Chapter IV

Re-integration with the Community

_The oppressed gain identity only by revolting against their oppressors. Any revolt by the oppressed, let it be individual or collective, issues mainly from self-respect and it finally associates with the community._ (Civakāmi Personal Interview)

Being politically committed, African American Literature and Dalit Literature in Tamil are engaged in recreating and constructing a dynamic self of the oppressed. In this attempt, the authors, the cultural prophets, express their selves', encounter and negotiate with the constructed others. Consequently they find their elsewhere absent-selves and reintegrate them ultimately with their community. Further, they attain the racial and communal consciousness, and instil the communal pride in their people.

Significantly, the interactions of the oppressed social groups in intense social conflict with their oppressors, often lead to the development of an explicit normative system that is based on difference and establish solidarity that leads to the formation of a distinct social identity. This chapter maintains that the identities - in the novels of McKay and Civakāmi - are constructed so as to rediscover the marginalised people's uniqueness and reassure their sense of belonging to their respective communities.

Identification is a socio-psychological process involving the internalisation of the values, standards, expectations, or social roles of another person into one's own behaviour and self-conception. Identification involves modelling of one's self after another person. In other words, it involves developing a sense of oneness with
another of its kind. Further, in identifying with a group, one internalizes the interests, standards, and role expectations of the group. It is an important process in normal human behaviour. Incidentally, the subjugated African Americans and the Dalits perceive themselves as the lost crowd and are in need of collective and communal reorientation to redeem their selves and rediscover their identity.

McKay's novels, as Addison Gayle points out, are "a realistic appraisal of Black life in all its existential trials and tribulations" (134). While constructing the Black identity, McKay presents the humble life of the Blacks in order to highlight the demoralising effect of the West on the socio-economic realities of the Blacks. Further, McKay's vision of effecting the Black identity lies in achieving individual wholeness and the ultimate association with the community. He treats self-preservation and personal development unique to the community as a counter measure against the dehumanizing cerebrations of the Imperial West, its social ramifications, and cultural ethos.

While encountering the problems of Black identity in White America in HH, hypocritical France in Banjo and the colonized Jamaica in BB, McKay is perfectly tuned to the racial rhythm. He does not subscribe to the "Talented Ten" policy, which was much publicized by Booker T. Washington and some philanthropic Whites. The talented ten insists that a section of the Black population should be given White education so that they, in turn, shall educate their fellow Blacks. Nor does McKay in his novels and personal life, approve of cringing before the condescending White patronage. He is of the conviction that the onus of Black progress lies entirely on themselves and that they are the makers of their destiny. In
other words, he feels that Blacks need greater pride, unity, determination and specific traits that could not be supplied by the Whites no matter how sympathetic they are to the plight of the Blacks. True to his convictions, McKay places his characters amidst perturbed fellow Blacks and confirms their emergence by delineating them as individuals who withstand the culture of the condescending colonizers.

The geography of the quest for identity in *HH*, no doubt, remaps the Black insight and embodies the ultimate reunion with Black life and culture. Jake, on his return to Harlem after two years, is "thrilled and sniffs the streets like a hound" (10). The exploitation of the Black soldiers that he himself experienced in the U.S army turns him a "war deserter" (22) earlier. Nevertheless, in the presence of the Blacks he feels "as happy as a prince all the same" (15). He yields himself voluntarily to the native Black life in Harlem and wonders, "where else could I have all this life but Harlem?" (14). His "awful fever of lonesomeness" (9) in London is alleviated further by, "the contagious fever of Harlem [with] the thickness, the closeness of it" (15).

McKay, in *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*, gives an account of the plight of the Black community during the eventful years of the twenties and thirties of the 20th century. He describes Harlem, as "the queen of Black belts, drawing Aframericans together into a vast humming hive [...] Harlem is more than the Negro capital of the nation. It is the Negro capital of the world" (16). He looks upon it as a place, where the exclusive Negro respectability resides. Like his creator, Jake in *HH*, at first considers it "Niggers heaven" and shouts in joy "Oh, boy! Harlem is mine" (17). His
return to Harlem and his celebration of it accentuate the fact that Harlem does not exist simply as a space for the Blacks but as a land indivisible from the African-American life and culture. In other words, his journey to Harlem is a journey within that helps him encounter the White artificiality in the West and find comfort in his own native tradition. In short, to Jake, Harlem re-visited is Harlem re-discovered.

In addition to his enthusiastic spatial experience in "happy familiar Harlem" (15), Jake constructs his collective cultural identity through rich art forms of African music and dance. His passion for African music is noteworthy, because, he rediscovers his racial self in its wild rhythm. He dances to the popular tunes of the Blues at Congo, unmindful of the police ban. His dancing at the cabarets signifies that it is an exercise of the rhythmical existence of the Blacks and, no wonder, Jake falls into it spontaneously. Jazz and Blues are the proud exhibitions of the African art form to the world. And, all America jazz in the social meetings and cocktail parties. Hence, it is natural that Jake, being a Black, catches up his cultural rhythm in cabarets soon enough. The African music and dance are sensual in its manifestation, as the dancers "rear and prance together, smacking palm against palm, working knee between knee [...] breast to breast" (93). In addition, their grin of genuine joy bears out that the tactile communication is a part of African culture.

As John Miller Chemoff observes in his study of drumming in Ghana:

African music is a cultural activity, which reveals a group of people organizing and involving themselves with their own communal relationships – a participant observer's comment, so to speak, on the processes of living together. The aesthetic point of the exercise is not
to reflect reality, which stands behind it, but to ritualize a reality that is within it. (36)

Accordingly, Jake's quality of rhythmic relationship facilitates him to rediscover his racial identity and, it also illustrates the prominent trait of Black social life.

Later, Jake's unpleasant experiences in Harlem do not alienate him completely from his Black folk, but reunite him with his community comprehensively despite all its shortcomings. Jake, on his return to Harlem, initially, stands for the best that Harlem has to offer, and, of course, he is its natural exponent. As his biological need has been established by the end of Part I, Jake leaves Harlem in search of economic self-reliance.

Significantly, his departure from Harlem suggests that Jake is transported from the instinctive emotional life to the economic world of the Blacks. His proletariat self and his racial consciousness are constructed and regulated by his own self-appraisal. His self-appraisal, the level of his aspirations, and the realization of his actual potency make him contented. His interpersonal relations with the crew, in the chapter "The Railroad", underline his sympathy for his fellow beings, empathy for the Blacks, and thereby, his racial consciousness – the component that enables him to achieve collective identity.

Later, towards the end of the novel, Jake is betrayed openly by his friend Zeddy. The latter blurts out the truth that Jake is a war deserter. Exposed to the people, Jake decides to go on off to sea again in fear of arrest. But, as prompted by Felice he prefers to get lost in Chicago, "a mahvelous place for niggers" (333). It is to be noted here that Jake rediscovers his racial identity by associating all the time
with the Blacks since his disembarkment, during his life in Harlem and also in his departure from there. In fact, he lives like an instinctive emotional Black male, falls to the rhythm of African life and even wishes to get lost only among the Black folks. And, Jake reintegrates his Black self with the community. All his emotional ambivalences are resolved either by the Black characters in the novels or by his recently acquired Black pride – a redemptive measure – through Ray.

Like Jake, Ray, too, is endowed with racial reorientation in both HH and Banjo. Still, his racial consciousness in HH is infantile and sceptical when compared to the same in Banjo. At his first meeting with Jake on the railroad, Ray initially nurtures in Jake some racial pride by recounting to him the history of Haiti. He clarifies Jake’s doubts about his race, and convinces him “Africa was not the jungle as he dreamed of it, nor slavery the peculiar role of Black folk” (134). Ray’s knowledge of African culture and history, and his “love to write the romance of Abyssinia ... Ethiopia” (137), his racial consciousness and self-pride, like those of Kauri in PK, initially suffer greatly due to his scepticism.

Strangely enough, as in the case of many contemporary Blacks, Ray’s racial consciousness fails to cultivate in him a strong sense of racial pride. Unlike Jake, Ray’s White education cripples him so much that he finds it hard to move freely with the fellow Blacks. He directs his toothless racial consciousness pointedly against the Whites, as the oppressed self invariably does. Furthermore, in his protest against the Whites, Ray pounces heavily upon their education and civilization. His reference to White education as “anachronism” and “dead stuff” and his realization
of himself as "a misfit" (243) do not in any way bring him closer to the collective social identity at once.

Nevertheless, Ray's friendship with Jake and his eventual reconciliation with the simple life of the Blacks in Harlem coupled with his own self-realization help him reintegrate his racial self with the community. Significantly, Ray, in HH, is preoccupied only with learning life, not living it. When he reconciles with the life and "satisfied with the easy, simple things that sufficed for Jake", he exuberantly feels within himself "a reservoir of that intense emotional energy so peculiar to his race." As a consequence, "Life burned in Ray perhaps more intensely than in Jake [...] he drank in more life, than he could" (265).

