

**The Impact of Trauma in the Life of Metis Women:
A Study of the Select Works of Beatrice
Culleton Mosionier, Maria Campbell and
Katherena Vermette**

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CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION

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Canadian literature of today is a concoction of literatures contributed by the settlers, immigrants and the Natives. The land of Canada was originally inhabited by the First Nations who had migrated during the early times from the Asian continent to the continent of the Americas through the Bering Land Bridge. The First Nations were basically hunters who lived in harmony with the lands that surrounded them. The seventeenth century witnessed the arrival of the colonizers from Europe who came with the intention of plundering the abundant seas and later on settled down in colonies to hunt the animals of fur and ship the fur to Europe.

The birth of Canadian literature can be witnessed through the works of the colonizers who wrote diaries and charts of the territories explored by them and sent home letters to Europe describing the virgin lands. The early Canadian literature comprised of the contributions of the colonizers' writing which contained their expeditions and descriptions of the new lands and its Natives as subject. The major contributors during this point of time were George Vancouver, Samuel Hearne and Alexander Mackenzie.

The arrival of the printing press to Canada in the late eighteenth century expedited the growth of Canadian literature through the mushrooming of various literary magazine and papers which catered to the eager readers of the new found colonies. The growth in the settlements contributed to the growth of Canadian literature, which was used as a medium to discuss the inherent issues of the society. The genre of prose flourished initially as writers like Joseph Howe, Thomas McCulloch and T C Haliburton contributed to it with their simple prosaic style of writing. Catherine Parr Trail and Susanna Moodie, the migrants from England, were one among the early women writers who set forth the pace of Canadian literature through their works which mostly aimed to instruct and entertain its readers.

The Dominion of Canada was formed in 1867, through the union of four prominent provinces comprising Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Upper Canada and Lower Canada, which saw an influx of patriotic literary works among the settlers. The genre of poetry flourished due to the contributions of great poets such as Isabella

Valancy Crawford, Alexander McLachland and the Confederation of Poets who were known as the representative of Canadian poetry, and Canadian poetry was accepted in both Europe and Canada in spite of imitating the European style of writing.

The late nineteenth century was an age of nationalism and the society which was Anglo-centric had deep faith in God's Natural law, and hence most of the literary works of Canada served as an instruction of God's Natural laws and morals. Canada had annexed more territories and had expanded its boundaries, and with it came its social economic issues to be discussed in Canadian literature. National unity was enhanced by the connection of people due to the railroad projects which also led to economic inequalities and decreased levels of racial tolerance.

The hunting grounds of the Natives were turned into agricultural lands by the settlers which led to feud between the settlers and the Natives. The feud was mostly won by the settlers and the Natives were confined to the Reserves which seemed to be receding steadily. The nineteenth century witnessed development in the fields of science, industry and the social life of Canada, but the Natives were completely confined in the Reserves and were monitored by the Department of Indian Affairs.

The prose form of travel writing gained much importance during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the genre of drama in Canadian literature did not seem to be as successful as its rivals – the poetry and fiction. Though drama flourished during the confederation of Canada, it was unable to sustain its pace in the competition with poetry and fiction. In spite of the help extended by the government of Canada to help in its growth, it failed to compete with its rivals.

The Canadian fiction came to the forefront with the increase in the size of the European settlers. The first novel of the American continent *The History of Emily Montague* was written in 1769 by Mrs. Frances Brooke in the form of an epistolary novel. It encouraged writers like John Richardson and William Kirby to venture into the genre. The first Canadian novel was written by Julia Catherine Beckwith who wrote *St. Ursula's Convent* in 1824. The later nineteenth century witnessed a rise in the genre of romance but was unable to captivate the readers. Canadian literature inched forward through a slow process of development and could not produce any masterpiece worth mentioning.

The twentieth century turned out to be an age of scientific and economic prosperity and the writers were interested in the regional issues and created an identity of their own in Canadian fiction. The early period underwent rapid social changes and a spurt of growth in the cities. The two World Wars, the Great Depression and the changes in the Canadian society was widely discussed and the century witnessed a great development in the Canadian literature with the contributions from writers like Lucy Maud Montgomery – who is still known for her *Anne of Green Gables*, Robert Stead, Fredrick Philip Grove, Morley Callaghan and Hugh MacLennan. The changes in the socio political structure in the 1950s brought forth a change in the themes of novels which shifted to realism and highlighted topics such as the plight of the immigrants, hardships of the factory workers, and struggle for existence. Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House* may be called as one of the most influential work of the genre. Contribution to fiction during this period was also made by W.O. Mitchell, Ernest Buckler, Mordecai Richler and Sheila Watson.

The 1960s saw the development of a strong sense of nationalism with the birth of national flag in 1964 and the national anthem in 1967. This saw a surge in Canadian fiction and Canadian literature which gained importance was taught as a subject in various universities. Technology aided in the establishment of publishing houses which made Canadian literature, especially fiction where social realism was documented, accessible to even to the middle class citizens of Canada.

The influx of the immigrants in the 1970s paved way for immigrant writers like Michael Ondaatje, Bharathi Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, M.G Vassanji, Austin Clarke, Joy Kogawa, Anita Rau Badami and Yaan Martel who began to establish themselves by raising issues of racism, multiculturalism, and marginality. The women writers have been a strong force of contributors to Canadian fiction right from the period of the setters starting from Julia Catherine Beckwith, Lucy Maud Montgomery and Sara Jeanette Duncan. In 1920s the women writers used fiction as a medium to address issues such as gender, equality, rights, their demands and also their protests. Contributions were made by writers such as Martha Osteno, Gabrielle Roy, Ethel Wilson who were the predecessors of the strong force of Canadian women writers of the 1950s such as Mavis Gallant, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood and Alice Munroe.

The 1970s drew a new interest in indigenous subjects among the writers and the readers. The non-native writers catered to the imagination of the readers by including the Natives as minor characters, who were portrayed either as someone heinous or as weaklings in need of the white man's help. Rudy Wiebe changed the scenario by writing about the history of the Natives in his works of fiction. *The Scorched-Wood People*, for example, is the story of the rise and fall of the Metis leader Louis Riel, narrated by a Metis. The Civil Rights Movement encouraged the Natives to standup for their rights and they realized the need to be represented to the world by Native writers, who would be well versed regarding their issues. Hence, the Native writers wrote representing the realities of their life, and voiced out against the misrepresentations of their culture and life. They highlighted the cultural crisis, loss of identity and the miserable life in the Reservations.

The semi-autobiographical prose *BY The Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* by Elizabeth Smart, failed to make its mark as a work of a Native and hence, Kent Gooderham's *I Am Indian* can be technically termed as the first work of a Native writer in Canada. Gooderham was followed by younger writers such as Basil H. Johnston, Thomas King who is well known for his *Green Grass, Running Water* and Richard Wagamese. Jeannette Armstrong can be termed as the first Native woman writer who was followed by writers like Maria Campbell, Beatrice Culleton Mosionier, Lee Maracle, Sandra Birdsell and Katherena Vermette.

Initially the French landed on the Canadian lands as fishermen and later in the sixteenth century they landed as explorers. In the seventeenth century they settled down as settlers and established fur trading companies that indulged in the export of fur to Europe. France, due to its intention of increasing its dominion, encouraged the young officers in the companies to marry the Native women and the children born to them are known as the Metis. The Metis played the role of interpreters as they were well versed in both French and the Native language, and were excellent hunters and which led to their success in fur trade. The economic affluence and their sense of identity as Metis alarmed the French which brought in new stringent rules to indirectly prevent the French from marrying the Natives.

By 1810, the Metis had established themselves as accomplished traders near the Red River and in 1811, the land around the Red River was given away to the new

European settlers which led to a feud and later into the war of Seven Oaks, where the Metis emerged victorious. There was an increase in the Metis population by 1821 and by 1869 they began to face discrimination from the European society. The agreement between the Dominion of Canada and the Hudson Bay Company rendered the Metis landless and this led to the Red River Rebellion, also known as Red River Resistance. The Manitoba Act in 1870 failed to benefit the Metis and in 1885, a fierce battle was waged at Batoche, under the leadership of Louis Riel, which turned out to be a huge disaster for the Metis in the social structure and Riel was executed.

