguistically diverse text from one language to another and here it has been done with much care. Urmila Pawar's autobiography has been much acclaimed in Marathi literary circles. It has pride currently in its third edition. However, she has been criticized for her association with upper-class women's group and for open exposition of Dalit Patriarchy.

If one wishes to understand the complex interweaving of caste and patriarchy and how it affects not only Dalit women but also men and

women of all castes living in contemporary India, the memoir offers a reflection of that culture.

Sharmila Rege suggests that the weave should not be read as a feminist or Dalit autobiography rather as, ‘historical narrative of experience’. She has worked with Meenakshi Moon to compile interviews of women who participated in the Ambedkar movement. In the ‘Weave’, Urmila Pawar talks about her own experiences as Dalit woman, Dalit writer and Dalit feminist activist locating herself within the large socio-political backdrop. The ‘weave of memories’ thus documents a detailed narrative of how dalit men, women and children encountered modernity- the school, the city, the conjugal family, the bureaucracy, activism, literary societies, remuneration of a feudal religion- bringing to focus new times and spaces. Activist and award winning writer Urmila Pawar recounts three generations of dalit women who struggle to overcome the burden of their caste for the Dalits or untouchables make up India’s poorest class but they are forbidden from performing anything but the most undesirable and unsanitary duties.

Dalits are believed to be racially inferior and polluted by nature and are therefore forced to live in isolated accommodations. In this frank and intimate Memoir, Pawar not only shares her hideous personal tragedy but also conveys the excitement of an awakening consciousness during a time of profound social change. She not only expresses her sorrow as a

woman but also tries to put in front of the world the sufferings of the whole woman class. In short it is not a personal experience but a social issue discussed in the personal way. Even Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's influence is very apparent on her personality which takes her to the movement of women.

Both the Dalits and the Afro-Americans have written their literature with the intention of portraying their exploitation publicly and also to register their struggle through their writings. S.D.Kapoor in his book *Dalits and African Americans: A Study in Comparison* says:

What particularly interests me is their journey towards a human terrain-both in life and literature.... This journey involves two basic issues, which are central to their existence: identity and freedom: to relate themselves to a complex of relationships and to move untiringly towards complete manhood (Kapoor 9).

Similarly to the Dalits in India and the Afro-Americans in America began to write their own literature in order to portray their inhuman kind of life which the Whites had compelled them to lead. They have also fought very hard to overcome their cruel life and carve an identity of their own in the midst of White cruelty. The novels and autobiography of Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Maya Angelou are cases in point.

The similarities between 'The Prisons' and 'The Weave' are that they are both self narratives of two women accentuating contemporary

caste and gender struggles in India. Pawar has focused on her own life story situating it in the context of the Mahar community of Maharashtra and their struggle during the post Phule Ambedkarite period. The focus of Urmila Pawar's autobiography however, is on the self. She talks about her personal life and her life experiences. Nevertheless, the community always looms large in her autobiography as well as in her fiction. In order to understand how slavery and the caste discrimination of Afro-Americans and Dalits respectively influence their sense of identity and self, it should be known what 'identity' means. Identity refers to "the enduring aspects of a person's definition of her or himself..." (Kelman 3).

In *The Bluest Eye* Pecola has experienced ill-treatment in the public sphere as well as in her private domain. She is harassed by Black boys' uproar, "Balck e mo, Black e mo" (*The Bluest Eye* 63). Morrison refers to the self-contempt of these black boys, which results in bullying Pecola and following Maureen, a light-skinned black girl. However, Maureen also shouts at Pecola, "I am cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly emos" (*The Bluest Eye* 71). These negative experiences make Pecola (believe in her ugliness and) reject her Blackness and yearn for the blue eyes. Through her character, Toni Morrison delves deep into the question of self-hatred among Blacks and examines this tendency to show how this element of self-hatred can lead to self-destruction.

