



## **SUPPRESSED LIVES OF DALIT WOMEN – A DIVERSIFIED AUTOBIOGRAPHY BY BABY KAMBLE**

**K. RANI**  
Research Scholar  
Department of English  
S. V. University Tirupati  
[AP] INDIA

### **ABSTRACT**

*The autobiography is not parted into the self-reliant aspect, it portrays with the series of experiences, memories, and aspirations. The string of life memories make someone famous, but Dalit women memories change the lives of her community woman's life and society mind. The author presents an important element of life for society. Some of the autobiographies of childhood, education, marriages end with happy, but only Dalit autobiographies end with oppression, struggle, and pain in all stages. Baby kamble is well known as Indian activist and writer. She was born one of the biggest untouchable castes in Maharastra. She was inspired by B.R.Ambedkar. Mostly Mahars converted into Buddhism including Kamble's family. In Mahar community, Kamble accepted as a writer and affectionately people used the term 'Tai' to be calling her, it means sister. She extensively explained the Dalit community struggles, oppression in her life. Her contributions are powerful literary and activist work. Her works reflect Dalits life; it is useful to Dalit, setting a better way. She is an early writer from Dalit communities. Her writings reflex as a feminist setting apart from other Dalit works. The Prisons We Broke is an autobiographical book. In chronological order, she presents Dalit community struggles and women as a gender how she doubly discriminated by society. She dedicates the book 'for all my comrades who wish to change the world' shows her commitment to writing the book. Her comrades are downtrodden people and she aims to change the world with their help. My paper is to draw the elements like oppression, caste and class distinctions in Kamble's autobiography. It not only speaks of her personal life but also it is a record of Dalit's in general.*

**Keywords:** *Autobiography, discrimination, Gender, Violence, and Caste.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

**K. RANI**

1P a g e



With Autobiographies, literature introduces private suffering to the public domain. They also invite others to interact with autobiography truth with their human feelings and conditions. Autobiographies offer distinct reasons at distinct moments, and if Dalit women writers; autobiographies are not sweet memorable events it all filled with discrimination, pain, gender domination, poverty, and injustice.

Most of the Dalit writers in Maharashtra developed a narrative of conflict not in favor of caste domination. Varnvyavastha declared Dalits are downtrodden people and that one major feature of writings made Dalits most inferior and untouchable part of society. The society mentally own up superior is upper caste people, these thoughts remove through writings. Some are still never trying to change their caste feeling. Autobiographies deliver a moral basis for Dalit movement. It speaks out the struggle of Dalit and Dalit women under the rigidity of tradition. All autobiographies start with their village memories and childhood sufferings the cruel experience of untouchability. Only some autobiographies have dropped a line to winning the issues of women among Dalits. Dalit women writing are existing form the basis of discrimination, humiliation, caste and gender domination. Dalits are being separate people and living asset of low castes from some year. Dalit women situation is most horrible than Dalit men. They are doubly discriminated by society and their community as caste and gender. They allow the oppression of the system, made up of low caste. From the era Dalits don't have right of entry to education, so unlike Dalit writers, they represent a reality which suffers them and lives like an inhuman being.

The autobiographies expressed their feelings on the caste system because the writers or Dalits have been ill-treated several times. Dalits are not interesting to represent the beauty of nature and romantic stories because their clutches are leading them to write on pain, struggles.

The caste system segregates Dalit people, Hindu people looked up the caste system in their mind. Dalit gets the strength to picture their pain, struggle and discrimination is the result of Ambedkar's struggle. Writers have taken to writing as a weapon. They do not prefer fictional writings; autobiographies have flourished most among the Dalits.

The Prisons We Broke is a realistic picture of Dalits in Maharashtra. Baby Kamble says, "We were just like animals, but without tails", (49). She gives details of Dalits miserable life. The women's saris infested with lice, the hunger makes new mothers crying, month babies cleaned with saliva rather than soap, and to quell hunger consumed cactus pods the result is intestine problems.



The author's privileged background is kind of miserable poverty suffered by her people. Her English-speaking grandfather was butlers to Europeans; remove tremendous poverty suffering and demon-ridden Maharwada that set on the bounds of society. She portrays Mahars culture; festivals-buffalo fairs and sacrifice. The women possessed by goddesses and boys offered to the god as potrajas. She presents mostly about community their lifestyle in Maharwada, their houses according to caste and wealthy, customs favorable to man, their joys and sorrows. Especially women occupy a special place to the narrative.

