Chapter III

Negating the Other

Negritude is first of all a negation... rejection of the other; refusal to assimilate... rejection of the other is self-affirmation and the affirmation of our being, our negritude. (Senghor’s speech qtd. in Janheiz Jahn 251).

Identity is not a stasis but a process, and it is not something autonomous, stable and independent of all external influences. In fact, it is a response to something external and it is constructed, negotiated and defended either in harmony with the external influences or in conflict with the differences that constitute "the other". Lawrence Grossberg in his arguments on cultural identity and the logic of difference observes, "since the modern constitutes its own identity by differentiating itself from - an other (usually tradition as a temporal other or spatial others transformed into temporal others), identity is always constituted out of difference" (Hall Identity 93). In looking at how identities are constructed, it is suggested by Hall that they are formed in relation to other identities, to the outsider or in terms of the other, that is, in relation to what they are not. Difference, in other words, the otherness can be constructed negatively as the exclusion and marginalization of those who are defined as the other or as outsiders (Hall Identity 4). On the other hand, it can also be celebrated as a source of diversity, heterogeneity and hybridity, where the recognition of difference is seen as enriching as in the case of Subaltern protest literatures, and Native literatures.
George Herbert Mead propounds that the self is constructed through its relations with others. Mead distinguishes the 'I' from 'Me', arguing that the 'I' is the response of the organism to the attitude of others; the 'me' is the organised set of attitudes of others, which one himself assumes (175). The self, to Mead, forms itself upon the internalization of the viewpoint of others. Hence, the development of the self depends upon the others, it encounters.

The identities in African-American literature and Dalit literature in India are formed in their remonstration against their otherness – the negative perceptions of the Whites and the high caste respectively. In Edward Said's analysis of the colonial European study of Oriental cultures, the other is defined as a form of cultural projection of concepts. This projection constructs the identities of cultural subjects through a relationship of power in which the other is the subjugated element (Culler 131). Prior to the emergence of their own literature, the Blacks and the Dalits are described as irrational, uncivilized, dirty and ugly, and their selves are endowed with a sense of inferiority. In this sense, it can be argued that identities are formed in the novels of McKay and Civakâmi through the differences as perceived by their oppressors. As a trait of protest literature, in the construction of identities in both the writings, the selves are liberated from their otherness to assert their rational selves.

Both McKay and Civakâmi expose the cultural shackles, which keep the oppressed in fetters, denying them their legitimate choices. McKay, in his novels, distinguishes the differences on two levels: first, the differences as perceived by the oppressors, the Whites and experienced by the oppressed, the Blacks, and secondly,
the differences as the singularity of the race that help them keep their unique identity.

The construction of the racial identity, in **HH**, in terms of otherness is highlighted by its two major characters, Jake and Ray. Jake, as a stoker, is used to all sorts of rough jobs, and the White sailors in the ship hate the Arab crews for their unseemliness. Still nursing the hurt inflicted by the differences that he experienced in the American army, Jake does not approve of the Whites’ flattery, and feels his state of oppression agonizingly. He experiences the difference of being a Black, for he was treated as an outsider in the American army. He was enlisted to fight, but forced to do manual labour in the army. His bitter experience with the American army at Brest underscores the fact that a Black soldier with an ambition of going over the top was reduced to the level of a manual labourer because of his Black identity. He realizes the difference of being a Black in the White army, and deeply regrets his Black identity. For, he ruminates, "why did I want to mix mahself up in a White folks' war? It ain't ever was any of Black folks' affair. Niggars aim evah always such fools, anyhow. Always thinking they've got something to do with White folks' business" (98).

Jake’s experiences as a stoker in the ship and a soldier in the army testify the fact that the Black, even as a stoker in the ship, is treated unfairly and condemned as niggers and darky by his fellow proletariats. Further, as a soldier fighting against German fascism and, ironically, the supremacist’s racism in the war, the Black has to fight out the differences inside his own army to claim even the duty that he is meant for. Annoyed with his manual labour in the army, he deserts it. His desertion
from the army and his later resolution to leave for Harlem demonstrate that he wipes out his otherness, and asserts his racial self.

On his return to Harlem, Jake recounts to Zeddy, his fellow soldier in the army, the everlasting unloading of ships and toting lumbers in the army. It is apparent from his reminiscence that the Blacks are ill-treated chiefly for their colour. For, his recollection that "the Young Men's Christian Association, overlooking the harbor, where colored soldiers were not wanted" (21) underlines the sad plight of the Blacks in the White army in which one of his fellow Black soldiers died uncared in the war:

Poor boh. Was always belly aching for a chance over the top. Nevah got it nor nothing. Not even a baid in the hospital. Strong like a bull, yet just knocked off in the dark through raw cracker cussedness ... Some life it was, buddy in them days. We was always on the defensive as if the boches, as the froggies called them, was right down on us. (21-22)

Hence, it is obvious that a Black individual becomes conscious of the exploitation and disillusion of himself by distancing from the Whites.

Regarding this, Usha Shourie explains "In the fight against German fascism to save democracy the American government drafted many coloured soldiers, and President Woodrow Wilson had assured them to expect nothing less than full rights of citizenship enjoyed by other citizen" (58). However, the colour discrimination practised in the army convinces the Blacks of the hypocrisy and hollowness of America's claim for democracy.
In these terms, Jake tells Ray later, "[i] was way ovah there after democracy and them boches, and when I couldn't find one or the other, I jest turned mah Black moon from the A.E.F"(130). Jake's desertion from the army and later his justification insinuates the fact that his racial identity is also formed by external influences, particularly in the form of colour prejudice and exploitation in the predominantly White army.

Further, Jake, despite being a carpenter struggles to find a good job. Though the Blacks aspire for material progress in life, they are denied of their chances, because of their colour. Finally, Jake, "a little boss" once in Brooklyn, is contented to work as a longshoreman. Even there, the Blacks are appointed by the Whites cunningly to scab and break unions. When Jake goes to unload pineapples at eight dollars a day, he finds that it is a scab job, and, therefore, he refuses to do it. But, at the same time, he does not prefer to join the trade union, and tells his White initiator about the colour discrimination: "Things ain't none at all lovely between White and Black in this heah Gowd's own country" (46).

This incident lays bare the Whites' perception of the Blacks and their exploitation. When told by Jake that it is not decent to scab, Zeddy shouts:

Decent mah Black moon! [...] I'll scab through hell to make mah living. Scab job or open shop or union am all the same jobs to me.[...]But kain we get a look- in our trade heah in this white man's city? White mens don't want niggers in them unions [...] Ain't White mens done scabbed niggers outa all the jobs they seter hold down heah in this city? (48).
Zeddy's defiance to ethical norms accentuates that the Blacks are rendered jobless for their colour, and offered jobs ironically to scab. Both Jake's resentment and Zeddy's pragmatic approach illustrate that the Blacks in America are exploited and considered only for unethical jobs.

Jake's experience in Madame Saurez's speakeasy in the chapter, "The Raid of the Baltimore" also affirms the colour discrimination and determines the racial differences. The speakeasy is un-American in the sense that the Whites mingle with the Blacks freely and naturally in violation of the existing law. When the police raid the speakeasy, Madame Saurez besides being fined, is sent to Blackwell's island for six months. Ironically, of the punishment given to the two White girls, who are also taken in the raid the Mackay remarks, "it is a pity he had no power to order them whipped. For, whipping was the only punishment he considered suitable for White women who dishonored their race by associating with colored persons" (110). It is ironical that the White judiciary, too, perceives the Blacks as inferior and unlawful, and punishes them with its high handedness, but spares the Whites with just an inconsequential punishment. It is appalling to note here that even today in America, the Blacks are considered unlawful and the Whites' mingling with the Blacks is a dishonour to their race. It also bears witness that the Blacks are treated only as outsiders in the U.S., and they are discriminated for their colour even by the judiciary, which is ironically one of the four estates of democracy.

Jake constitutes his racial identity out of the external influences that he confronts in the form of colour and racial discrimination in the U.S. The Chef in the railroad, in his willing absorption of the Whites' customs and manners observes,
"[t]his heah White man's train service ain't no nigger picnic" (124), and despises his fellow Blacks for their colour. The premeditation of the Chef is proved fatal in the end, and he fails to evince racial sympathy even from his fellow Blacks. But, Jake in his numb acceptance of Ray, and as an outsider in the White dominant society sheds the constructed other by mingling freely with the Blacks in the railroad.

The search for Black identity, in HH, is not confined only to the emotional and instinctive self of Jake. His celebration of life in Harlem is in striking contrast with the alienation and intellectual responses of Ray. Ray's sense of alienation and his cultural ambivalences, issuing from his Western education make him an outsider not only to the Whites, but also to himself. He resolves his inner conflicts by negotiating with the differences and constructs his racial identity in close association with Jake, who is a symbol of the Black community.

Ray was enjoying Howard University education, until the U.S. captured Haiti. As a result, he hates the U.S., and in the U.S., he suffers an insider-outsider conflict. When Jake asks, "Aint' ch – ain't chu one of us too?" he replies, asserting his difference, "of course, I'm Negro [.....] but I was born in Hayti and the language down is French"(131). Though he is physically in the U.S., in his memory he still lives and longs for the country life in Haiti. His metamorphosis from "a humming bird" in Haiti to "an owl flying by day in the U.S" (157) is graphic and results in the loss of his personal identity in White America.

Further, Ray's interpersonal relations are also set against other individuals, groups, and societies that come to experience a certain degree of isolation. His inner conflicts and his loss of the feeling of solidarity with the Blacks in America make
him not only an alien to them but also to himself. As an alien to the Blacks, he rejects their common norms, laws and prescriptions. However, he perceives the sad plight and slavocracy of the Blacks in America, and feels condescendingly sorry for them.

As a waiter in the railroad, Ray is one among the Blacks. Yet, he fails to identify himself with the Blacks. Instead, in sheer helplessness he loathes himself for being one among them, and feels alienated. As McKay elaborates:

These men claimed kinship with [Ray] [...] Man and nature had put them in the same race. He ought to love them and feel them (if they felt anything). He ought to if he had shred of social morality in him. They were all chain ganged together and he was counted as one link.

