Chapter II

Realisation of the Self

The subject is the space demarcated by the ‘I’, understood as a sense of identity, a selfhood which is coherent, stable, rational and unified. Based upon this sense of individuality [...] it is believed that people possess agency and can use their capacities to alter, shape and change the world in which they live. (Woods 9)

Quest for identity begins with one’s realization of the self. For, the realization by an individual helps him/her regulate the emotional experiences, thoughts, feelings and actions. The present chapter, “Realisation of the Self” examines diverse concepts of the self as propounded by various theorists down the centuries, with a view to relating them to a study of the self in the novels of Claude McKay and Civakāmi. In the process, it is discussed that the self, an essentially human attribute, discovers and establishes itself only in its interaction with the other and the community.

Cultural theorists argue that the self is predominantly the character of a person and the individual consciousness of a being. It is linked to the issues of subjectivity and identity. The notion of the self is invoked as soon as the subject begins its quest for identity.

David Hume, in his Treatise of Human Nature accounts that the self is not an entity independent of sensations, but it is a kind of interpretation of the sensations, and hence it is mortal. He further claims in his “bundle theory” that the self is nothing more than a bundle of sense impressions that continually changes as the individual has new experiences or recalls the old ones (251-263). Nietzsche, in
his *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 16, argues that the self is always to be comprehended as a "being" situated within particular contexts and, therefore, the product of human culture, which forms the basis of experience and therefore knowledge (172).

Like Nietzsche, Emile Durkheim, in his *The Division of Labour in Society*, equates modern understanding of individuality to the self-understanding of humans in modern society, and argues that the individual is the product of a society, but the society is not the product of individuals and hence, the product of a particular culture (24).

Michel Foucault argues that the self, known as the subject, is an effect of the relations of power. To him, social forces and relationships constitute the self. In other words, all conceptions of subjectivity are dependent upon political, social and cultural factors. In general, the structuralists and post structuralists like Lacan, Althusser and Foucault, explore the nature of self-identity. It is linked to identity politics.

The recognition that identity depends upon the other, has opened up the theoretical space for marginal or oppressed groups to challenge and renegotiate with the differences that have been forced upon them in the process of domination. Recent cultural studies also insist that ethnic, racial and gender identities and gay and lesbian identities can be brought into the process of political change.

The protest literature by the African Americans and the Dalits has been an effective vehicle for the writers to express their inner consciousness. Over the years, writings about the Blacks and the Dalits by others, especially, by their
antagonists – White and high caste Hindus respectively – have generally portrayed them only as “objects”. Of late, the Black and the Dalit writers’ burgeoning consciousness has made noticeable dents in this other representation, and made progress tilting the balance by portraying the Blacks and the Dalits as the subjects of their own history. Their works attempt to regain their full human self-identity – not as slaves made out by tradition, but masters of their own destiny.

The writers, while revealing their belongingness and subjectivity in their works, redefine the identity of the Blacks and the Dalits. As Eugene C. Homes in his article on Langston Hughes states:

Poets are the antennae of the race. Their creations, the most sensitive registers of spiritual and social well-being or malaise, are like water drawn from the spring of people, which is given back to them in a cup of beauty so that they may drink and in drinking, understand themselves. [...] He makes his art responding to the imperatives among an oppressed people. (151)

Likewise, as psychological and social documents, the Black and the Dalit literatures express the psychic state of the people, who are on the point of acquiring self-awareness and beginning to articulate their demand for social and cultural emancipation. In short, African American Literature and Dalit literature in Tamil are the artistic manifestations of the quest for the Black and the Dalit identities.

McKay’s novels are an authentic record of a creative process initiated, executed, and completed under the active and purposeful influence of the Black society. His novels, *HH, Banjo* and *BB* identify, define, and illustrate the complex
entity, namely, the Black – something that has not been previously perceived as a theme fit for literature until The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. As Emmanuel S. Nelson points out, “McKay’s three novels, individually and collectively, can be viewed as an integrated record of his own private struggle to clarify his personal and political realities in order to construct a healing, and liberating sense of identity” (McLeod 106).

The novelist’s quest for identity and his struggle to find a suitable space for the Blacks are revealed through the displaced and marginalized Black characters living in the Black diaspora obtaining in Harlem in America, Marseilles in France and Jubilee in Jamaica. The Black identity and its liberating force as perceived and propounded by Claude McKay in his novels find their expression in three intersecting socio-psychological mechanisms of identity, namely,

* perceiving oneself as an extension of another,
* unifying oneself with another individual or group, and
* transferring of one’s character into the space and time of another,

resulting in assimilation of another’s personalised meanings.

The above mentioned socio-psychological denominators – perception, identification, extension, and integration play a major role in the construction of the self. In the process, McKay delineates the formation of the racial self and constructs it through the protagonist’s sexual, political, and cultural orientation. Obviously, this ontogenesis of McKay is enormously complex. It has its roots in his subjugated colonial experience, his precarious position as a rootless and exiled Black
intellectual in the Imperial West, his sexual ambivalence, and his rebellious temperment, as discussed below.

McKay’s *HH* is essentially a novel of maturation and it aims at constructing Black identity through its protagonists namely Jake and Raymond alias Ray. The novel, at first, focuses on Jake’s picaresque adventures through Harlem. His joyous affirmation of life in Harlem, his reunion with Felice, and his bitter experience of being a Black in America are in striking contrast to the alienation and intellectual impotence of Ray. The Black identity, in *HH*, is constructed through the formation of Jake’s selfhood through his search for pleasure in Harlem, the actualization of his Bohemian self, his home making with Felice, his materialistic search in the Rail Road, and his education by Ray and his subsequent self-realisation.

Jacob Brown, known as Jake, is obsessed with his own daydreams of going over top, but ironically, he is forced into the lowest and hardest sort of life. Being a Black soldier in the American White army, he is not given a chance to fight, but reduced to a mere manual labourer. He finds, “toting planks, and getting into rows with his White comrades [is] not adventure” (331). Later, as a stoker in France, he is seized with an awful fever of loneliness. He is convinced that hobnobbing with the Whites is not Black folk’s affair. Frustrated with the American army, he deserts it, and disgruntled again, he decides to return to Harlem - “his adopted urban home” (3).

Significantly, Jake’s return is similar to that of McKay from Jamaica, Russia, and France - “a long way to home, Harlem”. Returning to Harlem after two years, Jake is “thrilled”, and he feels “as happy as a prince all the same” (15).
In Harlem, he feels himself a whole man: “[h]e in his frame and atmosphere Alpha and Omega himself and a unique type of humanity” (234). He is responsive and receptive to the seductive charms of Harlem. Being a rural Black, Jake obviously takes life easy: “Take it easy....take it easy life. Sometimes he was disgusted with life, but he was never frightened of it” (105). He is alcoholic, even tries opium and gambles in the speakeasies of Harlem to gratify his natural instinct for being his racial self.

In his quest for identity, love and sex are clearly therapeutic, and they initiate, invigorate and sustain his self-restorative journey in Harlem. As Elmer Lueth observes, “Jake’s sexual prowess runs like a red thread through the entire novel as he roams through the Harlem life” (45).

In the process of constructing his self, the racial self, Jake encounters Felice first. In his union with her, he experiences perfect bliss of his race in the fruition of natural sex. She initiates his eventual re-unification with his roots and race through her sincere love for him. She is not the first woman in his life. Earlier, a White woman in the East of London just made him feel lonesome. Naturally enough, he finds Felice, the little brown girl, “ravishing, beautiful and responsive”. In addition, with her, he is in “a state of perfect peace” (15). Though seemingly a wanton wanderer, Jake, the Black as a questor finds in Felice his first initiator.

In contrast, Jake’s associations with Congo Rose -- “a ‘sweet-lovin’ high yaller queen” (36), and later with Madame Laura are brief but self-revelatory. Rose bristles with tireless activity, and she looks upon Jake as her good slave. She identifies her feminine sexual self with Jake’s masculinity. She willingly submits
herself to humiliations and tortures at his hands. Ironically enough, her masochist sexual identity suffers a blow when confronted with Jake’s connoisseur sexual self. Congo Rose is desperately hopeful about her life with Jake. She asserts her matriarchal ways of life, and wants him to live in the usual sweet Negro way, “to be brutal and beat her up a little, and take away her money from her” (113). But, unable to cope with her, he decides to leave Rose determined to preserve the worth of his self in tact.

Further, in seeking pleasure and identifying himself with his primitive emotional self, Jake stands in sharp contrast to Zeddy, his friend and fellow soldier in the American army. Zeddy lives in the Myrtle Avenue with Susy – a racial exotic of civilization owing to miscegenation. Curiously, though Susy believes in free love and she warns Zeddy against the hussies of her race. Zeddy’s forceful eviction from Susy’s house stands in sharp contrast with Jake’s sensible parting with Rose. Though emotional, Jake’s parting from Rose enables him to realise and rationalise his emotional self. It also signifies a growth in Jake. Obviously, it leads him towards his ultimate goal – home making with Felice. Zeddy, on the other hand, lacks the knowledge and aristocracy of Jake. The narrative of Zeddy and Susy highlights Jake’s impeccable union with Felice.

The dichotomy between Zeddy and Jake, as evidenced in their attempts to identify their inner, emotional, instinctive selves remains disparate. Zeddy’s attempt to make home with Susy is a failure, because he is not true to his instinct and emotion. He is not natural and his affair with Susy is highly opportunistic, and hence devoid of spirit. On the other hand, Jake possesses a sure instinct for the right
rhythm. He is connoisseur enough, and therefore, “although he had tasted such a varied many he was not raw animal enough to be undiscriminating, nor civilized enough to be cynical” (311).

