



---

## **JOURNEY OF DALIT WOMENS'S WRITING STORY**

**Shivani**

Research Scholar Sunrise University Alwar

**Dr.Nempal Singh**

Associate Professor, Sunrise University Alwar

### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this paper is to locate the journey of a few aspirational women from the Dalit community, the most persecuted group in India, from the fringes of society to its Centre, carving for themselves a life of dignity and prosperity. In fact, it may even be argued that the Dalits of India have suffered a similar fate with that of the Afro-American community, living for centuries within the 'margins', being an unacknowledged and derided part of society as the 'unwanted insiders'. Therefore, it is important to look at the Dalit Woman as a separate entity, with struggles unique to her social reality. This paper takes a look at some of these pressing issues that have plagued Indian society since generations.

**Keyword:** - Journey, Dalit women, Community, Education, Society

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Dalit women writers have also asserted their position in the context of Dalit literature and feminist movement in India. Dalit women writers like Urmila Pawar, Bama, Kusum Meghwal, Baby Kamble, Kalpana Kannabiran, M. M. Vinodini, etc. have raised issues like avoidance of Dalit women in the mainstream feminist circles, role of caste in atrocities against women, and problematic construction of Dalit women characters in literature both by the mainstream writers as well as Dalit male writers. Moreover, Dalit women writers have examined various permutations of caste and gender in varying situations in their writings. For example, KusumMeghwal objects the silence of Dalit women characters in the male Dalit writers' narratives. She argues that rape incidents are only used as a narrative tool against the background of caste atrocities. Dalit women characters, which have been the target of sexual crimes in the face of caste-antagonism, are used just as an object by the writers.

It can be inferred from the above critical deliberation that Dalit literature is still evolving with the passage of time. Dalit writers and thinkers need to work in a more holistic manner so that different

voices and literary trends can also be part of the Dalit phenomenon. D. R. Nagaraj (2016), a notable Kannada Dalit critic, indicates towards the “problem of selective upward mobility” and “the phenomenon of wilful amnesia” that is “amnesia towards one’s own past” among Dalits. R. G. Jadhav, a prominent Marathi literary critic, suggests Dalit writers to experiment more upon drama and humour in a more detached way. He observes, “Perhaps the Dalit writers, for certain reasons, fail to acquire the aesthetic detachment necessary to portray social feelings and relationships objectively”. There can be many more points of discussion to have a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the Dalit discourse like ‘Dalit Literature and Marxism’, ‘Dalit Literature and Black literature’, ‘Dalit literature and Culturalization of Caste’, etc., but due to the constraint of space, it is not feasible to accommodate all the discourses here.

## **II. EDUCATION AND THE NEW DALIT WOMAN**

Especially from the end of the 19th century, Dalits looked upon secular education as an important vehicle of modernization and emancipation. They wrested the modernizing force of education from the British and Brahman Raj and shaped their own resistance in colonial India. Furthermore, (Non- Brahman and) Dalit radicals sought to democratize education and gender relations. Especially Phule, Periyar, and Ambedkar emphasized egalitarian relationships as opposed to privilege, and combined critiques of knowledge, caste, and gender hierarchies in ways that opened up new spaces for women in general and Dalit women in particular. For Dalits, the politics of caste, gender, education, moral reforms, and self- discipline complicated modes of political participation, their claims to rights, and their subject formation in a colonial context, which always- already precluded the production of individual and collective agency. Dalit radical's powerful discourse shaped Dalit women, who participated in collective action for education and empowerment. Yet, despite Dalit leader's promises and efforts to expand educational opportunities, their connection of modern education with gender and moral reforms had unsettling implications for Dalit women. My first book documented this story in the context of Maharashtra.

Once again, compared to historians, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, and demographers have mined the field of Dalit's education. Suma Chitnis (1981), Padma Velaskar (1990), S.K. Chatterjee (2000), G. G. Wankhede (2001), Veronique Benei (2008), Craig Jeffrey (2010), and Roger and Patricia Jeffery (2008, 2010) have examined the deeply contentious territories of caste practices and education in independent India. My book builds on the works of these sociologists and anthropologists to provide historical depth and the working of historical processes involved in the construction of Dalit exclusion since the middle of the nineteenth century, as well as the shaping of Dalit women's subjectivity over time. I discuss the varying outcomes of Dalit women's formal education. I extend Benei's anthropological study to illustrate that schools not only discipline and shape women in particular ways but at the same time encourage them to an extent to develop their own understanding of social and political life.

