Chapter V

Literature of Resistance

The Dalit and Black writers explore the exploitation and subjugation of blacks and dalit communities respectively. All forms of exploitation are identical because they are applied against the only object, human beings. But they want to remind the world that the basic problem is restoration of man to his proper place. They voice their problems or write the atrocities committed upon them to assert their identity and they take a step towards the centre thereby assuming cultural stability. In order to achieve a space for themselves, it is necessary to recreate their past history, which is Euro-anthropocentrically distorted to re-live their lives in the present through the nation of earlier generation and look forward to a futuristic period of total liberation and equality. Sense of identity and confidence has driven the blacks and dalits to attain empowerment to some extent. Fanon believed that “restoration of the past was an important factor in giving colonized people the confidence to envision a future without European rule and a nation capable of future achievement” (10). The writings of the Blacks and dalits can be considered to be rewritings of history and there is a metalinguistic critique involved in their writings.

The oppression of women and women’s perspectives are reconstructed by the women writers, diverting it from the male cultural paradigms in an effort to change the tradition that has silenced and marginalized women. South African black writer Tlali and Tamil dalit writer Bama put questions which help reshape literary criticism and challenge the traditional notions of writing, thereby redefining the subjects and the modes narration. Their writings deal with oppression overtly but concomitantly they contain an optimistic vision and an underlying resistance rescues the victims and they acquire the potential to social and literary constraint in terms of a theory of the
anxiety of patriarchal influence. They trace in women’s writings the inscription of tension, self-doubt, renunciation, and above all rage against the society which confines them.

Each woman writer is singular, yet she may not be unique and hence it is possible to trace a narrative path from one to other. The visibility of Tlali and Bama reveal through their writings of women’s ability to act, the translation of their action into representation and the process from oppression to resistance and ultimately to optimistic visions of liberation. The liberation of the oppression people is a global struggle, which demand rights of equality, freedom, and liberty that is often denied to them. In response to oppression, the marginalized people struggle and resist from within the shackle of oppression, racism, casteism or patriarchal supremacy. The renowned sociologist Wallerstein rightly remarked, “It is not oppression that mobilizes masses but hope and certainty, the belief that the end of oppression is near that a better world is truly possible” (3). The momentum of hope incites the oppressed, especially the women to action, so that they can fight for equality and liberation and resist whatever is detrimental to their progress.

Black and Dalit histories document the sufferings undergone by these communities, the struggle to overcome the patriarchal domination, and the economics of slavery. Writers from these communities have liberated themselves from their slave past and the sense of self-worth has awakened within them to explore their relationships within the frameworks of family and community, Tlali and Bama work along the same lines with family and community which offered them the impetus to fight against the resistance displayed by them was the best defense to stop further attacks. Such resistance runs throughout their narratives inspiring them to create a self-spun philosophy from de-centre to centre. The term resistance implies antislavery
activity and as such it is inexplicable how slaves ought to improve their lives even if their actions did not often attack slavery or lead to freedom. It could be equated with an oppositional consciousness that is often inferred. In the writings of Tlali and Bama, resistance is enforced by the pressures of circumstances which draw the narrators to defend their self-identity and hopes which are inevitable for becoming bildungsroman.

Theory of resistance in literature is a complex concept to define, for it is associated with a shift in a paradigm in the relations between text and image. Resistance to hegemony is presented in a number of text and usually those who resist occupy the margins of society. Resistance can result in the formation of a community with its own hegemonic or dominant values. Therefore identifying resistance in a text will be highly dependent on individual context. The term “resistance”, first applied in a description of Palestinian literature in 1966 by the Palestinian writer and critic Ghassan Kanafani, was for national liberation to accomplish the political and economic liberation of the people from the domain of imperialism. He expected such writings to bring a revolutionary transformation of the existing social structures. In referring to Palestinian literature as resistance literature, Kanafani insisted on the need for the revolutionary movement to educate the people to practice which would transform systems of exploitation whether based on gender, race or class into a collective solidarity for liberation. Hence such writings were presented as an arena of struggle. The very immediacy and specificity of the historical context reveals the role to be played by resistance literature in Third World Literature. The literatures of blacks and dalits can be grouped under resistance literature because they fight for social and economic emancipation and resist exploitation at all levels. Their writings unravel past history of exploitation and seek to emerge from the depressive marginalized social structure.
The autobiographical form of writing is one of the ways through which blacks and dalits asserted their right to live, a bid for freedom, and a hope beyond exploitation. It is also the means to express their dissatisfaction in the repressed condition of life and to voice their desires and hopes. Thus it becomes a literary tradition of self-creation, where women could move beyond alienation through the collective solidarity with other repressed women. Critic Roger writes:

All autobiography is minority autobiography. Minority autobiography and minority fiction deserve that minority status not because of comparative numbers, but because of the presence of special reality, one provided for the minority by the minority, within which each member of the minority tries to reach an understanding both of himself and the reality into which he has been placed. (168)

Writing itself forms of the organizing motif where the experience is contextualized and made an integral part of the writing practice and resistance becomes a strategy in which that writing participates. The texts of such writers emerge as collective corpus, a common statement which embodies challenges to patriarchal structures and race and caste apparatuses. The power of writing maintains the struggles and the writer becomes the scribe for other people who try to survive. The struggle undertaken by Tlali and Bama shows their resistance against the unequal social order and gender discrimination. In that sense, their writings can be placed under the genre of ‘resistance literature,’ which continues to wage a struggle for liberation on many levels and in many arenas.

In the point of literary resistance Slemon, the post-colonial critic and theorist, questions the nature of literary resistance:
Is literary resistance something that simply issues forth, through narratives, against a clearly definable set of power relations? Is it something actually there in the text or is it produced and reproduced in and through communities of readers and through the mediating structures of their own culturally specific histories? (73)

Slemon considers the concept of literary resistance a complicated one since it is strangely in untheorised position for failing to address three major areas of critical concern. The first is a political concern, namely the centre and periphery notions of resistance that can actually work to reinscribe centre and periphery relations and can “serve an institutional function of securing the dominant narratives.” (139) The second problem is that the literary resistance is simply somewhere there in the literary text as a structure of intentionality and then in the social text as a communicative gesture of pure availability. Post-Lacanian and Post-Althusserian theories of the “constructedness” of subjectivity would contest the easy access to representational purity and would argue that resistance is grounded in the “multiple” and “contradictory” structures of ideological interpellations or subject formation and would claim that resistance can never be purely expressed in representational or communicative models. The third problem Slemon puts is that resistance has to put aside the persuasive theory of power, that power itself inscribes its resistance and in the process seeks to contain them.

The first concept of resistance is put forward by Selwyn Cudjoe in his “Resistance and Caribbean Literature” and by Barbara Harlow in her “Resistance Literature.” For these theorists, resistance is an act or set of act design to rid the people of its oppressors and it so thoroughly infuses the experience of living under oppression that it becomes an almost autonomous aesthetic principle. Literary
resistance can thus be seen as a form of contractual understanding between text and reader which is embedded in an experiential dimension and buttressed by political and cultural aesthetics at work. Thus, literary resistance or resistance literature emerges as an integral part of an organized struggle or resistance for national liberation. It might be justified to resist if there are substantive injustices that can be reduced or eliminated. Unjust acts, practices, rules, law, or system like oppression, violation of rights, torture, exploitation, or corruption, all justify resistance. It is important to examine the applicability of theoretical structures and modalities in the texts of marginalized group of writers as resistance literature emerged significantly as part of the organized national liberation struggles and resistance movements in Africa, Latin America, and The Middle East.

