Part I
2.1 Violence: Definition

The term ‘violence’ is employed primarily to signify the application of an intense, forceful and often destructive physical action so as to cause harm or injury to another person. For instance, *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines violence as “behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something.” *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary* defines it as the “exertion of physical force so as to injure or abuse.” According to *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, violence is the “illegal employment of methods of physical coercion for personal or group ends.” The conventional definition of violence – as a physical action employed for destructive purposes – is problematic because it overlooks the various other kinds of violence experienced by people in everyday life. Diverse theoretical perspectives have, in fact, problematized the standard definition of violence. These theoretical insights have brought into light diverse forms of violence that are inconspicuous, subtle, complex, destructive, revolutionary, creative and a lot less discerning to the eye than any acts of physical violence.

2.2 Theorizing Violence

A prominent Sanskrit epic of ancient India, *Mahabharata* is regarded as a literary and spiritual marvel comprising crucial insights about humanity. Besides its epic narrative of the war of Kurukshetra, *Mahabharata* contains a
detailed discussion of the four goals of human existence, namely, dharma (right action), artha (purpose), kama (pleasure), and moksha (liberation).

“Shanti Parva,” also known as the “Book of Peace,” forms the twelfth “parva” (meaning an “episode” of Mahabharata). The parva narrates the crowning of Yudhishtira as the new king of Hastinapur after the Pandavas’ defeat of the Kauravas in the war of Kurukshetra. It gives an account of the instructions given by Bhishma to the newly anointed King, Yudhishtira. Here Bhishma focusses on the issues of economics, politics, and social relations among human beings. Also known as “wisdom literature,” it starts with Yuddhishtra’s lamentation over the death of his elder brother Karna at the hands of his younger brother Arjuna during the battle. Yudhishtira is angry with his mother Kunti for hiding the identity of Karna from her other five sons. He is also anguished that his efforts to get the kingdom have unwittingly caused his brother to be slain (Bk. 12, Ch. I). Yudhishtira wishes that he had led the life of a mendicant so as to avoid the unnecessary slaughter of innumerable men. He considers being born as a Kshatriya to be the greatest curse of his life. Yudhishtira views the desire for sovereignty to be the primary cause for all sinful acts on earth. Kshatriyas are the military and ruling elite in the social order as defined by the Hindu religious scriptures. He expresses shame and disgust over his qualities of strength and combating prowess. He wants every human being to uphold the virtues of forgiveness, sense, self-control, purity, renunciation, non-violence, and humility. Yudhishtira feels that the only atonement for his acts of violence is the renunciation of the kingdom of Hastinapur (Ch. VII-IX).
Yudhishthira’s decision to renounce his sovereignty rouses different reactions among his relatives which provide an insight into their perceptions of violence that occurs in political regime. His younger brother Arjuna objects vociferously to his decision to abdicate the throne. Yudhishthira’s retreat to the forest will, in Arjuna’s view, provide dishonest men with an opportunity to carry out more acts of violence. Arjuna advises Yudhishthira to perform a horse sacrifice so that the sins of killing innumerable men will not afflict him. After performing the sacrificial rite, he must concentrate on the duties required of a monarch (Ch. VII). Yudhishthira’s second brother Bhima states that forgiveness, compassion, and non-violence do not have any relevance in the life of the ruling elite. An individual who usurps the property of another deserves to be slain. Moreover, a sovereign’s renouncement of his duty to rule over his subjects is akin to his leading the life of idleness (Ch. X). Yudhishthira’s youngest twin brothers also echo the sentiment that a sovereign’s refusal to give protection to his citizens is the highest form of sin (Ch. XII-XIII). Sage Vyasa-deva states that punishing the persons who transgress the laws of justice and morality should not be viewed as a grievous sin. Moreover, he advises Yudhishthira to approach his grandfather Bhishma to gain knowledge about the science of morality and of his duties to mankind.

In his speech to Yudhishthira about morality, Bhishma outlines the nine duties that are meant to be followed: suppression of wrath, truthfulness of speech, justice, forgiveness, begetting children upon one's own wedded wives, purity of conduct, avoidance of quarrel, simplicity, and maintenance of dependants (Ch. LX). Bhishma also specifies the various duties associated with the four Hindu varnas (social classes): *Brahmanas* (spiritual leaders and
educationists), Kshatriyas (the ruling elite and warriors), Vaisyas (traders, merchants or capitalists), and Sudras (craftsmen and labourers). In order to acquire wealth, a Brahmana should marry, and seek to beget children, practice charity, and perform sacrifices. The duties of a Kshatriya, especially a righteous sovereign, involve studying the Vedas, suppression of any kind of opposition, accepting gifts, and engaging in violent battle. A Vaisya’s duty is, in Bhishma’s view, to protect and rear cattle and demand a seventh part of profits over one’s mode of trade. The duty of the Sudras is, according to Bhishma, to serve the aforementioned varnas. A Sudra cannot acquire any personal possessions or wealth. All of Sudra’s possessions belong lawfully to her or his master. Worn-out umbrellas, turbans, beds, shoes, fans, torn clothes, etc. are the only lawful acquisitions of Sudras (Ch. LX).

In his exposition of the ideal way of living, Bhishma also outlines the various norms in relation to women. Bhishma says that a Brahmana’s intake of food cooked by an unmarried and childless woman lessens the period of his life. Moreover, Bhishma equates a prostitute’s offering of food to a Brahmana equivalent to his being fed with dirt and semen (Ch. XXXVII). A Kshatriya ruler must never indulge in an act of violence against womankind. A sovereign must also never allow a woman to be present during political consultations (Ch. LXXXIII). Bhishma also labels woman as helpless and an object of pity based on the absence of man in her life. A husband is, in fact, like a protector and a refuge to woman. For a chaste woman, in Bhishma’s view, life automatically ceases to have any meaning after the death of her husband. He compares a chaste woman to a “she-pigeon” who shows her devotion to her deceased “lord” by casting herself on the blazing fire (Ch.
This act of self-immolation by a widow helps the soul of her deceased husband to obtain “proper honours for his deeds in this world, to sport in joy [in heaven], accompanied by his wife.” In fact, by following her lord in death, a woman “speedily ascends to heaven and shines in splendour” (Ch. CXLIX). Bhishma advises Yudhishthira that as a sovereign it is his responsibility to ensure that the four social categories adhere to the rules and the regulations specified by the Hindu social order. Deliberate or inadvertent nonconformity to these “dictates of righteousness” should be viewed as an improper, violent, and immoral act (Ch. LX). “Shanti Parva” raises the question of violence in society but fails to elaborate on its complexities. It remains confined to queries about the justification of violence in various situations.

Mahatma Gandhi’s theory of non-violence includes also his insights into violence. A prominent political and ideological leader during the Indian Independence movement, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is also remembered as the greatest modern practitioner of non-violence. In fact, his philosophy of non-violence has played a major role in his pioneering socio-political movements, such as Satyagraha (also known as mass non-violent civil resistance against India’s colonial rulers) Non-cooperation Movement, and the Quit India movement of 1942 which demanded immediate independence for India. It was Gandhi’s utmost desire to witness the establishment of Swaraj, explained by him as “self-rule,” after India’s decolonization. An American journalist named Edgar Snow, who interviewed Gandhi, remarks that the non-violent freedom fighter is also a self-proclaimed “philosophical anarchist” (“The Message of Gandhi”). His vision for an independent India is of a nation
that exists without an underlying government. He states that an “ideally non-violent state would be an ordered anarchy” (Gandhi 79: 122). Gandhi envisions a nation where all countrymen are united through virtues of tolerance, humility, piety, love of nature, equality, brotherhood and cooperation. Moreover, his writings have been converted into monumental volumes which provide an insight into his perspective on violence.

Gandhi states that he has achieved an understanding of non-violence only “after having fully known what violence is” (Gandhi 33: 41). In his view, violence is the product of illusion and it is devoid of truth. Moreover, violence is “simply impossible unless one is driven by anger, by ignorant love, and by hatred” (33: 87). Cowardice – described by Gandhi as the negation of all forces – needs to be viewed as a species of violence. In other words, a violently inclined individual’s refusal to discard violence and take up the superior force of non-violence should be construed as cowardice (33: 92).

Gandhi points out that “the doctrine of violence has reference only to the doing of injury by one to another” (33: 73). The presence of violence within a human being’s psyche turns her or him into a beast (33: 86). Gandhi considers the practice of untouchability or caste-based discrimination, boycott of social reforms like widow-remarriage or of protests against child-marriage, the exhibition of “unmanly lawlessness” by the police, etc. to be acts of violence (26: 67).

The essence of non-violence, on the other hand, lies in willingly suffering an injury on one’s own person. Gandhi conceptualizes non-violence to be a “more active and more real fighting against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness” (33: 74). Non-violence is, in
fact, a moral opposition to immorality. A practitioner of non-violence seeks to “blunt a tyrant’s sword” not through violent retaliation but rather through the refusal to put up a physical resistance. Gandhi firmly believes that absence of physical resistance on the part of the victim would disappoint, humiliate, and uplift the aggressor into giving up on violence. According to him, violence is characterized by hypocrisy, arrogance, aggression, untruth, brute force, etc. and is responsible for the downfall of a human being. On the other hand, victory is always ensured through non-violent acts which involve straightforwardness, humility, simplicity, truth, endurance, generosity, moderation, etc. Moreover, the primary quality required in the practice of non-violence is “meekness” (26: 93). According to Gandhi, the infusion of meekness with courage always leads to the achievement of freedom. All these virtues combine to form Gandhi’s concept of “satyagraha.”

