

I. Introduction

The Man Who Lived Underground has all of the features of the classic naturalistic fable.

The text's working-class protagonist Fred Daniels has been falsely accused of murder. He escapes from the police and takes refuge underground in the sewers. After a few days of tunneling through the sewers and secretly observing the people who live above ground, he leaves the underground and confronts the policemen who earlier forced him to sign a confession of guilt. When Daniels tries to lead them into the sewers so that they can see people as he has seen them, one of the officers shoots and kills him. Thus Daniels suffers the classic fate of the naturalistic protagonist: "He is wiped out" (21).

Daniels struggle begins when he is forced to flee from the police for a crime which he has not committed. He takes refuge by escaping through a manhole into the city sewer. It is here, beneath the superficial elements of the outer world, that he begins to discover the true nature of reality and of human nature. In the depths of the sewer Daniels gropes through the darkness until he finds that he has entrance to the basements of buildings adjacent to the sewer tunnels. In these buildings and in the sewer he sees people in grotesque and different roles, symbolic of the base human nature that underlay outer respectability. He first observes a Negro church service, next discovers a naked, dead baby caught in some debris in the sewer slime, and then goes on to view the people in a mortuary, a movie theatre, a jewelry firm, a radio repair shop, and a meat market. These incidents are significant because the people do not realize they are being observed, and Daniels is seeing them from a unique vantage point, from the level of the unconscious evil and despair which motivate man.

When Daniels first approaches the Negro church service and hears the people imploringly singing, his impulse is to laugh at their blindness. The protagonist escapes from society's stereotype of an African American male by hiding underground. After the protagonist returns to the worlds, he experiences the ultimate punishment. He is tormented by the night watchman's suicide and the claustrophobic feeling he receives while in his hideout. Although the plot moves slowly, it captures the attention of the reader by making the person wonder what will happen next. This story is recommended for people who like to see man struggle within him as well as with society.

Paradoxically, as Wright compares the situation of the protagonist Daniels to animals, he similarly compares him to Christ. This animal/ Christ linking is a sub-paradox within a broader animal/ God paradox. The first suggestion that Daniels is Christlike occurs early in the story when Fred dreams he can walk on water. Daniels stays underground for three days, reveal his story to be virtually the mirror image of Christ's. Christ was executed, lay dead in a cave for three days and then rose on the third day; Daniels lives in a cave for three days, rises on the third day, and then is executed.

Daniels' identification with Christ is further suggested in the confrontation of Daniels with the Black worshippers in a church when Daniels returns above ground on the third day. Their paradoxical encounter, during which the worshippers reject the savior that they pray for, is a sustained example of dramatic irony, based on the reader's awareness and the worshippers' lack of awareness that Daniels is a Christ.

Most critics of Richard Wright's novella *The Man Who Lived Underground* focuses on its existential content. These critics generally ground their usually brief analysis on the story's plot rather than close textual analysis, their comments about man's

essence and existence. Along with this few critics mention the story's naturalistic content. When they do mention it, these critics assure their audiences that Wright surpassed and moved beyond the naturalistic perspective to the more universal sophisticated and philosophical existential perspective. Despite its current low repute, naturalism makes a statement about man's essence and existence. Thus to focus on the story's existential content while ignoring or minimizing its naturalistic content is necessarily to risk distorting what Wright says in it about man and man's life. More importantly, such a focus disregards a major basis of the story's paradoxical structure because at every level, from the diction to the philosophical, Wright pairs contradictory and seemingly irreconcilable parts.

At the heart of the paradox is the story's simultaneous existence as a naturalistic fable and an existential fable. The result of this yoking of fables is a protagonist who is simultaneously portrayed as an animal, whose fate is controlled by forces independent of his will, and a god, whose will becomes, in effect, the First Cause of his fate. The paradoxical structure of the story demands first that the protagonist be considered in terms of his role in both the naturalistic and the existential fables, and finally that the apparent contradictions related to the fables and the protagonist's role in them is reconciled. This structural approach discloses a more accurate picture of the protagonist's essence and existence than has been developed by evaluating the protagonist in terms of one fable alone.

Richard Wright's *The Man Who Lived Underground* besides other themes deals with subaltern consciousness. The black subaltern consciousness is reflected through the character Fred Daniels. The novella is an account of white brutality over blacks. The

novella is about the issues that arise out of marginal experience. The identity crisis of Fred and his endeavor to assert it get collapsed due to White's Master psychology. Thus, instead of articulation of subaltern voices, it represses it.

The novella *The Man Who Lived Underground* has been analyzed through multiple perspectives. Carla Cappetti takes it as a black Orpheus, which tells the story of epic journey. Regarding this interpretation he notes: "A fugitive escapes to the underground sewer of an unnamed city; in the footsteps of Orpheus and Odysseus, Virgil and Dante, Ishmael and Queequeg, Huck and Jim, he begins to explore the underworld, the world of darkness, nature and death" (41). As the fugitive does not feel safe at the timeless place, he moves away in search of shelter. Hence, Cappetti vitalizes the position of Fred by comparing him with the historical and renowned figures such as Virgil and Odysseus. When Fred does not see any chance of being protected in the aboveground, he moves to live in the underworld which is gloomy and desolate. This critic seems to have mentioned the journey made by Fred to the underworld. He is not concerned to the circumstances that have indeed compelled him. The novella, Joseph A. Young analyses it in relation to phenomenology and Textual Power. He notes: "Here the protagonist, having exposed the transcendental; a condition of infinite possibilities in shaping his destiny and building a new value system" (82). Young seems much concerned to the outer factors that have surrounded Fred to reshape his destiny by dismantling the existing system and innovating a new that can ensure the fundamental rights of the marginalized like him. The world he has chosen is better than the one he has ever lived in the sense that the newer one is unbiased.

Likewise, Ronald Ridenour describes the situation of Fred through existential perspective that follows the footsteps of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground* he remarks:

However, Wright wrote *The Man Who Lived Underground* (1944), a magnificent short story, a precursor to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and decidedly influenced by *Notes from the Underground*. In this early work Wright expounds existential themes, the nature of reality, the meaninglessness of life, inevitable death, despair, dread, guilt, the nature of absurdity, and the meaning of social responsibility. There is an appreciable lack of the immediate of the ephemeral and of the well-worn white black conflicts. (54)

Wright's intention exposed in the above extract about the texts produced with the passage of time is obvious and the critic simply focuses on the existential aspects and themes carried on such as death, despair, dread, guilt, the nature of absurdity. *The Man Who Lived Underground* is about the meaningless efforts made by Fred in order to escape from the police brutality and tribulations. Whatever Fred does is the matter of significance when his plight is looked at from his vantage point of view.

"Wright provided a new definition for blackness" indicates Charles Davis analyzing African American Literature:

Wright made blackness a metaphysical state, a condition of alienation so profound that old values no longer applied [...] Blackness was no longer a set of stereotypes connected with the old plantation, nor was it the primary self with roots in Africa, the south or the West Indies, which the Harlem Renaissance had discovered, blackness was the disturbing, complicated ambiguous creation of contemporary civilization. (qtd. In

Tamara, 4)

Denissova Tamara opines that for Richard Wright the problem of self identification provided the major quest of his life. The reference of Harlem Renaissance to approve the nomenclature of blackness is much focused in the above mentioned criticism.

Furthermore, Tamara reveals the fact that blackness is the ambiguous term which confuses people to understand the genuine essence it conveys. For her, *The Man Who Lived Underground* is materialization of Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*. She remarks: "The underground man published earlier, materialized Dostoyevsky's metaphor for the way to exist or at least survival" (7). The existential crisis the blacks faced during the time of Wright is much significant in the sense that common survival people of color were deprived of.

Similarly another critic, Whitted Qiana J. has studied the novella giving Autobiographical touch. The impact of Wright's grandmother is reflected in this text. He points out: "Yet Wright's fictional account of Fred Daniels' otherworldly withdrawal in to establish a troubling kinship with his memories of Granny" (10). This critic seems to have touched the personal aspect of Wright and the expression of autobiographical tenets in the text. He further discloses the fact that his relationship with grandmother is much significant since it has left inerasable impression on him.

In this regard, it becomes clear that though the text has been analyzed through various perspectives, the subaltern approach has not been applied yet. There exists a strong need to carry out research on this novella from new perspective. Without proper study on this issue the meaning of this text will remain incomplete. Having taken this fact in consideration, the present researcher proposes to carry out research from subaltern approach.

