

SUMMING UP

The present thesis is a comparative study of the works of Canadian First Nations women writers, Jeannette Armstrong and Maria Campbell and the works of Tamil Dalit women writers, Bama and Sivakami. The thesis concentrates on their identity crisis, their need to bring a change in the society and the way they trumpet a call for political unity. During the course of analysis it is pointed out that they have not only depicted the Native/Dalit woman as one who is bowed down by racism, classism and gender, but also as a strong personality who is capable of rising up with her vigour and perseverance. These writers have taken up the great responsibility of being models to their people. They do not want to remain bowed down by the existing system.

The voice of the writers is that of anguish and pain. They try to present a realistic picture with the memoirs of their own life and the true to life incidents. It is not simply to make a few shed tears at the cruel treatment of these people. It is a clarion call for awakening. The writers take up the responsibility of creating an awareness in their people. Unlike the non-Natives and the non-Dalits writing, the literature by the Natives and the Dalits project the pain in an effective way. The writings of Jeannette Armstrong, Maria Campbell, Bama and Sivakami prove that oppressed subjects can speak for themselves and they dare to break the shackles of the repressive power of racist and casteist forces. They emphasise on the dynamics of change and cultural engagement as a political act for emancipation, relief from traditional structures of oppression and the quest for new ways to state their subjectivity and history.

These writers have taken upon themselves the task of telling the story of their people in their own words. They take up their act of writing in several steps. First the writers help the Natives/Dalits in putting the finger on the source of his

frustration. Secondly the writers have to instill in the reader the long lost faith in his tradition and prepare his mind to accept his Indianness/Dalitism irrespective of its consequences. By rewriting and reconstituting their past, the writers expose their vulnerability and suppression and they create awareness among the people to rebel and ask for his due recognition and self-dignity in the world. They motivate the people to recover the broken threads of their lives. They succeed in presenting not the pain of one person but the anguish of thousands of marginalized people and their voice becomes the collective voice of their community. They express the pain of human beings who are not treated as human. The conscious thought of being a Native/a Dalit plays a prominent role.

Jeannette Armstrong, Maria Campbell, Bama and Sivakami are not only powerful writers but also activists who actively strive for their people. Jeannette Armstrong and Maria Campbell accuse the Education System of the Whites as the mechanism which has tried to silence their voice. Bama and Sivakami feel that education can be used as a tool for uprooting the casteism that exists in India and its devastating consequences. They emphasise that through education they can climb up the economic ladder and socially they can proclaim their voice

All the four writers try to give a voice to the voiceless and an identity to the people whose existence has been underestimated by the society. Instead of being humiliated by the terms Native/Dalit, they emerge empowered from passive endurance to affirmative awareness.

The four writers locate materials from their own life and experience . Armstrong's analysis of the Canadian Native women writers is applicable to the Dalit women Novelists Bama and Sivakami:

If the lives of the Canadian Native women writers are characterized by double colonization and double dispossession, their writings show the process of desalinization and rewriting with an amazing energy from the

subaltern position through the recovery of myth, oral tradition and language by decanonizing the master narratives. (15)

They not only recollect but also express their dreams. Their memories are a fusion of the personal and the collective and their dreams are about future generation. They rest their hopes with the younger generation. Their vision of a changed society is in the hands of the youth. They expect a very big transformation to take place in their society.

Jeannette Armstrong and Campbell express the rejuvenation of the Native values such as orality and storytelling through their personal narratives Bama and Sivakami want their youth to find a positive identity to gain self-dignity. These writers question the established canons of the authority and they want to assert their presence, identity longing for recognition and their innate desire to be treated as a fellow human being. Their works give a clarion call to awakening awareness among their people. Reliving the pain becomes a kind of therapeutic healing for the writers. They write with a social responsibility and express their wish for unity. For the Native Canadian writers reviving their Native culture and tradition will give them wholeness. They try to gain their identity which they have lost during colonization. But for the Natives, a new human identity for which they have been longing is yet to be established. The awakened voice of the subalterns vibrates in the changing literary scenario. They demand recognition by redefining literature with the perspective of the subalterns. They want to dismantle the identity given to them by the whites/upper caste and to rebuild a society of equality and respect with human dignity for everyone. Their need to establish well organized, principled and united stand is expressed by all the four novelists.