Obviously, in his quest for identity, Ray perceives Jake ultimately as an extension of himself, and tries to place himself in Jake's position. He strives to dissolve himself into the space and time of his race, and aspires to assimilate its personalized meaning through Jake. After finding himself emotionally unresponsive towards women in Madame Laura's lodging, Ray looks upon Jake's spontaneous amorous venture appreciatively. Inspired by Jake's sexual prowess, he considers Jake "a lucky dog" (203), and expresses his wish to treat women as Jake does: "Wish I could feel the difference as you do Jakie" (202).

Though envious of Jake's happy, sensual life, Ray is sympathetic towards him. On his hearing Jake's relapse, Ray, his admirer, turns at once a teacher-advisor. He tells Jake "I know you love life too much to make a fool of yourself like so many of those other fellows. I've never knew that this thing was so common until I started working on the rail road" (222). Ray's advice to Jake makes it clear
that he having been once a hater of Harlem and the Blacks eventually has come round to accept and reconcile with the Blacks' modes of living. In short, Jake functions as a catalyst in the process of Ray's re-orientation with the collective social identity.

Obviously enough, Ray's eventual realization that Western civilization is dehumanizing and that Imperial education an anachronism are derived from his experiences with Jake. They convince him that Western civilisation and education have marginalized the Blacks, and depersonalised them into mere exotic objects. Ray, who earlier hated to be one among the Negroes in the barrack room after his experiences gained through Jake, speaks in support of the Black promiscuity. He exhibits his maturity by viewing with compassion the life of Jerricho Jones and Rosalind Whicher. Jerricho Jones relies on his woman Rosalind Whicher, who happens to be a prostitute. Her sudden death later renders him fatally depressed to the extent of committing suicide. Ray now realizes "something so strange and wonderful and awful" lifts him up out of his little straight thoughts into a big whirl "where all of life seemed hopelessly tangled and colored without a point or purpose" (244).

Moreover, through Jake, Ray, erstwhile the colonized individual, dualistic in culture and torn between his instinct and intellect gains awareness of people's worth in Harlem. "Once Ray hated it for its brutality, gang rowdyism, promiscuous thickness. Its hot desires" (267). But, now he realises:

The blood red colour of it! The warm accent of its composite voice, the fruitness of its laughter, the trailing, rhythm of its "blues" and the
improvised surprises of its Jazz. He had known happiness too, in Harlem, joy that glowed gloriously upon him like the high noon sunlight of his tropic island home. (267)

When Ray signs on as a mess boy in a freighter to Australia, he feels that without Harlem he is at loss, because, in Harlem, as he remarks, “life burned in.” Amidst the Negroes in Harlem, he feels, “like a tree with roots in the soil and sap flowing out and whispering leaves drinking in the air. But he drank in more of life than he could distil into active animal living” (265). Like Jake, he accepts Harlem, for life in Harlem “touched him emotionally in a thousand vivid ways”. In addition, he considers himself, “some thing of a touchstone of the general emotions of his race” (265-66).

In fact, Ray’s perception of Jake as an extension of himself and his appreciation and acceptance of the Blacks’ life in Harlem integrate his intellectual identity, in particular, with the instinct of Jake, and, in general, with the community. Evidently, on his farewell feed, just like a child leaving its mother, he sings painfully “Got to leave you Harlem / Got to turn our back on you” (271).

Similarly, Banjo’s identity, in Banjo, is constituted by his ambition to form a Black orchestra in Marseilles. Music to Banjo is symbolically inspirational and the source for the right rhythm of African life. His creative excitement leads to the realization and the rediscovery of his Negritude. In the process of rediscovering the racial identity, Banjo asserts and affiliates his position as a Black in White France through music. He first discovers his inherent talent in music, and subsequently he is struck with the idea of forming a Black orchestra. In him, it surfaces more as a
means to determine his Black identity than a way to make his living. He always holds a banjo with the result that he is identified with, and called by the instrument, Banjo. He plays banjo, in Malty’s words, as “a real artist”, not for money but for “expreciation” (8).

Significantly, art in any society helps forming its cultural identity. Banjo's interest in music is akin to that of the Blacks. Music, essentially, is an integral component of all tribal cultures. It brings the community together, and cements their collective bonds. Here, a musical instrument facilitates the unifying process. Banjo is aware of this fact, and turns his banjo to good use. His intention to form a Black orchestra to assert his Black identity is evident in his words: “The American darky is the performing fool of the world today. He is demanded everywhere. If Ic’n only git some these heah pan handling fellahs together, we’ll show them some real nigger music” (14).

Unlike Ray’s ambition to write, Banjo’s wish to form ‘a Black orchestra’ is realized in Marseilles with the help of the Beach Boys, Malty, Ginger and Dengel “more wildly, more natively, more savagely” (48). Banjo with his instrument plays “the affirmation of his hardy existence in the midst of the biggest, the most tumultuous civilization of modern life” (49). In fact, Banjo recreates the lost glory of Africa, and while playing his banjo, he is possessed with the African spirit. At the Senegalese bar, he plays “shake that thing”, which inspires the Blacks and others with his infectious enthusiasm. It helps them rediscover “the sweet dancing thing of a primitive joy, […] eternal rhythm of the mysterious, magical, magnificent – the dance divine of life” (58).
In addition, his music makes Banjo look and behave differently from the panhandlers of the Bum beach. His possession of the banjo, like a sceptre, promotes him as a leader of the beach boys, just as in the tribal tradition, in which the leader is gifted with a talent to assert himself. Consequently, the Black orchestra reveals and develops his personal potentials. It causes in him an “aesthetic realization” and raises him to “a bigger thing than any of his dreams” (97).

Besides music, Banjo’s inherent racial consciousness is another factor that further accelerates his reunion with the community. However, his reintegration is neither purely instinctive as that of Jake nor intellectual as that of Ray. His attitude towards his race is clearly mundane and it arises out of his experience, and not from his intelligence. Like his artistic maturity, his empathy for the poor prompts him to identify with the miserable. He even helps a poor White boy to the extent that Latnah scolds him for not being a genuine Black.

All the same, Banjo is sympathetic towards the Blacks. However, his sympathy, similar to McKay’s, does not lead him to either passionate infatuation or strong affection for his race. Instead, he is disillusioned and turns seemingly antipathetic towards the Blacks. He shares his views on negritude with his friends by cracking jokes, and many a truth does unfold in his jest. For instance, he exclaims, “A nigger [for him] is a born mistake” and adds: “Gawd nevah gived the nigger no brain’ stuff to correct his mistakes, and so the nigger kain of invent anything to correct his mistake” (180). He is not a racial fanatic. It is evident in his glorification of his friendship with a White man in Chaunsly. Incidentally, his hatred for the Whites and his realistic reconciliation with the Blacks are rather his
own personalized means of achieving racial integration. However, in his hatred, he is rationally analytical and accepts the Whites if they are honest, but hates them to the most, if he finds them overriding. For instance, when the seamen enquire of him, whether the “froggies treat you better than the hoojahs”; he replies nonchalantly, “I wouldn’t know how to answer none at all [...] for it all depends on which way you take it” (190).

When Banjo takes ill, Latnah visits him in the hospital. He tells her in a tone of resignation, brooding, “Ise cullud and that cullud is cullud and white is some’n’ else” (255). His words do suggest that he is innately aware of what his identity is, and also that his behaviour, attitude, and actions issue from his being a Black. His sense of being a Black is activated, and he expresses his congenital contempt for the Whites and asserts, “How could I evah love White moh’n colored? White folks smell like laundry soap” (255). Finally, Banjo in France, with his “nationality doubtful” (313), refuses to return to the U.S., once his home in protest against the lynching. Instead, with plenty of hopes he decides to leave only for the West Indies – another Black diaspora. In brief, through music he realizes his potent self. His racial consciousness paves for him a way to reintegrate his alienated psyche in the Black space. His departure for the West Indies is symbolic in that Banjo decolonizes himself both spatially and ideologically.

Ray, in HH, reintegrates with the community through his friendship with Jake and in Banjo, he strengthens it further through his association with Banjo. Despite the intellectual conflicts within, Ray, in Banjo, loves the life in the docks more than the life on the sea. In his “mighty life of restless search within and
without, and energetic living to find himself until the very end” (66), he
unhesitatingly identifies himself with the Black panhandlers in the Ditch. He
willingly serves as a critic of Banjo’s orchestra and tells Goosey, “right now there is
nothing in the world so interesting to me as Banjo and his orchestra” (92).