II. The Subalterns and Their Consciousness

The issue of the subaltern and subaltern consciousness is very debatable. It has drawn significant critical attention from the beginning to the date. To call who the subaltern is itself has come to be a puzzling matter since the term is much broad that it covers up numerous groups of people who are down-trodden in respect of caste, gender, class, race, community, nation, continent and so. Generally, it is said that those who are on the margin and are cut off from the power-hold are subalterns. Such people are always on the margin due to their inaccessible presence in the authority. The entire society is dominated by those who entertain political and social power. They further abuse the human rights of others who are hierarchically below them. They never strive to feel the miserable moments of the subalterns. Sunit Singh from Delhi states in his book *Subalterns and Their Plight*: "Subaltern is a term that commonly refers to the perspective of persons from regions and groups outside of the dominating power structure" (23). Hence he defines the term subaltern and makes it clear that Subalterns are deprived of power and rather they are as puppets at the hands of those who constitute policies and implement them on the powerless forcibly. In the 1970s, the term began to be used as a reference to colonized people in the South Asian subcontinent, especially in India. It provided a new perspective on the history of a colonized place from the perspective of the colonized rather than from the perspective of the hegemonic power. Marxist historians had viewed colonial history from the perspective of the proletariat. It was unsatisfying as it was still a Eurocentric way to see the world. "Subaltern Studies" formally began in the early 1980s as an "intervention in South Asian historiography."

While it began as a model for the Subcontinent, it quickly developed into a strong postcolonial critique. Subaltern is now used as a term in history, anthropology, sociology, literature and even in media studies.

The term subaltern is used especially in postcolonial theory. The exact meaning of the term in current philosophical and critical usage is under dispute. Some thinkers use it in a general sense to refer to marginalized groups and the people who are in lower strata of life. It is used to indicate a person or group who are rendered without agency by their social status. Others, such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak use it in a more specific sense. She argues that subaltern is not just a classy word for oppressed, for *Other*, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie....In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern - a space of difference. Now who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus, they don't need the word 'subaltern'...They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They are within the hegemonic discourse wanting a piece of the pie and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern.

Ranjit Guha's published *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* in the 1970s concerns intellectual trends surrounding one nineteenth-century text, and his second book *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency* distills data from studies of peasant revolts in the colonial period to evoke a theory of subaltern resistance. His writings make it clear that colonialism appears to be a single, unified, discursive structure of power inside a vast ethnographic present; and state institutions, texts,

personnel, and discourse, including those of the nationalist movement, stand in stark opposition to subaltern India and its indigenous culture from the first day of British rule down to rupture of Subaltern Studies. As he speaks in the light of subalterns: “subaltern studies reinvent subalternity” (15). In 1982, the term subaltern’ seems to have had little meaning in South Asian studies. Its conceptual emptiness at the time is underlined when Ranjit Guha quotes the Concise Oxford Dictionary on the first page of *subaltern studies I* and then remains silent on Gramsci’s use of the term.

Subaltern Studies had launched itself with an act of rejection, denying South Asia’s previous history from below. The importance of this opening act is suggested by its republication in two anthologies of selected essays, in 1988 and 1997. Thus subalternity becomes a novelty, invented by Subaltern Studies, which gives old terms new meanings and marks a new beginning for historical studies. Domination, subordination, hegemony, resistance, revolt, and other old concepts can now be subalternised. David Ludden in his book *Reading Subaltern Studies* says by definition, “subalternity had been ignored by all scholars in the past; thus, all the old research became elitist” (16). A distinct idea that Michel Foucault forwards about subaltern, “politics and representation are two aspects of subalternity, which historians study in records of action and discourse. Two sides of one coin, they both evoke anti-hegemonic possibilities” (17). Hence the focus is on the sensitive aspect of the subalterns who resist against the dominant power agencies and also fight for the rights ever exploited at the hands of hegemonic classes. Guha states: “Dominance without hegemony

and its historiography,' which provides a comprehensive template for Subaltern Studies under the discursive power of colonialism. In the interim, he has indicated in his introduction to a collection of essays by Bernard S. Cohn how subaltern Studies would be wedded to anthropological history by an insistence on the primacy of opposition between 'indigenous' and 'colonial' knowledge. He attempts to make the sense of subalternity clear:

The meaning of subalternity in Subaltern Studies shifted as the framework of study increasingly stressed the clash of unequal cultures under colonialism and the dominance of colonial modernity over India's resistant, indigenous culture. Subalterns in India became fragments of a nation; their identity and consciousness reflected India's colonial subjugation. (19)

Subalternity focuses on the constant conflict ever extant among people of unequal classes and cultures. The marginalized cultures are ever exploited and indeed they are the subalterns. During colonialism in India subalterns become segments of the nation and their identity and consciousness display India's colonial subjugation. Methodologically, recuperating subaltern subjectivity entails the analytical and rhetorical liberation of Indian culture from its domination by the colonial archive and by modernity.

The originality of Subaltern Studies came to rewrite the nation outside the state-centered national discourse that replicates colonial power/knowledge in a world of globalization. This new kind of national history consists of dispersed moments and

fragments, which subaltern historians seek in the ethnographic present of colonialism.

Writing such history constitutes subversive cultural politics because it exposes forms of power/knowledge and that oppress subaltern peoples and also because it provides liberating alternatives against colonial modernity to secure a better future for subaltern peoples, learning to hear them, allowing them to speak, talking back to powers that marginalize them, documenting their past. Ranjit Das Gupta says:

The political autonomy of subalternity was hotly contested as a general claim and in specific circumstances, but reviewers indicate that there was plenty of room for Subaltern Studies in the Indian historical profession, where its authors already had a place. Their intervention was in tune with contemporary concerns and most critical comments were more requests for clarification than hostile attacks. (21)

Critics' arguments that subaltern *political activity* cannot be detached empirically or theoretically from elites—even when detached from nationalist institutions—seem to have hit home. Jim Masselos calls, “the subaltern...a creation, a reification of historians, which combines a polarized social category with the mentality of opposition” (23 Introduction). He distinguishes subaltern from real subaltern people. He rejects Subaltern Studies' theoretical identification of subordinate social status with mentalities of resistance and literary penchant for dramatizing class opposition, both of which he traces to the activist world of the late 1960s and early 1970s. What he dislikes in Subaltern Studies he also dislikes in Marx, Gramsci, and other Marxists. In reality he says, “subaltern acts of resistance link up with,

interact with, intersect with what is happening around them” (23). In his view, any theory of subaltern autonomy would tend to erase real subalterns from history. To Gupta, another important difference arises from the claims made by the subaltern historians regarding the existence of an autonomous domain of the subalterns with its own coherent manifestations of consciousness, protest and organization. He says:

The idea of subalternity is particularly relevant for historical circumstances in colonial India where the processes of class formation and class categories have never been adequately clarified and free from ambiguities. The term ‘subaltern’ is not just a substitute for peasantry or laboring poor or common people but a concept implying a dialectical relationship of super-ordination and subordination, a concept which is of importance in analyzing the interplay of this relationship. (109)

The subaltern can be understood in the context of India when she was colonized by European countries. The class categorized on the basis of Indian people’s approaches to the colonial rulers. The people remaining intact with them were economically powerful and the rest were under domination in almost all angles. Hence it gets pretty clear that subaltern does not only stand for the peasantry class or the poor. Rather it shows the relationship between the subordination and super-ordination. In fact there is a dialectical relationship between them which constantly goes on. On the whole the subaltern refers to the subordinate one that simply seems to assist the super-ordination.

David Ludden marks that Subaltern Studies commences its impressive career in England at the end of the 1970s, when conversations on subaltern themes among a small group of English and Indian historians lead to a proposal to launch a new journal in India. By 1990 the historian Burton Stein can cite the growing interest in Subaltern Studies as one sign that the 1980s are a decade of historical efflorescence' in South Asian studies. In the 1990s Subaltern Studies becomes a hot topic in academic circles on several continents; a weapon, magnet, target, lightning rod, hitching post, icon, good mine, and fortress for scholars ranging across disciplines from history to political science, anthropology, sociology, literary criticism, and cultural studies.