The Metis suffered from unemployment, acute poverty and racial discrimination, and hence many turned to substance usage to escape from the reality. The racial discrimination induced many Metis to hide their identity to avoid humiliation and even migrate to other countries. In the 1960s, numerous Native social organizations came forward to help them and restore their position in the social rungs. The government of Canada recognized the Metis as aborigines and provided them access to the aboriginal rights in the Canadian Constitution.

The three women writers and their works analyzed in this study are Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, Beatrice Culleton Mosionier's *In Search of April Raintree* and Katherena Vermette's *The Break*. The three writers were chosen in order to make a study of the impact of trauma on the Metis women for over a period of forty years – from 1973 to 2016, in an attempt to view the impact of trauma on their mind-set and their subsequent actions, through an analyses of the novels, and also to study the changes in the attitude of the society towards the Metis women. The works of these authors were analyzed using trauma theory with more inclination towards intergenerational trauma and historical trauma. The study focuses on the impact of intergenerational trauma and historical trauma using the Historical Trauma theory propagated by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, and the Individual Trauma using the trauma theory of Sandra L. Bloom, a Psychologist and Judith Herman, a Psychiatrist.

The word 'Trauma' originally means a wound in Greek terminology and psychological trauma implies the meaning that a wound instigated on the mind of a person. When an individual is subjected to trauma, the individual tends to carry the pain in their subconscious mind which would be exhibited through their actions which is a response to the original trauma. Generally trauma tends to disturb the mind or the

psyche of an individual and cause hindrance to their psychological wellbeing. Natural calamities cause trauma but when it is caused intentionally to hurt the individual, it creates a deep and lasting wound on the mind of the individual.

The study of trauma gained importance during the late nineteenth century and it was originally connected to Hysteria, which was believed to affect women mostly. Hysteria was investigated and researched by Jean-Martin Charcot. In 1880, Charcot proposed that hysteria could be treated through hypnosis since it was psychological. Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud carried out further research based on Charcot's theory and both established that psychological trauma was the basic cause for hysteria. Freud later abandoned his research on hysteria and proposed the theory of psychoanalysis which was based on the theory of hysteria. Psychological trauma soon lost its charm and was forgotten by the people.

The World War I and II renewed the interest of the medics in psychological trauma since its theory was used to treat the soldiers who were 'shell-shocked' and suffering due to the war. The twentieth century paved way for the association of trauma to domestic and sexual violence since it was discovered that the women who were subjected to violence contained the symptoms similar to the shell-shocked soldiers. Thus the study of psychological trauma came into public arena to stay permanently.

Psychological trauma can produce feelings of helplessness, rage or confusion and is usually abrupt, and attacks the victim both psychologically and physically. The duration of the impact is determined by the nature of the act, since trauma caused intentionally causes more negative impact or reactions on the individual. Trauma can be divided into strain trauma and complex trauma where strain trauma is minimal and disappears as time goes by, whereas complex trauma, true to its term remains forever and creates deep damage to the psyche of the victim.

The common symptoms of psychological trauma are compulsive behavior patterns, inability to make choices, dissociation from self and others, and even forming alter personality. Sandra Bloom in her work *Creating Sanctuary*, lists out the common physical and psychological responses to an emotional trauma, but the response may vary from person to person based on their level of resilience. The responses are fight-flight-freeze, learned helplessness, thinking under stress, action

without thought, remembering under stress, dissociation, stress and endorphin addiction, trauma bonding, turning from a victim to a victimizer. The common issues exhibited in a person who had been subjected to trauma are sense of guilt, emotional numbness, anger, suicidal tendencies, anxiety, fear, hypersensitivity, depression and all these issues lead the traumatized individual towards substance usage to gain temporary relief from their pain and depression.

Historical trauma is the transmission of the effects of trauma from one generation to another when a race or a group of people experience trauma, and this trauma gets summed up into cumulative trauma and is handed down to generations, like the experience of racism, hatred, fear and so on. The trauma affects one generation but the emotions are passed down to subsequent generations. Historical trauma takes place where a race is suppressed in the form of genocide, slavery, tyranny or colonization, and this knowledge of suppression is handed over to the subsequent generations who are either mute spectators or individuals who take part in the aftermath of the trauma. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart pioneered the concept of historical trauma in 1998 and explained the connections behind the difficulties experienced by the subsequent generations of the Natives who had not undergone the original trauma but were the part-takers of the original pain. Historical trauma is transmitted through psychological, physiological and social process.

The socio-political aspects prevailing in the society plays a prominent role in the transmission of trauma from one generation to another. The changes in the hierarchy due to colonization and the failures of the early Natives have been handed down to generations as historical trauma in the form of racism, marginalization, economic and social neglect which seem to be affecting generation after generation as historical and intergenerational trauma. This also leads to the trauma of frustrations and failures in the form of substance usage which seem to destroy multiple generations of the Natives leading them to more poverty and unrest.

Trauma studies in literature helps to explore the effects of trauma in a society through the analysis of the cultural, social and psychological aspects found in a work of art, since, literature is generally termed as a mirror of life. The writers write fiction drawing their inspiration from their observations of the society and hence, trauma studies may be used to analyze the hidden psychological facts prevailing in between

the secret depths of the writers' words. Trauma studies have gained prominence since 1990s and it helps understand the motives of extreme actions of human beings such as Holocaust, racism, oppression and colonialism. Trauma studies were brought to the forefront by Cathy Caruth, Shosana Feldman and many more exponents of the twentieth century.

The Metis of Canada have been subjected to Historical, Intergenerational and Individual trauma since the period of colonization, and are a victim of racism, segregation, suppression and neglect. They are victims of poverty, unemployment and hence indulge in substance usage. Their miseries are transmitted to their younger generations who bear the brunt of the original trauma. The Metis fiction voices out the stark realities of the Metis life and the miseries experienced by the generations – past and present. Hence the works of three Metis women writers are chosen for analysis in this study in order to understand the impact of trauma on the lives of Metis women.

The novels chosen for this study are Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, Beatrice Culleton Mosionier's *In Search of April Raintree* and Katherena Vermette's *The Break*. The novels can be studied using individual, intergenerational and historical trauma since the characters in the novel, especially the women, suffer from the impact of trauma which seem to be affecting their generations. They seem to suffer at the hands of the society which comprises of both whites and the Native men, and hence, they are doubly oppressed. The novels project the changes that take place in life of the Metis women due to the impact of trauma. The characters of the novels are analyzed to understand the interference of trauma and the changes brought about by it in the life of the Metis women.

Halfbreed, an autobiography written by Maria Campbell, was published in 1973. It was widely recognized by the Canadian readers since it succeeded in providing its readers a clear view of the life of the Metis, in their glorious past and miserable present. *Halfbreed*, which is written in first person narrative, throws light on the life of Campbell from her childhood to her adulthood, intertwined with the history of the Metis. Maria Campbell talks about the community's sufferings, poverty, marginalization and addiction, thus providing to the world a wide knowledge regarding the life of the Metis in the past and the present. She gives an insight to their

glorious historical past, the battle at Red River and the death of Louis Riel from a child's point of view.

Maria Campbell throws light on the humiliation and racism faced by the Metis in the Canadian society which was dominated by the whites. Her autobiography highlights the exploitation and inhuman miseries suffered by the Metis women. The Metis women have been subjected to individual, intergeneration and historical trauma, and this seems to be explicit through the analysis of the life of Maria Campbell.