Ray’s reoriented Black identity in France is essentially the result of the close
relationship with Jake and Banjo. As a liberated Black intellectual, he, in Banjo,
matures into being the spokesperson of McKay’s views on the objectives of Black
writing, definition of Negritude and formation of racial identity. Ray firmly
believes that writing is a mode of protest and an affirmation of racial pride.
However, as an aspiring writer, Ray enunciates McKay’s views on Black literature
and rejects the argument that Black writers should write only on Black success. He
informs Goosey that he proposes to write “[h] ow the black boys live is the most
interesting thing in the Ditch” (115). When Goosey expresses his apprehension, Ray
speaks at length expressing his views on his race and Black writings and, above all,
the universality of art as follows:

Let the crackers go fiddle themselves [...] it is a good earth-loving
race. I’ll fight with it if there is a fight on, but if I am writing a story-
well, [...] I telling a story for the love of it. [...] I’ll just identify
myself with those who are really listening and tell my story. [...] a
good story, is like good ore that you might find in any soil – Europe,
Asia, Africa, America. The world wants the ore and gets it by a
thousand men scrambling and fighting, digging and dying for it. The
world gets its story the same way. (115)
Concerning literature as a means to achieve liberation of the oppressed race and to bring them back into their native culture, Ray, like his creator, boldly declares: "I am not a reporter for the Negro press" (116), and "I am writing for people who can stand a real story no matter where it comes from" (117). He explicates his views on his own writings and theory of literature, and regardless of his western education, he narrates an African folk tale to his friends. Similarly, McKay in his writings opposes Dubois' theory of the talented ten to uplift the masses. McKay does not feel that the masses need uplifting by intellectuals - Black or White. Like McKay, Ray regards that positive racial pride alone will help the Blacks regain their lost identity and ensure their survival.

In his search for cultural identity, Ray, like McKay himself quite voluntarily distances himself from the pretenders, and happily identifies himself with the panhandlers of the Bum Beach, to the extent that he reminds the reader, on various occasions, that the Ditch will be his subject matter in his writings. He justifies it saying, "There was no mistaking the scheme of life of the Ditch, that bawdiness was only a means toward the ultimate purpose of respectability" (248).

Interestingly, Ray reacts intellectually to the racial propaganda against the Blacks and, thus, lays bare his hatred for civilization and suggests a possible redemption to rediscover the lost identity. He considers that the White civilization will "rob [Black] of his warm human instincts and make him inhuman." He further observes that in the clutches of White civilisation, "the thinking colored man could not function normally like his White brother." To confront these conflicts and to overcome them, he suggests to the Blacks that "only within the confines of his own
world of color could be his true self.” Unless he “enters the great White world, where of necessity, he must work and roam, low, middle, unclassed, all conspired to make him painfully conscious of color and race” (164).

While brooding over the problems of the Blacks caused by the Whites and their Christian civilization, Ray clings on to his original racial self, which is now rooted firmly in the community. For instance, he is overwhelmed in his racial harmony and, therefore, prefers to renounce his intellect to be more his natural instinctual self in *Banjo*. It is echoed in his deep contemplation over various responses to the Christian civilization:

> [W]hat Anglo Saxon standards were doing to some of the world’s most interesting peoples? Some Jews ashamed of being Jews. Changing their names and their religion ... for the Jesus of Christians. The Irish objecting to the artistic use of their own rich idioms. Inferiority bile of non-Nordic minorities. Educated Negroes ashamed of their race’s intuitive love of color, wrapping themselves up in respectable gray, ashamed of Congo sounding laughter, ashamed of their complexion (bleaching out), ashamed of their appetites. No being ashamed for Ray. Rather than lose his soul, let intellect go to hell and live instinct”. (165)

From this it is evident that unlike in *HH*, Ray in *Banjo*, despite his Western education feels and identifies his natural racial instinct and wants to live by it. It is clear that his Black identity rests on his simultaneous affirmation of his differences and his real native self, and not on his assimilations of Western civilization.
In contrast to Ray’s self-alienation and self-hatred, and his infantile contempt for the Whites, their material prosperity, civilization and religion, he resolves his ambivalences through racial consciousness and racial pride in Banjo. Eventually, his racial pride, an assertion of his racial differences, enables him to identify himself with the Blacks both psychologically and culturally relieving himself of his cerebral wrangling. This fact becomes evident, when he interacts with a Black student from Martinique.

The Martiniquan student in his views on race, resembles the Ray of HH, and warns him against mixing with the Senegalese in France. Ray’s argument with him proves that his discontent over the race and the people has withered, and that now he emerges as a “Negro scholar” advocating principles of negritude to others. Ray does not approve of the student’s views and in his inspirational address to the student, he reveals his eventual reorientation with the race. He transcends the limits of nationalism and desires that the racial renaissance include all Negroes of the world:

You can’t get away from the Senegalese and other Black Africans any more than you can from the fact that our forefathers were slaves. [...]. We educated Negroes are talking about racial renaissance. And I wonder how we are going to get it. On one side we’re up against the world’s arrogance – a mighty cold hard White stone thing. On the other the great sweating army – our race. (200)
It is significant to note a shift in Ray’s attitude. For, earlier in **HH**, he despises himself for being a Black, who “hates every one in the barrack room” (153), and feels derisively sorry for the poor Blacks in Harlem. But, in **Banjo** he is matured, and values his race and men quite confidently with pride, thereby eventually identifying himself with them. He proudly identifies himself with the race and says:

> It is the common people, who furnish the bone and sinew and salt of any race or nation. We will have to get down to our racial roots to create it. Getting down to our native roots and building up from our own people is not savagery. It is culture. (Banjo 200)

His insightful words indicate that he does realise the futility of the effects of European civilization and the fertility of African culture.

In his reintegration into his roots and culture, Ray, like many Blacks, is evidently antagonistic to and loses faith in White values. Once, before going to the vintage, he places all his baggage in the seaman’s mission. On his return, he finds his baggage missing. White beachcombers have stolen it along with the books and the manuscripts. The loss of his “books” may signify that Ray has shed the impacts of his Western education. Ray feels that he has been fooled by “Christian charity”, and hence he says, “I’ve never believed in that”(236). He wishes, “[b]etter I had left my stuff in the African pub” (236). His wish, in fact, clearly proves that, to him, the African pub is safer than the seaman’s mission run by “Canterbury Angels.”
Encouraged by his self-integrity, Ray firmly believes "close association with Jakes and Banjos had been like participating in a common primitive birth right" (321). Ray loves to be with them in constant physical contact, thereby keeping himself warm within:

the African gave him a positive feeling of wholesome contact with racial roots. They made him feel that he was not merely an unfortunate accident of birth, but that he belonged definite to a race weighted, tested and poised in the universal scheme. They inspired him with confidence in them. (320)

Language is a part of cultural heritage. As the cultural theorists argue, in language, arbitrary sounds are formed into cultural symbols capable of communicating ideas, desires, meanings, experiences and traditions from one generation to another. In fact, language is essential to human perception, thinking, awareness of self, the others and to the existence of social community. Ray's admiration for the Black language can be viewed as a part of his assertion of the racial self. The unique feature of the Black dialect is revealed in his passion for defying linguistic regulations. He considers the Black boys' "unconscious artistic capacity for eliminating the rotten-dead stock words […] and replacing them with startling new ones" (321) as liberation from the linguistic marginalization.

Besides language, Ray's response to the African sex life underscores the fact that he, at present, fully understands the vitality of the simpler sex life of the Blacks. The sexual life of a community is important in the sense that sexual relationships are organized more as a social than biological need. Blacks are freer and simpler in
their sex life and, as White people on the whole are not. He is convinced that the
Whites are hypocritical and they consider the African sexuality "a nasty, initiating
thing, while a Negro accepted it with primitive joy" (253). Ray, formerly a sceptic
and a hesitant initiator in sex life, understands the vigour of participation and
sharing. It is evident that he resolves his personal ambivalences and even accepts
sex as a liberating force. It may be rightly observed that Ray's realization of the
Black sexuality is a part of his communal reorientation.

Ray, smothered by the differences that he experienced in France, is
convinced that the western civilization victimizes the Blacks in the name of the
Whites' religion, sex and law. He asserts that the African "instinctive way of living
was more deeply related to his own self-preservation than all the principles, or
social morality" (319). Ray resolves his restlessness and accepts the constructed
differences rather proudly. For, Ray asserts, "To me the most precious thing about
human life is difference. Like flowers in a garden, different kinds for different
people to love." In proposing a suggestion for the Black progress, he admonishes
miscegenation, and says, "I should hate to think of a future in which the identity of
the Black race in the Western world should be lost in miscegenation" (208). Ray's
arguments with the Martiniquan student and his preference to hold his difference
prove that he cherishes his Black identity as a man possessed by the African
fetishism. In other words, Ray realizes his differences positively, and this
realization constitutes his Black self, not as a conflict of opposites but as a harmony
of complementaries.
Ray firmly believes that Black's wholeness can be accomplished by de-westernizing the colonized Black consciousness. Reversal of Western oriented attitudes must also be accompanied by successful and persistent restoration of Black cultural values. Ray's racial self discovery leads him to learn "how to exist as a Black boy in a White world and rid his conscience of the used-up hussy of White morality" (322).

