

EXPLORING THE PLIGHT OF DALIT WOMEN THROUGH LITERATURE; A STUDY OF BABY KAMBLE'S WRITING

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Abstract

The proposed research paper will delve into the experiences and perspectives of Dalit women through an in-depth analysis of the writing of Baby Kamble, a well-known Dalit feminist writer. This study will focus on understanding the intersectionality of caste and gender in the lives of Dalit women, and how this intersectionality shapes their experiences and resistance to oppression. The research will provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities and specificities of the position of Dalit women, and will be an important contribution to the fields of feminist and Dalit studies. The paper will provide a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by Dalit women and how they resist oppression through their writing. The paper will focus on the themes of caste-based discrimination, patriarchal discrimination, lack of access to education and employment opportunities, and lack of representation in decision-making positions as reflected in Kamble's writings. Her writing also highlights the way in which Dalit women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and the lack of accountability. The autobiographical work "The Prison, We Broke" is a powerful voice for Dalit women community and it brings out the struggles, discrimination and marginalization that they face on daily bases, it is an act of resistance and a reminder of the need for social justice and equality for Dalit Women. This paper also examines the theme and experience of Dalit women as portrayed in kamble's writings. This paper also focuses on "Dalit literature which expresses and explains the approaches of Dalit writers also explain. "The current state of Dalit literature portrays a diverse range of experiences and perspectives, shedding light on the ongoing struggles of the Dalit community.

Keywords - Discrimination, Racial and Social injustice, intersectionality, oppression, patriarchal discrimination, caste-based discrimination

Introduction:

Dalit women in India have historically been marginalized and oppressed due to their intersectional identities as both Dalits and women. Dalit women, also known as "untouchable" women, who face discrimination based on both their caste and gender. This research paper examine the position of Dalit women in Indian society through an analysis of the autobiographical work The Prison, We Broke by Baby Kamble, a Dalit woman writer who has written extensively on the experiences of Dalit women in India, and how they reflect the position of Dalit women in Indian society, situations faced by Dalits, particularly Dalit women, through their unique perspectives

The term "Dalit" refers to an exclusive group or community in India who have historically been considered to be at the bottom of the traditional caste system and have experienced discrimination and marginalization as a result. The etymology of the word "Dalit" can be marked to the root word "Dal" in Sanskrit and "Dalan" in Hindi meaning 'broken down' or 'broken to piece'.

The term "Dalit" was first used by B.R. Ambedkar, a prominent Dalit leader. He used the term to describe the people who were considered to be at the bottom of the traditional caste system in India, as a way to empower and unite them in their struggle for equality and justice.

The Dalits, also known as "Scheduled Castes," are a diverse group of people who have traditionally been involved in menial and manual labour, such as cleaning and sanitation work, leather work, and manual scavenging. They have been excluded from many aspects of Indian society, including education, employment opportunities, and political representation. Dalits have faced discrimination and violence throughout history, including forced segregation, and restrictions on their movement, access to public spaces and resources. They have been denied access to education, employment, and political representation.

The Indian government has implemented a number of affirmative action policies to try to address these inequalities, such as reservation in education and government jobs for Dalits and other marginalized groups. Despite these efforts, discrimination against Dalits continues to be a major problem in India. In recent years, there have been a number of high-profile cases of violence against Dalits, including lynchings and mob attacks. Activists and organizations have been working to raise awareness about the issue and to push for more effective action to address discrimination and violence against Dalits.

"Growing Recognition and Representation of Dalit Literature in Contemporary Scenario"

Dalit literature, also known as "literature of the oppressed," refers to the literary works produced by members of the Dalit community. Dalit literature serves as a powerful tool for raising awareness about the struggles and experiences of the Dalit community. It provides a platform for Dalits to express their feelings of oppression and to assert their humanity and dignity. Through their literature, Dalit writers give voice to the pain, suffering, and resilience of their community, and challenge the dominant narratives that have long sought to silence and marginalize them.

Dalit literature also plays an important role in the struggle for social justice and equality. It exposes the atrocities committed against Dalits, and demands accountability for these crimes. Dalit literature also calls for the dismantling of the caste system, and for the inclusion and empowerment of Dalits in society.