Due to continuous exposure to institutionalized racism, the Native is carried away from his own culture. There are two alternatives for him - he has to assimilate with the colonizer's culture or he has to cling on to his aboriginal

culture. But the institutionalized racism has already made him feel ashamed of his aboriginal culture. The result is alienation and loss of identity. He is deprived of his voice also. He is restless and this restlessness sets him go in search of an anchor for his peace of mind. This journey in circle brings him back to his ancient traditions. There comes an understanding that only his family, his land and Nature can give him a sense of wholeness. Jeannette Armstrong's **Slash and Whispering in Shadows** begin with the estrangement of the protagonists from their communities. Their encounter with subsequent trials and their final return home and reintegration. The protagonists Slash and Penny feel estranged when they are on the move. They lose their sense of belonging and consequently they suffer pain, bouts of anger and feel powerless and stranded. After two decades of educational experience marked by frustration, dejection, despair, confusion and pain, Slash emerges as an archetypal hero in search of truth. The white-dominated town school brings about his exile through institutionalized racism. The city life with its internalized racism causes loneliness, angst and near death. The medicine men, elders and their traditional ceremonies restore him to his home, community and land. These experiences help him find out his identity with his native culture. His realization of his identity gives him a new vision of the future generation.

Penny, the protagonist of **Whispering in Shadows** is blessed with a happy childhood. Her journey towards finding wholeness shows her search for identity. Penny's first step towards city life takes her away from the protective shell of the traditional Native ways. She leaves home in search of a livelihood and feels lonely in the city. She wants to fit into the city life for the sake of her children. She gets exposed to the hazards of city life which are alien and hostile to her native sensibility. She begins to explore her own psyche. She analyzes her inner being. She is divided in herself. It is like an obsession or a quest for something. She realizes that till she finds this identity, she can only be a disgruntled artist, an unwilling live-in partner, a reluctant mother and a furious activist.

Penny realizes that coming home is the route to wholeness. Penny returns home to recover herself with the unique healing methods of her community. She gets back her sense of belonging. Penny's self analytical discourse throws light on the Okanagan concepts of the individual, the family, the community and the land. The fullness a person feels is derived from his connection to family, community and the land.

Exposure to Native culture and customs and the experience of mingling with other Native people has a significant effect on the development of Metis consciousness. It serves to encourage awareness of who they are and where they belong. A new sense of Metis identity is created in **Halfbreed**. The metamorphosis of the character of Maria Campbell in her support for Metis political organizations, represent possible solutions to the identity crisis. From the beginning, Maria acknowledges who she is, takes pride in being Metis and loves her people. She realizes the need for unity among the Metis in order to throw away "the blanket" which does not give warmth. When Maria Campbell involves herself in the activities of Alcoholic Anonymous, she realizes the need for unity among the Metis. She finds her identity in the cultural roots of her Native culture. This identity, a shared feeling of belonging needs awakening among the people. Maria Campbell provides a possible solution to the contemporary identity crisis. Thus Jeannette Armstrong and Maria Campbell share their quest for roots in their Native culture. It is a reassertion of their identity. They want to establish what they have lost during colonization. It is a quest for cultural roots in their Native tradition.

Irrespective of the religious affiliation or financial position, the Dalits suffer humiliation from the dominant sections of the society. Bama's journey in **Karukku** from an innocent village girl to a Paraya and then to a Dalit involves several social experiences and revelations of the self. Bama's quest for an identity, an acceptance into society makes her get into a convent. She realizes that she is a Dalit wherever she goes. Like Slash, Penny and Maria, she comes back

home. At last she finds pride in leading a true, humble, unpretending life of a Dalit. She finds wholeness in working for the upliftment of her people. Bama has given voice to the voiceless, an identity to the people whose existence has been denied by the society. She tries to break the Dalit identity and at the same time she tries to offer a human face to the people who are often brushed aside as ‘untouchables’. In her quest for identity, Bama has projected her idea of woman’s repression and her subsequent quest for self-actualization.