Ray also recognizes from them the "potential power of racial salvation" in their instinctive way of living and "in the rude anarchy of the lives of the Black boys – loafing, singing, bumming, playing, dancing, loving, working..." (322). In short, Ray's "close association with Jakes and Banjoes" and his "comradeship" with the beach boys are revitalizing, and he ultimately, feels reassured of his racial identity.

Similarly, in BB, the construction of the collective racial self emerges from Black sexuality, music and dance, Black's conscious resistance to Westernization, the conflict between instinct and intelligence in Bita, and finally from her reconciliation and reintegration with the native elements. In fact, Bita's constant quest for Black identity in the White world constructs her racial self, resolves her inherent conflicts and helps her reclaim her racial identity.

McKay, as a Jamaican Black, in BB rediscovers Black identity by portraying the colonized native woman Bita. Her search for racial identity is intensified through her interaction with Squire Gensir, a White gentleman. Squire Gensir is what White Walter Jekyll to McKay and Ray to Jake and Banjo. Squire Gensir, aged about sixty, likes the Blacks. They also love him to the extent that, the most
eminent people in the colony would be "delighted to honour him" (71). The peasants are "his hobby" (71), and he is engaged in writing the native Anancy stories and the peasants' songs. Significantly, Squire Gensir is the only compassionate White who appears in McKay's all the three novels discussed here.

Squire Gensir's presence on the picnic with Barnaby, Bita's cousin, sends waves of inspiration among the native Blacks. The Squire, in his conversation with Bita, praises the native dance and asks her if she is "not tempted" (72). Bita in her native Black honesty says, "yes", but her religion Christianity, an obligatory manacle, does not approve of her dancing. Her words make it clear that she longs to dance, but she is painfully aware that the "church folk can't dance like that" [...]

And those Church members who dance are not so closely associated with Church" (72). Squire Gensir sows the seed of the native tradition in her and inspires her to discard her assimilated inhibitions towards native culture telling her that the church is only "living on its tradition and more of a shackling than liberating institution to the native spirit" (73).

Encouraged by the Squire's words, Bita re-discovers her true native self, which has so far been smothered by Christian beliefs and practices. Not surprisingly, for the first time, she reveals the conflict between her native instinct—that wants her to dance— and the prohibitive position that she is in the church. It is evident from her response to Squire's insistence; "Because there are some things you are not always free to do even though you may want to. All depends on your position. And my position is such if I went to a tea-meeting I know Mrs.Craig would be shocked to death". (73-74)
Endowed with “eternal truism”(74), Bita is awakened to her natural instincts. Prompted by them, she ignores her ‘being’ in the church, and decides to attend a tea meeting that night with Yoni Legge and Belle Black. Bita’s decision to attend the tea meeting becomes her personalised means of rediscovering her native self. It is further strengthened by the remarks made by her companion, Belle Black, who tells her, “I got to follow mi feelings” (76).

Contrary to the Christian views, tea meetings, in fact, prove to be helpful to the peasants. To the peasants:

It is a kind of practical lottery, which was often resorted to replenish an empty coffer or help out in an emergency such as finding the funds for an unfortunate lawsuit. The trousseau of many a village bride and the cost of the wedding feasts had been paid for by means of a tea meeting”. In the tea meeting, money is “made from the purveying of rum, orange wine and ginger beer, but the most exciting money-making thing was the auction of the cakes. (76-77)

The purpose of tea meeting is disparaged by the Christian missionaries, who find the native practice outlandish, consider them vulgar and, hence, a social taboo. Further, the missionaries even deny the participants respectable membership in the church. Here it is evident that the White religion in the name of fixated morality does not even approve of the Blacks' alternative social practices that bring about communal solidarity.

Bita’s participation in the tea meeting may consequently be viewed as the first sign of her self-recovery. She astonishes Squire Gensir and others at the tea
meeting with her "don't care" (84) attitude and by joining the native dance. He watches in disbelief as "she dances forgetting herself, forgetting even Jubilee, dancing down the barrier between high breeding and common pleasures under her light stamping feet until she was one with the crowd" (84). As it is evident in this passage, Bita, in her quest for identity, unlike Ray in **HH** and **Banjo**, dances down all her differences of being an educated Black. After the dance, Bita quite naturally is "tingling with emotion" (84).

In the process of identification, the concept of folk dance suggests that dance can represent an expression by the community, of its values and identity, or a resistance by it to external pressures. Angela McRobbie, a cultural theorist views dance as "a part of feminine youth culture" for, it "is a form of control of the female body and movement, through its emphasis on grace and beauty while at the same time, it is also a way in which the dancer can herself take control" (144). In McRobbie’s view:

Dance can be an extension of the private culture of femininity, into a public space. Dance is a form of evasion and an opportunity for fantasy, as the dancer is both out of control and therefore out of the reach of controlling forces. Paradoxically enough, dance is simultaneously a dramatic display of the self and the body, with an equally dramatic negation of the self and the body. (144)

Bita’s dance at the tea meeting, therefore, can be viewed as a negation of assimilation and an assertion of her feminine Black identity. The dance at the tea meeting represents the Black community’s expression of its values and identity.
Through her focus on grace and beauty in her dance, she overcomes all her White controlling forces. In other words, her dance at the tea meeting is a manifestation of her protest against the alien forces working on her in the form of her English education. It can be argued that in her dance she acknowledges her instinctive self, and ignores her carefully - groomed intellect.

Squire Gensir, on Bita's second visit to Banana Bottom, through his knowledge and freethinking continues to be a source of inspiration and guidance. He urges her to find for herself the ways to discard her imposed upbringing in western culture and rediscover her lost tradition. For him, education is intrinsic and it has to be used "for individual cultural development" (122). He believes that the best thing for a man is "to devote himself first to the understanding and adjusting of his own life" (122).

Squire Gensir's views on life do indeed alert Bita. With her modern education, Bita often feels that her life is "empty and lonely" (123). He educates her on the significance of her native music and makes her feel proud of her primitive God Obeah. In his conversation with Bita, Squire Gensir tells her that he is enthralled by the mumbo-jumbo of Obeah men. Bita, though a Black with her Christian inclination does not approve of Obeah, for, she is yet to free herself totally, and calls it: "an awful crime" (123). But, Squire Gensir, like a true master, points out to her that Obeah is not to be found fault with, because "it is just our civilization that makes it a crime." According to him, "Obeah is only a form of primitive superstition. Just as Christianity is a form of civilized superstition" (124).
He asks her to be tolerant about Obi and Obeah men. While inculcating pride in her for her native religion, Squire Gensir most strikingly comments on Obeah

You’re intolerant because of your education. Obeah is a part of your folklore, like your Anancy tales and your digging jammas. And your folklore is the spiritual link between you and your ancestral origin. You ought to learn to appreciate it as I do mine. My mind is richer because I know your folklore. I am sure you believe the fables of La Fontaine and of Aesop fine and literary and the Anancy stories common and vulgar. Yet many of the Anancy stories are superior. It’s because of misdirected education. (125)

Further, Bita’s “second coming” to her village, Banana Bottom, purportedly to take care of her ailing stepmother, causes her natural sexuality to resurrect and facilitates her growth to maturity. On her second visit to her village, she is in search of the right man, and for the first time in the novel, she approves of Jubban’s presence. She becomes conscious of “the existence of her father’s drayman for the first time”, admires his frank, broad, blue-Black and solid jaws, and thinks, “that it was all right for her father to have confidence in him”(115).

While re-discovering her native sexuality in BB, Bita now identifies her racial roots. In her memories, she grows nostalgic of the happiest moments of her girlhood. During her naked bath in the Cane River, she floats dreaming there between fancy and reality. As on an earlier occasion, when she longs to live in ‘her barefooted girl hood’ (59), she takes off her shoes and climbs upon the trunk, walks along it balancing herself until she reaches the pool and jumps down. Bita’s naked
bath in the Cane River is symbolic in that she casts off her Western civilisation. As in her girlhood days, she climbs up the tree. It is again symbolic in that she balances herself between the Western civilisation and native tradition on the trunk and finally jumps into the pool of native people. Thus, Bita uninhibitedly reaches to her native roots, naked. The Cane River adventure, in a way, suggests Bita’s discovery, recovery, and assertion of her self, and anticipates her maturity, both instinctive and intellectual.

