



**'Woman' in Dalit Women Writing: A Feminist Study of the Selected  
Novels of the Contemporary Dalit Women Writers**

**PhD THESIS**

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### **Conclusion:**

The conclusion will synthesize the various arguments that have been developed in the previous chapters. It will offer a summary of the above chapters and draw attention to the writers in the terms of strategies of self-empowerment, social reform and inspiring others to rise against human oppression. This chapter gathers the individual strands, findings and observations of the preceding chapters, binding these into a comprehensive whole in order to arrive at a definite inference regarding the triple oppression of Dalit women as it operates in the works of contemporary Dalit women writers. The essential goal of Dalit women writers in establishing and cautiously guarding the boundaries of their promising literary genre is to exercise control over their illustration; in history, literature and the public imagination. This is the fundamental principle in all of the innumerable practices of the Dalit literary sphere. We find that a new self-image with overall general political contribution is being cultivated by Dalit women writers through the declaration of their rights and maintenance of their movement for social change and for the organization of an egalitarian society.

Voces from the marginalized sections have been abased with their account of oppression, exploitation, subjugation, anguish and resilience. Having remained quiet for so many years, their passive suffering finds no substitute until the indestructible experience of humiliation sensitizes their autonomy and urges them to make themselves move from invisibility to visibility. This move signals the infringement of the age-old immobility, on the act of self-assertion as well as self-discernment. The journey from darkness to presence, though very hard, is a pleasurable one for the marginalized self. This is depicted well in the selected works of the Contemporary Dalit women writers. These Dalit women writers while realizing flaws have attempted to portray Dalit women as real; valiant, spirited, and self-concerning. This study

makes use of eight selected Dalit women novelists who gave voice to the humiliated and tormented self of Dalits. The settings of these writings are generally rural since most of the writers belonged to villages. By narrating their pain and suffering, they not only produce a sagacity of consciousness but also release themselves of the pain and suffering and initiate their way of liberation. Rather than double subjugation, the women characters in Dalit women's narratives are shown as the victims of manifold oppression. With diverse characters and representations, the narratives help to unravel a widespread variety of interpretations of Dalit women in India. Dalit women's narratives appear in various forms and integrate the story of the entire society along with the personal experiences of the authors. Thus, through the use of contemporary Dalit women's writings, this study spreads responsiveness regarding the triple oppression of the Dalit women and to change the observation of society towards equality.

The analysis of the individual works incorporated in the present study begins from chapter one onwards and concludes in chapter four. In the first chapter titled as "Dalit Patriarchy in Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoir*(2008) and Baby Kamble's *The Prison We Broke*"(2008) the focus lays on describing the patriarchy and violence experienced by Dalit women both inside and outside the public spheres. The close investigation of writings like *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoir* yields an otherwise picture of the social circumstances to which the Dalit women are subjected to. These include the practising of social ills such as those of widow system, childhood marriages, marriage without their consents, dowry system and restricting women to get an education. Urmila Pawar not only expresses her sorrow like a woman but also tries to bring forth to the world the sufferings of the whole women community. Patriarchy diminishes a woman's belief in such worth and makes her believe that her inadequacy is pre-destined. The approach of family members towards a girl child

is different among Dalits. The female members of Dalit families never got healthy food to eat. They have to serve good food to the husbands and male members of the family. To gratify themselves, they have to eat the left-over food of the men in power. This novel represents the pain, torment and protest alongside the social system and patriarchy which treats them as subhuman beings. Pawar anecdotes how the casteist social structures have framed the mindsets of the Dalits that the latter are made to believe and substantiate to certain practices, which still became a part of their culture too. The only rationale behind the rituals was to extend patriarchy among Dalits. The novel explores the infinitesimal details of oppression and mistreatment of Dalit women. *The Prison We Broke* unravels the lives of women who broke the prison created by men and caste to gain selfhood. It focuses on the lives of married women, daughters-in-law and housewives. By keeping the different generations of women as nameless, unidentified, Kamble intends to focus on the collective experiences of women as Dalits. Focusing on general Dalit women who did not go out to work but were occupied in household chores; Kamble shows how these women woke up at early sunrise and grinded the cleaned grains. While the men were still asleep, work for women started previously earlier in the morning. Apart from narrating the lives of Dalit women, Kamble plays the character of a path breaker and a role model for Dalit women. She joins the Ambedkarite movement and initiates changes for the good of her people and civilization. She concludes the story with importance on education and ridicules some of the age-old practices followed by Dalits, like eating dead animals. The description incorporates the story of the whole society along with the personal experiences of the authors. This novel brings the bleak conditions of Dalit's life and the diverse defining norms and rituals connected with it. Patriarchy and caste affect women's way of living as gendered beings and also contour their voice, agency and subjectivity as Dalits. The daily narrated experiences highlight their pain,

