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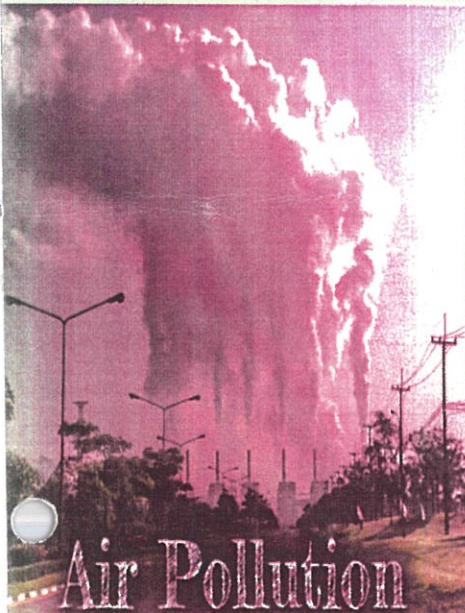
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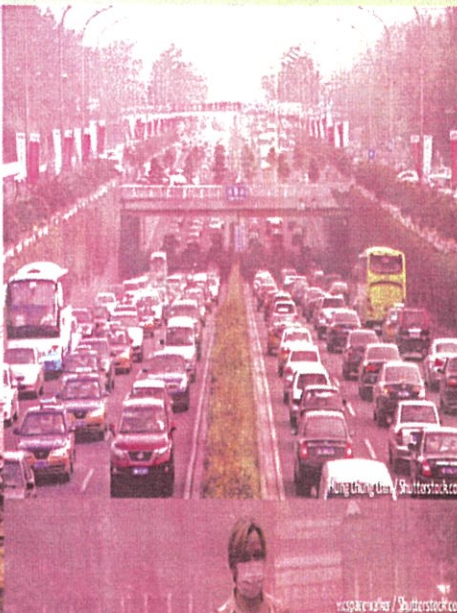
Contemporary Issues & Challenges in Humanities

SPECIAL ISSUE -224 (B)

March-2020



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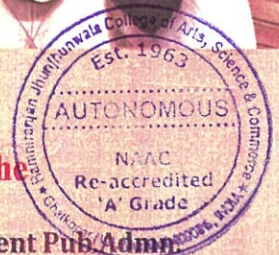
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शुभेच्छा संदेश



आज मला खूप आनंद होत आहे. आमच्या अनुसया शिक्षण प्रसारक मंडळ, परभणी पूर्णा (जं.) येथील स्वातंत्र्य सैनिक सूर्यभानजी पवार महाविद्यालयातील लोकप्रशासन विभागाच्या वतीने संशोधन पत्रिका प्रकाशित होत आहे. 'मानव्य विद्या शाखेसमोरील : समकालीन समस्या आणि आव्हाने' या संवेदनशील विषयावर देशभरातील संशोधक, विचारवंत, प्राध्यापक व विद्यार्थी यांनी अभ्यासपूर्ण लेख पाठवून सहकार्य केल्या बद्दल सर्वांचे आभार.

या पत्रिकेचे संपादक लोकप्रशासन विभागप्रमुख प्रोफेसर डॉ. संतोष कुन्हे, त्यांचे सहकारी प्रा.डॉ.जळबा हटकर यांनी खूप परिश्रम घेऊन हा संशोधन लेखाचा ग्रंथ प्रकाशित करत आहेत.

यास माझ्याकडून मनःपूर्वक शुभेच्छा.....!

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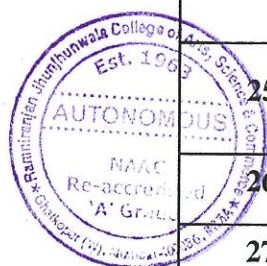
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अनुसया शिक्षण प्रसारक मंडळ, परभणी संचलीत,
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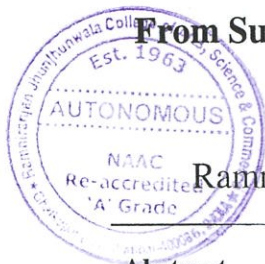
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From Subsर्वience to Revolt: The Spirit of Protest in Select Dalit Poetry.

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Abstract

The present paper titled "From Subsर्वience to Revolt: The Spirit of Protest in Select Dalit Poetry" explores the issue of oppression of Dalits and it also exposes the biased thinking patterns of society presented in Dalit poetry. The article also examines Dalit poetry from the perspective of the Dalit as a 'rebel' and it also seeks to depict the voices of protest resounding in Dalit poetry. The poems taken up for critical analysis are Keshav Meshram's poem "In Our Colony", "To Be or Not to Be Born" by L.S. Rokade and Arjun Dangle's "I will Belong to it". These poems bring to light the bitter reality of exploitation of Dalits. At the same time, these poems depict their transformation from helpless beings to strong individuals who want to break free from the brutal caste system. In the poem, "In Our Colony" by Keshav Meshram, the separation of the Dalit colony from the mainstream community clearly exemplifies the 'politics of marginalisation'. Similarly the dark womb protects the Dalit speaker from the cruel world in "To Be or Not to Be Born" by L.S. Rokade. Arjun Dangle's "I will Belong to it" presents a ray of hope as the Dalit speaker connects himself with his native soil.

