



## CRITIQUE ON DALIT MALE WRITINGS AND DALIT WOMEN WRITINGS

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### ABSTRACT

*"Dalit Women Speak Differently", Gopal Guru argued that Dalit women need to speak "differently" because they face exclusion not only in the political sphere but also in the cultural sphere. He writes: "Dalit male writers do not take the production of Dalit women's literature seriously and reject it." Not only caste and class identity but also one's gender status determines the validity of the phenomenon the experience of Dalit women shows that local resistance is important among Dalits. According to him, the two issues that came out were: 'Differences' exist not only among 'Indian' women but also in Dalit communities based on gender and this writing becomes a way for Dalit women to explain their struggles and resistance. While Sharmila Rege criticized Guru's argument in favor of identity-based politics for Dalit women, she argued for a more compelling approach, that for Dalit feminism to flourish, "their causes" must 'change' our work. (Rege, p. 45),*

**Key Words:** - Dalit communities, Dalit women, contemporary Dalit women's identity, resistance, community, Brahmanism and Dalit patriarchy,

### INTRODUCTION

In Dalit male autobiographies, women are portrayed as victims or mothers. Sharankumar Limbale's Akarmashi, two prominent female characters, his mother Masmai and grandmother Santamai are examples of this type of representation. Masamai forces Hirola to go to the village feast and blames him for not bringing kheer for her, Santamai feeds him without

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eating her own share. For Limbale, Masamai becomes a barrier to self-esteem, a woman who suffers from extreme hunger and Santamai remains a source of inspiration. Dalit women's writing, on the other hand, paints a different picture. The stories, songs and folktales of daily life, the writings of Dalit women present the story of survival and protest. Some of the key aspects of contemporary Dalit women's writing are identity, resistance, community, Brahmanism and Dalit patriarchy, and criticism of mainstream Indian feminism. Commenting on what 'Dalit literature' means, Limbale writes,

*"Dalit writers believe that Dalit literature is a movement. They see their literature as a vehicle for their pain, sorrow, questions and problems. The relationship between the writer and the reader is broken." (Limbale105).*

Limbale thus refers to writing and his living experience that does not fit into the mainstream 'aesthetics' and thus violates its parameters. Dalit literature diminishes the 'pleasure' value of literature by bringing 'disturbing' images and language. According to Limbale, the investment of Dalit literature in material life experiences challenges the mythical concept of 'aesthetics'. The two novels under study are important because they capture two different moods from two different eras. Baby Kamble's *The Jail We Break* symbolizes the energy and hope of Dalit women autobiographers who took part in the 1980 Ambedkar movement, while Bama's statement illustrates 21st century pessimism.

#### **The Prisoners and the Prisons They Broke: -**

Calling it "social-character rather than autobiography", Maya Pandit writes in *The Introduction to the Prisoners We Break* about Dalit feminist sentiments that seem different from the writings of Dalit men. She writes: Next to her for the original Marathi autobiography, she says, 'Today our young educated people are ashamed to say Mahar. But what is there to be ashamed of? We are the great dynasty of Mahars of Maharashtra. We are its true inhabitants, the songs of the soil. The name of this land also comes from our name. I love the name Mahar of our caste - it flows in my veins, in my blood and reminds me of the fierce struggle for truth. Juthan, on the one hand, is a well-known Dalit male autobiography, where author Omprakash Valmiki describes painful and deliberate attempts to hide his ethnic identity, while Dalit women writers are proud of their caste origins. This statement was made due to Ambedkar's call for self-respect. The book is extremely complex with the participation of Dalit women in the Ambedkarite movement, which underlines the lives of Dalit women as a constant struggle at home and abroad.

#### **Narratives of Humiliation and Survival: -**

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In the sphere of the 'within' Kamble describes how her father took pride in keeping her mother at home. She writes: "In those days, it was the custom to keep women at home, behind the threshold. The honor enjoyed by a family was in proportion to the restrictions imposed on the women of the house." Here therefore, we see an internal patriarchy imitating the upper caste practices of keeping women within the house. However, this intra-patriarchy was not just a reflection of upper caste patriarchy. It had its own workings of patriarchal systems as well. In Baby Kamble's narrative we hear stories of young girls married off at an early age becoming subject to the verbal torture of the mother in law. Any attempt to get out of this situation resulted in enormous physical abuse, such as beatings and sneezing. The mother-in-law's 'son-in-law' rudeness, 'loss of respect' and her 'non-star' luck, along with stories of child molestation, were a daily occurrence in the society for the young Mahar women of Baby Kamble. Divided Dalit women, both inside and outside the home, are remembered for generations for deprivation and oppression. However, these memories become a way of self-expression rather than a silent acceptance of destiny. Baby Kamble writes about an incident in her childhood when the Ambedkarite movement was in full swing. Mahar girls were teased by upper caste girls at school, saying:

*"That Ambedkar has educated himself, that's why these filthy Mahars have started appearing! He eats filthy Mahars, Ambedkar, dead animals but look at the air he has given himself!". This babysitter and her friends will answer: "You bearded widow, how dare you name our Ambedkar! You have your own bucket, that stupid Gandhi! He has no shirt or teeth in his mouth!" (109)*

This dialogue fails to raise awareness of the differences between women and Indian social reformists to meet the needs of the lower castes. This story sets up the struggle rather than the silent grief. Perfection in the caste system is the concept of purity and pollution. A great struggle arose after a Mahar boy in *The Prison We Broke* touched the idol of Vitthal. Religion is important to perpetuate casteism. However, as Rege points out in her article, "Dalit women speak differently:

*'Differences' and 'criticism of the status quo of the Dalit feminist approach', these methods were not so prevalent to keep the polluted lower castes away as to maintain the purity of the upper castes. Such discrimination through religion creates a desire among Dalits to break the shackles of Hinduism. Ambedkar has enthusiastically spoken of his conversion to Buddhism in 1954 as it has created hope for change among the Dalits. In *The Prison We Broke*, Baby Kamble argued that the memories of humiliation and perpetual slavery must be recounted because future generations need to know the test that previous generations had to face.*

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Sometimes Dalit women actively participate in the story. In the novel, people gather at Chawdi and discuss the Ambedkar movement, its conversion and their views on these movements. Her writings emphasize the claim of Dalit feminism that her ideology grows out of her activism because she considers mainstream Indian feminism to be superior and is unable to understand the true voice of Dalit women. Although Dalit Dalit identity-based autonomy may ultimately lead us to the question of who puts Dalit feminism on the margins, the writings of Dalit women became important, as the Guru wrote in *The Prison to Broke to Afterward*,

*"To investigate herself, as well as the mechanism that forced Baby Kamble to write her story." (170).*

The storytelling of a society, not of an individual, Bama writes, "My mind is filled with many stories: not only about the sorrows and tears of Dalit women, but also about their vibrant and rebellious culture, their curiosity." Hard swimming; about the self-confidence and self-respect that enables them to leap over threatening adversities by laughing at and ridiculing them . . . I want to shout out these stories.

Known as the "Autobiography of the Community", Bama's story has a special place in Dalit women's writing because it does not revolve around the life of the protagonist. Sangti is really a collection of 'events' where numerous life stories come together and are scattered in the tapestry which we can call the 'collective experience of Dalit women'. Gender / Caste Roles: Looking at the 'differences' in Bama's description, as a young girl of twelve, the narrator understands that the roles of boys are different from those of girls. And these roles survive in the form of sex games that are made for them to play as children. Kabaddi and marble is for boys, while girls are expected to play cooking or wedding, housework, etc.

Conversion from one religion to another does not bring rest. Hinduism defines the ultimate form of oppression of Dalits, while Christianity defines it. The white nun, Patti tells the narrator, "tried very hard" to teach Dalit women how to be an ideal wife. The third axis of patriarchy in Sangati is likely to devalue the economic freedom of Dalit women. The fact that Dalit women cross the boundaries of the household and earn money on their own gives them higher credibility and more privileges than Brahmin women who are financially dependent on their fathers or husbands or children. However, Dalit women face daily physical abuse from men in their families. Patti assessed the situation of women in her community:

*"We have to work in the fields as much as men and then most importantly fight to bear and raise our children. For men, their work ends when they are*

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*in the field. If you are born into this world, it is good that you are born as a human being. What good do we get after a woman is born? We just work hard in the field and at home until our vagina is dry.” (Bama 6-7).*

Here is an example of how Dalit patriarchy subjugates Dalit women not by imitating upper caste men but by changing their daily dealings. The participation of lower caste women in social labor often justifies the sexual availability of lower caste women for upper caste men. To give an example: Mariamma, a young woman from the Pariya community, was beaten by a man of higher caste, Kumarasmi, who accused Mariamma of having an affair with a child of a lower caste. After all, Mariamma is not only accused of being a ‘loose’ woman, she is beaten and forced to pay a fine. So Kumaraswamy and Manikkam are both undoubted. Two things are clear here: the public humiliation of Mary by the upper caste male Kumarasmi and the physical abuse by her father.

By publicly embarrassing Mariamma, Kumarasmi proved that the sexuality of lower caste women is facilitated because they participate in social labor. Such an act becomes a way to reduce the masculinity of lower caste men. There is a figure of Dalit woman at the crossroads of masculinity, gender ideology and caste which creates oppression and domination over many structures in this place. According to Ambedkar, endogamy is the root of caste system. In Sangati, the fear of interracial organizations is expressed through the story of Pecha. Ek Pe is the ghost of an upper caste woman named Iski who was killed by her brothers for marrying a lower caste man. It is also interesting to note that, even in the lower castes, the social system works by the same parameters to control the women appointed by the Brahmins. There is a fear of pollution if the boundaries of endogamy are violated. A lower caste menstruating woman who goes out for work is dangerous for her community as it creates the possibility of inter-caste integration. Dalit men tell women that Brahmin women never attack at home, showing aspirational aspects to Dalit men who now want to reflect the Brahmin practice of ‘purity’ in women. It is within the boundaries of the house.

### **Contesting Humiliation Through Language**

According to Raj Gautam: "Dalits who have long been considered wealth should wake up and shout for their selfishness, their 'I.'" Using the language spoken precisely by the Dalits, their writings show a clear sense of outrage which has taken the form of an injustice of protest. Such language has been used for a variety of purposes. In the writings of Dalit men, references are made to upper caste men who have kept them in slavery and ignorance, used by Dalit women to protect themselves from being beaten against their husbands. In Sangati, the narrator writes about an incident between Pakkiraj and his wife Rakkamma as a witness.



Pakkiraj was abusing her in a rude and impolite manner and was going to beat her. And to save herself from being beaten, Rakkamma was replying in equally insulting language.

*"Before his hand fell on her, she screamed and shouted, 'Hey, he's hitting me. You're a vile man, you're going to die, you're going to be taken as a corpse, you're a little one. Life, you're' In short, you're. "* (Bama, p. 61)

What binds the two narratives together is a sense of conflict. Although Dalit women do not exist as silent acceptors of violence and cruelty, this article is important to show how they successfully transformed their personal grief into collective political awareness. It is the awareness gained through personal experience and the stories they hear. And it replaces the approach that brings Dalit women back into the new knowledge system and creates the possibility of writing new stories from a Dalit feminist perspective.

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