There is abundant evidence of native disaffection and dissent under colonial rule of contestation and struggle against various forms of dominations. The black and dalit historical archives and informal texts written by the oppressed, from very early time narrativized instances of insurrection and political opposition. Traces of popular disobedience, unwritten by the official, can also register the violence or rejection of the subject. Such modes of resistance were not deliberately accommodated in the anti-colonialist discourses since the elite writers never thought that the oppressed could advance to the level of defiance and identity assertion. The black post-colonial theorist Parry contests:

The work of contemporary critics recuperating figures of colonial resistance, not from the rhetorical strategies of the dominant discourses, but by revisiting dispersed and connotative informal sources and the projects do not appear as preoccupied with victimize or
as enacting a regressive search for an aboriginal and intact condition / traditional from which a proper sense of historicity is occluded. (38)

It is essential to delve into the matrix of the history of the oppressed to understand and position them because the collective becomes “oneself” and narrative of the people with the common history of oppression and exploitation continues to be very powerful and creative since the act of rediscovery creates self-identity and self-assertion. In the narratives of the decolonized, the possibility of encountering the identity struggle of one community can serve as a model for other resistant discourses. The self-definition articulated by the marginalized like the Black, Dalit, Jew or African in defiance to received representation can be communicated to different situations of contest against the authority of dominant race, caste or religion.

History is a tool for all the writers from the marginalized section. They consider a slave pastor a coercive past to be intimately bound up with the present. The inferior status accorded to the blacks and dalits in the established order and the questions raised from living in this inferiority cannot be ignored. Hence their literatures become mirror images of their lives, sorrow and poverty. It can be created through the chemistry of life and experience, society and problems, pain and rebellion. Whenever they are subjugated to social control and fixed in a position of subjugation there is a possibility of resistance, where the suppressed refuse their assigned positions and muted conditions. The post-modern critic Manohar remarks; “...revolt is the most valuable truth in life and literature” (21). Revolt and rebellion impart energy to destroy distortion and it could foster culture. There is a need for them to counter the official histories imposed by the slavery as representations primarily to protest the past and the present oppression and to explore the process of
self-creation under extremely oppressive conditions. Paradoxically, the marginalized create a site of resistance in their marginality. Hooks asserts:

This is an intervention. The message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves where we meet a solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer. Marginality is the space (site) of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. Enter that space. We greet you as liberators. (152)

In post-colonial literature, resistance becomes a new literary focus which refutes the notion of negativism and the very act of writing oppression, racism, and casteism revitalizes the cultural bitterness of the indigenous people.

For Spivak, the post-colonial intellectual, the term “subaltern” is useful because it is flexible; it can accommodate social identities and struggles that do not fall under the reductive terms of “strict class analyses.” In her interview she asserted:

I like the word ‘subaltern’ for one reason. It is truly situational ‘subaltern’ began as a description of a certain rank in the military. The word was used under censorship by Gramsci. He called Marxism ‘monism’ and was obliged to call the proletarian ‘subaltern’. That word was used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that does not fall under strict class analysis. I like that because it has no theoretical rigor. (46)

Spivak’s writing demonstrates the experience of social and political oppression in post-colonial societies such as India that cuts across difference in class, religion, language, ethnicity, region, generation, gender and citizenship. Spivak’s critique of western models of class consciousness and subjectivity is further developed in “Can
the Subalterns Speak?” (141). In this essay, Spivak juxtaposes the radical claims of Twentieth century French intellectuals Foucault and Deleuze to speak for the disenfranchised and the self-righteous claims of British colonialism to rescue native women from the practice of widow sacrifice in Nineteenth century India. The point of this juxtaposition is to emphasize how the benevolent, radical western intellectuals can paradoxically silence the subalterns by claiming to represent and speak for their experience, in the same way that the benevolent colonialist silenced the voice of the widow, who chooses to die on her husband’s funeral pyre.

Spivak raises the issues of marginal subjects, especially the stance of subaltern women in society and their empowerment. Her statement “subaltern cannot speak” has created a wave of controversy in the post-colonial context. But she believes in her theory which formulates that subaltern can speak but others do not have the patience to listen to them. For the colonized women, the double bind of colonialism and patriarchy suppresses her completely and it becomes impossible for her to represent herself. Spivak rakes in various issues related to “Sati” – the practice of widow self-immolation. She substantiates her argument with the example of practice of Sati that the subaltern women did not get the opportunity to transact their ideas and convince the society about their dissenting voice. From the discourse on Sati, Spivak derives large, general statements on women’s subject in which the subaltern woman is conceived as a homogeneous and coherent category which culminates in a declaration on the success of her planned disarticulation.

Parry charges that Spivak “gives no speaking part to the colonized, effectively writing out the evidence of native agency recorded in India’s two hundred year struggle against British conquest and the Raj” (20). In response to such charges, Spivak has emphasized that deconstruction is a sophisticated interpretative approach
to philosophies and literary text and it offers a way of theorizing the conditions and possibility for subaltern insurgency. Parry insists that the issue of whether or not the colonized can speak should not be decided on the grounds of textual analysis alone. Parry’s persistent criticism is that post-colonial studies expanding rapidly as a subfield of cultural studies occludes altogether the marginalized into obscurity by characteristically failing to register the specific conditions under which different discourses were produced, the purpose they were intended to serve and the different audience to whom they were addressed. She believes that Spivak theorizes the silence of the doubly oppressed subaltern women and her theorem on imperialism’s epistemic violence extends to positing the native male and female as historically muted subjects. Spivak in her writings restricts the space in which the colonized can be written back into history even when interventionist possibilities are exploited through the deconstructive strategies devised by the post-colonial intellectual. Parry writes:

Spivak’s theory of subalternity does not seem to me to be a theory of ‘native agency’ at all, but a theory of the way in which disenfranchised elements of the ‘native’ population are represented in the discourse of colonialism. The subaltern is for Spivak not a colonized person but a discursive figure in a battery of more or less integrated dominant cultural text. (205)

According to her, Spivak fails to register or even suppresses the fact of colonized people’s resistance to colonial domination.

The weak and strong forms of oppositional discursive practices have been designated as “counter-identification and misidentification” (Pecheux 157) and ‘re-citation’ and ‘de-citation’ (Terdiman 68). For Pecheux, a discourse against is that in which the subject of enunciation takes up a position of separation with respect to what
the "universal subject gives him to think... (distaination, doubt, interrogation, challenge, revolt)... a struggle against ideological evidentness, an evidentness with a negative sign reversed on its own terrain" (157). In Terdiman's terms, the technique of re-citation seeks "to surround the(ir) antagonism and neutralize or explode it", strives "to excluded it totally, to expunge it" (70). Both the critics encourage the counter discourse and Terdiman concedes that reverse discourses are always interlocked and parasitic on the dominant they contest and maintains that they function to survey the limits and weaknesses of the dominant by mapping the internal in coherences. He believes that "... from this dialectic of discursive struggle, truths about the social formation, its characteristic modes of reproduction and its previously hidden vulnerabilities, inevitably emerge" (66). Citing Pecheux and Terdiman, Parry affirm the power of the reverse discourse and argue that such writing could challenge, subvert, and undermine the ruling ideologies to overthrow the hierarchy of colonizer/colonized the speech and stance of the colonized refusing a position of subjugation and also dispensing the definitions of the colonizers. The writings of the oppressed often do not appear as preoccupied with victimage or as enacting a regressive search for an aboriginal condition or tradition but an inner re-creative response to the violation of slavery and suppression. The act of writing becomes a revisiting of the repositories of memory and cultural survivals. Glissant believes:

History is not only absence for us. It is vertigo. The time that was never ours we must now possess. We do not see it stench into our past and calmly takes us into tomorrow, but it explodes in us as a compact mass, pushing through a dimension of emptiness where we must with difficulty and pain put it all back together. (161)
Writing and communication, however, function in establishing and maintaining the solidarity among the oppressed significantly within the nation and outside. Through the narratives, the voices of the other individuals, of children, wives, and even of authorities find expressions as the different positions struggle with and against each other. Thus the multiple perspectives collectively represent the voice of the people who have long been deprived of the right to speak for themselves.

