CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Literature is an influential tool in the hands of creative writers to transform and change the communal framework. It principally reveals three sets of relationship—human being in relation to the cosmos, individual in relation to the society and man in relation to woman. The primary motivation of literature has always been a projection of a social situation and the reflection of social consciousness. In other words, it may be well thought out as a document of social criticism it tends to reflect the contingent reality in an inventive fashion.

Literature, being a subsystem of a particular culture in which it is produced offers illustration or exemplification of some general pattern of the very same culture. Minority discourse is characterized not only by an urge to adopt and assimilate but also by a culture of protest and resistance culture is not merely a secretarial principle holding together the members of a community. It is also a means of establishing its separateness from and resistance to other communities.

Literature is indeed the most unambiguous record of human spirit it is a medium through which the essence of living is made supreme by linking it to imaginative experience. A creative writer has the perception and the analytic mind of a sociologist who provides an exact record of human life society and social system. “Literature "reflects" society; its supposed converse is that literature influences or "shapes" society . . . literature functions socially to maintain and stabilize, if not to justify and sanctify, the social order, which may be called the "social-control" theory” (Albrecht 425). Literature reflects not only the social reality but also shapes the complex ways in which men and
women organize themselves, their interpersonal relationships and their perception of the socio-cultural reality.

Fiction is the most powerful form of literary expression. It is the most acceptable way of embodying experiences and ideas. It is a form of art which beautifully, faithfully and perfectly mirrors the social fabric. It reflects the thoughts of an age. It provides a sort of credentials for the study of social traditions and socio-cultural change. Fiction in English written both by native and non-native speakers has acquired a prestigious position all over the world. Fiction embodies ideas and experiences of the human being in the subtlest way.

Fiction by Dalit writers provides insights on a wealth of understanding the reservoir of meanings and above all a basis for discussion as they always oppose and challenge caste hegemony. It is to be accepted that Dalits being equally potent of the other, the upper caste and their outlook being essentially different from that of others, and their works are complementary and supplementary to the entire pool of literature and at the same time it does not fail to register their protest against the social stratifications, established standards and common values which are accustomed by the dominant culture of the particular society. In fact, of all the different phases in Indian literature in English, Dalit movement passes through and now at the climate which may be described as the phase of discovery where their affection turns inward. They are in search of identity in the caste ridden and caste biased Indian society and the very same mood is reflected in almost all the contemporary Dalit writings.

Fiction by Dalit writers is often considered and used by writers as one of the weapons to fight against the established social constructs-social order, norms, tradition, hypocrisy, outmoded custom as well as the political system. Protest in literature always
exists; it symbolizes changing time from past to present and present to future. Literature speculates emancipation of the downtrodden or the subalterns.

Human life has a complex and multifaceted reality defying conceptual formulation and hence the contemporary man has perennially engaged in pursuit of knowledge seeking to impose meaning to his life which is shrouded essentially with chaos of experience. It tries to evolve coherent patterns of thought from the overabundance of ardent observation to comprehend man’s existence. Existentialism as a branch of thought owes its development to the Second World War and also during this period it has gained currency. Existence of human beings is never an ordeal, as it essentially correlates with his struggle in the universe materialistically both physically and spiritually. The world is shaken by the development of science and technology in the early twentieth century; it has questioned the existence of God. Consequently, human beings are in peril searching the reason for their existence and misinterpreting their existence which has resulted in despair and frustration and eventually set forth many difficult questions which challenge his independent survival. Existentialism is associated with the condition of man, his relationship with the cosmos, his act of living his state of being free and the directions he takes to use his freedom in reciprocation against his wider experiences and enormous challenges, he encounters in the society.

Existentialism emphasizes the importance of man as an individual and his freedom and responsibility. The central theme of existential thought includes reliability of everyday views of us and other people, the relation between objective facts and subjective experience and the significance of temporality and mortality of life. Existentialism, in its simplified form is applied to all sorts of peoples’ activities during the course of the transaction of life. The existentialists think passionately about man’s existence and treat him not only as thinking machine but also as an initiator of action and the centre of
feeling and passions. Existentialism stresses that each human being is thrown into the world in which pain, frustration, sickness, contempt, malaise and death that predominantly exist in almost all the societies; to put it simpler terms human beings are thrown into the world of absurd, absurd being modern term to denote meaninglessness of life in world today, and absurd world essentially signifies the world without absolute values such as virtue and justice.

Existentialism is a philosophy that has no definite explanation and all the existential philosophers are not able to draw a common line on the philosophy of existentialism and so John Macquarrie sees existentialism “not as a philosophy but as a style of philosophizing” (14). The philosophers who follow this style view existentialism with different convictions about the world and as answer for the existence of man in the absurd universe; the only thing that unites all those philosophers is the term “Existentialism” and “Existentialists”. They do concentrate on some themes, commonly occurring in most of the works of art including literature—freedom, choice, decision and responsibility. Miguel de Unamuno’s defines philosophy and justifies the passionate attitude of the existentialists thus:

Philosophy is the product of humanity of each philosopher and each philosopher is a man of flesh and bone who addresses himself to other men of flesh and bone like himself and let him do what he will, he philosophizes not with reason only but with the will with the whole sole and with whole body. It is the man who philosophizes. (28)

Literature is not exempted from portraying the survival strategy of people existing in the world of turmoil. Literature embodies the societal structures. Self identity and lifestyle are some of the philosophical ideas. The concept where literature represents is not always new; it sometimes gives embodiment to the existing Vedic and Puranic
incidents in a newer dimension as philosophy articulates. Existentialism is a recent philosophy that the development of which dates back only to 19th and twentieth century to the field of philosophy whereas the literary works of time immemorial quotes the existential tendency through the characters.

The Mahabharatha, an Indian epic depicts the existential quest of a warrior Arjuna; Arjuna requests Lord Krishna his charioteer to station the chariot between the two armies during the Kurukshethra war so that he can see the warriors who are in the warfare. He sees that all of them are relatives and inquisitively says to the existential philosopher, Lord Krishna that he is reluctant to fight against his kinsmen. Through his speech, he stresses the word “kinsmen”. Almost the two armies are constituted by his kinsmen and he is puzzled and consequently, reluctant to kill his own kinsmen for the sake of a piece of land. He says, “I would not fight against them even for the kingdom of three worlds; how can I then fight against them for a few clod on Earth? “ (qtd. in. Gandhi 19). Thus Arjuna is desperately left in existential agony for which lord Krishna provides a detailed explanation in the name of “karma” and drives away the existential angst; it comprises the text of the Bhagavadgitha, The whole of which talks about man’s predicament in the world.