Campbell was the eldest among the eight siblings and her family lived in poverty. Maria Campbell's father was a trapper who usually stayed away from home for days together and her mother took care of the children. The parents, though poor, managed to provide adequate food and shelter for the children. Campbell narrates the first encounter of racism by the Metis children in schools, through her own experience. When she was nine years old, she was enrolled in a school nearby and came into contact with racism for the first time in her life. She explains the segregation faced by the Metis children and the notable difference in the way they were treated by the white children and the teachers in the school. The Metis children were subjected to racism and segregation in school and they realize that they are unwelcome in the white community.

The Metis children become conscious of their poverty for the first time in their life when they see the affluent white children and they automatically prefer to stay away from them. They accept the segregation and keep away from the white children without fighting against them. The Metis children remain helpless and accept defeat due to the knowledge ingrained into their subconscious minds which they had received by observing their elders accept defeat at the hands of the whites. Thus the children are subjected to historical trauma of racism, to which generations of Metis were subjected to since the period of colonization.

The Metis children meekly accept racism and defeat similar to their parents, who are the previous generations, since the parents' poverty has been down to them. Thus they are also a victim of intergenerational trauma of helplessness. The children's consciousness of poverty causes a distress in them, which is due to their helplessness and shame in being poor. The distress turns into anger on themselves for being in a state of helplessness, and on their parents for not fighting against poverty

and providing them adequately. This distress is nothing but a trauma which would be etched deep in their subconscious mind and may surface later during their adulthood as crimes against the society, as revenge against the unjust social structure.

The trauma of poverty and segregation might hamper their education which would result in poor academic performance and would hinder their growth as a successful adult, thus making them a failure in life and continue to live in poverty. Their poverty would result in their failure to provide their own children adequately. The poverty of the previous generation is passed down to the children and hampers their development ensuring their poverty in future and inability to provide a decent living for their future generations. Thus the poverty of the previous generation which is an individual trauma, changes into an intergenerational trauma when it affects the children and their future generations until its vicious cycle is broken with a conscious effort.

Lack of education, unemployment and poverty leads the Metis to search for basic survival and lead an average life of struggle, and this leads to the disruption of the domestic life of the Metis. The men who are restless due to trauma try to pass on their trauma of failure to the helpless woman who becomes a victim of domestic violence and abuse. The domestic violence, which is witnessed by the mute helpless children, affects their mental wellbeing and growth, and they reckon that it is normal to indulge in domestic violence. The children, on growing into an adult, would enact the domestic violence on their family in the case of boys or would accept domestic violence meekly, in the case of girls. Thus the individual trauma of domestic violence turns into an intergenerational trauma and affects the next generation, where it is the woman who bears the brunt, since the pain is inflicted on her.

The Metis women are put to trauma by the system of placing the children in foster homes and the children who are never returned to their families, get lost forever. The trauma of losing the children forever is unbearable to the Metis women and this seems to be a historical trauma to which they are subjected to from the period of colonization. The children were snatched away from their parents and placed in residential schools in order to distance them from their own Native culture, and to assimilate them into the alien white culture. The trauma of losing their children haunted the Metis women but they were helpless, since the poverty in their life leads

them to addiction, and the addiction was quoted as a reason by the Children's Aid society to remove the children from their homes.

Campbell's mother dies due to lack of medical care, leaving behind an infant under the care of Campbell. The trauma of the loss of her mother, along with the burden of taking care of her siblings, brings in a huge mental jolt to Campbell. She drops out of school to take care of her siblings and the new born child, and finds it cumbersome. Campbell, who was gripped by the fear of losing her siblings to the Children's Aid Society, decides to marry in order to provide a secure support and a stable home for her siblings. Though she was in love with a Metis man, she refuses his proposal of marriage since she was weary of the fact that the Metis men wallow in addiction to alcohol. The knowledge regarding the failure of the Metis men makes her unwilling to accept a life of suffering and trauma. The trauma of witnessing the traumatic sufferings experienced by the Metis women had made Campbell shun away from the Metis way of life. The individual trauma and the intergenerational trauma of poverty and domestic violence evoke a fear in her, thus compelling her to refuse the Metis man whom she loved.

Generally, a person who is subjected to trauma would fail in decision making since the trauma would disturb their thinking and reasoning ability, and lead them to take wrong decision in life which would lead the individual towards more traumas in life. Maria Campbell marries Darrel, a white man and quite elder to her, hoping that he would be able to provide her and her siblings with a comfortable life. She assumes Darrel to be rich and non-addicted to alcohol unlike the Metis men, and also believes that he would dedicate himself to take care of his family.

Maria Campbell was not welcome in Darrel's family since she was a Metis girl. Campbell – the Metis bride was subjected to the historical trauma known as racism, which seems to be haunting the Metis women since the period of colonization. After her marriage, Campbell realizes that Darrel had cheated her and that he was not a rich man. She was also shocked by the fact that Darrel was an alcoholic. Campbell is subjected to domestic violence and she undergoes the same life of trauma and misery, which she had tried to escape desperately. Campbell also suffered from trauma bonding, which is an outcome of trauma experienced by the traumatized

individual. Due to the trauma bonding, she bears all the violence enacted upon her without retaliation and continued to live with her husband who victimized her.

Maria Campbell, who was battered and subjected to the trauma of domestic violence even during her period of pregnancy, gives birth to her daughter prematurely. Darrel who disliked the idea of giving shelter to Campbell's siblings informs the Children's Aid Society and hands them over to it. The siblings are placed in different foster homes and are thus lost forever from Campbell's life. The loss of the siblings pushes Campbell into a state of depression due to the trauma and she also suffers from survivor's guilt. She feels responsible for the siblings being placed in foster homes and the feeling of guilt prevents her from going back to her maternal home to seek shelter from domestic violence. She is also prevented by the shame of acknowledging to her people that she was subjected to the same misery of the Metis life, which she had tried to avoid by marrying a white man. This highlights the fact that the Metis women are subjected to violence and trauma at the hands of both – the white man and the Metis man. Trauma seems to follow them in spite of the conscious effort of the Metis women to break away from the haunting vicious cycle of trauma.

Maria Campbell who was unable to bear the trauma of violence, poverty and neglect inflicted by her husband, walks out of her married life and tries to live on her own. Though Campbell tries to support herself in the society by acquiring a decent employment, she is unable to do so due to lack of education. Lack of education, which is a by-product of the intergenerational trauma of poverty, seems to haunt the Metis women like Campbell, thus rendering them into a state of helplessness and dependency. It deters their effort to seek an employment and thus secure a respectable position in their social and personal life. The lack of education can be termed as a major setback in the life of these Metis women as it nullifies their chances of survival in the society. The lack of education leads to unemployment and unemployment leads to poverty. Thus the women are left to battle poverty and this trauma of poverty changes the path of their life.

When faced by trauma of poverty and misery, the Metis women who are unable to find the means to support themselves and their dependents with the basic necessities of life, try to find an easy way out by taking to prostitution. Thus Maria Campbell, who was unable to find an employment to support herself and her child,

ends up being a prostitute. This is an indication of the society's failure in taking care of its fellow beings. It also proves that the trauma of poverty has the capacity to undermine the life and self-respect of a person who is abandoned and left to fend by themselves.

The victims, who are unable to surmount their trauma and face the reality of life, try to seek solace from their misfortunes through substance abuse, in order to forget their shame, failure and misery in life. The substance abuse helps them forget their traumatic pain of failure, shame and heart break temporarily but once the effect of the substance wears away, the traumatized individual is once again confronted and haunted by the trauma of pain and failure, and hence the individual seeks asylum in the substance once again. Thus a vicious cycle is formed and the traumatized individual gets addicted to the substance and is unable to find a way out of it, even when they try hard to break free of it. The individual gets engulfed by the addiction which often releases the victim only at death. Maria Campbell gets addicted to substance usage and alcohol. She gets ensnared into the addiction to drugs and is unable to break free from it or find a way out of it.

