

REFLECTION OF RESISTANCE IN SELECTED MARATHI DALIT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

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Abstract:

Dalit autobiography is a kind of subjective narration by a Dalit writer in which more importance is given to the social life than the writer himself. The common social life is analyzed by the writer. The aims and objectives of these autobiographies are different as they are not written and published for self-gratification or self glorification. Dalit autobiographies serve as a weapon for creating a social change and awareness in an unequal society. Dalit autobiographies are the burning desires for freedom from the cultural clutches binding for centuries. A large majority of the population in India have been subjugated in the name of conventions which are forced upon them without any fault of theirs. All Dalit authors, whether male or female suffered equally or in fact the female more than that of the male authors as they were exposed to the caste ridden system and by the patriarchal order of the society. Those who have followed in the footprints of Mahatma Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar have surely gained self-respect and a sense of rights to be enjoyed by themselves and others are coming forward to revolt against the system claiming his/her equal human rights which are not only endowed upon the constitution but natural rights as well. Any social odds they come across are strongly tackled by the ones who think and act. These autobiographers are in a way mirrors to the Dalit writers and the entire community. This Dalit fervour continues to motivate the coming generations in order to stake their rights and live with self pride and dignity what was dreamt by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. In this respect one thing can be observed that situations of marginality have produced ideas of justice. Considering the notion of justice in the milieu of the Dalits for the Dalits the question of justice goes much beyond the narrow limits of distributional aspects like reservation or compensatory discrimination realising the aspects like violence, powerlessness, fear, and cultural identity

Keywords- Autobiographies, Dalit, Resistance, Emancipation, Epiphany etc

The main purpose of the Dalit autobiographies is the emancipation of the oppressed and exploited people. Gradually, in the twentieth century it came into the public arena, and in the post independent India it gained great momentum. At present, it is one of the most discussed subjects at national and international level. The term 'Dalit' is defined by different writers in various ways. The literal meaning of it is the masses that have been depressed, downtrodden, and exploited economically, socially, culturally in the name of religion, gods, goddesses and other factors. Dalit is not a caste.

According to one of the Marathi Dalit writers, Baburao Bagul, "A Dalit is the hero of the modern world. A Dalit is the centre of today's revolutionary activities. Dalit means revolutionary; Dalit means proper change." (*Translation Mine*) It is quite obvious that the people who are ignorant, unaware, weak, and powerless are harassed and deceived by the non-Dalits. At the same time, the Dalits are in search of their self-identity and have started being self-assertive and self-respecting.

The Dalit autobiographies like Upara (An Outsider), Kolhatyach Por (Against All Odds), Uchalya (The Branded), Baluta, Jin Amuch (Prison We Broke) etc. are very famous. They portray the realistic Dalit and non-Dalit life. They have been revealing the pseudo-dignity of Indians, as it disseminated that India is the greatest democracy in the world, and in it there is a unity in diversity. They have been examining and depicting the manipulative and pretentious ideology of the mainstream literature which has always been spreading that India is free from the caste system and the practice of untouchability. But the non-Dalits have been exploiting and deceiving the Dalits, from time immemorial. So, the system of colonization was already in India, and still it is there. Although Dalits are constitutionally free, they are somehow or the other controlled by the caste Hindus. Shankarrao Kharat, a famous Dalit autobiographer and intellectual narrates how his father was enslaved by the non-Dalits. The conversation that goes on between his father and Kharat himself when his father was forced to look after the corpse without having food and water for a long time indicates the cruelty of enslavement.

" No, son, I'll only have time to eat my bread when everything is over with this corpse. Not before that! But when will it all be over? And how long will you go without food. To my questions, Anna (Kharat's father) replied. The village chief was here a little while ago. He told me that the head constable has arrived in the village. But he is dining. He'll come only when he has finished eating and drinking. When the corpse is fetched out of the well, the inquest will be held. Then we'll Be free." (*Poisoned Bread 73-74*) Consequently, the Dalit autobiographers are concerned about the pathetic condition of the Dalits. The sufferings and humiliations are an integral part of the Dalit struggle. Dalit

literature is basically a socially committed one. It helps the Dalits to become aware and struggle for their human rights, which are denied to them by the so-called upper castes.

The expressions of Resistance reflected in Dalit Autobiographies are never before mentioned with intensity. All dalit autobiographies have this strong intensity which never before expressed in the form of literature. Dalit autobiographies in Marathi have changed the conventional norms of Autobiographies in Marathi. Persons and personality, beginning and development, character and characterization, sophisticated mixture of facts and fiction, well knit plot of events and eventualities of the Marathi literature were replaced by a different set of persons, characters, events, motifs and plots. Language in Dalit autobiographies showed the depth of the Social Epiphany and explosion of suppressed voice. Dalit writers avoided the use of standardized Marathi words, phrases and ideas.