Yet he loathed every soul in that barrack room, except Jake. (153)

Sigmund Freud uses the concept of alienation to explain the pathological development of a personality in a culture alien and hostile to its natural character. Alienation, as Freud observes, “is a neurotic loss of the feeling of reality and results in the loss of one’s individuality” (CPD 17). In other words, it is a kind of depersonalization. In Ray’s case, he feels that he cannot belong to the U.S., as “he possessed another language and literature they knew not” (155). Unlike Jake, he isolates himself from “the great mass of Black swine, hunted and cornered by slavering White canaille” (155).

Obviously Ray, in HH, is obsessed with a strong sense of placelessness, even when he is among the Blacks in Harlem. Like a colonial intellectual, who cannot mix with the natives, Ray in Harlem is doubly alienated: at first, from the
emotional and instinctive racial selves represented by the inhabitants, and secondly from his own racial self. The self-alienation of Ray results in his being peripatetic, for, later he perceives hoboeing as the highest form of rebellion and self-alienation in Banjo.

Meanwhile, in HH, Ray’s self-alienation from the Blacks in the dining car in the railroad is not unilateral. For instance, all the crew except Jake, scornfully calls Ray, “Professor” (163), and feels, “[t] hat theah nigger is dopey from them books o’ hisn” (159). The Chef, in the dining car, too, always abuses Ray, and when Ray is sick of the dope, the Chef insists Jake that he should “leave that theah nigger professor alone and come on’ long to the dining car with us”(159). This is symbolic in that the Chef wants Ray to be left alone from his race and Jake to be with them – the Blacks in Harlem.

Ray, because of his intellectual inhibition could not identify himself with the Blacks in the barrack room and also in the dining car. In turn, other cooks and the Blacks isolate him from their normal collective self. His education and freethinking, like those of his creator McKay, do not help him mingle with the Blacks. Despite his education, he is unable to find satisfaction, and hence considers himself a “misfit with his little education, and constant dreaming” (274). Though, his parents are Catholic, he claims, “I ain’t nothing. God is White and has no more time for niggers” (176). When the Pantry man is hurt with the Chef’s remark “bastard begotten”, Ray exhibits his congenital contempt for the White religion saying, “Forget it! […] Christ was one too, and we all worship him” (176).
Ray’s intellectual ambivalence is further aggravated by his ambition to write. In his meeting with Jake in the railroad, he expresses his wish to write “the romance of Haiti, because it is [his] native country” (136-37). Nevertheless, his initial enthusiasm is later lost in his eternal conflict. As Huggins observes, “Ray in his creative endeavour is made impotent by thought and interrupted by his over thinking” (123). Ray expresses his doubt over “Dreams of making something with words. What could he make .... And fashion? Could he ever create Art?” (228). Not sure of his inherent talent and his creative prowess and, for want of Black models he wonders if he could create literature out of “the blinding nakedness and violent coloring of life” (228). He is determined that his writings will be bitterly realistic because, unlike Jake he views life, “like one big disease and the world a vast hospital” (229).

Ray, in contrast to Jake, is not a happy prince in Harlem. He is distressed and depressed in his soul. Further, he does not get along with the Blacks in Harlem, because, he has deracinated himself with his White education and assumed an elevated self. Throughout HH, he remains sceptical, always dreaming to write, but failing to produce one. His ambition to write, a hope without action, is indeed, nectar in the sieve. His wavering thoughts and his ambivalences do not impregnate him with ideas but only words. In fact, he can be viewed as a man, who always searches for knowledge, finds fulfilment in reading, but never writes.

At length, Ray, barring his education, and superior bearing, reconciles himself with his racial differences. Ray is forced to do manual labour like Jake and Zeddy. In the chapter “Farewell Feed”, Billy tells everyone, "[a] wolf is all right if
he knows the jungle" (274). It suggests that Ray does not know his jungle, and hence suffers. Ray, too, accepts Billy's suggestion in the following words: "The more I learn the less I understand and love life. All the learning in this world can't answer this little question, why are we living? " (274).

In short, Ray in his attempt to rediscover his racial self, confronts his self in exile and reconciles himself with the Blacks' emotional way of living. His cultural ambivalences prevent him from moving freely with the Blacks, but his racial identity is re-established at the moment he sheds his differences and accepts Harlem in its entirety.

Besides the two protagonists, McKay also employs minor characters to construct the racial identity by foregrounding the cultural differences prevalent among the Black characters in *HH*. Susy, being a yaller herself tries to assimilate the Whites for her convenience and condemns the Blacks in Harlem. Of Susy, McKay writes: "civilization had brought strikingly exotic types into Susy's race. And like many, many Negroes, she was a victim to that" (57). Her assimilationist behaviour is significant in that she believes in the Western way of living and considers graciousness an essentially English trait. When she encounters two quarrelling West Indian women in the bar, she abhors them for their behaviour and censures them saying, "[i]t's a shame. Can't you act like decent English people?" (97).

It is evident that the Blacks who aspire to claim equality, sometimes fall a victim to a culture—here English and alien—which is not, in fact, theirs. Susy is conscious that she is Black, but in her attempts to assert herself, she does not negate
the constructed otherness but yields to it. She shares the Whites' views on Harlem and hates it. Ironically enough, despite her assimilation, she does not win any recognition from the Whites. It is also observable that her assimilation does not win her glories, but only contempt from her fellow people. In fact, her differences still remain the same, perhaps, more pronounced than they were prior to her assimilation. Her sad parting with Zeddy, too, underscores that Susy with her assimilation does contribute nothing to her individual development, but colonizes her mind and actions in a ludicrous way like the Chef in the railroad.

Ironically, the Black Chef is painfully honest in his assimilation. Like Susy, he condemns the Blacks so as to differentiate himself from them and thereby to win the confidence of the Whites. In his efforts to assimilate, he rejects not the social construct of the Whites but of his own race without even trying to understand it. He is a pretender, and "disdains pork chops, the favourite food of the blacks, and does not eat water melon, because the whites call it "niggers' ice-cream" (162). Ray, too, calls him rhinoceros – the ugliest animal in all Africa reminding him of his Black identity. The feud between the pantry and the kitchen too renders him helpless, and no Black waiter comes to his rescue. Inevitably, he is relegated to the position of a second cook, and sent to another car. Through Susy and the Chef, McKay suggests that assimilation is denaturalizing, and does not help the oppressed to assert their identity. However, it is obvious that both Susy and the Chef are not genuine, but forge their identities in their attempts at assimilation. As a result, they do not emerge as the cultured Blacks but comic creatures. In other words, the
inferiorization of the outside – essentially the White's culture – does not help the Blacks to assert their identity.

In Banjo, by presenting the Ditch, the milieu of the novel, as a Black primitive world in the White France, McKay probes the national and racial differences in France. And, the Black identities of the characters are constructed against the French perception of the Blacks. Banjo, despite his attempts to live "nacheral" (305) and "easy" (27) experiences the differences of being a Black. Like Jake in HH, Banjo was also earlier enlisted in the Canadian army in the Great War. In the army, which was dominated by the Whites, he was considered only as "a fool nigger" (193). Ironically, it is true that as a soldier, he fights to keep democracy in the world but fails to realize that, as he tells Ray later "the wul safe foh democracy is a wul' safe foh crackerism" (194). It is evident that his racial consciousness and his realization of himself as an outsider in the White army constitute his Black identity, which falsifies the Whites' uniform perception of the Blacks, whatever their societal position be.

The Beach Boys, in Banjo, with their different national identities, suffer from and succumb to French atrocities in Marseilles. They are jobless, and thrive on panhandling on the beach and feeding on the leftovers from the ships. As one of the boys, Dengel says, the police are "[a]lways after us, but scared of the real criminals" (35). They lead such a happy-go-lucky life on the beach that they are condemned by the privileged Blacks too. The Black steward in a ship drives them out of his ship, and scolds them for being idle and lazy. He scolds them for letting their race down. His contempt for the beach boys does not just arise out of his
superior bearing as a steward, but natural aversion to seeing them as panhandlers in the White world.

Banjo, too, despite his carefree living is enraged, and condemns the beach boys' hard swine-like feeding of garbage. For, he does not want the Whites to look down upon the Blacks for their laziness and panhandling. He condemns the beach boys:

you fellahs know what the White man think about niggers, and you-all ought to do better than you done when he 'low you on his ship to eat that dawggone grub. I take life easy like you-all, but I ain't nevah guine to lay mahself wide open to any insulting cracker of a White man. For I'll let a White man mobilize mah Black moon for a whipping, ef he can, foh calling me a nigger. (42)

These two incidents emphasize that the Blacks expect the Whites to regard them as fellow human beings. In their attempt to gain respect they even condemn their fellow Blacks for bringing indignity to their race. Yet, as Ginger observes, the declaration of principle is different from the destiny of the Blacks in France.

The racial differences in France depicted in Banjo are further highlighted by the appearance of Ray in the novel. With his vestige of cultural ambivalences, and intellectual conflicts Ray, in Banjo, is still in his search for proper racial identity. He observes the conglomeration of Blacks in France and to him, "[i]t was as if every country of the world where Negroes lived had sent representatives drifting into Marseilles" (68). Having returned from America, the bar keeper warns Ray of the colour discrimination in France and compares it with the one prevalent in
America. He states the contrast "the Negroes knew how they stood among the Americans, but the French were hypocrites. They had a whole lot to say, which had nothing to do with reality" (73).