In Hamlet, one of the four renowned Shakespearean tragedies Prince Hamlet feels desperate while learning that his uncle Gladius ruthlessly slaughtered his father, the King of Denmark; he wants to wreak vengeance but at the same time he realizes that he has to kill his uncle that may in turn, make his mother unhappy. His mind throbs between vengeance and his sense of love towards his mother. He avers, “

HAMLET: To be or not to be: that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them. . . . (Shakespeare 2.1. 56-60)

The dialogue of Prince Hamlet heightens his existential predicament. He suffers like anything and procrastinates wreaking vengeance on his uncle and because of this existential angst, he brings death on him.

Recent Indian English fictions evidently and explicitly show the plethora of man’s predicament in the universe. The writers provide a variety of themes in their fictions, entangled in the nexus of multiculturalism and impact of westernization, thanks to their education. Consequently, the scenario of Indian English fictions is shrouded by rich, variegated and complex themes. Indian English fiction has broadened its scope of fictional concerns by these themes. These writers now mix up fact with fiction to re-examine the earlier events, views, assumptions and presumptions. Their major concern is to review the existential predicament and search of meaning for human beings’ life, and also to expose and criticize man’s subjugations by man in all its forms.

Regional writings also give a fervent colour to the spectrum of Indian English fiction. Bama is also a regional writer whose works mainly go around the human beings existential agony and their lifestyles to tackle the subjugation, subordination and suppression; she fictionalizes the problems of Dalits with vivid and vivacious description of about its natural beauty. As a social activist, Bama creates her characters signify poverty, hunger, exploitation, corruption and oppression, she addresses the issue of marginalization as long continuing socio-historical process embedded in the social and cultural patterns and practices. Inspired by Ambedkar’s concept of Dalithood, Bama projects the grievances of Dalits in her fiction.

Bama’s characters are always caught in the nexus of existential agony of denied identity. Thorough delineation of such realistic characters in her fiction, Bama seeks and
provides way to break the shackles of authority. The portrayal of these characters also vividly articulates the lived experience and way of life of this community; Bama explores the complex identity of a community that is subjugated for many centuries and strives hard for emancipation and empowerment in the postcolonial space.

The term postcolonialism gained momentum during the closing decades of the twentieth century. Postcolonialism truly means the impact of colonialism on the natives that ranges through “a wide range of practices including trade, plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, enslavement and rebellion” (Loomba 22). Postcolonial subjects seek to represent themselves in the form of literature to the global phenomenon; consequently, there has established a vast growth of literatures among the hitherto colonial subjects. The literatures of Canada, Australia, Nigeria, Pakistan and India are a few to mention under the umbrella term postcolonial literature.

They emerged in the present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is this which makes distinctively post-colonial. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin: 32).

Postcolonial literature invariably focusses on the myths of power and the racial classifications and images of subordination of people of the colonized countries. It brings to limelight the discrimination, humiliation, subjugation and ill treatment of people either by the British colonizers or by the developed bourgeois of their own society. Thus the plight of colonies has been laid bare by the postcolonial authors through their works.

With regard to significant themes, dealt in postcolonial studies, Harrison remarks, “The issues to which they have turned their attention have included power relations and patterns of colonized; the question of subjective and Political agony, nationhood, nationalism and anti colonial resistance, Eurocentricism, universalism and relativism;
‘race’ or ethnicity, gender and identity . . .”(9). Thus the key themes in postcolonial literature ranges around representation of resistance, nationalism, gender, language, hybridity, plurality of culture, ambivalent attitude of people and establishment of subaltern identities in literature.

Literature of the English speaking nations has undergone a sea change during the postcolonial era; Indian writing in English is not an exception. Many of these English speaking nations have once been colonized by the British imperialism and their literature invariably focusses more or less the same experience; suffering, exploitation and ostracism become their common thread.

Humanism seems to be another threading theme of the postcolonial literature which has invariably led to the development of the literature of the oppressed, thwarting the European hegemonic power in literary form and theme. “One significant effect of postcolonial criticism is to further undermine the universalist claims once made on behalf of literature by liberal humanist critics’” (Barry 183). The rejection of Eurocentric norms and forms of literatures and their mode of writing invariably have lead the postcolonial writers to concentrate on their own land; The concept of universalism is thwarted away.

The ancestry of postcolonial studies can be traced to Frantz Fanon’s *The wretched of the Earth*, originally published in French in 1961. Fanon argues that the colonized people try to find their voice and identity to reclaim their past by showing how their past rich heritage has been spoilt by the colonial imperialism and in the process of criticizing the colonizers, the colonized try to erode the colonialist ideologies.

The second notable work on postcolonialism is *Orientalism* (1978), by Edward Said. Said has identified the establishment of the concept of “Other” which has been transmuted by a new term “subaltern” in the later stages of literary studies. He considers the East as “Other” and inferior to the west. He also identifies a hybridity or polyvalence
of culture in the postcolonial literary works. Chiefly as an impact of colonialism, the postcolonial texts seem to be the “projection of cruelty, sensuality, decadence, laziness and so on” (Barry 186). When the west considered literature as a pastime activity, displaying lust, terror, fury, and etc., the postcolonial writers seriously communicate something through literature and the most of the postcolonial texts are determined by racial discrimination and conflict.

Peter Barry, in his seminal work *Beginning Theory* (2010), identifies three stages in the development of postcolonial studies. At the beginning, the postcolonial writers tend to copy the European literary models as it stands thinking that it may bring universal acclaim to their literature. Barry observes, “All postcolonial literatures . . . begin with an unquestioning acceptance of authority of European models (especially in the novel) and with the ambition of writing works that will be masterpieces entirely in this tradition. This can be called the ‘Adopt’ phase of colonial literature . . .” (189). The second stage is known as ‘Adapt’ phase. In this phase, the writer has used the European literary genres to convey their problems. So it is evident that the theme of the literary works is the invention of the postcolonial author; cultural independence is sought. In the final phase, ‘Adept’ phase neither the form nor the theme of the literary work seems to be European but of the colonized; this phase invariably lends its hands in cross-cultural interactions.