The entire narrative of the instinctive emotional life of the Blacks, in HH, is structured around Jake’s search for Felice. It is, in essence, a quest for a symbolic communion with his roots. Jake’s journey, searching for a suitable woman, may be interpreted as a journey of a Black masculinity in formation. Crosby regards it, “as a sort of pilgrim’s progress in which a number of threatening embodiments of the female and feminine have to be negotiated” (749). Jake’s search for identity is liberally punctuated with his sexual encounters with Felice, Congo Rose, and Madame Laura, and this search for identity becomes complete and sublimated, when he meets Felice again in the third part of the novel. Naturally, Jake’s sexual self is not to quieten until he meets Felice.

In Philadelphia, Jake encounters Madame Laura. Despite her age, he considers her a wonder. Her attitude towards her eleven-year-old son and Jake is the same, except for the fact that she makes sexual advancements with the latter. In Laura, Jake’s sexual and Oedipal self find fulfilment. His love for her issues only from his biological needs. Both identify themselves with their natural, sexual and racial selves. In sex, Jake prefers “the nigger’s way every time”, for “[t]hey does it better” (202). Laura, too “got no loving inclination for any skin but Chocolate” (199).
Jake has not made his home still, and in his attempt at home making, he detests both Rose and Laura. He is convinced that he cannot settle with women like Rose and Laura as their prancing he-man. Maybe, it is the lack of a steady girl that keeps him running crazy around. Further, Rose “lacked the charm and verve the infectious joy of his little lost brown” (41) – Felice. Though she is of “all a wonderful tissue of throbbing flesh”, he never finds in her “any tenderness or timidity or aloofness” (42).

Jake’s love for Felice is the kind of “all men who love love for love’s sake can feel” (280). His longing and the resultant anxiety cease on his meeting with Felice in the symbolic chapter, “Spring in Harlem”. His meeting with Felice brings spring to his life. Though he is still responsive and receptive to the seductive charms of Harlem, he emerges as a “sweet papa” to her. His journey is complete, and he has a sense of fulfilment and fullness: “His mind was a circle containing the girl, and himself only making a thousand, and plans of the joys they would create together. She was a prize to hold” (311).

Felice, too, as a Black female and individual, justifies Jake’s relentless longing for “holy communion” with her. Jake views her body with admiration and passion, for, “her body is bound to renew and revive the troubled and lost Black male”. She is, in fact, “finer than the finest” (70). He finally decides to make in peace the home that he longs for with Felice. Towards the end of the novel, Zeddy’s disclosure that Jake is a war deserter prompts Felice to assert her essential womanhood. She justifies Jake’s action and consoles him, saying “you done to the right thing, honey, and I’se with you and I love you the more for that” (332). She
asserts her authentic African womanhood, reflecting on Jake’s views that “women were so realistic and straight going. They were the real controlling force of life” (70). Obviously, she transforms herself from being a mere prostitute to a figure of wholesome sexuality and racial pride. She urges Jake to leave Harlem for Chicago with her and “get lost in” (332).

Towards the last part of the novel, Felice simply mesmerizes Jake and leads him along on his path to salvation through merger with the race. Jake inwardly feels bitter for Harlem and regards it, still, as “simple, raw emotions and real” (338). Seeking better prospects they both leave Harlem for Chicago. Fortunately enough, he is ultimately saved by Felice from being doomed to shame and punishment as a war deserter. At length, in his attempt at home making, Jake unifies his self with that of Felice.

Jake’s encounters with the three women namely, Felice, Congo Rose, and Madame Laura, help him rediscover his primitive joy and instinctive desire. Of the three, Rose and Laura are portrayed as caterers for the perverted passions and needs of men. Rose, remains a barbaric masochist insisting on physical pleasures, and Madame Laura satisfies Jake’s natural and oedipal selves, caring and caressing him. In contrast, Felice holds Jake’s Bohemian self in check. She, with her distinctiveness, is identified as a woman, who can sublimate his primitive sexual desire by catering at once to his biological and spiritual needs. She is instrumental in effecting a shift in his self from being a wolf sniffing Harlem to becoming a home-man. It is evident that the women characters in III, while asserting their subjectivity contribute towards the construction of Jake’s self-identity. As Jonathan
Culler, while discussing the process of identity, identification and subject observes, "the individuals discover who they are not by learning something about their past but by acting in such a way that they become what they are" (113). Obviously, Jake and his female counterparts discover their selves only in their active participation of life.

Besides his happy home making, Jake's identity is also constituted by his material self. As a proletariat Black, Jake is honest and trustworthy. He does not scab the strike by the White labourers, and at the same time, he refuses to join the White union because of their racial discrimination. Jake's proletariat self is worth contrasting with that of Zeddy. During the strike, Zeddy bursts out in sheer frustration, "I'll scab through hell to make mah living [...] White mens don't want niggers in them unions" (48). Despite the differences in their outlook, both Jake and Zeddy, the Black proletariats, denounce American capitalism for its exploitation and oppression of the Blacks.

In the railroad, Jake's proletariat self and his racial consciousness are obviously revealed by McKay through a carefully constructed episode, "The treeing of the Chef". The Black Chef fondly apes the Whites and does not fancy pork chops and eat water melon, because the Whites call it "the niggers' ice cream"(162). He is treed by his own crews and sent to another car as a second cook. The "rhinoceros" is thus transformed into a mere Black lamb, and the Pantry man hopes, "there aint another down-home nigger like him in this, white man's service" (187).
Ironically, the Chef’s episode and Jake’s job as a third cook in the railroad remain a source for constructing Jake’s Black identity in his materialistic search. On the railroad, quite conscious of himself and his position, Jake “rubbed smoothly along with the waiters by remaining himself and not trying to imitate the Chef nor taking his malicious advice” (125). His job in the railroad is, of course, a way out for him “to break the hold that Harlem had upon him” (125). In his search for material identity, he does not aspire for too much this time, and he reconciles with himself. An angry youth, he detests the high-handedness of the White officials and later as a war deserter, he accepts his being a cook doing “his bit in diplomatic silence” (163).

In his search for pleasure in Harlem, Jake, being a natural exponent, stands for the best that Harlem has to offer. By the end of Part I, his need for sensual relief is secured and gratified through Felice. As for the material aspects of his life, he is contented and they are regulated by his 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” exemplify his sympathy for his fellow beings, empathy for the Blacks, and in fine, his racial consciousness.

Jake’s quest for identity and construction of self are further reinforced by his self-education. Soviet Marxist psychologists Petrovsky, A.V. and M.G. Yaroshevsky define self-education as:

"The control by the subject of his own activity in order to change his own personality in conformity with his consciously set
goals and established ideals and beliefs. It implies a definite level of
personality development and self-consciousness, and also the
individual’s ability to analyze by consciously comparing his own
actions with those of other people; self-education also assumes a
stable attitude towards perpetual self-perfection. (CPD 227)

In the light of the above definition, Jake emerges as a consummate self-educator.
During the process of self-education, he consciously compares his instinctive self
with Ray’s intellectual self and strives to achieve self-perfection.

Jake, as he evolves in the novel, has the potential to change. In his wanton
way of living he is like a “crazy ram goat” (206), despises even prophylactics as
“kill joy things” (206) and contracts syphilis, like McKay himself (Tillery 78). Ray
observes Jake as “a handsome hound, quick to snap up any tempting morsels of
poisoned meat thrown carelessly on the pavement” (228-29). Nevertheless, the
friendship that blossoms between them saves Jake from utter self-destruction.

Jake meets Ray first on the railroad. He is astonished to see a “Negro” that
too, a waiter, engrossed in reading. Jake’s education begins, when Ray honours both
Wordsworth and Toussaint. With a view to inculcating racial pride in Jake, Ray
informs him on the French writer Alphonse Daudet and the leaders of the Blacks in
Haiti. Drawn by Ray’s words, Jake “sat like a big eager boy”(131) and listens with
rapt attention to Ray’s narration of the revolution by the Blacks and the Black
warrior Toussaint L’ Ouverture. He expresses his wish excitedly thus: “A Black
man! A Black man! Oh! I wish I’d been a soldier under sich a man” (132). These
words prove that Jake is willing to change, and change for the better.
Jake, has never moved with the educated previously, for, “the educated ‘dick-tees’ in Jake’s circles were often subjects for raw and funny sallies” (164). But interestingly enough, despite the Chef’s assimilative attitude, Jake, stays and keeps working in the dining car in the railroad, because, “Ray had begged Jake to stay on” (163).

However, on many occasions, Ray keeps himself away from the infectious enthusiasm of Jake. He also keeps himself aloof from Madame Laura and refuses to indulge in free sex like Jake. But, Ray with his reticence, acts more as a super-ego, and many a time warns Jake against his bohemian self. He condemns Jake for his epicurean life and admonishes him saying, “I know you love your life too much to make a fool of yourself” (222). At the same time, he also inculcates self-awareness in Jake. Above all, Ray is sympathetic towards Jake, and visits him every day when the latter takes ill. When he cannot get round to see Jake, he asks his girlfriend Agatha to go and help Jake. Agatha reminds Jake of his “little sister down home in Petersburg” (209). For the first time, women cease to be mere sexual objects to him. Agatha creates in Jake a kind of self-respect, and inspires him to go ahead with his home making with the little brown girl, Felice.