Pecola's mother Pauline Breedlove is another character who internalizes the white values and escapes her African-American heritage by imitating White people and finds "beauty, order, cleanliness and praise" (*The Bluest Eye* 125) in the house of her White employers. Pauline's own culture as well as her family becomes distant and detestable for her as she is trapped in the conventional frame of "the ideal servant" (*The Bluest Eye* 126). In this role, she soothes the little fisher girl (her employer), whereas she beats into all well Pecola "a fear of growing up, fear of other people, fear of life" (*The Bluest Eye* 100). This internalization of White culture leads her to become alienated from her and this is what happens to every character that escapes from his or her true self in Morrison's work. Through Claudia MacTeer in *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison implies that the reason for the intra-racial discrimination or victimization lies in "ignorance", "self-hatred" and "hopelessness",

It was their contempt for their own blackness that gave the first insult its teeth. They seemed to have taken all of their smoothly cultivated ignorance, their exquisitely learned self-hatred, their elaborately designed hopelessness and sucked it all up into a fiery cone of scorn that had burned for ages in the hollows of their minds – cooled – and spilled over lips of outrage, consuming whatever was in its path (*The Bluest Eye* 63).

In *The Bluest Eye*, the characters of Pecola Breedlove and Claudia MacTeer encounter racial prejudice and are enforced to feel being inferior and lesser. Pecola is absorbed by this feeling of being lower coupled with a lack of understanding as she surrenders to the White standard of beauty. And this leads to the loss of Pecola's self. On the other hand, Claudia has to fight for survival and critiques the White Beauty. Morrison castigates the concept of beauty set by White standards. Her novel shows the worthlessness of White standard of beauty. Morrison's narrator, Claudia labels ideas of univocal standard of beauty and romantic love as two of the most destructive ideas. Claudia contrasts the adoration of White girlhood-in the form of White dolls and the White child star-Shirley Temple- with her own disdain for White girls.

In *I Know the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya Angelou is known as Ritie because her family members call her so. The fact that she chooses to go by Maya as an adult, a name given to her by her brother, Bailey, indicates the depth of love and admiration she holds for him. When Maya reunites with her mother and her mother's family in St. Louis at age of eight, one of her uncles tells her the story of how she got this name. Thus, finding her family is connected with finding her name and her identity. Indeed, for African Americans in general, Maya notes, naming is a sensitive issue because it provides a sense of identity in a hostile world that aims to stereotype blacks and erase their individuality and identity.

Maya Angelou finds herself in a plight similar to that of a caged bird which yearns, longs and craves for freedom and uses the allegory of a bird which struggles to escape its cage from incarceration of racism and oppression. Angelou wants to break all the obstacles and shackles of the society, which is beset by the narrow domestic walls of sex, caste, and racism. Like the Noble Laureate Rabindra Nath Tagore, she also wants to take a fresh breath of air in an environment equal both for men and women. Angelou envisages the barrier - free world like Rabindranath Tagore, “Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls” (Tagore 3-4).

Maya Angelou explores the subjects like identity, rape, racism, and illiteracy as it contains a sequence of struggles and harassments. With progression in the steady state of life, she experiences the more blatant instances of racism, such as a white speaker’s haughty statement at her eighth-grade graduation, her white boss’s assertion on calling her Mary, and a white dentist’s refusal to treat her. Her personal illtreatment reflects the larger social force that banishes black all across the country.

She observes that the society is mainly divided in two forms: subtle resistance and active protest. The foundation of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* envisages these two forms of conflict against racism separately. It begins with unreceptive protest against maltreatment of whites followed by evident hostility from Blacks against racial acts. “The

Black Female is assaulted in her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the time that she is caught in the tripartite crossfire of Male Prejudice, White illogical hate and black lack of power" (*Caged Bird* 265).

Maya Angelou transports her feeling of being raped by accepting the wrong done to her through her long silence of five years. Her decision not to open up of the deceit was owing to the fear of being highlighted and what repercussions the revelation would evoke amid the other family members. Time is the best healer and it is rightly said that once lost always lost is not the true case for chastity as nature has its own recuperative powers, though it heals the body but it leaves a scar on the psyche of the individual who keeps recollecting the moment which keeps questioning "Why me? and wants to erase it as a bad dream but cannot relinquish the stigmatization like Lady Macbeths guilt where she feels that " All the perfume of Arabia shall not sweeten this little hand"; her inner self and the sexual exploitation of her body is clearly elaborated and illustrated in these lines.

