CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

*Nature has given women so much power that the law has wisely given them little.* - Samuel Johnson

Women’s lives in post-colonial universe have been organized and manipulated by patriarchal society in all ages, all cultures by establishing values, roles, gender perceptions, and idealism that prescribes unequal means, methods and routes to achieve the so called ‘wholeness’ for women. The role of a mother and a wife are the dual crowns of womanhood and a man defined it in unequivocal terms. They are taught to be submissive as the society considers it one of the value codes advocated to women. They also believe that denying their traditional roles in the society is as equal to the crime. In family life, women are given secondary roles since they are treated as the weaker sex biologically. Women’s subjugated position in each and every walk of life has made them feel inferior. The hegemonic society has never left them to identify the possibility to come up in their life. The stigma attached to them does not allow them to create even a space for themselves.

Women’s position in society, particularly those of marginalized/peripheral one’s situations are very preoccupied with the sense of docility and negligence. Their sufferings have long been avoided, and were not even considered as ‘wrong’ but the usual consequences of everyday life. And it is so shocking that this marginalization prevails in the so called civilized Western countries as well. Simon de Beauvoir the writer of *The Second Sex* mentions in her book that Western societies are patriarchal. Being subordinate to male, the female discovers that she is a secondary or nonexistent player in the major social institutions of her culture. So Women must ask themselves, “What is a woman?” (23). Beauvoir insists that a woman’s answer must not be “mankind” because such a term once again allows men to define women.
Post-colonial writers started including women character and their fragmented lives in their literary works. The images based on social conditions of women drawn by male writers are either idealized versions close to angels or monsters in their essence permitting no moderate pictures real but different from the extreme. What the male dominant society demands of women is very different from what women demand of women.

The history also gives men’s story not her story. Society’s unwritten laws against women draw the limits of ‘permissibility’ for women writers. Creative arts like literature have been believed to play an active agent in deconstructing the oppressive political issues and social systems. However, this same artistic expression/ art form becomes unacceptable when used by women to dislocate the oppressive behavior of home, family and motherhood. This oppressive life of women has paved a way to start the movement like Feminism. The more women were oppressed, the more they became the revolutionary agents of social evils against them.

Feminism is an inter-disciplinary term which is related to social and political issues. It is not just a theoretical approach which is concerned with reading and analyzing, but it is after political aims. It looks at the society in which the text is written, then concentrates on the discriminations against women and looks for the solution. Although much of the rhetoric and the substance of feminist discourse in many idioms has focused on feminine voices, on telling women’s stories, on inventing or discovering a feminine language, the underside of this intense emphasis on production, on speaking, writing, and telling, has hardly been forgotten.

According to Castle (2007) modern Feminism began with Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. She believed that women should enjoy social, legal and intellectual equality with men. Women ought to enjoy equality in the social sphere, especially in marriage, and condemned forced repression and unnatural stimulation. According to Janet
Richards, “The essence of Feminism has a strong fundamental case intended to mean only that there are excellent reasons for thinking that woman suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex, the proposition is to be regarded as constituting feminism.” (3)

Defining Feminism Women did not write in the beginning as it now, the obvious reason as Virginia Woolf puts it in _A Room of One’s Own_, “A woman must have money and room of her own if she is to write fiction.” (126) Woolf identifies the certain information of being denied access to buildings or ideas as another type of infringement on the freedom of the female mind. Eisenstein interprets the term feminist or feminism in _Feminist Criticisms and Social Change: Class and Race in Literature and Culture_ as, “In my understanding of the term ‘feminist’ then I see an element of visionary futurist thoughts. This encompasses a concept of social transformation that as part of the eventual liberation of women with change all human relationships for the better. Although, centrally about women, their experience and condition. Feminism is also fundamentally about men and about social change.”(58) According to Miriam Shiner, “Simon de Beauvoir wrote that the first woman to “take up her pen in defense of her sex.”” (xiv)

African- American novelists of twentieth century have directly portrayed the exploitation in their work experience. Driven by an overriding impulse towards self-assertion, which can be traced back to the cultural ethos of the 1960s, they have also succeeded in turning their identity into a source of strength. The novelists have been publishing works for the two decades. They have been reflecting their own version as an American that was deleted from both black male and white female writing. Though they tend to depict the black woman’s victimization in a racist and sexist society, their primary focus is to present Black woman’s quest for total freedom as a human being.
Toni Morrison, like Alice Walker, her contemporary, desires that the black women through their friendship and solidarity must “repossess, re-name and re-own their cultural bonds” (8) as interpreted in *Sula*. They should realize that the definition of self must come from within and be self-reliant, independent and individualistic. Black women were de-humanized not only by inter-racial oppression but also by intra-racial oppression. Hence the black women suffered under the triple burden of race, gender and class as the poor, black female which is called triple colonization or oppression. Slavery is one of the main reasons for the emergence of Black Feminism.

America in 17th century felt a place for slavery. Particularly Africans were the victims of this social evil. Both men and women of Africa lost their basic human rights in order to serve the plantation economy of the American south. They were all treated as a beast of burden, the lives of women were furthermore worst; they were physically and sexually exploited by their white masters to ensure an unfailing supply of labour force for an expanding capitalist society. “This history inexorably impacts”, as Powell observes, “the thinking of every black woman’s understanding of the connection between sexism, racism and classism” (2).

Slavery as such has concluded, but not the systematic ill-treatment of these people on sexual racial levels. It is very evident in Black women author’s writing since they experienced double-edged persecution. Women’s condition was very worse course than men’s. Because in Beal’s words, “To be Black and female” was to be in “Double Jeopardy” (90). They had been taught to be adjustable to the system of white culture. “This covert form of racism was doubly injurious to the black race in that not much notice was taken of its invisibly corrosive nature” (13) as Plakootam rightly points out. They depict their pain of (suffering) being black and female, and at the same time, reflect their desperate search of genuine self. That becomes the identity of one’s own. In the so called civilized male dominant society, white skin color is equated with supremacy, virtuosity, beauty and culture whereas
blackness is related with ugliness and savagery. Countries and cultures may be entirely different but the prejudices were common and deep rooted. And equally pathetic parallel is found in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* where Sethe, Beloved’s mother, has a “Chokecherry tree” planted on her back. The choke cherry tree is the indelible scars on her back, created by the brutal beatings of the white masters at the Kentucky plantation.

The ability to do work as equal to men and the extraordinary capability of reproduction, made the white masters to treat women as an indispensable commodity. Miscegenation played a vital role in their relationship during the days of slavery. The other side of life is much more horrible than this. They felt the disgrace from the hands of their own Black men. Black men tend to see their women as loose women, and the stigma attached to the black women by their white slaver, ironically, received sanction from their men. Being slaves themselves, they were absolutely powerless to raise voice against the scheme of things. But the white man’s clever manipulation of the black woman’s situation equally escaped the black man’s attention.

The Black Feminist Movement grew out of, and in response to, the Black Liberation Movement and the Women’s Movement. In an effort to meet the needs of black women who felt they were being racially oppressed in the Women’s Movement and sexually oppressed in Black Liberation Movement, the Black Feminist Movement was formed. All too often, “black” was equated with black men and “woman” was equated with white women. As a result, black women became as invisible group whose existence and needs were ignored. The purpose of the movement was to develop theory which could adequately address the way race, gender, and class were interconnected in their lives and to take action to stop racist, sexist and classist discrimination.
In feminist movement they have created a section that investigates the treatment of black women in these two movements and aims to show how, due to the inability of black men and white women to acknowledge and denounce their oppression of black women, the movements were unable to meet the needs of black women and prompted the formation of the Black Feminist Movement, which, though it had been gathering momentum for some time, marks its “birth” with the 1973 founding of the National Black Feminist Organization in New York. Bell Hooks comments that during the Black Liberation Movement of the 1960’s, “black men overemphasize[d] white male sexual exploitation of black womanhood as a way to explain their disapproval of inter-racial relationships.” (www.mit.edu)

There was a huge difference in the ideology between white and Black feminism Movements. Black women were alienated from “the mainstream of the white feminist movement” as rightly pointed out by Powell (2). They have ever been concerned as much about ethnic discrimination as about sexism. In contrary white women, who dominate the feminist discourse, paid little attention to the problems pertaining to Afro-American women – because they never had to live under the threat of racism.