Furthermore, Dalit literature is vital in preserving the culture of the Dalit community. The literature helps in passing down the tradition, customs and practices of the community to the next generation, thereby preserving the community's heritage.

Dalit literature emerged in the early 20th century as a form of resistance against the caste system and the oppression of Dalits. These writers use their literature as a means to assert their identity and demand social justice. They also use their literature to challenge the dominant narrative and to give voice to the marginalized and oppressed communities.

Some of the prominent Dalit writers include B. R. Ambedkar, G. Shankar, and Daya Pawar. B. R. Ambedkar is considered the father of Dalit literature, as he was one of the first Dalit writers to use literature as a means of resistance and social change. G. Shankar is known for his powerful and evocative poetry, which gives voice to the struggles of Dalit women.

Glimpse of some well-known contemporary: Dalit male and female writers who wrote on Dalit and Dalit women

1. Omprakash Valmiki: He was one of the most prominent Dalit writers in Hindi literature. He wrote "Joothan," which is considered a classic of Dalit literature. It is an autobiographical account of his childhood and the discrimination he faced as a Dalit.

2. D. R. Nagaraj: He was a prominent Dalit writer and thinker in Kannada. He wrote several books on the Dalit experience, including "The Flaming Feet," which is considered a classic of Dalit literature.

3. Namdeo Dhasal: He was a prominent Dalit writer and poet in Marathi. He was known for his powerful and evocative poetry, which gives voice to the struggles of Dalits. He also wrote several books on Dalit politics and culture.

4. Sharankumar Limbale: He is a prominent Dalit writer and thinker in Marathi. He wrote several books, including "The Outcaste," which is considered a classic of Dalit literature. He is also known for his work on Dalit history and culture.

5. Daya Pawar: He was a renowned Dalit writer and poet from Maharashtra, India. His works focused on the experiences and struggles of the Dalit community, and he was known for his powerful and evocative writing.

style. One of his most famous works is "Baluta," a memoir about his life growing up in a Dalit community. Another one of his important works is "Shivaji Kon Hota" a biography of Shivaji Maharaj from a Dalit perspective. His works are considered as a significant contribution to the Dalit literature, and they continue to inspire many writers and readers today.

6. Shantabai Kamble: she was an Indian Marathi writer and Dalit activist. She wrote the first female Dalit autobiography. Her first novel 'majya jalmachi chittarkatha' considered the first novel written by a Dalit woman. Shantabai Kamble, known for her writings and activism advocating for the rights of Dalits, who are considered to be at the bottom of India's caste system. Her works portrayed the struggles and discrimination faced by Dalits in Indian society, highlighting their experiences and bringing attention to their marginalization. She was a powerful voice for the Dalit community, inspiring others to fight for their rights and dignity.

7. Urmila Pawar: "The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs" is an autobiography written by Urmila Pawar, a Dalit woman writer from India. The book is a memoir of her life, growing up in a Dalit family in a small village in Maharashtra, India. It tells the story of her experiences of caste discrimination, poverty, and oppression, as well as her journey to becoming a writer and activist.

8. Bama: "Karukku" and "Sangati" Both novels are written in a simple and direct style, which makes them accessible to a wide range of readers. They are poignant, often heartbreaking, but also infused with a sense of hope and resilience. They have been widely translated and acclaimed for shedding light on the lives of Dalit women and their struggles for equality and justice "Karukku" and "Sangati".

9. Meena Kandasamy: "The Gypsy Goddess" and "When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife". "The Gypsy Goddess" is a novel that takes its inspiration from the famous temple at Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, where goddess Kali is worshipped. The novel is a powerful exploration of the lives and experiences of Dalit people, particularly women, and it provides a glimpse into the world of those who are often marginalized and forgotten in society. "When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife" is a memoir written by Meena Kandasamy, which is a powerful and honest account of her marriage to a man who is both intellectually and emotionally abusive. The book is a powerful exploration of the many forms of violence that women can face, including physical, emotional, and psychological abuse, as well as the ways in which women are often trapped in these situations by societal pressures and lack of support.

10. Sharmila Rege: "Against the Madness of Manu. The book covers various aspects of the Manusmriti, including its historical context, its views on gender, caste, and class, and its influence on contemporary Indian society. Rege argues that the text is not only responsible for the oppression of Dalits and other marginalized groups in ancient India but also in the present. The book also explores the ways in which the Manusmriti has been used to justify and perpetuate discrimination and violence against women, Dalits, and other marginalized groups in India.