Jake’s meeting with Agatha is significant in that it has an everlasting effect on Jake. Feeling a vacuum inside, he becomes nostalgic and is reminded of his mother and sister in the village. His sense of loss in urban life is reflected in his recapturing the past. “He thought first of his mother. His sister. The little frame house Petersburg. The backyard of bleached clothes on the line, the large lilac tree and the little forked lot that yielded red tomatoes and green peas in spring” (216).
In part II of **HH**, Ray remains a source of education for Jake and resolves Jake's inner conflicts. Jake has no more encounters with women, and he is torn between his audacious instinctive emotional self and the intellectual self that he acquired from Ray. He is fed up with Rose, Laura and Harlem. As he declares, "It is a stinking life, and I don't like stinks" (242).

Educated by Ray, Jake comes a long way from Harlem and frees himself from its perilous impact on him. Though Jake instinctively knows the breaking point, and the way to stop, this knowledge is fostered further by Ray to facilitate his self-education. Jake once a happy prince, a dopeheed and a gambler, now despises all this owing to his self-education under Ray's tutelage. The result is that "[g]ambling did not have a stranglehold upon him any more than dope or desire did". Now he chooses, "what he wanted of whatever he fancied and... [k]ept going" (269).

Jake realizes his past, and under Ray's tutorship, distinguishes his instinctive emotional self from the "non-self" of intellectual responses to life. By being rational, he is aware of his non-identity. He expresses the loss he has suffered due to lack of education on the eve of Ray's ocean-bound departure. In "A Farewell Feed" to Ray, Jake reveals his helplessness and assures Billy, his friend that education "sure Ise human" and he will not be "a wolf again" (273).

It is significant to note here that the formation of Jake's self, in **HH**, involves the use of techniques of self-education such as self-commitment, self-account and self-control. He sets his unification with Felice as a goal towards self-commitment and pursues the same for attaining self-perfection. He introspects on his instinctive
self of the past. After his education from Ray, he comprehends objectively the significance of his own behaviour and activities in Harlem. Finally, he launches himself into the process of self-control and resolves not to be a prey to his instinct again.

The search for Black identity, in **HH**, is not confined only to the emotional, instinctive Negritude as portrayed in the character of Jake. McKay splits his protagonists into the man of emotion, Jake, and man of intellect, Ray. As Tillery observes, “The novel can be viewed as a biographical statement about McKay’s own inner conflicts. Through Jake and Ray, McKay expresses his own ambivalences, tensions, and status as a marginal man” (85). The formation of Ray’s self, in **HH**, is innately constructed through the following socio-psychic mechanisms: his sense of alienation and cultural ambivalence, his sexual and racial consciousness, his ambition to write, and his reconciliation with Jake’s emotional self.

McKay, in his letter to William Aspenwall Bradley, his literary agent, underscores the importance of Ray in his novels, “Ray…. [g]ives me a chance to let myself go a little” (Cooper 235). Ray is McKay’s political and philosophical spokesperson and, through him, McKay reveals his unresolved self artistically.

Ray’s sense of alienation and loss of cultural heritage in Harlem arise from his national difference and scholarship. He was born in Haiti, which was grabbed by the United States in World War I. His father, an official in Haiti, was killed by American Marines. Consequently, he was left a wandering orphan in the U.S. He 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. Being in the U.S., he feels, as if he were “an owl flying by day” and observes, “Howard University was a prison with white warders” (157).

Initially, Ray cannot identify himself with the Blacks in the barrack room and the dining car because of his intellectual inhibition. Reciprocally, other cooks and Blacks isolate him from their normal collective self. Despite his education, he is unable to find satisfaction and hence considers himself a “misfit” and gives to “constant dreaming” (274). His freethinking accentuates his sense of alienation further. 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 consoles him saying, “Forget it! […] Christ was one too, and we all worship him” (176). Hence, it is evident that his education and freethinking have made him an exile even in the religious context. As the Pantry man observes, his indifference to religion is due to “l’arning in them books” (176).

Apart from his alienation, racial consciousness and ambition to write, Ray’s sexual ambivalence also forms his self. In his biography of McKay’s life, Wayne F. Cooper claims that McKay is both homosexual and heterosexual. As he explains, McKay rarely discussed homosexuality in his writings. “McKay never openly explored nor publicly acknowledged homosexuality as an aspect of his personal life; it inevitably emerged indirectly in his published novels and short stories” (75). In HH, McKay portrays his sexual ambivalence mainly through Ray. Regarding McKay’s introduction of the character Ray, Suzette A. Spencer says, “there are
several implications that Ray is battling with homo erotic desire but represses these
urges beneath abstract theoretical dreams and philosophical discussions each time he finds himself in proximity to Jake” (183).

In HHI Part II, Ray introduces Jake to Daudet’s lesbian character Sappho. In appreciating the significance of Daudet’s story, Ray gloats on the homosexual subject, and ruminates, “Sappho gave two lovely words to modern language... Sapphic and Lesbian... beautiful words”(129). This discussion on sexuality may be suggestive of Ray’s latent homosexuality.

When Ray and Jake spend a night in Madame Laura’s lodging in Philadelphia, Ray finds that he cannot be touched by the sensual spirit of the atmosphere. Yet, he longs to be like Jake to “fall naturally into the rhythm” (194). When pursued by a woman seductively, Ray is held back. Curiously enough, he loses himself in “some sensual dream of his own [...] Like Black youth burning naked in the bush” (196). Here is an instance of the homosexual streak in Ray.

Ray’s affair with Agatha is inexplicable and obviously conditioned by his sexual ambivalences. Jake with his natural instinct considers Agatha, “some wonderful brown” (211). She sows a seed of hope for home making in Jake. But, for some strange reason, Ray perceives Agatha as a menace “and a fever in his flesh” (264). He refuses to marry Agatha, because, he sees marriage as a trap of complacency and atrophy that would make him “one of the contented hogs in the pigpen of Harlem, getting ready to litter little Black piggies”. He helplessly asserts, “he and Agatha were slaves of the civilized tradition” (263). And, at the same time, unable to respond to Agatha’s feeling for him “he hated Agatha and, for escape
wrapped himself darkly in self-love” (264). It might be argued that Ray, unable to yield to his natural sexual instinct, considers Agatha as the reason for his sexual indifference in Philadelphia, but when it does matter with Agatha, he escapes with the much dreaded homo erotic self love, his own dream, and arguably his depleted racial consciousness. Perceivable in him is a streak of narcissism.

Jake, with his inherent and everlasting love for Ray, remains the matrix of Ray's identity and self-realization. Ray, despite his university education, and secret hatred for his race, instantaneously becomes friendly with Jake. His preference for Jake is evident in his words: “[i] f I was famous as Jake Johnson and rich as Madame Walker I'd prefer to have you as my friend than – President Wilson” (273). Jake, too, unlike the other crew on the railroad likes Ray immensely and calls him, “Chappie, in a genial, semi-paternal way” (164). The friendship that evolves between Ray and Jake is reciprocal, and in their friendship, both try to identify with each other and discover their “absent selves” – Ray, the intellectual, his instinctive self, and Jake, the emotional, his rational self.

In brief, in HH, in spite of his seemingly superior bearing, Ray realizes that he is still a representative of the Blacks. And, his intrinsic worth and racial dignities are identified by contrasting his rational arguments with Jake's emotional existence and lived experiences. As Robert M. Greenberg rightly observes, Jake and Ray, in HH, represent “the two irreconcilable halves of McKay himself [...] extremes of heart and mind” (245). Ray celebrates the warm feeling and spontaneity of Jake – the characteristics of his race. The construction of racial identity in HH is partially fulfilled with the compromise between Jake's instinctive self that wishes to get
educated, and Ray’s rational self that longs to be steeped in feelings and emotion. The constituents of Ray’s self such as his ambition to write and racial consciousness are identified as the dominant features that deal with the other and the community respectively, and therefore, they are dealt with in detail in the ensuing chapters.

**Banjo**, published in 1929, is set in Marseilles, France. Subtitled **The Story Without a Plot**, the novel offers a simple series of episodes strung together more by the presence of a recurring group of characters than by an interlocking and developing plot. The novel is a continuation of **HH** and the reappearance of Ray, in **Banjo**, reiterates the predicaments of the Blacks in another diaspora existing in Marseilles. As Huggins observes, “the chief character, Banjo, wants to lead a pick-up band. The second leading character, Ray, on a quest to find authentic stories for a novel he hopes to write, joins him. The twosomes thereafter lead the reader through a maze of mostly unrelated episodes” (173).

In **Banjo**, McKay constructs the Black identity by presenting two opposite individuals, Banjo and Ray, who are led by their instinct and intellect respectively, as Jake and Ray in **HH**. The construction of Banjo’s self revolves around the following four components: his natural vagabondage, instinctive life, racial consciousness, and ambition to form a Black orchestra in Marseilles.

In **Banjo**, the titular protagonist, Lincoln Agrippa Daily, familiarly known as Banjo, is altruistic and longs for social recognition and self-assertion. He is a child of “Cotton Belt” and has wandered all over America as “a great vagabond of lowly life, [...] perpetually pursuing and realizing in ways, always incomplete but never unsatisfactory” (11).
Like Jake, Banjo was earlier enlisted in the Canadian army in the Great War, and from there he crossed to the States. Being restless, he rebels against the system prevailing in the U.S. and prefers wandering all over the world. The stressful situations and the "lynching" in America cause in Banjo a sense of loneliness and alienation. As a result, he volunteers to be deported. As a tramp, true to the tribal tradition of vagabondage, he "has no plan, no set purpose, and no single object in coming to Marseilles" (12).

Banjo's landing in Marseilles reminds the reader of Jake's return to Harlem in *HH*. Both Banjo and Jake led by their instinct react to situations sensuously. On his disembarkment in Marseilles, Banjo instinctively drifts to the Ditch and "as naturally he found a girl there" Banjo's soul, like Jake's in Harlem is "thrilled to the place" (13).