Black Women who participated in the feminist movement during the 1960’s often met with racism. They were not equally or even proportionately, represented on the faculty of Women Studies Departments, nor were there classes devoted specifically to the study of black women’s history. In addition to this, well known black women were often treated as tokens; their work was accepted as representing “the” black experience and was rarely ever criticized or challenged. Not only did some white feminists refuse to acknowledge their ability to oppress women of color, some claimed that white women had always been anti-racist.
Adrienne Rich claims, “our white fore sisters have… often [defied] patriarchy… not on their own behalf but for the sake of black men, women, and children. We have a strong anti-racist female tradition” (www.mit.edu) however, as Bell Hooks points out, “[t]here is little historical evidence to document Rich’s assertion that white women as a collective group or white women’s rights advocates are part of an anti-racist tradition” (www.mit.edu). Every women’s movement in the United States has been built on a racist foundation: women’s suffrage for white women, the abolition of slavery for the fortification of white society, the temperance movement for the moral uplifting of white society.

None of these movements was for black liberation or racial equality; rather, they sprang from a desire to strengthen white society’s morals or to uplift the place of white women in that society. Audre Lorde noted as,

Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master’s concerns. Now we hear it is the task of women of Color to educate white women- in the face of tremendous resistance- as to our existence, our differences, our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought (www.mit.edu).

In light of these facts, the women decided to forge their own movement, the Black Feminist Movement. Having decided to form a movement of their own, black women needed to define the goals of the Black Feminist Movement and to determine its focus. Several authors have put forth definitions of the Black Feminist Movement. Among the most notable are Alice Walker’s definition and the Combahee River Collective Statement. Alice Walker coined the term “Womanist” to describe the Black Feminist
Movement. She says, “Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.” (CP 395) Noteworthy are the emphases on self-determination, appreciation for all aspects of womanhood, and the commitment to the survival of both men and women. This definition is both affirming and challenging for it commends a woman’s stretching of her personal boundaries while at the same time calls on women to maintain their connections to the rest of humanity. The entire self, is connected to others in the community, is valued in womanism. Combahee River Collective Statement sets forth a more specific, political definition:

The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women we see Black Feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppression that all women of color face (www.mit.edu).

Black feminist were to focus on developing theory which would address the simultaneity of racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism in their lives. In addition, the audience of these writings was to be black women, rather than white feminists or black male activists. Black women started developing a critical, feminist consciousness and begin a dialogue which directly addressed their experiences and connected them to a larger political system.

The specific issues worked on in the Black Feminist Movement, according to Barbara Smith, were/are: reproductive rights, sterilization abuse, equal access to abortion, health care, child care, the rights of the disabled, violence against women, rape, battering, sexual harassment, welfare rights,
lesbian and gay rights, police brutality, labor organizing, anti-imperialist struggles, anti-racist organizing, nuclear disarmament and preserving the environment. (33) To this end, several organizations were established during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Modeled on the US constitution, a declaration asserts “that all men and women are created equal,” and indicts a patriarchal culture for repressing the rights of women: “The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpation on the part of man toward woman” (266) as quoted by Narges Raqufzadeh in her research article The Study of Feminism in Alice Walker’s The Color Purple. Feminist writers of the era are Virginia Woolf, Hilda Doolittle, and Djuna Barnes. As the first wave concentrated on equality, the second wave focused on difference. One of the main figures of the period was Simon de Beauvoir who is the writer of The Second Sex. Her text asserts that Western society is patriarchal. Since female is not male, she becomes the other, an object whose existence is defined and interpreted by the dominant male. Being subordinate to male, the female discovers that she is a secondary or non-existent player in the major social institutions of her culture.

Feminism in India is a set of movements aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights and equal opportunities for Indian women. It is the pursuit of women’s rights within the society of India. Like their feminist counterparts all over the world, feminists in India seek gender equality: the right to work for equal wages, the right to equal access to health and education, and equal political rights. Indian feminists also have fought against culture-specific issues within India's patriarchal society, such as inheritance laws and the practice of widow immolation known as Sati.
The history of feminism in India can be divided into three phases: the first phase, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, initiated when male European colonists began to speak out against the social evils of Sati; the second phase, from 1915 to Indian independence, when Gandhi incorporated women's movements into the Quit India Movement and independent women's organisations began to emerge; and finally, the third phase, post-independence, which has focused on fair treatment of women at home after marriage, in the work force and right to political parity.

As in the West, there has been some criticism of feminist movements in India. They have especially been criticised for focusing too much on women already privileged, and neglecting the needs and representation of poorer or lower caste women. This has led to the creation of caste-specific feminist organisations and movements. Unlike the Western feminist movement, India's movement was initiated by men, and later joined by women. During post-independent period, feminism in Indian English literature was largely a western feminist movement. It got sustenance from our freedom struggle under the dynamic humanitarianism of Mahatma Gandhi, independent spread of education, employment opportunities and laws for women’s rights.

Postmodernist and post-structuralist thoughts associated with feminist theories in a complex manner. While on the one hand feminism was fighting for equal subjects positions and had its roots in liberal humanist tradition, on the other, it joined hands with post-structuralist theories of deconstruction as an oppressed and marginal viewpoint. Feminist critics such as Elaine Showalter and Helene Cixous have introduced exclusively female branches in feminist critical and feminist writing called ‘Gynocriticism’ and ‘Écriture Feminine’ respectively.
The Feminism of 19th and early 20th centuries focused on the acquisition of a few political rights and liberty for women. The feminist movements in the west had some influence on the woman's movement in developing countries like India. Yet, feminism as it exists today in India has gone beyond its western counterparts. As Uma Nayantara Rightly puts it in *Indian Women Writer’s at the Cross Roads*, “Third world feminism is not a mindless mimicking of Western Agenda in one clear and simple sense. Indian Feminist is clearly a response to the issues related to Indian women.” (243)

In the realm of fiction, it has heralded a new era that has earned many laurels both at home and abroad. Today, the works of Kamla Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Sara Joseph, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Geetha Hariharan, Bharti Mukherjee, Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai, Manju Kapur and many more have left an indelible imprint on the readers of Indian fiction in English. These women writers have tried with sincerity and honesty to deal with the physical, psychological and emotional stress syndrome of women. A major development in modern Indian fiction is the growth of a feminist or women centred approach, that seeks to project and interpret experience, from the point of a feminine consciousness and sensibility. As Patricia Meyer Specks remarks in *Feminist Sensuality*: “There seems to be something that we call a women's point of view on outlook sufficiently distinct to be recognizable through the countries.” (37)

Many Indian women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity, which is imposed as a patriarchal society. Santha Rama Rau’s *Remember for the House* (1956), Ruth Prawar Jhabvala’s first novel *To Whom She Will* (1955), and her later novel *Heart and Dust* (1975), Kamala Markandya’s *Two Virgins* (1994), Rama Mehta’s *Inside the Haveli* (1977), and Geetha Hariharan *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992). For the portrayal of the predicament of middleclass educated Indian women, their inner conflict and quest for identity, issues pertaining to parent-child relationship, marriage and sex, and their exploitation. Shobha De, a
supermodel, celebrity journalist and the well-known author stands as a pioneer in the field of popular fiction and ranks among the first to explore the world of the urban woman in India. There was a major shift in the third phase of Mahasweta Devi’s creative writing and art gave way to activism and she tried to depict the struggles of the people against exploitation and tyranny. Mahasweta Devi has created an indelible mark on her fictional and non-fictional writings.