In those moments I decided that although Bailey loved me he couldn't help. I had sold myself to the Devil and there could be no escape. The only thing I could do was to stop talking to people other than Bailey. Instinctively, or somehow, I knew that because I loved him so much I'd never hurt him, but if I talked to anyone else

that person might die too. Just my breath, carrying my words out, might poison people and they'd curl up and die like the Black fat slugs that only pretended. I had to stop talking (*I Know why the Caged Bird Sings* 84).

Both Toni Morrison and Maya Angeleou belong to a period where the Tradition of Slavery existed with all its exploitation and being born into the life of slavery both had come across several kinds of oppression and torture, which were the internal parts of the society of slavery. If Toni Morrison's life portrays her struggle to escape from slavery and her purpose to have a respectable position in America, the life of Maya Angeleou is also full of humiliation as a slave and her hard work.

If these two writers talk about slavery and its cruel nature in their respective works, another writer Alice Walker portrays the life of Afro-American women's humiliation. Though slavery was abolished and the Blacks became free they were not free from the kind of exploitation which they faced in the form of racism. Because of their dark colour they were dehumanized and treated very badly by the Whites. The Whites were not able to see the Blacks as equal to them so they codified many laws which left the Blacks to remain under their control even after the abolition of slavery.

Alice Walker in her novel, *The Color Purple*, wishes to have her own identity. This search for 'self' is not an easy task especially when it

comes to a Black Woman. It axiomatically becomes a great matter of struggle. The character Celie is shown to be submissive and mild; she had the fear of men. It is through education and economic independence that a woman is able to gather strength and courage and live independently in the society. Primarily Celie's talents and desires had been silenced by her father and later by her husband. Shug's courageous and determined personality allows Celie to learn to express herself. Celie learns to sew pants which become popular with her family and her friends. She becomes financially independent. The patriarchal dominance which silenced Celie has been shrugged off. Shug says: "you making your living, Celie ... Girl, you on your own way" (*The color Purple* 193).

Nettie's letters to Celie reveal the depth of the novel. Celie has learnt through these letters that there is a world beyond her limitation. This helps Celie to come out of rural environment and gain an awareness of African life, from a land where blackness takes with it multiple images and villagers have been exploited and women have been submitting silently to male oppression.

Celie always looks at Sofia surprisingly and admiringly for a good physique and appear as a strong woman, "She not quite as tall as Harpo, but much bigger, and strong and ruddy looking, like her mama brought her up on pork" (*The Color Purple* 30). Sofia is of the belief that women would survive only by possessing strong faith in themselves and great

determination added with ability to fight when needed. Alice Walker writes: “All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers; I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain’t safe in a family of men” (*The Color Purple* 40).

Celie always believed that she is ugly and dependent woman. Celie compares Shug to her mother and says that Shug is more beautiful comparatively. “This identification foregrounds the child's acceptance or non acceptance of his sexual organs” (qtd. Ross 77). Celie and Shug Avery involve in a lesbian relationship. They have a different physical experience in their life. Celie had weird experience earlier as she was molested by her stepfather many times and has given birth to two children. She never had pleasure out of it even after marriage. With Shug Avery, Celie could get immense happiness, which in fact has been similar to Shug Avery. Celie feels true love for the first time.

Dalit and Afro-American women writers have depicted the status of women and images of new woman. Winnifred Harper Cooley quotes on Images of new women thus:

The new woman, in the sense of the best woman, the flower of all the womanhood of past ages, has come to stay – if civilization is to endure her, education is broadening her – and she now knows that she must perfect the race and leave her imprint upon immortality, through her offspring or her works (Cooley 31).