### III. COMMUNITY, HONOR, PATRIARCHY, AND THE CHANGING SOCIALITY OF DALIT WOMEN

“New” Dalit women play a crucial role as symbols of Dalit community identity as well as signs of “caste,” “civilization,” and carriers of “culture.” Historically, both the colonial rulers and upper-caste elite Indians looked upon Dalits as “uncivilized,” “docile,” “barbaric,” and certainly lacking in “civility” and “culture” (Paik 2014a). As a result, Dalits depicted civilization and culture as important, in order to be recognized, accepted, and assimilated into the larger Indian society. In so doing, however, radical, authoritative Dalit men, including Ambedkar and the larger community burdened Dalit women with gendered norms of propriety and respectability. They emphasized modernity and modesty for women, and in the process, sought to control Dalit women's social and sexual selves. Thus, uncertainties, anxieties, and ambiguities threatened Dalit radicalism at particular conjunctures (Paik 2014a). As caste continues to trump gender, the emphasis on violence against the community silences critics of domestic violence.

Only over the past three decades have feminists critically analyzed patriarchy and the power and privilege enjoyed by select castes and classes, both historically and contemporaneously. Feminist scholars like Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (1990) acknowledged the neglect of lower-caste and peasant women in their pioneering volume on *Recasting Women in India*. Some historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and activists like Gail Omvedt (1980), Uma Chakravarti (1993, 2003a, 2003b), V. Geetha, Dietrich (2003), Pratima Pardeshi, Rege, Karin Kapadia, S. Anandhi, Anupama Rao (2003), Vandana Sonalkar (1999), Ruth Manorama, Manuela Ciotti (2010), Clarinda Still, Charu Gupta, and myself have provided a necessary corrective, by examining the theoretical and material aspects and the compounded nature of caste, class, sexuality, and gender questions. Scholars have also explored the specific challenges of “Dalit Feminism”.

Class issues and the subjugation of Dalit women cannot be grouped together. To understand it, though, a unique framework is required. Every woman who has experienced oppression has a unique tale to share, and it is not simply restricted to caste and class systems. The type of situation they are in is what determines it most. Although it can be argued that violence against women occurs frequently throughout the world, societal and economic factors also play a significant impact. For instance, dowry has been linked to numerous incidences of murder, torture, and other forms of abuse, particularly against middle- and upper-class women, in India. Violence against upper-class and middle-class women is a rare occurrence. The patriarchal problems are more prevalent in upper class women than Dalit women. The Hindu mythology of Sita, Savitri, Draupadi, and other figures who exemplified ultimate sacrifice for a husband and children served as the foundation for patriarchy. Dalit women do not “worship” their husbands since patriarchy is not as prevalent among them as it is among higher caste women. In the Dalit community, women have their own identity and operate independently, free from gender bias to some extent. They are not referred to by their husbands' names. Dalit activist Ilaiah claims that women have greater social and economic independence in her culture.

In comparison to other communities, Dalit Feminism is at the top of the list. The ladies are discriminated against twice: as women and as Dalits. Bama was the first Dalit woman to emerge from the shadows. In "Sangati," she presented the autobiography of the Dalit community in Tamil. In the beginning of the book, women are shown as wretched and despairing, but by the end, they are shown to be courageous and fearless despite all the awful things that occur. Talking and laughing with others is the strategy for preventing these issues. They take pleasure in their increased power and fame. In the book, the narrator breaks out from the exclusive ties to the neighbourhood and works and lives by herself.

#### **IV. SUFFERINGS AND STRUGGLE OF DALIT LITERATURE AND WRITERS**

Dalit writers are gaining prominence in modern literature. They had to endure social stigma and isolation from society, especially from the upper caste Hindus. The way how their living was so harsh, their position as a writer stood even more difficulties. The dalit writers were discriminated against from the beginning. They were not allowed to attend the writers' forum where writers from upper caste took part in. Even at the time of JyotibaPhule and Ambedkar, the Brahmins did not allow reading and writing of Dalits. Their works were published mainly due to the Britishers who had allowed them to printing of their works. Their works are often compared to Africo – American literature which depicted sufferings of blacks and their racial discrimination as seen in "slave narrative" exposing injustice.

But the present scenario is much better than the social injustice that the Dalit writers had to face in the early time. Modern day Dalit writers are so vocal and are coming forward to explain the harm caused to them by the Hindu caste system. Even the Non-Dalit writers are exposing the exploitative nature of the Brahmanical system. As compared to male dalit writers, Dalit women writers had to face more oppression and struggle twice as hard to find the space to write and be heard. Since Dalit women writers are discriminated against on the grounds of both their caste and gender. Dalit women have been marginalized by India's mainstream feminism; they see themselves at the margin of the Dalit political and literary movement. It is observed that in the field of literary translation and the subsequent study of Dalit literature in translation, writings of women appear to be privileged, as such the study of Bama's work dominating the field. Dalit women writers have come a long way over the last four decades. From Baby Kamble, the first Dalit women to write her autobiography, to the new generation women writers like PradnyaPawar, Chaya KoregaonkaOr, ShilpaKamble, one can see a clear progression in the way they have interpreted and re-constructed the realities of their gendered existence. This change can be perceived in the way they have defined their identities, perceived their agency and interpreted social reality.