When the Metis women are unable to find a way out of the miseries of their life and break free from their addiction, they seek solace from death, and thus the rate of suicide among the Metis women seems to be higher than the contemporary white society. Maria Campbell too tries in vain to commit suicide when she was unable to overcome the trauma of addiction, poverty, shame and failure. She is sent for counseling for the attempt to commit suicide. This attempt of Campbell throws light on the helpless state of the Metis women who feel that death alone can save them from the clutches of trauma experienced by them. In fact, it reflects the inefficiency of the society in which the Metis men too assumes the role of a member. The society ought to extend a helping hand to the Metis women and not remain a passive spectator of their trials and tribulations.

Campbell tries her hand at all odd jobs to come out of the addiction and provide a decent life for her child but is subjected to harassment as the men assume that since she was a Metis woman, they could exploit her easily. The society views the Metis women as easy prey for exploitation and tries to victimize them. The Metis women are under the constant trauma and pressure to save themselves from the

exploiters, and this by itself contributes to trauma in their life. It deters them from fighting against the odds and adversities in life, and makes them flee constantly from the adversities.

Maria Campbell begins a new life with David who falls in love with her, but she does not reveal her dark past to him. The new life with David disturbs her since she was hounded by the fear of her past being exposed to David by her former acquaintances. This traumatic fear of her past turns her into a paranoid individual and she tries to commit suicide. Due to the trauma of living motherless, she tries to kill her children first to save them from a lonely life but the motherhood in her prevents her from doing so.

The Metis women are usually driven to the extremely disadvantages position in life and are confronted with the only option of committing suicide in order to escape from their adversity. The traumatic sufferings of their life mar their capacity to think and seek a way out of their misery. The trauma experienced by them at every step of their life's journey induces them to take the wrong decision of exiting from it permanently through the gateway of death. Hence many lives are snuffed out even before they could spread their light on the earth. A few try their level best to break the vicious cycle of trauma and manage to come out of it successfully, and try to find a purpose for their life. Maria Campbell decides to live a changed life and overcome the traumas of her life.

When an individual undergoes trauma in life and decides to overcome it, they generally decide to help the fellow traumatized victims to come out of their misery. They are in a position to understand the depth and the raw pain of the trauma more than any normal individual who have never experienced trauma in their life. Campbell decides to help her community, especially the women, by joining various social organizations that work for the welfare of the Metis. The organizations help the Metis by extending monetary help and psychological counseling in order to help them out of their unfortunate circumstances. Campbell feels that it was her duty to help the fellow Metis women who were suffering in their life due to poverty, addiction, domestic violence and lack of support from the society.

Campbell visits her home town and is appalled by the pathetic conditions of life led by the Metis people of her home place. She understands that the disease

known as addiction to alcohol had run deep in her community, since the women folk too had become addicted to alcohol. The addiction of women to alcohol had led to the neglect of the children who lead a life of squalor, neglect and lack of parent love. The condition of life looked deplorable and the people were totally unmindful and oblivious of their poverty, squalor and inhuman conditions that surrounded them, since they were completely submerged in their addiction to alcohol.

Campbell believes that the various traumas in their life have made the women folk addicted to alcohol in order to seek comfort and forget their state of unhappiness and misery. The addiction makes them turn a blind eye to the fact that their children's right to lead a comfortable life is being denied by them who seem to be wallowing in addiction and is unable to seek a way out their own miseries. The neglect suffered by the children during their childhood would have a direct impact on them as they grow into adulthood. Thus the children might turn into unsuccessful adults with a life of failure, and they may indulge in or be subjected to domestic violence as an adult, which might lead them to substance addiction, and they would end up neglecting their subsequent generations.

Maria Campbell feels that the Metis of her home place have also destroyed the forest that surround them in order to access the quick way of making money – given to them by the government for fighting the forest fire. Hence forest fires seem to appear every now and then, which have destroyed the forest around them. The disappearance of forest has brought their tradition of trapping and hunting to the verge of extinction and there is the danger of it being lost from the future generations forever.

Though the position of the Metis, especially the women, looks vulnerable and on the verge of destruction, Maria Campbell ends her autobiography with a note of hope stating that one day changes would prevail in the lives of her community and that they would be changes for the betterment of her community and the society around, since they all co-existed in the universe where the destruction of one race would heap gradually destruction on the other. She feels that times would change due the awareness found among the future generations through the various people who work for the development and improvement of the Metis community.

In Search of April Raintree was written almost ten years after the publication of Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*. Maria Campbell succeeded in capturing the attention of the society towards the Metis community through *Halfbreed*, her autobiography and Beatrice Culleton Mosionier sustained the attention of the society through her novel *In Search of April Raintree*, which can be termed as a semibiographical work, since it was written by the author through the influence of her personal experiences in life.

Beatrice Culleton Mosionier was born to alcoholic parents and was sent to live in foster homes. The death of her two sisters who committed suicide urges her to represent the mental trauma suffered by the Metis community, especially the Metis women through her novel. The novel narrates the story of two Metis sisters in a simple first person narrative, from the memory of April who serves as a narrator. The story revolves around the two sisters April and Cheryl, who were born to alcoholic parents. Mosionier highlights the insensitivity of the society towards the Metis women through the life of the two sisters. The Metis women are subjected to and suffer under the impact of individual, intergenerational and historical trauma, and this can be understood through the study of the characters of April, Cheryl and their mother Alice.

April and Cheryl are separated from their alcoholic parents by the Children's Aid Society and were placed in separate foster homes. Mosionier highlights the destruction done by the residential schools and foster homes to generations of Metis. She throws light on the physical and psychological trauma caused by the residential schools and foster homes to the innocent children, and to the parents from whom the children are separated forever. She implies that the generation to which Alice belongs to, had come from the residential schools where they were not provided access to proper education, and were trained to be employed for simple jobs like farming, housekeeping and labour.

The trauma of being separated from their family and placed in the residential schools had hindered the generation from acquiring adequate education. Thus, this lack of education denied them the access to proper employment in their adulthood, and they live a life of poverty. The lack of education renders them unable to provide their family and the trauma of poverty makes them seek the help of alcohol to

overcome the stark realities of life, and thus they end up becoming addicted to alcohol. Mosionier brings out the deep canker of alcoholism that seems to be rampant among the Metis – both men and women. The men sometimes in their poverty subject their wives to prostitution, like April's father Henry, who subjected Alice to prostitution. The women like Alice, who are unable to bear the fact that they have been betrayed by their own husband, become addicted to alcohol, since they too seek the help of alcohol to forget the trauma of shame and betrayal.

The women who are under the influence of alcohol neglect their children and subject them to the trauma of neglect. Thus the individual trauma of addiction turns into intergenerational trauma of neglect and affect the children who are the future generation of the community. The trauma of poverty is both individual and intergenerational since it is handed down to the children, who suffer from it along with their parents. The impact is found in their adulthood too since the childhood poverty prevents them from gaining proper foundation in the studies and social life. Addiction to alcohol is an intergenerational trauma since the children witness their parents' habit of addiction during their childhood and the habit get imbibed into their deep subconscious mind. They assume that addiction is the only method that might provide reprieve from misery and sadness of failure and poverty and acquire the habit as adults. Though they detest the habit, they are invariably drawn towards addiction in their sorrow and thus alcoholic addition which seems to affect the generations is an intergenerational trauma.

Most of the Native children placed in foster homes are subjected to trauma due to the isolation from their family and also due to the inhuman conditions and treatment received by them at the foster homes. This is due to the fact that some of the foster parents agree to take in the Native children for the sake of the financial assistance extended to them by the government for the upbringing of foster children. They also grab the opportunity to exploit the Native children by employing them as unpaid laborers in their homes and farms.

April was initially placed with the Dions who treated her with dignity but still she finds it difficult to accept them as her family. Generally, it would take plenty of time and psychological effort for the children to come to terms with the fact that they cannot go back home and this would cause mental trauma to the children and the

trauma would make the child feel insecure and uncomfortable. The Dions, who understood the trauma experienced by April, were very kind to her. Finally, April begins to like them and mingle with them but April's happiness is short lived, and she is shifted to the DeRosiers family since Mrs Dion was on the death bed.