The subtle racial discrimination in France is evident in the barkeeper's words that the Whites in France do not relish the presence of the Blacks in the bar. He remarks, "White people, no matter what nation, did not want to see colored people prosper" (74). To support his views, he reads out from the copy of French newspaper, *La Race Negre* of the Europeans' treatment of the Blacks in the colonies. He reads:

- Of forced conscription and young Negroes running away from their homes to escape into British African territory.
- Of native officials paid less than Whites for the same work.
- Of forced native labor, because the natives preferred to live lazily their own lives, rather than labor for the miserable pittance of daily wages.
- Of native women insulted and their husbands humiliated before them.
- Of Flagellation
- Of youths castrated for theft
- Of native chiefs punished by mutilation.
- Of the scourge of depopulation. (75-76)

Incidentally, as Ray observes, France is "the biggest White hog in Africa" (74), and his Black identity in the novel is constructed very much in the land of his oppressor. Ray after listening to the barkeeper, still, does not find any
difference between the French treatment of the Blacks in their colonies and the American treatment of the Blacks in America. When he is asked to comment on the facts found in La Race Negre, Ray asserts sarcastically, "you know when he was reading that paper it was just as if I was hearing about Texas and Georgia in French" (77). It is clear that in both America and France the Blacks are treated equally bad, and discriminated against for their colour. Ray's awareness of this fact proves that he does not anticipate the possibility of equality more in France than in America, and hints that to assert his Black identity he will include all these differences as the subject matters in his yet-to-be-written Black novel.

Further, conscious of his differences, Ray hates the White society that forced him into such an equivocal position. He hates Western civilisation. The more he travels, the more he feels that Western civilisation is rotten because its general attitude toward the coloured man is such as to rob him of his warm human instincts and make him inhuman.

However, in his realization of the otherness imposed on him, Ray is resolved to keep his Black identity. In his self-analysis, he fights against his own self, which is invariably laden with the Western thoughts. He sounds a Hamlet in his queries:

should I do this or not ? Be mean or kind ? Accept, give with hold ?
In determining his action he must be mindful of his complexion.
Always he was caught by the sharp after thought of color, as if some devil's hand jerked a cord to which he was tethered in hell. Regulate his emotions by a double standard. Oh, it was hell to be a man of
color, intellectual and naturally human in the white world. Except for a superman, almost impossible. (164)

However, Ray’s realization, in Banjo, results in his alienation, which does not originally issue from his nationality as it does in HH. It has, in fact, an intellectual origin. Interestingly, it initially elevates him to discover the vagabond poet in him and enables to achieve self-expression. Ray informs us that in America “he had lived like a vagabond poet erect, […] determined, courageous, and proud […] without being beholden to any body” (65).

But, in Europe and, particularly in France during his vagabondage as a poet erect he is always beholden. In Banjo, as Emmanuel S. Nelson rightly observes, Ray is still the intellectual given more to speculation than to action (but much more loquacious than he was in the previous novel), stays on the periphery of his bohemian community, and philosophises on the problems of forging a meaningful black identity in the midst of what he calls the ‘obscene phenomenon’ of western civilization.

(McLeod 109)

Besides his ambition to write, his strong sense of race also forms his identity in Banjo. On the whole, his hatred for the Whites is not emotional, but it springs from his learning and perfect understanding of the Whites’ attitude towards the Blacks. He responds to the racial conflict prevalent in Europe intellectually, and after a clinical analysis, observes that the Whites claim supremacy over the Blacks on the strength of their material prosperity and civilization. For instance, Ray tells
the Britisher, who shares a table with him in the bar that the Europeans have “dollar complex” (144), and adds, “[t]he trouble is you Europeans make no color distinction – when it is a matter of the color of our money” (144). He further tells the British that no European country accepts coloured people, and that even England with all its much-glorified honesty, adopts a different method of racism.

He narrates his bitter experience in England:

[I]n England I always felt myself in an atmosphere of grim, long headed honesty – honesty because it was the best business policy in the long run. You felt it was little hard on the English soul. It made it as bleak as London fog and you felt it was an atmosphere that could chill to the bone anybody who didn’t have a secure living. (145).

Ray does not approve of the English honesty in business and quips, “honesty at all it was only a technical thing, like, advertising, to help efficiency forward” (145).

In Germany, too, he experiences a different sort of White attitude towards the Blacks. When Ray visits Germany during the War, the French Black troops are in Ruhr. The German-Americans, the English Liberals and the Socialists wage a damaging propaganda against the Blacks, especially, against their sexuality. Ray states bitterly:

The odd thing about the propaganda was that it said nothing about the exploitation of primitive and ignorant black conscripts to do the dirty work of one victorious civilization over another, but it was all about
the sexuality of Negroes – the strange big bug for ever buzzing the imagination of White people. (146)

Markedly, when enraged, Ray condemns the White religion and the British Government. For instance, he comes across an old disabled Black Panhandling sailor everyday near the place de la Joliette. It is near the Mediterranean Mission to seamen, which operates under the patronage of His Britannic Majesty, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and other distinguished personages. Ray notices that the "poor seaman’s place is passed every day by the White servants of His Majesty’s Mission to visit the incoming ships and distribute tracts and mission cards to able sailors” (187). But, the Whites pay no response to the disabled sailor and let him die uncared for. Ray’s ironic narration of this incident shows that he is against the White religion and the government. Sadly enough, the missionaries help only the able sailors, but not the crippled old man for his being a Black.

Ray’s hatred for the Whites and their civilization comes to the surface on more than one occasion. For instance, when he accompanies his old rail road friend to a White British-American Bar along with Banjo, they are “greeted by an extraordinary salvo of shrill female laughter” (191) by the cabaret girls. The Senegalese friend is irritated and does not like the atmosphere. Not surprisingly, Ray does not react to this, because he is already aware that “the white people were never more contemptibly vulgar than when a Negro entered a White place of amusement” (192). But on the contrary, Ray is sure that “he had never known a black people to act like that when white persons entered a Negro place of pleasure” (192). He is confident that “on such occasions Negroes could assume a
simple dignity as remote from white behaviour as primitive African sculpture is from the conventionalism of a civilized drawing room. He had never remarked a vulgar gesture” (192). Further, in his contemplation, Ray draws another distinction between the Blacks and the Whites, and asserts, “Primitive people could be crude and coarse, but never vulgar”. He makes a pertinent observation: “Vulgarity was altogether a scab of civilization” (192). Even his waiter friend in the bar does not want to entertain them, as there are more American and British officers spending plenty of money, and he fears Coloured-White incident. Ray considers this incident as an insult, and elaborates on White man’s business:

Business! Prejudices and business. In Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, America, those were the two united terrors confronting the colored man. He was the butt of White man’s indecent public prejudices, insensate, and petty, bloody vicious, vile, brutal, raffine, hypocritical, Christian prejudices like, the Stock-market-Curtailed, diminishing, increasing, changing chameleon - like, according to place and time, like the color of the white man’s soul, controlled by the exigencies of the white man’s business. (193)

When his Senegalese-American friend claims “Americans cannot treat Negroes in France the way they do in America” (194), Ray responds negatively and exposes the hardships of the Blacks in America. He says:

That won’t prevent discrimination though. So long as the pound is lord and the dollar is king and the White man exalts business above humanity. Business first by all and any means. That is the slogan of
the White man’s world. In New York, we have laws against discrimination [...]. But no decent Negroes want to go to court for that. We don’t want to eat in a restaurant nor go to a teashop, a cabaret, or a theater where they do not want us, because we eat and amuse ourselves for the pleasure of the thing. (194)

In his harangue about White discrimination, Ray even suggests a solution to the problem. He says “when white people show that they do not want to entertain us in places that they own, why, we just stay away – all of us who are decent minded – for we are a fun loving race and there is no pleasure in forcing ourselves where we are not wanted” (194).

This escape might not be a right solution to the problem, but in the later part Ray suggests that since the Blacks are a fun loving race, they can very well find pleasure in interacting among themselves. The Senegalese seaman is not satisfied with Ray’s broodings over White man’s business and racial discrimination, and so he demands justice. Ray, having known what White justice could be to the Blacks quips: “Justice, like equality, mon vieux does not exist in the mathematics of life. It’s a man’s world, you might say a White man’s world and.... ‘a man’s a man for that” (197). It is significant to note here that Ray’s responses to the White civilization and the business do suggest that the Blacks are certainly the victims of the preposterous policies of White culture and economy.

Ray’s racial consciousness, in Banjo, is also constructed on his sexual proclivity. Ray earlier in Paris like McKay (LFH 253) was working as a nude model to be a “perfect savage” (29), and now meets one of the White woman artists,
a member of Satanists, in Marseilles. Her White friends intend to go for a blue cinema. But, one of the White men in the group does not approve of Ray’s presence among the women. His objection is conceivably due to his fear of the big bug syndrome or his American contempt for the Black. It may as well be both, because when the young man leaves, the remaining Americans remark, “my friend has done his bit for the honor of the Great Nordic race” (213).

The “Blue Cinema” episode exemplifies the Whites’ sexuality and their love for perversion and contrasts the same with Black’s natural sexuality. This can be seen in Ray’s lengthy lecture on race and sex:

[T]here was something fundamentally cruel about sex [...] the more civilized humanity became the more cruel was sex. [...] Ray had never felt that the Negroes were over sexed in an offensive way and he was peculiarly sensitive to that. What he inferred was that White people had developed sex complexes that Negroes had not. Negroes were freer and simpler in their sex urge, and as White people on the whole were not, they naturally attributed over sexed emotions to Negroes. (252)

However, Ray’s awareness of his racial differences and their dire consequences reaches its apex in the chapter “Official Fists”. Prior to Goosey’s return to the U.S., Banjo and Malty are invited by an Egyptian guard of a ship to take lunch on board. The Black steward of the ship also looks forward to it. But, when Malty and Banjo try to enter the ship, they are stopped by a White officer. He later informs the police, and the police take them in to custody. In the police station,
“each of them was taken separately into a room by the policemen, knocked and kicked. Then they were turned loose” (262). When Banjo informs this to Ray, Ray and his White friend Crosby think that the case should be reported. Ray, without knowing that a similar fate waits in store for him, wonders if “it [was] because they were friendless black drifters?” (262)

On the same night, when Ray passes two police men in the street leading to his hotel, he is suddenly grabbed without warning and the policemen begin to search him “roughly and thoroughly” (264). He protests and says that he has his papers and can produce them to the police. The White policemen are infuriated over this and stun him with a blow of fist on the back of the neck. They take him to the jail, and the policemen “took great pleasure in torturing Ray on the way to the jail” (265).

