



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 3. Issue 1.,2016 (Jan-Mar.)

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

THE REPRESENTATION OF DALIT FEMINISM WRITINGS AS CONTENTION TO
PATRIARCHY

Dr. DASARI KEJIYA¹, SAMPATHBABU TOKALA²

¹Lecturer in English, Department of English, SVKP College, Markapur, Prakasam District, Andhra Pradesh

²Doctoral Scholar, School of Humanities, Centre for ALTS, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, Telangana State



Dr. DASARI KEJIYA

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the ideas that Dalit women endeavor to precise their distress in their writings. The paper deals with societal approach towards Dalit feminism. The concept of feminism is restricted to certain recognized structures of gender insensitivity. The theory of feminism never gives a voice of Dalits in mainstream society. Dalit women problems have become unnoticeable and unspoken when the argument arises with Dalit women centric complications. Hence, Dalit feminism has begun as a concept to fight back against the atrocities done to them in day today life. Dalit feminism is not a marginal dichotomy anymore. It emerged as ambitiousness and path-goal to curtail every sort of discrimination and violence through their writings. Dalit feminism stands as an encounter to all prevailing manuscripts architected by Manu which keep Dalit women at the bottom of the caste ladder and gender construction. Feminism is not and should not be typical urban middle class concept and merely a record of upper caste women alone. Dalit feminist writings trace all aspects of social life and makes unquestionable that Dalit women have a certain and maximum space in literature. Patriarchy and women's oppression are found in all Indian castes, classes' religions, group and cultures, but a few attempts are made by Indian feminist writers to bring Dalit feminist interpretations in their writings. Hence, Dalit feminist writings develop as a thriving thump to show resistance of existing atrocities towards Dalit women and bring awareness among people to reduce these atrocities. This paper deeply studies the unlike divisions within the feminist fight that upraised the problem of dalit women and evaluates the speculative design of dalit feminism using the ideas of dalit women activists and writers.

Keywords: Caste, Patriarchy, Gender, Feminism, Dalits, Dalit movement, Dalit-feminism, Upper-castes, Lower-castes, Dalit autobiography, Discrimination, Sexuality, Caste violence, Culture, Inequalities and Economic exploitation.

©KY PUBLICATIONS

This paper looks in to the nuances that Dalit women attempt to express their anguish in their writings. The paper comprehends to re-examine society with Dalit feminist writings and provide the coherent explanation of their writings, re-interpretation of social theories from Dalit women's point of view. Feminism is not and should not be typical urban middle class concept and merely a record of upper caste women alone. Dalit feminist writings trace all aspects of social life and makes unquestionable that Dalit women have a certain and maximum space in literature. Patriarchy and women's oppression are found in all Indian castes, classes' religions, group and cultures, but a fewer attempts are made by Indian feminist writers to bring Dalit feminist interpretations in their writings. Hence, Dalit feminist writings emerge as a thriving thump to show resistance of existing atrocities towards Dalit women and bring awareness among people to reduce these atrocities.

During the period of post-independence, women initiated challenging equivalence against their men at the workplace and home in connection to proving their ability in everyday life. But women in general who are categorized and put on top and next in caste hierarchical ladder assumed that discrimination based on gender inequality exist as same to all Indian women. In reality, there is again a vast difference among different castes' women facing the discrimination and Dalit women lowered at bottom of caste system encounter the discrimination quantity at the highest rate. Indian feminist who gets into academics embroil with this thought and put all women in the same category and mention very less about Dalit women. It could be an acceptable indication keeping Dalit women in main stream society, but at the same time it looks as adequate makeover without touching the conflicts of Dalit women and counter-attacking them. Thus, this omission of Dalit identity in academics or writings troubled Dalit women and provides latitude for them to represent themselves in effective methods. Sharmila Rege rightly points out in the article 'A dalit feminist standpoint',

"There was thus a masculinization of and a savarnisation of womanhood, leading to a classical exclusion of Dalit womanhood." (47)

Muktabai, a student in Phule's school, in an essay titled 'About the Girls of Mangs and Mahars' appeals that:

"Consideration to the dispossession of lower castes from their lands, the prohibition of knowledge imposed on them and the complex hierarchies wherein even the lower castes were stratified into more or less polluting. She then compares the experiences of birthing for lower caste and Brahmin women, underlining the specificities of experiences of lower caste women." (12)