Life turns out to be traumatic for April as she is exploited and made to work as an unpaid labourer in their household, where she is made to do all the household chores and also work in the barn. She is subjected to racism, abuse, verbal violence and physical violence. The DeRosier children fling racial slurs and insults at her, and Mrs. DeRosier constantly chided her lineage. Thus Mosionier draws the attention of the readers and the world to the trauma experienced by the Metis children in the foster homes through her portrayal of the trials and tribulations endured by the protagonist April, during her childhood. Mosionier tries to point out that though the system of placing the children in foster homes was invented by the government to help the children, it was misused by the inhuman citizens of the society, and thus the idea of raising children in the foster homes often turned out to be a failure, causing more damage to the children by subjecting them to psychological disturbances.

April's parents stop visiting her in the Children's Aid office and she feels that she is unwanted by her parents and this makes her desperately lonely and sad. The traumatic experiences of April turn into helplessness which later turns into anger against her parents. She feels that her parents were responsible for her sufferings at a young age. She blames her mother for not fighting with the Children's Aid Society to retain her and Cheryl.

The DeRosiers point out to April that her parents were alcoholic and April is shocked to learn about it. When the DeRosiers children make fun of her alcoholic parents, she feels ashamed of her parents' addiction. The trauma of shame and helplessness makes her bitter and resent the fact that her parents chose alcohol to her and Cheryl. Mosionier throws light on the mindset of the Native children in the foster homes who feel that they have been betrayed by their parents. She also points out that the Metis children begin to hate their parents for abandoning them. They are shocked to learn that their parents are a failure and are unable to take care of their children. Mosionier points out that the children who are separated from their parents become easy targets for the predators of the society and are thus subjected to racism,

humiliation, physical and emotional abuse and are mocked at their helplessness by their foster caretakers.

The novel showcases the fact that the siblings sent to foster homes would be generally placed in separate homes and this leads to the scattering of the family, which sometimes reaches beyond repair. Mosionier also highlights the disadvantageous position of the foster children who are shifted constantly from one home to another. This constant shifting causes disruption in their psyche since they are under the constant pressure to leave behind their newly found comfort zone and adapt to the new environment. This trauma of constant shifting evokes a sense of uncertainty in the children and they tend to lack a social circle of friends. Cheryl who was placed in a comfortable foster home is shifted to the DeRosier family due to the greed Mrs DeRosier whose sugar coated words coaxes the social service worker Mrs Semple to leave Cheryl with her.

The novel portrays the destructive effects of the separating the children from the families. The trauma of separation from their families makes the Metis children, especially the girls like Alice, very sensitive and they suffer from the lack of survival skills. The destruction of the community and family support makes the Metis women dependent on their men, and they are unable to free themselves from the men even when they are exploited or treated with disrespect and disregard. Mosionier hints that Alice was exploited by Henry who subjected her to prostitution, due to his unemployment and poverty. Alice who was exploited by her husband, was unable to break free from him, and seeks the help of alcohol to forget her shame and misery.

The life of April explains the fact that the foster children are unable to mingle with the biological children of the foster homes and as a result both the biological and foster children are traumatized which leads to their poor progress in education and their holistic development. The DeRosier children perform miserably in their academics but April was better in her academic progress due to her ambition in life. April and the DeRosiers children are unable to accept each other and hence they indulge in verbal abuse. When the traumatic experiences of the Metis foster child mount to an insurmountable level, the foster child tends to run away from the foster house, and sometimes gets lost forever. After the failed attempt of April and Cheryl to

run away from the foster home, they are given a sermon by Mrs. Semple, the social worker, who warns them against the ‘Native Girl Syndrome’.

Beatrice Culleton Mosionier has coined and used a new term called ‘Native Girl Syndrome’ in the novel through the character of Mrs. Semple. Mrs. Semple warns April and Cheryl that the failures they might encounter in their future life might turn them into alcoholics, drug addicts, victims of domestic violence, shoplifters and finally prostitutes. Mrs Semple ends her speech saying that the two young girls would end up in life like their parents and other Natives girls who had failed miserably in their lives. The speech of Mrs. Semple brings out the fact that the Metis women are victims of intergenerational trauma for generations and for ages. Mosionier points out the helplessness and the pathetic conditions of life to which the Metis women are forced into by the society.

Mosionier subtly points out that the society plays an important role in ensuring the downfall of the Metis women and instead of taking up the blame for her downfall, the society stereotyped the Native women by commenting on their behaviour. The society fails to recognize the root cause of the deplorable state of life led by the Metis women and continues to blame them for their failure and downfall. Mosionier terms it as a syndrome or disease to indicate that a large number of women have been affected by the deplorable state of failures, and were not provided with adequate aid or help to recover from the disease of failures. The society fails to extend a helping hand to the ailing Metis women but rather, stereotypes, criticizes and generalizes the Metis women who are in dire need of assistance economically, physically and psychologically. Hence Mosionier indirectly blames the society and the social structure of Canada for the trauma suffered by the Metis women in their life. She is of the opinion that the society is turning a blind eye to the sufferings of the Metis women and she portrays it through the characters of April, Cheryl and Alice.

The children living in the foster homes eagerly await their freedom which would be granted to them when they attain eighteen years of age. It can be understood through the acquaintances of April that the Metis girls who grow up in the foster homes are unable to conduct themselves in a path of safety after they attain their freedom. Mosionier points out that the girls who had been in the clutches of foster homes without any freedom become extremely free and happy when they are granted

their freedom. They are ill-equipped to lead their life in the society since they lack the strong system called family, for guidance and censure regarding their conduct in the society and get exploited by the predatory men. Without the capacity to differentiate between friends and exploiters, and they end up with teenage pregnancy. As single, unwed, unemployed mothers who live in poverty and find life difficult to survive, they get addicted to alcohol to forget the traumas in life. They can be termed as victims of intergenerational trauma since these are the ones who had been snatched away from their alcoholic mothers. The trauma turns them into alcoholics to forget their pain, shoplifters and prostitutes due to poverty and single unwed mothers due to the mismanagement of their freedom. Thus they can be terms as women who suffer from the Syndrome of being a Native girl.

Not all children end up as being affected with the ‘Syndrome’ since some children like April turn out to be shrewd and ambitious, who are determined to attain success in their life. The traumas experienced in foster homes change the outlook of Metis women towards life. April, unlike her mother, becomes an opportunist and waits for her freedom which would be granted to her at the age of eighteen, so that she would be in a position to work freely towards her development in life. She studies hard in the foster home to equip herself to face the new world, once she is free from the foster home. April represents the Native girls who are driven by their ambition in life, that is, not to become like their parents and the members of their community.

Foster homes succeed in changing the outlook of the Native children regarding their own community. This is due to many facts. The children are removed from their culture, tradition and language, and are assimilated into the colonizer’s culture and language. The children become angry at their parents for deserting them as a child to foster homes and begin to hate them. This is due to the trauma they suffer at a very young age for which they blame their community and also due to the trauma of anger against their parents which seems to be embedded in their subconscious mind. The education that they receive portrays the Natives in a different limelight and makes them move away from their ancestral history. The children imagine their parents as very brave warriors and when they see the reality, they are totally shattered and are unable to accept the fact that they come from a very poor background. They only see the dirt, squalor, addiction and the failures of their own community which seems

unacceptable to them, and thus they hate to identify themselves as a member of the Native community.

The Metis women like April begin to shun away from their own community and feel ashamed to associate themselves with their own people. They are unable to accept their own community but they are unaccepted by the white community as one of them. They are left in a lurch where they do not accept one section of the society and try to identify themselves with the other section of the society, which shuns them and does accept them as a member of their section. Thus the Metis children who lived at foster homes suffer from the trauma of lack of belonging, and isolation when they grow into adults, and suffer from being victimized by the exploiters, especially in the case of women. April was firm that she would never reveal her true identity to the world and would identify herself as a white to the society since she fears that the society might look down upon her if she was identified as a Metis.