The new woman is the one who rebels against the meaningless verdicts imposed upon her by elites like whites in case of Afro-American and upper caste people in the case of Dalit women and by the patriarchal system. New women can also be called modern/post-modern women, who out of the repression of feelings, meaningless slave's life, and emerge in mainstream image as an independent woman. The new woman is the one who has learned to define her 'self'. She defines her 'self' that she is no more inferior to others. She has realized her self-worth. She hits back at the false imposition on her and lives a respectful life. She declares her own freedom.

Bama in *Karukku*, portrays images of women. The Dalit women, perhaps, are powerful mentally as they face problems of experiencing exploitations in the hands of upper caste men and women, are subjected to humiliation and sexual harassment at the hands of not only their men, but also those of other castes, and to overcome the economic difficulties, do hard labour to look after their family.

The central point of Bama's *Karukku* is the development of the protagonist's mind and character from her childhood through varied experiences and the recognition of her identity and role in the world. It highlights Bama as a Dalit who moves towards self-discovery, self-definition and self-affirmation. Her only mission is to uplift her Dalit community by writing the true story of her own people so that the world

would comprehend their pathetic plight and to provide ways and means and opportunity to live a decent life. *Karukku* grows in significance because of her first-hand knowledge about her own community, which she has faithfully put in black and white. *Karukku* opens with a detailed description of the various water bodies, small hill fields, places and streets.

M. Stella Rose in her article, “A Journey towards Self-discovery and Spiritual Identity in Bama’s *Karukku*” writes how even the young children of Dalits are subjugated by the upper caste people. “Bama herself worked along with her grandmother in a Naicker family during her holidays. Her own cruel experience of the hard work she did in the field and the forest enabled her to portray the plight of the oppressed in a realistic way. She helped her grandmother collect firewood and went to collect cow dung from the streets and the fields to be used as fuel at home. At other times she along with other children, went to the field to pull up the groundnut pods” (qtd Monika 670)

Having a brother who is a post-graduate student in a University, Bama learned that the rational sharpness is the pre-requisite for the accomplishment of her goal to move up in the personal life and to fight for the upliftment of her community. According to her brother education is the path to success, which alone can liberate them from the present dilemma. He regrets “We are never given any honour or dignity or

respect. We are stripped of all that. But if we study and make progress, we can throw away these indignities" (*Karukku* 15). Motivated by the words Bama focused on her studies and always stood first in the class. Even in schools, the Dalits are treated as the lowest caste people in the society. She powerfully feels that "I comfort myself with the thought that rather than live with a fraudulent smile, it is better to lead a life weeping real tears" (*Karukku* 104). Thus, Bama ends the novel by stating that her strong spirit will not be dropped down at any cost. The driving forces that shape her book are the numerous events that occurred in her life, which inspired her to write with dedication about her community's need.

She feels open and joyful:

...And although it is so hard to make a living; yet I am truly happy to live with a whole and honest mind. I feel a certain contentment in leading an ordinary life among ordinary people. I can breathe once again, independently and at ease; like a fish that has at last returned to the water, after having been flung outside and suffered distress. I have entirely lost faith in all that talk of service to the poor from within the convent. It is possible to live in elitist style with money, education, authority and power, and to claim that one is serving the poor. But what kind of service is it that is done without humanity? (*Karukku* 104)

Being a Dalit, especially the Tamil Dalit woman, Bama openly records inner fury in her writing. She evaluates the power and limitation of her community in an independent manner and thereby makes the world understand the feelings of the latent community of India namely the Dalit. At the end of the autobiography, Bama gives a message that people should transcend caste and class through education. Her message is to all downtrodden women from upper castes to women at every corner of the world.

The central concern of Dalit writing is with the rising awareness of the Dalit experience and explaining a changing Dalit identity. There is a powerful sense of engagement with history of changing notions of identity and belonging. Bama explains what writing is for her, “I experience writing as the breaking of the unbroken and forced silence of the victims and letting the victims and the militants in the victims speak up” (*Karukku* 21). She develops an approach of conflict that will speak to the quiet and create a freedom from where the subaltern as a female could speak.