There is a change in the position of women in the literature too after the awareness of women. Women writers have delved deep into the psyche of the male orthodoxy. They protest against the established existing unjust social order and rejection of the whole hegemonic power structure done overtly or covertly was the main thrust of subaltern studies. The creative women writers are being subjected to the internal tension to mould the characters of their works. The tension lies between the ideological conflicts and realization of being women in the patriarchal universe.

In literature, women possess a space which is made by them and is absolutely for them. The space they have created is always subverted and narrowed for social restrictions. However, within this narrow vacuum they do express their thoughts and raise their voices in various circumstances and these things explore the possibilities of subaltern women most likely to attain their liberated state. Beck and Bose aptly put the importance of voice consciousness in the fictional text as:

Voicing and articulating the muted and the silenced, representing the gender margins within that of caste, the cause of the gendered subaltern, empowerment and radical feminist realism, and an attempt for subaltern speaking have been attributed to her fictional texts (441).
The voice that subverts the very foundations of the hypocritical traditional social order must be controlled and truncated. The limitation of woman’s voice is a consequence of the paternalistic society’s need of invoking the disciplinary and institutionalize the female agency. In order to do so, women need to be ‘invisible’ and this objective is achieved through the hierarchical division of roles and spheres of activities. The isolation of women in the ‘private’ domain has been approved women’s exclusion from the ‘public’ space in different layers, in order to explain the power relation and gender prejudice of society. This does not end up, but this dissecting of women’s movement and belonging in a certain place become so much prominent when women enter the ‘public’ sphere. And there the art of writing exists.

Hence Women writers in the past determined that they must narrate their stories or others would do it incorrectly, who were interested in determining and picturizing the lives of women ‘as they have been living, as they live and as they are led to imagine themselves’ but now they seem to be concentrating on ‘how subaltern women can live afresh’ by transforming themselves from a voiceless state to the voiced. Not only the portrayal of identity and empowerment but also the gesture of defiance, subversion, resistance, and transgression help to identify the voices of subaltern women in various ways.

The theme subaltern is germinated from Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak’s essay, Can the Subaltern Speak? has invited for so many scholarly discussions about this term, has developed a cliché’ Maya Angelou’s I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings?. “Can the subaltern speak?” is not just a question raised by Spivak in her essays titled the same, but it also a very serious and one of the contemporary issues of the patriarchal society of the Post-colonial India. Though some of the writers of earlier Colonial India have started writing about this issue, it was vehemently attacked by the most. Devi in her fiction Breast Stories clearly has portrayed that the subaltern can also speak.
One can find this replica in the select fictions of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker as well. These writers have given importance to subaltern women in such a way that they have become the main characters of the stories.

The female protagonists are made to resist against the social evils in the form of marginality or subalternity, through the exhibit of their identity or through the articulation of their emotions. Devi has used breast as a weapon of Self-Identity with which she has proved that it is the best time of the subaltern women to raise their voice. For Morrison and Walker it is female body and sexuality to combat with. Devi’s Breast Stories, Morrison’s Sula and Beloved and Walker’s The Color Purple have definitely sustained the theme of Maya Angelou’s I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. These three women writers try to exhibit that the so called caged birds (i.e.) women, are not actually caged birds to be confined within the shackles of patriarchal fragmented life, but they are like the phoenix, comes out of its ashes to get a new (liberated) life.

Edward Said in his Foreword to Selected Subaltern Studies explains that the term ‘subaltern’ has political and intellectual connotations. The opposition group to subaltern is dominant (or) elite groups who are in power. Edward Said goes on refer to Antonio Gramsci in his Foreword to Selected Subaltern Studies, the Italian political thinker and writer according to whom:

Wherever there is history, there is class and that is the essence of the long and extraordinarily varied Socio-Cultural interplay between ruler and ruled, between the elite and dominant or hegemonic class and the subaltern and the emergent class of the much greater mass of people ruled by coercive or sometimes mainly ideological domination from above (vi).
Ranjit Guha’s succinct definition on ‘Subaltern’, “is a name for the general attribute of subordination in South-Asian society whether it is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way (vii). According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of current English by Joanna Turnbull, ‘Subaltern’ means – “an officer in the British army below the rank of Captain, especially a second lieutenant,” has acquired immense significance in post-colonial literary theory ever since the Italian Marxist Critic Antonio Gramsci used the term in his The Prison Notebooks.

The word ‘subaltern’ is of 16th century origin, which is derived from the Late Latin term ‘subalternus’. In the term ‘subalternus’, ‘sub’ means ‘next below’ and ‘alternus’ refers ‘every other.’ In the Context of Socio-cultural theory, the term ‘Subaltern’ as Homi Bhabha in his essay Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism has printed out, ‘refers to those marginalized social groups who are outside the hegemonic power structure’ (191-207).

Post-colonial study is imbibed with the theme ‘Marginality’. The problems of the so called theme are infinite and extravagant. It has got the impact on the subaltern people and their social, ethnic, economic and cultural activities. The utmost flaw of these people is that they belong to religiously, ethnically, continentally and linguistically minorities. And they have subcultures within them with which they find themselves estranged from the mainstream.

J. M. Waghmare observes ‘Marginality’ in his Literature of Marginality as “Marginality with all its aspects is indeed a major problem to be reckoned with the world.” (16). According to the anthropologist Victor Turner, ‘Marginality’ in terms of W.E.B. Duboi’s:
Marginals are simultaneous members (by ascription, potation, self-definition or achievement) of two or more groups whose social definitions and cultural norms are distinct from and often opposed to one another. What is interesting about these marginal is that they often look to their group of origin, the so-called inferior, group, for communities and to the more prestigious group in which they aspire to higher status as their structural reference group (233).

G.M. Waghmare explains Marginality further in his research article *Literature of Marginality* as:

Most of the commonwealth countries are divided into two extremes. One is power and another one is poverty. The second one is always estranged, engulfed and suppressed by the first one. Inequality is the main cause of marginality. Marginalized and indigenous people are left with fear, insecurity, exploitation and injustice. Marginalized sections of society are generally beyond the pale of the dominant culture. Their existence is, by and large, peripheral. All cultures and societies, advanced or dis-advanced have power centers in their corpus (16).

The marginalized people lack cohesiveness and strength as they consciously or unconsciously part themselves from the power centres and so they grope in the dark for survival and they struggle for their empowerment as well.

The selected texts show the subaltern women’s resistance towards the power that oppresses them and the resistance of the writers as well. And they have chosen a space for them to resist or voice out through their bodies and sexuality to be heard. Gayatri Chakrovery Spivak in *Can the Subaltern Speak?* mentions this as, “between ……subject constitution and object
form (103). The appreciation or the credit must go to the “Third-world” women writers to create a space for subaltern women to voice against the oppression.

The writers speak the voice of resistance as Bell Hook says, “there exists a counter language”- language of the subaltern which has “undergone a transformation” and has been “irrevocably changed” to speak against all forms of oppressions (157). Speaking about the subaltern voice of female characters, Niti Sampat Patel says that they have “a certain strength marked by an unmitigated energy that celebrates and validates their existence” (74) (www.googlebooks.com).

Subaltern women are the victims of the post-colonialism. They are suppressed not only by a continent but also by their men. They also are colonized by the tri-social evils class, race, and gender and they are known as triple- colonized section. Gender inequality has become the worst device in the lives of women. The democracy has made them to understand their rights (franchise) and laws and their freedom of expression and education give voice to the voiceless. But in the changed modern world, they are prioritized and privileged to exhibit their views and exercise their freedom.