While Dalit men are victims of casteism, Dalit women are doubly oppressed as Dalits and as women. They are reprimanded and dehumanized not only by upper caste men, but also by men from their own community. The relegation of women and their complete ostracism is clearly reflected in the writings of Dalit men. In exceptional circumstances when the women are essentially specified a voice or representation in Dalit men's autobiographies as in Tiraskrit, the narrative is based on conservative stereotypes. The observations are perpetually on their ethical character and the representation is always that of mothers or wives engaged in archetypal roles that society labels for them. Women's contributions in serving of the family and their struggles at making a livelihood are completely inattentive. This discriminatory obliviousness by Dalit males shows that men are not prepared to recognize Dalit women's impact to the family, the community and the Dalit movement at large. The absenteeism of these women in the men's narratives is not only deliberate but also intended. These men decline to accord their women equality even in literary representation. The quietening and stereotyping of the women has hence led to an alternative voice from the women themselves. Dalit women's personal narratives aren't only contesting their nonappearance in Dalit men's narratives, but also opine the apprehensions contributed by women each corner of all sections. These unconventional interpretations amenably condemn the patriarchal edifice in the society, thus, reproducing women's complications with detailed issues in Dalit society. The sufferings confronted by these women under the patriarchal order are thus verbalized. Dalit women's autobiographies are very honest and outspoken about all kinds of exploitation and subjugation that these women had to tolerate both within and outside their society. They also give coherent interpretations of their contribution to the larger cause of the Dalit community. Dalit women procured certain painful time to overthrow the oppression as women and as well as Dalits by inspired

usage of life experiences through social and literary movements. Though, Dalit men and women fight for common cause, yet Dalit women has extra burdens to think of patriarchy and its oppression as well.

Barbara Harlow writes in her study 'Resistance Literature' that:

"If resistance poetry challenged the dominant and hegemonic discourse of an occupying or colonizing power by attacking the symbolic foundations of that power and erecting symbolic structures of its own – resistance narratives go further still in analyzing the relations of power which sustain the system of domination and exploitation". (19)

Dalit women in rural areas encounter sexual assault from outside their castes when to go for work and within family boundaries. They hesitate so many times to fight back or to report in police stations for the sexual harassment and caste discrimination as they lack education and confidence to contest atrocities. Though, Dalit women comes as group and protest against the discriminations, it would not reach to a level of justice determination. As a result, these constant observations ignited dalit women to engage in writing poetry, and other writing forms in Telugu and it is evident in the form, content and the emotions that they express. Their writings deliver a kind confidence in Dalit women to contest these kinds of atrocities. Dalit women used language as their armament and defense, a fistful weapon to outbreak the oppression executed by Hinduism for centuries. Dalits acquainted their ways of learning to perform in literature and constructed self-respect from their humiliation. They have become thriving literary boulevards from nothingness caused by Hindu religious scriptures which denied a basic humanity and have been outcasts for centuries. Today 'untouchable' voices rule Telugu literature. Their writings show the aggressive gale of pain in dalit poetry.

Challapalli Swarupa Rani is the first Generation Dalit feminist. She is aware of women who undergo caste exploitation and patriarchy exploitation as well. She writes in her poem about dalit woman facing three kinds of oppression in her everyday life, about the undistinguishable evils of casteism and male chauvinism that condemn her life.

She says in her poem 'Mankena Puvu' that:

"Intlopurushahankaram
Oka chempachellumanipisthe
Veedhilokulaadhipathyam
Rendochempapagalagoduthundhi"

Translation:

"When has my life been truly mine?
In the home male arrogance
Sets my cheek stinging
While in the street caste arrogance
Splits the other cheek open"

Every fragmented section of civilization has its own explicit distresses and any manner of writing emphasizes on several aspects of societal glitches. Mostly, autobiographies claim to deliver proximate authenticity of the lived experiences, they have intended agendas and they are written in envisioned specified structure. In instances of Dalit men's and women's autobiographies have agendas and each one is dissimilar from others but the concerns can be accommodated in same genre. Dalit woman is vulnerable to physical, social, economic and domestic violence. Dalit woman's role in her family is very laborious and yet ambiguous stasis. She is labelled to strive for upliftment of the family and community as well. Dalit woman standing at the bottom of the hierarchy serves the above societies' ludicrous demands and bares silently whole Indian caste system's irrational rules book and patriarchy' adamant convictions.

FetterleyJudish writes:

"Power is the issue in the politics of literature, as it is in the politics of anything else. To be excluded from a literature that claims to define one's identity is to experience a peculiar form of powerlessness - not simply the powerlessness which derives from not seeing one's experience articulated, clarified,

and legitimized in art, but more significantly the powerlessness which results from the endless division of self against self". (2)

M. Foucault in his book 'Archeology of Knowledge' talks of subjugated knowledge, power of knowledge as being

"the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in functionalist coherence or formal systematization". (3)

In the poem 'Dalituralu', DarisiSasi Nirmala speaks about the manner in which everyone from the upper caste person to her own husband; dominate her in one way or another, denying her of any individuality.