Ray, as he has already decided on Banjo’s experience with the police, represents this to the higher authorities. However, Ray refuses to prosecute the police, because he is aware of the White justice and does not “believe in that prostitute lady who is courted and caressed by every civilized tout” (265). The official fists on Ray and Banjo reveal clearly that the coloured are not wanted in White France. He later observes on the French injustice to a Black: “The French are never tired of proclaiming themselves the most civilized people in the world. They think they understand Negroes, because they don’t discriminate against us in their borders. They imagine that Negroes like them” (267). Ray in his contempt for the French recalls the words of the Senegalese’s bar keeper, “French were the most calculatingly cruel of all the Europeans in Africa” (267).
In fact, the official fist makes Ray witness directly the sad plight of the Blacks in France, and he later tells Crosby, “To me the policeman’s fist was just a perfect expression of the official attitude towards Negro” (267). This official fist evidences the Black differences that lead Ray later to express his views on religion nonchalantly. For, Crosby tells Ray that he, in his attitude, sounds “Jesus stuff” (267), and Ray, in Banjo, reacts to this, as he does in HH: “I don’t have any Jesus stuff, nor the stuff of any other Jew-Moses or Jeremiah or St. Paul or Rothschild.” He later claims, “As far as I have been able to think it out the colored races are the special victims of biblical morality – Christian morality” (268). His remarks on Christianity, in both HH and Banjo, clearly reveal that he is against Christianity, for it is White man’s religion, and Jesus White born.

In addition to the Black’s suppression by the White materialism and the religion Ray is succumbed to White proletarian politics too. While constructing his racial self, in Banjo, Ray negotiates with his racial differences, and hates to be called ‘Joseph’ – “a common French name for male servants in general, just as George is for Negro servants in America” (269). It certainly reflects Ray’s views on proletarian politics. Crosby is surprised by Ray’s attitude towards the waiter, who calls him Joseph. Crosby asks him if he is not a proletariat. Ray in his answer to Crosby refers to the prejudices of Marxism over race, and racial problems. He declares, “Sure. That is my politics [...] As a Black man I have always been up against them, and I became a revolutionist, because I have not only suffered with them, but have been victimized by them – just like my race”(270). Hence, it is evident that Ray in his affinity towards and concern for his race, prefers racial
equality to the economic equality promoted by the Marxists. To Ray “Negroes are one significant and challenging aspect of the human life of the world as whole” (272). And, he defines the “Negro as a challenge rather than a problem” (273).

It is evident that Ray’s realization of the White civilization and their society, in which he is only an outsider, makes him rediscover his Black identity by defying the impact of the White civilization on him. He emerges as a Black, unconquered in his emotions and feelings, when he reconciles with the differences and says, “occidental life he had fought against it instinctively, and now that he had grown and broadened and knew it better, he could bring intellect to the aid of instinct” (104). It is also significant to note here that Ray by confronting the colour differences in France, resolves his own ambivalence of instinct and intellect. In HHI, he is a man led by his intellect, and as he reconciles, he brings his intellect to the aid of his instinct. He employs his intellect to help his instinct and proves himself to be a Black, who is natural in his living. Hence, it is evident that McKay by presenting the differences meted out to the Blacks in the White world inculcates a sense of pride among the Black characters, and thereby constructs the Black identity by making them reject the White standards and discover the Black pride.

Again, the chapter entitled, “The Blue cinema”, in Banjo, reveals that Ray constructs his Black identity in perfect harmony with his native self. The Martiniquan student represents the Ray of HHI. Ray, as a native magician, exorcizes the White ghost from the Martiniquan, and inculcates in him a sense of
pride in his race and people. In his arguments with the student, Ray speaks of Jim Crow, and narrates the sad plight of the Blacks in America:

Negroes can't ride first class in the trains nor in the same tram cars with White people, no matter how educated and rich they are. They can't room in the same hotels or eat in the same restaurants or sit together in the same theatres. Even the parks are closed to them. [...] There is no democracy for them. [...] Negroes there are living in prison (204).

Ray's clarifications over “Jim Crow”, and his conclusion that the Blacks in America are living in prison are similar to McKay's life experiences. Though McKay was a theatre critic himself in The Liberator, he was refused a seat in the front row to see Leonid Andreyev's "He, the one who Gets slapped". Ironically, it was McKay "who gets slapped for his colour" (LFH 144). He narrated his experiences in Berlin and Paris, and elucidated "what, then was my main psychological problem? It was the problem of color. Color-consciousness was the fundamental of my restlessness. [...] Because their education in their White world had trained them to see a person of color either as an inferior or as an exotic" (LFH 245).

However, the Whites' perception of the Blacks in France, for their colour, menial jobs, education, civilization and culture, makes them outsiders or the victims of the White civilization. Ironically, the victims strive hard to assert their identity confronting their differences in the land of their victimizers. Ray's experiences in the chapters "White Terror" and "Official Fists" underscore the sufferings of the
Blacks in the White world. Bugsy's death is testimonial to the Black's suffering in France. Like the old Black sailor who dies of starvation uncared for by the missionaries, Bugsy dies out of the fear over the Whites and their indifference toward the Black. When he takes ill, he refuses to go to hospital, for, he fears that the Whites "might make away with him there" (258). As a result, he dies, and of his pathetic end McKay writes:

The good sun of the Midi was splendid outside, but it was gloomy night in Bugsy's room. [...] He lay there like a macabre etched by the diabolic hand of Goya. With clenched fists and eyes wide open, as if he were going to spring at an antagonist, even if he were God himself. He finished with life as he had lived it, a belligerent, hard-fisted black boy. (259)

The death of Bugsy caused by the White's negligence is symbolically brought out through the description of his room. It reminds us that the French warmth for their fellow human beings is denied for his being a Black, ironically in the land of "Liberte, Egalite, et Fraternite". The darkness that engulfs Bugsy's room is suggestive of the indifference of the French towards the Blacks and it is further highlighted by the French police's attitude toward the Blacks.

Ironically, the official fist also falls on Sister Geter, a Black American evangelist, who visits France on "salvation business" (151) with a vision to turn the White and Black sinners to Good Samaritans. But, unfortunately, she is considered as a "high priestess of fetish Africa" (290), and the French police arrest her for her Black identity and let her go later on Ray's explanation. It is to be noted here that
even a Black evangelist is not spared by the Whites' racial fanaticism. She preaches Christianity for sinners' rescue and also to redeem their souls. Ironically for her Black identity, she is mauled by the police, who themselves follow the same religion. It seems that McKay, an agnostic at the time of the publication of *Banjo*, laughs at the Blacks' assimilation of the Whites' religion, and asserts that even Christianity does not bring equality to the Blacks in the land, where it is preached vociferously and followed faithfully.

Towards the end of the novel, Ray relates all the sufferings of his race to the White's perception of the Blacks as outsiders, and their attempts to dehumanize the Blacks:

It seemed a social wrong to him that in a society rooted and thriving on the principles of the 'struggle for existence' and the 'survival of the fittest' a Black child should be brought up on the same code of social virtues as the White. Especially an American Black child. A Chinese or Indian child could learn the stock virtues without being spiritually harmed by them, because he possessed his own native code from which he could draw, compare, accept and reject while learning. But the Negro child was a pathetic thing, entirely cut off from its own folk wisdom and earnestly learning the trite moralisms of a society in which he was, as a child and would be as an adult, denied any legitimate place. (319)
Ray compares the oppression of the Blacks with Chinese and Indians. His comparison strikes a painful note that in spite of the colonization, the Chinese and the Indians still keep their individuality. Their native spirituality is not corrupted much by the process of Westernization. But, the Blacks lose their entire African identity, and fall a prey to the invading Westernization. It is quizzical, that the Blacks are forced to turn down their native spirituality in order to be the followers of Christianity. Ironically, the Blacks' allotheism also does not claim equal status with the worshippers, but depersonalizes them as fetish Africans.

In short, Ray, in Banjo, realizes the hardships of being a Black in the White world, confronts with the otherness, and thus constructs his Black identity. Ray's quest for identity in both HH and Banjo is constituted by the otherness, and it evidently results in his discernment of his Blackness. Ray's recognition that he is only an outsider resolves his self-exile, and helps him rediscover the racial pride and associate himself with the Blacks. It also evidences that the internalization of the Western civilization and its religion makes the Blacks lose their individual Black identity and invariably lands them in crisis. The otherness described in Banjo can be seen as the differences enforced by the White culture and its negative influences on the Blacks. In fact, the characters' confrontations with the differences result in their self-realization and pave the way for reclamation of their self-esteem. No doubt, the negation of the otherness brings out the hidden Black sensibility of the characters and frees them from their double consciousness.
The Black identity in view of the negotiation with the otherness, in *BB*, is consciously constructed mainly through the White perception of the natural Black sexuality of Bita. She is the only Negro girl who is brought up in England "as a miracle of gentle upbringing" (51). In her seven years of upbringing like a princess in the English tradition "she had never had any contact with her home and her own folk" (1). However, on her homecoming, the narrative of the novel goes back to her past unravelling the mysteries of her natural powers and sexuality. When Bita is twelve years old, she is remarkably strong: "She could swim, and ride a horse bare back" (7). In her adolescence, true to her being a Black girl, she is passionate over music, and hence, unlike the other village children, she is not afraid of Crazy Bow, "the sinful, drinking, lunatic" (8). To her, this young man of twenty-five is "but a great musician" (8).

Captivated by his "masterly" music, she grows sexually passionate over Crazy Bow. On one Saturday noon, as they both romp together, Bita gets upon his breast and begins rubbing her head against his face. Blinded by temptation, he loses control of himself and seduces Bita.

This incident may be viewed either as an act of rape by Crazy Bow himself or as Bita's premature molestation of him as argued by many critics. Whatever it be, it still can be argued and convincingly proved that Bita, a strong native girl, at twelve years of age falls quite naturally into the African rhythm of sexuality. For, the setting is idyllic and the landscape is caressing, and the music is a sweet tea meeting love song. The space and music are native, they enthrall Bita, like a magical piper, Crazy Bow handles his fiddle, and Bita
succumbs to his natural wish, in his cat and mouse game of love. In fact, as Giles
rightly observes, "this is a spontaneous act of sex not forced by either party" (96).