The caste system, which has been the primary cause of societal oppression and injustice to the Dalit people for decades, was challenged by the revolution. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma JyotibaPhule were among the leaders who spoke out against prejudice and repression. Dalit

literature developed into a fruitful tool for expressing their opinions. Dalit literature was originally written in the Marathi language, but from the 1960s, various other languages, including Gujarati, gained popularity. Following the Gujarat anti-reservation agitation, it gained considerable prominence in the 1980s. Gujarati Dalit literature is currently a well-established genre. This kind of writing incorporates unique ideals, forms, styles, and aesthetics due to its primary goal of voicing Dalit issues and frustrations. The primary medium, regional or vernacular languages, captures the very essence of the social environment at the grassroots level.

Contrarily, despite being published in regional languages, the primary aim of Dalit literature is to let everyone understand their plight, their aspirations, and situations all over the world. Even, translation significantly contributes to this in many ways. The world is introduced to Dalit literature through a competent and accurate translation. Their problems can be heard by millions of people around the globe. English's status as a universal language makes it a key component in achieving this goal. An English translation of Dalit literature not only expands its readership but also adds to the canon of popular literature

## V. CONCLUSION

Dalit women's universal perspectives and historical and political practices are deeply democratic and as such have the potential of engaging in inclusive and productive politics, building solidarities, and actually reshaping the larger fields of South Asian Studies, India Studies, Dalit Studies, and Gender Studies. Dalit women's precarity of life provides a vantage point from which to analyze the deep and common continuities of structures of caste, gender, law, education, culture, capital, human rights, and struggles over sexuality, and labor (Paik, 2014b). Different Dalit women inhabit a variety of conflicting spaces from where they speak. We need to pay close attention to the different forms of incremental intersecting technologies that thwart Dalit women in tenuous historical conjunctures. In their struggle to achieve revolutionary modernity and to simultaneously fight against the violence of caste discrimination and untouchability, radical Dalits were also at times ambiguous regarding women's roles

The importance of Dalit studies is to offer new perspectives for the study of India. Dalit Literature is essentially against exploitation, and made use of writing as a method of propaganda for the movement. This area needs more exploration and recognition in the world. Dalit realities should be represented with a vision and cause. Though writing of Dalits and their representation in art and culture is recent phenomena, still there is a lack of actual issues and social injustice that they have to endure in day to day life.

## REFERENCES:-

1. Sambharia, RatanKumar.Thunderstorm: Dalit Stories.Trans. MridulBhasin. Gurgaon:Hachette India, 2015. Print.

2. Sathe, Putul. *Ethnography of the Marginalised Self: Reading of Dalit Women's Autobiographies* .n.d. Web. 13 Feb. 2016.
3. S.J., Aloysius Irudayam, Jayshree P. Mangubhai and Joel G. Lee. *Dalit Women—Speak Out: Caste, Class and Gender Violence in India*. New Delhi: Zubaan Publishers. 2011. Print.
4. Bose, AparnaLanjewar. *Crossing the Borders: Multicultural Dialogue In Literature*. Ed.Dharminder Singh Ubhaand DeepinderjeetRandhawa. Patiala: GSSDGS Khalsa College, 2015.Print.
5. Jaya Sinsinwar Dr. MuktiUpadhyay. ( Jun, 2019 ). *Study on Dalit Literature, Trends and Female Dalit Writings*. *Journal of Advances and Scholarly Researches in Allied Education* .
6. Kavitha, K. (April 2014). *Dalit Literature in India*. *PARIPEX - INDIAN JOURNAL OF RESEARCH* ISSN - 2250-1991 .
7. Konda, G. R. (2020, dec 12). *Dalit Narrative and Dalit Representation in Indian Cinema*. *Economic &Political Weekly* .
8. Pandit, M. (2017, dec 27). *How three generations of Dalit women writers saw their identities and struggle?* *The Indian EXPRESS* .
9. Yengde, S. (2018). *Dalit Cinema*. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* .
10. Waghmare, S. (2018, May 19). *Opinion | Where Are The Dalits? Their Representation in the Indian Film Industry is a Mere 0.1 Percent*. *News18* .