I am dragged
here and there
under someone's buttocks
a seating plank
someone or other
drags me along
by a nose rope
to make me dance

(DarisiSasi Nirmala, 'Dalituralu')

Dalit women have been distorted in Indian literature and especially in Indian English literature. Most of the upper caste writings appear as bigoted assertions towards Dalit women. They are depicted as the victims of lust of higher caste men and never as rebels to fight against the injustices perpetuated upon them. Though, certain fact that Dalit women besieged as male's prey for lust and the same is represented in the writings of Dalits, yet Dalit women fight back to such kind of atrocities need to be addressed in dalit narratives. Even in the writings of the progressive writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, Premchand and other writers depict Dalit women as either molested or raped by the upper caste men. By representing so, writers gained sympathy for the victims but those writings have formed routine and mundane action and which is not ample for dalit literature and their fight back against caste system. They have absolutely overlooked the element that Dalit women can also resist and fight back like any other victim of social oppression to safeguard their dignity. Dalit woman is a symbol of physical and socio-cultural exploitation. She is targeted to all kinds of atrocities. So, the resistance and retribution from dalit women definitely should be efficacious in reality and dalit narratives as well.

Challapalli Swarupa Rani also says that in some areas, girls born into dalit castes are dedicated to the gods as devadasis, busavis, jogins. This uncivilized tradition that condemns women to a lifetime of prostitution is still prevalent in this country. It is unknown anywhere else in the world. We are all familiar with the agony of Sajjalagudem Mahadevamma, a basavi. Dalit poets are now asking which chapters in this country's history will contain the histories of these women.

My fame is that I
was recognized as a whore
even as a new born babe
my story that should bring
the head of this civilization
low into the depths of hell
In which chapter of the volumes
of famous history of your country
do you intend to write it?

(Challapalli Swaroopa Rani, 'NishiddaCharitha')

Vijayasri, in her poem 'Panchayati' poses questions to upper caste people who run panchyatis in local villages and show domination on Dalits and infringe their attitude on Dalits.

"So now you know I am a 'madiga' maid

Because I cannot sing Rama kirtanas?
 It seems a buffalo is better than me
 He swears at my-low caste in Sanskrit"

Challapalli Swaroopa Rani, in her poem 'PremaVaida' denotes that suicide becomes her protest:

"For generations I have
 Borne this leprous caste ridden male world
 In the basket of tender affection
 On my head.
 This merciless time
 Forces me to bear the
 Cross of humiliation
 In my virgin womb".

Challapalli Swaroopa Rani, in her collection of poems 'Mankena Puvu' expresses her reluctance towards family structures and the stringent rules brought by Hindu family and marriage life.

"Good enough to fulfil lust
 but not good enough for a family
 I feel like hiding my face in a stream"
 (Challapalli Swaroopa Rani, 'Mankena Puvvu')

Dalit Literature is an attempt to articulate unheard, unspoken voices. Dalit Literature forms a significant and distinctive part of the Indian literature. It is the literature about the Dalits, their sufferings, anguish, experiences and consciousness. It presents the fight of the subjugated victims of society for liberty, honor, security and freedom from coercions from the authoritative rudiments of the society. Dalit literary movement is a result of the struggles of Babasaheb Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phule and many other writers followed by.

The distress voiced by the Dalit poets and writers forms the crux of 'Dalitism' as perceived in the Telugu Dalit Literature. However, Dalit literature and Dalit Movements are rather inseparable. The role of women in Karamchedu, Chundur and other movements is worth mentioning and forms the motivation to the dalit movements. The subtleties of dependence of a dalit woman and the consequent surge of dissent which would appease her identity in the framework of conservative arrogances and customary practices of patriarchy delineate the image of woman that has conceptualized the brilliance of Dalit Movement. Maximum Dalit writings from Telugu literature as regarded as the component of protest represent the image of woman as an indispensable factor of decisive struggle. A dalit woman is a conjoint and persistent subject of subjugation more than a woman of middle class when sex, caste, class are the outlining constraints of oppression. The implausible attacks on Dalits, especially on women, are persuaded by troubling division of untouchability. As rightly pointed out by Vimal Thorat, in the complete social arrangement of the Hindu caste system, dalit woman is positioned at the bottom. All the calculations of policies in fostering human development at the summative level hide gender differences and especially the belittled condition of dalit women. Women belonging to marginalized groups suffer triple deprivations arising out of lack of access to economic resources, caste and gender discrimination. In the first instance, she is molested and raped in order to settle the old scores but when her character becomes the topic for public scrutiny, she is subjected to a second rape. Rape has been a major tool of subordination against woman. Dalit women poets have confronted atrocities and rapes of dalit working class women in fields and homes. They recognize the fact that these women are subjected to such inhuman behavior only because they are dalit women. The upper caste capitalist class wants to appropriate not just a dalit woman's love but her sexuality as well. As this poem says;