Her final return to Banana Bottom resolves all her ambivalences caused by her Western education and imposed Christian beliefs. On this occasion, Banana Bottom does not just inspire her with its idyllic charms, but, teaches and helps her mature. For, Banana Bottom with the advent of Evan Vaughan’s new religious sect “The Revival” has changed tremendously. The impact of The Revival is such that:

Banana Bottom has abandoned its tea meetings dances and picnics for the salvation meetings. Couples who had been living in concubinage for years, some having even grand children of the free union, now became ashamed and miserable sinners and voluntarily separated until they should be married. So numerous were the ‘Revival’ marriages that the church kept a stock of dollar rings on hand for them. (233)

Nevertheless, untouched by the new enthusiasm for the “Revival”, yet another Western influence, Bita settles down quietly to the rural life of Banana Bottom “helping Anty Nommy to superintend the household, the drying of ginger, coffee, and cocoa, the preparing of cassava and arrowroot starch, besides practising
her music and taking long afternoon walk” (236). She spends much of her time with Squire Gensir and Teacher Fearon with whom she discusses the topics of the time. To be more precise, Squire Gensir nourishes self-love and racial pride in Bita, and makes her feel “she was also a member of the human family” (240). Further, while portraying Bita’s ambivalences in sexuality caused by her education and careful grooming, McKay sarcastically exhibits his contempt for Christianity. Squire Gensir remains his mouthpiece and functions as a guide to Bita in her endeavours to regain her lost identity.

Squire Gensir, like McKay, detests the spirit of the “Revival”, but regards it humorously as a spectacle. Evan Vaughan hopes to convert Squire Gensir and undermine his reputation by turning the ignorant Blacks against him. Squire Gensir’s embarrassment during the Revival congregation abates at the intervention of a group of Black women who are drumming and dancing. The innocent Black congregation, forgetting Squire Gensir, has been lured away from Evan Vaughan to this more primitive excitement. In his White contempt for the Blacks' native customs, Evan Vaughan detests the drum and thinks that it is “a barbarous thing” (249) and cries to stop the drumming. Bita, a mere witness to Evan Vaughan’s preaching till then, seems to be mesmerized by the common fetish spirit. For, “It was a stranger, stronger thing than that of the Great Revival”. As earlier in the tea meeting, she is absorbed in the native dance, because:

Those bodies poised straight while others transformed themselves into curious whirling shapes, seemed filled with an ancient nearly-forgotten spirit, something ancestral recaptured in the emotional
fervour, evoking in her memories of pictures of savage rites, tribal
dancing with splendid swaying plumes, and the brandishing of the
supple-jacks struck her symbolic of raised and clashing triumphant
spears. (250)

Magnetized by the spell of the dance, Bita is drawn deeper and deeper into
the inner circle "until with a shriek she fell down" (250). Before the women beat her
with a sapple - jack, Jubban rushes in and saves Bita. It is significant to note here
that McKay, while constructing the racial self of Bita, brings her closer to
Christianity, only with a view to detaching her away from its shackles in the form of
fetish dance. Further, her salvation through finding a suitable man is hinted at by
Jubban’s rescue of her – an act that may be regarded as his second natural response
to her, the first one being his confrontation with Tack Tally on the picnic.

Like Jake in HH, who completes his search for roots in his happy home –
making with Felice, Bita in BB regains her roots in her much-focussed journey of
finding a “suitable man”. In her attempts to rediscover her instinctive sexuality, her
encounter with Crazy Bow is juvenile, Herald Newton forceful, and Hopping Dick
wanton – but all are still indications of her rebellious temperament. In other words,
Bita has not yet met her “suitable man”. Similarly, the narratives of both HH and
BB, though they both aim at the happy home making of Jake and Bita respectively,
differ in their construction. For, in HH, Jake meets Felice in the beginning itself,
and all through the novel there is an anticipated hope for the reunion between Jake
and Felice. But, in BB, Bita, despite her various encounters with men, has not yet
come across the “suitable man”. To be brief, HH, in spite of Jake’s encounters in it
with women, travels back to achieve union with the little brown girl, whom he met in the beginning of the novel. It is only a journey with a known destination. But, in Bita’s case, her ‘home making’ in the form of her racial union is only a suggestion. She travels not with a definite destination, in mind but in search of one.

Incidentally, McKay’s introduction of Jubban, first as one who cares and fights for Bita, and then as a man, who rescues her from her fits, foretells that Jubban will be her real man. Jubban with his native prowess in hard labour, and his saving Bita from falling down in the “contagious” glamour of fetish dance, has gained recognition in the Jordan family as a member. Meanwhile, many suitors visit Bita, and being a Black, she does not like browns, and having matured, she refuses offers of marriage from a brown official, a pharmacist, a school master, a Black overseer and also a lessee of the vast Cane River Estate. Strangely enough, Bita does not even approve of Crazy Bow’s presence in Banana Bottom, regardless of the fact that he is her initiator in sex.

Meanwhile, Arthur Glengley, a half White, assaults Bita sexually. He grabs Bita firmly by the breast, and presses her against the bank to kiss her. Dramatically, Jubban appears, and rescues her from Arthur Glengley. His heroic rescue of Bita perhaps draws her nearer to Jubban, and she later “gathered a bouquet of sunflowers […] in Jubban’s room” (265). It is, in fact, symbolic in that Bita in her interaction with Jubban is romantic and natural.

Besides, Bita’s racial identity is propelled by her inherent hatred for the condescending White. Arthur Glengley episode helps her resolve her inner conflicts. In his outrageous attempts, Arthur 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:

How then could any class or people or nation or race claim a monopoly of a thing so precious and so erratic in its manifestations?
Oh, she marvelled at the imbecilities of a sepulchre - White world that has used every barrier imaginable to dam the universal flow of human feelings by suppressing and denying to another branch of humanity the highest gifts of nature, simply because its epidermis was coloured dark. (266)

She is so obsessed with the phrase that "she undressed and looked at her body in the long mirror". Like a woman lost in self-love, "she caressed her breasts like maturing pomegranates, her skin firm and smooth like the sheath of blossoming banana, her luxuriant hair, close - curling like thick fibrous roots, gazed at her own warm-brown eyes, the infallible indicators of real human body" (266).

Bita's innate racial conscious is obviously brought out by her sexuality. Bita, in her upbringing and beauty, remains opposite to the White's views of Black women. For being a Black, in the Whites' opinion, is amorous and an easy prey in sex, especially, to a White man because of his much-glorified skin colour. In other words, Bita, despite her White education, does not, as most Black women aspire, try to straighten her hair, and maroon her body for "passing White". But, she is,

Proud of being a Negro girl. And no sneer, no sarcasm, no banal ridicule of a ridiculous world could destroy her confidence and pride in herself and make her feel ashamed of that fine body that was the
temple of her high spirit. For she knew that she was a worthy human being. She knew that she was beautiful. (266).

Subsequently, Bita in her search for roots and reunion with her community, looks forward to an early and quiet wedding with Jubban. However, she has to wait for at least six months to complete the half-mourning period owing to her father's death. Meanwhile, Bita is pregnant and the people in the village think positively that "while girls with less education and chances were aspiring to ladylike living and trying to get away from their peasant origin, Bita had deliberately chosen to vegetate in the backwoods with a common drayman" (292). And, of course her readiness to marry Jubban, despite her education and knowledge, proves that she is racially reoriented enough to be a simple native woman.

Bita is quite natural in her perception of her individuality and so her choice of Jubban, "the uneducated" Black man, is viewed as a deliberate act to satisfy her deeper cravings of the body as well as the spirit. As Chellappan observes, the choice of Jubban is a "symbol of her reintegration with her culture and community as well as the soil: ultimately they are inseparable" (McLeod 36). Her cultural dualism, and its ambivalences - the manifestations of her otherness - are completely conquered, and in her, there is a joyful synthesis of the mind and the body for, remarkably enough, Jubban "is in no way a hindrance to the intellectual side of her life. He accepted with natural grace that she should excel in the things to which she had been educated as he should in the things to which he had been trained." By marrying Jubban, who is in harmony with himself and the environment, she re-establishes her link with her culture and true nature. To her, "[h]er music, her
reading, her thinking were the flowers of her intelligence and he the root in the earth upon which she was grafted, both nourished by the same soil" (313).