The definitions vary in accordance with the schools of thought and individual perspective. The term "subaltern" is an allusion to the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1881–1937). Literally, it refers to any person or group of inferior rank and station, whether because of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion. However, the word 'subaltern' does not have a specific meaning and can be defined in various perspectives. It is related to marginalized and economically downtrodden people. Subaltern has an extended meaning in the postcolonial world. As Gyastry Spivak in her essay *Can Subaltern Speak?* mentions that the subaltern comes from the margin. She argues that subalterns are traditionally doubly marginalized. According to her: "If in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subalterns as female are even more deeply in shadow" (Hans Berttens 212). This subject is oppressed and cannot speak or represent for himself. Thus the subaltern exists in discourse of the whites who represent him. In this way, the postcolonial subject exists

through the other's representation and discourse. In doing so, he cannot be expected to remain what he really is.

To Ranjit Guha, the subalterns, meaning the lower class peasants of society, have their voice spoken with the publication with due respect to the efforts made by the lower strata of the society. Guha declares a clear departure from the Indian national history and announces his project's intention "to rectify the elitist bias" because of the "failure of the bourgeois to speak for the nation" in a field "dominated by elitism-colonialist elitism of the bourgeois and national elitism" in his essay. The elitist historiography always dominates the history and postcolonial history is also written around similar suppression of the subaltern historiography.

Guha's essay "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India" in *Subaltern I* inaugurates the debate on such social structure and the position of the subalterns. He claims that there exists a difference between the Indian ordinary population and the elites. The new perspective forces a division within the Indian population. The existing division of colonizers and the colonized is not sufficient to describe the Indian population. At all levels of India-local, regional or national-there exists a selected class of elites that rules over a large population of India. And that population of peasants and workers do not have any space in the national historiography. There is a division between the workers and the ones who work for the others. This interpretation shifts the colonial dichotomy of colonizer and the colonized to a new binary of the "subaltern" and the "elites" or the oppressor and the oppressed. For the people of lowest end of the social hierarchy, the change of face of the oppressor class

hardly makes any difference. The elites remain the oppressor class for the oppressed class whether they be national or foreign. The culture of the either the national elites or the foreigners becomes the same with regard to the *dalit* and marginalized people. Kanchha Iiah says in his book *Why I Am Not Hindu*:

What difference did it make to us whether we had an English text book that talked about Milton's *Paradise Lost* or *Paradise Regained*, or Shakespeare's *Othello* or *Macbeth* or Wordsworth's poetry about nature in England, or Telegu text book which talked about Kalidas' *Meghasandeham*, Boommara Potanna's *Bhagavattam*, or Nannaya and Tikkana's *Mahabharatamm* except the fact the one text book is written with 26 letters and the other in 56 letters? We do not share the contents of either, we do not find our lives reflected in their narratives. We cannot locate our family setting in them.[...] How does it make any difference to us whether it is Greek and Latin that are written in Rome letters or Sanskrit that is written in Telegu? (15)

Kanchha reveals the fact that subalterns do not have a different perception of either the white colonizers or the upper class rulers at local, regional or national level of their own nation. Both of them represent the same authority for the subaltern population.

David Ludden asserts in *Reading Subaltern Studies* about the attitudes of readers towards the essence of subaltern. He opines: "Some readers accept and others reject the claim that Subaltern Studies represents the real substance of subalternity, even in India. The intellectual history of subalternity has emerged outside and in opposition to Subaltern Studies as much as inside it" (3). It becomes clear that there are distinct

perspectives of people towards the real essence of subalterns and at the same he mentions the emergence of the intellectual history of subaltern India covers a wide ranging scope of subalternity. He further says that Subaltern Studies occupies a subject position inside India, but is written for readers everywhere. Outside India, it is often the only brand of Indian history that readers know by name, but other brands are more powerful.

Readings of the Indian history contained in Subaltern Studies are inflected by globalization. Peter Gran argues: "In India Subaltern Studies is read against liberalism, Marxism, and religious fascism, whereas in the US, its principal novelty is its ability to represent India by being read into ideologies of difference and otherness" (Introduction 4). Though globalization circulates texts and ideas around the world, it nonetheless divides reading environments. In the US, readers are generally encouraged to think about cultures in essentialist terms, in the ethnographic present; to see colonialism and nationalism as cultural phenomena; to disdain Marxism; and to distance academic work from partisan politics, a separation that boosts academic credibility. But in South Asia, cultural change preoccupies scholars and activists, colonialism includes capitalist imperialism, Marxism is alive, and almost scholars embrace politics in one form or another as a professional responsibility of citizenship. Such contextual differences differentiate readings of subalternity.

Antonio Gramsci begins to weave ideas about subaltern identity into theories of class struggle. He himself is a communist activist whose prison notes are smuggled to Moscow for publication and translation, scholars outside or opposed to communist parties most ardently embrace his English books. Subaltern Studies deploy some of his ideas at a critical juncture in historical studies.

The colonial historiography has a direct concern with the national elitist rather than with the workers and peasants in the rural areas. It is colonizers' history that is formed in connection with a selected class of the nation. It not only neglects the subaltern historiography, but also declares it unworthy of any attention. The subaltern groups are never a point of address for the colonizers. Thus, the third historiography is developed as the subaltern historiography. Kanchha Iiaiah strongly puts his arguments "subaltern historiography is not mentioned in national states historiography because at that time India is colonized by Britain" (16). He finds the history to have been written in perspective of British Empire not from subaltern. Therefore, he insists that those national histories must be re-written in eyes of subaltern.

Depesh Chakrabarthy in his essay "Invitation to Dialogue" defines subaltern as "the composite culture of resistance and acceptance of domination and hierarchy" (17). This definition carries the consciousness of being subalterns in the socio-political hierarchy. Ajit K. Chaudhary also states, "the focus of Subaltern Studies is on the consciousness of subaltern classes, especially peasants" (18). This subaltern consciousness and resistance give rise to clash between unequal cultures under colonialism. The subalterns primarily clash with the nationalist elites but not with the colonizers. It is a clash within the national forces, the weaker subalterns and the stronger bourgeois elites. The resistance of the subalterns does not directly involve the colonial powers but the study of subaltern expands into "transnational study of colonialism" (19). Since subaltern exists within the colonial historiography of a nation. The study of subalternity has thus becomes a postcolonial critique of representation and politics in the colonial historiography of the nationalist elites.

While talking about the other factors concerned with subaltern position, Javeed Alam in “Peasantry, Politics, and Historiography: Critique of New Trend in Relation to Marxism” says:

Between the world of politics on the one hand and the economic processes of capitalist transformation on the other, there is a kind of mental space within which the social forms of existence and consciousness of the people are all their own-strong and enduring in their own right and therefore free of manipulations by the dominant groups. However much the ruling classes may control the themes and content of politics or the sources of history, the subalterns, that is, the people, will always manage to make themselves heard. In other words, this intermediate space represents the subjectivity; the active source of the political activity of the people and therefore the basis on which they act as subjects of history and not just its objects, being merely acted upon. (43)

There is the mental rift between the world of politics and the economic processes of capitalist transformation within which the social forms of existence and consciousness of the people are concerned. As the capitalist and proletariat are located in opposite side of class economy, the elitist and subaltern are also located in opposite side. The Subalterns are not only marginalized due to economy. There are so many factors due to which they are marginalized. They are not conscious of their own right and therefore not free of manipulations

by the dominant groups. The poor remain unheard. They raise voice so that their problems can be heard and resolved by the power-holders but the ruling class controls everything and even the consciousness of the subalterns.

As a matter of fact subalterns are those groups that have ever been marginalized and exploited due to race, gender, caste, class and religion. *The Man Who Lived Underground* by Richard Wright pictures the miserable conditions of the color people how they get exploited at the hands of the whites who hold the power and knowledge and often misuse their power to expose supremacy of their race. To see the relationship between these two races, the history of America seems significant.

The history of African-American people is the history of racial discrimination. It is full of oppression, apartheid, exploitation, brutality and dehumanization. Indeed, the history of racial discrimination began in 1619 (or the Afro-Americans were first introduced as slaves since 17th century) after a Dutch frigate sold twenty black captives to the Jamestown settlers. The Jamestown colonists were in need of workers or labors for planting crops, constructing roads and clearing fields. So, those twenty blacks were used as a good foundation of labor by those colonists. However, the native settlers in America did not have the practice of slavery. Rather, they had the practice of indentured service before the arrival of those twenty blacks from Africa to Jamestown. The poor whites were used or treated as indentured servants by the rich whites. But due to the arrival of these twenty blacks, the demand of poor whites decreased dramatically, and those blacks brought by the Dutch ship were instead used as indentured servants. With the passage of time, poor whites were replaced by those indentured blacks. Moreover, the white servants were given certain freedom after the end of definite time and conditions as the contracts

were written for them for certain time and period. But the black servants were neither given freedom and nor contracts as a result of which they were exploited too much and indentured throughout their lives. Even the children of those indentured blacks were indentured from birth to death. Consequently, the practice of indentured servants resulted in the slavery system in America.