When Koti Reddy pulled your
 sari in the corn field
 the humiliation
 when your husband seeking your
 torn sari said you were

overfed
the shrinking of your heart
(Vijay Kumari, 'GaviniDaati Ra')

G.N. Devy has identified Dalit writing as one of the forces, which has confronted the bourgeois nationalist perspective in Indian literary historiography. He asserts that:

"Dalit literature is not merely a collection of texts, but mark the emergence of a new self-consciousness influenced by the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar and the writers in this movement show a "clear awareness of belonging to a distinct literary culture and society" (Devy, 2006: 126)."

In Dalit literature, autobiography as a literary and cultural countenance has produced a practice, which has defied the prevailing literary edifices through their enunciation of cultural and caste discrimination. It emphasizes the question of otherness, metamorphosis, marginality, canon and the classifications of aesthetics. In order to voice the protest of the marginalized, Dalit literature often pursues the rebellious historiographic conduit of identifying past. It is therefore, autobiography is the most persuasive and often implemented formula of fiction formed in Dalit Literature.

Tamil writer Bama uses different modes to bring the essence of pain and fight back against discrimination. Bama practices proverbs in her writings to demonstrate the circumstance of the Dalit women who are regarded with disrespect not only by the public but also by government agencies and she insists them to defend their rights and affirm that they too are human beings. I bring an example from her 'Sanagti':

"It is like the proverb that they say if a man sees a terrified dog, he is bound to chase it. If we continue to be frightened, everyone will take advantage of us. If we stand up for ourselves without caring whether we die or survive, they'll creep away with their tails between their legs." (89)

According to Bama, woman's autobiographies should not exhibit lamentations, animosity, antagonism or humiliation of oneself. The characters and their ideas in her writings do not solicit for pity and solace but reckon with inner powers to continue with respect. Bama's account of the events from her writings does not request the reader for pity or compassion but actually confirms her will to persist and make evident of her self-respect and her resentment.

Though Bama uses the form of autobiography, it appears as an extension lead of short stories or narratives and this not only performs as approach of self-assertion and remonstrance for the characters in the narratives but also for the dalit public enormously.

In Sangati, Bama reproduces a depiction of insolvent and vicious world of dalit women which they undergo in their daily life. Her female characters torment double discrimination; they are beleaguered and molested by upper caste public and by also Dalit males. They constitute the majority of laborers, doing hard manual labor and involve in agricultural works. Women participate in industrious works, earn low wages compared to dalit men and contribute to the economic conditions of the family. This imbalanced division of labor emerges as a major subject in Sangati. The Dalit community is also under the controlling patriarchal system whereby dalit men are also disregarded by the upper class land owners and dalit men in turn ignore dalit women. Bama depicts this idea of marginalization of dalit women by upper castes and dalit men in her lines:

"It is not the same for women of other castes and communities. Our women cannot bear the torment of upper-caste masters in the fields, and at home they cannot bear the violence of their husbands" (65)

The political power of the country is operated by few sections of the society based on castes hierarchy. In fact, upper castes women representative shares the power in the society but they have been completely forgotten the social, economic and political upliftment and causes of the downtrodden' oppression especially Dalit women. Thus, the upper caste women are systematically marginalizing the dalit women in the political spheres. In the social areas such as education, the literary rate of them is minimal because the economic crisis and attitudes towards the dalit girls are gender biased. Violence on Dalit women is higher because of their social location in the society. The concealed sensitivity of untouchability and practice of Devadasi system prevented Dalit women's entry in to the public places makes them more helpless and unprotected. Domestic

workers face all kinds of violence and deceit at the hands of their employers. Vijayalakshmi, in her poem 'PaniPilla' addresses Devadasi system and early feelings of a girl child when she first encounters the oppression delivered by the caste system.