In her eagerness to mingle with the white society, April marries Bob Radcliff, a rich white man to escape from the identity of being a Metis. She also views it as an opportunity to give her children a white identity. The trauma of poverty and separation from her family, and being subjected to racism develops an innate hatred towards her community and she seeks a different path of escape from it. After her marriage she realizes that Bob had not married her out love but had used her as a weapon of torture and purpose, since his mother had opposed his love for a woman named Heather. The mere act of Bob marrying April for his personal purpose, points out that April is a victim of historical trauma which took place during the period of the colonizers. The colonizers had married the Native women for their own comfort, but not out of love and have thus exploited the Native women. April is also a victim of intergenerational trauma where the Metis women are constantly exploited in the name of marriage.

Cheryl, who had the opportunity of growing up in a foster home with kind care takers, had developed high opinion and regards for the Metis community. Cheryl disliked the idea of April marrying a white man and she was moved to pity for her community when she witnessed them living in deplorable conditions. The trauma of separation from her family and community makes Cheryl more inclined towards her community, and she resolves to work hard for their betterment in the social rungs.

Cheryl had high dreams regarding her parents and was eager to join them and live with them after gaining her freedom. Both the sisters kept in touch with each other through letters but April loses contact with Cheryl after her marriage to Bob. Though April tries to contact Cheryl after her divorce, she is unable to do so since Cheryl had shifted her residence.

April receives a phone call from a hospital and on rushing to the hospital, is shocked to find a Cheryl transformed and beyond recognition, and was lying in a miserable state. April was shocked to learn that Cheryl had turned into an alcoholic like her parents. Cheryl reveals that she had dropped out of college and had sold all the expensive gifts given to her by April. She also says that she lives with a man name Mark DeSotto and no longer works for the welfare of the community. When April goes to DeSotto's house to fetch Cheryl's things on her request, she is raped by a white man in a moving car. April files a case against him and he testifies in the court that he had mistaken April for Cheryl, the prostitute. This information makes April shell-shocked and the two sisters fall apart.

One day, when Cheryl comes to meet April, she comes in a highly intoxicated state and expresses her bitterness towards her parents, her community, the society, and April for ignoring her, after April had gained her freedom from the foster home. Cheryl reveals that she had gone in search of her parents and found her father living in utter poverty and addiction, completely submerged in squalor. She reveals that her dreams regarding her parents were completely shattered and was thoroughly disappointed to see their repulsive, deplorable state of living.

The trauma of disappointment induces Cheryl to drink for the first time in her life, and she does so in her father's house, to forget her traumatic pain of shame and disappointment. Cheryl also reveals to April that their mother Alice had committed suicide by jumping off the St. Louise Bridge, into the river. Cheryl who could not face the reality of her parents, her community and her broken dreams, seeks refuge in alcohol, and becomes an alcoholic. Mosionier points out that the children who grow up in foster homes are unable to face the reality regarding their own community, which was exactly opposite to their imagination and dreams. They are neither able accept the reality nor able to ignore their community, and find themselves torn between their love for their community and their disappointment. They feel both pity

and anger against their society and they also begin to hate themselves for not being able to accept their own community.

Alice had been subjected to prostitution by her husband, and this becomes intergenerational when Cheryl is coerced into prostitution by Mark DeSotto. This shows that the Metis women are subjected to intergenerational trauma of exploitation, not just by the white men of the society but also by the men of their own community. Henry had received money from Alice by subjecting her to prostitution, and when Cheryl provides him money through the same profession he does not chide her in the capacity of a father, but demands more money as an exploiter. Mark DeSotto uses domestic violence as a weapon to torture and punish Cheryl when she fails him. The trauma of exploitation experienced by Alice becomes intergenerational when the same trauma is experienced by Cheryl too.

Alice had committed suicide due to the estrangement from her children who were taken away by the Children's Aid Society. Mosionier points out that the Metis women commit suicide when they are unable to find a way out their misery. Thus the rate of suicide was comparatively higher in the Metis community when compared to the others in the society. Finally, Cheryl commits suicide by jumping off the same bridge as her mother did, and thus the act of committing suicide due to the various traumas in life becomes intergenerational. Cheryl and Alice jump into the river to purge themselves of their trauma of pain, shame, suffering, misery and disillusionment.

Cheryl represents the Metis women who are subjected to trauma and are driven to the extent of decimating themselves due to the betrayal they endure in life and the unbearable conditions of their life. Trauma drives them to death since it destroys their hope for survival in life, and surrounds them with an eternal gloom and hopeless unrewarding struggle. Cheryl represents the Metis women who are unable to find their way out their trauma of addiction, exploitation, depression, misery and finally accept defeat in life. She represents the Metis women who are unable to find hope and peace at the hands of the society and find them only at portals of death.

Cheryl leaves behind a son named Henry Liberty Raintree who was born to her due to the prostitution. She names her son 'Liberty' with a hope that the Metis community, especially the women, would be free from all their trauma and suffering,

and would emerge liberated from all the drawbacks that they face in life. Though the novel reveals the sad plight of the Metis women, it ends with a note of hope when April discovers her true identity, and accepts herself as being a part of the Metis community. April decides to work for the betterment of her community and to bring up Henry Liberty Raintree as an individual who would be a representative of the future generations of the Metis community, who had finally managed to come out of the disadvantages they had been subjected to for generations since the colonization.

Beatrice Culleton Mosionier ends the novel with hope dawning in the horizons of the Metis community to show that the life for the Metis community, especially the women, is not totally gloomy and devoid of hope and redemption. She ends with hope that the present generations would come to terms with their hardships and chart out a way to understand their identity, and thus help to pave a new path for the future generations, who may not be subjected to trials and tribulations to a greater extend like that of their previous generations. She feels that there is hope for the Metis women of the future generations due to the passage of time and the changes that might take place in the society's outlook regarding the Metis women.

Though Beatrice Culleton Mosionier's novel *In Search of April Raintree*, which was published in 1983, ends with hope, life does not change completely for the Metis women as hoped by her. The Metis women continue to suffer and they do not witness a complete transformation in their position or status in the social rungs of Canada. This lack of complete transformation and betterment can be found in the novel *The Break* published by katherena Vermette in 2016, more than thirty years after the publication of *In Search of April Raintree*. *The Break* talks about the anguishes and the distresses endured by the Metis women of Canada, who continue to suffer in spite of the passage of time, and the development of science and the social life of the people.

The Break, written by Katherena Vermette, was published in 2016. It reflects the life of the Metis who live in North End, Winnipeg, which is known for its high rate of crimes, and Vermette uses it as a backdrop for her novel. The story of *The Break* revolves around four generations of Metis women, giving an account of the hardships and the struggles in their life. It traces the changes that take place in the life of the Metis women through its account of the four generation of women – Kookom

the grandmother, her daughters Cheryl and Rain, granddaughters Lou, Paul, Stella and her great granddaughter Emily. The novel begins with a physical assault that takes place near Stella's house, which she witnesses. Emily is the victim of assault and the whole story revolves around the characters related to Emily and her perpetrator.

The novel *The Break* points out that all four generations of Metis women are impacted by individual trauma, intergenerational trauma and historical trauma. The novel employs the technique of multiple narratives where the characters who narrate their life are bound by a single incident. The subject of racism, poverty, marginalization, gender and child abuse, domestic violence and the apathy of the social system is highlighted through the novel. The novel portrays the struggle of the Metis women to preserve their tradition and culture from disintegration, and also portrays the fact that the Metis women are exposed to more adversities than the Metis men.

The novel begins with Stella witnessing an assault near her house, in a dark snowy evening. Stella is a victim of individual and historical trauma. When she informs the police regarding the trauma, they do not believe her since she was a Metis and the society often views the Natives with disbelief. This suspicion by the society is an intergenerational trauma that the Metis have been subjected to for generations. When Stella realizes the attitude of the police, anger swells in her and she is overcome with a sense of helpless anger. Thus Stella becomes a victim of historical trauma since she was viewed as a Metis and stereotyped by the police who are a part of the society, which had a wrong notion regarding the Metis, who are a victim of racism and neglect for generations. Stella is viewed by the police as untrustworthy and they believe that the assault was her imagination.