Satyagraha is a portmanteau of the Sanskrit words “satya” (meaning “truth”), and “agraha” (which means “to insist”). According to Gandhi, truth (“satya”) implies love, and firmness (“agraha”) engenders and serves as a synonym for force. Hence satyagraha is the force born out of truth and love or non-violence. Satyagraha is, in fact, the direct corollary of non-violence and truth. In his elaboration of the concept of satyagraha, Gandhi points out that it requires absolute non-violence and even a woman in danger of being violated must not defend herself with violence. A female satyagrahi will have purified herself so as to have “no malice, no anger, and no violence in them” (33: 72). Such a woman will be able to protect herself against violence as every ruffian is known to “become tame in the presence of resplendent purity.” Gandhi claims that Indians are “neither ready nor willing to meet violence with
violence” (26: 20). Human nature in India, in his view, has advanced so far that the doctrine of non-violence is more natural for the people, at large than that of violence. The masses in India have been trained in non-violence thought for ages through religious scriptures and ancient epics. According to Gandhi, it is impossible to undo this training among the true followers of Hinduism since their dharma is based on the concept of non-violence. Moreover, the ancient Indian religious epics provide insight into the suffering that ensues mankind’s acts of violence. The teachings in religious Indian classics also throw light upon the course of actions that should be undertaken to avoid or erase the marks of violence. Gandhi’s denunciation of the ideology of violence in the struggle for independence is similar to Albert Camus’s outright rejection of revolutionary violence. Like Gandhi, he believes that a rebel’s indulgence in unrestrained violence defies the logic of freedom from tyranny. But there has been no theoretical elaboration of Gandhi’s insights on violence obtained through his theory on non-violence. On the other hand, Camus explains his idea of true rebellion as the philosophy of limits as discussed further in this chapter. Hence this section surveys the relevant theories on violence.

Violence exists in every aspect of human life. However, its proper and comprehensive definition eludes us. In other words, its parameters are too vast to be exhausted by a mere definition. It is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that requires an extensive analysis. Thinkers have paid serious attention to its diverse forms. For instance, a close reading of Slavoj Žižek’s recent book entitled Violence (2008) illumines the multi-dimensional aspects of violence. He states that society’s preoccupation with subjective violence
blinds it to the objective reality of violence that it commits on a daily basis. In other words, an individual’s subjective outrage at the brutal acts of violence, such as murders, wars, terrorist attacks, genocide, assassination of political leaders, suicide bombings, etc. conceals the objective violence which includes symbolic as well as systemic violence perpetrated on human beings. In Žižek’s view, this kind of violence is invisible to the naked eye. Symbolic violence – derived from the Lacanian theory of the symbolic order – is manifest in language and all its forms (1). Language is, according to him, fraught with violent intonations and complicit in the expression of hostility and rage of each towards another. Systemic violence is, on the other hand, inherent in the system that includes physical violence as well as other subtle forms of coercion that operate through dominance and exploitation. The smooth functioning of society’s economic and political order, for instance, relies on subtly controlling the people and thus can be cited as an example of systemic violence. Moreover, systemic violence is the ideology implicit in those rules and beliefs that guide and control every human being.

Žižek has often been lambasted by his contemporaries for flouting the standards of reasoned argumentation and for deliberately being politically ‘incorrect.’ Edward R. O'Neill criticizes Žižek’s approach by stating that his works comprise a “dizzying array of wildly entertaining and often quite maddening rhetorical strategies deployed in order to beguile, browbeat, dumbfound, dazzle, confuse, mislead, overwhelm, and generally subdue the reader into acceptance” (“The Last Analysis of Slavoj Žižek”). David Bordwell calls Žižek’s sarcasm-laced humour academic and says that “academic humor is to humor as military intelligence is to intelligence”
(“Slavoj Žižek: Say Anything”). In Žižek’s view, however, theory must never employ a holistic approach to socio-cultural phenomena. The entire academia is, furthermore, a reaction against obscurantism (The Ticklish Subject 1). The purpose of theory is thus to engage in rigorous critique and challenge the ideological presuppositions of culture. This chapter accordingly focusses on theories that reveal those forms of violence that were previously viewed as ‘normal’ and ‘acceptable’ aspects of human life.

This chapter takes into account the works of several contributors to theories of violence, namely Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Walter Benjamin, Jean-Paul Sartre, Raymond Aron, Albert Camus, Frantz Fanon, Hannah Arendt, Louis Althusser, René Girard, Michel Foucault, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, Jean-Luc Nancy, Giorgio Agamben, and Slavoj Žižek.¹ These theorists have shed light on the violence that works at the social, political, economic, religious, artistic and existential levels.

Violence is, according to Hannah Arendt, the common denominator of the twentieth century which she describes as a “century of wars and revolution” (“On Violence” 83). In her view, violence highlights the role of military forces that are controlled and initiated by political parties in power in every country. In fact, most political theorists claim that politics is primarily a struggle for power and also that violence is the ultimate kind of power.

Arendt is a renowned twentieth century German-Jewish political theorist. Her works focus primarily on the concept of power in the context of issues like politics, authority, freedom, revolution, authority and totalitarianism. She analyzes violence as it occurs in the political realm. In

¹The present study follows the theories of violence not chronologically but in terms of their logical inter-relationships and mutual explanatory potential.
Arendt’s view, violence is a distinct phenomenon that is, however, often confused with concepts like power, force, or strength. *Power, force, authority, might, strength, violence* etc. are all considered to be terms that denote the means by which “man rules over man” (113). The differences between these concepts, according to Arendt, become apparent only when one ceases to associate them with domination.

*Power*, in her opinion, signifies the propensity of different individuals to act in concert; moreover, it always resides in numbers. *Strength*, on the other hand, points towards an individual entity. It is an independent property inherent in an object or person, which may prove itself in relation to other things or persons. Arendt states that force – often misconstrued as a synonym for violence – stands for “forces of nature” or the “force of circumstances” which indicates the energy released by physical or social movements. *Authority* is a phenomenon that involves unquestionable loyalty and obedience without employing any coercion or persuasion. Lastly, Arendt focusses on *violence* and highlights its instrumental character. In accordance with the view of Friedrich Engels, Arendt states that violence becomes apparent to human beings only with the help of implements. For instance, technological revolution is the primary source that promotes violence in society on account of several deadly weapons that technology has introduced in warfare (113-15). She also focusses on the role played by violence in human lives and states that violence generally springs from rage and its absence from “natural human emotions” guarantees the dehumanization and emasculation of an individual. Violence, in her view, may also be a person’s last resort to “set the scales of justice right again” (127).
Arendt also probes into the equation that power has with violence, which she believes is highlighted only in a government that works on the principle of violent domination. Power, according to her, becomes the essence of such a government. Violence, on the other hand, always requires justification but is always denied the legitimacy that it seeks. Mao Tse-tung observed that “power grows out of the barrel of the gun” (89). Arendt, however, says that it is violence that erupts out of a gun’s barrel and it is fully capable of destroying power. Hence power is unable to sustain itself when involved in a head-on clash with violence. It is this idea that Frantz Fanon appropriates for his theorization of colonialism: he asserts that the “colonized man liberates himself” (sic) from the power wielded by the colonizers only “in and through violence” (The Wretched of the Earth 44).

Frantz Fanon is an influential twentieth century revolutionary, philosopher, and author. He is also regarded as one of the most important theorists of revolution, colonialism, and racial difference. His writings have had a major influence on civil rights, anti-colonial, and black-consciousness movements around the world. In The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon carries out a critical analysis of the colonization of Third World countries and also makes a detailed examination of the importance of violence in the process of decolonization. He uses the French-Algerian war as the backdrop to describe the horrific lengths to which the white race has gone to maintain control over their colonies. According to him, Europe is a creation of the Third World as “the European opulence is literally a scandal for it was built on the backs of slaves, it fed on the blood of slaves, and owes it very existence to the soil and subsoil of the underdeveloped world” (54). In his view, the white colonist has
dehumanized the “native,” thereby reducing her or him to the status of an animal (7). The process of colonization thus involves the physical domination over the native as well as her or his psychological degradation.

Decolonization is the encounter between two antagonistic forces – the colonizers and the colonized. It implies the urgent need to challenge the colonial situation and thus becomes an “agenda for total disorder” (2). This idea of employment of violence against the colonizers has no shock value for the natives as they have encountered violence and have been prepared for it since time immemorial. The colonized, according to Fanon, exist in a state of anxiety due to the poor economic, social, and political status allowed to them by the white rulers. The anxiety is initially released in self-directed and self-destructive violence and aggression but is later transformed into a quest for liberation. For him, this form of violence is invested with positive and formative features as it forces every individual to respond aggressively to the violence of the colonizer. The violence of the colonized thus unifies them.

Fanon categorizes the disenfranchised masses of people as the *lumpenproletariat*. He also views the *lumpenproletariat’s* violent rebellion as the “most spontaneously and radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people” (81). It gives the “unemployed,” the “vagrants,” and the “petty criminals” a chance to redeem themselves in armed revolutionary struggle (82). The revolutionary ardour required for insurrection also helps in improving the knowledge of peasants and prepares them for further struggle. The nationalist militants – by exploding the former colonial reality – have uncovered unknown facets of that reality that were previously camouflaged by colonialism. Fanon states that “violence alone, perpetrated by the people and
organized and guided by the people, provides the key for the masses to
decipher social reality” (96).