"From the moment I opened
my eyes
I cried for 'dora' and 'dorasani'
not mother or father.
Caste is my colour
dire poverty my garment
When he said come
to my bed and
get a new skirt for the festival
I believed him.
(Vijayalakshmi, 'PaniPilla')

However, dealing with economic location of Dalit women, maximum dalit women lives under the below poverty lines compare to non - dalit women. Most of them work in the un-organized works like agriculture, factory, construction, households and other marginal works in which they have to face day to day harassment without getting the proper wage. The urban and rural economic statuses of dalit women with its deep rooted relation of castes exemplify in their experiences. In the urban areas, although the position of the dalit women becomes better but their social acceptance, being a dalit based on caste is never equal. The fundamental questions of class within class and urban dalit women who is in economic better condition do not think and help their deprived section of dalit sisters. The dalit women are not able to get the jobs in both the sectors because dalit women did not have any social networking and most of these jobs especially in private sectors get through networking. By categorizing the jobs in to two sections, dalit women either end up in self-employment, vending, home based production, scrap collection and wage employment or construction labor, domestic labor, beedi making. These menial jobs do not provide them any financial securities rather creates the ample insecurities in the life of dalit women. However, pointing to the rural dalit women which can be easily located with their social location divides their gender location that makes them more hardship which influences economic conditions. For instances, while the distribution of resources, the dalit women did not get any benefit, on the other hand non-dalit women gets major share in the resources.

And there is another point to be mentioned very strongly is that if suppose, Dalit woman marries upper caste man, then the life of dalit woman is not always comfortable. Though, they come together with the factor of loving each other and get married, the connotations of families, and the attitude of husbands change rapidly and sometimes, challenge Dalit woman vehemently. NamburiParipurna, a Telugu writer writes about inter-caste marriages and consequences of them in her story 'Aadharshalu-Anvayalu'. The lead characters in the story are Prasad from upper caste who actively participates in movements, Shakunthala, a dalit women gets married to Prasad. She faces lots of problems in her marriage life, caste discrimination within family, and economic dependency make her realize that the imagined life with Prasad when they are in love becomes a dry well after getting married as days pass on. Prasad after getting married to low caste women; his parents left him with no money. Prasad leaves all responsibilities on Shakunthala and spends time in actively participating in movements. In order to raise children, she does all kinds of temporary jobs. But at certain point of time, Prasad leaves her and her children. Then he re-marries an upper caste woman and settles well in politics with the help of dowry and contacts. But she becomes victim for marrying upper caste man. The same kind of implication we can observe from the poem 'Konda Chiluva', written by Varre Rani. She clearly describes about progressive men who talk about dalits and discrimination in public speeches and writes so much on Dalit experiences and Dalit women subjugation behaves with patriarchy propensity at home. She writes that if Brahmin patriarchy marries Dalit women writer then he re-takes python image. The poem goes like this:

" Makondachiluvamaatladuthundhi

Saahithyacharchaluchesthundhi
 English maatalduthundhi
 Nannumaathram
 Naalugugodala Madhya
 Namilimingesthundhi”

Translation:

“My python speaks
 It discusses on literature
 It speaks English
 But it swallows me
 Within the four walls”

There is a trivial dissimilarity between the condition of dalit women and other women. Higher castes’ women undergo gender subjugation. Dalit women, in contrast, agonize more from caste domination. Till today, both the feminist movement and feminist literature have exemplified the concerns of upper caste women. Feminists have resisted for economic and sexual freedom for women. Dalit women poets sense strongly that dalit women’s issues have not been effectively represented in the mainstream. Dalit women issues pertain to extensive bondage, basic needs and questions of survival, still need to be addressed. Challapalli Swaroopa Rani, in another poem ‘Mayamma’ says clearly about the humiliation passed on to Dalit women from ages.

“Mother!
 From the Soorpanaka of yore
 through Chilakurti Muthemma
 to SajjalagudemMahadevamma
 of your lineage of humiliation
 swept along a torrent of tears
 of your existence
 of your being a “nityasumangali”
 from birth you are encountering
 hunger through the years
 has one even one of them
 ever spoken”

(Challapalli Swaroopa Rani, ‘Mayamma’)