There has been a strong tradition of resistance to the power of particular imperial discourses since very early in the colonial period. Critiques of post-colonial theory have noted that locating resistance either in the contradictions of the colonialist text or in an essentialist Third World consciousness serves to conceal the actual operation of resistance. In writing back against the representations of experiences, the subject opposes that which is internal to itself in a dual sense – its own history of apprehensions and its own history of representations. Mohanty argues that the discourses of representation should not be confused with material realities (Parry 29). Since the native woman is constructed within multiple social relationships and positioned as the product of different class, caste, and cultural specificities, it should be possible to locate traces and testimony of women’s voices on those sites where women inscribed themselves as healers, ascetics, singers of sacred songs, artisans, and artists and thus they modify Spivak’s model of the silent subaltern.

Resistance is a necessary political strategy but the means and manner of resistance are diverse and even silence can become a powerful “speaking out.” Against Spivak’s conclusion that the subaltern as female cannot be heard or read, the post-modern critic Busia also argues that “if black women are inscribed in terms of their embodiment, there are alternative readings to the passivity of silent and sexualized identities since the body can be read as a text” (86). Spivak’s theory on the
silent subaltern women are often counter-argued by critics who offer the space for the oppressed women to articulate and make themselves heard; thereby, the literatures produced by such writers focus on revivalism of their culture, empowerment, and reconciliation.

Resistance, as part of decolonization, is as much a personal struggle as it is a group struggle. To the oppressed, it means an unlearning of what they were taught about themselves and to value their birth and culture. Their principles of patriarchy, racism, casteism, and sexism are the roots of unequal power relationships that subordinate certain groups are communities. Resistance to any form of social power can be produced from whining the communities that are most immediately and visibly subordinated by that power structure. Resistance often manifests not necessarily in a militant revolutionary context but in sustained daily acts of courage and rebellion. Positive affirmation and self-acceptance can help them to overcome the negative messages about them but a collective empowering option necessary to articulate resistance and to examine how they could participate in their own oppression. To decolonize the mind, they summon the capacity to think themselves out of the position of other. Intellectual awareness, critical self-reflection, and self-analysis are necessary to transform their lives. Fanon states, “the body of history those not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation. We are not victims. Individually and collectively we are responsibly for ourselves within the structures we live” (230).

Acknowledging the interrelationship of colonialism, racism, and oppression, employing a race, class, and gender analysis becomes a way of decolonizing the mind. Overcoming the silence they were made to feel, they interrogate and critically engage in a discourse which itself become a strategy of resistance. Forms of resistance are
complex and cannot be easily eliminated. Resistance has been evidenced mainly through silence and passivity. Even suicide was a strategy of resistance frequently employed by black slaves during the era of slave trading.

Resistance is encoded in the very practice of remembering and writing. The authors resist the colonial experience in varying ways depending on their cultural backgrounds. The resistance to the manipulation of the lives of blacks and dalits differs because of historical and economic condition of their existence. The transplanted blacks suffered from hyphenated personalities as they were forced to accept the world view of their white masters. The processes of liberation and social equality of both these oppressed groups began with the struggle over the nature of reality. They began to question the reality imposed on them and then redefined it so that they could move out of the fixed space given to them and also to acquire new frames of reference.

The progress from the colonial or neocolonial past to the present and into a genuinely post-colonial future uses the past as a resource for a different future. The history of the blacks and dalits and their present resistance are so interlinked that there is a progression from the native to the liberated. The space given to the marginalized sections of society, anywhere in the universe, is so narrow and locked that the claustrophobic situation only dehumanized and destroyed the human spirit without impunity. Even in such a condition, resistance can be envisioned when they move from a culture to a political position. The theory of resistance can be constructed on the acknowledgement of the mechanisms and systems of beliefs and a reflection of how race, class, caste, and gender shaped hegemonically. The constructed images of the East and the West and the essentialist notion of the self and their processes can be analyzed and reassessed.
Oppression is never complete as power relations shift often, and hence, are not constant. This inconsistency offers space for resistance which necessitates deconstruction of essentialist notions of culture, language, and identity. The oppressed intellectual often struggle out of these confines seeking possible crevices for resistance. Dominant power structures offer only personhood for the oppressed identities. It is for the marginalized to shove these structures and create spaces for articulation. It does not mean that the oppressed remained mute during the imperial reign, but they were bludgeoned to such an extent that the political force was too overpowering for them to express their resistance. Resistance is so corrosive to the resistant that it contaminates every part of the being, mind, body, and spirit. However, the anger that is generated inward has a healing effect too as it propagates out to deconstruct the notion of racism, casteism, sexism, and all types of supremacy.

Post-colonial critic Slemon questions the nature of literary resistance and argues that it is a form of contractual understanding between text and reader and finds it to be embedded in an experiential dimension and buttressed by a political and cultural aesthetic at work in the culture. She questions:

Do literary resistances escape the constitutive purchase of genre and trope and figure and mode which operate elsewhere as a contract between text and reader and thus a set of centralizing codes or are literary resistances in fact necessarily embedded in the representational technologies of those literary and social ‘text’ whose structures and whose referential codes they seek to oppose. (73)

Delegating Slemon’s comments to the background, it can be established that resistance is actually there in the text. It is possible to produce and reproduce literary resistance through the communities of readers and through the mediating structures of
their culturally specific histories. Resistance is exhibited differently by different writers as it depends on the experience, culture, and language of the writers. The language and the narrative used in the life stories become the weapon to retain and regain their identity and they find innumerable ways to reassemble the image that had been imprinted on them. Repression suffered was continually rewritten by the subversive punctuation of resistance.

When Spivak commented that the subaltern cannot speak, she felt “the absence of a text that can answer one back” (251), after the planned epistemic violence of the imperialist project and sought to develop a strategy of reading that will speak to the historically-muted native subject, predominately inscribed in Spivak’s writing as the non-elite or subaltern women. But for the postcolonial critic Bhabha, the subaltern has spoken and he found the “transgression performed by the native from within and against colonial discourse” (35). Parry too charges Spivak’s deliberate deafness to the native voice “one never encounters the testimony of the woman’s voice” (22). Jenny Sharpe had reconsidered the work of theorists such as Spivak, Bhabha, Jan Mohamed and Parry (Sharpe 138). Each of these theorists has worked to correct the tendency to presume the transparency of literary resistance in the colonial and post-colonial writings and they also examined the ways in which resistance in writing must go beyond the “questioning” of colonial authority. Sharpe while defining literary resistance draws out two key points. First, the site of anti-colonial resistance could never easily be located, since resistance itself is always in some measure an effect of the contradictory representation of colonial authority and never simply a reversal of power. Secondly, resistance itself is therefore purely resistance, not just here in the text or the interpretative community, but is always necessarily complicit in the apparatus it seeks to transgress. Sharpe clarifies, “The colonial subject who can answer the colonizers back is the product
of the same vast ideological machinery that silences the subaltern” (143). However, Hooks feels:

Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech of 'talking back' that is no more gesture of empty words that is the expression of our movement from object to subject - the liberated voice. (6)

Considering these arguments, it can be noted that the literature of the marginalized is embedded with the strategy of resistance and that there is obviously an answering back to the oppressor.

Most of the writings of the Dalit in India and Blacks in South Africa fall into the genre of resistance literature. They contain an analysis of social problems like casteism, racism, inequality, repression, and exploitation followed by the agenda of political change. Their writings demand civil and human rights, destruction of hegemony and the active reconstruction of interrupted and interpreted histories. Dalit and Black women had fought persistently over the years to resist the negative gender roles presented in literature and in real life. Their literature, of course, records the thoughts, words, deeds, and feelings that make the reality of being dalit in India or black in South Africa different than most men paint it.