When Stella's complaint is ignored by the police, she gets furious since she is reminded of her mother who was beaten up by a white man, and had bled to death. The police let the man go free since he was a white and her mother was a Metis. When Stella gets to know that her mother's murderer had scooted free, she is gripped by a trauma of helplessness and disbelief in the social justice. This trauma remains embedded in her subconscious mind and is exhibited through her bitter anger against the police who does not believe her. The trauma had groomed Stella into an adult with lack of faith in the social machinery called the Judiciary system and social justice.

Though Stella witnessed the assault, she does not open the door and go out into the dark, to help the victim of assault. Stella feels sorry for the victim, but refrains from opening the door since she was reminded of her mother Rain's untimely death on the street due to an assault by a white man, on a snowy evening. The trauma of losing her mother at a very young age had caused a sense of fear and paranoia in her subconscious mind and when she witnesses the assault, she is reminded of her mother's death. She fears that she might be attacked if she ventures out to help and this fear due to the trauma makes her freeze near the door. The trauma of losing her mother in her childhood surfaces in her and prevents her from action. She fears for her life and the trauma of growing up without a mother makes her fear that her children would have to grow up motherless like her, and this fear makes her rooted to the spot near the door knob, without extending any help to the victim. This is due to the individual trauma of witnessing the assault and also due to the trauma of losing her mother at the age of nine which had turned her helpless and afraid.

The trauma of living without her mother makes her paranoid and she is haunted by the thought that she should stay alive for the sake of her two young children. Thus she is constantly haunted by the thought of death and abandoning her children as orphans. This paranoia renders her unable to live free of fear and hence she is unable to live her life with peace and contentment. In fact, when she witnesses the assault, she freezes and fails to act due to the subconscious urge to stay alive for her children and not to abandon them by facing the assault, which she fears, might turn against her and pose as a threat to her life.

Stella, later, suffers from survivor's guilt for not helping the victim on time and preventing the attack. Survivor's guilt is a feeling of guilt experienced by a victim of trauma who had managed to escape from a trauma and continue to live, while the others succumb to it. The survivor who had survived the trauma would feel guilty for not helping the other victims, and assumes that the others might have survived had they been helped by the survivor. Stella feels that she should have helped the victim, and that the victim could have been saved from the assault, had she intervened and helped. Later when she comes to know that the victim of assault was her niece Emily, she becomes extremely guilty and inconsolably sad.

Katherena Vermette points out that physical violence was used as a powerful weapon by the society for harming the helpless Metis women of the society. She is of the opinion that the deeds of violence are enacted upon the Metis women to victimize them and to render them helpless and to dominate them. This violence is an intergenerational and historical trauma since it has been handed over from one generation to another. Vermette suggests that Metis women suffer violence at the hands of both the whites and the Natives. She portrays physical violence being enacted upon the three generations of Metis women – Rain, Elsie and Emily – to imply that the Metis women are subjected to physical violence for generations, in spite of the developments found in the Nation and the society. It also specifies that the trauma of physical violence is intergenerational since it is passed down to generations, and also historical since the Metis women had been subjected to physical violence from the period of the colonizer, who had used physical violence to dominate the Native women and to overpower them. Brute force is used on the Metis women for generations to dominate and to suppress them.

Rain was subjected to violence in a pub by a white man who attacked her to dominate her, and also to exhibit his white supremacy and his hatred towards the Metis community. When Rain, who was addicted to alcohol, had expressed her point of view regarding the biased nature of the society and the dominant attitude of the whites, she was replied by the white man through physical violence. Rain, who was hurt, was denied access to medical aid by the social structure called hospital since she was a Metis woman and was stereotyped as someone who would always engage in fights amongst themselves. The trauma of being subjected to racial discrimination and indifference creates a deep sense of hurt in Rain, who was a sensitive Metis woman.

Rain was made to wait for long hours in the hospital with a bleed head injury and was completely neglected by the nurses and the doctors. Rain's self-esteem was hurt, and the trauma of shame and neglect forces her to walk home with her bleeding injury, only to faint midway on the street and freeze to death. Rain who was unable to withstand the trauma of racism dies due to the shame of being disrespected as a human being. The mere act of not providing Rain with medical aid is a demeaning act of racial attack on the dignity of the Metis woman. The racism, to which Rain was subjected to, is intergenerational, individual and historical trauma. The Metis, especially the women, have been subjected to it since the period of the colonizers and

which seems to continue for ages. The denial of medical help is a reflection of the society's attitude towards the Metis. This attitude of the society must have been the reason behind Rain's alcoholic addiction since she was always surrounded by inequalities and prejudices that arise from the heartless members of the society.

When Rain was subjected to physical violence by a white man, the physical violence doled out is nothing but a subtle form of racial violence in the guise of physical violence. In the hands of the white man, physical violence turns into a crude weapon for expressing his racism and hence it can be viewed as racial violence. When the Metis women are subjected to the trauma of racial violence, it destroys them physically and psychologically. It tends to break their spirit to strive for equality in the society and leaves them broken. The Metis women have been subjected to racial violence since the period of the colonizers and they still seem to be struggling to seek a way out of its vicious grip of destruction.

Katherena Vermette draws the attention of the readers to the physical violence known as rape that is being used by the offenders to exploit, hurt and humiliate the Metis women for generations. The deed of violence have been enacted since the period of the colonizers, on the Metis women, as they were helpless and did not have a strong voice to defend themselves from their offenders, who were mostly known to them. Elsie, who was a friend of Stella, hailed from a broken Metis family with no strong support in life. When was invited to a party by a boy whom she admired and was her schoolmate, she attends the party along with Stella, Lou and Paul. Elsie was very friendly with the boy but he had no regard for Elsie and exploits the opportunity. Elsie is gang-raped by the boy and his friends who were both whites and Natives. The physical violence called rape, enacted mercilessly on Elsie, is nothing but gender violence to which most of the Metis women are subjected to.

The violent assault shocks Elsie and the trauma of rape drives her into a state of shame. The trauma causes her to dissociate from the society, and Elsie who was broken physically and psychologically due to the trauma, drops out of school to avoid the offenders and her friends, thus being lost to Stella forever. The violence culminates into pregnancy and Elsie is sent to the government center for girls with teenage pregnancy. The mere act of government opening a center for teenage pregnancy speaks about the depth of this social complication. Elsie gives birth to her

daughter Phoenix, who was born out of the rape. Elsie, who was driven to shame, mental anguish and misery due to the act of trauma, seeks solace from alcohol and drugs to escape from the trauma.

Years later, Stella finds Elsie walking on the streets, in a dazed condition and this is due to the fact that she was constantly haunted by the shame and pain. The act of violence turns her into a failure in life and an addict, thus ensuring her eternal downfall in life with no space for hope. The shock isolates Elsie from the society and she leads a life devoid of happiness, love, dreams and aspirations, in short, she lead a life of living dead. The trauma makes her shun her close acquaintances since she does not want to be reminded of the incident, and also she does not want to be recognized by them. The trauma transforms her into a drug addict, which in turn steeps her into a life of poverty. Poverty steeps her into more destruction and she turns to prostitution to sustain herself, Phoenix and her addiction. She begets two more children, named Cedar-Sage and Sparrow, through prostitution.

Elsie neglects her children due to addiction and the man who was living with her abuses her and Phoenix by subjecting them to domestic violence. When Phoenix was beaten up by Elsie's partner, she does not rebuke him but remains silent. This may be due to the fact that the trauma of rape and prostitution might have rendered Elsie psychologically terrified of men, and more over she might have lost her ability to voice out against injustice on the night of the violence during her teenage, and hence she is unable to voice out against the injustice meted out to her and her children,. The trauma had broken the spirit of Elsie, and had steeped her into a world of poverty, helplessness, misery, addiction and loss of hope overnight, and she seeks refuge in a world of escapism.