Hindu religion is used to subjugate women. Dalit women are marginalized in the debates of non-Dalit women organizations. Educated Dalit women are imbibing the values of conspicuous consumption and maintain a detached position towards the social backwardness of poor uneducated Dalit women. On the other hand, Dalit women's assertion will challenge the multiple exploitations based upon caste, class and gender in all castes and communities by assimilating Phule and Ambedkar ideology. Hence, the necessity to build up alliances within the marginalized non-Dalit women is crucial step marching towards goal. Dalit women are put aside in the progression of advancement due to the subjugation based on caste and gender. Dalit women have to challenge everyday outrages because of their lower position and gender within the caste system. On the other hand, non-Dalit women replicate caste through their higher positioning in the caste hierarchy. Dalit women become an invisible presence in government, and non-government platforms. Dalit leaderships in Telugu states are controlled by Dalit influential men who use consolidation of Dalits as their political power and they are also trapped within political operations that have concentrating relationship to the vote banks of Dalit women. Therefore, decision making power of Dalit women is defused through the multiple segregations of them. Dalit women have questioned and rejected caste in many ways with their protest of social movement and literature which upper caste women failed to represent in their writings. In some places and at sometimes even upper caste women who are under mechanism of patriarchy humiliate and demean dalit women by uttering their low caste position. Sasi Nirmala, in her poem ‘Dalituralu’ confirms that she can speak of herself

and can represent her humiliation because when someone from upper caste speak on behalf of her address their magnitude in emancipating dalit women and they also uses dalit women for their dominance which she does not like at all. She says that:

“Why speak of the other?
Another woman wants to buy me
She wants me as the gold lace
to her upper caste new sari.
She wants me as the crimson
on her lips.”
(Sasi Nirmala, ‘Dalituralu’)

Kanchalliaiah in ‘Of Land and Dalit Women’ argues that:

“The struggle of Dalit women against the liquor shop and land alienations signifies the struggle for self-respect and economic freedom of Dalit women in Andhra Pradesh. Dalit women who retaliated against the feudal forces in the rural areas unveiled the nature of castes and modes of productions.”
(17)

The supremacy of the feudal lords in the socially-regulated agricultural occupation also results the consequent subordination of Dalit women. Dalit men are co-opted by the feudal lords through the occupation in their agricultural fields. The political parties of Andhra Pradesh are silent about the struggle of Dalit women. Communist parties and organizations too invited the struggles of dalit women but failed to challenge the caste system. This is clearly obvious observations by number of representation of caste Hindus and lower caste as cadres in the party. Thus, the contention of Dalit women diluted the internal and external caste-based patriarchy and absence of land reforms.

Dalit feminists are exemplified as different category from other women belongs to higher castes and communities. On the other hand, the women's movement in India is not apprehensive with the problems of Dalit women. It has been concerned primarily with the difference between class and patriarchy but not caste and women. Dalit feminists argue that Dalit women are triply oppressed based on caste, class and gender. Further, they have consciously highlighted two issues: ‘external’ and ‘internal’. On the external side, they argued when the non-Dalit women talk about the shared position of Dalit women’s representation, then it reduced the applicability and actuality of their problems at theoretical and political level. Dalit women question the multifaceted character of their exploitation including their own community and attack the patriarchy within Dalits in the public and private spheres. Dalit leaders knowingly or unnoticeably produced systematic obfuscation of the Dalit women’s questions in post-Ambedkar period hence Dalit patriarchy is the cause for Dalit women’s subjugation within castes and Dalit feminist voice is the outcome of subjugation.

M Swathy Margaret, a Dalit feminist writer and a research fellow at Anveshi, a Research Centre for Women’s Studies states an insight given to *Counter Currents.org* that:

“I am a Dalit-middle-class, University educated, Telugu speaking Dalit-Christian-Woman. All these identities have a role in the way I perceive myself and the worlds I inhabit. I, as a Dalit woman, primarily write for Dalit women to uphold our interests. This statement of mine is necessary because if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others, for their use and to our detriment. This voice is not representative of all Dalit women. However, I know that my voice is important because it is the voice of a socially denigrated category, suppressed and silenced”. (1)

She is very particular to give her voice for dalit women as a wakeup call to understand the discriminations to them from all corners of caste and patriarchy systems. She wishes dalit women should understand looking at the inner attitudes of dalit men and higher caste feminists and their representation of dalit women in their writings. She also point out that:

“The lack of understanding of this caste-gender dynamics is reflected in the work of some important upper-caste feminists like Volga, Vasantha Kannabhiran, Kalpana Kannabhiran, and ChhayaDatar, who feel that women of all communities and Dalits are both badly discriminated against by the diku

system, and therefore all women are Dalits! These intellectuals do not, for a moment, think of Dalits who are also women. In spite of their awareness that women are divided along caste and class lines, they comfortably draw the analogy between “women” and “Dalits”. The social status of upper caste women has never been like that of Dalit men or women. Patriarchy, as it operates within and between different castes is determined by the caste identity of individuals. Politics based on difference should be sensitive not only to the difference that matters to them, which they perceive as important but also to other differences”. (3)

