

# A JOURNEY FROM ANGUISH TO LIBERATION: A STUDY OF DALIT FEMINISM IN BABY KAMBLE'S "THE PRISONS WE BROKE"

1.Ms. M. VincySafrina & 2.Dr. Soukarja Ghosal

1. MA ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDENT, DR. N.G.P ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), COIMBATORE.
2. ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, PROJECT ADVISOR, DR. N.G.P ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), COIMBATORE

Vincysafrina@gmail.com & Valdez212016@gmail.com

AFFILIATED TO BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY



Principal  
Govt. Khawzawl College  
Khawzawl, Mizoram

## Abstract:

The Prisons We Broke is considered to be the first narrative by a Dalit woman about Dalit women and their sufferings. Originally the work was written in Marathi with the title *Jina Amucha* and it was later translated from Marathi to English by Maya Pandit with the title *The Prisons We Broke*. The work was seriously published in 1982 in a Marathi women's magazine and later was published as a book in 1986. The book is about the lives of the Mahars and their distressed condition in the society. She has illustrated the life of her community and her people and has exhibited that Brahminical despotism had turned the Mahar people into chattel. Mental and physical frenzy against women at the public and private spheres are narrated in *The Prisons We Broke*. This book also criticizes the Hindu caste system that marginalizes people in the name of caste. In Indian society, this work depicts the socio-economic, cultural and political conditions of the Dalit community. In India, women face subjugation in various forms everywhere and their condition is worse than the men because of double marginalization: gender and caste.

**Keywords:** Dalit feminism, Gender discrimination, Patriarchy, Untouchability.

Literature is a term used to describe written and spoken material. It is derived from the Latin word literature means "writing formed with letters". The word literature suggests a higher art form. Literature is extract to the works of the creative imagination, including poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction and in some instances journalism and song. Some literatures are treated separately by language, by nation

or by special subject. Literature is described as the organisation of words to give pleasure. In the form of literature human expression can be expressed. The purest literary form is lyric poem, epic, dramatic, narrative and expository verse. Literature is classified into many works of philosophy.

Indian literature refers to the literature produced on the Indian subcontinent until 1947 and in the Republic of India. There are twenty two languages in that period. Indian literatures are orally transmitted in the earliest work. Ramayana and Mahabharata appeared towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE in the Sanskrit epics. Boris Pasternak says that “Literature is the art of discovering something extraordinary about ordinary people, and saying with ordinary words something extraordinary”.

The period of the British rule the seed of Indian writing in English is sown in India. Indian English literature is an honest enterprise to demonstrate the Indian writing in English. Indian writers is a poet, novelist, essayists and dramatist have been making momentous and considerable contributions to world literature. Post –independent India has been making quick strides in the field of science and technology. There has been an admirable economic growth in India. The Indian English novel owes its credit by the great proliferation. Northrop Frye says that “Literature speaks the language of the imagination, and the study of literature is supposed to train and improve the imagination”. The theme and technique of novels during this period found based on social upset, poverty, untouchability, exploitation, social movement, political movement in the Indian literature.

Baby Kamble (1929-2012) is an Indian activist and writer. She is born into an untouchable caste, mahar. It is the largest untouchable communities in maharashtra. She is a well-known Dalit activist and writer. She is inspired by B.R.Ambedkar. She is loved by the Dalit community because of her powerful literary and activist work. She is the earliest women writers from the untouchable communities and distinctive reflexive style of feminist. She is apart from other Dalit writers and upper caste women writers. She is critically acclaimed in her autobiographical work Jina Amucha written in Marathi. Baby Tai’s life story is the comparison of precolonial to postcolonial India. Jina Amucha public contribution is about a nation’s untouchable woman in a caste Hindu society. The book articulates caste and gender discrimination and multi-layered violence suffered by Dalit men. The book is translated into English and titled as “The

prisons we broke” by Maya Pandit. She explained the lives of Dalit women and their patriarchy and caste. She involve in the Dalit movement in Maharashtra. This movement are mass participation and contribution by women.

Feminism aims to define, authorize and accomplish the political, economic, personal and social adequation of the sexes. It is an extension of social movements, political movements, and philosophy. Feminism is about treating the women arbitrary within these societies. It is assimilating the position of the male in society. They are fighting for gender custom and seeking to establish educational and acknowledge opportunities for women that are equal for men. The feminist theory originates from feminist movements. It is an aim to understand the nature of gender imparity by appraises women's social activism and lived observation.