The other two Dalit women writers - Urmila Pawar and Baby Kamble through their writings create images of new women in patriarchal and dominant system for upcoming generation through self-awareness and self-confident in poverty. They are the Indian Dalit women Icons of Dalit Literature. Urmila Pawar’s *The Weave of My Life*, deals with very

sensitive issues related to attacks on women and her genuine efforts to help the helpless women. She envisions ‘true liberation day’ for women an agenda absent in both Dalit Movement and the Women’s Movement, which did not have the main issues of women. She vigorously argues:

The Manu Smruti has imposed many restrictions on women and built the caste system. That is why Babasaheb said that the woman is a gateway of the caste system. It was on 25 Dec. that Babasaheb had burned Manu Smruti to liberate Indian women from the clutches of Manuwadi culture. Our organisation has been observing 25 December as the women’s day of liberation for the last three years (*The Weave of My Life* 262).

It is evident from her autobiography, *The Weave of My Life* that she has enabled herself to map the Dalit modernity as a social experience in process and openly challenges the caste and gender discrimination. She even provides different suggestions to protect the rights of Dalit women and to fight against evils in the society.

In her autobiography *The Prisons We Broke*, Baby Kamble brings out important issues like caste discrimination, women’s subjugation and the influence of Dr. Ambedkar on Dalit women to get themselves educated, empowered and create for themselves images of new women in their society. Baby Kamble depicts the pathetic condition of women. She presents an unflinching portrait of the Mahar women, oppressed both by

caste and gender. The Mahar women would beg for the mercy of the upper castes. Every new bride had to adopt and follow this custom.

Baby Kamble illustrates the authority of husband and the hegemony of in-laws against women when they enter the bridegroom's home. The author writes, "But we too were human beings. And we too desired to dominate, to wield power. But who would let us do that? So we could at least enslave them" (*The Prisons We Broke* 87). Baby Kamble even touches upon the aspect of child marriage among the dalit families. In this context, the author says, "Thus girl would embark upon a new life that was harsh and arduous. She was a young girl, a child really, still immature. Yet, the poor child had to break all ties of love and go to her in-laws' house to lead a married life, without even knowing what a husband meant, or what it was to be given away" (*The Prisons We Broke* 93). Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar express how Dalit women experienced subjugation from their own community as well the society at large. In the process of protesting the age old oppression, they assert themselves and their lives following with an endeavour to open up their inner world to the readers. The doors to the culture of dalits are opened up through Dalit autobiographies. In this regard Sharmila Rege comments the genre as it "...washed out the I, an outcome of bourgeois individualism and displaced it with the collectivity of the Dalit community..." (Rege 323).

Both the Dalit and Afro-American women struggled in their life and came out of caste and race discrimination. Their effective writing becomes resistant. Both women are humiliated and insulted in terms of gender. They not only portrayed their lives but also portrayed all Dalit and Afro-American women.

Maya Angelou in her outstanding work *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* describes religion, resistance, and recreation to overcome multiple memories of the cruelest traditions of America - the slave trade and its shameful effects on the community, in her life stories. Here, the African-American race as a whole is imagined as a ‘caged bird’, which longs for freedom from subjugation, in the form of women entangled and raped, young boys beaten and harmed, men emasculated etc. This image of caged-ness is chronicled through a series of six autobiographical volumes that moves on to images of togetherness, song, music and ends with a request to God the liberator. bell hooks in her *Talking Back claims*, “. . . the liberatory voice of the folk preacher. . . is no longer determined by one's status as object - as oppressed being. That way of speaking is characterised by opposition, by resistance” (hooks 15).

Maya Angelou places both Vivian and even herself within the tradition of black women with strong characters and honorable survival mechanisms. Angelou says she often hears people react to the formidable character of black women in America as if they are surprised or offended.

This, in turn, surprises Maya Angelou. She feels that black women must struggle so much to survive that, when they do, their formidable character is predictable. She goes on to say that this inevitable strength of character should be respected if not accepted with enthusiasm. Maya Angelou demonstrates that the universal struggles of adolescence combine with the stresses of race and gender to make black women's struggles all the more challenging. During these years in Stamps, Maya Angelou becomes aware of both the fragility and the strength of her community. She attends a church revival during which a priest preaches implicitly against white hypocrisy through his sermon on charity.