Though Banjo in his instinctive life and emotional self reminds one of Jake in *HH*, he differs from Jake in his basic character. Jake is led by his instinct, and yields to it instantaneously. His attitude to women is sensual, and it remains a vital constituent in his quest for identity. In contrast, Banjo in his casual vagabondage is neither sensual nor responsive towards women. In spite of his "possession" of Latnah, his companion in panhandling, and being a lodger in her house, he tells her, "No woman nevah ride me yet and you ain't gwine to ride me, neither" (26). Further, despite his close association with Latnah, he does not approve of Ray's final idea of taking Latnah with them to the West Indies. He disagrees, saying, "Don't get soft ovah any wimmens, pardner, Tha's you big weakness. A woman is a conjunction" (326).
Moreover, Banjo during his vagabondage in Marseilles takes life easy like Jake, in **HH**, and says, “Easy come, Easy go, Tha’s the life living way” (27). His philosophy of life is, obviously, natural and compromising, and it is evident in his words: “Life is a rectangular crossways affair and the only thing to do is to take it nacheral” (234). Being fed up with the panhandling life in the Ditch, Banjo wants to experience a change. Hence, he decides to leave the beachboys, his friends and Marseilles against Ray’s warnings. Banjo leaves for Midi. But, disgusted with the mysterious experiences unrevealed in the novel and the "monkey business", presumably male prostitution in Paris, he returns to Marseilles after two weeks. On his return, the carefree Banjo becomes “a steady worker in the coal” (233). He just exists now “as if those glad camaraderie days had never been [...] it is his unusual dirty-drab contentment that buries him. Banjo has undergone a complete metamorphosis” (233).

When Banjo takes ill, Ray helps him get admitted to the hospital. In the hospital, deprived of a valid identity card and the resultant ill treatment, Banjo develops a sense of failure and defeat. He even thinks “at last America as home” (249), much against his association with Canada, England and France. Banjo’s carefree vagabondage ceases on his ironical recognition of America as his home. And, he desperately hopes, “he would soon be sent home” (257). Banjo’s shift from his original peripatetic self and the present sense of belonging to America is presumably transitional.
Conscious of the sad plight of the Blacks in America, Banjo, at the last moment, refuses to join Goosey who decides to go to the U.S. He asserts his carefree nature to Goosey, “I ain’t one accident made nigger like you, Goosey. I’se a true blue traveling bohn nigger and I know life, and I knows how to take it nacheral [...] I loves all the time becausen the honey-pot a life is mach middle name” (305). Hence, it is evident that Banjo in the quest for his identity, despite the turn of events in Paris in the middle of the novel, returns to his casual vagabondage and maintains it as a source of his racial salvation in the end. As a way out from the loss of self-confidence, Banjo decides to leave France for the Caribbean Islands along with his gang “like a big picnic” (317) as a restorative journey of the self.

Ray, who reappears in Banjo, is still in search of his salvation. His prudence matures by his experiences in Marseilles. He feels that in Marseilles, he is a Black outsider in the White West. Ray’s realization of his self in Banjo issues mainly from his association with Banjo and the beachboys. He perceives Banjo as an extension of Jake, and looks at Banjo and the beach boys as if they were a Lacanian “looking glass” for him to smooth out, specify, and correct the images of his own self. Further, the development of Ray’s self in Banjo is discussed in terms of his inner conflicts, namely, his alienation, unfulfilled ambition to write, sexual ambivalence and, finally, his reconciliation with the instinctive life of the Black masses. However, Ray’s intellectual complexity and his identity in Banjo are not sequenced in episodes as they are in HH, but they are revealed in his harangue about racial ambivalences. In other words, in Banjo Ray’s identity is not constructed on episodic narratives but on his own reflective thinking.
Ray's sexual ambivalence and angst are relieved by his natural and healthy relationship with Latnah. Her presence in the Ditch coexists with the reconciliation of Ray's sexual ambivalence. He falls for Latnah and she, too, responds to him, instinctively calling him 'camarade' (79). Ray, in HH, though led by his desire, cannot fall naturally into the rhythm of sexual life. But, in Banjo, inspired by the vibrant life in the Ditch, he yields naturally to his sexual instinct towards Latnah. She is the only girl in the group in the Ditch, which is predominantly and ferociously male, and she manifests feminine uniqueness in her deportment and demeanour. She is, mainly responsible for the development of the sense of identity in both Banjo and Ray.

Latnah is amorphous. "She was a little olive-toned woman of an indefinite age, clean faced, not young and far from old, with an amorous charm round her mouth"(16). Her transition from being a mere subject to Malty, just a woman to Banjo, and finally peace and forgetfulness to Ray are largely dependent on their varying outlook, convictions and moral principles. And, with her decisive significance in the novel, she functions as a catalyst in the process of Ray's formation of the self.

Latnah ultimately solves Ray's problems, and in his pipe dream, she inspires him with her Oriental self. Ray proposes, "I feel so close to you"(283) and Latnah responds saying, "Banjo never touch anything strange like us"(283). Ray, in his only successful sexual encounter in both the novels, overcomes his problem and locks Latnah to him in his elbow. Mysteriously enough, he discovers, "Peace and forgetfulness in the bosom of a brown woman. Warm brown body and restless dark
body like a black root growing down in the soft brown earth. Deep dark passion of bodies close to the earth understanding each other"(283). Ray, later, relieved of his ambivalence, wants to take Latnah with him to the Caribbean Islands.

Moreover, Jake’s appearance in the later part of Banjo exemplifies Ray’s reconciliation with his problematic sexuality. Ray meets Jake in Banjo and feels happy that Jake has named his son after him. Jake expresses his dissatisfaction over marriage because of its, being “too much home stuff”(293), which does not permit him to be in the old mongrel ways. In his gratitude, Ray considers Jake a thousand times better than him. Driven by his sense of guilt for what he has done to Agatha, Ray expresses his anguish, as follows: “Finding a way to carry on with a family and knuckling down to it. I just ran away from the thing” (293). Perhaps, the realisation that he has ditched Agatha for no reason, prompts him to take Latnah with him to the West Indies. In short, Ray, in Banjo, gives up his intellectual air, and realizes the Black’s instinctive way of life, and even aspires to take a woman like Latnah, to West Indies presumably to make a home.

Ray’s quest for identity in both HH and Banjo is based on his newly acquired Negritude. His inability to identify himself with the Blacks’ sense of placelessness and his racial self-hatred in HH reconcile with the racial dignity that he perceives in Banjo. For, Ray, in HH, is much confused with his cultural ambivalence, fragmentation of identity and doubtful racial feelings. However, in Banjo, he seems less alienated. His philosophy, in Banjo, appears to have more relevance to his personal life than it is in HH. In Banjo, he suggests de-westernization of the Black consciousness as a remedy to the Blacks’ suffering in
both America and Europe. He loves his roots, and has such an immense hope in his culture that "he loved it poetical enthusiasm of the black vagabond that he himself was" (202). His self-realization as a Black, which is born out of his maturity, results in constant apprehension and assessment of his own identity as a Black, psychologically, socio-culturally, religiously and sexually. In short, the problems posed by his intellectual self are solved by his perception of both Jake and Banjo as extensions of his own racial self, and his integration with the instinctive behaviour of the beach boys. Further, Ray's newly found racial pride, which is indispensable to his negotiation with the other and re-integration with the community, is discussed in detail in the following chapters.

McKay, in BB, through the portrayal of Tabitha Plant, familiarly known as Bita, most clearly formulates his vision of the interrelatedness of the self, the other and the community. In this novel, he argues that by realizing the significance of the self one can return to the roots. BB focuses on Bita's re-integration into Jamaican village life after an extended exposure to all the self-erasing allurements of Europe. Further, BB is regarded by many as a novel in which McKay achieves aesthetic maturity. Robert Bone, too, shares this view and finds BB perfect in form:

[T]he culmination of McKay's search for form. Home to Harlem is quite loose in construction and that McKay failed to bring out the broader significance of Ray and Jake by not adequately portraying their relationship to contemporary society. In Banjo McKay comes closer to realizing his central theme and the finished form that he finally achieves in Banana Bottom. (90)
Notably, Bita, in **BB**, rediscovers the Black self as a way of distinct life, and this self-discovery leads her to assert her individuality and cultural identity. As Chellappan observes, Bita's identity in the novel **BB** is “inseparable from her milieu as well as the landscape” (McLeod 33). In fact, her racial self is constructed and rooted in her confrontation against the Whites’ perception of the Blacks. The central themes of the novel, namely cultural dualism, religious ambivalence and native sexuality are viewed as the essentials of the other that form Bita’s identity.

To be precise, in his three novels, **HH**, **Banjo**, and **BB**, McKay carefully constructs the Black identity through his chief characters, Jake, Ray, Banjo and Bita on different planes. Jake, in **HH**, with his sexual prowess finds fulfilment in his unification with Felice. Banjo makes use of his music to achieve aesthetic realisation. Ray, in both **HH** and **Banjo**, curses his intelligence and hails instinct after his close association with "Jakes and Banjoes". Yet, their identification with their race is only partial due to their cultural inhibitions. But, Bita, in **BB**, resolves the malaise of Ray and emerges as a native queen in her adherence to native sexuality. In other words, **BB** can be viewed as a feminine bildungsroman, in which Bita educates herself from childhood to maturity. Her intrinsic education helps her identify with her native self. In an act of self-affirmation, she negates her Western upbringing and reintegrates herself with her native folk.

In short, the tools used for the construction of the racial self in McKay’s novel range from Black sexuality, Black music and dance, the Whites’ oppression of the Blacks, the impact of Western civilisation education on the Blacks, the conflict between instinct and intelligence in the characters and finally the people’s
reconciliation with native the elements. The quest for Black identity in the White world constructs the racial self and resolves the Blacks' inherent social conflicts.