Almost all the literatures of resistance have been written in English, the language of colonial power, though there are also writings in regional languages as in Indian languages. The very choice of the language in which to compose itself is a political statement on the part of the writer and till need to be considered in each case from author to author, region to region. If Indian dalit writings are moulded by casteism,
black South African writings are shaped by racism, both overt and distinguished, and hence, casteism and racism undermine and interpolate the corollaries of prejudice and discrimination. Innovative dalit output in Tamil literature was unable to find its distinct place in Tamil literary domain until late 1980's or early 1990's. The resistance and revolt in the Tamil dalit literature especially by women writers are few in number. Discrimination and social injustice were discussed but not with radical force. The protests in their novels were not infested with Ambedkarite consciousness or organized solidarity. Their resistance and protests were largely individual or marked by black humour.

Dalit patriarchy became an important subject of concern in Tamil Dalit Literature. Sivakami boldly focused on violent exploitation of woman's body and also drew attention to the dual oppression of dalit women on account of their gender and caste at the hands of the upper caste and dalit men. She writes, “Main stream literature has boycotted me because I believe that only dalits can write about issues concerning them and that only women can write on feminist issues. It is not just a question of experience but also perspective” (28).

Tamil dalit poet Meena Kandasamy articulates the voice of the dalits through her poems. She feels that language is the best medium to offer her resistance and that her language has resisted sanskritization in the face of much oppression. She believes, “if I were to be silent today, I will be condemned for my silence tomorrow” (Interview). The young poet gives expression to the failed classical hero Ekalavya in her poem Touch. She openly lashed out to the academicians for the discrimination prevalent even today in Tamil Nadu. She writes: “My poem essentially tries to invoke the militancy of Ekalavya's character and to remind him that there are a lot of ways in which he can get back at the system or reduce it to its knees. It was written as a call to arms” (Interview), if caste oppression is two thousand years old, then their resistance is as old as that too.
There is every chance for them to celebrate their victories and what is imperative is that they should reconstruct it and draw their hope and sustenance from it.

Language becomes the place of struggle for the dalits to identify, to reunite, to reconcile, and to renew them. Their words are actions. Dalit women writers, especially the poets, consider poems to be the fertile ground to sow their resistance. The little stanzas of these poets had raised much controversy in the Tamil literary sphere, questioning the form and structure of the poems rather than the content which openly criticized the narrow casteism existing in Tamil Nadu. The upper class literary circle expects a disillusioned oppressed entity in the poets, reconciled with the condition of their present lives but the vibrant and militant Tamil dalit poets aim at attaining their self by questioning and shaming patriarchy and casteism. Bama's writings also shocked the Tamil literary circle because of her use of non-standardadised spoken dalit vocabulary which was one of her resistant narrative strategies. She showed no overt attempt to sanitize the language. Hence, the major challenge in translating Tamil dalit writing into English is to reproduce the inherent, seemingly untranslatable resistance of the language of this literature. The linguistic nuances of dalit literature are of paramount importance and translation can erase the locational differentiations, cultural oppression and the resistance. The original writing is resistant to the very ideology that dalit readers could identify with a dalit translator while a non-dalit translator has to learn to write that resistance into the translation effectively. Tamil dalit literature remains close to its oral roots which is full of proverbs, chants and work songs. As Raj Gauthaman writes:

Dalit literature has no models that it can emulate. All the literary models are those of oppression. Dalit literature makes alternate forms taking whatever shape anger takes. In its attempt to destabilize hegemonic literary discourse, dalit literature ruptures it in terms of both content and
craft. It negates literary traditions, standardized grammar and practices, an aesthetic of violence-linguistic, generic, narrative. (62)

Most of the dalit narratives are in the spoken voice and the readers cannot expect a highly literary or sensuous use of the language because the theme and plot revolves around illiterate dalits. Bama's Karukku can be placed under the genre of folk autobiography because it is predominated by “as-told-to” autobiography of folk, where the communication takes an oral form, the language spoken by the Parayas community, the location is rural, profession of women are domestic and narration is of simplistic life stories. Using such a language, Bama has shown her resistance to patriarchy, casteism, gender exploitation and other such issues so that the other dalits might get the cue out of her narration to unite and establish solidarity for social equality.

Literacy and education are the strategic needs that can transform and provide potential to the blacks and dalits. Nobody can claim that by merely passing a law the social conditions of the marginalized section could change or it could remove all evils. But education is an important mode of social upliftment which is denied too many sections of society either scripturally or due to poverty. The need to educate has been stressed by both the black and dalit women writers. Exploitation, suppression, and rejection form the initial stages of the oppressed section; but soon resistance and revolt follows, leading to liberation and social equality.

Historical view of South African patriarchies in Black women’s writings are two reasons that make it necessary to examine the patriarchies in South Africa in depth. First, the boundaries between Western and black African patriarchy are, at times, blurred, which makes it difficult to distinguish between the two, as this study tries to do. Second, the oppressiveness of black African patriarchies is sometimes contested, whereby Western patriarchy in the form of apartheid is blamed for all
oppression of black women. The method used here to examine the patriarchies in South Africa, and black African patriarchy in particular, is to investigate in what terms black women describe the African social gender systems they are implicated in such overt expressions of resistance had inspired other black women writers to create themes related to their life’s struggle, focusing them on women’s perspectives and experiences such as sexism, gender relationships, marriage, politics, education, and employment. It signifies the women’s quest for emancipation from hegemony, sexism, and male dominance.

Black women’s resistance to apartheid could thus camouflage opposition also to patriarchal structures. At other times, however, women’s rejection of patriarchy resulted in one more burden on the shoulders of the black man - already marginalized and victimized by apartheid. Two influential autobiographies by black women writers reflect African patriarchies in the second half of the 20th century: Ellen Kuzwayo’s Call Me Woman (1985) and Mamphela Ramphele’s A Life (1995). Characterizing these two works, Desirée Lewis writes, “a legacy which continues to shape popular perceptions of women-in-the-nation, of women-as-citizens. In their representations of motherhood, the family and marriage, the texts reveal pivotal ways in which women’s citizenship is mediated.(Lewis 39). In addition, Lauretta Ngcobo’s novel And They Didn’t Die (1990), illustrating traditional patriarchal mores in rural Natal in the 1960s, and finally Sindiwe Magona’s Mother to Mother (1998), which portrays the adolescence and early married life of a young woman. The patriarchal traditions addressed by Kuzwayo, Ramphele, Ngcobo, and Magona had first been impacted by colonialism in the 20th century by apartheid.

The segregating laws of apartheid, like the colonial ideology, were highly patriarchal, and black women constituted the lowest rung in the hierarchy. White men
and women assumed patriarchal authority over both black men and women, and patriarchal hierarchies were reflected in laws and regulations. The holding of rental contracts, or the scant ownership of property allowed to blacks, was by law limited exclusively to men which significantly weakened the social position of black women and implemented radical change in African life styles. Anne McClintock writes:

The institution of marriage became a direct weapon of state control. Any [black] woman’s right to remain in an urban area became dependent on a male relative … In 1964, in an act of inexpressible cruelty, amendments were made to the Urban Areas and Bantu Labour Act, which made it virtually impossible for a (black) woman to qualify for the right to remain in an urban area. Wives and daughters of male residents were now no longer permitted to stay unless they too were legally working. (324)

Black women’s “traditional role in economic production was . . . undermined” in the “homelands,” Jacklyn Cock writes, and they therefore “became increasingly confined to dependent domestic roles (306),” constituted either by hopeless isolation and destitution on rural farms, or by slave-like labour in white homes in the urban areas. However, black women contributed significantly to the resistance struggle, which they, as mentioned, pursued in organisations parallel to the men. Concurrently, black women were oppressed by South African patriarchies and officially it took a long time for women to be recognized within the male black organisations.