Bama’s **Sangati** is not about identity crisis of a particular individual. Bama tries to give a different identity to the usual picture of submissive, suppressed, broken women. She projects them as lively, rebellious, eager persons who are ready to swim against the tide which has been pulling them down. She wants to acknowledge that despite the sorrows, pain and suffering, the Dalit women show self-confidence and self-respect which enable them to leap over their adversities by laughing at and ridiculing them. To the Dalit identity, Bama would like to bring a change by adding self-confidence and self-respect as the identity of the Dalit women. She tries to give a positive identity. She shows the positive side of the Dalit women and the freedom Dalit women enjoy. She is proud to say that no dowry is required of them. Widows are not discriminated and they can remarry if they choose.

Bama’s **Vanmam** is a different aspect of identity. There is no protagonist whose search for identity moves the novel. The quest for a collective awareness is the driving force here. The call for united effort to tackle the age old caste system and the oppressing factors is the awareness which Bama wants to instill in the youth of her community. Even here, the projection of the female characters deserve appreciation. The murder of Marraasu by Karuppasamy over the distribution of water to their respective masters’ lands leads to communal clash. When the police swoop down on the men, the women young and old stand by them, protect them, nurture them, take over their chores, run the household and also arrange for their bail. Their management of crisis following Paraya – Pallar

strife is astonishing. They drive carts to carry their dead and dig up a mass grave and bury the men. They emerge as gritty survivors, strong in their tenacious grip on the realities of the world. They are left battered, but still unbroken. This power of resilience is the new face-lift Bama wants to give her women.

Sivakami's **The Grip of Change** is the quest of the soul which has been tortured by the feeling of helplessness at the indignities caused by caste. Search for an identity or the loss of Dalit identity becomes the focus point. By the loss of Dalit identity Sivakami expresses her hope to be treated as a human being. She wants to shed away the Dalit identity and wants to be given a human face. As Gowri, she sees the possibility of the emergence of a new movement for all the downtrodden poor people. What Sivakami searches for is awareness in her people. She acknowledges that only this quest for identity to be treated as a human has made them fight against the suppressing factors and to create awareness among the others.

Anandai portrays the pitiable condition of thousands and thousands of women like Anandai who is not aware of his or her own position. There is no individuality, no spark of liveliness; she is just a typical suppressed Dalit woman. Sivakami makes it clear that only through education women like Anandai can be made aware of their power. There can be no question of identity crisis until the person realises his own position. As a woman coming from this set up, Sivakami takes up the notion seriously and tries to create awareness among her people through her writings. Jeannette Armstrong, Maria Campbell, Bama and Sivakami have succeeded in turning their identity into a source of strength. Their identity crisis is a double edged sword. On one side, they want to erase the existing identity of being broken people and on the other side the sword tries to carve out or niche a new, positive identity to their people.

Literature of Marginality relates to literature produced to project the juggernaut of social, religious and casteist oppression under which the subalterns

in the margin eke out their too heavy a burden of life. The literature that is produced by writers who themselves have experienced at first hand the oppression and segregation put forth the core of their bleeding hearts. They create awareness among the oppressed about the need to rise above their level of resistance and to claim their right with honour. Marginality based upon caste, creed, religion or race is a kind of disability or affliction. Inequality is a source of insecurity. They grope in the dark for survival. There is a wall of silence around them. Writers from the margin express their concerns, anxieties and anguishes in their writing. They explore their past and struggle for their future. They try to bring a change in the society with their writing. These writers become the spokesperson of his/her community. They present the insider's report of their experiences, memoir, recollections, rebellions rendered in a forthright, colloquial style. They try to portray everyday life with its sudden moments of traumatic experiences, alienation and self-discovery. They write with social commitment and want to perpetuate change through their writing.

Like the Canadian Native women writers Jeannette Armstrong and Maria Campbell, Dalit women novelists Bama and Sivakami locate the roots of their oppression on the basis of race, caste, sex and class. They begin to find the means of changing the system which perpetuates that oppression by making their voice become a clarion call to awaken their people and express their protest. They take up the great responsibility to lead their people along the political and spiritual path to healing and change through their powerful works.