During 1640 to 1680, the slavery system was established with the ill-treatment of those indentured blacks. There was high demand of blacks in the plantations. The demand of blacks was in places like Carolina, Virginia, Maryland and other places. Since the people of color were subalterns, their voices were often unheard by the ruling class or the whites who constituted policies for the blacks and made them obey by hook and crook. The constant conflict between these two races kept them segregated from each other as well. On the other hand, people started raising voice against slavery system or slave trade in 18th century, but those slaveholders and slave owners suppressed the voice as the economic base depended upon the production of cash crops such as cotton and tobacco produced by those slaves. The white owners of plantation did not want to change the practice of slavery as the large scale of construction could be produced on cheap labor by exploiting those black slaves. They were solely concerned with economic growth and profit in the plantations. Though the Americans revolted against the British colony under the leadership of Thomas Jefferson, George Washington and Patrick Henry during 1770s and 80's for the sake of equality, freedom, life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, the whites indeed did nothing so as to abolish racial discrimination or slavery system because the whites accepted the blacks as economic necessity. Against slavery system, some prominent black leaders such as Frederic Douglas, Paul Coffee and Benjamin Banker

revolted for the dignity and emancipation of all black slaves. Then, the confrontation between blacks and whites was intense as some educated blacks became aware of the slavery system and its evil outcome in America.

Due to the campaign organized by those outstanding black leaders for the abolition of inhumane slavery system. Then, in 1780, it was abolished in Pennsylvania. Many states then in North America were forced to eliminate slavery and freed slaves. Also runaway slaves started going to the Free states which created problems for whites. So, in order to stop the flow of the black slaves to Free states, the Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law. Also the slave owners announced reward for the return of runaway slaves by forming a group of professional bounty hunters so as to capture those runaway slaves. In 1850, the Congress issued and imposed another tougher and severe Fugitive Slave Law (punishment) to anyone those helping the black slaves to runaway from the indenture.

In 1861, an initiative to end the slavery system or racial prejudice started with the beginning of American Civil War which took place between the slave states of the South America and free Northern states. Another bold and historic process of freedom and emancipation for blacks took place in 1863. The then President Abraham Lincoln declared and freed the slaves through the Emancipation Proclamation. But the emancipation and freedom was confined only to Lincoln's *Emancipation Proclamation* (book). Again in 1865, the Congress amended the constitution and passed the 13th and 14th amendment so as to abolish slavery or racial discrimination. To the large extent, these amendments were beneficial but the blacks were not allowed their voting rights. The root of racial discrimination was not uprooted in the local laws, tradition and

customs. The blacks were obligated to go to separate churches, schools, hospitals, swimming pool, theatre, bus, hotels etc in practice. They were equally deprived of white color jobs, housing, opportunities etc.

Even the period of Great Economic Depression was more difficult for the blacks as only the whites were given the welfare support and job opportunities during the economic crisis of 1930's in America. Later, America industries started producing weapons along with the end of the economic crisis and outbreak of world war. This time, the blacks also were benefited to some extent for job opportunities. In 1940, when then president F.D. Roosevelt managed job facilities and training for the youths, again the black youth were deprived of the job opportunities, who were disappointed and fed up to that kind of discrimination. Also many whites such as President Roosevelt, his wife Eleanor Roosevelt and other prominent whites launched the campaign, for the black soldiers who joined the Army before 1940 were treated as servants rather than soldiers. Ultimately in 1941, Army Air Force was open to all qualified blacks too which was the outcome of the success of the campaign of youth blacks and many whites including Eleanor Roosevelt.

In 1963, the momentous and historic Civil Rights Movement took place under the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr. He had led a huge procession of Civil Rights supporters on August 28th from Washington Monument to Lincoln Memorial where, he in front of 200,000 people including blacks and whites, recalled the Emancipation Proclamation of Abraham Lincoln, and delivered the following historic and heart-touching speech:

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out of the true meaning of its creed [...] I have a dream that one day, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaves owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood [...] my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but the content of their characters [...] the womb of inter-position and nullification will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers. (76)

The central objective of the speech delivered by King and Civil Rights Movement was on the urge and need for restoring civil rights for the Afro-Americans. Slavery was abolished a century ago, but even after one hundred years, the blacks were denied equality, dignity and freedom in the country (America) which was against the spirit of the constitution of America—the land of Lincolnian democracy and Jeffersonian liberty. It is against the principle of morality and natural law. Subsequently, the Civil Right Acts 1964, 1965, and 1968 proved to be landmarks (milestones) for abolishing racial discrimination against blacks.

Richard Wright's *The Man Who Lived Underground* discloses the scene in which the hero seeks for his identity and involves his struggle for meaning in an absurd world which is covered with pretensions of order and meaning. It is further marked by chaos, disorder, and blind materialism. The hero achieves his identity, however, only when his experiences underground convince him both that it is futile to find meaning in an irrational world and that he must accept social responsibility despite the absurdity of

human existence. The hero is a man of color who is in short of his identity. Hence identity means not only the material one but something related with freedom and respectful position in the above-world. The people of his race have ever been on the margin and have undergone many challenges and complications for their dignified positions into their own nation. They have ever revolted against the super-ordination but most often their voices have been unheard and neglected. The most crucial fact is that subalternity covers a wide ranging canvas of study of human beings and their cultural boundaries they are strictly tied to. The irrational world implies the world where there is no justice and the respect for humanity in totality. The world in which the protagonist lives is much biased and unfair and this is why people of color like him suffer at the hands of the ruling class especially the white people. Thus racism proves as source of exploitation, ill-treatment, brutality and injustices. The subalterns represented by the blacks and the ruling class implied by the whites keep a distance between them since the ruling class does not feel comfortable to be intact with the people of color. Rather they enjoy in case they ill-treat the subalterns. Hence the subaltern implies the people of so-called inferior race black.

The people of the marginalized communities undergo diverse sorts of social challenges and difficulties. What they experience in the course of their life, get immortalized into the forms of literary works. Since literature reflects the ongoing conflicts of the society, the marginalized voice simultaneously gets embodied in the work of art as well. There is a sort of politics behind the creation of hierarchy on the bases of distinct social practices and biological variations such as gender, class, sex and race. The females, feminine, poor and black are in most of the cases speak the subaltern experience.

Thus their repressed voice sometimes gets expressed in literary forms provided that the writers have undergone similar situation or s/he is an imaginative and philanthropist one who envisions human agony and pain much intimately and keenly. In the text, *The Man Who Lived Underground* does embody the similar subject wherein the writer obviously presents the marginalized people especially the black in America who represent the subalterns and due to their skin color they are badly treated by the opposite race whites. The white never consider them as if they are equal to them in any domain of human life. This is the reason the blacks hence in the text, Fred implicitly revolts against the police brutality and the entire white dominance. Richard Wright seems to have observed the circumstance of the black much closely and eventually expressed in the form of the novella. The text, *The Man Who Lived Underground* carries the similar subject that reveals the circumstance of the subalterns who are represented by Fred, a black poor man who has been made to stay hidden in the underground world to keep him alive and safe from the ill-treatment and other discriminatory behaviors by the whites in the world aboveground. Since the literary work of art aims at exposing the social conflicts ever extant between the subalterns and the oppressors, the very text does explicitly embody the similar aspect of the social reality. After all, it becomes crystal clear that the relationship between literature and subalternity is obviously much deeper and dense.

I. Textual Analysis

Since subaltern denotes the people that undergo social, economic, political and cultural challenges due to caste, ethnicity, religion, race, community, class, and gender, the focal character, Fred Daniels in *The Man Who Lived Underground* embodies the traits of being subaltern. *The Man Who Lived Underground* follows the actions and thoughts of its black protagonist, Fred Daniels, as he escapes from the police who have intimidated him into signing a false confession of murder, and seeks refuge in a sewer beneath an unnamed metropolis swarming with activity and unpleasantness. From his underground sanctuary, Daniels clandestinely looks in upon scenes depicting those shared fantasies and unacknowledged brutal realities that go hand in hand in the aboveground society—a congregation of black singing hymns of worship to a remote god; an undertaker's establishment, giving a factitious appearance of life to a corpse; a movie house audience, applauding “animated shadows of them.