When sister Phibby, a loose lip in the village Banana Bottom, narrates the
tale to Priscilla Craig, the wife of a White Christian missionary, Rev. Malcolm
Craig, she treats the incident condescendingly. For, Priscilla is obsessed with her
Christian supremacy in morality. In her shallow benevolent austerity, she considers
the Black people as worthless:

> It was not because these people were oversexed, but simply because
> they seemed to lack that check and control that was supposed to be
> distinguishing of humanity of a higher and more complex social order
> and that they were apparently incapable of comprehending the
> opprobrium of breeding bastards in Christian community. (16)

Priscilla, prompted by her Christian feeling of superiority over the native
Blacks prepares to take in, educate, and bring up Bita as her own child. In fact, by
adopting Bita, she wants to demonstrate to the Black world "what one such girl
might become by careful training ...by God's help" (17). In her attempt to civilize
her, Mrs. Craig removes her both physically and psychologically from her people.
For, Priscilla "had conceived the idea of redeeming her from the past [...] and at the
finish she would be English trained and appearing in everything but the colour of
her skin" (31).

The Craigs plan to give Bita a good White education in England and then,
upon her return to the island as an enlightened and proper young woman, to get her
married to a Black youth Herald Newton Day, who is training to become a pastor.
They, in fact, treat Bita as a guinea pig in their Christian experiment and want to project her as a symbol of Christian redemption. But, ironically, Bita, on her return to the native land, is overwhelmed “by a feeling to capture and live again that moment of her barefooted girlhood” (59). Naturally enough, having been deprived of home contacts in England, Bita, on her homecoming, is surprisingly responsive to the Black community.

For instance, in the Jubilee Market, her native racial self is quickly awakened, and “she mingled in the crowd, responsive to the feeling, the colour, the smell, the swell and press of it. It gave her the sensation of a reservoir of familiar kindred humanity into which she had descended for baptism” (40). It is evident that Bita, on her return to her village, lives simply as a native girl unmindful of her Western and Christian influences. In the process of encountering her constructed otherness, she, at first, recognizes her native feelings quite instinctively.

When interacting with Hopping Dick, a feminine heartbreaker in Jubilee, Bita asserts her adaptability saying, “I could live anywhere there’s air to breathe and space for free movement” (44). Nevertheless, her assertion of adaptability, against her adoptive background of Christian morality turns out to be a mere notion and suffers a jolt, when Priscilla chides her for talking to Hopping Dick. Her casual encounter with Hopping Dick helps her realize her differences and cultural ambivalences of being a Black in a White monastery. That night, she lays thinking, gradually grows doubtful of her future, eventually realizes that she is a misfit in the Church, and rightly asks herself, “would she be able to live up to them?” (47).
Bita's realisation of her Black consciousness and her racial differences enhances further, when she visits Banana Bottom, her native village. Despite her visit to many European countries and a decent living in the small town Jubilee, she likes her village “a lot better” (55), and visits it on the 1st of August to celebrate Emancipation Day, an occasion “more stimulating to the blacks than Christmas” (48). In Banana Bottom, she is interestingly seized with a longing to attend tea meetings, which are “classed as vulgar amusements and bad company and denounced from the pulpits” (56).

Interestingly enough, Bita, with her native sexuality re-discovered, on her return to her native village, becomes a queen bee that attracts other bees into the hives. The character of Bita, obviously, revolves around her native passion to rebel against all social establishments. Her encounter with Crazy Bow uproots her from her native soil, and her participation in the tea meeting transplants her again in the original soil to which she really belongs. In other words, her participation in the tea meeting, which is considered a taboo by the Christian missionary, helps her regain her original native self in the form of open confrontation with her Western education and Priscilla Craig.

When Phibby informs Mrs. Craig of Bita's participation in the tea meeting, Mrs. Craig thinks reflectively of Bita's essential Blackness as follows: “Bita was atavistic as was her race. A branch of the same root and deceptive lovely flower would wither to seed a similar tree” (92). She regrets, for a moment and feels, “all the money she had spent would be as wasted, all her planning and thinking and careful cultivation of this girl come to naught. For evidently she lacked the
character to stand it"(92). Obviously, Mrs. Craig cannot but judge a Black girl
dancing in the tea meeting against her Christian religious feelings. Her Christian
vanity prompts her to condescend that all the attempts of Christian missionaries
have not yet perfected the Black people. She is lost in a fog of doubt. She wonders
sardonically:

If all that faithful and careful building up of mission work might not
some day go the same way as did the solid seeming facade of the
great plantations now abandoned to decay and crumbling in the dust
before the huts and fields and the careless living and grin of the
Blacks, who shouted praises to the Christ God in the Church in the
day time and muttered incantations to the Obeah God in the night
time. (93)

Bita's participation in the tea meeting, as a means to negotiate with the
Christian morality, hastens Mrs. Craig's plan for marrying Bita to Herald Newton
Day, a theological student in Tabernacle. On Herald Newton’s visit to Jubilee, his
father invites both the Craigs and Bita. Sitting beside Herald Newton “the dry goods
clerk”, Bita experiences a “sensation as if they were all conspiring against her” (96).
This feeling of hers indicates that she is not naturally and instinctively inclined to
accept him as her husband. She understands that Herald is not natural in his
feelings. He is pretentious, and eager to assimilate the values of Christianity. Even
in his proposal to Bita, he is not natural in expressing his wish. Instead, he proposes
to her quite artificially with the vanity of a clergy unmindful of the harmony of
personal relationship in marriage. It is obviously evident in the following:
[I]t will be fine for you and me, Miss. Bita. You know I wasn’t thinking Jubilee without you. For we were both trained to think of Jubilee - I might just as well say it - for the two of us together. I don’t know if you feel about it as much as I do. If it will appeal to you as much it does to me. But I know my father will be very happy. And Mrs. Craig too. Everybody would be happy if we both get married. (99)

But, Bita in her secret hatred for marriage with Herald Newton, perhaps out of her hatred for the English tradition retorts “I suppose we might as well do it and please everybody” (99). It is obvious that she does not please herself in this proposal. Moreover, when he praises her for her behaviour like “a pure minded White lady”, Bita asserts, “I am myself” (100).

Bita’s assertion of herself is an indicator that she is instinctively aware of her native sexuality. She knows well that “she could not love him” (100). When Herald Newton preaches a sermon in the church, Bita considers it funny and feels almost certain that “she couldn’t think about him seriously”(109). She even prefers Hopping Dick, just an acquaintance in the Jubilee Market, to Herald Newton, for, “her physical self recoiled from, as much as the spiritual rebelled against him. Hopping Dick was by a more desirable, even if he was not educated and refined” (110). She longs to be free from the irritation caused by Herald’s presence, perhaps from the Christian show off. She rightly fears that, if she is forced to meet Herald, “she might just break out one day with something that would destroy
irreparably the whole fabric of the plan that had been so carefully charted for her" (110).

Bita’s native self identifies its real worth through her sexuality. Bita, in her secret hatred for Herald Newton rates Hopping Dick superior to him. But, being matured in her attitude, she does not approve of all Black males. For instance, she hates Tack Tally for writing love letters to her. She calls him, “a dirty disgusting bully and beast” (133). Her disclosure of it to Yoni, Tack’s lady love, leads to many tragic events like Yoni meeting Obeahmen, the death of her father and Tack’s suicide.

However, Bita’s strong hatred for Herald is analogous to Ray’s hatred for the Blacks, who assimilate White values, and it does surface during the Harvest Festival in Banana Bottom. During the Harvest Festival, she mischievously introduces Hopping Dick to Herald in order to make him jealous. Herald, being presumptuous, never impresses her as Hopping Dick does. She even suggests to him that he should meet Squire Gensir, her White friend and mentor to get clarification for his religious views. She further hates Herald for comparing her always with White women. Later, his assumed religious fervour stands exposed, when he “defiles himself with a nanny goat” (175). The people are horrified to discover that Herald, is a bestial sodomite. The native Blacks consider Herald’s perversion as a handiwork of Obi, but the Squire regards it “a temporary amnesia, the result of too much exclusive concentration on sacred text books and holy communion”, and exclaims sarcastically, “Paul, too much learning hath made thee mad” (177). On coming to know of Herald’s affair, Mrs. Priscilla is unapproachably austere in her grief and
she loses faith in Black's reformation. She feels that all her work has been a waste. And her futile vanity of the careful Christian grooming has been faltered at last. It seems to awaken an interest in Bita that she is ready to relinquish her constructed Christian otherness.

Further, Bita's sexuality and the regeneration of her native emotions – her unique traits that help her negotiate with White civilization – are highlighted by her attachment with Hopping Dick. With Herald now out of the way, Hopping Dick, by accompanying her to secret parties makes advances towards Bita, who at present knows that Dick's invitation is irresistible. Of course, the native dances are frowned upon by the fundamentalist White churches, but McKay regards such dances as inevitable, because the Blacks "still possess more of primitive positiveness than formal hypocrisy" (193). Needless to say, Bita with her native sexuality and fervour for the primitive dance has a splendid time with Hopping Dick at the dance, and surely enough, it is a sign of her revolt against the White church.