Armstrong's **Slash** and **Whispering in Shadows** present the journey of the protagonists who return home at last to discover the 'self'. This process of development is sustained by the Okanagan philosophy of life which determines a person's worth not in terms of gender but whether he/she has the qualities to function as an efficient member of the community. At the outset, Tommy's and Penny's life may look a failure filled with despair. But the pain and suffering, humiliation and failure have made them mentally strong.

Jeannette Armstrong is more concerned with the relationship of the Natives and the world of Nature. Wherever and whenever the protagonists are thrown in disharmony, they yearn for and try to establish psychic relationship with Nature so that they overcome their crises and understand the meanings of Nature – the Mother and the Creator. Armstrong presents how the Euramerican ideologies of growth and individualism affect the natural world and take it to the verge of ruin. As an activist, Armstrong takes up the objective to preserve Native culture through her writings which highlight the Natives' connectedness to Mother Earth and their responsibility to take care of the environment.

Maria Campbell takes up the task of the Native writer to examine the past and culturally affirm towards a new vision. In her presentation of an alternative perspective of the history of Canada, Maria Campbell affirms and preserves Native views. By telling her experience from an insider's point of view, Maria Campbell confronts the lies of history with the realities of her own life. She never makes excuses for her horrible life. The process of writing is an inward journey for Maria Campbell. It is a kind of healing process which makes her understand the real enemy-racism. This inward journey has given her the inner strength and opportunity to analyze her life, her community and the society around her. Her great responsibility as a writer emerges in the form of giving voice to a silence born of suppressing racism.

Bama feels united with writers all over the world when she writes for social justice with social responsibility. She finds a uniqueness among the writers from the margin in their concern for humanness, human dignity and equality. Dalit writers make their personal experiences the basis of their writings. They write out of social responsibility with the emotion and commitment of an activist. As a testimonial autobiography, **Karukku** enables Bama to share her tale of pain and it becomes an accurate historical witnessing of a social structure of traumatic oppression. Through **Karukku**, Bama traces her development from passive endurance to affirmative awareness and finally to a definite and positive

determination towards life. She assures that through education, the Dalit community can become empowered and can gain human dignity. She aims at breaking the aesthetics of silence around issues of caste oppression, social inequality and the biases of the legal system.

Bama's **Sangati** is a portrayal of a part of the lives of the Dalit women who dare to make fun of the power that oppresses them. The undaunting spirit of the Dalit women becomes the driving force of Bama. She wants to break the image of the suppressed, tear-filled Dalit women with the image of women who can threaten and ridicule their adversaries. She wants to project them with their passion to live life with vitality, truth and enjoyment. Bama relies on the strength and resilience of Dalit women. The later part of **Sangati** moves away from the state of depression and frustration and renders a positive identity of Dalit women. She appeals for a change which can be achieved only through education and collective action. The various anecdotes express Bama's wish to perpetuate a change in the society.

Vanmam conveys the message that the people in the margin should put aside their internal enmities if they are to reclaim their self-respect and their rightful place in society. After elaborating the struggle, violence and vendetta, Bama brings her novel to an end with optimistic note. She requests her people to put aside their sorrow and asks them to work with new vigour to live together in mutual tolerance. She tries to educate her people the need to stand united for a peaceful tomorrow. She envisions a change which can be brought out only through education and their united effort.

Sivakami's vision for a change can be noted in the title **The Grip of Change**. Her writing is not just a question of experience but also perspective. She tries to unravel the multilayered structures of oppression and foreground the need for recognizing the challenges from within her caste. Sivakami's strength lies in presenting the youth of the community in **The Grip of Change**. She presents

them as eager people who are willing to strive for a change. The note of optimism is the spirit Sivakami wants to entrust on her youth. She takes up the responsibility of perpetuating a change in the attitude of her people through writing. She envisions the possibilities for a positive change.