Dalit women have to resist the day to day exploitation based on caste, gender and labor. Dalit women challenged the intellectual subordination of non-Dalit women through their writings. The post-Ambedkar ideologues of Dalit politics too sidelined the representation of Dalit women. Dalit men are dominant in the sphere of culture and marginalized Dalit women from that particular field. Dalit women’s assertions problematized new forms of caste, gender and economic policies. The internal hierarchy that exists within the Dalit women organizations should be avoided to strengthen the collectivity among Dalit women. Therefore, a kind of paradigm took place in the field of social theory. The post-modernist scholarship merely focused on the colonial domination but sidelined the pre-colonial elements of caste and gender. The emergence of Dalit women’s assertions is highlighted through such a theoretical form. The Dalit women’s assertion became a reality in the caste-based consciousness. Sharmila Rege in her article *“Dalit Women Talk Differently: A Critique of ‘Difference’ and towards a Dalit Feminist Standpoint Position”* points out that:

“In response to mainstream feminist movement after independence, Dalit women began to re-write their history using the ideological premises of Phule and Ambedkar. They challenged them (mainstream feminist) by raising the issue of the relationship between caste and gender. They began to question the claims of the Brahmin women by narrating their experiences in literary writings.” (41)

Dalit women as two distinct categories uneducated and educated, significant is how patriarchy operates within these two class categories of dalit women. Uneducated dalit women face the problem of poverty and unemployment. They have to work as agricultural or seasonal laborers. They do not get the minimum wages. Domestic violence is ubiquitous. On the other hand, educated women in the Dalit family are too enthralled with the family. Still, as a dalit woman, she has no autonomy and decision making powers in everyday life. Volga’s character Aruna from ‘Swecha’ novel resembles these women. Though, Volga talks about general women sense, in the case of Dalit educated woman also confronts similar problem in decision taking of her own. Even though an educated Dalit woman is able to earn, she still cannot make choices because of shared poverty within the structure of family. Dr. Ambedkar has clearly supported the concept of equality of women both in the public and private sphere and has empowered them by providing them certain laws, yet Dalit patriarchy does not allow them freedom.

Challapalli Swarupa Rani also says that:

“The day I was born I bore the imprint of an unchaste
Woman thrown into the drainage of traditions and
Dustbin of customs.
I became the forbidden one.
I am the one carrying the onus of age-old rejections
Generations of humiliations as my legacy...
In which canto of your country’s famed history
Will you write it down, my story?”

(‘Prohibited History’, Challapalli Swarupa Rani)

In dalit feminist literature, dalit women express their conditions realistically. It is apparent that from historical perspective, we have no instances to observe any indications of protest and resistance of dalit women against exploitation. Dalit women controlled by an existence that they had never been permitted to perceive and converse of their misery. After a long period, they have now become the subject of writing, appearing as a child widow, child bride, married girl, suffering mother, suffering daughter-in-law. Different images of dalit

woman, who is created by the Hindu family coding, unlocked the boundaries by retaining them in their writings. The modernity with its advancement has generated scope, new background and fortified dalit women to represent their real conditions. Dalit women have engaged themselves as crucial part of literature by inserting their miseries, bondage, adversities, sexual exploitations and assaults. Though dalit women from different parts of the country write in different languages yet the sensibilities addressed by them appear as similar by causing factors like caste and patriarchy.

Dalit women's writing, which transpires from the womb of anger, pain, and inequality, gives a detailed description of dalit society, exploitation of dalit women by their husbands at home and by their landlords at working place. That is what we can observe from Challapalli Swarupa Rani's poems and many other dalit women writers. Dalit feminist writings disapprove the customary social system which is grounded on injustice. Dalit women writers express their anguishes in diverse expressions and they are touchy and ferocious, as it is the only way of counterattacking extreme physical violence, frustration and sexual dominance. Hence, it is not an approved idea that by coming out from home to public life and going to work place does not mean that they are liberated from the milieu of patriarchy. Dalit woman's pain is ever additional when equated with dalit men's caste suppression.