Interestingly enough, while Bita is enjoying herself with Hopping Dick at the dance, Priscilla Craig is visiting a missionary couple, who have brought a collection of primitive masks and idols from Africa. This incident lays bare that a condescending White lady cannot understand the spirit of the Blacks and therefore at a crucial juncture she will be exposed. Throughout the evening, Priscilla is unable to take her eyes off the Pagan symbols, and she ultimately falls under their hypnotic spell:
Gazing again at the masks, [...] Priscilla remained transfixed, deprived of voice to shriek her utter terror among those bodiless barbaric faces circling and dancing towards her and hobbing up and down with that mad grinning [...] And now it seemed that Patou was among them. Patou shrunken to a grinning face, and suddenly she too was in motion and madly whirling round and round with the weird dancing masks. (199)

Commenting on this incident and its implications on the unnatural sexuality of the Whites, perhaps the missionaries, James R. Giles observes that Priscilla has almost realized her inner fear and hatred of the Blacks through her retarded son Patou. Her near realization terrifies her. As Giles remarks:

McKay in an effective dramatic passage makes the point about White neurosis regarding Blacks and sex that is to be a major theme in subsequent Afro-American fiction. That Patou has shrunken to a grinning mask in Priscilla’s hallucination is perhaps the most telling point in this scene; Patou, the product of her sexual intercourse with Malcolm, has always represented the grotesque and the unnatural to her; but he is now equated with Blackness. Priscilla, except for the duty of gratifying Malcolm, never experiences fulfilment herself; and this nightmarish experience results. Priscilla’s own sexual and racial neurosis played a critical role in the destruction of Herald. He was her protégé, and she taught him to abhor his sexual needs and to see them as monstrous”. (103)
Meanwhile, in contrast, Bita in the same night enjoys her company with Hopping Dick, and identifies herself with the dance. It is significant to note here that Bita, in spite of her education and moral lenience towards Christianity, identifies her sexual self with Hopping Dick, and quite naturally yields to him. But, Priscilla’s sexual repression in Christian civility gets her trapped among the Black images, which are the symbols of strong sexuality.

Further, the White hypocrisy in sex and Bita’s response to it are emphasized by Mrs. Craig’s servant-maid Rosyanna. Mrs. Craig professes to her Black servant that she does not have sex with her husband. Bita views this incident from a different perspective, and feels that Mrs. Craig is not frank and honest to herself in sex. Her realization that she could not stay at the mission reveals to us that her days at the mission are inevitably numbered. However, Bita’s increasing sense of her instinctive sexuality is reflected in her deliberate denial of Mrs. Craig’s wishes. When Hopping Dick visits the missionary to take Bita to a party, Mrs. Craig warns her of Hopping Dick, saying, “It reflects not only upon you but upon me and Mr. Craig - the mission and our work” (209). But, Bita in her growing anger and hatred for the imposed values on her declares that “she would marry him” (210).

Significantly, Bita in her attempt to identify with the Blacks, and rediscover her instinctive sexuality feels “a natural opposition against Mrs. Craig”. For, “a latent hostility would make her always want to do anything of which Mrs. Craig disapproved.” She feels that her defiance against Mrs. Craig is unconscious, because, “her attitude of life was alien to hers, and not to her parents, she owed the entire shaping of her career.” Bita in her refusal to be “a pet experiment” of
Mrs. Craig even feels that "the profession of religion left her indifferent" (211-12) and becomes contemptuous of everything.

Her native sexuality suffers repression at the handiwork of the mission and her Western education. To recapture her past, and redefine her native self, Bita, becomes contemptuous of her civilized being. In her determination not to assimilate the Western civilization and its education, she tries to erase her forced assimilation, tears the photograph of her English college and tramples the pieces under her feet. It is symbolic in that Bita, while attempting to go to the roots, rebels against the Christian mission, and it is her native sexuality – an aspiration to marry Hopping Dick – that paves the way for it.

On the other hand, Mrs. Craig, regards Bita's assertion of her wish to marry Hopping Dick as ungodly and ignoble. She feels betrayed and concludes, "I have brought up a bird to pick out my eye" (216). For, she feels that the rhythm of the mission house has become "broken and upset" by Bita's behaviour and realizes that "her experiment had failed" (219). She further assumes that "Bita at bottom was a nymphomaniac" (221). It asserts that Mrs. Craig nourishes Bita only as her pompous experiment. However, when her White supremacy is questioned, she exhibits her congenital contempt for the Blacks. Bita, being instinctively aware of this fact, confronts Mrs. Craig and establishes her native elements much against the wishes of her foster parents and their culture.

Nevertheless, in fear of keeping a noble lady like Bita at his ordinary house, Hopping Dick refuses to marry her. She is left with no other option but to go back to her village with Anty Nommy. Mrs. Craig's reaction to her alleged "treachery"
is on the predictable lines, for Mrs. Craig sees it as the final proof that her great work has been hopeless from the start because she believes that one simply cannot save “backward people” (228).

Bita leaves Jubilee for Banana Bottom as a new born. Significantly, her journey from Jubilee to her village is a journey within, an epic journey in search of her roots. For, the Craigs’ control over her is now shattered. Herald never lives even in her memory, and Hopping Dick’s irresponsibility has removed him as a factor in her life. In other words, she is resurrected, and released from her consciously constructed religious fetters. She goes back to Banana Bottom to re-live her girlhood, but with the experiences of a woman, which she gains from negotiating with the Craigs, Herald and moving with Hopping Dick.

Besides her own quest for identity, Bita’s native sexuality is also awakened by her encounters with the White supremacists. Arthur Glengley, the White landowner takes her colour for granted and makes sexual advancements. While she is walking along the edge of the forest, he interrupts her. He grabs her firmly by the breast, pressing her against the bank and trying to kiss her. Fortunately, Jubban, rescues her from Arthur Glengley.

However, the Arthur Glengley episode makes her confront with the White supremacy and reorient her racial self. It helps her resolve her inner conflicts and the differences too. In his outrageous attempts, Glengley asserts his White superiority. He calls her “only a Black girl” (265), as if he condescends to kiss a Black girl. Her rumination over the phrase illustrates her inherent racial consciousness and prompts her to reunite with the roots.
Meanwhile, the sudden demise of Jordan Plant and Malcolm bring Bita closer to Jubban. Later, growing in confidence, she accompanies Jubban and proceeds to Gingertown to get her father's body. It is a long journey of about ten hours in the heavy rumbling rattling dray. And, all the way, she is restless with a strong hectic feeling. She becomes nostalgic, and recalls the elusive time of her childhood with her father.

After collecting the body, Bita and Jubban return to Banana Bottom at night. Bita, now after being alone with her father's body, communes with the past "the hectic feeling had left Bita and she was filled and brooding with a great peace" (288). Jubban, while contemplating over the untimely death of Jordan Plant feels that he is "a kind of protector of the house" (289). Interestingly, she has the same feeling about him. "Almost unconsciously Jubban's hand encircled her waist and spontaneously their mouths came together and a sweet shiver spread through her body against the impact of his warm passionate person" (289). Bita, too, in Jubban's embrace is overwhelmed with a feeling "as if she were upon the threshold of a sacrament and she yielded up herself to him" (289).

It is significant to note here that with both the corpse in the dray Jubban and Bita are aroused in their sensual feelings, quite inexplicably, at the time of extreme grief and involved in sex. Her search for roots is accomplished. The physical union is not just carnal but communal. This is an important episode, because Bita accepts Jubban in her moment of extreme sorrow. It is an act, not of mere sensual escape, for, Bita in her ten hour-long journey and return recalls all her past. Initially, she is "restless with a strong hectic feeling", and now, she is "filled and brooding with a
great peace”. Hence, it is clear that she is not just overwhelmed by her sensual feelings. Similarly, McKay's creative excellence synchronizes in perfect harmony with Bita's melancholic nostalgia for her physical union with Jubban: “[i]t was strange and she was aware of the strangeness that in that moment of extreme sorrow she should be seized by the powerful inevitable desire for love which would not be denied” (289).

Bita, in her conscious attempt to renounce her otherness and reach her roots, is in the process of finding a "suitable man". Naturally, she is aware that she is not simply overwhelmed by her sexual feelings in her moment of grief. For, she is "not oblivious of her father's body in the back but her conscience fortified her with a conviction of the approval of his spirit" (289). She also feels that her father, who seems to "understand her all her life would understand now. Her spirit was finely balanced between the delicate sadness of death and the subdued joy of love and over all was the glorious sensation of life triumphant in love over death" (289). It is obvious that Bita's approval of Jubban is not playful like her affair with Crazy Bow, nor deliberate like her affair with Hopping Dick, but spontaneous. Yet, her spontaneity is caused by her conscious, careful analysis of Jubban.

However, Bita's final return to Banana Bottom matures her to be of her real self and redefines her as a native woman. Bita and Jubban, fall quite naturally in to their native rhythm and she is touched by the manner he has chosen to reveal his feeling for her. Her love affair with Jubban and later their marriage are discussed as components of her reintegration with the roots.
Bita in **BB**, unlike Ray in **HH** and **Banjo**, resolves her cultural dualism her search for the roots and union with the native folk. She rejects her otherness through – the Western civilisation – in favour of the simple values of her native folk. She rediscovers and re-establishes her native identity. Her renunciation of colonial culture and her self-denial of Western education reclaim the values of the 'folk' in her. Significantly, of the three chief protagonists of McKay, Bita successfully reconstructs her racial self and redefines negritude. While redefining her racial self, she negates Western civilization. Despite her English upbringing, she refuses to assimilate, and affirms her being by marrying Jubban, as a means to reintegrate herself with her roots.

Like the Black identity in McKay's novels, the Dalit identity in Civakami's novels is also formed by encountering the negatively constructed other. The Dalits in India live in sub-human social existence, abject poverty, economic exploitation, culture of submission and political powerlessness. They have undergone the psycho-economic pressure of social conformity for centuries. In addition, without access to the vital economic resources and bargaining power, they have become the most exploited peripheral group in the Indian society.

Further, the social customs prevailing in India deprive the Dalits of their right to seek higher social status by forcing them to take up hereditary occupations. As a result, they are economically the poorest of the poor, toiling in the most unremunerative and often degrading occupations. R.B. Tripathy in his preface to the book, **Dalits: A Sub-Human Society** argues that Dalits are "traditionally, predominantly rural, [they] have been mainly landless rural agricultural labourers
and marginal share-croppers and peasants—commonly indebted beyond redemption and held in varying degree of bondage in different parts of the country" (2).

Negating the other in African Americans’ struggle for equality has been evolved as an effective political strategy to counter the hegemonistic entrapment of the Blacks. McKay also uses this strategy to counter the White supremacists. As he employs this technique consciously, it comes out quite apparently and aesthetically fused with the formation of the Black self in his novels. But, Civakāmi does not employ substantial number of sequences of this sort, so as to emphasize the importance of the process of negating the other in the formation of the Dalit self. This perhaps is the result of the fact that in the history of Dalit politics of emancipation, the Dalit activists have not effectively used the countering of the other imposed by the oppressors. Instead of owning up proudly and keeping their original identity and countering the other imposed on them, the Dalits, without showing any resistance, mutely accept Sanskritization in fear of further humiliation. It is a serious charge levelled against the educated Dalits, and it could be argued that there is a prima facie in the allegation. But, the fact remains that Civakāmi, as a Dalit writer, is an exception to the social situation.