Postcolonial texts are chiefly concerned with the experiences of exclusion, denigration and resistance under systems of colonial control. These texts address historical, political, socio-cultural ramifications of the colonial encounter between west and east. The study of postcolonial literature explicitly exhibits postcolonial culture and politics. It brings the response of the colonized towards the colonizers to limelight. It predominantly manifests resistance of the colonized to unjust and unequal forms of political and cultural authority.
Through the political independence, the colonized seek to acclaim the economic freedom. Historically the colonized people’s economy has been weakened by the imperial forces. Postcolonial literature aims at bringing the economic freedom besides the political liberation. In this connection, Young observes:

To sweep colonialism under the carpet of modernity however, is too convenient a deflection. To begin with its history was extraordinary in its global dimension, not only in relation to the comprehensiveness of colonisation by the time of high imperial period in the late 19th century, but also because the effect of globalisation of western imperial power was to fuse many societies with different historical traditions into a history which apart from the period of centrally command economics, obliged them to follow the same general economic path. The entire world now operates with the economic system primarily developed and controlled by the west and it is the continued dominance of the west in terms of political, economic, military and cultural power, that gives this history a continuing significance. . . . without economic liberation there can be no political liberation” (5).

The most significant development in the postcolonial studies is the establishment of the notion of “subalterns” which has played to be very crucial in the making of Dalit literature. The colonized people blisteringly criticize the imperial powers whereas there are many people who are trapped as slaves in their own country in the scale of economy and race or caste by the better off people. Perennially these people are suppressed and ostracized, but used by the better off caste people, who atrociously wreak untouchability whenever they need their help. The situation is still worse than the imperial colonialism, still these people have been living on the edges in terms of their living condition, obtaining basic amenities and acquiring their rights to live amicably with others.
Postcolonial notion of “subalterns” has given a perfectly woven impetus to these people in establishing their literature which they feel as a tool for social transformation and to expose their marginalized life, in a newly discovered form and theme of their own.

In India, many protest literatures are created to show Indian’s protest against the British regime. *Nildarpan* and *Gora* are the Bengali plays written by Dinabandhu Mitra and Rabindranath Tagore respectively which provide the sense of protest against the exploitation of Indians by the East India company and U.R. Ananthmarthy’s *Samskara* shook the sensibilities of Brahmans in south India.

Indian literature, essentially the Hindu literature considers *Vedas* as eternal, because art is not interpreted as art but it is connected with the peoples’ lives and sentiments and consequently any art produced in deviation from the established norms of Vedas are not accepted. M. F. Hussain is aggressively criticised in recent years for his portrayal of the Hindu Goddess Saraswathi and Sulman Rushdie’s work *Satanic Verses* is banned for criticizing the Islamic culture. Rawat in this connection writes:

The established literature of India is essentially Hindu literature even though non-Hindus such as Malik Mohammed Jayasi, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Joseph Mundassery, M.K.T Mohammed, Vaman Rao Tilak, Fakier Mahan Senapathi, Bashar, Shah Abdul Latif and hundreds of others from Tamilnadu, Kerala, Andhra, Gujarat, Punjab have contributed to the Indian literature. Their contribution is accepted and their names were written in the annuals of the Hindu literature, because they were conformists. But Acharya Rajneesh was forced to leave India, because he did not conform with Hindu scriptures and Hindu values. (92)

Indian literary historians and critical theorists and the Indian literary intellectuals are spectacularly silent about a newly blossoming and significantly developing form of writing, Dalit literature, which prominently focusses Indian society, people, history,
culture and relationship. Indian literary aesthetic world expects pleasure or beauty, instead of inspiration for social transformation. Dalit literature is a tool for social transformation and liberation of people; to aver succinctly, Dalit literature raises awareness among the people about the need to struggle for identity and rights that are denied.

The origin of Dalit literature is ascribed to Dohaara Kakkayya and Madara Chennaiah who belonged to the *Vachana Sahitya*, a rhythmic writing evolved in kannada literature during the eleventh century and flourished in the twelfth century chiefly by the efforts of Madara Chennaiah, the cobbler turned saint. Dohara Kakkayya is associated with Basavanna and has worked for annihilation of caste and to recreate a casteless society. In his poetry he moans for his birth in a low caste and he has sought emancipation through the then prevalent religion.

> O linga father you made me take birth in a mean caste
> I am undone as I touch you and yet do not touch
> If my hand cannot touch you can’t my mind too touch you

(Dohaara: Vachana 1787)

The poet believes that his birth in this world is bound with meanness because the Hindu *Vedas* promote a falsified picture of the creation of human kind on earth and also he believes the meanness of his low birth can be rectified by the touch of Linga, the God.

In Marathi, Chokhamela, the saint poet who belongs to the Mahar community ostracized as untouchable in Maharashtra has sung about ostracism and exploitation of Mahars. Though he is a saint, the society in his times has considered him a lesser mortal. He has been forced to live outside the town in a separate settlement for members of untouchable castes. He has brought out all his angst in his writings. His poems have Dalit
consciousness and those poems are considered as the harbinger of Dalit literature in Maharashtra.

Dalit literature, in Tamil is believed to be originated from “Pallu Literature” in ancient Tamil Literature. These are the songs sung by the Pallars, who hail from Tamil Nadu and these people primarily indulge themselves in agriculture. While doing works like tilling the land, sowing seeds, irrigating the crops and harvesting, they used to sing songs in order to relieve the monotony of work and fatigue. They exploit many literary devices in their songs like alliteration, assonance, oxymoron and etc. These songs are collected and brought out by scholars in the name, “Mukkudarpallu” to represent their life and culture. “The pallu literature is believed to be the earliest documented source for a new genre “Dalit Literature” that has later sprouted with a new critical and creative vigour” (Ramanathan 331).

The phraseology, “Dalit literature” can be viewed from two different angles, i.e. Literature on Dalits and literature by Dalits. Non-Dalit writers also has written about the plight of Dalits. Significant among the writings by non-Dalit writers are saraswativijayam (1892), written by Potheri Kunambu, a Malayalam writer and lately the novel has been translated into English by Dilip Menon; Untouchable(1935) by Mulk Raj Anand, one of the stalwarts of Indian writing in English and Outcaste by Romen Basu. Even today writers like Arundhati Roy works on the theme of untouchability, the major concern of Dalits and her Booker prize winning novel, The God of Small Things significantly probes the problem of untouchability and their ostracized and exploited life through the character, Velutha. These are the most significant contribution of non-Dalit writers to literature on the Dalits. But when these works are considered with Dalit consciousness, one can undoubtedy acknowledge that these novels are weakly structured as they have
failed to provide a solution for the age old problem, untouchability. Instead, they present the out broken Bakha and Velutha at the denouement.