inequity and humiliation. At all the stages of life, Dalit women are treated as other to men of their caste in a patriarchal society. Thus, their lives represent a saga of abandonment and oppression. Although, they are jeopardized and susceptible, the discourses in the narratives exemplify them as strong individuals. They control their being once they realize and resist against the odds. With conscientization, they gain liberation and become agents of change for themselves and for others to follow.

The second chapter recounts how being women the writers as well as their community were discriminated based on caste and gender disparity. This chapter emphasizes on Shantabai Kamble's *The Kaleidoscopic View of My Life*(1998) and Bama's *Sangati*(2005). Kamble's novel deals with the realm of every woman who was born as Dalit in the hypocritical society. This chapter exposed the authenticity behind the institutional narrative that caste and gender exist as a dominating force in Indian democratic society. The finale of the novel values the dissimilarity that education had made to the whole community as well as the change that came in her own extensive family. While prevailing Indian society has acknowledged Dalits as inferior, Dalit writers re-write so to speak of their own lives as well as of the society. Throughout the novel, Kamble appears as very bold, courageous and convinced in highlighting issues of women based on caste and gender disproportion. Facing unfairness both inside as well as outside the public spheres, this novel traces the writer's journey from childhood to maturity, from helplessness to proficiency, and from deficiency to liberation. The mixture of gender with caste domination is a callous and undeserved suppression of Dalit women as depicted in the works of Bama. Bama's *Sangati* draws our attention to the fact that the women who start to protest are silenced. Bama points several instances and incidents, through the voice of different women, the utter predicament of Dalit women who have to suffer harassment at the hands of the upper caste men

in the fields during the day and at night undergo the anger of their husbands. The male members of the family have their defense systems. Since, they cannot show objection to their landlords, so they show their strengths at home on their wives and children. Women, as a result, undergo caste oppression in mornings and gender oppression at night. Women characters represented in the novel show audacity to break the taboos which declare them as animals. They oppose the restraints of oppressions shaped by men and society to drive their self-hood, the voice, agency and subjectivity they appear with, is a step to alter their difficult predicament filled lives. In the writings of the above writers, it is pragmatic that sexual oppression, economic exploitation and socio-cultural subjugation are the chief reasons which influence Dalit women's gender associations.

The third chapter of the thesis titled as "Incessant Atrocity Against Women in P. Sivakami's *The Taming of Women* and Kumud Pawade's *Antasphot*". The autobiographical novel *Antasphot* (1995) narrates the experiences of the writer's childhood and youth in caste-based Indian society. Besides throwing light on the barriers produced by different socio-political institutions in Kumud's life and showing how she overcome them during her life-journey, *Antasphot* also speaks about many of the conventional inequalities of Hindu social structure resulting in making the lives of women and Dalit's miserable. This novel traces the miserable plight of women in an Indian patriarchal society, where the happiness of men is always taken into deliberation. Women are shown as second class citizens, though they are acknowledged equal to men in all spheres of life. Pawade, the voice of the modern Indian women, has written much about the partial behaviour given to women. She highlighted religious beliefs as the institutions of oppression. For example, Kumud has given the depiction of Vatsaviti, a fast observed by married women on full moon's day worshipping the fig tree to get the same husband