Anandai is a visual presentation of an ordinary Dalit woman who does not have a bone of resistance. Sivakami points out that lack of education is the reason for her lack of voice. Anandai cannot even give a voice of protest because her mind is preoccupied with the task of running her household works. Even that submissive subaltern raises her head in protest when her husband brings his concubine home. She gets beaten whenever she raises her head in rebellion. Sivakami tries to instill a sense of awareness in her women. She takes up the responsibility of bringing awareness through education.

Openly acknowledging and exposing to public view, the painful psychological wounds caused by caste oppression and its consequences is a step towards healing. The experience of the individual represents the experience of the community. The solidarity of a group/community provides the strongest protection against the terror and recreates a sense of belonging and awareness and restores the self-dignity. Jeannette Armstrong, Maria Campbell, Bama and Sivakami are activists who dream for a reform in their community. They aim at improving the self-images of their community. These writers have been using writing as a weapon for their social assertion. They try to demolish and destroy the suppressive social and cultural order. They try to reconstruct and transform the social reality in the direction of freedom, equality and human dignity.

Politics, Association and Movements are different forms through which Jeannette Armstrong, Maria Campbell, Bama and Sivakami try to resist their suppression and project an emancipated community. They represent a significant historic phase in the awakening of a large mass of suppressed people. It is the voice of liberation for them as well as of protest, dissent and rebellion. They give

startling pictures of the crippling effects of social exclusion, untouchability, poverty and misery on the mind of the sensitive individual who has been silenced for a long time.

Jeannette Armstrong and Maria Campbell are acutely aware that damage to the environment is synonymous with damage to their culture. So they use their writing to protest the acquisitive expansion of the European civilization and they try to educate their people on the urgent need to go back to their own old ways of life and to return to Nature to revive their Native spirituality. They are sure that this return or psychological reunion with Nature will be possible only through their united effort.

Jeannette Armstrong discusses the Native political struggle of the 1960's in Canada in **Slash**. She further deals with Aboriginal people in the whole continent, cultural and land rights, physical deprivation of the Natives and discrimination in schools. The novel records some of the memorable political insights of 1960's and the struggle of the Natives. Being an activist, Armstrong observes the political realities. Unable to cope up with the White culture, Tommy becomes a troubled teenager. Armstrong mentions the strong feeling of unity which spread fast among the Native community. During the caravan-trip, Tommy meets Elise, an activist. She makes him aware that their people are being killed through psychological warfare and tells him that young Indian Chiefs have become clowns in the hands of B.I.A.agents. As a political activist, Armstrong articulates her views through Elise. Tommy's friendship with Mardi at the Indian Friendship Centre marks a change in his attitude. It is Mardi who motivates him to find a third choice and introduces him to Red Patrol, which sets up an example of pride and power in being Indian.

Slash's participation in the number of political agitations shows that they are not bothered about which Band or Tribe a person belongs to. Every participant is an Indian. His discussions reveal the point of view of

assimilationists to liberationists. His political experience is characterized by frustration, confusion and pain. He gets a better understanding of the Indian Rights Movement and looks forward to the future generation with a ray of hope.

Penny of **Whispering in Shadows** is a believer of Native traditions. She is a painter, Indigenous Rights activist and an environmentalist. Penny feels that disassociation from Nature is the reason for the problems and there is no community life. She expresses her views on consumerism and globalization. She takes part in protest rallies held to prevent deforestation by logging companies. Along with David, she visits the indigenous people in Mexico and some Native Centres in the USA. She contrasts life in the city with the life in reserves where there is no value for currency. Sharing and caring can be seen only with the Natives in reserves. By taking up the journey in circle, she comes back to the Native life which gives a sense of self dignity and safety to the mind. These political activities are nothing but a united front put forth for a common cause. In these political activities neither Penny nor Slash stand alone. They stand with people for a united cause. Only through their Native traditional ways they can achieve their sense of self-dignity. So they stand united in bringing back the Native traditional ways.

Maria Campbell assures through her autobiography **Halfbreed** that it is possible to remove the economic disparities and improve the status quo of the Natives through political organizations. The attitude of the dominant society, stereotypes, racist and discriminatory practices, the ‘divide and conquer’ technique of the government and the child welfare system are the key factors responsible for the Metis problem. Maria Campbell takes pride in being a Metis and asks her people to retain their Metis identity. This sense of identity can be awakened only by resurging the cultural traits with the help of the Native organizations. Through her life story, Campell specifies the need for a united effort through the Native organizations. In her support for Metis political

organizations, Maria Campbell represents possible solutions to the Metis identity crisis.