Maya Angelou compares herself, her black female role models, and even her entire race to the bird that is locked in a cage but nevertheless sings. Maya Angelou implies that by reading her autobiography, the reader will come to understand why the bird sings despite being locked up in a cage. At the same time, the title implies the possibility that the reason why the caged bird sings could be a secret, one that Maya Angelou holds close inside her, away from the tampering, meddling forces of the prison master. We can guess why the bird sings - perhaps to break free, perhaps to provide solace to it, perhaps because its voice is its only means of action or communication, or perhaps because the bird feels joy knowing something others do not. Maya Angelou's widely varied and

insightful depiction of the Afro - American struggle affords many possible reasons.

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, depicts new women. The novel not only portrays the pathetic condition of black women but also even goes beyond that purpose. In reality, the intended goal of writing the novel is to give a voice for the black women and to show them the right path to emancipate themselves. Alice Walker traces the development of her major character, Celie, from being a sexually abused child, a passive wife finally to an emancipated woman. African-American women have many awful things in their life; they have to face double hardships as Blacks and as women. Celie, as the main female character in this novel is an Afro-American woman who is severely tyrannized by her patriarchal family.

The Color Purple has the theme of sexist oppression, patriarchal supremacy and oppression of Black women, class struggles and status of Afro-American women. In many places of America, segregation on the basis of colour was highly observed. There was humiliation and degradation due to the colour of the skin. The Black women suffered, suppression, oppression, class and race variations.

Collins commented that: "It is therefore possible to conclude that the blues is actually another self-expression form among African Americans. It is not merely entertainment, but it is a way of solidifying

community and the social fabric of working class Black life in America” (Collins 145). If a woman is economically free, she can be free in every aspect of her life like having her own ideas, personality, and relying on herself. Moreover, Celie is a girl who exploits her creativity to establish her own job and she uses her ability and her own taste to design clothes, so this reflects her inner beauty and self-confidence. After this Celie becomes an independent woman, which marks the turning point in her life and creates a positive situation for her and this makes her feel that she is born once again since she is able to fulfill her dream to be an independent female.

In addition, Celie is able to create a world of her own by her letter writings, which is not like the world where she really lives that is full of oppression. In this world, she is free to do whatever she likes. This guides her to search for freedom and to reject segregation and oppression and to understand her situation and how she can set herself free. Therefore, writing becomes a tool for rebuilding her personality and identity. Alice Walker writes,

...the reason the black women's self-empowerment is achieved through four major standpoints. First, Black women empower themselves by creating self-definition and self-valuations that enable them to establish positive, multiple images and to repel negative, controlling representations of black womanhood. Second,

black women confront and dismantle the ‘overarching’ and ‘interlocking’ structure of domination in terms of race, class and gender oppression. Third, black women intertwine intellectual thought and political activism. Finally, black women recognize a distinct cultural heritage that gives them the energy and skills to resist and transform daily discrimination (Collins 39).

The novel, *The Colour Purple* thus, reveals the victimization, suppression, unnatural relationship and self-realization of the protagonist. Walker has presented living characters to show the dominant patriarchal system and to erase the deviations in the society simultaneously. It is important to note that male community would have to acclaim them and give equal rights for women. Education is a primary concept here. It is through education, worldly knowledge, gaining their social status and identifying their ‘self’ thereby, gaining economic independence that, women can fight against violence and show their potential.

Alice Walker and Maya Angelou create their own world by portraying the female characters and give new birth to them. Toni Morrison depicts the characters who are Afro-American women. Toni Morrison creates new images of Afro-American women in her novel *The Bluest Eye*.

