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## From Silence To Speech: Examining Brahmanical Patriarchy In The Weave Of My Life And The Prison We Broke

Vani Jaiswal, Dr. Ipshita Nath

Student, Associate Professor

Master of Arts, English Department

Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies, Faridabad, Haryana, India

### ABSTRACT

This paper talks about the complicated interweaving of caste, gender and class in Dalit women's account, centering on the terrible impact of Brahmanical patriarchy and their journey towards change and resistance. Through critically examining the works of Dalit women writers- *The Prison We Broke* by Baby Kamble and *The Weave of My Life* by Urmila Pawar, their account gave an insight how Dalit women face triple marginalization, they went through numerous layers of repressions that made them feel excluded from the society. The research delves into the culture and tradition of Mahar, exposing the ingrained caste and gender inequality. By treading on the transformative change from silence to speech, the study discloses how Dalit women not only represent the saga of their suffering but also exhibit courage to fight for Dignity and equality.

**Keywords:** Brahmanical patriarchy, marginalization, oppression, resistance, equality, Dalit literature.

### INTRODUCTION

Dalit literature has become a separate class of writing in many of the Indian languages. Many writings under this classification have appeared as a strong voice of marginalized communities in different streams of literature. The word Dalit is derived from Sanskrit language and it means "suppressed" or "broken to pieces". The term Dalit is to describe the marginalized section of society that are oppressed by the upper-caste people. The category of these people is burdened under the caste and gender structures. By looking upon the caste hierarchy, Dalit people were never considered a part of the system. These writings gave a

brutal reality of their live experiences. Many social activists who came forward to lead the movement for them. Dalit is not just a caste but a socio-political category of oppressed people belonging to many castes speaking many languages.

### **Positioning Dalit women in the social hierarchy:**

Dalits are acknowledged in India as the lowest caste in the social hierarchy. Under this structure, Dalit men are depressed but Dalit women are most under privileged. Their position are often viewed lower than men. These women are tormented not because of the caste but also the gender. Their identity has been snatched and they never hold importance in the socio-political status. In traditional Indian society, the living conditions of women was not good, their freedom was restricted. Being a Dalit is the most difficult situation to live in, but being a Dalit woman becomes complicated to survive under the hierarchal structure. As a woman, their duty is to do household chores and nurture children at home. Despite doing all work, they were discarded as leftover food. They are exploited physically and economically not only by the males in their community but also by the upper-caste men. It becomes deplorable for them to live in such a community. These women are triple marginalized through caste, class and gender. Firstly, they endure the suffering imposed by caste-ridden society, the brutal taint of untouchability. Secondly, they endure extreme poverty and denied basic amenities. Thirdly, on the basis of gender, as a woman they face domestic violence within their community.

In the *Weave of My Life* by Urmila Pawar and *The Prison We Broke* by Baby Kamble, revealed the multiple layers of oppression that operates through the three tiers. It brings to light, how these forces grappled them and their very existence becomes a prison of economic, mental and psychological subjugations. These oppressive laws entrapped their liberty and fixed their position as a role of woman who is bound by household duties. Dalit women's position is even worser than Dalit men as they bear the torment of earning money as laborer as well as managing the house. They often toiled harder than their husbands but stayed financially dependent. Even if these women go out to earn in order to feed their family, their assistance was never acknowledged. The caste prejudice slaps them backwards and they were forbidden to do jobs of higher rank. The Dalit women's marginalization within the culture of Dalit literature is obvious. Dalit women are fewer in number than Dalit men and only few of them given chance to rebel against the injustice they faced. Through writings, they came forward to rebel against the discrimination they endured not only through caste structures but also the gender inequality.

### **Brahmanical Patriarchy:**

Uma Chakravarti, a feminist scholar introduced the term "Brahmanical Patriarchy", referring to which where Brahmanical casts ideals intersects with patriarchal structures to suppress Dalit women. In this system, women sexuality is restrained to maintain practice endogamy holding women chastity as a means of caste purity by marrying her in the same caste or within the same family. In *The Prison We Broke*, Kamble disclose how this oppressive force not only affected the Brahman caste but also penetrated into the Mahar

community who initiated the same stereotypical norms and patriarchal beliefs that inflicted on Dalit women. Despite being repressed, they replicated their values in order to gain respect among other communities. Dalit men who controlled their women just like upper-caste men who confined women in patriarchal dominance. This included governing their behaviour, disciplining women to maintain order, imposing humility and demanding submissiveness. Their problem with female modesty and sexual purity is what they have taken from Brahmanical caste. It was even cultivated in the improvised Dalit households where women were expected to be silent sufferers, submissive in nature and self-sacrificing.