The expire of suppression (colonization) has paid them a way to utilize the political power and freedom thereby they are enkindled to hitch equal status and dignity in the society that they live. To create awareness among the subaltern women who are deprived of equal gender status, equal opportunity in all walks of life, equal social status and equal individual dignity in their neighborhood authors of commonwealth much talk about it in their works by shaping women of this type. Authors in their writing, voice out their concerns, anxieties and anguish either subjective or objective. They arise questions like, “who are we?” “What is our future?” and “what is our status?” etc.
Women characters in such author’s works are in search of their identity. Identity is the root cause of all their problems. The subjugation of their roles in society has made them to take a dire attempt to reveal their identity. The pride and fulfilment of women is understood when they try to explore the quest for identity and exhibit it in right occasion. The three writers of different continents and generations made it possible the voices of these double colonized marginal characters’ to be heard. The destiny of being a subaltern connects Devi’s women characters to those of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker as they struggle with the hegemonic male, race and unsecured life of women in all these works, take recourse (possibility) to the use of their bodies as they available revenue they have for hostility.

While explicating the theme, examining the plot and structure and exploring the characters of these writers one can understand that they have been successful in portraying or representing subaltern women in their writing. Being subaltern women writers, they could realize their status, roles, importance, and their paradigm in their society. And they have been trying constantly to break the paradigm advocated to them by the society especially their social location has given them the confidence and capacity to write about the subaltern women. The reading of the chosen texts makes the readers to assume that the writers are not only aimed at speaking for the subaltern women who are caged by their family and society, but also they use the art of literature to let them speak for themselves.

African-American Literature and Tribal Literature converge in their portrayal of the subverted marginal through Literature. Especially women are given much importance since they are considered as the jeopardy of the society. Both literatures have received International accolades and have also listed in the mainstream of American and Indian Literature respectively in the postmodern literary scenario. The fact that they have received universal
acknowledgement is they have wonderfully showed the poignant struggles undergone by the African Americans and Indian Tribals, not for money or power but for asserting or claiming their basic human right of equality and liberty.

Both African American women and Tribal Indian women were also dehumanized under the pretext of Gender consciousness, though they were the victims of the other criteria like race, color and class. Mahasweta Devi, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker the most glorified women writers have not only sensitized the society on color, or caste discrimination but have also established themselves as the voice of the voiceless. Their writings highlight the importance of equality in all the spheres of life and aspire towards creating a large global village of equality by infusing the spirit of equality in all the people all over the world in a transcultural milieu. As literature is the microscopic reflection of macroscopic reality, Claudia Tate reflects that in *African American women's literature*, Qtd. in Das as:

……This type of change…. Occurs because the heroine reorganizes, and more importantly respects her inability to alter a situation. This is not to imply that she is completely circumscribed by her limitations. On the contrary she learns to exceed former boundaries but only as a direct result of knowing where they lie. In this regard, she teaches her readers a great deal about constructing a meaningful life in the midst of chaos and contingencies, armed with nothing more than her intellect and emotions (213).

Mahasweta Devi, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker represent the subaltern voices and intersect in their perspective on ‘equality, social justice and human rights.’ Sunitha Williams the eminent astronaut from space says, which is quoted by Bijoy in his article *The Aboriginal Butterfly* “could see no borders, no political, social, racial, cultural or economic boundaries- only the
serene blue waters laced by pearly surf and interspersed with brown and green land.” (16)

Mahasweta Devi, the renowned Bengali writer and activist, was born in 1926 at Dhaka in East Bengal, the modern day Bangladesh. She had done her elementary studies at Dhaka and after the partition of Bengal; her family migrated to West Bengal in India. She took the B.A (Hons) in English from Vishvabharati University in Shantiniketan, the famous experimental university established by Rabindranath Tagore. She passed the M.A in English as a private student from Calcutta University in 1963.

Mahasweta Devi was inspired by her family to pursue her career as an artist and an activist. She was appointed as a lecturer in English at Calcutta University and was retired from service in 1984. After the retirement, she concentrated on writing for the uplift of the poor, especially the downtrodden sections of the society. She has been editing the quarterly ‘Bortika’ since 1980 to voice the pent-up emotions of the marginalized people of India. Mahasweta Devi established herself as the major novelist during the second phase of her creative writing. She deals with radical left Naxalite movement and its effects on the people.

Mahasweta Devi’s stories speak of the unspeakable truth of women’s misery and their power of enduring and resistance. In her stories, readers get the linear story which is derelict in mainstream literature. Her fiction offers an array of female’s figurative situation/position in society, voice of the subaltern women and their materialistic use of the body for the social and economic purpose as well. She has included in her works, the paradoxical position and representation of women in society as well as their fragmented voices, endurance and resistance.
Devi’s writings stand out as a powerful tool that subverts the authority of upper caste in tribal society, particularly marginalized women’s subjugation by society. Her writing questions the whole discourse of caste prejudice and women’s suppression; by suppression means objectifying the female reproductive body for material purposes. She chooses the tribal women who are in many ways are submerged by society and economy. Their positions in society are being exploited for the benefit of others. Not only this, but also their female body is being mutilated in the benefit of others. M.N. Chatterjee says:

Women, according to [Devi], are much stronger than men. But, in the poorer class their suffering multiply not only because of their belonging to this class but also because of their bodies. They thus suffer double oppression. No wonder, the most common stories of victimization revolve round their falling a prey to the male lust (240).

Works of Devi, Jaidev had remarked in the Indian Review of Books in 1977, that ‘her works are dangerous for readers in a country like ours where it is risky to have a conscience’ (157-76). Her books are dangerous because they try to create a conscience in us. She presents the rare combination of an activist and a writer who has been leading a spirited crusade against social injustice meted out to the disenfranchised and the dispossessed. From the tribal areas of Birbhum, chhotanagpur, palamau to the past riot-hit Gujarat, the frail old woman strides tirelessly for the redress of injustice, through her pen and her resistant action and mobilization and through the publication of her journal, Bortika that publishes writings by and about tribals, and other marginalized and ‘lowly’ sections of the society. Devi is mostly known as a social activist among the contemporary Bengali literature and literary artists. As Sadhana Sharma says in her research article:
She [Mahasweta] “Penned [her] stories to render and reveal to our [readers] gaze the charade and duplicity of the democratic set-up in […] [a] country and to give a picture of the fates of the marginalized women experiencing and undergoing untold miseries within and without their own communities” (454).

People from Bengal and those who accustomed with Bengali language and also who are known to tribal-indigenous life, marginal life of women are most of her readers.

She has been feted with many national and international prestigious awards like Sahitya Akademi and Padmashri for Journalism, Literature and Creative Writing, Jnanpeeth (1996) and The Magsaysay (1997). She has received these awards for daringly acknowledging the explosive issues in her two books Hajar Churasir Ma (1974) and Aranyer Adhikar (1979).

The reputation and recognition of Devi’s work has slowly started spreading outside India. Her books are translated and published in to English in the USA. Kalpana Bardhan has taken effort to publish the earliest works of Devi like of women, out casts, Peasants and Rebels: A Selection of Bengali short stories that consisted six of her stories, got released from the University of California Press, Berkley in 1990. But Devi had got the big visibility after Gayatri Chakravorthy Spivak’s translation of her stories and her critical theories in her work Imaginary Maps: Three Stories (Routledge, 1995) and In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics (Routledge, 1998). A significant segment of Devi’s works in English, The Selected Works of Mahasweta Devi, makes her accessible to the largest English-Knowing readership.