in seven cycles of births. This novel is an appraisal of such religious practices which are fractional and meant only for women. These Vrat processes propagate the patriarchal system in which women had a secondary place. The ethnicity and traditions of patriarchy have been profoundly rooted in the minds and hearts of Dalit women making it complex for the reformists to uproot them. False religious beliefs and other social institutions are being observed as systems that lead Dalit women to the dark ghettos of ignorance. Dalit women of all ages and places have been the victims of male dominance in one or the other way. In *The Taming of Women* (2012), Sivakami portrays the trials and tribulations and the miserable plight of the women and how they are treated by men in patriarchal Indian society, it is the dual stress of caste and gender which places women in a state of utilization by the men. She is reduced to a mere body, to the place of a mere sexual commodity. Sivakami positively explains all ages and generations of women who are made to endure physical assault, sexual exploitation and gender inequity. Women are subjected and ill-treated in many ways. It is all because of the age-old patriarchal society in which men are always upper hand and control the women irrespective of the class, background and the predicament of the women. All the women characters are shown as trapped in the authority of men. They are forced to suffer all kinds of oppressions, all through their lives and they accept fate which cannot be erased. They lack basic rights and easily face brutality in their day to day life. The caste, class and gender factors all join to compress women's identity. Both the novels show women characters as easy prey to atrocities by rich, upper-caste landlords and the men of their communities.

The fourth chapter lays emphasis on two novels namely *The Gypsy Goddess*(2014) by Meena Kandasamy and *Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and The Making of Modern India*(2017) by Sujatha Gidla. This chapter brings forth the voice of those people who

have remained silenced for ages. Dalit women have no safety in this kind of society and whether literate or ill-mannered, she has to depend on her menfolk. In *The Gypsy Goddess* an attempt has been made to voice those Dalit women who lived under dire circumstances. It traces the condition of Dalit women in the post-independent India which is more-worse and where Dalit women's body act as sites of oppression and exploitation. The voice of the Dalit women's is heard through dreadful happenings. It draws attention to the writer as how text becomes the potent tool in the hands of writers especially when it has to awaken the sleeping masses. It criticizes the Indian caste system, as all of the victims were impervious Dalits who were segmented and not accepted by the higher order of society at the time. In the same system, their oppressors were landlords who treat Dalit women in the most horrible possible way conceivable. Dalit women were punished by landlords by making them naked and whipping them by tying with trees in front of the whole village. Being poor, they withered in shame. The ones who died from the beating were wordlessly buried. Those who survived swallowed their shame and some toxin. The detailed analysis of the novel unfolds different issues of Dalit women such as inequality, discrimination, economic backwardness, lack of employment and trafficking of Dalits. This chapter traced the voice of those people who behind closed doors, were being tormented, beaten and killed. Another novel analysed in this chapter is Sujatha Gidla's *Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India*. Gidla brings forward how insidiously caste permeates every minute of life. She reveals to the world the truth behind the caste system since the Dora's rule up to the twenty-first century. This novel portrays that Dalit women conceded a life full of poverty, hunger and injustices. This novel also traced the customs, rituals and educational institutions as major sites for women's oppression. Making a collection of the experiences of her ancestors starting from the time since the colonial rule in

India till the present modern-day world, her importance remains, the enunciation of the different levels of discrimination. With the passage of the time, the practice of casteism by the Indians is so profoundly engrossed in their societies that it makes sustenance intricate on the part of the Dalits. The author has given the portrayal of mother Manjula who faced inequity right from her birth. Despite being educated, she faced embarrassment at the hands of her mother-in-law as well as her husband. Her husband often beats her until she becomes half-dead. This points out that in Indian patriarchal society, aggression is deep-rooted and satiated. It is crossing all the social classes, gender, social lines and age groups. It is fetching a legacy being accepted on from one generation to another.

Dalit writings are not just remembering of things past, but determining and structuring things in such a way as to help comprehend one's life and the social order that created it on the one hand, and to awaken a fervour for change in the society on the other. Dalit feminist writings tend to be investigated as it calls for the downfall of the casteist and patriarchal literary conventions and finding a new language of wish and disagreement. Being subjected to caste, class and gender oppression, the amount of their understanding of subordination and their response to mistreatment vary from one caste segment to another. As a result, they articulate their complaint using different languages and descriptions having different significations. This demands a study of Dalit feminist writings by relocating them in their specific socio-cultural contexts to ward off the menace of essentialism. Their writings mirror the true-life experiences and the true picture of prevailing social, historical and cultural circumstances that dominate women. The representation of Dalit women in women's narratives reveals their lived experiences. Dalit women's narratives thus cover a huge landscape of lived experiences of marginalized women of the Dalit community. From this perspective of Dalit women, it is

experiential that sexual oppression, economic exploitations and socio-cultural suppression are the key reasons which influence their day to day life.