Abstract

The thesis ‘From Oppression to Optimism through Self-spun Philosophy - A Comparative Reading of the Fictional Output of Maya Angelou and Bama’ is outlined into six chapters which discuss at length how the literary discourses of the two representative writers - Maya Angelou, the Black American, and Bama, the Indian Dalit - offer new and positive insights into their communities. A comparative reading of these two writers exhibits their optimism despite the discrimination and disillusionment they had endured.

The first chapter of the thesis, titled ‘Inchoative writers of Optimism’, sketches the objectives of the study and its significance. In the second chapter, ‘The Genre of Literature of Resistance’, both the writers are categorized as literary resistantes and their works analyzed using the ‘Theory of Resistance’. ‘Indelible History’ forms chapter three which deals with in detail the undeniable history of the Blacks and the Dalits and their literary development. Chapter four is titled ‘Imposed Oppression’ and is a detailed study of the oppression and exploitation imposed on the Blacks and the Dalits. The writers have been found to expose oppression at the societal, religious and gender levels. ‘Ingrained Optimism’ forms the fifth chapter of the thesis. It notes how the writings of Angelou and Bama point to a marked deviation from other oppressive writers: optimism and hope generates self esteem and self identity to these writers. The concluding chapter ‘Beautiful Black, Dignified Dalit’ sums up all the chapters wherein the content of the thesis is revisited in terms of its stated objectives.
It has been found that there is an intense period of disillusionment in the history of contemporary marginalized women’s writing. But there is also a healthier counter discourse that allows them to go beyond despair. There is a forward looking optimism within their writings that convey transformability of existing conditions. They register their protest and resist whatever is detrimental to the gynic quest of self identity, self assertion and self worth. This act of autogenesis, the process of coming into being from silence to sound, is recorded as a slow process from marginalized invisibility into central vision.