The Dalithood in Civakāmi's novels can be compared and contrasted with the racial self in McKay's novels. The realisation of the self in Dalit context is not, analogous in all respects to that of the collective Black self. Like Negritude, Dalithood— the realization of the Dalit consciousness — is illustrated through its various dimensions. While constructing the Dalit self in PK, Civakāmi is relatively utopian in her diagnosis of the Dalit problems and providing solutions. Since, the novelist views the problems more on the basis of gender and economy, the construction of identity in her novels is not mainly based on socio-psychological and cultural aspects as in the novels of McKay. This fact, she accepts in PKAK. As a matured novelist, in PKAK, Civakāmi reorients the fictitious past with her real experiences in the casteist society. She also constructs the Dalit self by presenting the characters in the socio-cultural background and expressing Dalit consciousness.

Civakāmi in her introduction to her Dalit metafiction Pa-Ka-Ā-Ku emphasizes her objective of writing her first Dalit novel along these lines: "Paḷayaṇa Kaḷitā:lum is a revelation of my wish for the development of the Dalits. In that attempt I portray aesthetically the society in which I lived" (4). True to her statement, PK portrays the sad plight of the Dalits in Puliyūr village. The Utaiyar, a backward caste enjoys a slight privilege over the Dalits in the rungs of caste system in India. Yet, they are caste fanatics. The wafer thin distinction between the two agrarian communities helps the novelist probe into the minds of the characters, and subsequently, construct the Dalit self.
Civakāmi, while constructing Dalithood, in **PK**, exposes the exploitation of the Dalits, and their emergence against their socio-economic disparity by contrasting two politicians Kāttamuttu and Cantiran. And, this dichotomy is perceived by Kāttamuttu’s daughter Kauri, and it enables her to shed the socio-cultural inhibitions. In addition the novel itself is written from her point of view.

Civakāmi, in **PK**, in her aspiration for the social betterment of the Dalits, constructs the much-aspired Dalit self mainly through these three characters, in the backdrop of the sexual exploitation of Taṅkam. While doing so, she portrays the problems pertaining to the Dalits in the casteist society, their helplessness, and also the lack of unity among the Dalits to encounter their oppressors.

Kāttamuttu, being “a panchayat president” (28), is venerated by the people of his community – Parayar – and the other upper caste, too. But, as perceived by Kauri, he is a cunning sly old fox and communalises everything for his personal and political interest. In the absence of education and proper leadership among the oppressed people, the Dalits in Attūr and Puliyūr villages hail Kāttamuttu "as a god" (11), and look to him for his advice on all matters. He, in turn, being the first generation political leader among the Dalits in the post-Independent India, partially exploits his people and yet, enjoys their support. Little though his formal education is, he is seemingly contemptuous of his own people. In his attempts to domineer the ignorant fellow Dalits, ironically enough, he quotes from, "Ramayana, Mahabharata and My Experiment with Truth" (62). He silences counter arguments by abusing the opponent.
Nevertheless, Kāttamuttu as a Dalit leader has earned people’s confidence. They hail him for his benevolence but, condemn his volatile insolence:

He is extremely active like a scratching pig, and never gets tired of himself. He always involves in social activities, and never cares for his paddy field. As a result, he doesn't get enough yield and income out of his cultivation. He does his social service as a profession but in that, he always supports the poor, though with some personal interest. He is unobtrusively obsessed with a sense of domination. He even justifies his misdeeds by quoting cleverly from Ramayana and Mahabharata. (28-29)

Strangely enough, this Dalit leader is a replica of the upper caste Hindus, who justify their misdeeds by quoting extensively from the two great epics. Despite his selfish motives and polygamy, he emerges as a champion of the Dalits, and fights against their social oppression in his own rustic aggressive ways. He is a terror to and remains a thorn in the flesh of many upper caste people, who intend to suppress the Dalits. His arguments with the Nāyakkar, a jeweller in the town, reveal his sympathetic attitude towards his fellow Dalits. They, in turn, accentuate his Dalit self, which is bent on claiming equality.

The Nāyakkar, who is steeped in caste fanaticism neither accepts the Dalits, nor entertains them properly in his shop. As the Dalits are rendered untouchables by the Hindu religion, Nāyakkar never allows himself any physical contact with them even while attending to his business. When a relative of Kāttamuttu goes to his shop to buy a silver ornament, he "drops it form a safer distance" (33). Kāttamuttu, after
being informed of the incident, takes Näyakkar to task. Näyakkar pleads innocence, and claims, "he does it in that way because they [Dalits] are not clean" (34).

Kättamuttu in his seething anger and concern for the fellow Dalits abuses Näyakkar for equating cleanliness with untouchability. He reproaches Näyakkar for his stinking mouth and explicates the sad plight of the Dalits for not being physically beautiful. Kättamuttu is frustrated with the society in which he lives and echoes the voice of many Dalits concerning their physical traits, "you people shout for cleanliness. A Dalit has no money and he should work in the paddy field all the day more wretched than a bull. How will he look like then? Beautiful? Give him money first and then see his beauty" (35).

It is significant here to note that Kättamuttu never betrays his community, and in his feelings, he is altruistic and never refrains from asserting to his upper caste friends that he is one among the Dalits. The formation of Dalit self in Kättamuttu, issues from his constructive violent reaction against the caste oppression as well as his strong sense of belonging with his community.

Moreover, with his limited political empowerment as a Panchayat president and the dominance that he enjoys simultaneously over his people and the upper caste men, he never despises the Dalits, in the manner Ray in HH and Banjo calls the Negroes "Black skunks and swines". Throughout his political career and social interactions, he identifies himself with the Dalits, though not with the cultural affinities as in the case of the Black protagonists in McKay's novels. But, he empathises with the poor Dalits of the villages. Like Jake, in HH, who does not want to be called "a nigger" or "a darky", Kättamuttu abuses Näyakkar for calling
him "low born". In his seething protest, he quarrels with the latter to the extent that Näyakkar surrenders to him and he is even ready to be called "Nākkkan — a mean ugly reference to his caste" (33). It is obvious that Kättamuttu by way of consolidating the Dalits is critical of his people, in private, for their ignorance of the exploitation. But, as a true leader of the Dalits he defends them in public. It is therefore evident that circumstantial constraints force him to play a double role — one in private and another in public.

Unlike the protagonists — Jake, Ray, Banjo and Bita in McKay's novels Kättamuttu, in PK, while asserting his Dalit self does not rediscover his cultural roots, but recreates the social significance of the Dalits in his crude protest against the upper caste — the fact that comes to light in the case of Tañkam's rape.

Tañkam, a Dalit woman is a farm labourer of Paranjötüy Uţaiyār. She is "a supportless widow ignorant and helpless" (57). Fascinated by her "wild bull' like traits, Uţaiyār exploits her helplessness and frequents her amorously. All the same, she is neither adulterous nor immoral but only a sexual victim to him. For, "sometimes she thinks of her wretched fate and weeps"(60). When his relatives get to know of this clandestine affair with Tañkam, they draw her out of her home, and thrash her brutally. Surprisingly, none of her relatives, because of their mute subordination to the upper caste, comes forward to support her or prevent them from attacking her.

Humiliated and rendered homeless, Tañkam leaves Puliyūr, and finds refuge in Kättamuttu's house in Attūr. Though Kättamuttu does not recognise her immediately, on seeing her wretched condition, he sympathises with her. When he
comes to know of the affair between her and Uṭaiyār, prompted by his communal affinity, he indicts her coarsely, asking her, "Don't you have our men to go; Are they bitter to you?" (13). Nevertheless, he rightly observes, "upper caste men touch lower caste women; they speak but never marry" (18). Though indifferent at first, he is determined to lodge a complaint with the police and seek justice.

In order to make the issue more serious and caste oriented Kāttamuttu, as a tactical politician manipulates the incident and distorts the facts to his convenience.

Tañkam while going to defecate in the backyard of the village is intercepted by Kamalam, Paranjōtīy Uṭaiyār's wife. She contemptuously calls Taṅkam, "Pariah dog" and prevents her from going through her street. When Taṅkam refuses and asks her not to refer to her caste, Kamalam beats her with a broom. She tries to escape but Kamalam's brothers join her in beating Taṅkam. (21-22)

Kāttamuttu, in order to make the issue more serious, fabricates the incident and terms it "an attempt to murder"(22). It is to be noted here that Indian legal system prohibits any caste reference of the Dalits by the upper caste. Being aware of this fact Kāttamuttu cooks up Taṅkam's case so as to get the authorities initiate stringent action against the culprits.

At the police station, the inspector, knowing Kāttamuttu's penchant for confrontation shows indifference to him, and casually tells him that due action will be taken. On the police inspector's dismissal of the involvement of caste issue in Taṅkam's rape, Kāttamuttu warns the inspector indirectly. Kāttamuttu magnifies the issue astutely, and forces the inspector to act more vehemently against the culprits.
But, in his discernment and handling of the case prove that Kãttamuttu is flawless in his approach. For, reality as he perceives and tells the police inspector:

Caste is the basis of all problems. It is everywhere and it is present in everything. If you don’t like caste, you may not reveal it to others and it shows your character. But, that doesn’t mean that there is no caste. Everyone accepts that caste is everlasting. Caste will be there until we die, and even after our death, it will be there with our children. It is our destiny. (40)

Kãttamuttu’s reflection on the communal divide is obviously a warning that people cannot escape from its clutches with their idealistic perception of the society.