As the hypothesis of the research is concerned, the subaltern consciousness is prevented from getting enacted in the behavioral manner in the text. The protagonist, Fred Daniels represents the entire black race which is hooked in much strong thread of segregation that tends to invite unfair treatment by whites towards the marginalized especially the people of color. The history of color discrimination in America is long and ever seems to reflect the burning problems extant among people of distinct races and genders. The conflicts prevailing in America are not only based on race but other factors such as gender, class, Diaspora, religion and so on as well. Whatever the factor might be,

becomes the issue of subalternity. The subaltern underlies in the domain of discrimination regardless the sorts of factors.

Subalterns are those people in America who are blacks, women and the poor. The people from the lower strata in the time of Richard Wright suffered less than the blacks. Then the people of color were socially and politically boycotted and their position in the society was inferior. The most significant and indispensable thing for such people was to get released from the social, political and economic deprivation. The most remarkable and noteworthy issue of conflict ever extant in America is race. The conflicting rift between these two races black and white is genuine and their fight regardless to its type has ever been between them. The preoccupied mentality getting carried on by whites towards the blacks is much biased and critical that can hardly be erased. No doubt endless efforts have ever been made to delete this perennial concept from both of the races. However, the consequences are little and nominal due to the harsh and presupposed mindset. The protagonist, Fred Daniels represents the entire black race and his representation carries on the suppressed voices and unheard cries of those who have been tossing down in the pool of racial brutality and tribulations in America. In many cases people of color like Fred fall victims at the hands of police brutality and ill-treatment in such a way that they cannot express their wants and desires to prove their innocence regarding any kind of accusations made over them by the police that promote the position of whites and obstruct the voice of the black. Since the theory applied to the text, *The Man Who Lived Underground* is Subaltern; it reflects the situation in which the marginalized especially in terms of race suffer severely in the systematic organization of

the white egotism and superiority. The text evokes the similar situation when Fred is bound to seek a safe place to hide him:

Either he had to find a place to hide, or he had to surrender. A police car swished by through the rain, its siren rising sharply. They're looking for me all over ...]He crept to the door and squinted through the fogged plate glass. He stiffened as the siren rose and died in the distance. Yes, he had to hide, but where? (1)

Most often the voice of subalterns is unheard. They keep on tossing down in the pool of ill-treatment and inhuman behavior. The people of color in America who depict the subalterns and their voice do face the similar circumstance that is highlighted in the text. The most miserable fate the black people bears in America is because of being colored and their race is black in the nation where whites dominate almost aspects of American civilization. Even the history states that the whites have ever obstructed the mind and heart of the black and have ever exploited them in diverse ways. Hence Fred is compelled to search a place to conceal him so that he can defend him from the police brutality and unproven accusation made over him. He creeps to the door and looks sideways through the fogged plate glass. The very action discloses the fact that he is captivated and surrounded by the swarming police and at any moment he may fall at their hands. It is questionable why he seeks an opportunity to get free this brutal group. Perhaps he thinks they are going to put him in the prison house without any trial from his side. After all, this is the genuine reason he has made efforts to keep him away from them. The above extract makes it clear that he though searches a place, finds much complicated to hide him since no place is untouched by the whites.

Despite the fact that American constitution seems to have ever produced loud sound in the favor of humanity and for the protection and strengthening of democratic norms and values, practically it is found to have been a great failure. The plenty of evidence is in the very nation as well where people do not seem to have been behaved in terms of human beings but in terms of race, caste, gender and class. The most protected and privileged people in America are the white Christian well-to-do males and the rest have ever been oppressed in the systematic ways. The outside the nation, America is much popular and democratic but the innermost part of the nation so severely infected that people of color, poor people, non-Christian and women in most of the cases have been victimized in at least few ways. Fred as a black man suffers so and badly tortured by the police department which is predominantly biased to the people of color. The text shows the tormenting plight of Fred how he is behaved by the police: “He dropped and was washed violently into an ocean of warm, leaping water. His head was battered against a wall and he wondered if this were death” (2). The most inhuman mannerism the white police show by beating Fred. Though they are not sure who the particular criminal is, they inhumanly punish him. He is forced to live each moment of his life in the pool of blood and agony. The police batter his head against the wall in such a way that he will probably pass away. This scene of the most inhuman facet is the evidence for declaration of the fact the whites are cool-blooded and they do not sense whether the blacks are also human beings as them.

The white people think that they are superior to the black in the sense that their skin is white and they have been born to rule the non-whites. This preoccupied mentality of the white people forces them to commit many inhuman mistakes in much severe ways. In

fact this is the racial ego they have and always feel proud of being white. Even the so-called highly intellectual and educated white people who dominate the administrative departments in America have the similar mindset which ultimately leads them to expose their cruelest aspect. The text brings about the similar situation when the white people who carry on the responsibility of administration and protection of the nation, ill-treat with the people of color and vitalizes their race by insulting the black: “The white men crouched out of sight, behind their cars. Make up yo mind, nigger! C mon out er burn, yuh black bastard! Yuh think yuhre white now, nigger?” (3). The word nigger is a vulgar term used to call the people of color provided that the white people feel that they are superior to them and they want to detach the black people from them. Calling someone with an insulting term is a sort of slap on the face of humanity. The white people think that the people of color want to replace their race with the white one. As a matter of fact there is nothing as such in the language but the sense people associate with is much problematic and questionable. The police call Fred a nigger and threaten him that they will burn him as well. This is antagonism between these races extant throughout the American history.

Fred attempts to tell them something but he is not permitted. Though he is conscious of his existence and about the fact that he is guiltless, he is prevented from making any kind of appeal to them. His plight is worsened in such a way that he remains unheard. The text approves this fact:

After a long time he grew numb and dropped to the dirt. Pain throbbled in his legs and a deeper pain, induced by the sight of those black people groveling and begging for something they could never get, churned in

him. A vague conviction made him feel that those people should stand unrepentant and yield no quarter in singing and praying, yet he had run away from the police, had pleaded with them to believe in his innocence.

He shook his head, bewildered. (6)

He is beaten so much that he becomes numb and loses his mental capability. In one sense he becomes unconscious and later on restores energy to feel somewhat normal and then he thinks that he has been severely tortured and punished in much inhuman way. His plight is after all the reflection of the miserable condition of the people of color in America. Despite his innocence, he is not allowed to prove him that so. Though he makes endless efforts to justify that he is all in all guiltless, the police do not believe him. Rather they turn their ear deaf to his unpleasant and alarming voice. He is confused in such a way that he does not see any chance of escape from the strong and cruel grip of police brutality. In other words his consciousness is obstructed as well. Besides, there is no any agency to respect his appeals.

Fred's situation is much fragile and he does not feel safe in any way. To protect him from the police he seeks for a place to shelter in and protect his life. The more he tries to manage to hide him, the further problems appear to him and he gets hooked to probability of being caught up by the police. His plight is made clear through the textual evidence: "Ought he to go up into the streets and take his chances on hiding somewhere else? But they would surely catch him. The mere thought of dodging and running again from the police made him tense" (6). He is so much trouble that he feels unsafe everywhere. He keeps on moving here and there in search of a safer place. Consequently he gets exhausted and feels upset and disappointed. This very puzzling situation of Fred

reveals the issues of racial discrimination and segregated life of the people of color in America in the contemporary time. His case is not the personal affair. Rather it is the public concern simply because people of color undergo similar situation and complications which surround them in such a way that they cannot come out.

Subaltern is the composite culture of resistance and acceptance of domination and hierarchy. The domination and hierarchical relationships among the blacks and whites are a grave and critical matter. There are both acceptance and resistance. Hence Fred simply accepts the domination and ill-treatment. Furthermore, he bears the false accusations imposed upon him by the police simply because he cannot explicitly discard and revolt against this kind of severe inhuman treatment. The reasons are many in number. The first and foremost is that people of color are unprivileged and powerless in comparison to the whites in the contemporary time. Similar the next probable reason is that Fred knows better that no authorities will take notice of his complaints against such false accusations simply because almost all administrative and legal departments are overflowed by the whites who are much biased and usually maintain dual standard while passing on judgments. Hence he cannot go against the injustice made on his part is the mark of extreme suppression and domination by the whites that even the consciousness of people of color is controlled and overruled.