Campbell feels that political organizations act as catalysts in generating a new feeling of pride and hope for the Metis people and give them a confidence in themselves. Her association with Alcoholics Anonymous makes her aware of the other organizations. She realizes the need for unity to throw away ‘the blanket’ which does not give warmth. She accepts that there are many set backs in the organizations and sometimes the leaders become victims of the ‘divide and rule’ policy of the Government. She hopes that the general unrest among the poor people throughout Canada can lead to a united voice. Maria Campbell is aware that an armed revolution of Native people will never come about. She hopes that people will set aside their difference and come together as one. She assures that the Natives will need each other to survive and to fight their common enemies. The new sense of identity and a shared feeling of belonging will help them get united.

The death of colonialism has given birth to political awareness and freedom for the people suppressed in the margin for time immemorial. There is an aspiration in the minds of these people for attaining equal status and dignity. They excavate their long past to bring out the pain of their life and forge ahead with determination to attain self-dignity. It is a protest literature against all forms of exploitation based on class, race, caste or occupation. The birth centenary of revolutionary Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar marks the political awakening of the Tamil Dalits and the creation of Tamil Dalit Literature. Bama’s **Karukku** reflects the low status of Dalit Christians and the breaking of the silence of subalterns through the process of recovery. Irrespective of their religious affiliation and financial position, the lower caste people suffer humiliation from the dominant sections of the society.

Bama envisions a new society made up of justice, equality and love. Bama is aware of the inherent political dimension of the Dalit identity. She appeals to her people for a united front. She wakes up her people to open their eyes and dares them to stand up for change. She wants to prove that there is no one high or low but everyone is a human being. Unlike the writings of the other three writers, there is no direct reference to any political party or Association or movement. But Bama firmly believes in the united effort of the subalterns. She is happy to see people who work with zeal for the Dalit liberation. Her close association with these people has inspired her to take up her responsibility as a writer more seriously. When she felt like a bird with broken wings, it is these associations which have helped her recover her wings. She finds solace in their company. Their love soothes her pain and she realizes the need for political unity. Self-respect and self-dignity can be attained only when there is united effort.

Bama's **Sangati** is about Dalit women's journey from subjugation to the heights of celebration of life. Like sharpening a rustled sickle, Bama wants her women to sharpen their minds and learn to live with self-respect. It is a clarion call for empowerment through education and introspection. Bama pens down the ignorance of the Dalit women about the political activities going around them and their indifferent attitude of let anyone be the ruler. She feels helpless at this mentality. Bama firmly believes that they can demand the rights due to them and demonstrate their strength through political power.

Bama's **Vanmam** echoes Maria Campbell's opinion that the 'Divide and Rule' policy of the Government/politicians never allows the Natives/Dalits to get united. By bribing the leaders, the effort of their organization to get united is shattered. Intra-Dalit rivalry is nurtured and kept alive. While the upper castes remain unaffected by the communal clash, the Parayas and Pallars go on murdering. Bama gives a silent appeal to her people that the marginalized people should put aside their internal enmities if they want to reclaim their self-respect and their rightful place in society. A democratic resolving of intra-caste

difference becomes the ultimate aim and the people must realize the need for united front.

Sivakami's **The Grip of Change** discusses the issue of Dalit leadership and points out the pit falls inherent in an imitative model wherein Dalit leaders duplicate corruption and manipulate politics. The novel is a vision of Sivakami for an organized, educated Dalit youth who will stand united with commitment and sincerity of action for the upliftment of the Dalits. She ensures social justice through political activities. Sivakami presents the self-indulgent side of a leader in the character of Kathamuthu who makes use of every opportunity for his benefit. Then Sivakami projects her vision for an ideal leader. She focuses on the union activities of Chandran, Gowri's cousin. It is very difficult to bring a change in the people who are engulfed in utter helplessness and lethargy. Slowly he builds up a strong team of workers. The changes forecast by Sivakami in the political scenario and in the lives of her people give a ray of hope. She assures that only with a united effort, self-respect and self-dignity can be attained.