From Subsर्वience to Revolt: The Spirit of Protest in Select Dalit Poetry.

(Research Paper)

The research article titled "From Subsर्वience to Revolt: The Spirit of Protest in Select Dalit Poetry" is a study of the rebellious spirit of Dalits manifested in poetry. The gradual transition of this community from being regarded as exploited individuals to become revolutionary entities is indicative of Dalit progression. Dalit poetry manifests the subjugation of untouchables in its ugliest forms but at the same time some Dalits have taken up the course of revolt to protest against the 'politics of marginalisation'.

The poems taken up for the study are Keshav Meshram's poem "In Our Colony", "To Be or Not to Be Born" by L.S. Rokade and Arjun Dangle's "I will Belong to it". These poems have been explored keeping in mind the perspective of Dalit consciousness explained in the following lines:

And therein lies the difference in most Dalit writing. Charging that, most non- Dalit writers, however sympathetic, use the Dalit character as an object of emphatic connection and subsequently locate the impetus for the social change outside of that Dalit object, Dalit writers instead seek to invest their characters with subjectivity and the power to resist, rebel and change. This is Dalit consciousness. (Brueck 14-15)

Thus, the plight of Dalits definitely evokes sympathy but many of them have also become torchbearers of change. Dalit consciousness has, therefore, played a great role in order to bring about the transformation of Dalit masses. The purpose of this research is to investigate into the impact of the 'politics of marginalisation' on the evolution of Dalit identity.

Keshav Meshram's poem "In Our Colony", deals with the 'politics of ghettoisation'- a rural practice in which the untouchable community is forced to live in the outskirts of the village. The alienation of their community from the political and cultural center creates a painful impact on the collective Dalit psyche. The 'politics of marginalisation', thus, not only separates them from mainstream community but it also imposes lifelong bondage on them.

In this poem, their homes stand like "footprints of the cattle in the mud" (Meshram 9) which also points out to the insignificance of their existence in the world of rich sharks. Dalits have been



reduced to beings with "black bodies and black hair" (Meshram 9). However, elites choose to ignore that this group has burnt their skin working tirelessly for them by exposing themselves to the blistering tropical heat. Instead of being thankful for their hard labour, they are treated like dirt because of their 'blackness'. It also seems that their blackness has darkened the sun. The speaker feels that the Sun either does not want to light up their colony with joy or may be the sufferings have swallowed the beauty of the radiant star. Keshav Meshram writes:

In our colony

The postman gets bamboozled

Teachings get confused

Civilization stumbles (Meshram 9)

The image of the darkening sun in the poem stands for loss of hope in a feeble society full of hungry individuals for whom moral values of civilization and all brands of philosophies are meaningless. However, in spite of all this, they "swim along the current" (Meshram 9) or they flow with the tide. But the reality is that all hopes will be lost too soon because the truth of everyday existence of chewing discarded bones with chilled meat floating in the spicy curry (Meshram 9) may be a real feast. At times, they are even deprived of remains of food that leaves them hungry and makes their survival difficult. Amidst their problems, the colony still gets stirred on hearing the footsteps of the postman. The postman is an intruder from the outside world in the colony. The postman's arrival with the latest news and gossip sends waves of joy, thus making it a lively place. The bamboozling of the postman by naked guides thronging around him in huge numbers shows the combined strength of the whole dalit community.

Also, the colony is experiencing a moment of transition although the Dalit folk still cling to tradition. The Dalit colony still remains the same as corrupt politicians make reforms and schemes fail here. All hope is lost when the policeman criminalises untouchables to suppress their strong move towards freedom and even blames them and imprisons them for crimes they have never committed. The winds of change are transforming their ghetto as Dalit boys are attaining education and entering the threshold of literature thereby throwing their axes of words to cut the ancient trees of tradition (Meshram 9). The poem ends with a note of hope as the educated youth of the colony will fight against the bureaucratic politics of dominant groups so that the dalit masses embrace change.

Therefore, although they occupy separate spheres yet their colony is teeming with life. The phrase "A roaring, foaming, riotous sea" (Meshram 9) describes the colony's fighting spirit and the 'sea of riot' that defines the wonder of its existence without any help from the topmost hierarchical order. The mighty spirit of the roaring Dalits is powerful enough to dismantle the orthodox caste system and cause a thunderstorm of revolt.

