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"Caste,Class,and Identity Conflict in Dalit Autobiographies : Baluta and Upara"

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Abstract

Indian Caste system is a stain on human society. Dalit society (Asprishya samaj) has been a victim of Indian caste system about 2500 years. Nowadays, dalits are becoming aware of rights and identity. They struggle against caste, discrimination, illiteracy and poverty. Dalits have the weapons of education, self empowerment and democracy. In Hinduism, it is said that caste system is Created by God many years ago. In Rigveda, it is recorded that from the mouth of Brahma -'Brahmin' upper caste was born, 'Kshatriya' (warrior) from (Baahu) arms, from Brahma's thigh -Vaishya merchant and from Brahma's foot -Shudra i.e. servant. There is no place anywhere for Dalits (Ati- Shudra). As they are more marginalized than Shudras. According to Manusmriti, an ancient Hindu false rule book, Shudras or Untouchables had no right to accumulate wealth, they were treated as inferior to dogs, cats and other animals. Doors of education were closed to them. Exploitation of marginalised classes started in history itself. Everyone knows the story of Eklavya in the ancient epic Mahabharata but if we look at Eklavya or his story as a dalit hero, we would like to mention that Dalits were denied education by upper class Guru Dronacharya because Eklavya did not belong to a high caste family. After Eklavya's exploitation, Dronacharya neutralized Eklavya, suppressing his power. Today, Caste discrimination is still visible in the Indian social system. Majority of the general society lives in the village. Discrimination is observed in various forms in villages even today. The Republic of India was established on 26th January 1950 and officially the great work of eradicating untouchability was done by the Constitution of India .

. Through autobiography, Dalit writers have successfully tried to present the emotions, feelings, sorrows and indomitable will of Dalits. The strength of the movement, the values of freedom, equality, fraternity and justice, humanism, pantheism were inculcated among indians. Dalit express their agonies, expectations, aspirations, identity crisis through literature. Dalit literature in particular autobiography play a vital role in creating collective consciousness of dalits. Baluta (1978) is the first published dalit autobiography in Marathi language. The autobiography of Dagdu Maruti Pawar's forty years of life is presented in this autobiography. It is the picture of the society which remained neglected and deprived, remained mired in ignorance, misery and slavery. The Author has presented the pain of caste and exploitation attached to Human. Laxman Babu Mane's autobiography Upara: An Outsider' (1980) is a successful effort to highlight all the unhappiness and sufferings of margins or a person due to his/her caste in the deep darkness of oppression, alienation, exploitation, suppression and marginalization.

Keywords - Caste, Dalit, Upper-caste, untouchability, Manusmriti, Caste discriminations, Identity Crisis, Autobiography, An outsider, Marginalization.

Outline:

Introduction

Indian social System and Dalit

Dalit autobiography and major issues

Reflection of caste, class and identity conflict in Baluta and Upara

In a nutshell

Introduction:-

People of many castes, religions and sects live in India. India has a socio-cultural heritage but casteism seems to be an ingrained stigma in Indian culture. A certain community was treated inhumanely in the name of caste system. According to the ancient hindu scripture 'Manusmriti' in Indian culture there were four major varnas namely Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. But to serve these four varnas, there was one varna called 'Ati Shudra.' The people living outside the village were very exploited. They were being deprived of their rights and privileges. They were denied the right to see, speak, hear, move elsewhere, get water, do business publically. They were deprived of education and their voices were suppressed until the reformist movement of the 19th century. Over time, this mindset changed and Dalit literature emerged in Indian literature after the mid-twentieth century (1960s). Before 1960, Dalit characters appear in many stories, novels, essays, poems, autobiographies in Indian language literature, but their pains were not presented by Non-Dalits in the true sense of the word. Dalit identity, class struggle, consciousness of existence, awareness of rights and duties, rebellion against injustice, oppression and exploitation, freedom, equality and brotherhood are reflected in Dalit literature in true sense in autobiographies after 1960.

The term-Dalit:

Although it cannot be said with certainty who first used the word *Dalit*. The dalit voice appeared in following writings. In Marathi, P.N. Rajbhoj's magazine in 1932 AD is named as *Dalit Bandhu*, later on June 1, 1941, a gentleman named V. N. Barve started a magazine * *Dalit Sevak* * from Dhule. He also started a weekly *Dalit Ninad* from Kolhapur on 14 April 1947. *Dalit* is a Sanskrit word. It is derived from the word Dal. It *means* in many dictionaries Untouchable, neglected, destitute, outcast, dead, crushed, trampled, oppressed, light caste, *backward class* According to Gandhiji, untouchables means Harijan which means children of God. The name of the organization established in 1906 AD for the overall upliftment of the untouchables was named as 'Depressed Classes Mission Society of India' by Maharshi V. R. Shinde. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had said in the Round Table conference that the word Depressed class or Untouchable is meant by for this group. The important thing is that Mahatma Phule first started the fight for the rights of this Shudra / Atishudra i.e. Dalit class in Indian History.