Fanon’s emphasis on the need of violence to restore freedom and
democracy in colonized countries is supported vociferously by Jean-Paul
Sartre. In the “Preface” to *The Wretched of the Earth*, Sartre fans the flames of
violent rebellion against colonialism that have been ignited by Fanon. In
Arendt’s view, Sartre’s “Preface” glorifies violence way beyond Fanon’s
words and wishes. Sartre criticizes Europe by saying that it has stifled the
whole of humanity in the name of a so-called “spiritual adventure” (xliv).
According to him, Europe has maintained its position of power by weakening
and traumatizing the colonized through physical torture, undernourishment,
and psychological control. It has exercised control through stratification of
colonized societies by creating divisions and conflicts, and forging classes and
encouraging racism among the colonized. Sartre, in tune with Fanon, states
that “murderous rampage” by the natives is the only way to tackle colonial
oppression (lii).

Both Hannah Arendt and Raymond Aron are critical of the sweeping
statements made by Sartre on violence in his “Preface” to Fanon’s *The
Wretched of the Earth*. According to Arendt, glorification of violence is a
reaction to the severe frustration experienced by every individual in the
modern world. Riots and rebellions, in fact, reassure people of being part of a
rare event and acting in unison for the achievement of a certain goal.
However, it is wrong to regard violence as the only means for the pacification
of one’s demons. Violence must never be utilized to promote causes,
revolution or progress. Violence can remain rational only when it pursues
short term-goals. It can be employed to dramatize grievances and bring them to public attention. However, Arendt warns against this course for violence has a tendency to overwhelm the goal or the end that it seeks to achieve. She gives the example of the erstwhile and present superpowers that are burdened by the “monstrous weight of their own bigness” achieved through technology (144). Their “bigness” corresponds to the thriving of mass society. Moreover, the constant catering to society’s needs has caused chinks in their power structure and made them vulnerable before the smaller developing countries. Arendt fears that gradual decrease in power is an open invitation to violence (141-46).

Aron too censures what he considers to be Sartre’s blatant glorification of violence. He denounces the humanizing, cathartic, and heroic quality that Sartre attaches to the natives’ acts of violence. In Aron’s opinion, Sartre supports the natives’ violent rebellion against the colonizers because he considers collective choices to be more important than individual choices. For Sartre choices are, in fact, the only totalizing acts that promote humanization and diminish alienation. Aron remarks skeptically that “Sartrism starts off from the ubiquity of violence and dreams of radically eliminating it in favour of a non-antagonistic reciprocity” (214).

Sartre is a leading figure in twentieth century French philosophy. He works include his writings as an existentialist philosopher, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, political activist, biographer, and literary critic. However, Sartre has remained preoccupied with the question of violence throughout his career which, consequently, has shaped his views on existentialism, politics and ethics. Sartre considers violence to be an important
facet of human existence. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre formulates his existential philosophy by stating that an individual attains human essence only by striving to rise against the world and shape one’s self out of nothingness into the state of ‘being.’ The human condition is, he argues, a perpetual struggle between immanence and transcendence. Furthermore, human existence requires freedom which can only be obtained through conscious decisions. Sartre refers to every individual as a ‘being’ who is defined according to her or his relation to the world. The presence of another subjectivity termed by Sartre as the *other* is the revelation that comes through the being’s “flight toward objectivation” (257). In Sartre’s view, the gaze of the *other* infuses the essence of a ‘being’ with power and provides transcendence from the state of nothingness. But the gaze of the *other* may also force the human being to revert to her or his immanent *self*. Both conditions prove to be outside the human being’s control, for being-for-others makes her or him a subject in the eyes of the *other*. Here the subject might turn passive and enter into a relationship of domination with the *other*. On the other hand, reverting to immanence is an exercise in bad faith. It involves going through the motions of living without choosing to be free.

In Sartre’s opinion, violence is the “very power of the reciprocity of love” between human beings (439). Love, according to him, is a term applied to mask as well as glorify the state of emotional alienation in which a person shuns the act of self-examination and identifies with the gaze of the *other*. The individual’s struggle to exist takes a backseat in an attempt to continue being the subject of the other’s gaze. Such relationships are glaring manifestations of bad faith. Moreover, they can easily transform into sadistic and masochistic
zones where the individuals involved try to inflict pain upon each other as a proof of their control over the other. They are entrapped and enslaved by the gaze of the other whereby experiencing their own subjectivity becomes equally unbearable. Hence, love is merely emotional alienation and a denial of freedom through a human being’s conflict with the other. In other words, the arrival of the other marks the entry of another consciousness, another freedom in the world that can do “violence to [the] subjectivity” of the “being” (xxxvii).

In Critique of Dialectical Reason, Sartre combines Existentialism and Marxism to probe into the nature of historical knowledge. Here the discovery of the other becomes a “neutral” and non-tragic moment (545). Sartrean Marxism asserts that among labourers, each becomes an object within the other’s universe and serves as an instrument for the other’s project. There are no enemies and friends among labourers. In other words, human being is a “material being set in a material world” (112). Moreover, every one exists as the other for they are all slaves of the same mechanism of competition. Sartre calls this phenomenon “reification” which is, according to him, a necessity imposed by structures of the society on the member of a group to maintain her or his membership in the group as well as the whole society (176). The process of reification makes a human being fall into the “practico-inert.” In Critique, Sartre every individual experiences the practico-inert “in [one’s] work as in public life (and, to a lesser degree, in his private life) and that it is, in fact, characteristic of [one’s] everyday life” (336). In the practico-inert, an individual’s ‘praxis’ becomes slave to the Machine in order to survive in its
environment. Here the person is transformed into “anti-human” who never succeeds in escaping inertia\(^2\) and remains trapped within sociality\(^3\) (236).

In the practico-inert, Sartre notes, consciousness remains permanently condemned to both individual solitude and freedom. In the community of action (group-in-fusion), however, numbers become the principle of strength, of pride and of confidence. The fundamental characteristic of the group-in-fusion is the abrupt resurrection of freedom. Here the protesting labourers do not unite against alienation and exploitation by the Machine; instead they rebel to maintain the status quo within their group. However, this rebellion is not sufficient to remove alienation and powerlessness (54-6). It requires a “concatenation of historical circumstances, an explicit change of the situation, a risk of death, violence” (57). In other words, freedom tears itself away from alienating passivity only by action in which violence is implied. History, Sartre notes, is born from the permanent possibility of negation and overcoming. This negation is a consequence of consciousness being condemned to freedom, “freely enslaved and slavishly free” (174).

An institution, according to Sartre, arises only when a worker willingly accepts alienation. It entails curtailment of the worker’s efforts to transcend the bondage of the Machine. In brief, institutions are the rebirth of powerlessness and seriality. Sartre defines seriality as the “purely ideal or imaginary community with other people” which includes both workers and consumers (xxvi). Here the individual, as the member of a series, exhibits

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\(^2\)In *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre defines inertia as the “perpetuation of untranscendable impotence” among individuals (723).

\(^3\)In *Critique*, Sartre uses the terms “sociality” to describe the human relations that arise within the unity of a group (310).
“altered” behaviour. In other words, every part of an individual’s reaction is the “action of the other in him” [sic] (275). Hence, seriality is a situation where a human being is trapped in the ‘practico-inert’ because of her or his passivity or impotency to act individually within a collective group. It is characterized by an individual’s inability to transcend the materialistic bonds. These bonds form the key elements that certify a human being’s conformity to material values, thereby sanctifying power and permanency to the Machine. For Sartre, the State is also an institutionalized group that manipulates the alienated workers and embodies the interests of the ruling class (640).

According to many critics, Sartre’s perspective about anti-Semitism, racism and especially colonialism show his commitment to political causes, and imply his departure from ethics. In his analysis of Sartre’s works, Ronald E. Santoni has noted that Sartre’s position on the ethical aspect of politics is “curiously ambivalent” (Sartre on Violence). On the other hand, Marguerite La Caze says that an understanding of violence does not mean that one accepts it unquestioningly. In her view, Sartre does not purposely condone violence as a proper course of action against every form of oppression. He considers it to be the only means to gain independence for nations in specific situations, like Algeria, that have been victims of torture for years. For him, torture is the most dehumanizing form of violence that human beings inflict upon one another and any means must be employed to bring an end to it. Sartre, in general, believes that violence is the destruction of both humanity and human organizations. Moreover, he states that violence is opposed to lawfulness. However, he claims that oppression exists on the “sub-ethical and subhuman
level” and can be tackled only with different forms of violence (“Sartre Integrating Ethics” 4).

In his polemical work *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, Albert Camus denunciates Sartre’s notion of unrestrained violence as a means of human liberation. His critique of revolutionary violence is based on his liberal democratic values, namely tolerance, justice, freedom, self-awareness, condemnation of violence, and resistance to tyranny. In *The Rebel*, Camus synthesizes his concept of the absurd with his views on varied issues like politics, metaphysics, aesthetics and history in order to present an integrated analysis of man in revolt. The situation where a human being becomes indifferent to violence and murder can, according to Camus, be categorized as an “absurd” phenomenon. The absurd signifies an absence of universal logic. It is an experience human beings undergo in their confrontation with a senseless universe which frustrates their efforts to make sense of it. In this work, he highlights the way modern forms of rebellion – which initially started as a protest against human suffering – betrayed their origins and ended up justifying the suffering and dehumanization of mankind. According to Camus, rebellion is born out of the “spectacle of irrationality” that is encountered by every human being (10). The quest for meaning in an irrational world and the will to transform this “incomprehensible condition” encourages an individual to act, thereby marking the birth of rebellion. A “rebel,” according to Camus, is an individual who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. In fact, a rebel is also an individual who says “yes,” from the moment she or he makes the first gesture of rebellion. Every act of rebellion begins with the feeling that the other person is “exaggerating.”
exerting one’s authority beyond a limit, and infringing on the rights of others (The Rebel 13-14). In his view, the act of rebellion is never egoistic for a rebel always identifies one’s self with a natural community and may revolt even in response to the spectacle of oppression of another victim. Camus, however, insists that this identification is neither material nor psychological but metaphysical for it links one’s destiny with that of others.