The sexual exploitation of Taṅkam does not end up with its report to the police. It also unravels the tentacles of the caste system by exposing the high caste victimizer’s slipshod attitude to his crime. Utaiyár, the victimizer is caste conscious and in his contemplation over the rape, he is ashamed of himself, not for his act but for the caste of the woman. He condescends and exhibits his caste extremism:

I can even accept the consequences of a murder, but not this bloody affair with a pariah woman’. He calls her angrily, ‘thankless creature’. He proudly contemplates the incident and disparages Taṅkam, ‘Is she a woman who deserves my care and attention? She should have been blessed in her previous births to share bed with me. (56)

Ironically, he rejects his crime just as a condescension in which he claims to have patronized Taṅkam sexually, and prefers to bribe the police to be in his favour.
The sexual harassment of the Dalits by the upper caste in the novel coexists with the miserable plights of the Dalits. Tañkam turns out to be a victim to Utaiyär and Kaliyan, a Dalit male serves only as a stud to the high caste Cāntā without any personal likenings or hatred. The upper caste persons approach the Dalits for sex not naturally but forcibly, exploiting their poverty and inferior social status. The sexually violated Dalit female or male is, hence just an evidence of the social oppression she is subjugated to.

Sex is an act of pleasure, but when it occurs between the oppressed and the oppressors by force, the oppressed are inferiorized. They lose their selfhood and they are reduced to mere objects of pleasure. The roles of the initiator and the initiated in the Indian cultural context, too, are reversed in the act by the oppressors in their domination. Arguably, both Tañkam and Kaliyan lose their selfhood and self-will in the act of enforced pleasure. Even the act of pleasure is painful to the Dalits; for, in it they are not immersed on their own will but simply depersonalized as traded commodities.

The communal oppression, manifest in sexual harassment of the Dalits by the upper caste leads to caste conflicts. The plight of Tañkam in PK is not an exception as it presents the reality to the very similitude. Utaiyär deceitfully turns it into a labour problem and all the high caste people, in order to protect their wealth, join hands with him. The ignorant Dalits in Puliyär village, forgetting Utaiyär’s sexual exploitation of Tañkam, resolve, ironically, to ask for “more wages”. Eventually, “the truth is lost” (95) in the tricky squabbles.
The love affair— a sub-plot in *PK*— between Iñãkovan, a Dalit bank peon and Lalità, an upper caste girl ends abruptly as the result of the communal clash, which arises out of Tañkam’s rape. The communal clash is further aggravated by the much dreaded “burning of the huts”, a common feature in communal clashes. In fact, the fire in *PK*, is only an accident caused by “Kannammā a partially blind old lady”(100). But, the people in Puliyūr, unmindful of her forgetfulness and idiosyncrasy believe that the upper caste men set fire to their huts.

Consequently, Dalit youths in the village are ready for a violent communal riot. Kāttamuttu reaches the spot and surveys the extent of the loss. As a seasoned politician and a pragmatic communal leader, he exhibits his wisdom. He pacifies the angry youths, thinks practically and decides to get compensation from the upper caste. Most of the Dalits, in a no hope situation, agree to his suggestion reluctantly.

Civakāmi makes use of this episode to expose the ignorance and the helpless subordination of the Dalits. An old man in the Puliyūr village tells Kāttamuttu, expressing his anguish over the helplessness of the Dalits, “Instead of begging always before the upper castes, let us die in starvation. What do we gain by living?” (114). His words do clearly suggest that the Dalits’ life in any part of India is so horrible that it does not have any meaning to them. They do not live in the real sense, they just exist and their underprivileged existence hardly allows them to revolt against the high castes.

Yet, Kāttamuttu, a bold Dalit leader, refuses to be a subordinate to the upper caste. In his harangue about the sad plights of the Dalits in Puliyūr village, he
asserts his individuality. He reasserts his identity and exposes the discrimination made by the upper caste men:

I am the first one to walk in the upper caste street wearing foot wear. Earlier, the Dalits were not allowed to ride their cycle in the upper caste’s street. They should get down from their cycle to show respect. I was the only one going around in my cycle in their street and they couldn’t do anything against me.’ [...] Now the time is changed. It is not the same order now. Our people do learn a lot, find employment in the government. They earn and learn many things’. (117)

Kaṭṭamuttu, in his attempts to gain social recognition for him and his fellow Dalits, protests against the order of the day. Being a politician, he ingeniously links Taṅkam’s story with the fire accident. He tells the gathering, “Even now despite the emergence of the Dalits, a lady from the slum is beaten in the road and the Dalits houses are burnt down” (118).

As a gesture of reproach, Kaṭṭamuttu demands Rs.10, 000 as compensation for each house, gutted in the accident. He further takes advantage of Taṅkam’s case and the fire accident and settles the wage problem too. The unpleasant happenings in Puliyur village indicate that the Dalits in all parts of the country are exploited both socially and economically. The upper caste men employ the Dalits only for very low wages. In Puliyūr, the Dalits get only Rs. 3 as their daily wage. It is appallingly inadequate and does not even provide them for a hand to mouth existence. Kaṭṭamuttu, in his efforts to support the Dalits, elaborates on the wage
problem, and demands higher wages. He keeps aside Tańkam’s case for a while and shows interest in getting the compensation from the high castes.

The Tahsildar, the Taluk revenue official, after listening to the people from both the communities settles the issue of compensation inconsequently. “For fully burnt houses they offer Rs. 3000, and for partly burnt house, Rs. 1000. They have agreed to raise the daily wage from Rs. 3 to Rs. 3.50” (127). But, the settlement does not convince many from both the sides. Rājēntiran, a Dalit graduate, who embodies the voice of angry youths, does not even approve of the idea of getting compensation from the upper caste men. He bursts out to Kāttamuttu, “we have been begging them from time immemorial; that is the reason they weigh us down always” (120). Rājēntiran’s incensed out burst is ignored as unwarranted by the mute Dalits. Instead, the people in Puliyūr join Kāttamuttu, and in their absolute unawareness of their enforced subordination, they condemn Rājēntiran for opposing the idea. Kāttamuttu and others try to silence him. His silence does not issue from the recognition of the problem but the negligence of it. The simmering wrath that he reserves within him waits a winnowing to become arson.

Meanwhile, Rāmaliṅka Reṭṭiyār, a communal fanatic does not cherish the settlement. He is resolved to resort to violence, the old order of the high castes. Further, in the light of Rāmaliṅka Reṭṭiyār’s words it is to be understood that the mistaken fire accident would have been a reality unless this one had not occurred. Knowing the diabolical, violent tactics of systematic annihilation of the oppressed by the upper caste, Kāttamuttu is quick to twist the same to the advantage of the
oppressed. Here, he emerges as a pragmatic leader of the oppressed. Kāttamuttu asserts his Dalit political identity by rising to the occasions consistently.

The ignorance and helplessness of the Dalits are clearly brought out in the following episode. The victims of the fire accident are provided with compensation, and they receive it without any proper comprehension of the gravity of the situation. The Sub-collector feels sorry for the people, because, "they haven't felt bad over the loss of their huts but laugh" (131). A parallel may be drawn here between the Blacks and the Dalits. Though oppressed, they both still laugh at their miseries. Ironically, the Dalits in their absolute ignorance feel jealous of one other for getting higher compensation. The exploited are not even aware of their exploitation, but incongruously feel bad about each other in their exploitation.

Kāttamuttu intends to keep the compensation of Rs. 10000, given to Taṅkam by Uṭaiyār. Owing to his fascination for Taṅkam, he exploits her ignorance and seduces her. This illustrates that a Dalit woman is doubly oppressed. Taṅkam at first is exploited sexually by the upper caste oppressor, and then seduced by a Dalit male, Kāttamuttu, who offers her shelter. It proves the fact that Dalit women, unlike Dalit men, are subjected to dual oppression.

Kāttamuttu's sexual exploitation of Taṅkam, and later his betrayal of his brother Kājimuttu denote a serious flaw in his character and the doubt regarding the genuineness of his being a Dalit leader. Kājimuttu worked in Malaysia as a coolie and after his wife's death returns to his native village with his son Cantiran. He stays with Kāttamuttu and spends his money for his brother's family. For fear of any partition of the property, Kāttamuttu scandalizes that Kājimuttu has murdered
his wife in Malaysia and returned to the village only as a way of escape. He, further, makes others look upon Kāṭtamuttu as “a womanizer, who roams about his house prying at his wives” (168). Kattamuttu gets the major portion of the property, and then deserts his brother. But, the people, knowing the characters of Kattamuttu, do not approve of his deeds. When his knavery is exposed to the people, his hitherto unchallenged authority over the Dalits ceases to be useful for him. But he fails to accept that “his days are and will be over” (187).

The portrayal of Kattamuttu is significant in that Civakāmi, in PK, does not idealise him neither as a lovable father nor as a true champion of the Dalits. Perhaps, owing to its autobiographical overtones of her father Palanimuttu, she is torn between the reality and her convictions. In other words, Kattamuttu in this novel is portrayed first as an unquestioned patriarch and then as a Dalit leader with his own flaws. But, Civakāmi, in PKAK, matured in her perceptions, changes her political and personal convictions and recreates the character of Kattamuttu with more facts drawn from her father’s real life.

Besides Kattamuttu, Civakāmi, in PK, constructs Dalit identity and apparently hopes for the Dalits’ social resurrection through Cantiran’s Marxist lenience. While creating the character of Cantiran, she considers the economic equality as a source for Dalit emergence and their social enhancement. The theme of socialism co-exists with Dalit emergence in PK rather explicitly.