In spite of *The Bluest Eye* being focused on black women and their family, the white women have a strong and surprising role in the novel,

since their condition in society influences the behavior of the black ones once they are representative of the ruling class and surprisingly are taken as models. The first recurring role of white woman is that of the movie star, and linked to it is that of the child movie star. Although these women are not characters in the novel, they affect the black ones due to the mass circulation of their condition and role in society. In the novel, children are always disadvantaged in relation to adults. When Mr. Henry comes to live in the narrator's house, he breaks this paradigm and greets Claudia and her sister Frieda in a friendly way: "Hello, there. You must be Greta Garbo, and you must be Ginger Rogers" (*The Bluest Eye*. 17).

The novel also documents the effects of images of femaleness; for even Mrs. Breedlove's sexual pleasure depends entirely on the ability to feel a power that comes from a sense of herself as desirable. In the early days of her marriage when she had pleasant moments of intimacy with her husband, the words she uses to describe those moments are deeply connected to the ideas spread by the wide screen: "When he does, I feel a power. I be strong, I be pretty, I be young" (*The Bluest Eye* 101). She is a symbol of the victim in a society which reduces black people to the condition of objects at the same time that makes them feel as inferior as objects and where "light-skinned women can feel superior to dark ones, married women to whores, and on and on" (Davis 14).

The writings of Morrison serve as a lens to comprehend the agony of being black and slave. Likewise, Dalit writings voice the deep agony of being untouchable and caste discrimination for the entire Dalit community. These sufferings and agonies generated by marginalization and oppression produce and construct a conscious thought of self-assertion. The narration of the slavehood and untouchability by Morrison and Dalit writers respectively speak of the dejection, desolation and exploitation. Morrison depicts the corrosive effects of slavery, racial segregation in her writing. She does not merely depict the doleful status of Afro-American and pain of being Black but rather portrays striving for self-affirmation and this portrayal, according to Cornel West, is “for identity, meaning, and self-worth” (West 13). The element of self-evaluation and criticism in Morrison’s as well as Dalit writings runs along the construction or discovering identities. Through Claudia, Morrison dissects the Black community and inspires to retain their self-esteem suggesting that objective definitions of physical beauty are created by the ideals of the dominant culture in order to reinforce dynamics. Claudia represents Morrison’s psyche on the issues of self-respect and self-worth.

After going through the works of the Dalit and the Afro-American writers, one thing becomes very clear that both have struggled and resisted so much to come out of their ignorance in their respective lands.

Education was not easily accessible for both but by their hard work and effort they became educated and challenged their exploiters in their own way. By looking at the situation, that both have faced in India and America one can easily say that the life of the Dalits and the Afro-Americans appear similar because of the kind of oppression they undergo in the form of caste system, untouchability, slavery and race.

Hence, throwing light on the status women of two different nations and cultural backgrounds, the present study tries to focus on the triple jeopardy of both the women (Race, Class and Gender in the case of Afro-American woman in USA and Caste, Class and Gender in the case of Dalit woman in India). Though they live under two different social systems and cultures their mode of suffering and the reason for suffering are the same. They are the marginalized among the marginalized.

The Afro-Americans were bought and sold in the open market like animals but, in India though the Dalits belonged to the same religion as that of the upper castes they were treated worse than animals and were relegated to the lower strata of society with no facilities and no rights of their own. Though slavery was abolished legally, the system of racism continues even to this day by treating Blacks as victims. The Dalits faced the same situation with the practice of untouchability though it was abolished by the Constitution. In legal terms both the practice of

untouchability and racism are illegal but in the real sense there exist the practices with no hesitation even to this day.

The writers have exposed the lives of the exploited through their characters in their works analysed. The study discusses six writers' for the purpose of comparison, based on triple jeopardy; human relationships such as man-woman relationship, mother-daughter relationship, and female bonds of friendship.

Exploitation in both lands has continued from time immemorial. However, some solutions offered by the writers themselves to the problems discussed can be perceived. Dalits and Afro-American people have to concentrate more upon education to fight out the oppression meted out to them for education is the key to success to emancipate oneself. Until and unless the upper caste people shed their ego the differences would continue. Now it is high time that the practices of discrimination only on the bases of caste and color should be put to an end.

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