L.S. Rokade's poem "To Be or Not to Be Born" depicts the trauma of all Dalits who feel that it is better to be cradled in the dark wombs of their mother rather than being born to experience the inhumanity of the world. The image of the woman struggling to give birth as the speaker does not want to leave the womb is presented in the poem. By hibernating inside her womb, he wants to escape the wrath of people against Dalits.

Also, the Dalit woman's 'long labour' in the poem is due to her hard work during pregnancy. She has exhausted herself on the fields and has slogged at home while satisfying the demands of her husband and her sexual exploiters. Hence, the Dalit mother's womb, the source of Dalit life, is the centre of exploitation.

The poem progresses from the womb of the mother to the sky full of hope but then it turns to be a mirror reflecting "generations of dire poverty". The womb of the mother is a dark world for the unborn child but the Dalit child finds it to be a safe haven from the scary world posing danger to his existence. The sky is not full of optimism; instead it reminds him of the negativity enshrouding all future prospects of his life. His low birth has debarred him from all big opportunities. He says:



Do I want to be born at all
in this land
where all paths raced horizonwards
but to me were barred (Rokade 1)

Yet he keeps on looking at the open skies but later realises that generations of Dalits lived in dire poverty with the same hope but it didn't take long for their dreams to be shattered. The poem begins with his 'womb- fears' then it proceeds to the limitless skies without any opportunities and then comes down to the land where his mother and the whole Dalit community can't find a sip of water. This makes him realise that he is an 'insignificant other' and so it is better that he remains in his mother's womb forever.

Then, without any feeling of shame, he freely talks about the birth of a human being through sexual reproduction:

Here you are not supposed to say
That every human being comes
from the union of man and woman (Rokade 1)

He, therefore, blasts traditional practices of keeping sex a secret inside closed rooms and he makes everyone acknowledge that the essence of every human being is sex. To run away from sexual talk is therefore a game of hypocrisy.

The poem, "I will Belong to it" by Arjun Dangle initiates the discourse of 'masturbation'. In simple terms, it means fondling/ stimulating one's own sexual organs. Great litterateurs have touched upon taboo subjects as homosexuality, erotic fantasies and bodily fluids (semen or menstrual blood). However, masturbation is associated with shame and looked down at with disgust.

However, the speaker reveals that masturbation is simply not a 'Dalit fantasy' but it is the real way of controlling one's sporadic sexual desires and it is practiced by all- Dalits and non-Dalits alike. However, the higher caste/class elites put on a mask of Brahmanic purity to disguise the fiery carnal desires burning in their loins while indulging in harsh criticism of Dalit sexuality.

The speaker presents the real facets of Dalit life. The Brahmanic world cruelly associates their dark skin and ugliness to their dark sexuality. They, however, hardly realize that the scorching heat of the sun and poverty has ruined their appearance and they do not have time to indulge in the erotic reveries of masturbation.

Every phase of life- adolescence, manhood and old age just passes by. The speaker laments that endless toil has deadened his sexual desires. His eyes never turned to see the beauty of a lovely damsel because he has to run around from one village to another in order to find work. And, later on, in old age, he wanted to live the last moments of his life playing with his grandchildren although his old body is beaten down with age and hard work.

Every stage of life had robbed him of his identity as a human being and all the pleasures of life slipped from his hands. "Is this my life?" (Dangle 39), he wonders. His motherland has ruined his life as she has never accepted him as a legitimate heir/ son and all the elements of nature including the sun and the moon feel ashamed of his existence. The following lines from the poem sows the seed of discord between him and his soil:

The soil which has not allowed
The footprint of my existence
To make its mark upon her yet (Dangle 39)

It is important to note that in Rokade's "To be or not to be Born" and Dangle's "I will Belong to it" the blatant sexual talk and also the fearless castigation of his motherland casts them as a romantic dalit rebels. In "To Be or not to be Born", the speaker "spits on this great civilization" (Rokade 2). It stands for their refusal to sing of the glories of their land which marks the death of patriotism and the separation of Dalits from mainstream literature and community. However, Dangle's



poem ends on a positive note with the desire of bonding with his motherland. The land where he lives should embrace his Dalit identity and when its soil is smeared on the brow it will bring tears to the eyes. The connect between him and the soil is the vital sap of his life and this sense of belonging will never let his patriotic spirit die.

The politics of marginalisation of Dalits, therefore, has split them from mainstream literature and society. However, this separation has helped them create an identity of their own. The conflict between Dalits and the non- Dalits gets worse mainly because of prejudiced thinking. This line of demarcation between these groups can be erased through literary readings of Dalit experience.

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