In such a way, the black women writers provide a comprehensive view of black women’s struggles to form positive self-definitions in the face of derogated images of black women and also document the process of personal growth. The specific narrative strategies applied in Tlali’s texts are shaped to negotiate the political situation at the
time as regards both patriarchy and apartheid; therefore, they differ significantly depending on the expected impediments to be negotiated, or the degree of contextual domination experienced at the time. The Black Consciousness ideology, for example, is gaining momentum towards the end of the 70s, mobilised black resistance to the cultural hegemony of the apartheid regime. This, in turn, affected Tlali’s choice of literary form, a form that she then also deploys to oppose patriarchal values prevailing within the Black Consciousness ideology. In order to clarify these arguments, and as a general background to Tlali’s highly political writing, a brief historical background to political developments in South Africa in the 20th century and to the black women’s contribution to the struggle is presented.

The stigma of the black woman as domineering or promiscuous or even that of the Indian woman as silent sufferer or malevolent are serious distortions of the truth. Both are human with human weaknesses and strengths. The gestural mechanisms of refusal are not acknowledged and recognized; instead they are listed as signs of rebellion. When the black and dalit women become central and establish an authentic female identity, it becomes the clear testimony of questioning male supremacy. The act of resistance creates such an impact that the margins get transgressed. The rebel nature is an overt act of crowding the memory with all that has been lost. Without loss or fear of loss, there would be no movement, and hence, the sense of loss prepares the ground to retrieve whatever is lost. This psychological theory of loss works well in the case of blacks and dalits. Survival becomes a form of resistance and retribution. The history of oppression had been handed down to the various generations through oral discourses which helped the new generation to keep the embers of oppression alive. Resistance is an ingrained part of the survival conditioning of peoples in Africa, America, and India. Writers from these countries delineate resistance based on their cultural, social, economic,
and political conditions, and hence, their behavioural manifestations are different. The works of Bama and Tlali exhibit such manifestations and through their works the black and the dalit women are represented as life-sustainers who contribute to an understanding to the notion of community as extension of self.

The dalit and black history documents the oppressive conditions of the Indian dalits and South African blacks respectively and the record of early writings of the marginalized were also indented with slavery, oppression, exploitation, racism and casteism, gender discrimination and variant inequalities. Though the later writings exposed the atrocities committed on a section of society, they also included self-realization of what the black knew as apartheid and dalits understood as casteism or untouchability. There was an employment of tactics of ethos which challenged the marginalized to appreciate their worth and to understand their culture. The writings became a call for self-esteem and self-love which is endemic to any empowerment or liberation. The self-realization opened up avenues for them to resist, the subjection and resistance in turn led to revolt and revolution the ultimate aim being emancipation and equality. The underlying elements of resistance in the writings of the marginalized were conveniently ignored or eliminated that it instigated the later writers to overtly expose their resistance in their writings. The texts of these writings are embedded with resistance which gave impetus to their community to march forward with hope and optimism.

A philosophy of optimism, which is born out of the active engagement with the past oppression, is present in the writings of Bama and Tlali. It is a self-spun philosophy created by the writers, in spite of their belonging to two different races or separated by a vast geographical gap. They believed that oppression of the discriminated can be neutralized by the optimism inculcated within the community to oppose the world social order. Hence, their narrative is not an oppression prone one though they document it, but an
indictment. There is an ideological analysis and vision of future possibilities of a
discrimination free global society, born out of the contemporary straggle and
resistance against oppression. There is a common thread running through the works of
Bama and Tlali, a theme derived from the lessons in their lives as well as the women of
their community for whom they speak. For these women, the malady of racism and
casteism is doubly terminal not only because they must bear it under conflicting internal
impulses but also because they must shoulder it alone. Tlali exposes the South African
social system in her rendering of the black experience. She indicts;

It is a system based on cheap labour, which undermines all law of
morality and decency, making nonsense of the concept of the family unit.

On it the mining industry in the Republic of South Africa has flourished.

To my mind, it is comparable only with the slave trade. (MM 60)

India seems to be one of the world’s largest democracies, but ironically being a caste
structured society. In India, dalit people are living a life of subjugation with
insurmountable sadness. Therefore, dalits articulate their dissent against the dominant
ideology not only in social and political platforms, but also through literary forms. In spite
of contextual differences, Bama’s life is also full of struggles. She aches for freedom of her
own and also her community which is not accepted by men of her own community and also
the upper castes. Bama advises her fellow members, “We must not live like people who
choose to be blind though they can see, if we ourselves do not change our condition then
who will come and change it for us?” (S 122). Such internal probing and incurred optimism
are the rich sources of her writings that make her fictions authentic and real.

The act of writing itself is a declaration for Bama. The excessive oppressive
force repressed her much that generated anger and rebellion within her. She needs an
outlet to resist the forces that subjugate her and the outcome is the first
autobiographical work *Karukku*. She expresses a desperate urge to break, throw away and destroy the bonds of unjust social structure. The driving forces that shape her book are the numerous events that occurred in her life which inspired her to write with dedication about her community's need. The politics of dalit writing must be an active one that fights for human rights, social justice and equality. In the afterword of *Karukku*, Bama writes, “It has been a great joy to dalits aiming to live with self-respect, proclaiming aloud *dalit endru sollada, talai nimirndu nillada*: say you are a dalit; lift up your head and stand tall” (K 105). This short statement explains that subaltern can also speak. She admits the rootlessness in life, social exclusion and the pain involved in it, yet the challenge then is to subject her to the pain so that it creates art. As Hooks has commented, “... the thinking, the writing was an act of reclamation, enabling me to recover wiser to be whole” (30) and creative writing for Bama is to assert and celebrate the humanity of the dalits.

The central concern of dalit writing is to raise awareness of dalit experience and explaining a changing dalit identity. There is a powerful sense of self and the community as dalit which rejects the notion of Varna refuses to Sanskritize and to evaluate dalit lifestyle according to mainstream Hindu values. There is a powerful sense of engagement with history of changing notions of identity and belonging. Bama explains what writing is for her, “I experience writing as the breaking of the unbroken and forced silence of the victims and letting the victims and the militants in the victims speak up” (K 21). She develops a strategy of resistance that will speak to the muted and create a space from where the subaltern as a female could speak.

The element of resistance is the strength of her novels. She, as a nun, is happy to teach the children and she never fails to argue with the other nuns about the discrimination: “I enjoyed standing up to the authorities and teaching with some skill and success” (K 20).
Bama, as the incarnation of Ambedkar, insists the authorities of Catholic institution to mind the injustices, humiliation, and discrimination that have been meted out to dalit students in their institution. She wanted the people of her community to be aware of discrimination, resist enslavement, and submission. Through her mission oriented writings, Bama wanted to dispel the inferiority complex by which her people are suffering lot. And also she asserts that education is the only means through which the downtrodden could emulate themselves as respectable beings. She believes, “Those who have found their happiness by exploiting us are not going to let us go easily. It is we who have to place them where they belong and bring about a changed just society where all are equal” (K24). In spite of all the discrimination and insults, she feels optimistic because she still a fighting has a desire to live which boosted her with courage. In fact, Bama feels sorry that she lives in this society which disregards her and her community. While remembering the scenes of insults and oppression, she encodes the modes of resistance that constructs herself in opposition to the hegemonic structure of the caste system. Whenever she questions the dominant upper class authority's hegemonic power, it becomes a political act of resistance.

Bama's works point out how the church distorts the real image and teachings of Christ. The priests and the nuns had frightened the dalit children telling stories of Satan and Evil. After reading the Bible, she understood the real meaning of the teachings of Christ: “I learnt that God has always shown the greatest compassion for the oppressed-And Jesus too, associated himself mainly with the poor. Yet nobody had stressed this nor pointed it out” (K 89). She found that none had taught her that “God is just, righteous, is angered by injustices, oppose falsehood, never countenances inequality” (89). Jesus was described differently to different castes and the oppressed were taught in an empty and meaningless ways about humility, obedience, patience, gentleness. In the convent, Bama kept quiet about her caste initially, but her anger propelled her to reveal her identity and
ultimately took the bold step of leaving the convent which otherwise offered a protected environment. Leaving the convent becomes an act of resistance, thereby breaking the conventions and though she felt unstable, unprotected and unemployed, she achieved a sort of freedom by doing it. She had no regrets when she left the convent because she had a false existence there.