Spivak’s critical introductory remark or essay is very supportive for the novice readers to comprehend and to do dialogic and discursive reading. No one has written better commentary to surpass the thought-provoking
introductory essays of Spivak, Avalon Foundation professor in the Humanities, Columbia University, and translator of Mahasweta Devi’s cycle (or) series of *Breast Stories*. Spivak’s intellectual affinities have not stopped with Derridean approach to literary criticism but ceaselessly continued with Marxism, Feminism, Post-colonial and Subaltern Studies. Her seminal post-colonial readings and deconstruction on Devi’s *Breast Stories* have provoked a greater impact and also a convincing one. Susan Chacko notes it as, “a big bonus” both for post-colonial academics and readers as well. Their writings lead to serious attention that result to the readers go beyond the moods of pity and charity and kindles him/her to mingle in to social activism. (www.parabaas.com)

Native baggage (slang or dialect) is a little heavier. One can speculate on the degree of normalization that had already gone into Devi’s standard Bangla to make the words and terms used by tribals generally intelligible to readers. It is so very tough to translate a culturally rooted works. Because the person who translates such works should have accustomed with the culture of the characters prescribed in the story. Fortunately she has got some reputed Indian translators who have known about the culture and tradition of Indian tribals at least from their ancestors if not personally. She has made use of a lot of region based colloquialism, dialects and a variety of language registers. Hence the translator has also driven as much more responsible and sensitive. Critiquing the language used by the translator A.S.Dasan in his work, *The Subaltern as Metaphor: A Dialogic Reading of Mahasweta Devi’s Breast Stories* says, “And he/she should try to strike a delicate balance between the demands of idiomatic English and the local flavor, veering away from the extremes of both ‘Domestication’ and ‘foreignization’” (76-77).

As Susan Chacko points out, the English used in translating these stories is sometimes awkward and started giving an indication to the reader that are “words and worlds beyond the English translation” (www.parabaas.com). Devi’s protagonists are “powerful enough” to move
against the tide of oppression, societal and systemic, in spite of their helplessness. Her writings transcend the boundaries of binary opposites such as self-versus other and domination versus subordination.

Mahasweta Devi’s stories are not only about her surroundings rather it reciprocates marginalized women’s voices. It tells the grand narrative of the unspoken story of peripheral women in existing society. For constructing the authentic narrative, Mahasweta Devi travels to remote tribal areas of India, gets an empirical understanding of the harsh living of these indigenous masses. Moreover, she also ‘forms’ and ‘leads’ a number of ‘grassroots’ organizations to fight against domination for justice. Additionally, in roaming around these remote places she is able to connect herself with the roots and that helps her to understand the root level situations and thus comes to the arena of ‘subaltern discipline’ to discuss. Vandhana says:

[Devi’s] journalistic reports on exploration and expropriation, deprivation and degradation, edits journals carrying subaltern voices and translates the issues and the people she is concerned about into the narratives and characters of her fiction (27).

As a result, re-voicing the suppressed voice or an act of ‘ventriloquism’ raises the question of subject formation.

Female body and gender consciousness are more focused in the works of Devi. She has depicted in her works how the subjective possession of female body gazed by the male dominant society as an objective one. It becomes a metaphor at times an image. Devi’s writings are all dramatic representations of political realities. Uma Parameswaran in her research article titled Breast Stories says, “She re-creates a span of history imbuing her narration with trenchant satire against government and city people and soul-stirring poignancy for the peasants, tribals and students idealists” (457). Her
attention is on young intellectuals and naïve, peasant tribal people due to the earlier ones were drawn to the cause because of their idealism and to the later ones that they were the victims of old oppression over the centuries.

The infiltration of hegemonic male power is also under increasing attack from various contesting quarters and peripheries. She is known for “making things possible” through the weapon in her hand. Ajai S. Sekher when he talks about Devi in his work Writing and Agency: A Minor Critique of Mahasweta Devi’s Narration, mentions “change transformation have been top priorities in her writing agenda.” (63) Specific Socio Political intentions are found in all works of Devi. With her proficient learning, amazing and remarkable memory, profound critical realism and kinetic energy she has inspired and propelled the readers to social activism.

Devi is a trend-setter in postcolonial and subaltem depiction of the tribal women. As Spivak observes, “Ontology-wise, Devi does not, by epistemology-wise, yes, she belongs, and as this writer adds, activism-wise, she does belong to the world of the subaltern. Tribes have been assumed and branded as “natural criminals” by the British colonizers for the last two and a half decades. And Devi minimizes her own privileged social status and her cultured family background to that of an Adivasi for the sake of subaltem people as mentioned in the book The Adivasi Mahasweta Devi (3) by G.N. Devy (www.India-seminar.com), another committed activist-literary critic. It is this disinteresting representation with the cause of the poor subalterm women that makes her writing more appealing in fact, ushering in a cathartic effect in the readers. The trenchant satirical narratology against the exploiters gives a tiny space and scope for reductive relativism or nihilism.

The word ‘democracy’ becomes highly interpretable in the context of a largely illiterate, multilingual, heterogeneous, and un-politicized electorate. One can find the theme of class deconstruction with Draupadi’s solitude (7). Her story Draupadi has got the historical background too, which refers to the
war between the Government of India and Pakistan took place in 1971. The Indian PM, Spivak recollects in her Foreword: Draupadi, “was able to crack down with exceptional severity on the Naxalites, destroying the rebellious sections of the rural population, most significantly the tribals as well” (8). Senanayak’s career belongs to this 1971 in the story Draupadi.

After Pearl S Buck, Toni Morrison is the second American Woman writer to receive the Noble Prize for Literature in 1993 declared: “Winning as an American is very special, but winning as a black American is a knockout” (www.questia.com). A major literary award considered to be the crowning glory in a writer’s life brings Morrison into limelight. It became all the more significant because the award came in the wake of the conferment of the Nobel Prize of Peace of 1993 to Dr. Nelson Mandela. Mandela has been the crusader of the rights of the Blacks; whereas Morrison in her novels explores the dark realities beneath the surface.

Born Chloe Anthony Wofford in Lorain, Ohio in 1931, Morrison majored in English at Howard University and then completed her master’s in 1955 at Cornell. In 1957, Morrison started to teach at Howard University, and she began to write her first novel. After traveling for a while, she eventually settled in New York where she began working as an editor for Random House, taught at both Yale and Stanford Universities and went on to become a Professor at Princeton. Since her first novel, The Bluest Eye, was published in 1970, Morrison has become a voice of African American women. Her first novel The Bluest Eye had many negative reviews. Sula followed it in 1974 and won wider recognition. Her novel Beloved won the Pulitzer Prize and Robert F. Kennedy Award. It contained sordid details and some very disturbing truths.

One of America’s best and most prolific post-war writers, Morrison in her six novels provides poetic glimpse of the frustration, anger, poverty and misery of American Blacks. Her people are the victims of racial
discrimination and slavery to freedom has been a transfiguring experience. When asked by an interviewer what had inspired her to take up writing, Morrison commented: “This country is seething with the presence of black people but it was always necessary to deny that presence when we discussed our literature” (www.notablebiographies.com). They live in a world which is destroyed by torment and agony. In her moving and poignant novel Beloved, Morrison very appropriately observes:

During, before and after the war, he had seen Negroes so stunned, or hungry, or tired or bereft it was a wonder they called or said anything who like him, had hidden in caves and fought for food; who like him, stole from pigs; who like him, slept in trees in the day and walked by night; who like him had buried themselves in slop and jumped in wells to avoid regulators, raiders, paterollere, veterans, hill man, passersby and merry makers (31-32).

Although she writes about the black man’s burden, she is at the same time, concerned about the black woman’s quest for freedom, which in fact is the quest for freedom of every woman. As Virginia Woolf had to fight the stereotype of the Victorian white woman as the angel in the house, Morrison too had to contradict the stereotype of black woman as “Mammy”. She has created a new form and language to communicate the American black woman’s consciousness.

Being an African-American Novelist, Toni Morrison has portrayed African-American feminist consciousness in her writing. African-American women are captured in the Centre place of American life and Literature. Knowing this Morrison says, is quoted by Parker, “There is something inside (them) that makes (them) different from other people. It is not like men and it is not like white women” (255). Because of their difference from the other categories of African society, Morrison observes, quoted by Tate as:
I think women probably do write out of a different place. There’s some difference in the ways they approach conflict, dominion, and power. I don’t find the large differences between male and female writing in term of intimacy though. But I do think black women… It is not so much that women write different from men, but the black women write differently from white women. Black men don’t write very differently from white men (122).