Feminism has been criticized for the creation of specific or multicultural forms of feminism, including black feminism and intersectional feminism. In 1852 the first appearance of the word "feminist" and 1895 the word "feminist" is listed in the Oxford English Dictionary. Marx echoes analysis: “Man’s innate casuistry! To change things by changing their names! And to find loopholes for violating tradition while maintaining tradition, when direct interest supplied sufficient impulse. (132) Elaine Showalter describes and development of feminist theory into three phases in the field of literary criticism.

In the late 1960s is accompanied by an emerging literature of concerns for the earth and spirituality and environmentalism by the resurgence of feminist activism. The "woman is a producer of textual meaning" including "the psychodynamics of female creativity" in the second phase by Showalter calls "Gynocritics". The "ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex or gender system" are explored in the last phase. To establish the origins of the family and towards analyzing the process of patriarchy some feminist scholarship shifted away from their needs. Engels proposes the following historical analysis:

According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of the immediate essentials of life. [...] On the one side, the production of the means of existence, of articles of food and clothing,

dwelling, and of the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. (110)

Dalit literature is literature written by Dalit's about their lives. Dalit literature emerged in the 1960s in the Marathi language and it appeared in the Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, Bangla and Tamil language, through narratives such as poems, short stories and autobiographies. It is due to their stark portrayal of reality and the Dalit political scene. Dalit literature denounced the prevailing portrayal of life by mainstream Marathi literature. The first Dalit literature conference is held in 1958 by newly converted Buddhist writers Annabhau Sathé. In 1993, Ambedkari Sahitya Parishad organised the first Akhil Bharatiya Ambedkari Sahitya in Maharashtra to re-conceptualize and transform Dalit literature into Ambedkari Sahitya Sammelan. Dr.B.R. Ambedkar had been successfully campaigned against caste-discrimination and a story advocate of Dalit rights.

First of all Dalit Women bears the age-old denunciation of being a 'woman'. A Dalit woman is not pushed towards the margin. As a loathed object she is rather brutally thrown beyond the periphery. Singh observes, "On the one hand a dalit woman shares with her male counterpart the deprivation and disabilities due to her position at the lower ladder of Brahminical hierarchical order, on the other as a woman she has to bear the tortures and invisibilities which our patriarchal social order imposes upon the supposedly "fair sex" (15). A Dalit woman has a permanent scar on their psyche due to the unjust treatment. As a part and parcel of lives the entire community of the dalit women had accepted sufferings in their lives, until Bhimrao Ambedkar transpired as a messiah in their lives.

Mahar's only had to change their destiny. Babasaheb said, "My final words of advice to you are, have faith in yourself. With justice on our side, I don't see how we can lose our battle. For ours is a battle not for wealth or power. It is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of the human personality" (Shah 120). Baby Kamble associated to the Mahar caste and they are considered as untouchables in Maharashtra in her maternal grandparent's house, a village in the Purander taluka in Pune district. Her father was a contractor, there was never a basic amenity in Baby Kamble's house and the author's father Pandarinath was generous as Karna and he has no savings.

She recalls her, “There were about sixteen houses in our maharwada were illiterate except for my aaja... It was because of their association with the European Sahibs that they could speak English so well... His butler’s clothes used to look so elegant... The villagers would be so impressed! He appeared no less than a minister to them” (Pandit 45).

Baby Kamble’s autobiography work “The Prisons We Broke” the life of her community to demonstrate the Brahminical domination and they are torturing the Mahars into slaves and they are forcing the Dalits people to live in conditions worse than animals. Baby Kamble has a believes that religion are playing a significant role in the lives of Mahars and an instrument of oppression and misery. The author portrays the people of mahar community and followed the oppressive practices in the name of religion and ruined their lives. She extent their preoccupation with the superstitious beliefs and blind faith in Hindu religion customs reduced the status of beasts.

#### **Reference:**

Deshpande, Satish (ed). The Problem of Caste. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2014. Print

Kamble, Baby. 'Jina Amucha' translated by Maya Pandit as The Prisons We Broke New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2009.

Kamble, Baby. The Prisons We Broke. Translated by Maya Pandit, 4th ed., Orient Blackswan, 2014.

Kamble, Baby. The Prisons We Broke. Maya Pandit. New Delhi: Orient Longman. 2008. Print.

Kavya B. "Portrayal of Women Prisoners in The Prison We Broke by Baby Kamble" International Education and Research Journal, Vol 2, Issue VII, July 2016.Print.

Mohd Nageen Rather, "Analysing the Painful Recountal of Dalit Women in Baby Kamble's The Prisons We Broke" American Research Journal of English and Literature, vol 3, no. 1, 2017, pp. 1-5.