They vividly and vivaciously juxtapose the events to create pathos; the suffering of lower caste people presented in the novel, arouse pity and there find a psychological purgation of their mind . . . the authors give the readers a psychological theoretical perspective on the atrocities of caste discrimination. . . . there is no representation of Dalit culture. (Ramanathan 333).

Literature produced by Dalits has Dalit consciousness. The quest for liberation becomes the primary aspect and concern of a Dalit writer. It rejects the hitherto hegemony of literary beauty and inherent aesthetic devices of literature, as they consider that those devices will discard the purpose of Dalit writers. Rejecting the traditional aesthetics, Dalit writers insist on the need for a new and distinct, aestheticism for their literature -- an aesthetics that is life-affirming and realistic portrayal that transcends a clear diagnosis of the concerned social reality and alludes a sanguine hope for its desirable transformation.

Dalit literature, in the modern context is perceived as the depiction of social life of Dalits. Each writer draws his/her inspiration from the space he belongs to. However diverse subjects, he deals with in his writings, “. . . the Dalit writer is combating the caste-based divisive forces and tendencies being committed to a cause . . . Their writings are not only propaganda but also characterized by a feeling of rebellions against the establishment of negativism and scientificity” (Rawat 90)

Literature to Dalits seems to be part of social awakening and social consciousness. Dalit literature in its modern form is blossomed in Marathi language first; usually, the development of which is attributed to Ambedkar, the veteran Dalit leader who has worked for Dalits’ political freedom and consciousness. He has not written any stories or poems
but has authored meticulous essays on varied subjects. Consequently Rawat, considers him, “the father of Dalit literature” (89). Having travelled through various parts of this mystique and mythic land, India, Dalit literature is produced in many other regional languages and then they are translated into English.

In the literary and social history of India, the period between 1920 and 1956 was influenced by the political activities of Ambedkar, the veteran Dalit leader who is acknowledged as a forerunner of modern Dalit literature. Ambedkar, through his writings and speeches has interrogated the dominant casteist construction of Indian society. Ambedkar has rejected the hegemony of the Vedas and he feels that the caste system will remain unchanged and people have no way but to accept the varnashramadharma as fate, if vedas are considred and accepted as eternal. Consequently, he has worked towards keeping away of not only the Vedas but also of any orthodox scriptures and he has made a clarion call to maintain social justice through his writing. Ambedkar has used literature as a tool for social transformation and Dalit emancipation.

Through his examination of history, mythology, Vedas and Puranas, Ambedkar has deconstructed the caste based issues and has established a well-built and well-knit Dalit identity and need for liberation of the Dalits and the strategy to be adopted by them to survive in caste-biased society. His works are foregrounded with political activism which has predominantly led the future generation of Dalit writers into literary and critical writing. “The period of Babasaheb’s work should be called the renaissance phase in the history of Dalit movement” (24), observes Limbale. Many Dalit boys have been educated by Siddhartha College in Mumbai and Milind college in Aurangabad, founded by Ambedkar. These intellectuals have begun to write, influenced by Ambedkar’s thinking and these writings have been published in the annual publication of Milind college.
In the early stages, many publishers have rejected Dalit writings, whereas these early intellectuals have continuously been writing. In the first conference of Dalit writers held 2 March 1958, a resolution was passed to the effect that the cultural importance of Dalit literature should be acknowledged and the literature must be given due recognition. Dalit society has gained a new cultural dimension with Ambedkar’s religious conversion; his departure has not failed to create a tremendous cultural vacuum among the Dalits. This phase has witnessed several groups of Dalit leadership. But at the same time, injustice and atrocities against Dalits have spectacularly escalated. The quest and thirst for survival and physical repression has become the predominant motive of young Dalit minds.

Dalits have understood the importance of organization and struggle for emancipation and empowerment through a little education, they could manage to receive. Even the constitution, though drafted by their virtuoso has failed to afford them any practical solution for their amicable existence. On the one hand, the Dalit youths are ignited with the tremendous awareness of their existence; on the other, the caste boundaries and poverty have suppressed their thoughts and they are trapped in the state of decrepitude. The Spread of education, pressure of Dalit movements and struggle against the existential conditions, prevalent in society have caused the Dalit youths to express their angst and aversion against the social injustice and inequality. These writings significantly formed the cannon of “Dalit Literature” in the contemporary scenario.

The development of Dalit literature is also spearheaded by a new branch of study in the field of literature which is called as subaltern studies among the literary circles. Subaltern studies which has come into force as a result of discussion among the English and Indian Historians in England and the group has published three volumes of essays entitled Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society. Ranajit Guha, Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Gautam Bhadra, Dispesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee,
David Hardiman, Gyanendra Pandey and Subit Sarkar are the major contributors and these are regarded as original subaltern theorists. Later readings in subaltern theory in India have been published in the form of book reviews. David Ludden Opines, “by 1986 an accumulation of writing inside and outside the project had established a distinctive school of research whose adherents came to be called ‘subalternists’ or simply, ‘subalterns’”(1-2). The essays of these researchers have been published by Oxford University Press under the title *Selected Studies* edited by Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak with a foreword by the renowned postcolonial theorist, Edward Said. In the 90s subaltern studies has begun to earn currency in academic circles on several contents for the scholars ranging across various disciplines: history, political science, anthropology, sociology, literature, culture studies and so on.

Modern Dalit literature takes intuition from the Black literature, though the problem of race and caste is varied widely in degree and mode of suppression, the concerned literatures: racial literature and Dalit literature, converge in their depiction of the subverted. Both Literatures have gained universal accolades and also have been considered as part of American and Indian literatures respectively. They have gained currency internationally for they portray the poignant struggles undergone by African Americans and Dalits, nor for money and power but for asserting basic human needs of liberty, equality and fraternity. Both the people: Black and Dalits have perennially been dehumanized on the pretext of colour consciousness and caste consciousness respectively. Only difference is the mode of oppression that Blacks are from Africa and are humiliated by whites in America, many of them have been purchased as slaves by whites in America, while some of them are immigrants, Whereas Dalits are dehumanized in their own soil by their own brothers and sisters, which makes the degree of suppression even worse.
The works of the early Dalit writers are not only rebellious in nature but also it has remained confined to Mumbai, the region where many of these writers belong to. They express their dissatisfaction over the articles published in contemporary journals like *Satyakatha*. They themselves have published little magazines, since the leading magazines do not publish their writings. The early writings of Raja Dhale and Namdeo Dasal, the prominent Dalit writers have found their publication in these little magazines. The early Dalit writers cannot establish a common standard in theme and form of their literature; there are witnessed by differences among their writings.