Dalit is a broad term that refers to many downtrodden castes. They have been trampled or destroyed by the upper castes. They are considered to be the lowest in the Hindu caste system. Earlier these castes were considered untouchable. These groups include, for example, Dalits, Nomadic Tribes, neo-Buddhists, landless, homeless women, and the oppressed castes and sects of Christianity and in Islam too. According to Article 341 and 342 of the Constitution, the Central Government has declared the list of Scheduled Castes and Tribes. The Scheduled Castes and Tribes were kept outside all the four varnas in the Hindu caste system. The story of Eklayva is reflection of Upper castes' monopoly. These castes were neglected for thousands of years and were given the work of slaves. Scheduled caste, Scheduled Tribes and Nomadic Tribes members have to suffer a lot due to exploitation by Upper-castes. Today all those Castes are called Dalits. Scheduled Tribes are specially called Adivasi. The total number of Scheduled Castes in all the States and Union Territories is 1215 while the total number of Scheduled Tribes is 747. In Maharashtra the number of Scheduled Castes is above 59 while the number of Scheduled Tribes is 47.

In brief, The word Dalit means oppressed whose rights have been taken away. In this sense, the Dalit class is present in all religions like Hindu, Muslim, Christian etc. Among those who are considered as Dalit in the present time. Many classes were earlier considered Untouchables. They were exploited in many ways. According to the

2011 Census of India, about 16.6 percent or 20.14 crores of the population of India are Dalits. They are victims of our caste ridden- society.

Influence of Dr. Ambedkar on Dalit Writings:

In the post-independence period, the pace of social change began to accelerate. The idea of 'Learn, Organize and Struggle' seems to have had a profound effect on the Dalit class. Dalit literature came to be known as a distinct genre. In the early and middle of the 20th century Dr. B.R. Ambedkar gave a new dimension to the cause of Dalits'voice. He was the 'messiha' for dalits or Bahujan people in India.Dr.Ambedkar questioned every established outworn religious norms that allow the inhuman treatment to Dalits.He questioned 'varn vyavastha of Hinduism'and proclaimed importance of Buddhism in the life of Dalits.After 1945, he prepared the constitution which place for the equality, liberty and freedom and all kind of justice to all people in India. Many organisations like Dalits' Panther, Bheem Army , Dalit Sangharsh Samiti,Bheem Sena, Samta Sainik dal such many movements that brought marvelous changes in the status of Dalit communities.Firstly,it was Ambedkar's literature that influence many dalits to come up with their own literature.Therefore,dalits wrote essay, poems editorials, news, latest magazines, short stories,novels and biography.Apart from those forms of literature ,it was autobiography that caught the dalit experiences meticulously centred around dalit identity, social upliftment,and dalit consciousness. The Republic of India was established on 26th January 1950 and officially the great work of eradicating untouchability was done by the Constitution of India .

Dalit autobiography and major issues:-

It is said that autobiography is a personal account of one's own life. Several Dalits have written autobiographies describing their protest and struggle for living. This is a true testament to raising one's own voice in form of the written words.Dalit autobiographies deal with caste ,class,the search for identity ,demand of social justice,the eradication of slavery,demolitions of orthodox mentality of upperclasses, marginalisation, empowerment and enlightenment. The protagonist in Dalit Autobiography is representative of his community. He or she keeps high self respect, love for equality and brotherhood.The central character means protagonist speaks for truth, dignity in social structure. The aim of dalit autobiography is to protest against the established system which is based on inhumanity ,injustice , outworn laws and sanctimoniousness of the upper castes. Caste,class and identity conflict, caste discrimination,women empowerment,self respect,exploitation, suppression and gender violence are dominant Central ideas in almost all Autobiographies of Indian Dalit writers.Dalit autobiography attempt to unveiled the agony's of dalit life and experience is through first and account. Those autobiographies are the reflection of dalit protest against the economic exploitation and humiliation based on it. There are arduous endeavors from the canonical to the marginal ,from macro narrative to the micronarative ,from the virtual to the real and from self emulation to self affirmation. Dalit autobiographies are largely recollections of their miserable experiences as the outsider. There is the presentation of unhead voices of Dalits who are marginalised heroes and heroines.

Dalit Autobiographies tried to demolish all traditional boundaries with their sharp weapon that is language. Autobiography depicted life as it was. Their original life stories were caught in the words,the experiences of untouchability, oppression, castism form a common attitude among the Dalits.They express their sorrows, expectations, aspirations, dreams, identity crisis, through literature. Dalit literature in particular autobiography plays a vital role in creating self awareness,respect and collective consciousness of dalits.Baluta by Daya Pawar and Upara by Laxman Mane are two masterpieces in Dalit literature.