The trauma suffered by Elsie is passed down to her children as intergenerational trauma of domestic violence and poverty. The heartless act of the society affects the life of Elsie and her future generations. The Children's Aid Society removes Elsie's children due to domestic violence exercised by her partner and her addiction, and Elsie loses her children permanently. Cedar-Sage and Sparrow are sent to foster homes where they are subjected to trauma. Vermette points out the failure and the inhuman treatments doled out at the foster homes through the death of

Sparrow, who dies due to poor care and absence of medical help, and the withdrawal of Cedar-Sage into silence.

Phoenix, the eldest daughter of Elsie was affected more than her siblings due to her mother's disintegration. She was unfortunate to grow up in an environment of trauma and destruction. She is constantly accompanied by the intergenerational trauma of poverty, violence and neglect which was handed down to her by her mother who was a failure, and this paves way for her hatred towards her mother and the society which ignored her sad plight. Her hatred and the trauma she was subjected to turns her into a social bully. Since Phoenix had witnessed her mother's addiction to alcohol and drugs right from a very young age, she too acquires the habit of alcohol, drugs and smoking, at a very young age. She turns into a social bully and at the age of sixteen, she is sent to the detention center for correction but breaks free from there. Phoenix who had never received love from her mother seeks it from the fifteen year old Clayton, who sold drugs to school children. Phoenix was seven months pregnant with Clayton's child but he had no inkling regarding it. Thus the trauma of teenage pregnancy becomes intergenerational.

When Clayton becomes interested in the thirteen year old Emily, his schoolmate, Phoenix, whose life has been riddled with traumas, views her as a threat to her future dreams of setting up a happy family with Clayton. The trauma of losing Clayton drives her to assault Emily in an inhuman manner and thus the act changes Phoenix the victim of trauma, into a victimizer of Emily. Trauma makes Phoenix blind with rage and she assaults Emily with a beer bottle, which was witnessed by Stella. Trauma transforms Phoenix into a sadist and she metes out to Emily, the same punishment endured by her mother in her teens. Though the society would never forgive Phoenix for her act of cruelty, it is the society which is responsible for the action of Phoenix, since it has ignored her in her times of need and this has turned her into a brutish beast. Phoenix is sent to the prison for sexual assault but she goes in with a hope of bringing up her child as a successful individual. She does not realize that the child would be sent to foster homes for being born to a teenaged unwed mother in the prison and thus the child would carry forward the intergenerational trauma of being separated from the family.

When Emily was assaulted by Phoenix, the physical violence is transformed into a violence of domination. Vermette tries to point out that the Metis women are subjected to violence of domination by the society comprising of both whites and the Natives. The trauma of assault conducted with the sole purpose of domination breaks the spirit and the world of happiness for the young Emily, who is silenced by violence at the threshold of life. Emily becomes broken physically and psychologically due to the traumatic pain, and begins to cling to her family for her mental and physical comfort, and to heal from the mental trauma and physical wounds. She becomes sensitive, restless, disturbed and psychologically weak. Emily represents the Metis women who break easily due to trauma but gets healed with the passage of time.

Vermette also touches upon the trauma of child abuse narrated through the memory of Stella, to whom Lou had confided her traumatic experience. Lou had confided the abuse experienced by Paul and her at a very young age, expressing her anger, bitterness and their helplessness. Though the incident had taken place when they were very young, the impact of the trauma could be witnessed even during their later stage in life. The trauma of abuse, which had embedded in their deep subconscious mind, was responsible for their broken marriages, since they were unable to trust or express their love to their relationships. Lou remained aloof from her relationships due her mistrust of men, whereas Paul has the habit of clinging for help, thus choking the relationship. The trauma of child abuse destroys their married life as an adult and they end up being single parents.

The trauma of broken marriage makes them bitter and lonely and they long to be loved. Kookom had grown up in a residential school and hence longs for love and relationship, but her husband was unable to understand her longing and subjects her to domestic violence. Kookom, who was unable to bear the domestic violence, walks out of the house with her two daughters Cheryl and Rain. The Metis women are treated with disrespect and lack of love, by their Native husbands, which cause them to break the bonds of family and live as single parents. The Metis women are ill-treated by both Native and white men, and this is evident from the life of Stella who had married Jeff, a white man. Even though Stella was married, she still leads the life of a single parent, since Jeff does not help her neither in domestic chores nor in looking after the children. The responsibility of the whole family is laid on the shoulder of Stella who feels burdened and treated as a slave.

Vermette portrays motherhood as one of the positive qualities of the Metis women. The mothers are portrayed as either being responsible and dedicated to their children like Kookom, or as addicts like Elsie, who neglect their children due to their own unresolved traumatic issues. When Emily is admitted in the hospital after the assault, her mother Paul owns up the responsibility for the misfortunes of her daughter, since she feels that she has failed in her duty as a mother to safeguard her child from the negative elements of the society. The trauma of this failure and the pain of witnessing her child suffer depressed Paul. When Phoenix was arrested for sexual assault, Elsie cries helplessly since she was worried about her daughter's future. The motherhood in her blames herself for the failures of Phoenix. The trauma of seeing their daughters suffer makes both Paul and Elsie blame themselves for their children's failures.

Though the novel portrays the trauma of misery, abandonment, violence, abuse, fear and hatred, taunting and haunting that seem to affect the Metis women, Vermette ends the novel with a note of hope. Stella who had visited her Kookom, goes back home with the resolution of living her life in peace and determination, Kookom dies in peace and with a strong belief that eventually Emily would be healed, Paul succeeds in finding a kind man as her life partner, Lou accepts the reality and limitation of her life, and Cheryl, the elderly matron of the family, becomes the next Kookom of the family after Kookom's death.

Katherena Vermette ends the novel with hopes and dreams of a better future for the Metis. She tries to imply that the course of life would definitely change for better in the case of Metis and that, their years of sorrow would come to an end. Katherena Vermette points out in a subtle manner that the society too should take an effort and the responsibility for creating a mutual friendship between the whites and the Natives, especially for the wellbeing of the Metis women. She declares that the Metis women have learned to cope up and accept their plight, and evolve out of it into successful people who would be able to live freely and unexploited on this earth.

The thesis proposes that the Metis women had been victims of trauma for ages and hence they cannot be blamed totally for their failures and the misgivings in their personal and social life. The trauma experienced by them shapes their mindset, which in turn shapes their lifestyle. Hence the society ought to be considerate towards them

bearing in mind that the traumatic experience undergone by them determines their behavior in life, and that trauma has the ability to either break a person emotionally or even turn them into a victimizers who would turn out to be a negative element in the society.

Every single child comes into the world with two tiny fists which are closed tight, where one fist contains hope and the other contains innocence. It is this cruel world which wrenches open both the fists and makes the child lose both hope and innocence. Similarly every little Metis girl begins her life with hope but it is the social environment and the domestic environment that decides her success, failure and decimation in life, based on the trauma it subjects her to. Hence the society plays a major role in the wellbeing of the Metis women and also in the destruction of the Metis women. Trauma determines the course of the Metis woman's life and hence it is the duty of the society to take care of its inhabitants in an unbiased manner and see to it that the Metis women are given their share of happiness, peace, respect and freedom in their life.

The impact of trauma on the lives of Metis men and the views of the Metis men regarding the society and life can be researched for further understanding of the Metis community. Further research can be carried out on the role of the Canadian Government in the betterment of the Metis community with special reference to the welfare of the Metis women. The success and the failures of the steps and policies taken by the society for the progress of the Metis community can be analyzed through text written by Metis writers. The psychological reasons for the failure of the Metis family structure can also be analyzed. The changes that ought to be implemented for the betterment of the Metis women can also be analyzed. The issues faced by the Metis women through the gender point of view can also be studied for further understanding of the issues that confront the Metis women.