Anandai picturises the society and makes it clear that empowerment of women is not possible unless they are made aware of who they are. The novel shows the oppressive acts of a husband and a submissive woman. Anandai channelises her energy into tending her family land, improving the family livestock and nurturing her five children. When she does not have time to sit and relax, how can she think about emancipation and self-dignity? There is no place for politics. In the midst of domestic violence there is a bonding within and outside the family. The Dalit women have got a still long way to come out and shine in the political scenario.

Tommy of **Slash**, Penny of **Whispering in Shadows**, Maria of **Halfbreed**, the nameless protagonist of **Karukku** and **Sangati** and Gowri of **The Grip of Change** stress for their union with the other Natives/Dalits to bring about a change in the attitude of their people. From the defeatist attitude, there should

be progress towards self-dignity and self-respect which will become possible only through their political unity.

Literature is a manifestation of the cultural, social, political and spiritual growth of a nation. It not only embodies the long-cherished and the deep-rooted traditions, but also brings out a comprehensive perception of the changing aspects of life. Literature becomes a specific, precise record of the history of the nation and the essential characteristics and spirit of its people. Technique lends a distinct charm to the author's work and Jeannette Armstrong, Maria Campbell, Bama and Sivakami are master craftsmen in fusing the theme and the form by moulding through various technical devices. Their narrative modes combined with symbolism, images, settings, motifs, humour and language add spices to their earthy flavour. Their experiences are the same and they come from the marginalized group. In their attempt to get over the crisis of silence imposed on them, these writers have used the first person narration. They excel in verbal mastery, language manipulation, linguistic experimentation and artistic devices. The story is told through different points of view.

The genre of autobiography is mostly used by these writers. An individual's story gains significance in the exploration of group identity. The life experiences of the marginalized communities have turned autobiography into a strategy of representation and resistance. They may be from distant lands and different cultures but the agony of the soul is the same. Autobiography or the self narrative becomes a genre of collective identity. The personal narratives of Jeannette Armstrong, Maria Campbell, Bama and Sivakami are a combination of history, traditions, beliefs and personal experience with anecdotes and folklore.

The life story of *Slash* becomes a Native historical novel as it covers an important span of the history of Canada. The novel is primarily an autobiographical account which narrates the journey of the protagonist. The genre of autobiography undergoes a process of hybridization. With a Prologue and an

epilogue, **Slash** is a history of political resistance parallel to the history of colonization. **Whispering in Shadows** is a narrative about change – change as a process, a continuum through which Penny discovers her identity as a Native person. Okanagan traditions have been used throughout the novel. The novel is the personal narrative of Penny and it involves her journey through life as an artist, environmental activist, a single mother, a Native, a college student and a casualty of cancer. Armstrong has incorporated poems, letters and entries from Penny's own diary to tell the story.

Maria Campbell's autobiography **Halfbreed** is a communal declaration of the humiliation experienced by Campbell as a Metis woman. Her autobiography records oral narratives, values, beliefs, traditions, humour and figures of speech. Despite the images of poverty and economic destitutions faced by Maria Campbell's family, the first part of **Halfbreed** is permeated by laughter, music and a sense of joy prevailing in the community. The Natives' respect for the elders, their joint living and superstitious beliefs are described vividly. Maria Campbell's suppressed anger is revealed in the title of her book **Halfbreed**. The symbolic reference to 'the blanket' which fails to give warmth but destroys the self-respect and self-dignity is remarkable. Superstitious beliefs about ghosts make the readers laugh. With skillful texturality Maria Campbell has seasoned her writing with the Native rituals, celebrations, beliefs, nicknames and stories.