Caste, class and identity conflict in 'Baluta' and 'Upara:an Outsider':-

Baluta (Marathi □□□□□ , published in1978) is an autobiography by the Indian writer Daya Pawar, written originally in Marathi language.Later, An English translation by Jerry Pinto was published in 2015. In Baluta-Mother of all dalit autobiographies, the writer Dagadu Maruti Pawar (Daya Pawar)sketches the picture of his agonies, struggles hopes and aspirations in rural as well as in urban areas. Dagdu Maruti Pawar's forty year life journey is presented in this autobiography. This is the story of a Dagadu that has been trampled by the society and burnt by misery.In Baluta,Dagdu Maruti Pawar's forty year life journey is presented.The autobiography of Dagdu Maruti Pawar's forty years of life is presented in this autobiography. This is the story of a

Daya Pawar that has been trampled by the society and burnt by misery. For thousands of years the society which remained neglected and deprived, remained mired in ignorance, misery and slavery. Dagdu's childhood has been spent in both rural and urban areas. Maharwada of Dhamangaon, Chawdi there, ground in front of Chawdi, games there, quarrels are all rooted in the spirit of his childhood. The Mahars(dalits) had to do village chores, run in front of the horses of the big officials, take care of their animals, playing music at the weddings of the upper caste, playing escort to a bridegroom, announcing death and birth through the village, drag the dead animals, chopped wood, the list is extensive... and in return for this work they got grain and fodder. **The exchange was called Baluta, a share in all of the village's produce.** The autobiography deals with the neglect of Dalits by the upper castes, ignorance - superstition, and the suffering of Dalits and women in villages and cities.

The autobiography is written as a story by the Dagadu Maruti Pawar being told to the more literate, educated, social activist Daya Pawar. He lived in Kamathipur, Mumbai for job reasons. The author has described the horrible life of Dalits in Kamathipur. Betting, and brewing are considered common here. Gambling dens and sex were openly discussed in Kamathipur. The cries of social change started by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar reach his heart. But the situation seems to be constantly eroding the rubble. Dr. Ambedkar who gave light to Dalits self-confidence, self-reliance and self-respect. It is clear from this autobiography that Daya Pawar was influenced by Dr. Ambedkar's thinking.

In this autobiography, Daya Pawar has presented the pain of caste and exploitation attached to man. While the autobiography of the personality of Daya is being revealed, here is also the autobiography of the degraded society of stone. The drawings of Dagdu's family and associates are very convincing and lively. The drawings of Dagdu's family and associates are very convincing and lively. Mother who is constantly struggling, addicted grandfather (father), grandmother, sister in Wadala slum, aunt who drinks neem juice, artist Sadashiv, rumor monger Uma Ajya, Sattar who is betting, Sita who is hysterical. There are many personalities like Gau Vadarin, Nakshatra-like molecule, prostitute Jamna aunty, deluded Roka, Salma in this autobiography.

Therefore, this autobiography has gained value both in terms of caste, class and identity conflict. In Baluta, Daya Pawar writesI have always like a poem from 'in Prison'(kondwada). You know the one in which sorrow is compared to an iceberg?

My Sorrow: an iceberg, it's tip alone breaking the waterline.
 My memories: drops of acid
 That leave me shivering in pain .
 On my shoulders, the crucifix of life
 On my forehead, the placard of my fate-,
 You who have washed the guilt of your hands,
 You who have exfoliated your past,
 How do you manage with this new-hewn faces?

Laxman Babu Mane's autobiography Upara: An Outsider is a successful effort to highlight all the sorrows and sufferings of margins or a person due to his/her caste in the deep darkness of oppression, marginalization, exploitation, suppression and alienation. It is a story of his life as a member of the kaikali caste. It was first published in Marathi language in 1980 and translated into English by A.K.Kamat and title as 'Upara: an Outsider' in 1997. Through his autobiography, he has made an excellent effort to express the sufferings of the marginalized people. After publishing his autobiography Upara (An Outsider) in 1980, he suddenly came in fame. Although Narrator has to face too much struggle, pain and exploitation in his life yet he does not feel depressed. On every step high caste people imposed difficulties on him, insulted him and degraded him. After all this, he never feels defeated and these things and injustice inspire him to fight for his rights. One by one on every step of life he gets success and society fails to bind him in its rules. Jan Panchayat opposed education but his father convinced them that decision of admitting him to school was not spoil his child. He gains education and gets knowledge. This education enlightened both his mind and soul. Now he knows that a person cannot be judged on the behalf of his birth and caste, he can be judged on the behalf of his moral and spiritual values. He also encourages other oppressed people. He fights for other and asks people to raise their voice against injustice. So as per above discussion it is clear that the present work is not only an autobiography or the journey of a single person but it is

the true Reflection of the society that is full of caste,class and identity conflict. His autobiography is considered as a milestone in Marathi Dalit Literature and for this wonderful work Laxman Babu Mane received Sahitya Academy Award.

In a nutshell, Baluta (1978) by Daya Pawar and Upara (1980)by Laxman Mane ,two Autobiographies are landmarks in Dalit literature. They presented a vivid account of narrator's trouble in life within the framework of Hindu society's rigid stratifications. Daya Pawar did not only depicts the picture of the pervasive cruelty of caste system but also gave ground to the unheard voices of dalit community. Both writers had no pretensions to become writers nor were they engaged with any literary activities. They wrote because they wanted to tell experiences of casteism, cruelty of Upper castes monopoly, exploitation and pain to the society. Pawar and Mane through these autobiographies revealed their true experiences of oppression and marginalization. They strived for Liberty ,Equality and Fraternity dignity ,pride and status of human being.

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