There are also several literary festivals and organizations that promote Dalit literature, including the Bhasha Research and Publication Centre and the Dalit Sahitya Akademi.

Additionally, many universities and academic institutions have begun to offer courses and research programs focused on Dalit literature and culture.

Overall, the status of Dalit writings is growing with more and more recognition and representation of Dalit writers in the literary scene. With the increasing number of literary festivals, organizations and academic institutions promoting Dalit literature, the representation and awareness of Dalit literature is increasing.

There are a few key elements that define the approach of Dalit writers:

Emphasis on lived experiences: Dalit literature is characterized by its focus on the daily struggles and experiences of Dalits. The writers often use their literature to tell the stories of the oppressed and marginalized communities.

Political and social commentary: Dalit literature is marked by its strong political and social commentary. The writers use their literature to critique the caste system and to highlight the injustices faced by Dalits.

Use of vernacular languages: Many Dalit writers use vernacular languages, such as Marathi, Hindi, and Telugu, to reach a wider audience and to assert their cultural identity.

Feminist perspective: Some Dalit writers also have a feminist perspective, they focus on the intersectionality of caste, class, and gender oppression faced by Dalit women, and their work challenges the patriarchal society of India.

Exploration of identity: Dalit literature explores the themes of identity and self-expression, as Dalits often struggle to find their place in a society that denies them equal opportunities and recognition.

Emphasis on resistance and empowerment: Dalit literature emphasizes the resistance and empowerment of Dalits, highlighting their strength and resilience in the face of oppression.

"Exploring the Gender Divide: A Comparative Analysis of Male and Female Writing Styles"

Dalit male writing, as the name suggests, refers to the literature produced by Dalit men. It often deals with themes of oppression, marginalization, and resistance, and is often characterized by a strong political and social consciousness. Dalit male writers often use their writing as a means of protesting against the injustices faced by their community and as a way to assert their own identity and dignity.

Dalit women's writing, on the other hand, is a more recent phenomenon and deals with the specific experiences of Dalit women. It often deals with themes of gender oppression, violence, and discrimination, and is characterized by a strong feminist perspective. Dalit women writers often use their writing to challenge the patriarchal structures that oppress their community and to assert their own agency and voice.

Dalit women's writing also differs from Dalit male writing in the use of language. Dalit male writing often uses the standard, "high" language of the dominant caste, whereas Dalit women's writing often uses the language of the community, which is often considered "low" by the dominant caste. This choice of language is a deliberate political statement, as it asserts the validity and value of the language and culture of the Dalit community.

While both deal with the experiences of the Dalit community, the two differ in their focus and perspective. Dalit male writing focuses on the political and social oppression faced by the community and often uses a strong political voice, while Dalit women's writing deals with the specific experiences of Dalit women and often uses a feminist perspective and language of the community.

Baby Kamble; She was a well-known Dalit activist and writer in Marathi who was inspired by B.R. Ambedkar, Prominent Dalit Leader. She has written several books including, "The Prison we Broke" and "A Memory of Darkness", which are considered as powerful literature that reflects the position of Dalit women in Indian society.

Her novels often explore the intersectionality of caste and gender discrimination in Indian society, particularly as experienced by Dalit women. In her writing, Kamble highlights how caste-based discrimination and patriarchal societal norms combine to create a unique form of oppression for Dalit women, who experience discrimination not only based on their gender but also their caste.

Themes and experiences of Dalit women as portrayed in Baby Kamble's work include:

- Oppression and marginalization: Kamble's writing highlights the ways in which Dalit women are oppressed and marginalized within Indian society, particularly due to their caste and gender. She portrays the difficulties Dalit women face in gaining access to education, employment, and basic human rights.
- Struggle for survival: Kamble's writing portrays the struggles of Dalit women to survive and to make a life for themselves, often in the face of extreme poverty and hardship. She also highlights the resilience and determination of these women, in the face of their circumstances.