Rural literature has also contributed to some extent to the development of Dalit literature. Almost eighty percent of the Indian population lives in the villages. The sons of farmers have begun to write something on the theme of peasantry and penury. Thus, they have given a new flavour to this new form of literature; however, they do not fail to portray the tears and sufferings of farmers along with the drizzling and dewdrops on meadows. They also bring out their experience of untouchability and the stigmatization of casteism which denies equality to Dalits. Dalits’ experience the problem of untouchability and they realistically describe the problem, consequently, Dalit literature is conceived by the thought of untouchability.

Dalit literature naturally portrays the sorrows, pains, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule, injustice wreaked by Hindu caste system, the predicament of Dalits and poverty. This literature seems to be a lofty image of pangs and agony of Dalits. The Hindu ideology of living has ostracized Dalits from normal passage of life and property. Thousands of generations of Dalits have accustomed to endure this injustice, and they have found their voice originated in Babasaheb Ambedkar; this anguish is also found embodiment in their literature.
Every human being must find liberty, honour and security from the intimidation of hegemony. When these values are denied, it is very common to note that the particular race protests against the clutches and it is witnessed throughout the world history and that they use literature as a powerful weapon; Dalit literature is not an exception that it portrays Dalits’ protest against the caste hierarchy of Indian society. Dalit literature faithfully caricatures the experiences of Dalits. It portrays the protesting experience of Dalits to achieve self-respect and it portrays the life as lived and experiences as experienced not as felt or seen.

Dalit consciousness is yet another aspect of Dalit literature. Dalit consciousness is the belief in rebellion against the caste system; Dalit consciousness is making the Dalits conscious of their bondage and slavery. The unique identity of Dalit literature is felt in the history and development of Indian English writing, because of this consciousness. Dalit literature has mainstreamed into Indian literature.

Dalit writers write out of social responsibility. Their writings express their commitment to enlighten the people on the need for social activism. Literature, for Dalit writers is a tool for social transformation and they seem to think that society may understand their problem and positively reciprocate to their quests. Consequently, they present the existential problems Dalits. Dalit literature is a part and parcel of their liberation movement.

Dalit literature is the recently growing distinct stream of Indian literature. It has contributed a new life, fresh experiences, new sensitivity and an alternate vision in terms of narrative technique and theme. Recent epochs in the history of Indian literary theory witness the introspection of Dalit literature and pertinent questions pertaining to the existence of dalits are raised in the sprouting minds of readers and critics. Dalit literature accords the highest place to humanism. This sprouting stream of literature is definitely the
declaration of human freedom. It encourages liberation of humanity believes in greatness of mankind rather than religion and any established values. It rebels against culture, society or literature that promotes discrimination and disparity.

Some critics point out the resemblance of Dalit literature with the black literature or Afro-American literature. It can essentially be noted that the things which connect both the societies are their oppression and subversion—Dalits in the name of caste and blacks in the name of race, though degree varies. Though Afro-American and Dalit liberation movements have propagated along with different paths and in different periods, both movements are basically considered as movements of struggle for human rights against social power politics and against exploitation. Despite differences of country, religion, social condition, society and language, the similarity that is shared by both writings is derived from the fact of injustice, degradation and slavery experienced by the respective people. Afro-Ameircans express their pain through novels, ballads, stories and songs as established by their living society without any deviations, Dalits also do through literature but through their invented forms of narrative techniques; there are many deviations in form and language that are very distinct, because of which some critics do not approve Dalit literature as genuine literature.

Dalit liberation movements and Dalit literature are inspired by the thoughts, concepts and ideas of Ambedkar in articulating the life-affirming values. Dalit literature does not follow any traditional aesthetic or the western canonized form like novel standards and develops its own aesthetic standard. Evaluating Dalit literature, Limbale propounds some standards, Dalit literature adopts. He says:

- Artists must be motivated by their experience.
- Artists must socialize their experiences.
- Artists’ experiences must have the strength to cross provincial boundaries.
Artists’ experiences seem relevant to all time. (120).

In 90’s Dalit liberation movements have indulged in looking out for identity and upholding the caste assertion Iyothee Dass who is known as a contemporary of E.V.R Periyar in social reformation movements of India is a Dalit scholar. He puts forth the theory on the identity of parayars. He has proposed that “Parayars were the early Buddhists who had been displayed and subordinated by outsiders” (Tharu and Satyanarayana 49). His work has been marginalized, and his theories are kept in silence.

Much of the new writing in this period appears in little magazines started by Dalits. The earliest and best known journal of this kind is Nirapirikai, started by the left oriented intellectuals like Ravikumar and Raj Gautaman. The journal has initially not specifically concerned with the Dalit related issues; it soon took that stand, nurturing the Dalit writers. It is best described as a social science journal which comprises high quality literary criticism, local history with a subaltern perspective and some translations of articles taken from the English social science journals.

Many things related to Dalit writing has come into exist as a part of Dalit liberation and emancipation movement. The tendency of weaving literature of their own has been persuaded by Afro-Americans. In 1992, a group of Dalit intellectuals has conducted a Dalit cultural festival in Pondicherry which has promoted and presented Dalit theatre, music, visual arts, oratory and other cultural works. It also conducts seminar on Dalit human rights issues. In 1994 Nirapirkai has published a special volume on Dalit literature with translations from Marathi Dalit writings. In 1995 Tamil version of India Today has published a special issue on Dalit writings that includes Raj Gautaman’s critical essay, stories by renowned Dalit writers like Sivakami, Idayaventhan, Bama, Ravikumar, Cho. Dharuman and Imayam and poetry by K. A. Gunasekaran, Prathiba Jeyachandran, Sukirtha Rani and Meena Kandasamy. This is to say that the new kind of
writing by the Dalits are approved and accepted even by general magazines and this pervasively marks the birth and development of Dalit writing in Tamil Nadu. Many of the Dalit writings have also been published by some left-oriented literary and cultural magazines as Manavosai, Pirachanai, Manitham, and Kavitha Charan. There are also many other magazines that contribute to the development of Dalit writings in Tamil, notable among them are Dalit Murasu, Puthia Kodangi, Dalit, Bodhi, Manusanga, Thaiman, Adithamizhan and Devendrar Malar.