Dalit autobiographies in Marathi are the life stories of victimized persons. Dalit community in Maharashtra was deliberately kept to the inhuman level of beasts and brutes by the system. Some social groups needed downtrodden section of the people in order to maintain their traditional supremacy.

Different religious, educational, matrimonial, philosophies and theories were constructed in such a way that the oppressed class will never be able to climb the ladder. Gods and scriptures served their purpose to keep them at the lower range. Upper caste members of the society had established ownership right on the bodies and minds, wives and children, hearts and soul of these people.

We came across the pitiable condition of Dalits in Maharashtra in these autobiographies. Their life was marked by perpetual hunger, relentless, humiliation and continuous deprivation. The preaching of Dr. Ambedkar have changed their life. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar told them that tolerating injustice is a serious crime. Dalit community admire his thought and express their revolt against injustice. It is the result of Dr. Ambedkar's hard work that these people have got education and expose the injustice done with them in the form of literature. Dalit community praises Dr. Ambedkar as their God.

Dalit Literature is showing the true face of Indian Society. Equality is there on paper for the namesake and even today in many corners of India dalits are living the life of a slave. Dalit Literature is full of suffering, trouble, torture and humiliation. The literature created by Arjun Dangle focuses on the social, political and economical status of dalits- yesterday and today. His writing is based on their experience and the observation of the society. Little of his literary creation enables the listener/reader to understand the book very soon. A kind of experience Dalit gets; and their experiences are the source of their writings. He has gone through unexpected and unwanted experiences and he feels the upcoming generation should

not be a victim of the system. All his efforts of writing are bringing a positive change in Indian Society. Mr. Dangle has a great hope that a day will come and caste will be vanished from the Indian Society.

Every day, Dalits are harassed, humiliated and so many atrocity cases are registered in various police stations of Maharashtra. If this is the truth, in the context of a very forward State of India then the situations of dalits in Bihar, U.P., Gujrat, Punjab and other states of South India is beyond our imagination. Maharashtra could be a secular state but not the safe state for dalits and the latest and the best example of it is the 'KHAIRLANJI SCANDAL' (HATYA KAND). The Dalits in India are expecting a threat of human-beings from non-dalits. These great literary-men are expressing their inner feelings in the form of literature and their criticism on Indian Society is for reconstructing India in a well-manner. Dalit Autobiographies have no models before them to copy from. They were not Autobiographies of persons at the fag and end of their lives, looking back on life with composure. They were not even the life stories of people who had already become accomplished writers. Writing the Autobiographies made most of them writers. In this sense they were not even 'Autobiographies' they can be described as 'social epiphanies' expressions which are never before mentioned with intensity. One can understand the same with the brief review of the following autobiographies.

Laxman Manels autobiography Upara - An Outsider

His autobiography reflects the social condition of the age. It will also throw light on two major things. First is the significant role that education plays in upgrading the standards of human life. Secondly the life story of Mr. Laxman Mane brings forth the optimistic picture of the future society. How the writer and his community faced the injustice and how he prepares to expose it through literature. This type of exposure can be called as 'social epiphany'.

Kishor Kale's (Kolhatyach Por) 'Against All Odds'

We can observe the strong revolutionary element in this autobiographical work. It shows how Kishor Kale, boy of Kolhati community becomes a highly qualified doctor and attacks the so-called upper class of the society and also his own community for keeping bad and black rituals. This autobiography can also be considered for the language and its explosiveness as an utterance of suppressed voice. It also reflects Kishor Kale's struggle to reform his community and give them vision to understand and accept thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Baby Kamble's (Jin Amuch) 'Prison we Broke' deals with the established caste system and contrasting situation of Dalit and so called upper class. This autobiography also throws light on the changing situations of Baby Kamble's life and her community. How and why she considers Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar as the God of Gods, who broke the

Indexed in: International Citation Indexing (ICI), International Scientific Indexing (ISI), Directory of Research Journal Indexing (DRJI) Google Scholar & Cosmos.

prisons of caste dominated society. It also shows the place of women and their problems in her community.

Urmila Pawar's (Ayadan) A Wave of my Life deal with a self-confident and self-reliant Dalit woman and a writer in Urmila Pawar. How a rebellious Dalit woman boldly attacks on male dominated society. It also focuses on her efforts to establish herself as a person of significance is obviously seen in her active participation in all activities. It also focuses her confident character as a woman to refuse either special concession or a deliberate humiliation in the society. Autobiography reflects bold and rebellious character of Urmila Pawar.

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