Morrison’s famous fiction *Beloved* sets against the backdrop of mid-80s when slavery came under attack from the abolitionists, helps us to understand the problems that still pursue the blacks. A.S Byatt sums aptly which is quoted by Veena Singh in her *Toni Morrison: Quest for Freedom*: This is a huge, humane, generous and gripping novel…… It is a magnificent achievement. This novel gave me nightmares and yet I sat up late paradoxically singing to myself with intense pleasure at the exact beauty of the singing prose…. It is an American master piece” (32).

Morrison is considered to be the epitome of black women’s literary assault on men. In the nineteenth century, many black women writers like Harriet Jacobs and Harriet E Wilson were obsessed with a white image of virtue by the other women writers who were trying to assert their womanhood. Ironically, in their attempt to prove that they possessed those same virtues that distinguished the cult of true womanhood. They adopted the literary consciousness of white women writers. But Morrison turns to African-American literary tradition and projects the black woman’s quest for identity.

However, like Naipaul, Morrison does not confine herself to the narrow loyalties of nationalism or racism. It is the human experience she records with great delicacy and understanding. James Wood, Weekend Gaurdian writes on
Morrison which is used by Veena Singh in her *Toni Morrison: Quest for Freedom*:

Toni Morrison’s voice transcends colour and creed and she has become one of the American’s outstanding post-war writers….. A great story teller…. Her characters have amazing and terrible past- they must find them out, or be haunted by them…. One who begins not so much with ideas and characters, but like a white man or even a Bellow, with a voice and words (34).

Toni Morrison has employed two major concerns named sensuality and sexuality to articulate a perspective of black experience of American women which as part of human psychological endeavor, transpire in the egalitarian and the humanistic attitude of life as identity and identification. Her perspective terms with the past and constructs a critique of the present. Morrison explains the sexual experience of black women as distorted by male-chauvinist heterosexuality, but she acknowledges their rich joyous sensuality. And her writings clearly highlight the acceptance of the dictates set by the supremacy of the white, apartheid society; the effect has been on the identity of Black women since they were all treated as slaves and the secondary object of the society.

The exploitation of sex and cultivation of consciousness and liberated sexuality are more the issues of sureness for adjustments than the political or the social subjugations. Of course there has been a myth that the white skin color brings with it superiority and that “the white is more intelligent, more virtuous” as identified in *Black and White: The Ghetto Inside (Lapides and Burrows, 1971)*, by Kenneth Clark (104-120). Phillis Wheatley, Emmanuel S. Nelson, Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, Gwendolyn Brooks, Dorothy West, Octavia E Butler are the contemporary writers of Toni Morrison who
have highlighted African-American women’s miserable life and their self-
identity after the struggle.

In order to analyze the work of Alice Walker, one needs to recapitulate some of the important tents of Black Feminism. For centuries, Black women have been called the *mule of the world* and *slave of a slave* and had the status of the wretched on the earth. A glance through the history of African ancestors reveals that there was no rigid compartmentalization based on sexual taboos. A black woman in Africa enjoyed many privileges and equality with men prior to the chains of slavery.

The black woman’s condition in exile was worsened. Her virtues were violated. Her silence was the silence of the oppressed. Initially, the main concern of the Black women’s organizations was to abolish all kinds of economic and political disparities against them. Now, they are mainly concerned with the issues of black women who are oppressed by both sexism and racism. Black women writers thus articulated their anger, jealousy, rage and disappointment through books, articles and anthologies in their own way.

*The Color Purple* is a well renowned African-American gynocentric classic fiction Written by the literary colossus Alice Walker published in 1982 and won the Pulitzer Prize of the year 1983 and also the American Book award. Her first novel *The life of Grange Copeland* is published in 1970. Her first collection of Short stories *In Love and Trouble* (1973) won the prestigious Rosenthal Award of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Her second novel *Meridian* is noted often as the best novel of the ‘Civil Rights Movement’. As a prolific writer of African-American literature she has published three books of poetry, two short story collections, two novels and a biography of Langston Hughes, a legendary Harlem Renaissance poet. Each and every work of Alice Walker is known for its own right and virtue of its appeal. Walkers’ works occupy a significant place in African-American
history as they deal not only with the plight of African-American women but also with the voice consciousness.

The condition of woman stated by Esther in Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* is “When you are married and had children, it was like being brainwashed and afterwards you went about numb as a slave in some totalitarian state.” (105) Gender equality in marriage is nothing but a Utopian dream. The quest for self-sustaining dignity and meaningful identity is no different from Celie’s need though certain variation of characters, situations and emotions are present. Unlike her male counterpart she does not wish to be freed from their social responsibilities and is voluntarily ensconced in community activities. They remain satisfied with a physical movement within a certain boundary, though the boundaries are self-defined and different. Since these women quest for higher intellectual and emotional awareness, their journeys are internal and not external.

Using an *epistolary style* (generally associated with the eighteen century novels of Samuel Richardson and shunned by the fiction writers of modern period) and a first-person narrative view point, the novel maps out, in elaborate details, the Central Women Character’s tortuous and tortured journey from extreme bewilderment, abject dependence, mute self-surrender to male authority and grinding poverty to a fair measure of enlightenment, independence, self-assertion and happiness. The entanglements of Celie’s life and the conversion of a non-identity, a nothing into a person with a distinct identity; her journey toward emancipation and the transformation of their de-voiced state to a voiced one are portrayed by Alice Walker in *The Color Purple*.

Walker in her fiction, unlike other writers gives prominent role to women characters rather than men. Most of her heroines hail from peasants’ family. They are the real victims of class, race and gender of the patriarchal society. Susan Wills states that “bound to their husbands (or fathers), worn by
toil in the fields and the demands of child bearing, these women are the underclass of the underclass” (126). The women she portrayed are the representatives of subaltern voiceless women in the patri-centered universe. As a deep observer of the white hegemonic, male dominated society, she always has a soft corner for women as she is the witness of their struggle and double jeopardy.

*The Color Purple* articulates the complexity of the struggle of black women in America and illuminates their 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.

*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 women characters of the novel highlight 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’m pore, I’m black, I may be ugly and can’t cook….. But I’m here.” (CP 214) In *The Color Purple* (1982), writer Calvin Hernton declared its author Alice Walker, “advanced the tradition of the black narrative form by extending it to include the particular struggles of black women.” The battle, Ms Celie believes in Walker’s novel, is not against white oppression but against black male domination. The story in this critically acclaimed book is a powerful one of survival and emancipation.
The hypothesis of the research study is to explore and exemplify the Voice of the Subaltern Women in Post-colonial Select Fictions.

Among the various and multiple commonwealth theories, Feminism is the quintessential and a trend theory that fascinates all readers of post-colonial literature. As women are emerging in all walks of life today, it is quite apt to make a study on the voice of the subaltern women which is an interdisciplinary area of Feminism. Many researchers have done their feminist perspective research on African-American writers and Indian Writers separately and it is so very interesting to do a unified thematic analysis on both the writers. Indian and African-American writers are not sharing any of the qualities or customs among themselves except the theme. Their lifestyle, culture, tradition, religion food and so on are entirely different from each other. Even the way they handle language is also varying from one another. The writers of different continents have a different caste and class systems.

Though they are different in each and every aspect of life, they are united by the fact that they are all subaltern women. Colonization is common for both the continent women writers and women as well. Enslavement is a social evil which every African-American and Indian human being experienced. Indian women have got this experience from their masters, as many of them are turned into a bonded-labourers whereas this experience given to the African-Americans in plantation. The African slaves’ black psyche is clearly portrayed by Leopold Seder Senghor’s Negritude and Frantz Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks.

Subaltern women suffered a lot not only in the hands of the colonizers but also in the hands of men in the upper class society and their own men in the family. This is why they are called as triple colonized sectors of society. Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second sex and Elain Showalter’s Towards a Feminist Poetics have given an insight to understand the world of women and the facets of women writers of different ages further. Derrida’s ‘de-
construction’, Homi Bhabha’s *Culture and Imperialism* and Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and so on could also be taken into account and could be inter-connected with the theory of Feminism.