Having herself undergone the hardships of being a Dalit, Civakāmi, in her novels attempts to portray the differences, and strives hard to eliminate the other as experienced by the Dalit characters in both PK and PKAK. In the process of negating the other, PK centres mainly on Taṅkam's rape, and its consequences.

Taṅkam's rape by Uṭaiyār, a high caste male, is not merely a figment of imagination that the novelist contrives, but a fact that appears frequently in
newspapers and other media. It is highlighted by Ruth Manorama in her article "Dalit women." She claims that an analysis of 400 rape victims by the organisation against rape namely, Balatkaram Virodhi Manch discloses the disturbing fact that more than eighty percent of the victims belong to the lower caste Dalits and tribal groups, and come from the poor classes of society (Massey People 165). Tańkam's rape by Utaiyār renders her a Dalit among the Dalits and a downtrodden among the downtrodden. For, Kāttamuttu blows out her case not for her welfare but for his political benefits, and also to ensure for himself the votes he hopes to get in elections. Besides, in PK, the identity of the Dalit women becomes inconsequential, because they are deprived of their individuality, and are miserably dependant on their male counterparts.

Tańkam, as a typical Dalit woman, is physically strong and works hard like a "wild bull" (57). Nonetheless, she is subjugated, thrice alienated and oppressed on the basis of her class, caste and gender. Utaiyār, the rapist, marauds on Tańkam, simply because she is his "farm labourer, a coolie, a pariah, and a support less widow" (57). He is confident that "no one will oppose him" (57). The plight of a Dalit woman reverberates in Kāttamuttu's words to Tańkam. He draws a parallel between his second marriage with Nākamani, an upper caste woman and Tańkam's concubinage to Uṭaiyār:

I am a man. Little popular among the people too. No one dares opposing me in my marriage with the upper caste woman. But, you are a woman. If an upper caste man desires you, he will come to you. But, you can't go to his house in search of him. They prefer to touch,
speak but never marry [. . .] since you are a lower caste woman; you are beaten by his relatives. (18)

Further, Kāttamuttu, presumptuously proud of his virile masculinity, jeeringly imagines that to control the frequent clashes between his two wives, he should marry yet another. He cherishes the idea secretly and “When the thought of another marriage strikes him he smiles over that” (29).

The victimization of the Dalit woman by the men finds its fullest echo in Kauri’s words. Apprehensive, she responds to the sexual harassment rather frantically, "I am a woman, a lower caste too"(25). The dawn of anxiety horrifies her, and she feels disgusted with the society in general. The identity of the Dalit woman, in PK, is constructed in accordance with a feminist perspective. The Hindu society is predominantly patriarchal and a woman, therefore, is depersonalized on various occasions. Sex, for instance, is male’s choice, and the female partner and her wishes are conveniently ignored in the act. A Dalit woman, in this sense, is twice removed from her individuality, first, for being a woman and secondly, a Dalit. Uṭaiyār’s rape of Taṅkam is an obvious indicator that even an old man belonging to upper caste can seduce a Dalit woman and frequent her amorously by exploiting her poverty, widowhood and caste. In turn, Taṅkam in her helplessness, loses her identity, and yields to Uṭaiyār, in a “no hope” situation.

Again, Taṅkam’s rape, in PK, and the consequent identity crisis may be viewed as a tragedy that may befall on any young widow in Indian society. After her husband’s death and prior to her molestation by Uṭaiyār, her own brothers-in-law approach her sexually. “They refuse to give her a share of land, but desire
Surprisingly, they respond venomously to Tañkam's rape by Utaiyär and foist it as a heinous crime on the helpless woman.

It is significant to note here that the Dalits, in their mute subordination slapped on them by the upper caste, do not oppose their exploiters but give vent to their resentment by finding fault with the exploited. For instance, Tañkam's own relatives are the first to censure her. When Utaiyär's men beat her, they stand by as mere lookers on. They brand her as "a woman of show and vanity" and call her "shameless creature." To justify their cruel indifference they convince themselves saying "she deserves it; because she never cares for her relatives and finds refuge in Utaiyär's farm" (47-48). The non-supportive and insensitive attitude of her relatives in Puliyūr makes Tañkam realize her isolation, and, hence she resolves to take up the issue directly to Kāttamuttu in Attūr. Ironically, she does not know that she escapes from the pan to fall in the fire.

Moreover, Tañkam's genderization by male chauvinists and its awful consequences find a parallel even in a woman – Varxjsammai, Tañkam's co-sister. She shows no concern for Tañkam even as a fellow woman. Instead, she feels that Tañkam has defamed her family by having a clandestine relationship with Utaiyär. As she elaborates:

'It is not enough that she is beaten; she should have been beaten to death. It's a shame [. . .] Being a woman and a widow she must have been at home dependant on her relatives. Instead, she went in search of an Utaiyär. He would keep her so long as she is young, and give
her money. But as she grows older he will desert her. She is to live like a stray dog. (50)

From these words, it is apparent that Tañkam is alienated from her relatives first as a woman, then as a widow and finally as a concubine of Uțaiyăr. None seems to be aware of the fact that Tañkam’s early widowhood and her helplessness in the Indian context, especially among the downtrodden is precarious. Had it not been Uțaiyăr, as mentioned earlier, her own brothers-in-law would have exploited her poverty, insecurity and widowhood. Later, in the novel Kăttamuttu's knavery and his control over Tañkam prove that she, as a widow has no place of protection, but has to yield to the male chauvinist for her survival.

Despite being a Dalit leader, Kăttamuttu has no qualms about capitalizing on the helplessness of the raped widow of his own community. He strikes a bargain with Uțaiyăr. After a series of haggling, they come to an agreement. Uțaiyăr gives Rs. 10,000 to Tañkam. Being a knave, Kăttamuttu pockets it for himself. Worse still, he exploits her innocence sexually, though she calls him "brother" (154).

The question of subjugation that is being explored in the novel is not without its underlying paradox. It is manifest that Dalit men are resigned to their subjugation. They dare not find voice to protest against their inferiorization. At the same time, it seems that they are out on their hunt for mute subordinates. And, they find what they search for in their own women, who look for healing from their men. The simmering discontent and wrath in their psyche provoke them to take it out on their hapless women, who, in turn, find themselves twice oppressed.
Dalit women's double oppression is further highlighted by the police's response to Taṅkam's rape. When they investigate in Puliyūr, they are informed by the scavengers of the secret affair between Taṅkam and Utaiyār. An upper caste policeman, who probes the case brushes aside the affair and ironically brands Taṅkam "a whore." He goes further and justifies the assault on Taṅkam in these words: "If a pariah woman be a concubine to an Utaiyār, how can the Utaiyār woman keep quiet? So, she beats the whore" (55).

In consequence of the caste fanaticism, the verdict is written in favour of the high caste male with little concern for the victim. The policemen, because of their hatred for the Dalits and also with an eye on the bribe, are ready to distort the case in Utaiyār's favour. Their wicked brains work out a diabolic plan and, accordingly, they instruct Utaiyār to lodge a complaint against Taṅkam for stealing a radio and Rs. 2,000 from his home. When Utaiyār hesitates, they abuse Taṅkam and attribute virtues to Utaiyār. The policeman ironically views, "she has no compunction in betraying her master. But, you are hesitant even to lodge a complaint. That's the difference between high and low caste" (73). Like the official fists that Ray experienced in Banjo, Taṅkam for being a Dalit, is branded as a whore and a thief by the police.

In PK, Civakāmi presents the marginalization of women, especially Dalit women. She does so without exaggeration to depict the stark reality. Taṅkam's end does testify to the fact that the Dalit women in the Indian context have no will of their own but have to remain always as mere subjects to their men. It is a harsh and ugly fact and a common phenomenon among the Indian women especially among
the widows irrespective of their class and creed. However, it is worse in the case of Dalit women, as their male counterparts consider them only as objects of submission on whom they gratify their egocentric masculinity, which, if observed objectively, is nothing but the sheer impotency of the oppressors. These oppressive Dalits ironically enough, lack the potency to fight against their victimizers, namely, the high caste. In short, the oppressed male, suppress their already oppressed women in sheer despair. The Dalit women do not revolt against the oppressors and negate the other forcefully but succumb to it and they are resigned to their hard destiny.

Apart from the plight of mute women like Tañkam, the Dalit identity, in PK, is also constructed in Kauri, who, quite unlike the former, negotiates and tries to shed her casteistic otherness more as a feminist than as a Dalit. In Kauri, the identity of a Dalit girl is first constructed, in tune with her realization of the jeopardy that her gender encounters. Later, her experiences as a woman prompt her to negotiate with the predicaments of the Dalits. Most feminists boldly reject the assumed universality of male values to eliminate the differences, and emancipate themselves from patriarchy. They believe that women must look to their own experiences and create their own values and identities all by themselves. For, the Black and the Dalit women, the fight for liberation is as much a racial and communal issue as it is a gender issue. Viewed from Kauri’s feminist perspective PK is a novel of maturation that presents her to some extent as an emergent woman. In other words, like BB, PK is also partially a feminine bildungsroman.
In the beginning of the novel, Kauri is portrayed as a girl who is scared of her ferocious father. She wants to show and feel proud of her pet parrots and chamomile garden to her friends. But, she never invites her friends to her house, as she is afraid of her father and his abuses. She detests her father's baseness, and takes up every opportunity to confront him. For instance, when she writes the complaint as dictated by her father, she consciously renders the words into modern language. “She likes doing it in her own way” (20). Kauri’s rendering of her father’s speech into modern language is symbolic in that it prophesies her modernity and the fall of the stale, old-fashioned ways of Kãttamuttu. The title itself signifies the much desired change in the society. For, the title of the novel, *Palaiyana Kalitalum* is based on the principles of *Nannül*, Tamil Grammar book in the eighth century, which accepts the change in the language. As *sutram* (verse) number 462 reads:

The old order changeth to new order

Yields to the necessity of times and circumstances (Bower 69)

When he vulgarizes Tañkam’s issue by communalizing it, as an adolescent unperturbed by the caste fanaticism so far, Kauri “does not agree with her father and gets annoyed at his deportment” (23). Yet, even as a teenager, she is aware of the predicament of women, and she disdains the society, because it spreads its tentacles around women.