Dalit Murasu has come to exist in 1987 by Punitha Pandian. The journal provides space and visibility to Dalit movements. It has also trained journalist with a consciousness of “widening the basis of the struggle against caste, bringing together Dalit leaders and ideologues and antinext and secular intellectuals (Geetha 92). It also provides a forum for Dalit writers.

Punitha kodangi has begun as a quarterly by renowned IAS officer Sivakami, Pratibha Jeyachandran and artist Chandru. It addresses many Dalit related problems in socio-economic and socio-cultural perspectives. Many renowned Dalit intellectuals contribute to the journal. Thaiman, the official organ of the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal portrays the life and culture of Dalits in socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural spaces “Earlier writers such as K. Daniel from Jaffna and Poomani depicted Dalit life and were critical of caste, but they wrote from a Marxist perspective, treating caste question as largely a class one. They did not represent themselves as Dalit writers” (Tharu and Satyanarayana 28), fearing the revelation of caste identity may lead to the ostracism of their works, whereas the contemporary writers point-blankly represent them as Dalit writers. Bama is one such writer who candidly proposes her as a Dalit.

Bama was born in 1958 and has originally been named as Fathima Rani Faustina Mary in a Roman Catholic family from Puthupatti near Madurai. Bama’s ancestors
belong to the Dalit community. Born as a Dalit, she has experienced the caste
discrimination and as a woman the gender discrimination. Bama’s ancestors have been
the landless agricultural worker as most of the Dalits be. Her family embraced
Christianity from her grandfather’s time. Her father has been employed in Indian Army.
Bama has received early education in her village. After graduation, she has joined the
religious order as a nun. Having served in that order for seven years, she has left the
convent as she has believed that the convent does not serve the cause of poor. She has
started writing out her ailments and ill experiences in the society; her novels invariably
focus on the theme of caste and gender discrimination. She writes the things as she has
experienced. The characters, she has created in her fiction are bound to be the stereotypic
representation of the persons, she has met and lived with; the delineation of the events in
her novels are very lively with the original flavour of the village with all its settings, the
activities of people and the existential strategies of the village people to make themselves
survive in the world with their own style of language that is not refined, as such language
uncompromisingly add beauty to the narration of events.

Bama has vitally produced three novels, *Karukku* (1992), *Sangati* (1994), *Vanmam*
(2002) which have been translated into English as *Karukku* and *Sangati: Events* by
Lakshmi Holmstrom and *Vanmam: Vendetta* by Malini Seshadri; she has also written
some short stories which are collected and published as *kisumbukkaran* (1996) and *Oru
Tattavum Eurmaiyum* (2012). Some of the stories are translated into English by N. Ravi
Shanker and published under the title, “*Harum-Scarrum Saar*” and *Other Stories* (2006).
Her works are universally acclaimed for its vividness and vivacity, the novel *Sangati* and
the short story collection *Kisumbukkaran* are also translated into French.

The Year 1992 cogently heralded a significantly new phase in the Tamil Literature
with the publication of *Karukku* by Bama, with which there has flourished a new kind of
genre in Tamil literature which is identified as “Dalit literature”, that argues powerfully against social constructs like caste hierarchy, patriarchy, discrimination, oppression, suppression and bondage or slavery. Many Indian literary intellectuals have not approved this new form of writing and consequently there have been many disputes and discussions over this. In this connection Bama writes, “Literary critics read it analysed it, asking each other how to categorize it. They decided, finally, that it was a new genre in Tamil literature. Many praised it, many scorned it.” (“Ten Years Later” ix).

Though there are many attempts to write about the Dalits previously like Bharathidasan’s “Taazhthapattor Samathuvapaatu” (Song Proclaiming Equalization of Dalits) and a significantly large collection of poems by the Dalits, Mukkudar Pallu, in ancient Tamil Literature, those have not been recognized as Dalit literature. Through translation of Karukku first in 2001 by Lakshmi Holmstrom, the new form has attracted the universal attention and Dalit literature has become identified on par with the literature of the marginalized—Black Literature, Feminist Literature and Communist-Socialist Literature.

The novel Karukku, though written by a Christian nun centering around her life, her struggle against the patriarchy of churches and her location and dislocation both in society and church, establishes itself as an answer to the pertinent issues like Dalit identity and culture. It can best be discerned as a mode of confessionalism just like the works of Sylvia Plath in American literature and Kamaladas in Indian Writing in English; it is a literary discourse, particularly of the marginalized people, who have deliberately been segregated from the mainstream of the Indian Society. Bama significantly calls, “Karukku stands as a means of strength of the multitudes whose identities have been destroyed and denied” (Ten Years Later x). For the upraisal and emancipation of Dalits, literary representation of Dalit life becomes significant. Dalit intellectuals feel that the
mainstream history is biased and deficient. In Dalit narratives, history is recalled and retold. Dalit narratives also challenge the mainstream literature.

Karukku has been translated into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom in 2000, and has been read less as individual’s autobiography than as testimony of Dalits’ life since it documents the sufferings of and atrocities committed upon a large group of people who are historically and politically, socio-economically and culturally ostracized; it depicts the trauma of the people who are living on the edges with their meagre or little economic empowerment, rejection and suffering. Karukku is not only the story of Bama but also it depicts the collective trauma of Dalits whose length of suffering cannot be measured in time. It just tried to freeze it forever in one book so that there will be something physical to remind people of the atrocities committed on a section of society for ages. Holmstrom observes:

Karukku was written out of a specific experience, the experience of a Tamil Dalit Christian woman. Yet it has universality at its core which questions all oppressions, disturbs, all complacencies, and, reaching out, empowers all those who have suffered different oppressions. It is precisely because it tells the story of Bama’s personal struggle to find her identity that Karukku also argues powerfully against patriarchy and caste oppression. (xiv)

Bama recollects events that happened in many stages of her life and presents them in her novel, Karukku. Through the title of her novel, she compares her life with the serrated edge of the Palmyra frond. She also presents the unjust social practices which deliberately plunges the oppressed into ignorance for ages. She pleads for liberation of her community through the thought provoking exposition of events; for writing such a filthy account about her village, she has been ostracized from her village and has not been allowed entering the village.
Though the novel starts with the first person narrative, it is very significant to note that it is not a unified subject but a collective subject. The novel, in entirety is a personal and passionate plea for the age old questions related to the quest of Dalits’ life and it is one of the processes of social transformation. She makes her comrades aware of their rights and responsibilities saying, “We must not accept the injustice of our enslavement by telling ourselves it is our fate as if we have no true feelings. We must dare to stand up for change . . .” (Karukku 25).