Cantiran, as Ray to Jake and Banjo, in HH and Banjo, is a rational counterpart to Kattamuttu’s emotional self. Kattamuttu, like Jake in HH, and Goosey in Banjo, is emotional and relies on his constructively violent Dalit self to
settle all crisis. Goosey, makes use of his Negro identity to sympathize with himself and his race. But, Kättamuttu exploits his Dalit identity quite consciously to achieve his political gains. On the other hand, Cantiran like Ray is an ideologist and tries to reach to the roots of the oppression of the Dalits by highlighting the economic structure of the society.

Civakãmi, while portraying the character, Cantiran, constructs the Dalit self rationally based on his formal education and his views on Marxism. Betrayed by his uncle Kättamuttu, Cantiran joins as a coolie in the rice mill, and he unites the Dalit youths against Kättamuttu's knavery. Eventually, he emerges as a trade union leader in the rice mill. With his ideologies, Cantiran wants to do something constructively, and after his becoming the leader, the Dalits' attitudes change positively:

He taught them to read and write. [...] Having listened to his speeches they gain confidence to live. It is their genuine wish to live keeps them active. [...] Once they smoked beedi, sobbed off their fate and worked like bulls in the oil press. But, now they are optimistic and hopeful of their future. They ignore any negative suggestions to their life and say, 'leave that, think of the future'. [...] They want to know the meaning of life and living of it. (175-76)

In his search for identity and protest against Dalit subordination Cantiran does not imitate the emotional ways of Kättamuttu. He is refined and empathetic towards his people. His emergence as a leader of the working class is significant in
that the people acknowledge his realistic approaches and are critical of Kättamuttu's emotional politics.

Cantiran instils hope in the oppressed people, who aspire to have a bright future at least for their children. In his protest against the subordination of the people in general and the Dalits in particular, Cantiran is pragmatic and cogent. He teaches them a new way of life. He contacts many trade unions, and sometimes feels disgusted with the internal politics that he finds in them. For, most of the trade unions suffer because of the caste discriminations inherent in them. He is fed up with "the office bearers who have become a separate caste all by themselves" (186). Yet, he does not lose faith neither in them nor in his Marxist ideologies. Instead, he strives hard to achieve social and economic equality for his people. It is to be noted here that the Marxist principle and its impact on the Dalits as a redeeming force is later questioned and viewed objectively by The Critic in PKAK.

In his attempts to ascertain his identity and the proletariat self as a trade union leader, Cantiran does not exploit his subordinates as Kättamuttu does. He is more rational, and tries to understand the causes of suppression. He realises that "the economic disparity is intertwined with the problem of the caste system. They are a part of the same problem, and form a vicious circle" (187). Though "as a blind man describing an elephant"(187), he is still uncertain of the causes of suppression. But, he earnestly tries to find solutions.

Kättamuttu's character, as discussed, in PKAK, is modelled on the novelist's father Palanimut tłumex MLA. Civakāmi detaches herself from her father in the aesthetic portrayal of the character, Kättamuttu and views the problems
of Dalit oppression critically. Jonathan Culler's observation of the identity of the oppressed that "an oppressed people gain identity from opposing the oppressor" (117), becomes operative in Kättamuttu and Cantiran, who realize their caste selves differently and establish them by opposing their oppressors, in their own ways. Civakāmi views the oppression quite objectively, and in the process of constructing the Dalit self, she presents the two contrasting characters led by their emotion and reason. The contrast is obviously reflected in the following passage:

Kättamuttu still conducts trials in his pial and wins many cases with his old reputation. He emerges victorious, and accumulates wealth. He, as always, never respects others and treats people insignificantly. His blind followers, who accept him without any question, surround him. On the other hand, Cantiran is encircled by many youths, who question him directly and they will not be convinced until he gives them right answers. They don't blindly support him, but if convinced, they accept him at once. (187)

Kättamuttu's emotional politics has no relevance in the present day context. Cantiran's rational and socialist principles win the heart and support of the people. The contrast is explicit in that Cantiran emerges as a true leader conquering the rude ways of Kättamuttu:

Kättamuttu, with his familiar old ways, approaches the officials, concocts tales and distorts facts. He threatens them with his words and gets things done. But, Cantiran never does so, and he believes only in the people's support. He is not like spurges, which destroy
other plants, but like a plantain, which nourishes saplings. He emerges like a whirlwind, which will toss Kättamuttu easily, and gain unshakable support from the people. (187-88)

The emergence of Cantiran as a trade union leader is accepted by the youths of other castes too. It is evident at his marriage, when many comrades belonging to other communities attend his marriage and bless him. Though, Kättamuttu tries to create a commotion at the wedding, Cantiran's intimate friends belonging to high caste bless him and "dine at the wedding"(200), much against the custom, which is prevalent among the high castes.

The acceptance of Cantiran by others is symbolic of the fact that the communal discrimination and the caste fanaticism are partly a problem linked to economic disparity. When the working class strives hard to achieve socio-economic equality in a feudal country like India, it needs to shed its differences of caste, colour and religion. For, in India, the bourgeois, who thrive on manipulating these differences; control the struggle of the peasants and the labourers cleverly. Civakãmi, in PK, has an implicit message to the working class. She makes a success of Cantiran, surpassing Kättamuttu. By doing so, she expresses her wish that all the peasants should unite together to create a brave new world totally devoid of any caste discrimination.

Further, Civakãmi in PK, by establishing the Dalit identity in parallel with the working class identity, seeks to gain socio-economic equality for both. She weaves in the novel a sub-plot of love so as to ascertain the above discussed viewpoints. She presents the love affair between Iļaṅkõvan and Lalitã, at first to
highlight the differences between Paraiyar and Patayacci, their respective communities. They fall apart with Taňkam's rape and its adverse consequences. Nevertheless, the novelist brings them back to the main theme with Cantiran's emergence.

Lalitā despite her quarrel with Iľankōvan pines for him always. She argues with her reluctant mother, and forces her to agree to the marriage. The realization of the hardships of the peasants and her aspiration to do away with the caste systems are evident in her argument with her mother:

"Did you ask me, why there is caste discrimination? Tell me first, why there is a difference between Black and White?" - The mother asks Lalitā.

Black and White is God's creation. Rich and poor is our fate"- Lalitā replies.

"Do you understand now? It is their work, which discriminates them. Chakkilis are cobblers. Parayars are drummers, they work in the burial ground, Pallan works in the field".

Lalitā interrupts her mother. "But we do work in the field. We are poor alike. How could we be an upper caste them". (181)

Lalitā's rational queries indicate ostensibly that the caste system is manifest only on the cultural plane, which obstructs the working class' unity. Her feeling about the communal system is also shared by the educated youths of her caste. Later, the support that she gains from them proves that caste difference is on the wane among the educated youths. Lalitā transcends the caste differences through
her love affair and emerges as a symbol of communal synthesis with her decision to marry Iľańkovan.

The construction of the Dalit self, in *PK*, is further established in the character of Kauri, presumably a replica of the author herself. However, the caste identity of Kauri suffers a lot in *PK*. She, like Ray in *HH*, is torn between her formal education and her Dalit sensibility. Further, she is more a feminist ideologist than a Dalit activist, because, she identifies her caste and gender based differences with her father Kăttamuttu and his polygamy. With the negative impressions caused by her father, she does not glorify or even accept her Dalithood with pride. Instead, she reconciles with the existing system, and like Cantiran, she tries to solve the problems of the Dalits on the socio-economic plane. When she becomes a lecturer in a college, she grows paradoxically more cosmopolitan in her spirit. Her hatred for her father's polygamy renders her a spinster throughout, and she prepares her mother and stepmothers to revolt against her father. Kauri's identity, in *PK*, is constituted rather by her ambivalences and suffers heavily due to her assimilations.

To be precise, in *PK*, the construction of the Dalit self and Dalit sensibility revolve around three major characters who achieve it in their own respective ways. Kăttamuttu in his own violent ways of assertion of the Dalit identity enjoys equality among the upper caste and he strives selflessly for the social emancipation of the Dalits. Cantiran, on the other hand, criticises Kăttamuttu's emotional politics and identifies himself as a trade union leader. He is more a communist than a community worker. Instead, as a Marxist, he fights for the working class benefits. Kauri in her search for identity, because of her formal education and hatred for her
father is more a feminist than a rebel against Dalit subordination. She remains as an
escapist in her spirit, and she unfittingly expects the oppressors and the oppressed to
come together to create a new world. In short, Kauri, in this semi-autobiographical
novel PK, having understood the problems of the oppression better than any one
else, fails to project and protest against it. In short, the construction of the Dalit self
in Civakami's PK is partly achieved, but it is discussed elaborately in her Dalit
metafiction, PKAK.

William Gass, in his Fiction and the Figures of Life invents the term
metafiction and defines metafiction as "fiction, which draws attention to itself as
artefact to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (25).
As a Dalit metafiction, PKAK is self-reflective, and it draws our attention to her
narrative elements, such as, language, structure, and development of plot. While
reflecting on the narratives of her first novel PK, Civakami, in PKAK, constructs
the Dalit self of the characters, and argues in favour of them and admits her artistic
blemishes. Her self-analysis of the plot construction and the characterisation, in PK,
explores the labyrinthine ways of Dalit oppression and Dalits' strenuous emergence
against it. PKAK presents two leading characters, The Critic and The Novelist.
Like McKay's creation of Ray, who appears in both HH and Banjo, Civakami's
ambivalences are portrayed in her twin novels through the two characters, The
Novelist in PKAK and her fictionalised alter ego Kauri in PK. While conversing
with The Critic, in an interview the Novelist discusses the need that she felt for
writing the novel PK. In the form of The Critic's queries, she tries to fill the
vacuum that exists in the major characters of PK and thereby realigns the Dalit self. In other words, The Critic makes her understand The Novelist's limitation in PK.

