AN ABSTRACT

The present research entitled, “A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Selected Autobiographies by Indian Dalit and African American Writers” is an attempt to analyse six autobiographies namely *The Branded* by Laxman Gaikwad, *The Outcaste* by Sharankumar Limbale, *The Prisons We Broke* by Baby Kamble, *Up from Slavery* by Booker T. Washington, *Black Boy* by Richard Wright and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou from the point of view of sociolinguistics. These autobiographies are considered as the landmarks in the literature of subalterns. They present the lives of disadvantaged people from the Dalit and Negro societies. The language used by the autobiographers is unique and natural. It reveals the social and cultural backgrounds of the characters. Therefore, studying these autobiographies in the light of Sociolinguistics really shows how language plays an important role in the social and cultural contexts.

The thesis is divided into six chapters as follows:

**The First Chapter** serves as the general introduction to the thesis as a whole. In the beginning chapter, the aims and objectives of the study are clearly stated. It also highlights the rationale and significance and scope and limitations of the study. Further, it spells out the methodology and techniques to be used. It also throws light on some definitions of autobiography. In addition, the diachronic study of Indian Dalit and African American autobiographies is furnished towards the end of the chapter.

**The Second Chapter** is entitled as ‘Theories and Concepts in Sociolinguistics’. This chapter studies the sociolinguistic theory in general, and different concepts and terms related to it in particular. In the beginning, an attempt is made to define and explain the term ‘Sociolinguistics’. The chapter discusses the major sociolinguistic terms and concepts in view of the research objectives. It also offers distinction between Linguistics and Sociolinguistics. The other aspects of Sociolinguistics such as language and society, Sociolinguistics and sociology of language, language and social class, language and humanity, power and solidarity and code mixing and code
switching are also discussed in detail. The chapter forms the foundation for further chapters.

The Third Chapter ‘Sociological Background of the Characters’ explains the sociological background of both the major and minor characters of the selected autobiographies. This chapter relates sociological background of the characters to their linguistic behaviour as both are complementary to each other. It is generally observed that a person’s sociological background has great impact on his/her language. The language a character uses very clearly suggests about the social background he/she belongs to. The sociological background of the characters helps to understand the nature of characters and their linguistic expressions. This also helps to establish the authenticity of the characters and the situations in the autobiographies under consideration.

The Fourth Chapter is entitled as ‘Indian Dalit Autobiographies: A Sociolinguistic Analysis’. In the beginning of the chapter, an attempt is made to study the factors influencing the language of the characters such as social class, caste, age, education and gender. It also discusses the extracts and the conversations of the characters from the selected Dalit autobiographies. The Dalit writers’ experimentation with regard to phonology, morphology and syntax is thoroughly examined. In addition, the chapter thoroughly discusses the code mixing and code switching strategies used by the Dalit writers. The other strategies such as power and solidarity are also discussed in detail. The chapter thoroughly examines the address terms, greetings, blessings, curses, abusive expressions, honorific terms, kinship terms, diminutives, unusual spellings and other sociolinguistic features of the selected autobiographies.

The Fifth Chapter is entitled as ‘African American Autobiographies: A Sociolinguistic Analysis’. This chapter investigates sociolinguistic features of autobiographies written by African American writers. Factors influencing the use of the characters’ language like social class, race, age, education, gender and power and solidarity are taken into account while discussing the sociolinguistic features. It studies the linguistic experiments made by African American writers to unveil the socio-cultural realities that existed in America during the slavery era. The chapter also
interprets and discusses the sociolinguistic aspects like address terms and greetings, abusive expressions, honorific terms, unusual spellings, diminutive expressions etc.

The Sixth Chapter is the ‘Conclusion’. This chapter is mainly devoted to the major findings of the present research work. It also states the pedagogical implications of the study. Towards the end of the chapter, an effort is made to suggest scope for further research in the related area.