Camus states that true acts of rebellion can be found in literary works. He cites the examples of Marquis de Sade, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Friedrich Nietzsche. Camus calls Sade the “first theoretician of absolute rebellion” (36). In his view, the writings of Sade were responsible for the initial cracks in the Greco-Christian religious philosophy which promoted the “concept of an all-powerful and arbitrary forgiveness” (33). For Sade, God is just a criminal divinity whose main attribute is murder. Moreover, God’s only objective is oppression and denial of mankind. Since God too is a killer of mankind, it is impossible to stop the lesser mortals from going on a murderous rampage. According to Sade, destruction is an important part of every creation. Hence, Sade’s heroes always have the criminal element as an important part of their nature. He castigates monarchy for supporting God and basing all its laws on so-called divine principles. Moreover, he expresses his extreme hatred of the death penalty for it is issued by those who themselves commit heinous crimes. Sade is skeptical of the law of this world because he believes that it is created and practiced by the “advocates of crime” who use laws as a means of force to rule over their fellow human beings (41).

Camus examines the Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky’s fictional work The Brothers Karamazov in order to highlight the rebellious movement
in which God is put on trial. In this novel, according to Camus, the character of Ivan Karamazov is etched with regard to Dostoevsky’s philosophical position on Christianity, suffering and justice. Ivan is a metaphysical rebel who is able to deduce a law of murder as soon as he rejects “divine coherence” and resolves to discover his own rule of life (58). He considers the entire knowledge of the world to be absolutely worthless. He refuses to accept Christianity’s view of the truth of existence because he realizes that accepting its explanations would give credence to the Christian theological conception that suffering and despair are essential aspects of human life. Instead, he chooses to be damned with the rest of humanity for the ignorance of suffering shall ensure happiness in human life. Ivan thus rejects Christ’s promise of salvation, His call for freedom and His offer of the eternal life. He rejects leading a life full of virtues and embraces the notion of a world where “everything is permitted” (57). He believes that happiness cannot be achieved by making a choice between good and evil but by defying God and dominating and unifying the world. Through Ivan’s philosophy, Camus argues, Dostoevsky voices absolute nihilism.

In Camus’ view it is Friedrich Nietzsche, however, who is the true prophet of nihilism. Nietzsche himself conceded that he was the “first complete nihilist of Europe” owing to the complete erosion of his belief in life (66). Camus regards as a nihilist not the one who does not believe in anything but the one who refuses to believe in what exists. Nietzsche’s philosophy begins with staging a rebellion but ends up addressing the problem of rebellion. He kick-starts his rebellion by making the controversial statement that “God is dead” (Thus Spake Zarathustra 3). Camus then claims that it is
false to assume that a rebel always seeks to replace God because He is already
dead in the souls of human beings. Moreover, Nietzsche slams Christianity for
being nihilistic itself because it imposes its own imaginary meaning of life on
human beings, thereby preventing them from discovering its meaning. He
considers other forms of rebellion, such as socialism, to be degenerate forms
of Christianity for they all take their cues from history in asserting their brand
of values that are generally abhorred by a free mind. Nietzsche states that one
need not look towards religion in search of God and truth because the only
truth that exists is the world. In his words, “the world is the only divinity” that
shall help human beings in rediscovering their own “eternal divinity” (74).
Camus, on the other hand, considers nihilism to be an important camouflage
for a new prison of history and reason that is constructed for a mind that has
escaped from God’s prison (80). In the quest for absolute clarity about human
existence, the metaphysical rebel blindly seeks a new form of moral
philosophy or religion (101). Camus maintains that hatred for the creator can
easily turn into hatred for the creation and both may ultimately lead to murder,
thereby losing the right to be called a rebellion.

Camus also concentrates on the phenomenon of historical rebellion
which is the main attribute of all revolutionary political movements of the
modern world. Revolution, according to him, demands dedication to perpetual
strife and involves struggle of wills bent on seizing power. Here an individual
is simply an unwitting vehicle of the divine will and is consequently
manipulated by the cunning of reason in history. This blatant disregard of an
individual for the cause of a revolution was taken up by several
revolutionaries. Camus states that some revolutionaries, in order to hasten
history towards its goal, sought to increase the suffering of the proletariat so as to incite them to revolt. He cites the example of Russian revolutionary Sergei Nechaiev who was a staunch follower of the nihilist jargon “Everything is permitted.” His way of starting a revolution was that “governments must be driven to take repressive measures, that the official representatives most hated by the population must never be touched, and that finally the secret society must employ all its resources to increase the suffering and misery of society” (162-63). This nihilism soon transformed into military socialism. Here Camus quotes a philanthropist called Chigalev who states that “beginning with the premise of unlimited freedom” these revolutions only arrived at “unlimited despotism” (175). The Russian nihilism thus announced the advent of State terrorism and the totalitarian theocrats of the twentieth century.

Camus identifies the State with the “‘apparatus’, that is, the sum total of mechanisms of conquest and repression” (181). In his view, all modern revolutions have ended in the reinforcement of the power of the State. For him, fascist ideology also belongs to the history of rebellion and of nihilism because it deifies irrational elements of nihilist inheritance and not reason. Fascists like Mussolini and Hitler used a nihilist ‘philosophy’ to justify all the evil things that are products of the instinct of domination. According to Camus, both were “the first to construct a State on the concept that everything is meaningless and that history is only written in terms of hazards of the force” (178). In his view, Marxism is just another form of historical Messianism. Karl Marx, according to him, considers history to be not driven by divine will but by the proletariat. For Camus, however, the Nietzschean tragedy is again evident in Marxism. Marxist aims and prophecies are human and liberal, but
the reduction of every value to historical terms leads to dire consequences. Marx sees suffering in the present as a necessary sacrifice for the establishment of the future utopian society. Hence, in Camus’s view, he sees individuals as a means to the fulfillment of his historic mission.

Camus’s analysis of revolutionary political movements shows his condemnation of violence and his repudiation of the logic of revolutionary political nihilism as it leads to political tyranny and totalitarianism. Camus thus takes a completely different stand from his contemporaries like Sartre and Fanon. The true spirit of rebellion, he argues, never demands total freedom. In fact, it puts total freedom up for trial. In other words, it attacks the unlimited power that authorizes a superior to violate the rights of others. A rebel thus never demands the right to “destroy the existence and the freedom of others” (284). Camus states that “calculated revolution” is always marked by the denial of human existence. Here rebellion always forgets its origins and “denies life, dashes towards destruction and raises up the grimacing cohorts of petty rebels, embryo slaves who end up marketing themselves for sale in the market-places” (304). According to Camus, the true philosophy of rebellion is the philosophy of limits. It supposes a limit at which the community is established. Moreover, it has no place for murder, malice and tyranny.

Sartre’s justification of the use of violence to thwart oppression is indirectly explicated by Walter Benjamin’s essay entitled “Critique of Violence.” Here he analyses the status of law in modernity. A twentieth century German-Jewish philosopher, essayist and literary critic, Benjamin terms the use of violence in oppressive situations as belonging to the thesis of “natural law” (“Critique of Violence” 269). In his view, natural law justifies
the use of violence when deployed for the sake of arriving at just ends. In other words, the use of violence is justifiable for the cultivation of an aspiration by every human being towards a universal and transhistoric Good. The natural law tradition, in fact, considers violence to be a natural fact of life which can never be interpreted in terms of justice, legitimacy and legality. Positive law is, on the other hand, predicated on the understanding that violence is a “product of history” (269). This view is based on the assumption that there is a natural or given good accessible to man. Hence it makes violence unjustifiable with reference to just ends and forces the law to look towards just means in order to prove the legitimacy of human action. However, Benjamin’s bent is towards positive law tradition which focusses on the distinction between sanctioned and un-sanctioned laws to some extent.

Benjamin also makes a distinction between lawmaking and law-preserving violence. Lawmaking violence emerges during the declaration of independence and the inauguration of a new constitution. This kind of violence acquires legitimacy in the future implementation of a not-yet-realized legal order on behalf of which it claims to speak. Law-preserving violence, on the other hand, is the violence carried out by an already-founded state; it is conservative and protective, designed to preserve or reinforce a pre-existing legal order. It is violence deployable against an uprising or a potentially lawmaking insurrection and it is also simply the basic form of the day-to-day functioning of the legal system. The definitive description of these two forms of violence exhibits that law can never be fully constituted or legitimized, for legitimation depends on the foundation of historically determined and potentially contestable power structures, which ensures the possibility of a big
or small eruption of lawmaking violence against the legal order. Every act of law-preserving violence thus encloses within itself a defensive moment of lawmaking violence which forces the legitimated regime to re-posit itself. Hence, law is never able to divest itself of the original founding violence (276-80).