Fred is made a submissive person who neither can revolt explicitly nor can accept the accusation. This puzzling situation reveals the fact that he is hooked to the chain of biased and unfair discriminations. The very miserable situation can be perceived in the extract below: “Water blossomed about the tiny legs, the tiny arms, the tiny head, and rushed onward. The eyes were closed, as though in sleep; the fists were clenched, as

though in protest; and the mouth gaped black in a soundless cry” (7). Despite the fact that he is a human being like whites, he is behaved as if he is an animal which cannot feel and react. As he is powerless and helpless, he cannot show his agony and feelings. His bodily gestures speak a lot about his existential consciousness and revolting spirit that he has repressed due to powerlessness and helplessness. After all, he is a rebellion who hesitates to shatter the desolate walled pool of racial discriminations. Furthermore Wright craves a picture of his tormenting condition in the cave in much transparent way:

Back in the cave, he sat and leaned his back against a dirt wall. His body was trembling slightly. Finally his senses quieted and he slept. When he awakened he felt stiff and cold. He had to leave this foul place, but leaving meant facing those policemen who had wrongly accused him. No, he could not go back aboveground. He remembered the beating they had given him and how he had signed his name to a confession, a confession which had not even read. He had been too tired when they had shouted at him, demanding that he sign his name; he had signed it to end his pain. (7)

Fred’s voices are unheard and there is no one to take notice of his situation that is full of miseries and difficulties. He undergoes many memories that were attained in the course of getting battered and tortured by the police. He remembers and recalls those moments so that he can have a feeling of the past. It is said while a person is breathing in the smoky air; s/he suffocates and bows down before the circumstance. He is vulnerable and his days are unfavorable. He is the victim of the time which is much cruel and inauspicious to him. He repents why he had signed the paper of confession despite his innocence. After all, the responsible factors are the power relationships ever extant biased

and unbalanced. The racial tussle remained between the white and the black uncovers the social and political rift as well.

As a matter of fact in the painful days the sufferers do not get helped in any ways. The similar quandary is of Fred when he is tortured and made alienated from the world of morals and laws. He suffers much and with some sort of hope he looks out so that his sadness could be shared and his painful condition could be appeased. The writer says:

He turned away, parted the black curtain, and looked out. He saw no one.

He started down the white stone steps and when he reached the bottom he

saw a man in trim blue uniform coming toward him. So used had he

become to being underground that he thought that he could walk past the

man, as though he were a ghost. But the man stopped. And he stopped. (9)

The expectation of Fred is shattered when he goes in touch of the man coming towards him. The man stops and does not move here and there as if he is a ghost which is lurking. It becomes certain that he is cooperated by the supernatural power but the people of the same world do not take notice of his painful moments of life. The old man is used to seeing in the darkness. Hence it becomes clear that the black people in America have ever been in darkness and consequently they are habituated of adjusting them in sort of climate. Hereby darkness may symbolize the innocence and ignorance. The most probably people of color in America have lived the life of others. Their lives have always been segregated from the whites who have the sense of pure blood and superior race. Time and again, the people of color get conscious of their miserable and marginalized situation but their aspirations and voices have ever been oppressed and repressed due to the biased and unfair political and social system of America which is constitutionally the

greatest democratic and liberal nation. How the old man feels and what he does inside the dark world is noteworthy here to reflect on his condition since he represents the people of color as well: "Oh, yes [...] He understood. The old man had worked here for so long that he had no need for light; he had learned a way of seeing in his dark world, like those sightless worms that inch along underground by a sense of touch" (10). He is compared here with sightless worms in the sense that he is capable enough of seeing in the darkness. It does not mean that his eyesight is so sharp. Rather he is accustomed to the dark world in such a way that he can easily move here and there and predict things through touching them. It further clarifies that people of color are nice at living in the dark world but do not feel comfortable to remain in the above ground.

Racial identity does not directly determine what happens to Fred Daniels. Rather, environment-especially, economic and social forces-seems to be a more important determinant of Daniels's fortunes. Before his arrest Daniels worked at the home of Mrs. Wooten, presumably as a servant. Hence, Daniels is at the lower end of the economic and social scale like the night watchman who is falsely accused and forced to suicide. Having falsely accused and then tortured Daniels, one of the same policemen shoots and kills him. In the reference, the evidence from the text is required: "The watchman was guilty; although he was not guilty of the crime of which he had been accused, he was guilty, had always been guilty. The only thing that worried him was that the man who had been really stealing was not being accused" (26). Hence the absolute injustice on the part of the watchman is done by the policemen simply because they accuse him of the crime he has never committed. On the basis of his previous measures, they pronounce him as a guilty person for the crime recently taken place. In fact this crime has been committed by

somebody else. The policemen are indifferent to the real criminal. Rather they force the watchman to confess this crime. After all, the policemen instead of doing justice to the watchman, they simply intimidate the innocent person and the reason for this is pretty clear that this watchman belongs to the lower strata of economic class as well as he is from the people of color. On both grounds he is a subaltern and this is why his consciousness is manipulated and reshaped in such a way that he gets ready to bow down before the tyrannical and cruel system of the whites.

No doubt there is a genuine reason that Fred Daniels stays in the underground. Wright throws a glimpse on this: “Now he had a reason for staying here in the underground. He waited for a long time, but the white hand did not return. Goodamm! Had he been more alert, he could have counted the twirls and he would have had the combination” (12). The relationship between the white and the black hereby seems much antagonistic and both races of people do not stay in the mutual mannerism. They do not feel nice in the presence of each other. Fred as a typical character stays in the underground simply because this world is not dominated and controlled by the white. The rules and regulations of the white people are dominant in the aboveground. The entire system in the aboveground is biased and prejudiced since it favors the whites and upgrades their lifestyle. In contrary to this it turns antagonistic to the blacks.

Wright further reveals the fact about Fred and his activities: “The door slammed and the light went off; once more he stood in shadow. His tension ebbed. From behind the frosted glass he heard the man’s voice: “Forty-eight cents a pound, ma’am. He shuddered, feeling that there was something he had to do” (13). Fred’s case inside the underground is like of a fish in the drying river. The fish cannot stay much comfortably

in the river gradually drying. Similarly Fred is exhausted and fed with the long stay in the cave as well. He thinks of doing something. When the door is slammed, he feels that someone is coming to him. And for the time being he feels tension-free and suddenly becomes alert as well so that he can have any outlet from the ever-lasting problem. After all, Fred is a human being who thinks and feels. Despite the fact that he is away from his relatives and other concerned people, he keeps on considering about all: "Sprawling before him in his mind was his wife, Mrs., Wooten for whom he worked, the three policemen who had picked him up ... He possessed them now more completely than he had ever possessed them when he had lived underground" (14). The most significant people in his life are his wife, Mrs. Wooten and the policemen. He is in love with his wife; he is grateful to Mrs. Wooten; he is hostile to the policemen because he is emotionally attached to his wife, he has been treated humanly by Mrs. Wooten and he is has been falsely accused of crime by the policemen. As a matter of fact he is all right in having such diverse attitudes and feelings towards these people of distinct temperament and social behavior.

Fred Daniels is much tortured with the sight of the white people. He does not feel good any more when he sees the whites. The reason for this may be a preoccupied concept that he lingers with:

Emotionally he hovered between the world aboveground and the world underground. He longed to go out, but sober judgment urged him to remain here. Then impulsively he pried the lock loose with one swift twist of the crowbar; the door swung outward. Through the twilight he saw a white man and a white woman coming toward him. He held himself tense,

waiting for them to pass; but they came directly to the door and confronted him. (14)

There is a gap between the world underground and the world aboveground. In fact nobody prefers the world underground to the world aboveground simply because the life in the underground is much complicated and gloomy wherever, one feels puzzled and does not get any comfort. The life inside the world underground is like custody and those who live there are living the life of prisoners. This is why Fred is tempted to the world aboveground. He wants to escape the prison like world since he is tormented and feels much difficult to pass moments of his life. But when he sees a white man and a white woman passing by, he gets upset and wants them to pass away so soon. A sort phobia is there imprinted onto his mind that is almost inerasable. He does not lose that fear and the sense of discrimination. Hence it becomes clear he does prefer to stay in the segregated state from the white people.

It is not only the police department that intimidates the people of color but also the other sectors such as media, court do violate the fundamental citizenry rights as well. In fact the entire system of American government in the contemporary time stands against the colored people. The similar experience Fred has got: "He saw a headline: HUNT NEGRO FOR MURDER" (15). This slogan is very much inhuman in essence since the hasty generalization is made that all Negroes are guilty and they must be hunted. In fact this is a slap of the face of humanity. Furthermore it is the insult of democracy as well as of the preserver of human rights. America as ever known the greatest nation to fight for human rights fails to enrich every citizen of her own country with the human rights. The above mentioned slogan provokes the hierarchical relations

ever extant between the blacks and the whites. Further it entails the fact how the whites have ever exploited the innocent blacks by accusing them of false crimes.