Bita's marriage with Jubban, the drayman, instead of Herald Newton towards the end of the novel, as Timothy S. Chin observes, "signals the triumph of this "natural" sexuality as much as it represents the affirmation of an indigenous Jamaican folk culture" (131). McKay's contrast between "unnatural" and "natural" sexuality in *BB* is highlighted by Bita's rejection of Herald Newton and acceptance of Jubban. Her consideration for Jubban, and her realization that her education has been "a happy waste" (314), further functions as vital points that re-establish her natural sexuality, and thereby help her resolve her inner conflicts. For, their love for each other has become "a fact without the declaration" that unifies her soul to the primitive instinct:

[They lived their life upon a level entirely different from her early romantic conception of love. Once she had thought of love as a kind of mystical force, incomprehensible. But gradually she had lost all that feeling of the quality of love, for it was a borrowed thing, an exotic imposition, not a real intrinsic thing that had flowered out the mind of her race. (312)]

Finally, Bita's embodiment as mother earth is revealed in her sensuous vitality of her new identity as a mother. Her little son Jordan symbolically reinforces her nightlong reflection on her marriage with Jubban and its cultural significance. In the morning, the "bleating" of her son awakens her. She looks at him writhing indignantly in Anty Nommy's arms, because he is angered that she has
taken him away from the mango tree. His shirt is wet and yellow with mango juice, and as a rustic child, he feels happy to be close to nature. It is symbolically significant, because the child remains himself in communion with nature in its native spirit, and rooted to the soil. But, Bita, in her childhood is deprived of this kind of communion and taken away from her native folk and its spirit by the Craigs. Now, she finds fulfilment with her child playing and growing strong with its nativeness. Her involvement with the child can be observed as her regression to the glories of the past and also her progression towards her community. Finally, Bita completing her search for identity extends it to her child as substitute gratification and plays the role of a “preacher” of her racial pride. As H.H. Anniah Gowda remarks, “while home and wholeness elude Ray, Bita retains them through a personal commitment to Jubban, through whom she reintegrates with her folk community” (46).

In short, McKay, in his novels, advocates a “Return to Blackness.” Yet, Africanness does not, as Ray suggests, involve a Garveyesque return or physical return to Africa. It is an ideological and psychological strategy to counter colonization of the mind. In brief, Jake rediscovers the potential power of his race by making a happy home, Ray through his close association with Jakes and Banjoes, and Bita by asserting her instinctive Black sexuality with Jubban.

Challenging Untouchability in the Indian context is born out of the Dalits’ thirst for freedom and quest for identity. The Untouchables are unnaturally made. The Dalits are forced into the trades of a low and degrading order such as street sweeping, scavenging and shoemaking. Some skin carcasses and eat carrion, tan
hides and skins, work in bamboo and cane and mow grass. Others, who are less fortunate, till the land as tenants or work as bonded labourers in the fields; a great number of them subsist on food and grain given to them as village servants.

Deprived of social, religious and civil rights, they have no chance of bettering their conditions and so, the Dalits live the life of miserable existence in inadequate accommodation, unsanitary surroundings and social segregation. In short, as Dhananjay Keer observes, "they were born in debt and perished in debt. They were born Untouchables, they lived as Untouchables and they died as Untouchables" (2). There is a popular belief among the Caste Hindus that even the shadows of the untouchables bring pollution. Reclaiming identity to Dalits is, therefore, not just reintegration with the community but erasing self-imposed and thrust upon denigration.

Even though the Blacks in America were uprooted from Africa and transplanted in a foreign soil and thereby dispossessed, the Dalits, the most ancient people of India, were made aliens in their own homeland. Subaltern theorists find striking points of similarities in forms and movements of resistance. They are manifest in theories and literary movements of these oppressed communities as well. Like African American literature, the Dalit literature creates self-confidence among the readers and maintains ultimate reunion with the community as a source of redemption.

In accordance with the ideas discussed so far, Janardan Waghmare finds striking similarities between the literatures of these communities. The Dalits are not racially different from the majority of Indians like the Blacks in America. Yet, the
language, religion, culture and history of the high caste have been forced on them. Since then, the Dalits continue to be a marginalized lot and could never reclaim their appropriated cultural and individual selves. For centuries, the Dalits could not get an equal share in the development and progress of their culture, religion and social life.

As Waghmare points out in his essay on “Black Literature and Dalit Literature”, the Dalits fight against the caste supremacists to rediscover and retain their identity by overcoming their self-denigration and self-hatred. It is true that Dalit literature is prominently a literature that aims at inculcating positive Dalit consciousness and creating social awareness.

In her novels, Civakâmi while constructing Dalit identity, inculcates the Dalit consciousness in her people and endeavours to create a social awakening. In his novels, McKay suggests the reintegration with the community as the possible measure to retain the racial identity and on the other hand, Civakâmi in her novels reconstructs and reclaims Dalit identity through self-pride and self-assertion. Kauri's metamorphosis into Civakâmi can be viewed as the restoration and reassertion of the caste self.

Kauri, the fictionalized alteridem of Civakâmi, in PK, at first, suffers heavily from the loss of self and collective pride in her caste. Being fostered by a male chauvinistic father, she, initially, hates him for his polygamy and later on, this leads to her self-captivity. Afraid of her father, she never invites her friends to her house, despite her juvenile enthusiasm to show them "her pet parrots and chamomile garden"(16). Paradoxically, her inner confrontation with her father
results in neglecting her caste identity. As revealed in *PK*, "she is ashamed to be born in the caste" (21), and "feels disgusted with the society" (25).

Regardless of her father's spirited involvement in politics and social activities, and the people's instantaneous appreciation of it, Kauri with her self-imposed abhorrence for him remains "ignorant of his popularity" (68), and grows antipathetic to her caste. Ironically, she turns a romantic and "the moonlight and the sweet fragrance of Jasmine have relieved her of the inexplicable sadness" (68). It is significant to note here that, Kattamuttu's attempts to settle the issues related to Tankaam's rape do not fetch any appreciation from Kauri. Instead, as an adolescent youth, in the process of forging her own identity, she ignores and defies her father. It is reverberated in the following instance. When a stranger visits her house in search of her father, she refuses to call him. Her refusal to her father and romantic escapism can thus be viewed as regression of her behaviour in which she substitutes a social task – the caste – with her aesthetic emotion and latent hatred for her father.

Later, preoccupied with her father's personal life, Kauri despises other members in the village and desires to join a college. As discussed earlier, she hopes to escape from her caste predicaments by getting immersed in the "ocean of students" in the college. It is significant in that like the middle-class Blacks in America, the educated Dalits in India, instead of inscribing their identity with pride in the casteistic society, prefer to live concealing their caste identity. Kauri, too, in the college, driven by her futile aspirations and hopes, forges her identity as a student. But, her experiences with other backward caste students, bring her back to reality. The casteism among the students and the high-caste students' congenital
contempt for the Dalits make her realize her peripheral position in the society. Yet again, as in the case of many educated Dalits, she believes in a happy harmony with the oppressors. Ironically, she ridicules the Ambedkar movement in Tamilnadu and as an alternative supports Cantiran's Marxist principles. Finally, even after becoming a lecturer, she is sceptical and incongruously yearns for the unity between the backward and scheduled castes.

However, as a matured novelist, in PKAK, Civakãmi resolves the conflicts of Kauri and makes amends by recreating the social background of PK. As a literary experiment, and first of its kind in Tamil literature, PKAK strikes a positive note on the Dalits' reintegration with the community. It is noteworthy to recall Wankhade, a Dalit critic's views. Commenting on the responsibilities of a Dalit writer, M.N.Wankhade in his article, "Friends, The Day of Irresponsible Writer is Over" is resolute that "Once man is considered the centre, it is the Dalit writer's duty to launch an intellectual attack on that society in which there is no equality, justice or brotherhood" (Dangle 317). He further, rightly points out "a writer understands who he is writing for, he understands how to write. This consciousness will impart power to his words. [...] without going after the recognition of the establishment, Dalit writers must write for the Dalit masses, for their awakening – for the Dalits, only for them" (Dangle 323).

Civakãmi, the novelist and also a character in PKAK, unlike Kauri in PK, seems to have realized her predicaments as a Dalit writer. In PKAK, unlike her previous novel PK, she asserts her individuality. In other words, PKAK is a radical
re-vision and re-version of what is dealt in PK. In her Introduction to the novel, Civakāmi expresses her objectives clearly:

This novel raises a series of questions such as

What have I regarded as a novel? Why is there a need to impose life into the story? While writing, have I kept the readers and solution to the problems in my mind? Why has there been a compulsion to distinguish between the interaction of characters of the novel and their counterparts in real men? [...] That I wrote is to identify myself, understand life and share my experiences. Now, I consider the question of writing itself is a preparation that I have consciously undertaken to confront.

In Palaiyana Kalitalum, I pictured the society in which I lived, both aesthetically and narratively. And, in it I expressed my desire for Dalit progress. Where as, in Pa Ka Ā Ku being a Dalit, I associate myself with the struggle for the abolition of casteism. The novel coordinates my thoughts and actions for the emergence of Dalits—philosophically, socially, and politically. (3)

It is significant to juxtapose the self-consciousness in African American literature with Civakāmi's PKAK. Madelyn Jablon argues that the thematicization of art in Black fiction makes a redefinition of metafiction imperative:

Black metafictionists thematicize art in several ways. They recognize artistic creation as an ongoing process. They see artistic process as a metaphor for identity and self-invention, and they focus on the
experiences of the artist rather than just on the artwork and its effects on an audience. Story tellers, musicians and painters benefit from knowledge of the past that informs them of their roles and responsibilities. (29)

It can be inferred that in PKAK, Civakâmi, the protagonist, draws attention to herself and re-lives the life, as it is presented in PK. Kauri, Civakâmi’s alter-ego, in PK, is sceptical of her caste predicaments. But, Civakâmi, while redefining herself in PKAK, expresses the harsh truth of the evils of caste system. Though an elite academic herself, she states, on various occasions, that for being a Dalit, she was ignored and insulted by others.