In the context of the state of Andhra Pradesh, VasanthKannabiran and Kalpana Kannabiran in their article "*Caste and Gender: Understanding Dynamics of Power and Violence*" argue that:

"Violence that erupts in rural areas is affected by the caste and power of that region with relation of patriarchy. Dalit women and Dalit man are prone to such violence because of their significantly lower caste status and non-material class conditions. Dalits also could not establish connections in the bureaucracy and other institutions because of the feudal conditions of Andhra Pradesh. Dalit women are targeted in caste-based violence initiated by the dominant sections. The violence against Dalit women is also influenced by the masculinities of the non-dalit, land-owning castes and classes which have a direct co-relation with caste and gender." (9)

Dalit feminist writers are unveiling their anger in their writings. They give priority to liberation of women. Dalit feminists are in conflict with Marxism as caste and gender have not been included in it. Dalit feminism is the outcome of dalit woman's experiences; atrocities and social discrimination are forcing women to express their intensity. The atrocities committed on dalit women in the name of religious customs, cultural and social norms are the main concerns of dalit feminists and are touchingly portrayed by dalit women in their writings. Gogu Shyamala is a Dalit feminist writer, poet, and activist in Telangana, India. She puts 'Nallapoddu: DalithaShreelaSahityam', an edited book of Dalit women writings as a feather in her writings. In her 'VaradaGoodu' she utters that:

"I am the victim in this country
I am the way to revolution too!
.....
My past lies in suppression
My present and future ensure revolt,
Caste my target,
Durban my triumph!"

However, these writings on the problem of Indian women are far from single voiced and the Indian feminist discourse is marked with multiple strands. Although these strands share a common view on some aspects of the women problem, there are visible differences on number of other aspects. One of the strands which deviate from the other strands, however, relates to the problem of "Dalit women". Writers on the problem of Dalit women, (particularly those belonging to Dalit background) argued that the low caste women, particularly the untouchables among them not only suffered from gender discrimination and economic deprivation. They also suffered from discrimination related to religion, caste and untouchability. Thus, the Dalit women's problem encompasses not only gender deprivation and economic deprivation but also discrimination associated with religion, caste and untouchability, resulting in denial of economic, social, cultural and political

rights. This view asserts that the Indian feminist discourse is selective in its focus and hence, excludes the problem Dalit women from its purview. The Dalit women centric perspective argued that the Dalit women suffered not only from male domination resulting in lack of equal rights and lack of economic rights but also from unequal treatment in society due their caste identity governed by institution of caste and untouchability. During the last decade Dalit women have begun to articulate their problem in their own way and developed a viewpoint on the issue of gender, which is similar to that of mainstream women writers in many ways, but also differs in significant manner in another way. Beside gender and economic deprivation, they also bring a sharper focus, the problem of caste and untouchability based discrimination and similar forms of discrimination. This has begun to be known as 'Dalit feminist discourse'. Dalit women have created in terms of developing a perspective on their own problem.

Primary source

Vidmahe, Kaathyayani. (2010). *Sahityakasamlo Sagam: StreeLakavithwam- Katha- Asthitwachaithanyam*. Warangal: StreeJanabhyudaya Adhyana Samstha.

Vidmahe, Kaathyayani. (2003). *20 VaSatabdiRajakeeyardhikaParinamalu: Telugu StreeLakavithwam (A Collection of Seminar Papers)*. Warangal: Ashoka Krishna Offset Printers.

Works cited

Althusser, Louis. (1971). *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. By Ben Brewster, London: New Left Books.

Devy, G. (1992). *The G.N. Devy Reader*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

Guru, Gopal. (1998). "Dalit women talk differently", in Anupama Rao (ed.), *Gender and Caste*. New Delhi: Zubaan, An imprint of Kali for Women.

Kamble, B. (2008). *The Prisons We Broke*. Trans. M. Pandit. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

Kannabiran, Kalpana. (2001). "Caste, the academy and dalit women", New Delhi: The Hindu.

Kumar, Raj. (2010). *Dalit personal narratives: reading caste, nation and identity*. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan.

Limbale, Sharan Kumar. (2004). *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit literature: History, Controversies, and Considerations*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.

Limbale, S. (2004). *Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies and Considerations*. Trans. A. Mukherjee. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

MadhavRadhakisan, Yeshwant. (2012). *The Dalit and Non-Dalit Women Autobiographies* (September). Available at: www.the-criterion.com. (Accessed in June 2012).

Omvedt, Gail. (1993). *Reinventing Revolution: India's New Social Movements*. New York: Sharpe.

Pandian, M. S. S. (1998). "On a Dalit woman's testimonio", in Anupama Rao (ed.), *Gender and Caste*. New Delhi: Zubaan, An implicit Kali for Women.

Prasad, Amar Nath. (2007). *Dalit Literature: A Critical Exploration*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons. Print.

Spivak, GayatriChakravorty. (1988). "Can the Subaltern Speak? Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture". Chicago: Illinois University Press, Print.