As admired by the portrayal of women writers and their contribution to women’s empowerment, the researcher decided to choose the fictional writings of Indian and African-American women writers. Mahasweta Devi, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker’s works were selected for the research study, as they have given an ample way for the uplift of women on one hand and the real picture of women’s misery on the other. As a woman of women’s era, the researcher feels that it is her privilege and honor to undertake the research study on the above mentioned women writers. It is assumed that it is very challenging and also a novel idea to have a research on the voice of subaltern women with two different continent fictional writings, though various studies on these writers have made separately in earlier days.

A good number of Indian writers have dealt with the experience of women’s lives. Very few researches have done on the Indian tribal author Mahasweta Devi in different perspectives. And many researchers have taken up any two of the other two writers (Toni Morrison and Alice Walker) for the research and their angle of research has not been focused on the voice of the subaltern women. Hence the researcher has selected the novels of these writers, especially women writers, who are of different origin (Indian and African-American) with the same concern. This idea of highlighting the same concern of these writers motivated the researcher to make an in-depth study and bring about the similarities and dissimilarities in handling the theme of *Voiced Female Subaltern*.

Many reviewers have pointed out the contributions and achievements of these writers (Mahasweta Devi, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker) individually. But a clear cut assessment of the works of these writers from the viewpoint of Subaltern women’s voice is not perceived so far.
The accolades won by Mahasweta Devi reveal not only her versatility but also her multi-dimensional approach. A brief review of select critiques will point to the pattern in the critical exercise.

A.S. Dasan’s research paper The Subaltern as Metaphor: A Dialogic Reading of Mahasweta Devi’s Breast Stories in Littcrit Vol. 34 No.2 (2008) nurtures the readers on multi-dimensional aspects of the author and her work. It elaborates Devi’s writing and the language is used in the book, attributing not only Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s translation and critical introductory essay but also the portrayal of Post-colonial India, conventions, religion and traditional orthodoxy of the paternal society, the subaltern gendered subject position, subjugated life of tribals and so on. In the same edition of the Journal Littcrit (2008) Ajay S.Sekher in his research paper Writing and Agency: A Minor Critique of Mahasweta Devi’s Narration talks about Mahasweta Devi and her Career as an Adivasi writer, Class conflict of Indian Community, need for resistance as gendered subaltern, Caste system of the country.

J.M. Waghmare in his research paper Literature of Marginality discusses marginalized people and their living condition in Democratic countries like India and America. And it also notifies the power politics exercised on Dalit (tribal) people, double jeopardy and so on. In the Journal World Literature Today, Uma Parameswaran has written an article under the title Breast Stories, talks about Mahasweta Devi, her works and the background of her stories and also the two cross-cultural activists of Spivak and Devi and both of their agenda as writers. The research article Feminism in Mahasweta Devi’s Selected Stories by Usha A. in National Journal on Advances in Computing and Management Vol.1 No.1- 2010 features the sympathetic portrayal of the subjugation of women end in resistance.
Dr. Huma Yaqub’s research article Performing Resistance and Reconstructing Margins in Mahasweta Devi’s *Draupadi* in The Dawn Jounal Vol.3 No.1 (2014) represents the fragmented life of subaltern women in a specific historical movement called Naxalbari. It also portrays the resistant rage of the protagonist Draupadi. The research work *Deconstructing the Marginalized Female: A Reading of Mahasweta Devi’s Short Stories* (2014) by Audity Newshin gives the detailed information of women’s position in society, their misery and materialistic use of the body of female. The research paper *Gender-Based violence in the Dynamics of Caste and Class in Mahasweta Devi’s Short Stories* by R.K.Sharma explores the gender relationships in the context of Subalternity. Malavika Karlekar’s study in *Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 5:1* (1998) reveals the notion of victimhood, female sexuality and resistance and the use of language by Mahasweta Devi.

Toni Morrison, a prolific women writer has made indelible mark in narrating the agony of Subaltern Black Women in African- American Literature. A few important books and articles written on her will shed light to see her literary output. Devika Rani L.’s book *Image of the women in the Novels of Toni Morrison* makes an interesting study of the women characters, which gives a clear cut perspective on the portrayal of women in Morrison’s novels.

Monika Gupta in her research article *Quest for Self in Toni Morrison’s Sula* explores the right to create one’s own inner self. Dean Franco’s research article, *What we Talk About When we Talk About Beloved*, published in MFS Modern Fiction Studies, Vol.52No.2 (2006) by the John Hopkins University Press, analyses the psychoanalytic approach of the enslaved women in the novel *Beloved*. ‘The Silences are not Silences’: *A Critical Study of Toni Morrison’s Sula*, is a research article in *The Atlantic Literary Review Vol.7 No.4 DEC-2006* by J.Samuel Kirubahar, articulating the need for self-determination to achieve Voice-consciousness. Heike Harting’s research
study on “Chokecherry Tree(s)”: Operative Modes of Metaphor in Toni Morrison’s Beloved in ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature, 29: 4, Oct (1998) reveals the inner lives of former slaves of America presupposes a “literary archeology” that excavates memories from within, that generate an archive of mental images and metaphors.

The research Article The Aesthetics of Black Cultural Identity: Toni Morrison’s Sula and Song of Solomon in the book Feminism and American Literature written by A. Jameela Begum, traces the African-American cultural identity that was sacrificed at the altar of a dominant White ideology. Madhumalati Adhikari’s research study on The Female Protagonist’s Search for Wholeness and Toni Morrison’s Discourse in Beloved in the book Feminism and American Literature probes the quest for wholeness through complex and subtle discourse. Toni Morrrison’s Sula: A Study in Black Feminist Ideology is a research write-up by G. Dominic Savio, incorporated in the book Commonwealth and American Nobel Laureates in Literature reveals the ideology of Black Feminism with the reference to the novel Sula. Dr. W. S. Kottiswari in her article Sexual Power Politics: A Post-Modern Reading of Margaret Atwood’s The Edible Woman and Toni Morrison’s Sula in Indian Journal of Postcolonial Literature 2002 divulges the effect of racism and sexism on black identity formation of the black female.

Dr. Ann Thomas’ research article Peripheralization and ‘Double-Colonization’ of Women in Toni Morrison’s Beloved published in Eclectic Representations Vol.1, Issue 1 May-2011, highlights the double jeopardy of African American women from the point of view of intersecting racism and sexism. Veena Singh’s research on Toni Morrison: Quest for Freedom, reflects black’s march from slavery to freedom. The research paper Poor Black, Female, Child: Effacement and Resurrection in the Novels of Toni Morrison by Sunanda Mongia in the book Feminism and American Literature informs us the agony of being a black oppressed by whites, a poor exploited by the rich, a woman amongst overbearing men, and a child amongst
authorization ruined their life. H.H. Anniah Gowda’s research article Feminine Black Voice in The Literary Half-Yearly traces the black history to find a line of dispossession.


The research article Man-Woman Dichotomy Untenable: A Post-structuralist Reading of Toni Morrison’s Novels by S. Kannamall in Indian Journal of American Studies Vol.23 No.2 1993 by American Studies Research Centre, presents the argument that the individual character in its dialectical relationship with the ever-changing socio-historical process defies a static structure. In the same journal, E. Raja Rao’s article on African-American Women Writers and The Aesthetics of Marginality with Special Reference to Toni Morrison explains the aesthetics of marginality in the inter-relationship and intra-relationship of Afro-American women. G. Lakshminarasaiah in his article The Wounded Black Psyche under White Dureness in Toni Morrison’s Novels in the Indian Journal of American Studies (1993), foregrounds black people’s wounded psyche by the white-dominated American Society. The research paper Subjugation to Subversion:
A Reading of Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* by P. Kalaichelvi in *Dialogue: A Journal Devoted to Literary Appreciation* Vol. VI No. 1 June 2010, highlights the dehumanizing effect on black women and the importance of equality in all spheres of life.