Benjamin also talks about the situation where lawmaking violence can get contaminated by the practical and administrative constraints of law-preserving violence, lose sight of the revolutionary forces that were a prime component of its origin and existence, and consequently cause the decline of parliamentary democracy and decay of various institutions. There is, in fact, continuous as well as mutual infection between lawmaking and law-preserving violence which is represented by the police force of modern times. The police force is apparently a representative of law-preserving violence but it is inevitably forced to employ law-making violence in specific situations, such as the intervention of police in numerous cases where no clear legal situation exists, like the terror strikes. According to Benjamin, the line that separates the lawmaking (legislative) from the law-preserving (executive) power has blurred, thereby causing the decline of the absolute sovereign. Moreover, the modern police force has itself become a beacon of brutality for it has crossed the boundaries between lawmaking and law-preserving violence thus exemplifying the decay of law in modern times (275).

Benjamin also talks about capital punishment or the death penalty. He labels it as the most brutal form of mythical violence, that is, “bloody power over mere life for its own sake” (283). Mythical violence is, in his view, an archetypal form of violence that is manifested in immediate violence and that
is identical to legal violence for it threatens, sets boundaries, spills blood and brings in guilt and retribution (280-283). In fact, mythical violence signifies the hold law has over the life of an individual and his complete subjection to it. The machinations employed by mythical violence, Benjamin argues, are disrupted by the expiatory powers of the “law-destroying” divine violence (282). Divine violence purifies individuals not of guilt but of law that binds them to the state-sanctioned violence. He terms divine violence as the “doctrine of the sanctity of life” which involves the divine judgment of the multitude on a criminal (285).

The purpose of the essay “Critique of Violence” is, according to Benjamin, to comprehend the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence (270). In his view, the law considers the application of violence by individuals as a threat to the legal system. Today, apart from the State only legal subjects are endowed with the right to exercise violence and that too in a mild form, such as strikes carried out by organized labour. Moreover, strike is an indirect escape from the violence that an employer unleashes on the workers (271). The State, however, sanctions and reserves many forms of violence, such as militarism, death penalty, conscription, etc. which it considers to be instrumental in the lawmaking function (273-74). Giorgio Agamben terms this as the “state of exception” where the State suspends the legal order to safeguard the “existence of the norm and its applicability to the normal situation” (State of Exception 31).

Agamben is one of the leading figures in twenty-first century Italian philosophy and radical political theory. His work is largely influenced by contemporary figures in western philosophy, such as Friedrich Hegel, Martin
Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Emile Benveniste, and Carl Schmitt. In his view, the “state of exception” – where the law employs the suspension of the law – is the state power’s most immediate response to the internal conflicts, such as civil wars, insurrection, and resistance. The state of exception has, however, become the “dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics” and has, consequently, marred the distinction between democracy and absolutism (State of Exception 2). This situation calls for the suspension of the constitution and the negation of the legal rights of those individuals who are in detention or surveillance. The state of exception thus opens a no-man’s-land between the political and the judicial.

In Political Theology, Carl Schmitt describes the state of exception as a kind of legal vacuum, where legal order is suspended in its totality. This situation introduces a kind of anomy⁴ into law thereby presenting a doctrine of sovereignty. The sovereign has the privilege to proclaim the state of emergency, remain exterior to the valid legal norms, and yet remain anchored in the legal order. Agamben’s book State of Exception is, however, an attempt to sever this artificial and violent link between the sovereign power and the legal order. He seeks to uncover the essential “fiction” that underlies the emphasis on “global civil war” and expose the lawlessness that lies at the heart of law (2). For this purpose, Agamben offers his analysis of a lecture given by Jacques Derrida in the year 1990 entitled “Force of Law: the Mystical Foundation of Authority” which comprises of Derrida’s views on Benjamin’s “Critique of violence.” The term “force of law,” according to Derrida,

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⁴The term ‘anomy’, also spelled as ‘anomic’, was coined by Emile Durkheim and refers to the situation where the society is either devoid of the norms or too inflexible to be followed. In the zone of anomy the lives of individuals are essentially plagued by alienation, helplessness and chaos. Agamben defines “anomy” as the creation of a zone where all legal determinants are deactivated.
authorizes the indestructible character of the law that the sovereign himself can neither repeal nor revise (Acts of Religion 241). Technically, however, the term refers not to the law itself, but to the decrees that the executive power is designated to give. It defines a demarcation between the efficacy of the law and its formal essence, by which the acts that do not have the value of the law are able to acquire the “force of law.”

For Agamben the confusion between law (legislative power) and the force of law (executive power) characterizes the state of exception. Here the force of law can exist without law. The state of exception establishes a regime of law within which the norm is valid but cannot be applied (since it has no force), and where acts that do not have the value of law acquire the force of law. This lends an indeterminate element to the force-of-law making it accessible both to the authority of the State and to a revolutionary organization. In Agamben’s view, the force of law possesses a mystical element or is a “fiction” that disconnects norm from reality and invites “anomy” to be a part of law itself. Agamben makes another point against Schmitt in his analysis of the Roman republican convention of the iustitium, that is, an ancient precedent for the state of exception. It involved not a suspension of the framework of justice but the suspension of law itself. Agamben seeks to correct Schmitt’s notion that the state of exception is akin to dictatorship. The iustitium, just as the modern state of exception, does not imply the creation of a new magistrate, only the creation of a zone of anomy in which all legal determinations find themselves deactivated (47). In his view, Hitler and Mussolini cannot be called dictators. The legal appointment of Hitler by the president, according to Agamben, allowed the Weimar
Constitution to remain valid, though after transforming it into a secondary and legally non-formalized structure that could exist only by the virtue of a generalized state of exception. Hence the existence of lawlessness or spaces devoid of law is, according to Agamben, essential to the legal order which is guaranteed through the authorized organization’s maintenance of relationship with anomy.

In *State of Exception*, Agamben places Schmitt’s idea of inclusion of all violence in law with Benjamin’s pure and revolutionary “law-destroying” violence to highlight the indecision that plagues the authority of the State. His reading of Benjamin’s “The Origin of German Tragic Drama” is meant to contrast Schmitt’s theory of sovereign decision with Benjamin’s notion of sovereign indecision. In fact, an important aspect of the state of exception is, according to Benjamin, the sovereign’s aversion to making and effectively carrying out decisions. This fracture between the sovereign power and the inability to act results not in the restoration of the legal order but in a generalized catastrophe that causes the annihilation of sovereignty.

Agamben too considers the state of exception to be a “catastrophe” for it violates the rights of people on legal as well as humanitarian grounds (56-7). He cites the example of the decision of the Bush government in 2001 to authorize the “indefinite detention and trial by military commissions of noncitizens suspected of involvement in terrorist activities” (3). This is, according to Agamben, the employment of a drastic and violent measure by the government as it radically erases any legal status of the individual and produces a “legally unnamable and unclassifiable being” simply labelled as an “alien” or a “detainee” (3). He equates the treatment meted out to the Taliban
captured in Afghanistan by the American government with the continued state of exception that lasted in Germany under Hitler’s rule. The only distinction here, according to Agamben, is that despite the agony and brutality of the concentration camps the Jews were allowed to retain their identity unlike the Talibanis. It may be pointed out that Michel Foucault also sheds light on the manner in which violent “excesses of torture” inflicted during the Nazi rule have, over the course of time, given way to milder, nonetheless, equally if not more potent techniques of control adopted by the prison authorities in recent times (Discipline and Punish 35).

Foucault is renowned for his outstanding and path-breaking critical analysis of social institutions. In his works, Foucault has primarily reassessed the various shibboleths of Western culture, such as reason, science, freedom, justice, democracy etc. and revealed the oppressive shadows they cast over an unsuspecting individual. Discipline and Punish is a study of penal history which highlights the way the violent forms of punishment, like the public execution, have gradually given way to milder yet powerful, controlling as well as reforming techniques represented by the modern prison. In the eighteenth century, public execution of legally condemned man was a long process in which death was both retarded by calculated interruptions and multiplied by a series of successive attacks (12). The execution entailed that the condemned man be flogged until he fainted, hung up in chains, dragged along on a hurdle, in which his entrails quickly ripped out and were thrown into the fire; after which he was finally decapitated and his body quartered (12). The theatrical elements of punishment as spectacle were supposedly
meant to be engraved in the heart of a weak man in order to curb his proclivity towards committing a crime.

Foucault states that a whole economy of power was invested in these excesses of torture (35). The very excess of violence adopted by the judicial system in the eighteenth century was considered to be ceremonial of justice being expressed in all its force. The public execution, however, in Foucault’s view, did not re-establish justice. It was a political ritual and was meant to reactivate the power of the sovereign (47-49). The imbalance and excess of violence in an execution was supposed to be an emphatic affirmation of monarchic power and its intrinsic superiority (49). The body of the condemned man was, thus, the major target of penal repression in the eighteenth century (8). In fact, the body of the condemned man became the king’s property, on which the sovereign left his mark and brought down the effects of his power (109).

At the advent of the nineteenth century, according to Foucault, punishment ceased to become an “art of unbearable sensations” (30). Today law manipulates the body according to strict rules and with a much higher aim. Its main concern is to control the mind of the convict by penalizing her or his body. Physical pain is no longer considered to be the primary element of the penalty for crime. The body has become an instrument caught up in constraints, privations and prohibitions in order to deprive the criminal of liberty that is regarded both as a right and as a property by every individual (138). In the present times, thus, the system of non-corporal punishment is adopted by the judiciary, which basically involves suspension of the rights of the offenders. Prison, according to Foucault, is a disciplinary institution that is
punitive as well as correctional in design. Discipline, as a form of control, was first introduced in institutions like the military academies, monasteries, schools, hospitals, asylums and workshops. Foucault states that discipline is a kind of counter-law although it appears to extend the general forms defined by the law to the everyday life of an individual. Disciplinary institutions are always sponsored by law and both reinforce and multiply the asymmetry of power and undermine the limits that are traced around law (222-23).