Women in Sangati are delineated deliberately so that they gain voice. There is a multiplicity of voices in “a voice.” She foregrounds her narrative in a heteroglossic structure where instead of a single narrator, many dalit women speak to the reader. She examines the different issues that oppress different women but at the same time has an admiration for those dalit women, who could cope with the caste and gender discrimination. Her celebration of women is acknowledged by Holmstrom, the translator of Sangati. She admits:

The ideals Bama admires and applauds in dalit women are not the traditional Tamil feminine ideals of accham (fear), naanam (shyness), madam (simplicity, innocence), payirppu (modesty), but courage, fearlessness, independence and self-esteem. (S xix)

Bama explains why woman of lower castes are possessed by evil spirits, why men vent all their anger at home, the reason for the street quarrels, the use of abusive language and submission to the police and upper caste men. Lack of education and lack of self-awareness make them submissive and exploitive, “But now, generation by generation we must start thinking for ourselves, taking decisions and daring to act. Don’t we sharpen and renew a rusted sickle? Just like that we must sharpen our minds and learn to live with self-respect” (S 104).

Bama’s language is lively, genre-breaking, iconoclastic and a constant reminder of the speaker. The local language is formalized and universalized. Her language is
completely new and uses the demotic and the colloquial regularly as her medium of narration and even of arguments. It is a dalit style of using language which overturns the decorum and aesthetics of received upper caste, upper class Tamil. She breaks the rules of written grammar and spelling throughout and demands a new pattern of reading dalit Tamil. She is accused of using obscene and vulgar language in her novels by main stream writers and critics. But Bama's challenge is to preserve the language of her People and she deliberately uses the dialect of the parayars community which shocks, bewilders and even scandalizes the conservative literary readers and writers. It was a challenge that she did not try to rewrite Karukku in chaste literary Tamil but believed that the life experiences of a people can be told only in their language. In Sangati, she includes a feministic diction to show how the experiences of women are different from and often contradict those of men. This act of autogenesis, the process of coming into being from silence into sound, is a slow process from marginalized invisibility into central vision.

The dialectical Tamil used by the parayars community becomes a subversion of received Tamil and is marked by certain other characteristics as it reclaims and remains close to oral tradition. The language is purely rustic and without any sophistication so that it may appear to be vulgar and incestuous but the illiterate women are not expected to speak the language of the refined, modest women. The sharp, violent expletives are the weapon to resist the supremacy of the men whether belonging to their own community or to the upper caste. The voice that is raised against the oppressor is a survival technique of the oppressed and Bama writes, "... knowingly or unknowingly, we find ways of coping in the best way we can... we could manage our own lives in our own way" (S 68).

Being a Catholic, Bama gives catholic versions to Tamilized Sanskrit words. For example, in Tamil, Mantiram means sacred utterance, or magic charm or spell, as
derived from Sanskrit word mantra, that is used by Bama as “catechism” and *pusai* becomes “a Catholic mass.” There is often a spin or a twist of meaning, freshness in some of the coinages and different routes and slippages in the way Catholicism has been naturalized into the Tamil of the text. Bama consistently uses the language of popular Catholicism, eschewing very largely the terminology of theologians. Through her writing, Bama intends to break through the barriers that have been erected by an unjust society which has oppressed her and other dalit communities. The ordinary colloquium of the *parayas* community has reached the main stream readers in different places.

Translation of dalit writing into English and other foreign languages provides spaces for a fair and free global discussion on the subject. It is a development and encouragement when authors could communicate with the world’s community, discuss discrimination, resist the hegemonic powers and ultimately establish their identity. Spivak has commented: “Translation is the lost intimate act of reading. Unless the translator has earned the right to become the intimate reader she cannot surrender to the test, cannot respond to the special call of the text” (183). What is demanded of the translator and reader is found in the works of Bama whose language in her works is at once startling, containing ethnographic details and native idioms. By using self-styled dalit writing, she demands a new and different pattern of reading in Tamil. It is powerful because it is real. *Karukku* is the first novel ever written entirely in colloquial narrative style. It is a spontaneous flow, which demonstrates how she has discovered her own voice and style. Mainstream critics have begun to acknowledge this sort of writing as radically new and different. It challenges the literary norms in Tamil both in its form and content.

There are several challenges in translating Tamil into English and then the challenge of translating individual styles. The translator’s aim must be to make the
work reverberate in her/his own tongue. Holmstrom, the translator of Bama, faced difficulties while translating her novels because Bama has depended entirely on the spoken local dalit register in describing the violence against the dalit women and their resultant deprivation. The major challenge she faced was the inherent untranslatable words which seriously impeded translation possibilities even in middle class Indian English. Holmstrom writes:

> Even obscenities I find are culture bound. The taint of pollution, particularly attached to a woman can be thrown back at a man. So I have tried to maintain Bama's informality, the rhythm of spoken speech, the cultural edge which colours the strong language of abuse. (43)

The linguistic nuances are of paramount importance and translation can erase to a locational differentiations and resistance in their writings. But without the intellectual activity of translation, the works of Bama would not have achieved recognition. Despite the underlying problems, the works of the marginalized acquired a global, cultural perspective and enabled them to transverse the territories of nation to make themselves available. Thus translation has become an essential life activity for the marginalized writers to move about and convey the personal experiences, emotional conflicts, cultural traits and their challenges and charges.

Tlali is the first black South African writer to consistently raise questions about gendered violence. Her enforcement in writing tempts to collect the unity against domination. Of most South African black writing of the period of resistance, her novels have mainly been regarded as being in opposition to the apartheid regime. Her first novel *Muriel at Metropolitan* resists the conventions of "stereotype," "spectacular" and "escapism" forged in the South African black male literary tradition. All three elements represent patriarchal attitudes in black male writing at
this time, for example, the violence of the “spectacular” mode and the escape from the
ordinariness of domestic life to the glamour of she has been and the ensuing evasion
of a serious political discussion in the escapist mode. Therefore, to resist these motifs
is also to resist patriarchy. The aim of this section of the present study is to show how
the depiction of women in Muriel opposes stereotypical male depictions of women,
especially in earlier epic writing, how a low-key mode of narration in Muriel, in
combination with the non-dramatic setting of the novel, resists “the spectacular” in
later black male writing.

Muriel resists the stereotypes of earlier black male writing by introducing a
new type of black woman protagonist. In contrast to male writers’ protagonists, for
example Plaatje’s Mhudi, who is a symbol of the nation, or Mphahlele’s many
traditional mothers, Muriel is above all a modern working woman, well educated,
with a good command of English, economics and bookkeeping; moreover, she is
politically aware, knowledgeable about trade unions and the laws of the country. She
values her own rationality and the condition she shares with all humanity. Asked
outright what she is? Muriel answers that “What do you mean what am I? I’m a
human being, of course” (MM 68). Muriel thus resists being defined in stereotypical
terms of race or gender; rejecting any label others want to pin on her. She first and
foremost regards herself as a person worthy of respect. Furthermore, Muriel also
mostly depicts others in a non-stereotypical fashion.