The social injustice that Civakâmi experienced in the past inspires her to write a Dalit novel. The answers to The Critic’s queries in the metafiction do suggest that she is naturally involved in the problems of the Dalits. As a popular maxim reads: "only the one who wears the shoe know where it bites", Civakâmi has a natural urge to write about the Dalits. Instead of narrating a story about her mentally retarded brother and ailing mother, she prefers to expose the problems of Dalits. The Critic, her rational counterpart, wonders "what makes her write about the village, caste, and suppression" (15). And, it is highlighted in the imaginary interview between The Critic and The Novelist. Civakâmi ignores the questions of personal interests and asserts to The Critic: “I am rather involved more with the problems of Dalits. My novel does speak that. Sharp questions from this subject please” (17). It is perceptible that, while constructing her Dalit identity, she
neglects her other inner conflicts, and views Dalit literature only as an assertion of
the dignity of the Dalits, who have been suppressed for ages.

Significantly, the plight of a Dalit is miserable. In her attempt to assert the
Dalit identity, Civakāmi narrates a distressing incident related to her own father,
Palanimutu, an MLA.

Her father won the general election and went to Tahsildar office. The
Tahsildar was earlier a lackey to the British Government and now to
the Government of India. He did not even offer a seat to her father
and disgraced him by addressing him without any honorific reference.

It was told, he later bemoaned how a pariah could sit equal with
him. (18)

It is agonizing that the bureaucrats abuse even a Dalit MLA. Unable to bear
the insults, Civakāmi's father weeps in silence. As mentioned earlier, the Dalits
accept their helplessness under societal compulsion. In opposing their oppressors,
they are not organized, and their fear for the caste Hindus is mortal. While
redefining his identity and Dalit politics, Palanimitu, encouraged by the District
Collector, meets the Tahsildar the next day and slaps him with his footwear. "He
does not spare the stick, and his supporters, the fellow Dalits are exultant over
this" (19). The incident is significant in that the Dalits have come out of their
shackles and gained confidence to negotiate with their oppressors to assert their
identity.
However, like Ray in **HH**, through Kauri in **PK**, Civakāmi initially feels condescendingly sorry for her fellow Dalits and disapproves of a Dalit leader’s actions. But, as she matures, she recalls her past and others’ perception of her. In addition, her introspection testifies to the fact that it is her humiliations, which make her write a Dalit novel as a form of protest against the society. Moreover, her realization of the casteistic society marks her identity as a Dalit novelist, and it brings her close to the mundane living. When the protagonist, The Critic of **PKAK** asks her, “why does she write and what is it that she does with her novel?”, The Novelist replies that she sympathizes with the poor in her novels. However, sympathy alone does not make a work of art, and she too is aware of that. She mocks at herself as follows:

"When I travel in a rickshaw, I weep for the rickshaw puller"

[..........................]

"But you should be angry, when he asks for more money"

[..........................]

"His need is not literature. I sympathize with him, and I identify myself with his sufferings. Is it not enough for you?” (52)

This conversation between The Critic and The Novelist, throws a critical light on her identity as a Dalit novelist. Her self-examination convinces her that sympathy alone does not help the Dalits and indicates her maturity as a Dalit novelist, who later regards literature as a vehicle for Dalit emancipation.
Yet, The Critic in PKAK comments that The Novelist of PK is so smothered by her personal experiences of women exploitation, and the male chauvinism that she shifts her focus from Dalit problems to the problems of women. The women in Indian society are doubly marginalized, and The Novelist tries to unravel their miseries on two contrasting social evils in the novel, namely the subordination of the Dalits and the oppression of women. Hence, she creates the character of Kattamuttu as a womanizer, and judges him from a feministic perspective. Her realization of the dichotomy and her genuine grief over the loss of her father prove that she understands her sad plight of being a Dalit more than that of being a woman. Further, it helps her rediscover and reunite with her subjugated self.

To regain their lost identity, the Dalits, at first, reject the social implications thrust upon them. While renouncing the otherness ascribed to them, the Dalits oppose their oppressors vehemently. In her college days, Civakami encounters an experience similar to that of her father. Being a member of the students' union, she keeps the results of the elocution competition with her. When she refuses to show the result to one of her fellow students prior to the official declaration, the latter expresses her upper caste's inherited hatred for the Dalits. She calls Civakami "Scheduled caste bitch" (19). It is obvious from the incidents that in a country that prides in secularism and equality, the intellectuals and the bureaucrats, generally speaking, are corrupt and caste-oriented. The corrupt are, further, hypocritical and dishonest. Civakami is perturbed by this incident. And, of course, as she expresses elsewhere, the seeds are sown in suppression and the identity of a Dalit is
constructed only through negotiating with the differences. Her resolve to encounter, instead of wailing over the high caste values, underscores the fact that the Dalits have come out of their self-denigration so as to affirm their collective identity.

Like Ray, who is humiliated and beaten by the White police officers in *Banjo*, Civakāmi and her father Paḷanimuttu are depersonalized for being Dalits. The Critic, in the *PKAK*, rightly observes that these incidents might have influenced The Novelist to write a Dalit novel, instead of a domestic comedy or a tragedy. Both, McKay and Civakāmi turn their humiliations for being Black and Dalit respectively, into creative excellence in which they correspondingly construct the oppressed self and also their much-intended salvation.

In *PK* and *PKAK*, Civakāmi attempts to rediscover her wholesome human self-identity, and in her attempts, she portrays her own bitter experiences with the upper caste people. Her novels are essentially an exploration of Dalit consciousness, and as a part of protest literature, they construct Dalithood quite assertively.

Further, as a writer, too, Civakāmi surmounts the differences prevailing in the literary arena. Like Ray, who intends to write a Black novel and thereby remain apprehensive in *HH* and *Banjo*, Civakāmi, in *PKAK*, expresses the ordeal of being a Dalit writer who writes Dalit stories. It is pertinent here to record Saratchandra Mukti Bodh's views on Dalit Literature:

- Dalit literature is the literature produced by the Dalit consciousness.
- Human freedom is the inspiration behind it.[...] A feeling of rebellion is invariably accompanied by an extreme psychological commitment.
As Dalit sensibility seeks to bring about compatible changes in the social consciousness, it is rebellious as well as fundamentally optimistic and revolutionary. The Dalit sensibility shows deep concern for the Dalit point of view and an outstanding work of Dalit literature would be born only when Dalit life would present itself from the Dalit point of view. [...] It is essential for him to experience a Dalit insight of his own, through it. (Dangle 267)

The trauma of the Dalit mind is portrayed in order to express the creative affinities and limitations of the Dalit novelist. Civakami narrates her experiences of writing as a student. Once she participated in a short-story writing competition. She was asked to write a short story under the title "Milk is White". However hard she tried, she could not write a story in the allotted time:

Words do fail her and she finds it very hard to write even a single sentence. When she closes her eyes ruminating, only the sheep and goats enthral her. Her thoughts are laden with the native images. And, she can write only her nativeness. She relates only the incidents like picking the chillies, and taking a mud bath in the canal. (43)

Later, when she writes the story of a shepherd, she is sarcastically asked to reveal her relationship with the shepherd, and, thereby she gets identified with the shepherd’s profession for being a Dalit. She narrates this incident in order to highlight the domination of the high caste perception of what literature is.

Like her natural themes, the Dalit discourse in her writings is also criticised sharply by the elitists. It maybe presumed that the writer and her writings are
identified with her caste, and hence ranked low among other writers and their works of art. It is painful that the publisher, while printing *Palaiyana Kalitalum* has altered the language on many occasions for its native fervour. When she asks about this, as recorded in *PKAK*, the publisher claims: "The language is not civilized" (48). Her honest revelations prove that she is not affected and at last, she is aware of her inadequacies as a Dalit novelist. Her realization that she once yielded to the high caste publisher's literary "acumen" confirms the fact that she will never give up her natural discourse for the condescension of the high caste hereafter.

It is worth mentioning that Dalit literature demands a realistic perception of the Dalit identity in its theme and language. It should not for any reason, replace the habits and feelings, thinking and aiming by another set of habits, which belong to the strangers who dominate them. Cultural conflicts and problems of cultural assimilation should not impede the natural presentation of Dalit writings. It is obvious that Civakãmi, an influential novelist, has overcome the concern for literary recognition and does make bold attempts to be one of the pioneers of Dalit literature in Tamil.

