
DALIT WOMAN IN DALIT LITERATURE: VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Dr. Nirley.R. Petkar.

Assistant Professor

Jawaharlal Nehru College

Wadi, Nagpur, Maharashtra

Email: petkarnirley487@gmail.com

Abstract :

Dalit literature is a literature of pains and agonies. It started from the undocumented oral folklore and takes of the past decades. Dalit literature was established in the 1960's and the 1970's particularly in Marathi and Gujrati. After two decades Tamil Dalit writing started in Tamilnadu. A Dalit woman Dalit amongst Dalits. Double oppressed by a patriarchal and caste tyrannical society. Here a Dalit woman bounce back against all odds. Here the writer not only lamenting but also celebrating spirit of Dalit women. This paper shows how violation of human rights and gender discrimination in the life of Dalit women. Here, the writers show Dalit women became victim of violation of human rights and gender discrimination.

Keywords : Tyrannical, Patriarchal, Commodities, Agonies, Oppressed.

Introduction :

The Dalit woman faced violation of human rights and gender discrimination, which was written by Dalit women writers in their books. The portrayal of Dalit women in the works of male writers, in contrast to their distinct identity as visible in Dalit female writers, has been less than adequate, thus forecasting the intense impact of gender discrimination and violation of human rights faced by Dalit women in Dalit psyche. It not only renders claims of egalitarianism in Dalit literature ineffective but also tends to make any coherent conception of Dalit aesthetics logically unstable due to the presence of Dalit woman as a subverting force. Dalit critics led by Sharan Kumar Limbale and Gopal Guru, while defending the necessity for alternative Dalit aesthetics, base their arguments on Dalit literature's essential separability from traditional literature, its realistic nature, its connection to human life, its evocation of pain in place of pleasure, the kind of audience it addresses and its redefinition of beauty. According to Dalit critics since traditional aesthetics aims at pleasure born of discovering beauty in a work of art, a person who derives pleasure from any work of art must be sensitive enough to appreciate and taste it. It leads to inference firstly that the aim of any work of art is to impart pleasure, secondly that the work of art must possess beauty and thirdly that the targeted audience should be refined enough to appreciate the beauty only then they will be able to taste it. Dalit writings aim at depiction of pain and sufferings of Dalits and the object of study is exploited, suffering mass of Dalits which is not 'beautiful' in the traditional sense. In Dalit writings, we find that, violation of human rights and gender discrimination faced by Dalit woman.

There are some inherent incongruities in the conception of Dalit aesthetics as a counter



value system to traditional aesthetics. Dalit aesthetics faces roadblocks due to caste essentialism- the problems faced in formulating a universally accepted definition of Dalit language and arts- and because of its essentially reductive approach to aesthetics. The claimants of Dalit aesthetics base their arguments on two assumptions- that existing art and aesthetic theory is an unequivocal expression of Brahmanical ideology and that dalitism needs to develop its own autonomous criterion for the production, interpretation and appreciation of art. The seemingly autonomous nature of Dalit aesthetics relies upon some problematic premises: firstly, that there is a universally shared Dalit experience and secondly that art should be evaluated on the basis of its accuracy to depict this experience. The first point is eroded by the presence of Dalit women as a potential sub-category within the overarching Dalit experience, whose experiences have been largely precluded from the norm of educated, city bred Dalit males who determine mainstream Dalit experience. Secondly, the formulations regarding the power of art to correctly represent human experience, which is premised on mimetic theory of art, has been dismantled by recent theories about representational arts. Thirdly, the concept of Dalit identity is itself problematic and it can argue that the primary aim of Dalit literature is to question and subvert the core of beliefs and assumptions around Dalits which has been created by centuries old Brahminic literature, rather than creating an alternate aesthetics. Further, Dalit aesthetics is imbricated not only by questions of gender but also by educational background, profession and locale of the writer. There can be no single Dalit aesthetics because of internal disjunctions in Dalits due to their belonging to different sub-jatis and their location in different local cultures due to spatial distances. To deny alternate Dalit aesthetics is not to say that all aesthetic values are perennial: they fed upon the sup which courses through the fibers of a society in the form of social, religious and cultural postulations. The definition of what is beautiful varies with these drifts in human societies and this transformation is what keeps any culture alive. 'A new beauty is born' every time a momentous incident shakes the social order and human consciousness. The inert, monotonous corpus of literary values, represented by Brahminic thought needed a vigorous shake up at a time they had lost their rejuvenating touch with the vast majority of human beings. A revision of literary values becomes exigent when old aesthetics become immune to fresh ideas and experimentation. Universality of experience most often becomes a ploy to be dumb and deaf towards influx of novelty and embodies a deep-seated fear against losing the comforting, conventional order. In Dalit writings, the Dalit woman wrote about violation of human rights and gender discrimination. In Karukku, Sangati, The Prisons We Broke and other Dalit woman books shows violation of human rights and gender discrimination.

The caste system in India evolved due to diverse impacts of domination wars between Aryans and Aborigines, zeal of a particular community to seal itself off from others and the 'purity complex.' The notion of women in this clash of civilizations as vassal to beget sons, who were essential for building and preserving the emerging empires, was important to Aryans. Further, women also acted as a source of comfort and their sexuality needed to be contained. Thus, women as gateways to caste is an important factor underlying the matrix of caste system. Dalit aesthetics will need development of a strong base in distinct narratological style of 'mainstream' literature, but its artlessness must be consciously produced and there should be some 'seriousness' behind it if it is to go beyond being 'the stories of sobs.' Dalit writers and



critics need to work hard as mere spontaneity, rationality with a methodical, scientific analysis of caste system.