In *Discipline and Punish*, prison is Foucault’s paradigm for the contemporary disciplinary society and the birth of the prison signifies the development of modern society imprisoned by the norms of various institutions that it has itself created. For Foucault, prison is like any other structure of domination and is founded on the inter-related concepts of power, knowledge and body. His view is in accord with Nietzsche’s that human body is seized and shaped by all social, political and economic institutions. Systems of production and domination require bodies to be mastered and subjected to training so as to render them docile, obedient and useful to a great degree. Some institutions control the individual through the use of violence, restraint and physical force. Many social institutions, however, control and manipulate an individual without the use of any external force. This is achieved by invading and exerting an influence on the innermost recesses of an individual’s mind.

Like Arendt, Foucault also seeks to highlight the role which power plays in a controlling and violent situation. In his view, power denotes to the various forms of domination and subordination that operate in society. The operation of power becomes most evident when it comes in contact with the
bodies of the subjects. Prison – a microcosm of our disciplinary social institutions – is basically a vector of power (30). In a prison, the process of controlling a convict through the penalty of coercion basically involves the training of behaviour by a detailed time-table, the acquisition of habits and the systematic training of the body (129). The “micro-physics of power” – a relationship between power and body – involves a third element also, that of knowledge (139). It means that the agent of power, who is also the executioner of punishment, must have a complete understanding of the reactions, strengths and weaknesses of the body it wishes to control. The role of the executioner today has thus been taken up by a whole army of technicians, namely warders, doctors, chaplains, psychiatrists, educationists etc. Foucault calls it carceral punishment (297). He states that the frontiers between the legal system and other social institutions have become obscure because of the similar disciplinary techniques undertaken by all of them. The process of punishment, in other words, has become similar to that of offering education or cure. The carceral method is evident in the functioning of schools, religious institutions, hospitals, charitable societies and moral improvement associations (299). The carceral system has introduced a new economy of power and permitted the emergence of a new form of law. Its function is to judge, assess, diagnose, recognize the normal and abnormal and claim the honour of curing and rehabilitating. The “judges of normality,” according to Foucault, are present everywhere in society in the garb of teachers, doctors, educators and social workers (304).

Foucault concentrates on exhibiting the steep rise in the use of mechanisms of normalization and the extensive powers that are meant to
control individuals. In his opinion, power can no longer be viewed merely as an exercise of force which prohibits, delimits, rejects and denies. The positive and productive aspect of power has been reinforced by the agencies of health, insurance, social security, education, psychiatry, etc. These institutions control and regulate the lives of people in a way that can hardly be called repressive. Power – manifest in such institutions – functions not to prohibit but to produce the practices of our culture. This power is reforming and constructive by nature as it curbs the individual’s desire to commit crimes and ensures clockwork operation of social mechanisms (211-14). It is another matter that the reforming methods of these power mechanisms are extremely oppressive. They are subtle and gentle forms of domination that are more controlling and more dangerous than any form of physical coercion (129). It is more difficult to try and break free from their grasp because they convince an individual that her or his actions are based on free will. In Marxist terms, an individual’s submission to the power-invested institutions of society may be termed as her or his subjection to the ruling ideology. In fact, the Marxists see a relationship between power and ideology. The ideological mechanism, which works in the creation and continuation of social institutions, is extremely essential for the legitimization of the power of the ruling class which owns the means of economic production. In wider terms, it means that ideology is important for the maintenance of relationships involving dominance/subjection as well as ensuring that the repressive elements are never uprooted from the individuals’ thought processes.

Karl Marx views ideology as the system of ideas and representation which dominate the mind of an individual or a social group (The German
Theorists like Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser claim that ideology is a mechanism for hegemony and the presence of class structures in society. A renowned French Marxist philosopher, Louis Althusser analyzes the way ideology operates and he also dissects the institutions that serve as a site or mechanism for their functioning. His essay “Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation” investigates the manner in which ideology plays a predominant role in maintaining the capitalist relations of exploitation. Also, he uncovers the way in which subjection and manipulation of individuals is ensured by social/state institutions like the family, the school, the church and the army. Althusser defines ideology as the representation of the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence. He distinguishes between the two sites or ‘apparatuses’ that condition the capitalist mode of production, namely the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The former is political in context and functions by violence that may either take physical or non-physical forms. The State Apparatus comprises the government, the administration, the army, the police, the courts, the prisons etc. and belongs entirely to the public domain. It is known to be repressive because of the violent force it exerts on individuals to make them do its bidding.

The Ideological State Apparatus is, on the other hand, manifest in distinct and specialized institutions like family, schools, religious institutions, laws, trade unions, literature, art, newspapers, sports etc. Unlike the Repressive State apparatus, it belongs to the private domain and functions by the ideology of the ruling class. According to Althusser, ideology always
resides within and is reinforced by individuals and social structures invested with power. The ISA indoctrinates children and adults to think and behave in consonance with the dominant ideology. The repression and violence wrought by the Ideological State Apparatus is subtle, silent, covert and even symbolic.

The punishment meted out in schools, religious institutions, prisons, etc. is not meant to exact revenge for the crime committed but to discipline and conform individuals according to the ruling ideology. He stresses that these supposedly non-productive aspects of the capitalistic society are, in fact, primarily responsible for the conditions of the structure’s existence.

Althusser also asserts that man is an ideological animal by nature. Ideology insinuates itself into the lives of individuals and transforms an individual into a subject through the method of “interpellation” (197).

Althusser states that individuals are, in fact, “always-already subjects” (199). He cites the example of an unborn child whose identity is marked before his birth through familial ideological construction. The child’s subjection to ideology is ascertained through the insistence that it shall bear its father’s name. He also gives the example of Christian religious ideology which presupposes the existence of one supreme Subject (Christ) and thereby interpellates all individuals as subjects of this central Other Subject. In Althusser view, the ISAs ‘subject’ a person to the existing ideology while sustaining her or his belief of having a firm hold on one’s subjectivity. He equates ideology to “misrecognition” for it makes an individual submit freely to her or his subjection (196).

Ideology operates primarily through language and discourse. Theorists like Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek claim that language is itself
complicit in the subjection and victimization of human beings. The *Oxford Dictionary, Thesaurus and Word Power Guide* defines discourse as being a “written or spoken communication” or a “formal discussion or debate”.

Sociologists consider discourse to be an institutionalized mode of thinking that delimits, dictates and defines the rules relating to all aspects of society.

Foucault asserts that discourse is inevitably linked to power. In *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, he states that discourses should not be considered as being autonomous for “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (100). Foucault explores the manner in which sex is “put into discourse” (11). This book, according to him, serves a three-pronged purpose. Firstly, it uncovers the instances of discursive production that administer silence. Secondly, it exhibits the manner in which the production of power sometimes adopts the function of sanctioning the prohibitions. Thirdly, it highlights the way the promulgation of knowledge often causes the circulation of mistaken beliefs or systematic misconceptions in society.

In *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Foucault highlights the nexus of power and sex. He says that where there is desire, the power relations are already present (81). In his view, the juridico-discursive power governs both the thematics of repression and the law which is constitutive of desire. The “repressive hypothesis” rooted in this power masks the relationship between sex and pleasure by the means of prohibition, censorship, exclusion, concealment, etc (86). It also places sex in binary relationships, that is, licit/illicit and permitted/forbidden. The juridico-discursive model of power, according to Foucault, reveals that the legal system is merely the way of exerting violence under the cover of general law.
Foucault also makes an in-depth analysis of the concept of power. Power is, in his opinion, neither an institution nor a structure. It is a complex strategical situation in society. Power is omnipresent because it emerges from every sphere. In Foucault’s view, power may be understood as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate; it may also be defined as the process which forcibly strengthens or reverses these relations (92). Power targets sexuality with the help of the techniques of knowledge and the procedures of discourse. There is indeed an interminable relation between power, knowledge and discourse. In the eighteenth century, the mechanisms of power and knowledge centering on sex developed four distinct strategic unities. Firstly, it caused the hysterization of women’s bodies. The female body was analyzed and placed firmly in the domain of familial relationships and maternity. Secondly, it led to the pedagogization of children’s sex which was brought about with the help of parents, educators, doctors and psychiatrists. Thirdly, it insisted on the responsibilization of married couples with regard to birth-control practices. Fourthly, it resulted in the psychiatric analysis of the perverse pleasures of sex. In the nineteenth century, these four figures – the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple and the perverse adult – became the targets as well as the anchorage points for the ventures of knowledge (104-05). Sexuality was deployed in the family, and the parents and relatives became its chief agents with the outside support of doctors, educators and psychiatrists (108-14).

While enumerating the repressive hypothesis, Foucault also highlights an important paradigm of power, knowledge, sexuality and the body. In the discourse on sex, firstly, power is centered on the human body and, secondly,
it is focussed on the species’ body. Foucault has called the strengthening hold of power over life as the beginning of the era of the “bio-power” (139). Bio-power is constituted of diverse techniques that are used to subjugate bodies and control the populations. Hardt and Negri, however, define bio-power as a “form of rule aiming not only at controlling the population but producing and reproducing all aspects of social life” (Multitude 13). In their view, bio-power is not only restricted to the power of the mass destruction of life, such as the threat posed by nuclear weapons, but it also encompasses “individualized violence” which means torture (19). Today torture has transformed into an increasingly banal and generalized form of control that individuals apply on each other. It involves physical and psychological torment as well as simple means of humiliation in order to subjugate and discipline an individual. Bio-power has, in Foucault’s opinion, become an indispensable element in the development of capitalism under which the human body is disciplined, and the population is regulated for the sake of greater utility, efficiency and productivity.