Bama records the sensation of being wounded in this novel. The taboos and social barriers are also brought out to limelight. Bama describes the trembling bodies and her racing heart abruptly beats, on seeing violence of the upper caste and the Government through the assistance of Government machinery and her burning anger, on seeing the atrocities, perpetrated. Bama unrelentingly records the experience and sufferings of pain; these sufferings of pain is a collective one, where social, political, historical and cultural structures oppress, ostracize, suppress and exploit Dalit communities. The narrative seems to highlight the localized and individualized sufferings and subsequently, those are located in the universal historical space.

*Karukku* is considered as an autobiography with a collective awareness of Dalit communities. It details on the education and experiences of Bama right from her childhood. Bama, having completed her education, enters the convent with an ambition to serve the poor and destitute but later discovers, “the convent . . . did not even care to glance at poor children” (Bama: *Karukku* 66). She explains the sophisticated lifestyle of the nuns and priests in the convent which has shocked her very much. She adds, “there was no love to be found in that convent . . . there was no love for the poor and humble . . . In the name of god they actually rob from the poor who struggle for their livelihood” (Karukku 92-4).
The novel also exposes how Dalits are treated by the Government machinery like police during the times of agitation. The police take the side of the upper caste, Chaaliyars. The law also discriminates between Dalits and upper castes. “Karukku is significant because it takes into the public domain shameful secrets. In fact, Bama’s ethics consists of breaking the aesthetic of silence around issues of caste oppression, social inequality and the biases of the legal system” (Nayar 90).

Bama has documented her identity crisis in Karukku, during her childhood in schools and college and later in the convent. She also brings forth the hypocrisy of church and the authorities connected with, when she has left the convent she finds her identity crisis in the society; her suffering continues because she is a Dalit.

Bama’s second novel Sangati has been translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom and was published in 2005. The novel basically deals with the problems faced by the Dalit women in their daily life. Bama dexterously handles the problem by delineating the people whom she has encountered in her village. It has no plot or subplot, as a regular novel has, it is literally defined as an episodic novel. The term “sangati” literally means “event”. The novel deals with the struggles of Parayar women in the male dominated caste-ridden society. Literary critics consider this novel as an auto-ethnography. The narrator is Vellaiyamma Kizhavi. It also focusses on Dalit culture by describing festivals and functions. In this novel,

Bama foregrounds the “difference” of Dalit women from privileged upper caste women and also celebrates their “identity” in their strength, labour and resilience. As a feminist writer Bama protests against all forms of oppression and relying on the strength and resilience of Dalit women, makes an appeal for change and self empowerment through education and collective action. (Palwekar 36)
*Sangati* traces an account of aggressive exploitation of women in society and home. The novelist exposes how the landlords sexually abuse the village Dalit women. She has articulated their pangs of pain and angst caused by inequality, discrimination, inhuman treatment at workplace, exploitation and sexual exploitation. Throughout the novel, Bama describes the pathetic condition of women. Bama portrays many bold women who are ready to fight against the shackles of authority and male dominance to propel themselves upward, *Sangati* partly looks at these women’s lives.

In terms of structure, *Sangati* seeks to create a Dalit-feminist perspective and explores the impact of discrimination compounded by poverty. There are many mother and grandmother figures who narrate their personal experience. These stories talk about women who are fond of doing the household duties like cooking and caring siblings, of women who are in ignorance and indulging themselves in exorcism and their cultural identities. Yet, all the stories make their confluence in the denouement of portraying how the Dalit women especially the Parayar women are more vulnerable to make their existence economically independent.

Bama’s third novel *Vanmam* first appeared in Tamil in the year 2003 and then it was translated into English by Malini Seshadri in 2008. It is not the usual Dalit novel which generally eulogizes on the atrocities against Dalits and exploitation of Dalits wreaked by the upper caste, though it portrays the brutality of upper caste and police man against Dalits. But rather it focusses on intra-Dalit community violence which foregrounds in Dalit identity.

The story of *Vanmam* is set out in the village, Kandampatti. The protagonists in this novel are two castes, Pallars and Parayars who identify themselves as Hindus and Christians respectively. The novel describes how the land owning Naickers instigate violence between the two Dalit communities to benefit themselves ignoring the human
lives spared. Bama here writes about the continuing rivalry that exists between the two major Dalit communities, Pallars and Parayars.

Bama’s *vanmam* portrays another important aspect of Dalit community that the community is not homogenous but heterogeneous and bounds in differences in life and cultural patterns. The Dalits in this novel are constrained to erase their culture, community or vocation specific distinction—aspects which lend them individuality and self esteem, though they are far better able to bargain politically

*Vanmam* typically portrays the internalization of Dalits within the given social system of segregation based on caste. Parayars and Pallars are outcasts in the eyes of other upper castes, whereas Pallars consider themselves superior to Parayars and Parayars consider themselves superior to Pallars; consequently, they treat each other as outcasts in their own social habitat. *Vanmam* shares the discourse of modernity, which addresses issues concerning contemporary society and its contradictions indicating sub-caste differences in Dalit community. The novel ratifies a further understanding of the word “Dalit”

Bama’s short stories are translated into English by N.Ravishanker from the original Tamil *Kisumbukkaran* named, “Harum-Scarum Saar” and Other Stories. This collection may not be belittled for being short stories but they can be treated on par with her novels. Both the genres serve as a testimony to her skill and intent as a writer. Anecdotal in nature, the stories published in this collection takes the reader directly and almost effortlessly into the lived lives of Dalits in Tamilnadu. The characters delineated through the stories stand for their challenge to the hegemonic hold of the upper caste people. In all the ten stories, Bama discusses the change in the bent of mind of Dalits; the changed times, education and awareness of social injustice brings in a different atmosphere into these rural areas, challenging and discerning the upper caste landlords.
The democracy that frames the feudal order now exerts its pressure on it and its hegemonic caste equation.