Though, Kauri does not approve of the way her father handles and exploits Tañkam’s issue, she knows what it means to be a Dalit woman. In her reflective mood, she muses: “I am a woman. I also belong to this woman’s caste. How am I
sure that I may not be beaten like this. No assurance'. She shudders at this thought and gets disgusted with the society" (25).

However, Kauri's knowledge of the problem and realization of the fact that a Dalit woman is only a neglected being do not inspire her enough to get herself involved in Dalit problems. She, still, considers and despises her father as and for being a fraudulent Dalit leader. She, often, turns romantic, lingers in her dreams and wants to escape from her father. It is to be noted here that her intended escapism could be seen as a result of excessive emotional insulation. Unable to confront the brazen reality of being a Dalit and a woman, she finds solace in nature and beauty. "The moonlight and the sweet fragrance of Jasmine relieved of her inexplicable sadness" (68). She hopes that if she stays away in the college hostel, she can escape from all these hardships.

Like Ray, in HH, Kauri grows romantic and her formal education prevents her from moving freely with her fellow Dalits, and family members, too. Trained in the hypocritical high caste values and by being an assimilationist, she despises her father and mother for their occasional habit of drinking. She shouts at them, and presumes this rarity as extravaganza and a taboo. She argues with her mother, "When people suffer for want of food and sing tunes for their meal, you get drunk and make merry" (152). She pretends as if she is undisturbed by the sufferings of the Dalits, whereas she finds fault with their life style.

It is to be pointed out here that alcoholism among the men in India is not viewed seriously. And, alcohol now a days is served as a symbol of hale and health in all social meetings. The Dalits - both men and women – are manual labourers,
and they do their works in unhygienic surroundings. To resist stink, they use alcohol, and ultimately become addicts. This leads to a situation, where men physically assault their wives and children. While their income remains very meagre, alcohol claims a chunk of it rendering them indifferent to their health and their family. As a result, they suffer from mal-nutrition and starvation. However, alcoholism is common among the sophisticated Indians in their private parties. The high caste people escape from any shame and shamble, owing to their money and profession. On the other hand, alcoholism is associated with the lower castes, and they are looked down upon by the hypocritical high caste. Like the belief of oversex attributed to the Blacks by the Whites, excessive alcoholism is ascribed to the Dalits by the high caste.

Kauri is yet to understand Dalithood and alcoholism in their proper perspective. Therefore, she despises her parents as her high caste counterparts do. Consequentially, she turns an introvert, and shifts her interest towards her own thoughts and feelings, attaching supreme values to them. She deceives herself by her sophisticated self-analysis and, hence, remains socially passive. "She never talks to any one in the house, except her brother Cēkaran. She pays no heed even to her mother, and spends her time always in reading" (156).

While negotiating with the other, Civakāmi as a woman records the Indian peasants' attitude towards their daughters' education and construct the identities of the working class ingeniously. Being socially and economically downtrodden, the peasants in general, and the Dalits in particular, marry off their daughters at an early age for fear of not getting suitable matches in future. It becomes evident in
Kăttamuttu’s words: “It’s all right if she passes the exams. Otherwise I will, marry her off right away” (157). Fortunately, Kauri escapes the trap. She passes the exams and joins in a college. One can recall Bita of BB, who also undergoes such a trepidation. She, too, has no choice of her own regarding her marriage. Perhaps, Kauri’s experiences as a girl preoccupy her mind rather than her caste identity. She despises her father more for his polygamy without giving due consideration to his social service. It is this hatred that prevents her presumably from understanding her caste identity and its differences. Hence, the negotiation with her constructed otherness is not full-fledged on her part.

Significantly, the shift in Kauri’s character and her caste consciousness become more assimilative in her college days. An adolescent student still, Kauri chooses not to reveal her caste identity. Though she cannot dismiss the fact that she is a daughter of a Dalit leader, she continues to disdain her father’s involvement in Dalit politics and prefers not to express her caste identity to others. Added to this, she is impulsively romantic, and lives in an imaginary world untouched by the harsh reality. On her leaving the village to join the college, she is in rapture, and transported to the poetic world of daydreamers:

The day has come. The day that she aspires to go to college has come. Since morning, she is ecstatic and restless. She goes to her home garden, bids farewell to chamomile. She pines for the Jasmine, and feels that in her absence no one would ever care for them. She goes to the stone bench, on which she usually sits and enjoys the beauty of the dusk, and says, ‘farewell’. (157-58)
Illusion- ridden, hopeful and ambitious, this rustic girl enters the portals of the college. She is thrilled:

Her dreams have been realized. She has become one among the students of the college. The young girls in the college, as their age proves to be, are curious to know, craving for new experiences, and courageous to pull down the established norms. She comes across new faces and is introduced to all. Considerably, she mingles with all and gets lost in the camouflage. She is identified as one of the girls, who have charm and intelligence, and she is happy that she is homologous and at last, denuded of her caste identity.

As flood makes wells immerse in the ocean, and causes them to lose their boundaries, she joins the great ocean of students in the college crossing the boundaries of her father, caste and the village. (158)

However, in the college, Kauri's romantic aspirations and her temporary escape from the social predicaments do not last long. "As the flood drains, caste the immortal monster grins at her like putrefied pine trees" (158). Kauri, despite her being a romantic dreamer, to her shock, stumbles upon the reality of the caste system in the college. She becomes so self-conscious that she feels embarrassed to get the educational scholarship given to the scheduled caste students. But, her humiliations prologue her fight against the evils of caste system. Though the backward class students are also given scholarship, they denounce the scholarship for the scheduled caste with scornful eyes. Generally speaking, the other students in
schools and colleges consider the scheduled caste scholarship an ignominy, and to them the beneficiaries become only the butts of ridicule. Kauri once meets a backward class student who also gets scholarship. When Kauri enquires her of the amount, she gets annoyed. She tells Kauri:

"Yours is different".

"Aren't you a scheduled caste then?"

She retorts and proudly claims, "No No, I am a Vanniar Kula Chatriya". (159)

Notably, this incident initiates an incredible change in Kauri, and she is brought down to the ways of the world. Quite voluntarily, she confronts the girl, and tries boldly to assert her Dalit identity for the first time. It is obvious here that Kauri, from being an escapist earlier evolves herself into a self-conscious Dalit, who negotiates with the societal otherness imposed on her. As in the case of Ray in Banjo, Kauri's imagined self – what she wishes to be if that were possible – is shattered by her social experiences, and now she resolves to recover her real self.

However, Kauri's resolve to identify herself with her caste and her negotiation with the carefully constructed otherness are yet to take its full shape. She continues to vacillate between the standards set by the high caste and the reality obtaining in the Dalit community. For instance, when she attends Chandran's marriage, she feels disgusted with the Paramolam*, the drum beating of the

*It has to be mentioned here that the clan of Dalits in Tamil Nadu, south India is called "parayar" due to their profession of beating the drums. In Tamil, Parai means ‘drum’ and Arai, ‘beat’. Parayars or Pariahs are basically drummers.
parayars. The tempo reaches such an unbearable pitch that, though they play in a rousing manner by accomplishments with fanfare, Kauri closes her ears and runs into Cantiran's house. Expressing contempt for her own clan's native music, she asks her mother:

"Why haven't you arranged* koil molam?"

Her mother tries to silence her saying assertively, "That's the tradition"

"What tradition... Scornful". (196)

Kauri's attitude towards her native music, largely due to her present assimilative proclivity, is appalling in that it evidences her Sanskritized notions. The Sanskritization of the Hindu social values, as apparent in many cases, has made Kauri look upon her own native music as inferior to that of the high caste Hindus. Though enlightened as a woman, Kauri, instead of boldly confronting the differences and contesting the high caste attributes, yields to its values.

Towards the end of the novel, influenced by her academic background as a lecturer, Kauri envisages a Utopian merger of Dalits with the Vanniyars. In the process, she forgets the fact that, in the rungs of the society, the Vanniyars, a backward class community, are placed just above the Dalits. In reality in the northern districts of Tamil Nadu, the Vanniyars exploit the Dalits and practice, untouchability. There is always a communal clash between these two emerging communities. The Vanniyars in their attempt to assert their superiority over the Dalits often have a row with them and even go to the extent of arsoning the Dalit

* Koil molam – The music played in temples.
colonies. Still, Kauri yearns for their union, which in terms of reality is beyond the bounds of possibility or reason.

Like Ray, in HH, Kauri in PK, is led by her formal education, and thus estranges herself from caste politics. This fact manifests itself towards the end of the novel, where she ridicules the failure of Kāttamuttu, her father. She instils hope and faith in her mother and other women that they will from now onwards emerge as individuals and to such emergent women, men like Kāttamuttu can only be objects of contempt.

In short, while attempting to negotiate with the caste differences Kauri stays off from the mainstream. She tries to cope up with her inner conflicts rather academically and hence, it is obvious that her social ambivalences are not resolved yet. The researcher views Civakāmi’s PKAK as a continuum of PK in which Kauri metamorphoses into Civakāmi by renouncing her casteistic otherness. Since the novel re-establishes Civakāmi’s identity, first as a Dalit and later as a Dalit novelist, the researcher discusses it as a source that reintegrates her with the community and triggers her self-determination.

In brief, the construction of identity in both McKay and Civakāmi encompasses the encounters of the characters in the novels and their creators in their efforts to overcome the rancorous oppression. Both McKay and Civakāmi in their novels negotiate with the dangers of assimilation and seek deliberately to retain their original selves. Realisation of the self and Negation of the other lead the suppressed towards associating and merging with the community. This, in detail, is discussed in the next chapter.