Unlike the spectacle of male writing, Muriel presents a low-key, non-dramatic
narration of rather mundane events. Instead of depicting violence or appealing to
strong feelings of resentment or vengeance, Muriel subtly foregrounds the small
injustices of every-day life. Alongside outright political preaching, Muriel, with
didactic scrupulousness, depicts incidents likely to awaken the reader’s awareness of
the political situation, or to gently provoke identification with the protagonist’s dilemma. Her observations promote rational thought and caution rather than emotional reaction and violence. The slow evolvement of a dramatic instance in the chapter called “A Slap in the Face” may serve as an example. Muriel’s situation at work gradually becomes more difficult to bear due to suspicions against her harboured by the white workers. The incidents that generate these accusations are characteristically non-dramatic: they are “the toilet incident” (MM 22), “the incident of the addressed statements on the ledger cards” (MM 63), ‘the incident of the legal document,’ and “the incident when the boss is accused of all too often asking for Muriel’s advice” (MM 64) to the dislike of the white ladies. As Muriel is “beginning to despair,” she narrates the “worst incident,” in which she, ironically, because of the anti-climax, is accused of “educating’ African customers” (MM 64). The irony derives from the positive connotations of the word education. The argument ensues, after Muriel is accused of theft, in comparison to the ongoing societal violence caused by the enforcement of apartheid.

Similarly, the portrayal of Muriel’s gradual development towards awareness of her predicament also resists the convention of the “spectacular.” Unlike the flashy action, sudden reversals of fortune, and violence found in the “Drum” stories, Muriel is portrayed with psychological subtlety: step by step she realises how companies such as Metropolitan further the cruelty of apartheid, and how her position there is gradually making her complicit with this policy. Initially, she is pleased to have landed a new job and has “nothing to complain about except that it was too noisy” (MM 12), and still, after some time at Metropolitan, she likes Mrs Kuhn for being “so friendly and kind” (MM 14), But when she eventually begins to realise what her work entails, a more negative tone is heard:
I had seen apartheid applied in many spheres in the Republic but never before had I seen it applied to ledger or record cards! At Metropolitan Radio we kept the European cards in one section separated from the non-European cards. It was all very confusing for a person who did not know the different Coloured townships because that was the only clue to where the card should be filed or found. (MM 15-16)

In place of the escapism of the Drum writing, Muriel introduces “the ordinary” as a subject matter for the novel. As mentioned above, Tlali’s narrative engages with the ordinary lives of very ordinary people. In addition, in place of male writers’ refusal to engage in political matters she posits a serious political discussion revolving around the powerlessness of the black people. At the time, the narrative explicitly points out that, due to laws implemented by the apartheid regime, blacks had no right to vote, could not own property, and were not allowed to go on strike. This type of discussion, Cecily Lockett writes, renders Tlali’s project “didactic in nature.”

In black South African fiction, didacticism is a frequently used narrative device that lacks the negative connotations that are ascribed to this phenomenon by Westernised critics, such as Lockett. Tlali’s didactic sections are often dialogic, that is, they take the form of a discussion, where the characters are allowed to voice their opinions, but where the reader is left to be the judge. For example, when the white mechanic Douglas complains about his low wages, Muriel takes the opportunity to comment on the different working conditions of blacks and whites and finds it apt to explain to Douglas how the white unions protect the interests of the white workers. On the other hand, she says, the “nonwhite workers were unorganised, and it was difficult to get them more organised” as it was “illegal for non-whites to strike” (MM 80). She does not try, however, to persuade him to change his mind but lets him
carry on grumbling. At other times, she is more forceful, as for example, in a heated discussion with the two white ladies;

Why did the Belgians keep all doors closed to the Africans for all those years until the eleventh hour? Why did they not train the Africans in local administration first and give them responsible positions gradually, why did they wait until the people demanded rights? If they had been given adequate education and prepared, they would have been able to take over without disastrous results. (MM 180)

Here, Tlali is venting both sides of the argument, giving the reader a chance to form his/her own opinion. When justifies her political didacticism, Tlali says that there were very few channels of information open to people living in Soweto at the time. Therefore, a lack of information/knowledge about political developments often caused confusion in the black community. In Muriel at Metropolitan, Tlali depicts a protagonist, whose political awareness served as an eye-opener to her fellow Sowetans at the time, and to her readers in general. This concern with the ordinary lives of people and the serious political discussion pursued dialogically in Muriel at Metropolitan forms a critical contrast to the escapist mode of black male writing. By implication it thereby resists this mode’s patriarchal attitudes of disrespect for the life spheres of women and instead acclaims their longing to be taken seriously and politically. At last, it has shown the Muriel, by avoiding stereotypes in the depiction of women, by portraying low-key ordinary events in a way that fosters gradual transformation and afterthought, and by introducing a serious, dialogic political discussion, opposes such literary traits found in black writing as gender stereotype, “the spectacular” and “escapism.”
In *Amandla*, Tlali does so by presenting daily reality in the lives of her characters. She describes her understanding of the writing process as creating work which reflects “our lives … about how we live, our feelings, our aspirations … about the lives of (especially) black women in their relationship with white women in South Africa” (“Quagmires” 96). The writing process for Tlali, explains to others what is happening in their lives, and partly helps her interpret her own. She depicts images of the everyday; scenes of “detentions without trial, deaths in detention, the detention of children” (A 96) fill both the streets of South Africa and the pages of her book. “All I do,” she asserts, “is writing about the true situation as I see it” (A 97). By grounding *Amandla* in South Africa’s streets, Tlali replicates South African experience. Black South African readers can easily identify themselves as characters in *Amandla*, and, Tlali hopes alter their own actions to emulate those of *Amandla’s* idealistic characters.

Like all resistance literatures, Tlali clearly establishes three generations: the youth, the parents, and the grandparents. Pholoso is the generation of youth; he is a soldier in the school-aged battles against Bantu Education. This generation comprises the “school-kids turn (ing) the world upside-down” with threats of “boycotts and strikes” (A 99-100). Because of them, the police “are overworked. Too many students are being arrested and the police have their hands full. More attention is directed at the students than at the other members of the public. The students are considered a potential threat” (A 135). They are the citizens ruling Soweto in the post-Uprising days.

Pholoso’s parents’ generation, the same generation as Tsi’s parents in *To Every Birth*, are apathetic and misguided. Like Tsi’s parents, they are aware of the fight around them, but unable to get involved. “The children” one of these adults “sig(s), they can be so determined!” (A 23) The emphasis on the word “children”
makes it seem as if the children’s age, not their politics, is responsible for the Uprising. The word “determined” underscores the adults’ condescension towards the children around them. They patronize the children’s game: skipping school, the parents assume, will not help fight a battle that is already lost. A school principal insists, “the school children are not kids, and they know what they want” (A 24). Although the adults in Amandla are aware of the children’s Movement, they feel defeated and see the Movement as futile. They can no longer fight what they see as an “issue (that) has been a bone of contention for a long time” (A 24). Although “bone of contention” is a figurative expression, the literal meaning of the phrase refers to a skeleton which makes apartheid the foundation of the community’s South African experience. Tlali’s use of the phrase “bone of contention” reveals the adults’ perception of apartheid as an ingrained and inescapable South African institution. It has become part of their bodies and their souls.

Tlali includes an old man, Makalo Magong, to establish the generation that remembers. His age demonstrates how long the Boers have been in control, and his presence in the story reminds other characters of this history. As he watches flames consume the second government building in two days, he “need(s) time to think, to grasp fully the significance of the spectacle before him” (A 57). It holds his attention, and he stands, fixated: “He gape(s), tongue-tied, waiting for his feeble mind to work so that the meaning of all this could sink in. It was actually happening, right there in front of him, in his own lifetime … the Boer-krag, the Boer might, was burning to ashes – crumbling right in front of him … Unbelievable!” (A 57). His inability to process his own participation in something that “only God can do” (A 57) calls to mind the decades of Boer control. At 83, Magong remembers working for the Boers as a child. Although he hoped that their “might” would fall, he never imagined they
would. As a member of the oldest generation in *Amandla*, he passes on the story of his long life and the Boer’s long rule to the children of Soweto.