The ideological structures used to enslave women are not limited to upper castes, these postulations seep to Dalit society and are conspicuous in Dalit male's appropriation of female sexuality, preponderance of domestic violence in Dalits and the imbalance of household chores. Dalit male writers subscribe to this malady afflicting Dalit life and society wherein women are seen in essential patriarchal terms through the skewed images of Dalit women in their works. The broken images of female characters in Dalit male writers such as Limbale and Macwan are testimony to the neglect of gender question in Dalit literature. Why is that Dalit male writers view females in certain stereotypical images and are unable to view them as human beings with their own concerns? Shantamai and Masamai in *The Outcaste* reflect a ruling fixation of Dalit writers wherein women are seen either victims of the debilities of caste or pieces of pride for Dalit males who glorify themselves in their motherliness, naturalness and unassuming love. Along with them, the non-Dalit male writers work shows more obtrusive presence of idolizing streak in whatever little space they give to Dalit women. There is strong inclination to see them as 'natural' against the decadent and conservative upper caste women. In spite of outward veneration, Dalit women remain objects of lust and nowhere do they become capable of attaining an independent status. As against both male Dalit writers and male non-Dalit writers, Dalit female writers draw a different and stimulating picture of Dalit women in their works. Be it *Sangati* or *Vanmam* or *Pan on Fire*, Dalit women betray a strong consciousness of their problems and challenges in a male dominated world.

The twin repressive structures of caste and gender, which are bane of the lives of Dalit women, have been adequately represented by Dalit female writers in their texts. The fate of Mariama in *Sangati*, who has to face victimization on the hands of the landlord Kumarasami Ayya, is typical of a Dalit woman who lives in the fear of sexual exploitation. Her berating by her own caste council wherein she is fined more than the alleged partner in the crime *Manikkam*, is an outcome of her 'femaleness.' The voices of women straddling the periphery of caste council suitably undercut the assumed notions of male superiority and wisdom. The *Pan on Fire* and *The Prisons We Broke* depict a world of women which constantly challenges and subverts notions of hitherto considered impregnable fortress of male hegemony.

The works of Dalit women writers amply illustrate the thesis that Dalit literature needs to reinvent its aesthetical considerations by reaffirming its matriarchal traditions. The external democracy vociferously demanded and advocated by Dalit critics cannot sustain itself without the internal democracy and egalitarianism. Further, it will have to shed its crusts which are misguidedly emphasized as Dalit. To venerate every custom just because it happens to be practiced by them and to invent imaginary excuses without understanding their implications to the full is not a good proposition. For instance, *Sangati* questions some of the well-entrenched notions of Dalit aesthetics such as eulogy of greater freedom accorded to women in Dalits by emphasizing that this freedom comes at the cost of physical assaults and persecution. The much-adulated asset of equitability in Dalit life does nowhere exist in the world portrayed by writers such as Sumitra Bhavne and Racine. Similarly, the mini parliament of Dalits- *Chavadi*



does not emerge as a symbol of democracy in Dalits in the works of Dalit women writers. Rather, except in Vanmam which shows greater influence of Dalit male ideology than other works of Bama, it remains a metaphor of unemployment and frustration in Dalit youths in Pan on Fire and Viramma. Further, the natural impulses in matters of love and sex, praised by Guru and Limbale come under most severe attack in these novels. The 'natural sex' in these texts becomes beastly and an emblem of power. It rarely demands participation from women who are used as 'relieving pot' by their men and then are left.

The solution to alternate aesthetics claimed by Dalit critics lies not in a disparate, autonomous aesthetic theory based on Dalit experiences but in the awareness of history and culture governed relationship between aesthetics, ideology of caste and Dalit's cultural practices. The aesthetics based on irreconcilable caste specifies represents an untenable position. It is not to deny the position of Dalits to the most downtrodden section of the society and their right to live and speak, rather it points out the inherent contradictions and instabilities in maintaining an unequivocal position while denying the presence of complexities within Dalit aesthetics. This alternate aesthetics will be informed and redefined by concerns for Dalit women. In the identification of a Dalit woman, both the words 'Dalit' and 'woman' define as well as limit her. The epithet 'Dalit' makes her a part of subaltern segment of Hindu society: the nomenclature woman further degrades her in a society of hierarchal power relationships. While due to her being a Dalit, Sohoni faces the same ordeals daily, her brother Bakha faces the same ordeals daily, her brother Bakha faces, her 'femaleness' makes her a victim of the lust of Pandit Kali Nath in Untouchable. This dual oppressive structure is discernible in the lives of nearly all Dalit women in Pan on Fire. Here caste deprivations are overshadowed by the violence in their lives perpetrated by their own kinsmen. This physical violence against female body arises out of patriarchal notions of possession and appropriation and the subsequent subduing of female self is claimed as natural. A search for alternative social structures in the larger society does not proceed from a concern for more equitable relationships at home. Gandhian and Ambedkar conflict, by an ironic twist of history, can be felt here in Dalit male's assertion of sacredness of home turf while desiring a change in the outer social circumstances. The point is that external democracy without internal one cannot be sustained for long and will fall of its own weight. Dalit critics venture for redefining of Dalit aesthetics must be consequent on an expansive cognition of Dalit female reality and the vicissitudes they face in a predominantly phallogocentric Dalit society. The search for an avant-garde aesthetics will be inefficacious till they rediscover their essential coequality with this 'thrice- subjugated human segment in literature as well as in society. In this way, Dalit woman writers wrote about that, Dalit woman faced violation of human rights and gender discrimination.

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