- Empowerment and resistance: Kamble's work also emphasizes the empowerment and resistance of Dalit women, as they resist their oppression and fight for their rights. She also highlights the ways in which Dalit women are using their own voices to speak out about their experiences and to demand change.
- Intersectionality: Kamble's writing also explores the intersectionality of caste and gender, and how this affects the experiences of Dalit women in a unique way. She also sheds light on the difficulties that Dalit women face due to other forms of discrimination such as poverty, class and lack of education.
- Caste-based discrimination: The novels reflect the ways in which the caste system perpetuates poverty and economic exploitation of Dalits. It also highlights the ways in which the caste system is used to justify discrimination and violence against Dalit women, who are doubly marginalized as both Dalits and women.
- Patriarchal discrimination: The novels reflect the ways in which patriarchal attitudes lead to the devaluation of women and the normalization of violence against women. It highlights the ways in which Dalit women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and the lack of accountability for such violence.
- Access to education and employment: The novels also reflect the ways in which Dalit women are denied access to education and employment opportunities, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and marginalization.
- Representation in decision-making positions: The novels reflect the lack of representation of Dalit women in politics and decision-making positions, leading to a lack of representation of their interests and needs.

"The Prisons We Broke" is an autobiography written by Baby Kamble, a Dalit feminist and writer from India. The book is a memoir of her life, growing up in a Dalit family in a small village in Maharashtra, India. It tells the story of her experiences of caste discrimination, poverty, and oppression, as well as her journey to becoming a writer and activist.

This autobiography deals with two major object of the society.

1. The suppression and exploitation of Dalit by white colour class- kamble writes that caste discrimination was prevalent and the poor Mahars were forced to live under it. The Mahars were treated as untouchables servants 'yeskars'. By doing yeskar jobs they would get bhakirs [leftover food]. the mahars were not allowed to use common road that was used by upper people. kamble writes 'when someone from this caste walked from the opposite direction 'the mahars had to leave the road, climb down into the bush and walk through the thisty bushes on the road side.'
2. The discrimination of Dalit women in a patriarchal society-The mahars women would be beg for mercy of the upper class. every new bride had to adopt and fellow these customs. If anyone failed to beg mercy of upper class, the master would simply explode in range and come straight to the mahar chwadi and call the new bride a shameless bitch'

Further kamble expressed her own experience'

In 'The Prisons We Broke, the adage 'Only the shoe wearer knows where the shoe pinches; is Quite accurate. According to Baby Kamble, "I wrote about what my community experienced. My personal anguish was exacerbated by the suffering of my countrymen. My experiences were shaped by theirs. Therefore, I genuinely struggle to think of myself outside of my group. Baby Kamble talks about her home village, and the Mahars, members of her own neighbourhood. The Prisons We Broke describes in great detail how Kamble fell prey to her husband's narrow-mindedness as a man. She recalls: In a general compartment that was quite full when we once travelled to Mumbai to attend a meeting, three young men occurred to turn to look at me. My spouse punched me so hard that my nose began to bleed profusely as soon as he suspected me. He was so enraged when we got back that evening that he continued punching me in the train.

According to The Prisons We Broke, the Mahars were living in utter ignorance and extreme destitution. They were ignorant of the existence of people in general. They wouldn't have the courage to question Hindus from the caste system and defy social convention. They followed their captors and were quite superstitious. Mahars were seen as filth by Hindu religion and gods, yet the Mahar community preserved Hindu values and held gods in the highest regard. Baby Kamble is an advocate of complete change. She wants fundamental change. Social equality must exist for all beings. Inequality is the foundation of society.

The work also touches on Kamble's experiences as a feminist and activist. She writes about the ways in which caste and gender intersect and about her experiences working with other Dalit feminists to fight for equality and justice. She also writes about the importance of representation and visibility for Dalit women and the need for their voices to be heard in the broader feminist movement.

Conclusion-

Overall, Baby Kamble's novels effectively convey the complexity and nuances of discrimination based on gender and caste for Dalit women in India, and the various forms of resistance and resilience that they exhibit in the face of these challenges. , Dalit women in India face a wide range of problems due to their caste and gender identities. These include poverty, violence, discrimination in education, and marginalization in society. Despite these challenges, Dalit women have been active in fighting for their rights and equality. It is important for society to acknowledge and address these issues in order to create a more just and equal society for all.

Reference-

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