In the memoir, both Kamble and Pawar unveils the oppression of Dalit women in her community by their husbands. They showcase how Brahmanical patriarchy robbed women of their self-respect and make them subservient to men. The memoir depicting extremely ingrained systems of class, caste and gender discrimination in India, how class structure go hand in hand with male dominance. Women should be virtuous towards their husbands to incorporate the very notion of Brahmanical patriarchy. The stories from folklore impacted their lives and these myths are entrenched into the psyche of women that may have lost the power to speak for their self-respect. Under the pretence of religion, Dalit women were offered to gods while their rightful place as wives was denied to them. The values of upper-caste people were persistent among the Mahar community. A Brahmin priest would be the one who takes the sole responsibility of doing the marriage rituals. He always stand far away from Mandap, from these polluting agents. Such kind of Brahmanical control can be viewed through the memoir. The misery of these women is beyond tolerance.

### **Violence and Exploitation of women:**

Dalit women are vulnerable to sexual harassment by upper-caste men and even in their own households. Both memoirs *The Weave of My Life* by Urmila Pawar and *The Prison We Broke* by Baby Kamble unveil the daily experiences of dehumanization, abject poverty, economic exploitation that leaves indelible impression on their lives. These women are oppressed not just by caste atrocities but also the patriarchal oppression. Pawar detailed the suffering of her mother, her daily life routine roam around her family. She was expected to be submissive and loyal towards her husband. Urmila's father though respected in the community, was abusive and authoritative towards his wife. Kamble's memoir is cruelly honest about the oppression women faced in their lives, especially from their husbands. They had no say in rational matters and were subjected to violence which collectively echoes the pain of suffering more psychological and physical. Their accounts are not a solo triumph but highlighting the communal voice of resilience against the ingrained injustice.

### **Journey from silence to speech:**

Both Kamble and Pawar conclude their stories by highlighting the significance of speech. Kamble breaks the prison of caste patriarchy, superstition, economic exploitation which Dalit people are subjected to, especially women. Pawar weaves the threads of pain and suffering through actual weaving of Aayadan. They both fractured the norms of Hindu caste and rebel against it by positioning themselves as strong and

independent women. The journey from silence to speech is not easy, rather filled with numerous hurdles that they cross to gain their independence. Both writers depict domestic violence, sexual harassment, highlighting how patriarchy within the Dalit community itself fortify exploitation.

The Prison We Broke by Baby Kamble and The Weave of My Life by Urmila Pawar exposes the brutal realities of violence that these women endure. Despite the harsh sufferings, nothing breaks them and the act of writing becomes a tool for resistance. Kamble disclose how Mahar community broke the silence and escape the clutches of caste and gender oppression by adopting new ideas under Ambedkar's assistance. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is a glorious figure in both narratives. Their memoir emphasised deep respect, depicting him as a guardian who changed their lives and guided them on the path of Buddhism. Through conversion into Buddhism, he urges them to transform their lives and his vision deeply resonates with the Dalit community.

Writing becomes a strong weapon to rebel against the oppression. The act of narrating stories gave an insight to their reality and speaks the volume of miseries they endured. The influence of Ambedkarite movement enlightened the hearts of Mahar community and filled them with hope to lead a better life. Despite being positioned at the lowest in the society, their determination to reclaim their identity does not shook. Kamble writes in raw and unfiltered words, unveiling the usual reality of Dalit women intentionally escaping from literary conventions to provide originality. Pawar chooses more organised form, combining reflection with critical analysis. Both Pawar and Kamble unite in their collective protest for empowering women and challenging the idea that education becomes a transformative path that can break free from systemic oppression. Their narratives glistening with the voice of resilience to come forefront and unite with the spirit to fight for equality.

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