In this context, it is fitting to recall the views of Harish Mangalam, a Gujarati Dalit writer on Dalit literature. In an interview he maintains, "Dalit writers are concerned about 'perspiration' than 'inspiration!'. In its preoccupation with fostering and upholding human values, it cannot afford to be a decorative piece of consumer article. Dalit literature is not 'lalit' literature or literature for entertainment" (Sherif 71). It is to be noted here that the most significant works in
the 1990s have come from Dalit writers. Yet, they remain unrecognized by the elitists. Though their contribution to Tamil literature is substantial, Tamil Dalit writers do never secure the recognition due to them. It is also to be observed here that in the literary arena, too, Dalit writings are regarded as 'low literature'. Fittingly enough, Civakāmi, in PKAK, expresses the cultural differences and hardships that she has encountered to establish herself as a Dalit writer. And, in it she reveals commitment and pride.

Like Ray in Banjo, Civakāmi in PKAK, by shedding her differences, resolves her inner conflicts and emerges as a perfect community worker and a Dalit novelist. It is obvious that being the creators of a committed literature, Dalit writers, of course, have to involve themselves in social and political activities to a considerable extent. As the reins of cultural and literary movements are generally in the hands of the upper classes and castes, people usually accept the values set by them. Considering the history of Indian literature, the ordinary man from the lower classes is out of the picture, and his life, experiences and feeling are never the subject of art. Further, whenever such people have been portrayed, the depiction is distorted. Dalit writers, therefore, should realize at first, the impediment, and rationalize the Dalit consciousness in his writings.

In this sense, Civakāmi, in PKAK, has realized her insignificant presentations of Dalit characters like Kāttamuttu and Kauri in PK, and through the words of The Critic in PKAK, she reasserts her original Dalithood. The Critic condemns The Novelist, "You laughed at the pariah servant in Uṇiyar’s house. The way that he eats is ridiculous to you. [...] Even you, demean a Pariah!" (80).
warns The Novelist of the awful references made to the Dalit characters in PK and rightly advises her to "keep her away from the made-up needs and view every thing independently" (81). The self-realization that the Dalit consciousness is not properly imparted in PK bears witness to the fact that, in the process of realigning her identity, Civakāmi in PAKAK "alienates herself from her earlier creation"(82) in order to rewrite the untold stories of the past and thereby recreate the Dalithood positively.

Dalit writers, as they are politically committed, need to reinforce and reflect the vain, pretentious, ritualistic and cosmetic society that suppresses them. Dalit literature is an integral part of the Dalit culture. However, in traditional literature, there is no place for the Dalits. In addition, the Dalits are depicted by the upper caste writers as sick people. Ironically enough, the readers get the impression from their writings that the Dalits themselves are responsible for their wretchedness. As Pāmā, a Dalit woman novelist rightly points out "The literature of the dominating castes can never voice the demand for the liberation of Dalits. [...] In the history of the dominants, there is no place for the culture, art, language cult and literature of Dalits. Therefore, every dominant literature should be inverted" (94).

Understandably, Civakāmi, in the process of constituting her identity as a Dalit novelist, subverts the established literary canons, and deliberately condemns the so-called "decency" in language. Further, decency is the most suffocating term for Dalits, and it does stifle the Dalit voice. As Pāmā asserts, "The Dalit language is decent for Dalits. The oppressor's decency is indecent to Dalits" (98). Civakāmi's realization that there is nothing wrong in portraying the reality using the language of
the common people rather than that of the elites establishes the fact that she is matured in her perception as a Dalit novelist. Further, her admission that she is immature in writing her first Dalit novel signifies that she is committed to write for Dalit development in future.

As a Dalit novelist, in PKAK, Civakāmi bravely confronts the literary differences, and proudly and triumphantly emerges as a Dalit novelist. She resolves her creative conflict by asking, "Can't any one write some thing as it happens? Can't it be termed literature?" (42). She, further, disassociates herself from the archaic "decent" terminology found in the traditional literature. It is evident, in her school days, when she struggles inwardly, to write a short story in the competition. She wonders: "Why does her usual poetic language fail her this time? Am I drained off? Have I forgotten the poetic terms like, moon, spring, and dream?" (43). Her realization that those words are cut off from her life indicates that in negotiating with the cultural differences in the process of creation, she cannot even pretend to be a poet in the traditional sense. For, hers is a literature of liberation in the language of people.

To be brief, the creative conflict of what to write and how to present is not just a query in the mechanism behind creation. On the other hand, it leads her to understand and assert her caste identity. And, the subaltern discourse in the novels is, certainly, a means to search for the self, which has been suppressed for centuries. Ray, in HH, wishes to write about his race and express his self through his writings. It remains a dream to be achieved still in Banjo. But, Civakāmi matures from the sceptical notions of Kauri to the convictions of Civakāmi, the Dalit novelist. Like
Ray, who admires the Black’s speech in both *HH* and *Banjo*, Civakāmi also admires the language of the Dalit for their unconscious artistic capacity, and deliberately eliminates the rotten dead stock of the traditional literature.

Subsequently, she narrates an incident exemplifying her stance. Paccai Ammāl, her relative and classmate, in the school drama plays a male role. Instead of rendering a dialogue "the girl from Bombay", she alters it unconsciously as "Bombay strumpet". The school later passes a resolution not to enlist "those girls" (48) in the drama hereafter. This incident testifies to the fact that Civakāmi, influenced by the caste differences present everywhere, understands the liveliness and the vitality of Dalit literature, and therefore, justifies her stand and forces her intellect to be natural and essentially instinctual.

The communal consciousness of Civakāmi in *PK* is at ebb but it flows freely in *PKAK*. For, it helps her rediscover her Dalit identity and reminds her of the oppression by the upper caste. The Novelist claims to The Critic in *PKAK* that "the soul of *PK* lies in its call for unity among the working class. The caste system will vanish if the working class unite together" (33). Kauri, too, in *PK*, calls for the unity between the two peasant communities —Vannīars and Parayars — and she is optimistic that this "integration", though a hard one to achieve, will create a brave new world.

The Critic in *PKAK* has a different perspective and reminds The Novelist that her intellectual responses to the problems of untouchability and Dalit subservience will not in any way help them. It is true that the Dalits like the Blacks, are "a born mistake" and they both are, no doubt, "born slaves". Untouchability is
practised not on the basis of economy, intelligence, profession and appearance as in the case of the Blacks so explicitly, but, on the other hand, the oppression is religious, social, and cultural because of the circumstances of one's birth in the community. Civakāmi's admission that the problems of the Dalits are unique and they cannot be associated with the problem of any working class. She maintains that she has realized her mistakes of creating Cantiran as a foil to Kāttamuttu and making him a success at the expense of a Dalit leader. Further, it seems that Civakāmi resolves her inner doubts over Dalit politics and renounces that Marxism by itself does not help the Dalits' emergence (87), and so, is the communal harmony between the peasant communities.

Finally, in PKAK, Civakāmi, like Ray in HH and Banjo, in her reassertion to write a Dalit novel, resolves the problems of her intellect by totally identifying herself with the Dalit community. In the last part of the novel, to a question by The Critic, she answers assertively accepting her Dalit identity:

"What is your name?"

"Civakāmi, Civakāmi, Civakāmi"

"What is your caste, clan and community?"

"All the three, to me, are one - Parayar". (90)

In short, by analyzing the creative process behind the novel PK and proudly identifying with her caste, Civakāmi, in PKAK, recreates the past in her favour to reassert and retain the Dalit identity both as a person and as a writer.
In sum, Civakāmi’s PK and PKAK can be considered as novels of conflict—self-orientation versus collectivity-orientation. Alcott Parsons observes this social dichotomy as the “dilemma of private versus collective interests, or the distribution between private permissiveness and collective obligation” (qtd. in Dictionary of Sociology 375). It is an opposition between personal interests and group interests in social situations. For, the individual, in a given situation, is smothered by this dilemma of whether to pursue his own personal interests and goals or subordinate his private interests to the interests and welfare of a group or other individuals. In PK, Civakāmi is preoccupied with her personal interest, as a woman suffering in a male chauvinistic society, and in PKAK, she attempts to surmount her personal conflicts in the wake of a social interest—Dalit emancipation. Hence, in PKAK, she recreates the situations intentionally, and tries to re-live them as a Dalit novelist. In addition, she realizes the subjugation of her Dalit self, and in an attempt to reorient her Dalithood, she recaptures her past to negotiate with the constructed otherness and thereby asserts her Dalit identity.

Hence, both McKay and Civakāmi advocate the return to native tradition and self-assertion as possible measures to regain the Blacks’ and the Dalits’ lost identity, caused by racial and casteistic suppression. In brief, all the novels discussed so far revolve around the central themes, such as, emergence and realization of the self, negotiation with the constructed otherness and reintegration with the community as the denominators for the rediscovery of the identity. The cycle is complete, leading to a mature self-awareness.