Bama's **Karukku** is a 'testimonial life – writing. This personal testimony slowly becomes an authentic version of traumatic oppression of a community. Through a series of sometimes poignant, sometimes funny reflections on her childhood in a caste – centred village, Bama vividly recreates her experiences as a Dalit child. **Sangati** is like a discussion between the narrator and her grandmother with anecdotes about many women. There is not a particular protagonist. The narrator is just an observer. The interconnected anecdotes talk of the courageousness, wit, humour and spirit of the Dalit women Bama creates an altogether different world with the form of oral narrative. She talks of the past, of

the present, of the stories about different people, of the social ceremonies including marriage and other festivals and even about the evil spirits that possess women. These descriptions make **Sangati** the biography of a community.

Vanmam, the third novel of Bama also doesnot have an individual hero or heroine. The protagonists are the two Dalit Castes-Paraiyars and Pallars and the enmity which kindle the ‘Vanmam’. This unrelenting anger swells and explodes into full-scale war. The ‘Vanmam’ is kept burning by the uppercastes. Though the novel is about atrocities and bloodshed, there are occasions which give us a picture of celebration of Christmas, New Year and Pongal. The novel is picturesque in its presentation of the games organized.

The Grip of Change by Sivakami has the daring quality of inwardness – the ability to look within one’s community and critique its shortcomings. The novel becomes an autobiography when the writer re-visits, re-interprets and re-enters her pain and observation in the sequel to the novel **Author’s Notes**. The narration of her personal experience gives the narrative a personal touch. **Anandai** is a presentation of the life of an ordinary Dalit woman who doesnot think about anything else except her work in the family. The powerful presentation of the character is revealed when the readers understand the real position of the Dalit women. Sivakami’s success lies in her characterization.

Like the other three writers, Sivakami also uses symbols to indicate the changes and their inherent meaning. The title ‘**The Grip of Change**’ indicates that a new change is inevitable when the old things are cleaned up and thrown away. It is a death knell announcing the time for the age old sufferings to get over and the new dawn to come up.

All these writers use contemptible, unrefined swear words, gossip, character assassination, rude nick names, obscene and abusive words which are particulars to their background. They have their own linguistic, grammatical,

syntactic and rhetorical peculiarities and similarities. These are used as powerful weapons and give a realistic touch to the narrative technique. Folk songs, folk tales, folk ballads, proverbs, riddles and myths enhance their works with a generous seasoning of folk elements particular to their own tradition and culture.

Folk songs, folk dances and folk music have an important role in the life of the Dalits. In Native culture also, prime importance is given to their rituals, songs, sundances and cleansing rituals.

The lives of the protagonists of these writers are standing testimony to their life, courage, endurance, will power and their keen instinct for survival. All these writers make their novels a call for compassion, an understanding and a plea for human dignity. Breaking all the barriers, they try to create a new world which will give human dignity to the subalterns. They use writing as one of the weapons to fight for the rights of the underprivileged.

A study of these writers reiterates that the Native Canadian Literature and the Dalit Literature are very much alike because the emotional worlds of these two societies are similar. A commonality can be found in their hopes, their rebellion and their aspiration for human dignity. Their languages may be different but their state of mind and the emotions expressed in their literature are parallel. Both appeal to the heart.

The present dissertation is a study of the identity crises faced by the Native and Dalit women writers who wish to perpetuate change through their writing and they strive for political unity to gain self-dignity. The craftsmanship of these writers is also studied. Though the discussion has been confirmed to these main issues, several other areas for future research have also been identified during the course of the study. The authors can be explored in their individual capacities on the basis of the above topics. The narrative structure of the works

demands critical attention. The growth and maturity of the protagonists in the writings can be treated in an independent study.

It may be quite appropriate to specify in this context that there is ample scope for further research in this area, as these Native women writers can be studied in relation to the Native male writers, in terms of their experience of oppression that cuts across the boundaries of gender. There is sufficient scope to conduct research investigations on these Dalit women writers in comparison with Dalit men's autobiographies like Omprakash Valmiki's **Joothan** and Laxmain Gaikwad's **The Branded**. A separate study of the Personal narratives of the Dalit writers has ample scope. The writers in the other genre can be studied. A representative writer from Aborigines of Afro-American countries, Australia, Canada, South-Pacific Islands and India can be studied as we can have certain common ingredients that may be identified as literature of resistance and share some common psychic and historical conditions. A study of the literature of subalterns is a potential area of scope for comparative literature scholars.