The Critic, the protagonist of PKAK visits the village that has been portrayed in PK. She is disgusted to see the suffering of the people in the village and she muses:

The novelist could have very well chosen her family as a theme. She might have written a novel on her brother, a mad man and his mother. But, she preferred the theme of caste and its predicaments. [...] Why should she write a novel on social problem, while she has a problem of a mad brother at home? What has made her choose the present theme? What is her association with the problems dealt in the novel?. (16-17)

The reflective thinking of The Critic suggests that The Novelist, while writing PK, strives to secure her Dalit subjectivity by protesting against the subordination. Undeniably, The novelist identifies herself with the Dalits, and prefers a social theme to her problems at home. Her preference is echoed, when she declines to comment on any question concerning her romantic life and asserts, "I involve myself with the problems of the Dalits. Since my novel too focuses on them, I expect sharp questions related only to them" (17).

The novelist's assertion of her involvement with the Dalit problems suggests that in her search for identity, she constructs her Dalit self by protesting against Dalit oppression. Her answers to the questions of the Critic take her back to the
past, and offer us glimpses of the influences, which she had already come under in writing a Dalit novel.

Ironically, the Dalit consciousness portrayed, in **PK**, is characterised by Kattamuttu's politics, Cantiran's emergence as a proletariat and Kauri's reconciliation. Palanimuttu in reality, despite his polygamy, is a true champion of the Dalits and fights for the downtrodden. As The Critic, in **PKAK**, observes, the writer of **PK**, ridicules Kattamuttu and distorts these facts. Kattamuttu, according to The Critic, is mischievously presented as a womaniser for his polygamy. However, in reality, Palanimuttu as a Dalit peasant and a leader is

> hard working and never lets any one to be idle. Even in his poverty, he keeps a practice of eating only after offering food to beggars. He establishes women's hostel in the town, and he is considerate to them. He helps the poor, and spends money for their education. He does not accept gifts offered to him, because he considers them as bribe in guise. Once he even sends back the fruits offered by the Kounter. (29)

Hence, it is evident that Palanimuttu is altruistic and sympathises with the downtrodden. He helps the Dalits for their studies by offering financial assistance, and he yearns for their emancipation. But, as The Critic, in **PKAK**, observes, the writer of **PK**, “burned an effigy of a Dalit leader in **PK**”(29).

As a metafiction, **PKAK** explores the reality behind creativity, and brings to the surface the suppression of the Dalits. The Critic wonders whether the novelist has portrayed her alter-ago, Kauri as a politically conscious and a
committed Dalit. The Critic draws a parallel with Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography “My experiment with Truth” and argues:

Gandhi in it has expressed his personal experiences truly, but has never spoken of his political and social stance in it. Gandhi did it so, because of the fear that his image as Mahatma would be marred. The Critic argues that Civakāmi, while writing her autobiographical Dalit novel has distorted her characters and their political stances in fear of her high caste readers. (29)

As an explicit warning, it has a message to all Dalit writers. While writing Dalit literature, they should not have the suppressing upper class readers in their minds as “intended readers.” In PKAK, Civakāmi does not repeat the same mistake, but boldly constructs and presents suitable Dalit literary canons befitting to the contemporary Tamil literary exercise.

The Critic is of the opinion that while constructing the identity of a Dalit leader, Kāttamuttu, the writer of PK, has marred his political image with her feminist inclinations. Kāttamuttu, while asserting his political identity, in PK, is crude, but only a belligerent politician could emerge and protest vehemently against untouchability. And, many Dalit political leaders today believe that equality cannot be granted, but secured. His Dalit consciousness and his fervent protest against the untouchability construct Dalithood in Kāttamuttu. Protest against humiliation, social awareness and realistic social service in the Indian context alone will help the Dalits reclaim their identity in the hypocritical Hindu society. Kāttamuttu, as a Dalit leader
revolts against the social and psychological oppression of the Dalits and establishes his Dalit identity emphatically.

On the other hand, Civakämi, in **PK**, ignores the important trends in contemporary Dalit politics and ridicules the Ambedkar movements in Tamilnadu. The Ambedkar movement, the first of its kind, which revolts against untouchability in the country unite the people, and inculcate a sense of pride and self-esteem in them. Civakämi is superficial in her views and Her Marxist leanings deride any genuine, emotional and suitable response against caste fanaticism. McKay, in the same way by presenting an intellectual character, Ray in **Banjo** ridicules Goosey as a racist and also the spirit of Marcus Garvey's "Go Back to Africa". Similarly, Civakämi, in **PK**, considers Kättamuttu an exploiter, and ridicules the expostulation of the Dalit movements against untouchability. However, both McKay and Civakämi in the end reaffirm with their subaltern identities giving importance also to the emotional ways of countering the oppression. The Novelist, in **PKAK**, confesses that she has sacrificed the Dalit consciousness and the sense of pride for the artistic perfection and tilts off the balance towards feminist ideology.

Incidentally, Civakämi's self-realization that she has distorted the facts in her novel **PK**, constructs her Dalit identity quite positively in **PKAK**. For, Civakämi recalls her school days in which she is the School Pupils’ Leader. As she works in the paddy field, her clothes are stained and worn out. When the educational officer visits her school, the teacher compels her, to wear a nice saree and forces her to borrow it from Cenbakä, a Nāṭār girl. But, Cenbakā, on her mother's doggedness does not give her a saree and says, "since you are a pariah, my
mother asks me not to give you a saree" (47). When Civakâmi’s father is aware of the incident, he points out to the teacher of his poverty and angrily tells her, "you run the school of the rich people's benevolence. You don't know about the farmer's suffering. Education does not lie in the apparels" (47-48). In spite of her childhood experiences and the humiliations that she suffers for being a Dalit, Kauri, in PK, disdains her father. But, her nostalgia in PKAK underscores the fact that she regrets projecting her father in a despicable manner in PK.

Civakâmi, in PKAK, further feels that the problems of the Dalits are ignored in PK in the wake of realism. Her high caste friends after reading the manuscript of PK, suggested that Dalits should not be portrayed as exploiters of Dalits. “They want her to create a foil to Kâttamuttu, a virtuous Dalit male, and ask her to write on his emergence coinciding with the Vanniyars' emergence” (72). In PKAK, through The Critic’s words, the Novelist realises her artistic blemish. In PK, she goes to the extent of suggesting that the inter caste marriages between Vanniyars and Parayars as a solution to the caste problems. However, the reality is different. In the critic's words:

The Vanniyars, imbibing the Brahmin culture oppress Dalits, and very often, they clash with each other. But, the novelist encourages the impractical inter caste marriage, and believes that they can fight together against the evil of casteism. She should have written of Dalits' unity and their agitation against the social establishments. The oppressors should then be afraid of the unity and agitation. But, she advocates an impractical compromise between both. (73)
The Critic dismisses the unity between the oppressive and the oppressed communities as imbecilic. She suggests in *PKAK* that Marxism alone will not help the Dalits. Like McKay, Civakami was also once an active member of the communist party. She was a member of SFI, a students' wing of the Marxist party in India. Parvati Menon, a party member and daughter of an IFS officer, advises her ironically "not to appear for the civil service examination and become an IAS officer" (88). But, Civakami by becoming an IAS officer, the highest bureaucratic position in India, testifies that she is individualistic in her thinking and pays no heed to the condescending upper caste. However, the construction of Civakami's Dalit self and subjectivity stands out sharply in the last part of the novel. She condemns her formal education, for creating a breach between her father and herself. It can be considered as a symbolic rift between her community and herself. She, like Ray in *HH* and *Banjo*, is critical of her education, for she says in *PKAK*, "If education destroys human relations, why should we study. It makes us criminals regarding human relationship" (89). Her realisation that education does not help the Dalits' emergence establishes that Civakami has understood the problems of caste oppression and the intellectual assimilation.

Civakami's identity as a Dalit novelist is established through a definite and authoritative subaltern discourse. She admits to The Critic in *PKAK* that her subjectivity as a Dalit novelist is also constituted by the subaltern discourse in her novels. For instance, The Critic condemns The Novelist's linguistic oppression of the Dalits in the portrayal of Dalit characters. The Critic finds fault with The Novelist saying, "You use respectable suffix to the upper caste but call the labourers
without any respect" (33). However, The Novelist later regrets her linguistic failure, and in the last part of her metafiction, she admits to The Critic that she uses the subaltern discourse to portray the life of the Dalits. Her employment of the subaltern discourse proves that she accepts her Dalit identity in order to present it as an effective tool for the emergence of the Dalits, which she keeps as the theme of her novel. In her metafiction, Civakāmi, unlike what she does in her first novel **PK**, constructs her Dalit self, resolves her intellectual ambivalences and emerges as a real Dalit novelist by revolting against the established centres of power.

To recapitulate, the Dalit self in both **PK** and **PKAK** is constructed through the major characters— Kāttamuttu, Cantiran, Kauri and Civakāmi. Kāttamuttu and Cantiran assert their identity politically, and Civakāmi re-creates her sufferings in the past to unravel the miseries of a Dalit woman and the novelist. Of course, the two novels **PK** and **PKAK** are thematically constructed on Civakāmi’s being – Kauri in **PK** – and becoming – Civakāmi in **PKAK**. In short, as protest literature both **PK** and **PKAK**, like McKay’s novels, portray the human thirst for freedom from oppression. The construction of the identities in the novels of both McKay and Civakāmi relies heavily on the realisation of the self. Both of them illustrate the Black and the Dalit identities by delineating contrasting characters of instinct and intellect. The identity of the suppressed is established further by its constant negotiation with the other, which is negatively constructed and imposed on them by their oppressors. The negotiation with the other as a tool of self-emergence is the focus of concern in the next chapter.