In The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Foucault states that sexuality has primarily been repressed by religion, medicine and art. The moral and religious function assigned to sex, the silence imposed on sex in literary discourses as well as the ‘elusive’ tag attached to it by science has hampered individuals from discovering the truth about sexuality. Foucault claims that sexuality that has taken the form of interrogation, consultations, autobiographical narratives, literature, letters, dossiers and commentaries amounts basically to scientific pretensions for they not only “produce” the truth about sex but also manage to mask it (63). Religion and art, in fact, wield
immense influence in producing, moulding and hiding various “truths” according to the specified requirements of the power-invested institutions of society (22-23).

The twentieth century French philosopher, social theorist and literary critic, René Girard explores violence as it is represented throughout history, literature and myth. In *Violence and the Sacred*, he focusses on religion in order to understand the importance of violence for it forms, in his view, the basis of all culture. Girard states that violence is the heart and soul of the sacred. The sacred comprises those forces whose “dominance over man [sic]” increases in proportion to his effort to master them, such as tempests, forest fires, and plagues (32). As violence is endemic in every human community, several measures are adopted to deflect it, the primary measure being to choose and eliminate a “surrogate victim” (286). This victim may be either an animal or a human. It is thought that violence may be thwarted by sacrificing this victim or casting it out of the community. In Girard’s view, sacrifice is a mechanism of collective transfer which deflects a community’s own violence away from itself to an outside victim, that is, a “scapegoat” (104). Sacrifice thus carries out the function of quelling the violence within the community and preventing the eruption of conflict among its members. According to Girard, the spectrum of human victims sacrificed by various societies includes prisoners of wars, slaves, small children, unmarried adolescents and the handicapped. These surrogate victims serve as an antidote to cleanse the violence precipitated by the entire community. Religion ensures that this violent expulsion of the victim be regarded as requisite for the maintenance of
harmony among the people. Religious rites and rituals thus make sacrificial
violence generative and repetitive (284).

Girard also analyzes the reciprocity and the repetitiveness of violence
that prevails in a community. The cause of reciprocal violence is, in his
opinion, a phenomenon called “mimetism” (179). He says that “man [sic] is
subject to intense desires,” and violence is always mingled with these desires
(155). Moreover, the main reason for an individual’s falling into patterns of
violence is “mimesis,” which is a deep-rooted tendency to unconsciously
imitate the desires of another. In Girard’s view, every human being
unconsciously imitates the actions and desires of a specific “model”.
Consequently, the individual comes into conflict with the “model” and begins
to see it/her/him as a rival. Girard sees this condition as a “double bind” (156).
An individual begins to regard his or her model’s opposition as an act of
condemnation and excommunication and he or she inadvertently starts
considering violence to be the most distinctive attribute of one’s own as well
as the model’s supreme goal. Violent opposition, thus, becomes the signifier
for every person’s ultimate desire (157). According to Girard, rivalry and
violent conflicts arise not because the imitator and the model/rival desire the
same object. They arise because the subject always desires an object which is
desired by one’s rival. Girard calls this condition “mimetic desire” (155). He
considers mimetic “desire” to be a more comprehensive term than “violence”
with reference to religious pollution (158). In his view, mimetic desire is the
catalyst for sacrificial crisis and only the rules and regulations sanctioned by
rituals manage to prevent multiple desires converging on a model object
thereby upsetting the cultural order.
The cultural order is, according to Girard, a “regulated system of distinctions in which the differences among individuals are used to establish their identity and their mutual relationships,” and also maintain order, peace and fecundity in the community (52). The sacrificial crisis is, on the other hand, defined as a “crisis of distinctions” which invariably affects the cultural order (51). Literature, according to Girard, always warns human beings to restrict themselves to the identities assigned to them in the given cultural order so as to prevent the unleashing of violence by the sacred. He cites the example of Sophocles’s play *Oedipus the King* where the violent acts of patricide and incest are shown to be responsible for the erosion of the differences between father and son. The crimes committed by Oedipus, therefore, are perceived as the sole cause for the plague epidemic that infects his entire kingdom. Girard sees both patricide/incest and the plague motif as a camouflage for the presence of the sacrificial crisis. Oedipus becomes the repository of all his community’s ills, that is, the human scapegoat.

There is no doubt that literature is hugely influenced by the dominant ideology of the era in which it is written. It largely reflects and reinforces the prohibitions, restrictions, censorships, taboos and silences that the existing ideology imposes on individuals in order to tie them to identities and roles assigned to them as well as narrow down their choices so that they act in the manner that society expects from them. Such literature also promotes bad faith, thereby exerting existential violence on an individual. In Sartre’s view, an individual needs to seize his or her freedom; an act which involves the negation of bad faith and the assumption of responsibility for one’s choices. For him, the freedom of an individual is dependent on the freedom of
humanity and the creation of a society where oppression and exploitation are eradicated (What is Literature? x). Sartre envisages literature as an important means for guiding human beings towards the path of freedom and consciousness. In his view, a literary work is never dead or finished because its meaning changes as the world changes.

In What is Literature?, literature is presented by Sartre as a form of social action. Each literary work captures the alienation caused by “institutions, customs, certain forms of oppression and conflict…superstitions” on the basis of which the reader is presented with an opportunity to “bring about his [sic] concrete liberation” (52-3). In Sartre’s view, literature should not be a sedative or a feel-good pill but an irritant that provokes readers to realize their condition and strive to transcend it. Sartre states that the writer is the “conscience” as well as the “guilty conscience” of society (60-1). A writer makes readers aware of their suffering, thereby challenging the ignorance with which society accepts the established values of its regime. According to Sartre, the writer’s negation of the sterile dogmatism imposed by the moral codes of society can be likened to a state of “perpetual revolution” (61). Sartre’s idea of revolution encompasses violence as a necessary factor for reconstruction of language, values, beliefs, and of man, himself. In his view, the writer’s “negativity” and negation of the present system of values is a “necessary element of reconstruction” (62). For Sartre, the committed writer may be the parasite of the “parasitic” governing elite, but she or he never refrains from exposing and challenging the exploitative ploys of the ruling class (68). A writer, however, becomes a victim of bad conscience when she or he allows one’s self to be directed by the ideology of
the ruling class. A writer, Sartre argues, must never base one’s work on ideologies because literature itself is an ideology. Literature constitutes the synthetic and often contradictory totality of everything which the age has been able to produce to enlighten itself.

Sartre states that it is inexcusable to consider literature as the depiction of dreams and the unconscious reality (as Surrealism sees it) of life. According to him, “[The] literature of a given age is alienated when it has not arrived at the explicit consciousness of its autonomy and when it submits to temporal powers or to an ideology, in short, when it considers itself as a means and not an unconditioned end” (117). Literature becomes conscious of itself only when it offers itself to the free judgment of every human being which, according to him, can happen only in a classless society. Moreover, society becomes classless only through suppression of classes, abolition of all dictatorship, constant renewal of frameworks, and the continuous overthrowing of order. Hence, literature is, in essence, the “subjectivity of a society in permanent revolution” (122). It is only in a revolutionized society that literature becomes completely conscious of itself and realizes that its function is to make an individual acknowledge her or his subjectivity and attain the freedom of making one’s own choices. Here the writer’s subjectivity merges with that of the men of the world and the product of this identical subjectivity. Literature thus reflects the universal and collective needs of the public. Revolution, according to Sartre, signifies “a historical phenomenon involving the change of the regime of the property, the change of political personnel, and the recourse to insurrection” (216). In simpler terms, it involves suppression of all classes, complete annihilation of the dictatorship regime,
renewing frameworks consistently and continuous deposing of order once it tends to coagulate. Hence Sartre – by likening literature to a revolution – attributes a violent aspect to the literary work penned by a “committed” writer (14).

In a similar fashion to Sartre, Camus turns to the realm of aesthetics for a clue to the salvation of anguished modern man. Camus’s theorization of modern art is set within a more general discussion of the problem of rebellion as an individual and social phenomenon. The centre of Camus’s aesthetic theory is his view that art is an activity which affirms and denies reality in one and the same act. According to him, art attempts to create a universe and produce a unity which reality as such never provides. The world portrayed in the novel is, in fact, “a rectification of the world we live in, in pursuance of man’s deepest wishes” (263). The novel is not an instance of escapism but an attempt to unify what might be but is not. The novel provides an individual with an opportunity to give unity to reality, give meaning to events, and even create ‘destiny’. According to Camus, this dialectic of negation and affirmation represents the creation of the world of justice.

In recent times, however, the works of art have embedded a rather strange reaction to the human situation. According to Camus, instead of becoming truly creative, artists have frequently chosen the path of negation of reality. This has given rise to pure formalism as well as escapism with a ‘nihilistic’ origin (273). For Camus, the world can discover the road to “creative synthesis” only when the source of rebellion is rediscovered, where the “individual and history balance each other in a condition of acute tension” (273). But in the long run, art can never sustain itself in revolutionary societies
and if it does it will only signify a “vanquished rebellion, a blind and empty hope in the pit of despair” (274). In Camus’ view, art teaches an important lesson that human existence cannot be explained by history alone. One needs to look at the order of nature in order to find a reason for human being’s existence.