After establishing generational divisions, Tlali creates endearing relationships between them that set her work apart from other protest literature. By centering the story around Pholoso’s family, Tlali indicates the importance of families in the struggle. His family, the Moremis, raised Pholoso in an educated household; they all work together to enable Pholoso’s success. The third person omniscient narrator announces: “Thanks to Gramsy, his aunt Nana and her studious husband, T, Pholoso had developed his young, inquiring mind” (A 90). His family has nurtured in him the respect for his own mind that the Movement teaches its followers.

Because of his family’s care, Pholoso has the courage and self-conviction to become an active leader, spreading the Movement among other students. His family does not entitle him to this position of leadership; instead, his familial relationships prepare him to earn it. He encourages fellow student leaders the same way his family supported him. He tells them: “Sit down under a tree and read. It is good for your soul. Remember the words of Mao-Tse-Tung: Revolution begins within the consciousness of men. We have to start changing from within before we liberate our people” (A 92-93). Pholoso’s philosophy echoes the Black Consciousness Movement.

At the same time, Tlali uses Pholoso’s respected voice as her own. Through Pholoso, she tells readers to take charge of their own lives; if they want liberation they must first convince themselves they deserve it. In his speech’s closing, Pholoso announces: “As a human being, you must believe in something. We are dedicated to the struggle for liberation. *Amandla Ngawethu!* (The people have the power!)” (A 93). Because his family has believed in him, he has strength to believe in his peers and in the Movement. Tlali advocates the Movement by first creating a character
empowered by his close-knit family, and then delivering the message through him. In a conversation with her sister, Gramsy explains her special connection to Pholoso:

    How can I keep from liking him so much, Marta? Pholoso is the child of the son I lost, the only son I ever had ... Pholoso himself cannot stand the idea of being separated from me. I shall never let him go. He is mine. He has taken the place of his father in my heart. (A 39)

She feels an affinity towards Pholoso that can only be described by the bond between a mother and son. Pholoso’s presence comforts Gramsy, whenever the two are together, Gramsy is happy and relieved. Tlali describes her face as “(lighting) up when she saw him” (A 269).

    After emphasizing this bond, Tlali betrays it three times. She first separates Pholoso and Gramsy by imprisoning Pholoso for his revolutionary activities. When Pholoso escapes from prison, he immediately runs in the “direction of his home where, he knew, Gramsy would be thankful to see that he was alive and well” (A 169). This reunion is brief, as Tlali separates the two a second time, taking Pholoso underground as he continues his involvement in the Movement. Although ill, Gramsy stays alive long enough to see Pholoso one last time. The two literally form a life-sustaining relationship with each other; and their forced separations underscore the impact of apartheid on the daily lives of oppressed black citizens. Tlali describes their final meeting, saying:

    There was very little they could say to each other, but the gratitude, the happiness and contentment he detected on her face were enough to convince Pholoso that Gramsy had ultimately realized her dream. Pholoso, you’re back at last, she sighed in relief when he put her to bed and kissed her for the last time. (A 270)
After Gramsy’s death, Pholoso is filled with the warmth of the final meeting. Her unwavering trust in him provides Pholoso with the strength to continue his resistance. Apartheid separates families through incarceration, revolutionary action, and exile. These separations make inevitable death all the more poignant. Tlali’s portrayal of the frailty of life and the life-supporting nature of familial relationships, juxtaposed against the oppressive regime that overpowers them, creates urgency in her call to join the Movement. Black citizens, Tlali forces the readers to recognize, that one cannot live under an apartheid system that separates families.

The novel ends with Pholoso’s going into exile. This is an important move as it is presented, if not triumphantly, then at least inspirationally. Despite the defeat inherent in retreating into exile: “I never wanted to flee, Felleng. I have to go because the student leaders think it is the best thing, better than rotting in jail. The police dragnet is closing in on us. All known leaders are in jail” (A 288). The movement into exile is presented as a continuation of the fight. Despite everything being lost, everything is portrayed as not being lost:

You see, Felleng, in order to fight we must be armed, not only physically but also mentally. We are up against a formidable, highly-sophisticated enemy whom we must face on equal ground. That our task is a momentous one cannot be denied. The roots of this evil have penetrated deeper than we can speculate. But we dare not give up. If we forget those who laid down their lives, then they will have done so in vain. We the oppressed cannot be expected to think we can go living as nothing has ever happened. (A 289)

A people’s defeat and subjection – by a system of dehumanization and by their rejection of this system through violent rebellion – is denied. This is inevitable. The
reality of it all is too unreal even to contemplate. An imaginary resolution (fight into exile) to a real contradiction is the very condition for continued existence after defeat. Without this no hope, and no conscientisation and the creation and the creation and filling of a cultural space seems to be a possibility. Of course, that still leaves one with the problem of filling the cultural space in such a way that it will amount to more than the mere resistance of the hegemonic culture on its own terms.

The writings of Bama and Tlali can be enlisted under the genre of resistant literature. They articulate the discrimination and exploitation levelled against their community and themselves as individuals and has created their own philosophy that there is the possibility of rising out of oppression to optimism. They use the philosophy of optimism as a shield to edge forward resisting whatever is detrimental to the gynic quest of self-identity, self-assertion, and self-worth. As Slemon has suggested, resistance is found in their texts issuing forth through their narrative style, incidents in life, language they use and it is set against a definable set of power whether it is political, social, or religious. What is embedded in the text is their success in survival though in the process they suffer displacement geographically or socially and there is an urgent call to revival of tradition and culture. The black culture is brought out by Tlali through the prayers, behavioural patterns taught even as a child, beliefs, customs and rituals retrieved from memory so that she could valorize and establish that black is beautiful and powerful. The Blues of the Africans are revived by Tlali in her songs and certain compositions and as an artist she identified herself and her community. Bama too writes about her culture, customs and rituals related to marriage or death and celebrates the creativity of the dalit women who compose instant songs to tease and laugh even in the midst of hard work and oppression. All these representational strategies are utilized by both Bama and Tlali, thus making their texts shimmer with positivism.
As Sharpe suggests, the colonial oppressed subject is able to answer the colonizers back. The black community had almost achieved its liberation and there is undoubtedly a progress from margin to the centre. The dalits in India have taken the blacks as models to establish their stance in society and attain social equality, if not economical. The problem of racism and casteism, patriarchy and gender are constantly at work within the writings of these writers but there is a loud call for change in literary and critical perspectives so that the ubiquity of resistance could be recognized, while internalizing their incompleteness, their strengths, their weaknesses and needs.

The cultural affirmation in the writings of Bama and Tlali can be considered as a necessary phase of resistance since the culture and the individual are intensely interlinked that it concomitantly acknowledges the need for social change. Oppressed and subjugated blacks and dalits have been silenced for centuries and now they have begun to question and discuss their stance and have begun to critically engage in dominant discourse. Intellectual awareness, critical self-reflection and self-analysis are the ways to transform their lives. Those that are ‘othered’ and ‘excluded’ or ‘discriminated’ against have to affect their own cures. The optimistic realism in both the writers envisions the future by attaining empowerment only through education because illiteracy and lack of exposure are important factors that oppress them, especially the women of their communities. Tlali’s unique style of writing conveys her optimistic expectations and desires for the human race. She is a person who thrives on challenges because she had bailed her way through life relying on no one and nothing but her own strength, intelligence, and courage. Bama’s life experience taught the lesson that life is a struggle and it is when she encounters it with courage and self-confidence that it becomes real life. Her strength is her optimistic vision about life
and about her community's upliftment. To achieve equality and freedom from casteism and patriarchy, she equips herself with the tactics of resistance at the social, religious, and gender levels. Both the writers have registered their protest in their writings and also contest the neo-colonial structures that try to silence them further. Their literary output celebrates womanhood, liberation, and empowerment, which transform their works into a potential instrument for the regeneration of positive social values.