



Voice of Marginalized Dalit Women in the Novels of Dalit Novelists

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ABSTRACT: The Dalit literature is the voice and protest of The Dalit people for the social equality against the hierarchy of Hindu Varna System. The Dalit literature has started as social distinct movement in Maharashtra. The Dalit literary movement is a powerful movement and widespread than in other languages because of native reformers like Ambedkar and Phule. Along with Maharashtra the Dalit literature is ample space and influence in Tamil and Dalit literature has also its impression on Tamil literature.

KEYWORDS: Dalit, Oppressed, Social, Sufferings, exploitation, outcaste, harassed, tyrannical, tolerance, abuses, equality

I. INTRODUCTION

At the very outset Dalit literature was considered as a literature composed by Dalits for the Dalit. Later it became a genre that raises voice for all oppressed including women. To express their sufferings, political positioning Dalit writers began to write literature. Dalit literature like other progressive literature is cultural phenomenon that craves for social recognition. The literature should be either for life's sake or for art's sake these are two very broad classifications of literature: Art for life's sake is followed by most of the Indian writers but ironically the life of a Dalit does not come in this category. A just representation of pain and suffering of the Dalits has never been the subject matter of elitist Hindus. They have presented the mythical stories of various kings and queens, love stories of various princes and princesses, dilemma of the separation of a lover and beloved, the wrath of various deities and totally ignored the pathetic lives of Dalits, and in this way they have achieved what is left by the religion; the total rejection or negation of Dalits from the literature. The entire Dalit society felt the impact of Babasaheb's works. Dalit writers, too, are inspired by powerful writings of Babasaheb and seek their tradition in the writings and deeds of Jyotiba Fule, Kabir Das, Sant Tukaram, Sant Raidas and above all Lord Buddha. Thus a new rebel tradition is born out of the rejection of various traditional Brahmanic concepts. As Sharan Kumar observed —Dalit literature is the outcome of sufferings, oppressions and exploitations of a group of people for centuries. It is not the pain of a single person, nor is it a matter of one day—it is the painful voice of lakhs of people, experienced over thousands of years. The anguish of Dalit literature is not that of an individual but of an entire outcaste society.

II. DISCUSSION

P.Sivakami speaks about the —tyrannical over bearingness, corruption and polygamy of her male characters. She says for the weak member of the Dalit community, its women Thangam, the low caste woman, harassed by her brothers in law when she refuses to submit her share of land. She is not given the share of family land because she does not have children. She has to work in the land of Udayar for her living. Paranjothi sexually assaults her does not dare to raise her voice against Udayar for the fear of social banishment. For the loyalty to the person who gives her means of livelihood, she keeps quiet and accepts it as her fate. Dalit women have to face silent agony without raising their voices for the harassments they undergo in the lands of upper castes men. Thangam was harassed and dishonoured because her family members don't help her. Sivakami presents the ironic situation when Thangam goes to Kathamuthu for help and justice but Kathamuthu himself suppresses his both wives. Kanagavalli, Kathamuthu's wife highlights the Kathamuthu's dominance over his wives in these words; —everyone laughs at the set-up in your house, and here you are trying to teach others. You think you are a big shot (The Grip of Change 2009)

The novel **The Grip of Change** presents the oppression of a Dalit widow, who is not helped by anyone. No one is there to take pain to give her justice. Kathamuthu also feared that if he helped her, it would be harmful for his caste to go



against upper caste Paranjothi. Sivakami shows the wretched condition of Thangam who is ignored even by the Dalit leader. Sivakami expresses her regret for the position of Dalit woman who is forced to lead her life according to the laws and rules set by man. Sivakami in her novel **The Grip of Change** presents this situation through the character Thangam. Paranjothi is the upper caste landlord, in his fields Thangam works, and she has to follow the terms and conditions laid down by him. She has to safeguard herself from the sexual thirst of the landlord. Sivakami shows the wretched condition of Thangam. She becomes prey of his lust, but she does not dare to raise her voice against Landlord because she thinks that he is her paymaster and fears of social ex-communication. Dalit women are in the most wretched condition on earth. They are the slaves of slave. They are double marginalized. They have to face two problems, one is class and another is gender. Dalit woman expresses her anger through the medium of books, articles and other ways of writing. Sivakami in her novels expresses the miseries of Dalit woman from the perspective of feminist.

III. RESULTS

The novel **The Grip of Change** depicts the life of a Dalit woman. It shows that the Dalit women are without mind of their own like an object. It is the basic duty of Dalit women to make available the basic necessities of life as water, food, firewood for entire family. They have to face some of these specific problems in casteist society compared to the other upper caste women of India.

Sivakami portrays very clearly the poverty and oppression prevailing in their life as when Thangam said —Udayar took no notice of me. He raped me when I was working in his sugarcane field. I remained silent; after all, he is my paymaster. He measures my rice...My husband's brothers tried to force me, but I never gave in. They wouldn't give me my husband's land but wanted me to be a whore for them. I wouldn't give in. Each time one of them came near me I brandished the broom.After that none of them came anywhere near me. I am a childless widow. There is no protection for me (The Grip of Change)

Sivakami shows her aggressive protest against the exploitation of Dalit women. Dalit women are constantly oppressed and sexually harassed in the male oriented society. Power always remains with the men. When Kathamuthu asked Gowri for her marriage, she forcefully protested and gave her reasons for refusal. It was intolerable for Kathamuthu. Society does not allow a girl to live at home without getting married. Dalit women have to face double marginalization. As a woman they are defenceless and as a Dalit they are more defenceless. Women from other communities are generally protected and financially strong. Caste is not a barrier for them. Dalit women are the victim of their husbands. Because Dalit women are illiterate and or less educated, they don't have any other alternative than to work in the fields. Dalits are landless so they have to work in the fields of upper caste landlords for their survival. Dalit have to tolerate the abuses of upper caste landlords because they are their only employers and provide them work. The landlords take unwanted advantage of the helplessness of Dalit women. They sexually abuse them. Dalit women's complaints against landlords are not heard.

Further they are not permitted to work in their fields.

IV. CONCLUSION

Finally, the Dalit literature is the expression of exploited people and is primarily concerned with their _search for freedom, and giving expression to it. One can find all the aspects and dimension of freedom in it. In Dalit literature, the idea of freedom is considered to be an important component. The essence of the Dalit novelists is that there is a need to change the attitude of society. Their novels are ended in an optimistic way. In their novels they demand equal rights for their communities and specially for women. They become the voice of the women of their community. They have a vision of a changed society, where women would be regarded equal to the man and also equality in caste and race. These writers have faith in education and consider their writings as a source for liberation of their communities.

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