A French theorist of politics and media aesthetics named Jean-Luc Nancy [Born 1970] explores the association of violence with art and aesthetics. He states that violence always makes an image of itself. In his view, violence always completes itself by imprinting its image “by force in its effect and as its effect” (The Ground of the Image 20). For instance, Nancy says that a painter is unable to paint forms without the help of a metamorphic force that drags them into the realm of presence; hence, the expression ‘bringing art to life.’ The imaging trait or mark of violence arises from the truth which is an act of self-manifestation. Violence never attempts to serve as the truth; it wants to be the truth, so it uses force to make the truth and project it through an image. Every image is, according to Nancy, engaged in an aggressive competition for presence. It is the prodigious “force-sign” of an improbable presence and is always seeking to erupt from the concealedambits of a restless being (23). Hence, every image is violent. Nancy states that the art which generates from realism depicts death and destruction and bloodshed and, consequently, increases the ambiguity between image and violence. Such an art reveals the “extreme violence of cruelty” hovering around all images (24). Like violence, art is an excess in signs but it is not able to signify anything because it touches the “real” which is something formless, groundless and bottomless (25). Art is basically an imminent revelation that
never comes about. Hence, it is irrational to believe that the aesthetics are a means of protection from unjustifiable violence.

Nancy also focusses on the significance of art created by women. He holds that the artistic representations of women need to be marked as moments of “displacement…and the deep unsettling of the foundations of a world conceived” (129). Moreover, these representations need to be viewed as women’s emergence from an “archaic obscurity,” liberation from “strange and foreign powers,” and an opportunity to “gain mastery over their own fate” (129). The artistic representations of the woman’s body by female artists, Nancy argues, are not meant to present the simplistic image of the perceived world. These representations are, in fact, a female artist’s attempt to touch the secret of violence which remains buried in the antiquity of its very condition. The violated “figure” of women in art thus signifies the “representation of the unrepresentable” rather than the depiction of “what is already immutably present” (134-35).

The aforementioned studies exhibit the diverse forms of violence that had previously not received a systematic and detailed examination. These studies highlight the manner in which an individual unknowingly makes oneself vulnerable to violence. These works also signify the theoretical stance of the aforementioned thinkers with regard to the phenomenon of violence. The theorization of violence by Sartre, Fanon and Benjamin shows its destructive facets, such as oppression, terror, torture, capital punishment, etc. But these theorists also attribute a positive, productive and cathartic quality to violence. On the other hand, theorists like Arendt and Girard concede that violence plays an important part in the functioning of society and go on, in a
neutral manner, to delineate its symbolic, social role. Camus, Aron, Foucault, Agamben, Hardt and Negri focus on the destructive, subtle and disguised forms of violence.

The relevant work of the aforementioned theorists lays bare the extent of violence in mankind. However, most of these theorists have presented the larger picture but ignored other forms of violence such as individualized and gender-based violence. In fact, they have not taken into account the violence that specifically targets women. However, an alignment of these theories with woman’s experience of violence may provide an insight into forms of gender-based violence.

Sartre and Fanon are two theorists who propagated the notion that the path of violence is the sole way to gain freedom from the alienation and powerlessness imposed on individuals by the situation of colonialism and racism or by the ceaseless suffering experienced by them when trapped in an existential dilemma. Fanon can be said to be a reductionist. His work on colonialism can be held up as evidence of his glorification and utmost belief in violence. Similarly, Sartre can be criticized for his defense of terrorist violence as well as his view that violence is the only path that leads to emancipation from oppression and to the humanization of the self. Both advocate violence as the only solution to decolonization because a colonizer’s power is built on brute power. Any resistance to this power must also be of a violent nature because violence is the only ‘language’ the colonizer speaks and understands. Moreover, colonial brutality and aggression are internalized as terror by the colonized. Hence violence is the only language that the native ‘understands’ and responds to accordingly. Similarly, there are many thinkers and
revolutionaries who seem to have tacitly accepted symbolic violence as the inevitable answer to patriarchal power. French feminist Julia Kristeva argues that till date only men have been instilled in the symbolic order as subjects and so they are the sole agents of revolutionary transformation. Woman, on the other hand, is like an orphan who does not belong to culture and language. Her contemporary and fellow-French feminist Hélène Cixous states that a woman can only attain her self through the disruption of the binary organization that forms the linchpin in the patriarchal order. In her view, a woman needs to bite the tongue that speaks in order to let the patriarchal language haemorrhage and rupture. A review of the recent insights by feminists shows that their reliance on violence at a “symbolic” level has, in fact, become a paradigm for feminist theory.

In “On Violence,” Arendt attributes an instrumental character to the concept of violence. Her theory reveals that violence is exercised only for the preservation of power by those who indulge in a relationship of domination over others. Violence emanates either out of power-driven enterprise or it erupts as a reaction against a power-wielding institution. Here power seems to be the driving force behind violence. The essence of violence thus resides in power. Arendt’s analysis is quite accurate for violence and dehumanization are constantly employed in gender-based oppression to maintain the powerless and helpless stance of the victim. Moreover, this upholding of power and wielding of violence is accomplished through the ideology propagated by the dominant individuals and groups. Ideology is akin to violence because its main aim turns out to be a suppression of the self, for an awareness of one’s own consciousness may posit to be a threat to power-infested relationships. Radical
feminist terms this totalizing ideology as patriarchy which, in their view, forms the basis of social institutions that dominate women in the interests of men.

Camus rejects Sartre’s radical philosophy of violence and expresses his antipathy for all kinds of violence, such as revolutionary, nihilistic, or absurdist for they all cause universal suffering. This corresponds to Western feminists’ vociferous critique of radical feminist thought which holds men responsible for the victimization of women. Feminists’ have rejected views of radical feminists like Mary Daly who declares that feminist revolution’s goal to abolish patriarchy would be achieved only through a “drastic reduction of the population of the males” (“No Man’s Land”). In fact, liberal feminists view this radical philosophy as potential destabilization of the feminist movement. Revolution is, in Camus’s view, often an act of cunning and deceit in which the unsuspected revolutionaries are manipulated to commit violence against humanity. Feminists are also often criticized for replicating the norms that they seek to challenge. For instance, feminists have been criticized for reinforcing the binaries of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ by reversing their mutual positions. Aron’s emphasis on the importance of individual acts rather than universal choices pinpoints the discrepancy that underlies Western feminist thought. One of Aron’s objections to Sartre has been that he gave undue significance to the collective needs of the people and generally ignored the impact that it would have on an individual. Western feminists have also been severely criticized for focussing on universal patriarchy thereby ignoring the victimization of women at the specific individual levels. It has been pointed
out that woman’s experience of violence is fraught with complexities introduced by the specificities of race, class, and culture.

Foucault has highlighted the power-driven operations that are carried out in society in order to ‘discipline’ the individuals. Individuals are taught to never defy the social norms by stepping out of the roles assigned to them. Foucault’s theory can be used by feminism to delineate the brutal exertion of control over the female sex. Social institutions infected with power are the prime culprits in the violent onslaught upon women. Institutions like schools, hospitals, and religious institutions outline the boundaries that separate the abnormal behaviour from the normal. These institutions have authorized representatives to judge whether a woman adheres to the ideal of femininity. In Foucault’s view, these judges of normalcy are present as teachers, doctors and priests in society. Moreover, they are the modern-day executioners whose method of punishment is to control and discipline the ‘abnormal’ individual. They wield violence upon individuals by reinforcing the notion that adhering to its rules would help an individual to lead a normal and fulfilling life.

Violence operates extensively through language and discourse. Language is, according to French feminists, a tool that is employed for repressing the female body. They hold that the prevailing culture and language are patriarchal where man is firmly ensconced as a ‘conscious’ subject and woman is left floundering in search of her self. In Foucault’s view, discourse is an amalgamation of power and knowledge and is the prime instigator in endorsing oppressive beliefs. In fact, discourse constitutes the “sex” in binaries and decides on the repression or expression of sexuality. A study of
the juridico-discursive power reveals the legal order’s infliction of violence under the guise of general law.

Agamben’s *State of Exception* shows the lawlessness that resides at the heart of the law. He talks about the fictional bond that exists between law and lawlessness and is sustained by recourse to violence. In his view, the distinction between law and anarchy is blurred. The legal order plays a major role in ensuring the establishment and maintainence of repressive social institutions. The violence emanating from the legal institutions is consequential in multiplying the asymmetry of power. These anomic institutions are socially sanctioned and undermine the limits that are traced around the law. Patriarchy too operates and controls those fictional bonds which confer legitimacy on the violence directed against women. It is a pervasive and power-based structure that manifests itself through all social institutions. Patriarchy is inherent in discourse; it is an intrinsic element of the prevailing ideology. It enforces the biological and cultural suppositions that are responsible for the subjugation of women. Patriarchy intersects with a person’s specific gender, race, class and ethnicity, and it contributes to multiple forms of violence.

The aforementioned thinkers expose those forms of violence that are either overlooked or willingly assimilated within normal social behaviour. In short, their works illuminate various dimensions of violence. Some of these are blatant while some are masked and hence difficult to detect. Some are brutal and dehumanizing, whereas a few are constructive and creative. Some thinkers have even provided solutions for dealing with violence. These solutions involve either embracing violence as a means of social action or
completely renouncing violence. Yet these theorists’ inability to account for women’s victimization points to the lack of proper articulation of gender-based violence. Feminist theory has, in fact, appropriated some of these theories on violence to focus on the subjection of women. The second chapter of the research project examines feminist theorists’ approach to women’s experience of violence. The chapter is sub-divided into two parts: Western feminist theory, and Third-World/postcolonial feminism. It reviews the various feminist insights to show that feminist theory still has major ground to cover in its comprehensive articulation of Indian women’s experience of violence.