The stories are also tinged with humour which gives the people some sort of pleasure in the workplace. Bama chronicles the awakening consciousness of Dalit community through her short stories. She also unhesitatingly points out the divisions and oppressions prevalent among the Dalit community either in the form of gender or sub-caste. The stories like “Annachi’’ and “Ponnuthayi” replicate the hegemonic power structure of the Dalit community.

The caricature and portrayal of the young men like Esakkimuthu in “Pongal” Ammasi in “Annachi” and Kaliappan in “Half-sari” are vocal in their condemnation of caste practices and display pride and dignity. All her characters demonstrate how they manage the inequality and inhumanity. Bama’s stories affectionately create her characters to address their exploitation and injustice done to them perennially in Indian society.

Kapoor addresses:

For Bama there is a decree, but in each of her stories the ending sets up a whole panorama for action many of her stories have a feel of jigsaw puzzle. In story upon story men and women undergo the rituals of self subjugation to adhere to the rules of subservience handed down over generations. . . . It takes just one remark for them to see the larger picture. It takes just one incisive comment for the puzzle to get solved. And once seen in its entirety and so many of Bama’s stories end at that point – we know that life has changed for them. . . . The absurd self-abnegation that caste imposed on their ancestors and to which they unquestioningly submitted becomes intolerable.” (37).
Like effective writing on the subject of empowerment, Bama’s writing also goes in delineation of raw incidents through raw language and this type of uncompromising narration seems to be the success of Bama.

Bama’s fiction is quite significant which portrays the life of Dalits with all its angst of pain and despair. The stories weave a wonderful mosaic of Dalits’ lifestyle and culture. Through her stories, Bama raises a clarion call for Dalits socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural emancipation and empowerment. The characters that are weaved in the stories get their significance not because of their individuality of performance which assists the novelist in making her novels lively and the readers more enthusiastically, but because they are the stereotypical representation and delineation of the entire society; for example when Bama says that she has a pain in her heart. It is the pain experienced not only by Bama alone, but also of many Dalits’ experience which is fossilized in the throbbing hearts. It clearly exposes that Bama writes out this type of collective experiences of a particular society.

Bama’s contribution to Dalit literature is immense that she has flavoured her writing with a unique style of vocabulary and this type of vocabulary adds a distinct resonance to her writings. Her syntactical patterns used in the novels seem to specify the Dalit speech patterns. The material in the stories of Bama succinctly signifies the socio-political and socio-cultural activities undertaken by Dalits for survival, reconstruction, and empowerment. The readers are called upon by Bama to understand the feeling and passions of Dalits and accept and respect them as human beings. More importantly the readers need be aware of the fact that they are experiencing the fictionalized facts and construction of truth in socially relevant narrative, novel. The text envisages at the past and present and also it earnestly speculates the future with its due recognition, if not respect to Dalits and their culture; it foresees the construction of society that is socially,
economically and culturally independent for Dalits towards which Dalits march amidst all their pains and despair. Bama does this and consequently she deserves the place, she enjoys in the literary cannon.

The present study entitled *Indian Society and Existential Strategies of Dalits in the Fiction of Bama* analyses socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural aspects and status of the Dalits in India in general and in Tamilnadu in particular and also it enumerates the strategies that are adopted by Dalits to make themselves survive against ostracism, imposed and exploitation wreaked by the so called upper caste in the present day Indian society through the works of Bama, one of the leading Dalit writers who pens the chronicles of the lives of the Dalits of her region who have been deprived of identity and equality.

The researcher, in this present study analyses Bama’s fiction socio-cultural perspectives. It is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 entitled “Introduction” deals with the postcolonialism, which is the primeval underlying force in the creation of Dalit literature in the modern sense. Next in the same chapter, the researcher succinctly analyses the growth and development of Dalit literature with a special focus on social aesthetics and human existentialism. He also undermines the connection between the Black literature and finds conformity of the Dalit literature with the Black literature and the growth of new knowledge in the 1980s in the name of subaltern studies.

Chapter 2, “Dalits in Social Context” deals with varying nature of Indian ethnicity and its complexity which invariably results in the stratification of people and this stratification reciprocally subjugates people in course of time. The researcher analyses the mythological patterns which underlie in the process of Dalitization. Then he browses how the untouchables of Indian society have turned into Dalits. He analyses the etymological roots of the word “Dalit” and successively analyses how Bama portrays Dalits in Indian
society and its institutions like casteism, religion and the like unleash discrimination and how these people are exploited and swindled by the so called upper caste people who are socio-economically well developed mainly because of the unrelenting labour of Dalits. The researcher compares Dalits and the aboriginals of this antique land.

Chapter 3 entitled, “Hard Paths and Hardy Women” deals with the Dalit women who are the most disadvantaged among the disadvantaged and the most underprivileged of the Indian ethical pattern. The researcher analyses the condition of women in general and the status and nature of Dalit women in particular; then he compares the upper caste women with Dalit women. He also sketches how Dalit women are exploited economically and sexually, how their labour is swindled by the upper caste landlords. He also faithfully pictures how even the girl children in Dalit community contribute to the economic development of the family. He portraits how Dalit women are physically and mentally strong enough to tackle the problems and also how their defiance brings the collective punishment to the Dalit community. The researcher in general presents the world of Dalit women with all its hopes and despair.

Chapter 4 entitled, “Paths to Liberation” deals with how Dalits try to liberate themselves from the clutches of Indian society. The researcher amply discusses the growth and development of Dalits through education and protest, which is one of the significant strategies which can liberate the depressed. The researcher also discusses how far these paths—education and protest shove Dalits towards socio-economic and socio-cultural empowerment.

Chapter 5 entitled, “Culture and Aesthetics” deals with the cultural patterns of Dalits and their contribution to Indian culture. The researcher analyses the lifestyle, food, jobs exclusively done by Dalits, festivals and functions and their social significance and
relevance. The researcher speculates Dalit literature as a medium which recreates the subjugated and socially and culturally ostracized Dalit culture.

Chapter 6 entitled, “Summation” succinctly sums up all the arguments of the preceding chapters and justifies the arguments citing incidents from the contemporary socio-political scenario and status of Dalits. The researcher also brings out the need to re-devise the strategies of Dalits to attain liberation. This chapter, the researcher effectively uses the contemporary socio-cultural and socio-political scenario of Dalits.

On the whole the present study, entitled, *Indian Society and Existential Strategies of Dalits in the Fiction of Bama*” is an attempt of analyzing Bama’s works in social, political, cultural and economic backdrops with contemporary relevance.