Kashinath Ranveer’s research article African-American Feminist Consciousness in the Novels of Toni Morrison in *Indian Journal of American Studies* Vol. 23 No. 2 1993, spotlights the victimization of African-American women and the need for feminist consciousness. Usha Puri’s article Toni Morrison: Redefining Feminine Space in *Beloved*, published in the above research journal describes the struggle to discover the authentic black female self. Madhumalati Adhikari’s The Female Protagonist in Rabindranath Tagore’s *The Home and the World* and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* in the journal *The Literary Half-Yearly* accentuate the women’s sense of self. The article by Roseline T Mathew & D Radhakrishnan Nair on The Logic of Female Madness in Toni Morrison’s Fiction in *S B Academic Review Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies and Research* gives a clear picture about the inscrutable female psyche and black women’s world. S. Kannammal has written a research study on Neither Wonderful Nor Awful: Toni Morrison’s Feminist Perspective for the book *Feminism and American Literature* includes the feminist movements of Five Cultures – French, British, American, Black and Indian.

Alice Walker is another African-American feminist novelist, short-story writer, poet, essayist and activist. Her creative vision is rooted in the economic hardship, racial terror, and folk wisdom of African-American life and culture, particularly in the rural South. Her works, along with that of such writers as Toni Morrison and Gloria Naylor, however, is commonly associated with the post-1970s surge in African American women’s literature. So many articles have been published on her writings besides number of books and personal interviews.


The research article A Thematic Study on Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* by S.Padmavathy in the Journal *Contemporary Vibes* (2012) deals with women’s uplift against the unfair treatment they receive at the hands of men. Madhumalati Adhikari’s research article Re-organizing the Lives of
Women: Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, divulges the fact that the Woman’s Quest for self-identity, self-awareness and self-empowerment are made possible by their creator’s intense desire to construct organized lives of women free from all forms of liminality. In the research article Queering Black Patriarchy: The Salvific Wish and Masculine Possibility in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, incorporated in the Journal *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 48 (2002) by Candice M. Jenkins explains how the novel engages in a project of “queering” the black family by subjugating women.


The present research in the select novels of Mahasweta Devi, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker is an addition to the existing fund of knowledge on these writers. It is attempted to give a thematic study of these three popularly known women writers of India and America with special reference to Subaltern Female Voice.

The first chapter ‘Introduction’ highlights the lives and roles of traditional women in the patriarchal universe. The history of Black Feminism and Indian Feminism are also given to understand women’s world from the genesis to the present. The term ‘Subaltern’ has been explained and different definitions of great thinkers and critics are given. Critics like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Antonio Gramsci, Maya Angelou, Ranajit Guha’s notion
on Subalternity and how literature becomes the best medium for informing Subalternity are also highlighted. Marginality is the part and parcel of Subaltern theme. As subalterns are the people of marginality, it is apt to define it as well with substantial ideas of recent literary theoreticians. Voice and double and triple jeopardy are the terms which are discussed clearly. The latter part of 20th century has a number of fictions with subaltern themes. The researcher also justifies her intention to take up this topic for research. A very short biography of Mahasweta Devi, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker along with their works has been dealt with. The selected authors’ contemporary writers and their theme of writing are also discussed. Articles, books and interviews on these writers by learned scholars and critics have been brought to the notice.

The second chapter entitled ‘Voice for the Voiceless’ discovers the voice of the Subaltern Indian tribal women in Mahasweta Devi’s Draupadi, Breast-giver and Behind the Bodice- the breast trilogy, labeled as Breast Stories (1997) - that hover around the common thread cum metaphor ‘Breast’. It remains the fact that the protagonists are subaltern women, treated so badly and made as mute sections of society by its norms, who invariably confront the evil forces of oppression and exploitation. Dopdi Mejhen is portrayed as the tribal revolutionary activist in Draupadi. After her captivation, she is made as naked in public. She stands in front of the enemy group that reminds the reader the incident where Draupdi in the great Indian Mythology Mahabharata, is brought to stand among the men in the palace. Modern Draupadi Dopdi confronts realities, resists oppression, and acts unlike Draupadi of the Mahabharata. In Breast-giver, Devi tells the story of a subaltern woman Jashoda, who has been appointed as a professional mother of ‘Haldar family’, in post independent Bengal, after the accident of her husband. It is very ironic that, Jashoda sacrifices her own body, to support her employer in return for nothing but a good amount of food. When she is affected by cancer, her family rejects her. She understands her usefulness to
the family in her healthier days and her rejection by the society in her sick bed that leads her towards self-evaluation, ends up her boldness to die alone. In the last story *Behind the Bodice*, Devi unravels the voice of a tribal poor woman Gangor. She is photographed by the itinerant ace photographer Upin, results Gangor’s gang rape followed by the publication of her photo with her ‘konark chest’ in the front page of a magazine. Gangor’s power of resistance is revealed when she dares to question Upin at the last part of the story. Her voice is much audible to the reader in the last part of the story.

The third chapter entitled ‘Voice of the Subaltern Women’ explores the voice of the individual self with reference to the women characters of Toni Morrison namely Sula and Beloved. Sula represents the modern democrat and also the liberal who would form the basis for herself that in following the epitheis by the bygone ages. Sula keeps her “self” off the society, the family and the friends in a manner which would prove her an escapist, inheriting a sense of reaction and revolt from the bottom of her inner self. If she maintains that “beauty is a liberation to sublime that engenders the selflessness and understanding” as mentioned by Mari Evans in (42-43) her fundamental characteristics as a rebel are always approved and established. Sula acquires liberty in a perfect way of projecting her isolation which is built upon a real detachment from both the society and its roots. If she is a fundamentalist, it is because of her intense isolation. But Sula is the first feminist who thinks in capturing freedom by herself. All that Morrison shows in Sula is a consciousness which is free, liberated and natural. The cost is really borne by the protagonist Sula. Morrison’s another novel *Beloved* (1987) explores the most important event of Sethe’s murder of her elder daughter Beloved. She prefers to kill her daughter Beloved rather than seeing her in bondage. With the background of slave history, Sethe as a slave woman wants to save her daughter from the psychological scar of childhood by her act of killing her own child. She feels robbed of her essence when she is forced to milk by her slave masters. She decides to face the storm all by herself through this act
stranges her from her own community, ‘she would trying to do it all alone with her nose in the air.’ Once she is started her travel into life’s experience, she battles hard to preserve it.

Chapter Four captioned as ‘Voice of the De-voiced’ analyses the conversion of an individual woman’s voice from her muteness in Alice Walker’s The Color Purple (1982). 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 casuist patriarchal order and attain an autonomous state. This idea is supported by the other women characters of the novel too. Shug and Sofia defiantly oppose all oppressive designs of gender and racial discrimination. Nettie conquers the adverse circumstances of her life through courageous actions and self-education, shy and timid Squeak transforms herself into self-reliant Mary Agnes. All these women 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. The novel is woven around the life of Celie a fourteen-year old girl and her misfortunate life both by the father and her husband after her marriage. Both of them assume her mere an object of sex. In addition, she does the work of a servant-maid by doing the household work and takes care of children. The companionship of Sophia, Squeak, Shug Avery and of course the knowledge transferring letters of Nettie makes her more stubborn than ever. She becomes an emancipated woman both mentally and financially. A complete transformation of her character is revealed in her attitude towards her husband.
Chapter V is the last chapter entitled ‘Summation.’ This part summarizes the entire views starting with introduction where we find different theories of Subaltern given by various critics. Other four core chapters deal with the main objective of the research ‘Representation of the Voiced Female Subaltern’ and the handling of language in the select novels of Mahasweta Devi, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker and the findings of the research have been summed up convincingly. A few avenues for further research in this area of study are identified for prospective research.