It is the scientifically proven fact that to turn a thief is better than to die in poverty. The intention is to be understood. Stealing is a great sin committed by the poor in the eyes of those who do not have any economic crisis. Those who belong to the well-to-do families, take stealing as an immoral act. But who knows what the poor and underprivileged think and why they commit such immoral acts. People normally look at the effect but hardly seek for causes. The blacks in America turn thieves simply because they have ever been deprived of the economic sources existing in the country. But the power-holders rarely take notice of this genuine fact. Rather they simply punish the blacks blindly and unwittingly. Hence the extract from the text can make it pretty clear:

The hands trembled; again the right hand slipped a packet of bills up the left sleeve. He's stealing, he said to himself. He grew indignant, as if the money belonged to him. Though he had planned to steal the money, he despised and pitied the man. He felt that his stealing the money and the man's stealing were two entirely different things. He wanted to steal the money merely for the sensation involved in getting it, and he had no intention whatever of spending a penny of it; but he knew that the man who was now stealing it was going to spend it, perhaps for pleasure. The huge steel door closed with a soft click. (17)

Fred Daniels realizes that his stealing differs from the man's since his intention has been merely to fulfill the sensation but the man's stealing has been to spend money for the pleasure. Though he makes his innocence and intention crystal clear, the policemen do

not care for. Rather they blindly torture him. Hence his consciousness is obstructed. As a matter of fact he evokes the feelings and views of the subalterns. His consciousness is foiled further signifies that the consciousness of the entire race which carries on the voice and agonies of the subalterns. Fred is a man who is without the sense of possessiveness. He does not want to have money in advance. Rather he prefers the common survival and this simply keeps him satisfied. In this regard Wright in *The Man Who Underground Lived* reveals:

There was in him no sense of possessiveness; he was intrigued with the form and color of the money, with the manifold reactions which he knew that men aboveground held toward it. The sack was one-third full when it occurred to him to examine the denominations of the bills into the sack.

(18)

Fred knows better about the reactions of the people who constitute policies and implement them in the aboveground. He is not tempted to money. Money to him is simply a means of fulfilling basic needs for the time being. This aboveground is the world where people rule the ruled. Daniels experiences a variety of emotions and attitudes—a sense of isolation, angst, guilt, freedom, creation and divinity—that are often related to his existence. The pattern of experience is consistent with the archetypal pattern of the existential fable. The policemen chase Fred Daniels into the underground, ignoring his declaration of innocence and proclaiming him guilty. His underground experience causes Daniels to realize the truth—that he is, in fact, guilty. Because it is the policemen who are responsible for Daniels' going underground and thereby learning the truth, they

are malevolent and benevolent. Fred Daniels' dealing and handling with money is presented below:

He broke into a musing laugh, feeling that he was reading of the doings of people who lived on some far off-planet. He turned the bill over and saw on the other side of it a delicately beautiful building gleaming with paint and set amidst green grass. He had no desire whatever to count the money; it was what it stood for- the various currents of life swirling aboveground- that captivated him. Next he opened the rolls of coins and let them slide from their paper wrappings to the ground; the bright, new gleaming pennies and nickels and dimes piled high at his feet, a glowing mound of shimmering copper and silver. He sifted them through his fingers, listening to their tinkle as they struck the conical heap. (21)

Fred is living the captive life in the underground world. He perceives the people in the aboveground with keen eyes. He finds them oppressive and exploitative. He uncovers the roll of pennies and then handles them onto his fingers. He is in one sense deriving pleasure from the tinkling sound of money. This sound is produced when these currencies slide down. It makes clear that Fred has ever been deprived of economy and this is why the first time he is taking pleasure and delight out of perceiving the money. Hence the world aboveground is a systematic organization that imposes its rules and regulations on the innocent and creates an environment for the oppressor and the oppressed, the whites and the blacks and the rich and the poor. A sort of rift is made between these two strata of people in terms of race and class which ultimately invites a forced obligation for the innocent and the poor like Fred who gets compelled to find out a way out for the living.

How Fred takes the world aboveground and the world he is hiding him is much prominent to bring into light:

He slapped his thighs and guffawed. He had triumphed over the world aboveground! He was free! If only people could see this! He wanted to run from this cave and yell his discovery to the world. ... Yes, this room would be his hide-out; between him and the world that had branded him gully would stand this mocking symbol. He had not stolen the money; he had simply picked it up, just as a man would pick up fire-wood in a forest. And that was how the world aboveground now seemed to him, a wild forest filled with death. (22)

The cave Fred has ever hidden in for the sake of his survival mocks at the world aboveground that is to be discovered as he perceives. Furthermore he clarifies that he has not stolen the money. Rather he has picked it up as people fire-wood in a forest. This metaphoric expression is tilted towards proving him innocent as he has been accused of committing a crime by stealing money. Due to this blind accusation he is much obsessed with the world aboveground and this is why he takes this world as a wild forest filled with death in the sense that it is corrupt and unjust that never sees what is right and what is wrong.

As his desires for freedom and dignified citizenry life have ever been repressed, he is too reactive to the world aboveground and seeks for satisfaction and wants to remain pleased with the current plight in the cave. Though there are many drawbacks on the part of the world underground, he prefers this to the world aboveground. Thus Wright highlights this state of Fred:

He imagined that he was a rich man who lived aboveground in the obscene sunshine and he was strolling through a park of a summer morning, smiling, nodding to his neighbors, sticking an after-breakfast cigar. Many times he crossed the floor of the cave, avoiding the diamonds with his feet, yet subtly gauging his footsteps so that his shoes, wet with sewer slime, would strike the diamonds at some undermined moment...

He felt he had a glorious victory locked in his heart. (23)

He imagines that he is a rich man who lives aboveground in the obscene sunshine makes it crystal clear that he is not in that world. He simply wishes for. In fact he wants to spend a normal life as other fellow beings do whom he calls his neighbors. He is indeed deprived of the citizenry rights in his own country simply because he is a man of color. He is on the margin and his world is segregated from the world of whites. His actions of diverse notion are presented in order to show how he is living in the cave. Actions such as measuring his footsteps and striking the diamonds create mental impressions for readers to perceive his world wherever he feels that he has gained victory that is locked to the heart. After all he is psychologically and ethically victorious.

Whatever has been made in the world aboveground are man-made. The policies and rules in aboveground are biased and unfair because these rules are in the favor of the power-holders. In almost all sectors of American administration whites are dominant and they rule. Hence Fred is much critical to the entire American system that has been constituted with the hierarchal notion wherein the whites are superior and the rest are inferior. He says: "Maybe anything's right, he numbed. Yes, if the world as men had made it was right, then anything else was right, any act a man took to satisfy himself,

murder, theft, torture” (23). He says everything is just and fair if something is done for the sake of human beings since all the rules and regulations are man-made. He takes even theft, murder, and torture positively provided that they are committed with the commendable intention. He considers that his acts have been all right since they are purposeful.

There are diverse problems in Fred’s life. He is in dilemma and cannot decide what to do and what not to do. To pass time in the cave is much boring but he cannot do anything against it. Rather he remains indecisive regarding this matter. Furthermore, he does many trifle things to kill time in the cave. But the reason he is in the cave is political and social. His race is an outcaste in America and people of his color are not deprived of their fundamental rights and these people are helpless and cannot go explicitly against the white people’s oppression and exploitation. His miserable situation can better be perceived in the following lines:

He knew now that he could not stay here and he could not go out. He lit a cigarette with shaking fingers; the match flame revealed the green-papered walls with militant distinctness; the purple on the gun barrel glinted like a threat; the meat cleaver brooded with its eloquent splotches of blood; the mound of silver and copper smoldered angrily; the diamonds winked at him from the floor; and the gold watches ticked and trembled, crowning time the king of consciousness, defining the limits of living. (24)

There are many visual images that directly leave a sort of impression on us and reveal a lot about his life inside the cave. He could not stay here and at the same time he could not go out. This ambivalent situation of Fred is much marvelous in the sense that he is

hanged between two walls and is helpless to do anything. The purple on the gun barrel is compared with threat and the meat cleaver brooded with its eloquent splotches of blood that may signify revolution by the people of color against the whites and their domination in all aspects of the nation. *Crowning time the king of consciousness* indirectly tells us about Fred's consciousness about his existence that constantly undergoes challenges and complications. Fred is desperately waiting for a time when he gets released from this pool of miseries and problems. He does not like to stay in the cave any more. However, he is there. When his physical actions take a break, he starts contemplating over the issue of protection. Hence he is not secure and needs some sort of safety from the climate as well as from the white race that has ever thrown his life into the well of troubles from the world aboveground. Wright says in this regard:

He jumped awake in the dark; he had not moved. He sighed, closed his eyes, and slept again; the time his imagination designed a scheme of protection for him. His dreaming made his feel that he was standing in a room watching over his own nude body lying stiff and cold upon a white table. (24)

His body is naked and consequently turns stiff. It signifies something more than simply the general understanding about his life. It triggers the fact that he is economically poor, socially boycotted and psychologically repressed. His desire for good living is as a dream and he ever thinks of fulfilling it in any way. But his life has been made so crippled that he cannot move ahead to proceed for bettering his condition. To emphasize on the similar theme, Wright's remark on his plight can be cited here:

He hovered between sleeping and waking, unprotected, a prey of wild fears. He could neither see nor hear. One part of him was asleep; his blood coursed slowly and his flesh was numb. On the other hand he was roused to a strange, high pitch of tension. He lifted his fingers to his face, as though about to weep. (24)

He is strolling between two melons one is sleeping and the next is waking. He is in between situation which in other words can be called as a dilemma. This dilemma has become the part of his life in the cave. He is an unprotected prey of wild fears and this is why he cannot perceive things around him. Hence it becomes clear that his perceptual organs do not work as well that shows his feeble circumstance. He is about to burst in tears which is the consequence of the extreme exploitation and flaw of social norms and values.

He is now in possession of the feeling that has gripped him when he has first come into the underground. It comes to him in a series of questions: Why this sense of guilt is so seemingly innate, so easy to come by, to think, to feel, so verily physical. He is made a puppet by the police department as well in the sense that he is forced to accept their claim which he has not committed. The conversation between the policemen and Fred highlights how he is insulted and his voice is unheard:

Come on, boy! Tell us what you did with the radio!

Mister, I didn't steal the radio! I swear!

He heard a dull thumping sound and he imagined a boy being struck violently.

Please mister!

Did you take it to a pawn shop?

No, sir! I didn't steal the radio! I got a radio at home," the boy's voice pleaded hysterically. O to my home and look! (25-6)

Though Fred is an adult man, he is called a boy by the policeman. In fact, this is a common practice in the United States to call the black males as boys. The white overrule the blacks not because of the fact that they are naturally superior and more powerful and knowledgeable but because they are in the view that they have been born sacred and their skin is far better than the blacks'. Most often the whites impose their lifestyle and other cultural tenets over the blacks. In one sense this is a kind of domination. Even linguistically the blacks are dominated a lot by the whites. The white people think that all the people of color are not mature despite their age. There is no mental growth and they are always childish and never have the sense of maturity. Due to this kind of racial discrimination and underestimation even Fred is called a boy and with a great respect he keeps on addressing him by the word mister. This hierarchy between blacks and whites at the human social behavior genuinely invites a sort of endless tussle between the ruled and the rulers. One party is pushed to the centre and the other is towards to the pool of miseries and exploitation. The people on the margin are ill-treated and their voices are unheard; their appeals are neglected; their rights are snatched away; their sleep is disturbed; their dreams are shattered; and their life is worsened. The very circumstance Fred is going through where his consciousness is controlled by the white administration and he is made to breathe in the contaminated air with dust and smoke.

IV. Conclusion

The Man Who Lived Underground craves a story of a Blackman named Fred Daniels, a servant in the house of a white woman Mrs. Wooten, who is forced to veil in the sewers of a city as he is falsely accused of murdering a white woman Mrs. Peabody, his employer's neighbor. In fact, Mrs. Peabody is killed by an Italian citizen. One day, as Daniels is on his way home on Friday evening with his wages in his pocket, suddenly he is arrested, accused of the murder and brought to the police station, beaten and tortured. Someway he manages to flee.

Thematically the novella has been divided into two parts: the first half part is about the protagonist's stay into underground and the second part is about his anti-racist discontent and indomitable protest against the white policemen. The first part of the novella opens in an unidentified modern city sewer presented through the sense of the protagonist. It is rainy, windy, becoming dark and the protagonist is crouching in a dark corner in the vestibule, metaphorically a hell. Spotting a manhole cover lifted of sewer water beneath, he opts for the underground bowels of the city as his haven of escape. While being into the sewer or the subterranean world, he is severely caught in the whirlwind of dilemma because neither he can stay there for a long time, nor can he come out of it, for there is a fear of being caught by police and put to death. The blacks suffer a lot in the hands of whites not because they are physically inferior to the whites but because the whites hold all the power positions. They exploit the blacks in terribly brutal manner and do not have any sort of good feelings towards them. They think that the blacks are far inferior to them and they have been born merely to serve the white. This

contaminated mentality of the whites makes the blacks' circumstance unbearable and tormenting. They are hegemonic politically and culturally to the whites. The fear that they have is due to their marginalized positions.

The second part of the novella describes the protagonist's return to the city of above ground after a few days of tunneling through the sewers and secretly observing the people who live aboveground. He leaves the underground and confronts the policemen who earlier forced him to sign a confession of guilt. When Daniels tries to lead them into the sewer so that they can understand the outcome of racism, one of the police officers Lawson brutally shoots him. The police have the idea that Daniels had not committed the murder of Mrs. Peabody and they tell him in the hope that he will go away. Ironically, Daniels insists on declaring himself guilty.

Fred Daniels realizes that his stealing differs from the man's since his purpose has been merely to fulfill the sensation but the man's thieving has been to spend money for the delight. Though he makes his innocence and intention sparkler, the policemen do not take notice of. Rather they blindly afflict him. Hence his consciousness is blocked. As a matter of fact he evokes the feelings and views of the subalterns. His foiled awareness further signifies that the consciousness of the entire race which carries on the voice and agonies of the subalterns. Fred is a man who is without the sense of possessiveness. He does not want to have money in advance. Rather he prefers the common survival and this simply keeps him contented.

The white people believe that they are superior to the black in the sense that their skin is white and they have been born to canon the non-white. This preoccupied mentality of the white people forces them to commit many inhuman mistakes in much ruthless

ways. In fact this is the racial ego they have and always feel proud of being white. Even the so-called highly rational and cultured white people who dominate the executive departments in America have the similar mindset which eventually leads them to picture their cruelest aspect. The text brings about the similar condition when the white people who hold on the responsibility of administration and security of the nation, maltreat with the people of color and vitalizes their race by wounding the black.

The most outstanding and significant issue of clash existing in America is the racism. The contradictory rift between these two races black and white is indisputable and their fight regardless to its brand has ever been between them. The preoccupied mentality getting carried on by whites towards the blacks is much predisposed and critical that can hardly be erased. No doubt, endless efforts have been made to delete this perpetual concept from both of the races. However, the consequences are little and ostensible due to the insensitive and presupposed mindset. The protagonist, Fred Daniels represents the entire black race and his depiction carries on the suppressed voices and unheard cries of those who have been tossing down in the pool of racial brutality and tribulations in America. In many cases people of color like Fred fall victims at the hands of police brutality and ill-treatment in such a way that they cannot express their wants and desires to prove their virtue regarding any kind of accusations made over them by the police that prop up the position of whites and obstruct the voice of the black. Since the theory applied to the text, *The Man Who Lived Underground* is subalternity; it reflects the situation in which the marginalized especially in terms of race suffer severely in the organized association of the white selfishness and supremacy. Despite the fragile condition of Fred, he speaks in the revolting manner so that his ever repressed voice can

get an outlet. His protest is much implicit. He is in dilemma and he cannot suddenly decide what he should do next which is because of the fact that he is socially poor in all angles. He is not empowered and does not hold the political and social power to keep others mute as well. But one thing is pretty clear that the subaltern protagonist Fred attempts to speak even from under the rigid structures of racism, segregation and discrimination. It shows that the subalterns are often hegemonic to the dominant ruling ideologies. They are voiceless and historyless. However, literature is an important space for the subaltern. The subaltern gets represented even through the obstruction of their vibrant struggle. Fred is killed being unable to create his identity. But the consciousness of a black subaltern continues to extend through the readers. The subaltern voice has been obstructed that does not mean that the *The Man Who Lived Underground* has not represented the subaltern consciousness.

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