Baby Kamble's autobiography telling Brahminical domination. It also speaks women of her community, subjugated by both caste and patriarchy. The awful fate of daughter in law's by the hand of mother in law. The pity girls married at the age of eight or nine, they are not mature physically and mentally. But they are treated as a slave and punished crucially; their noses chopped off to acquire the displeasure of their husbands or in-laws. In these conditions that they hold the social contact of Dr.Ambedkar. They believe he is the messiah to Dalits.

The prisons we broke occupy a prominent place because it represents the development of the Mahar community from pre-Ambedkar days. The fast changes through education and mass conversion, revolts against through speeches provoke Dalits and make them enter into the temple courageously. The writer gives call us to all the Indians to follow Ambedkar. She convincingly says that she was a girl at that time. As she remembers and says:

*"The revolutionary fervor of his words set our blood coursing through the veins. We felt as if we should go and shake orthodox by the scruff of their neck. By the time we reached the fourth standard, we had sort of become grownups. We were then transferred from school no...2 to school no...5. This school was known as Bahulichhi Shala". (p.107)*

The narration is an emotional outburst; compose from social to personal on the way she says

*"I wrote about what my community experienced. The sufferings of my people became my own sufferings. Their experiences became mine. So I really find it very difficult to think of myself outside of my community."(136).*

#### **Double marginalization of Dalit women:**

Dalit women are doubly marginalized. Firstly, as a Dalit and secondly as a woman. They are equal to their men in terms of rendering labor, but they remain inferior in terms of societal norms, power, and decisions relating to family matters. Dalit patriarchy confines a woman within four walls. Few of the examples that baby incorporated in the text unveil the façade of



harsh reality a Dalit woman living in. A Dalit married woman is the butt of gender discrimination at the hands of both her father-in-law and mother-in-law. If a hungry Dalit woman sees to the eating of others and wishes to have a part of food before her in-laws theirs, it would bring stinging words from the sasu (mother-in-law).

Just in case a sasu noticed this, she would contemptuously throw a morsel at her daughter-in-law, saying, 'Push that down your throat, you shameless hussy! Aren't you ashamed to stare so at a child who's eating? At least let the food get down his throat! Your evil eye will make the child choke. Don't you know how to behave like a good daughter-in-law? (30).

Besides, child marriage is rampant in the Dalit community. Girls become pregnant and they have to deliver their child in a most inhospitable manner and the newborn baby, as well as its mother, always suffers from malnutrition and low vitality. So, both the rate of child death and death during delivery is very high in Dalit communities. Another fact that a reader comes across the text is that at best one woman in a hundred would have her nose chopped off. The answer to the "why" of this incident is the 'sasu'. A husband brainwashed by the mother-in-law thus 'teaches' his wife how to behave in society. An example where we see that each time an upper-caste man comes down the road if it happens by chance that a Dalit woman is on the road, she has to cover her whole body and repeat uttering the mantra, "The humble Mahar women fall at your feet master"(52). And if any newly married woman forgets to do this, it would raise a furor the locality. Baby particularizes such an incident and the reaction of a Patil :

*Who just tell me, who the hell is that new girl? Doesn't she know that she has to bow down to the master? Shameless bitch! How dare she pass me without showing due respect?' Then the girl's sesra and other elderly men from the community would fall at the man's feet in utter supplication, begging for mercy. 'No, no kind master! That girl is a new animal in the herd! Quite foolish and ignorant. If she has erred, I, her sasra, fall at your feet, but please forgive us for this crime.' 'No! You Mahars are transgressing your limits. It is all this food that you get free of cost that has made you forget your place, isn't it? But listen carefully. Next time, if anybody passes by me without bowing, you've had it! No mercy would be shown to you any longer. What do you take us for? Are we Mahars like you or do you take us for naïve children? Daring to pass by me without bowing! Think twice before doing any such thing again!'( 53)*

So, Dalit women suffer not only in the patriarchal bend of society but also in the matrilineal stereotype in their communities. Baby Kamble focuses special attention to the liberation of



Dalit women through education and advises her fellow women for setting up a small scale business in the first step. Kamble invokes the Dalit mothers, following Baba Saheb's message, to get their children to school for education and to become economically independent. The last two chapters are devoted to B.R. Ambedkar. In Kamble's opinion, Ambedkar was god-sent. She recounts many public meetings, and agenda led by Ambedkar. She was engaged in the Dalit solidarity movement and an active member (later president) of the Mahila Mandala. Technically, by finishing her book with her Himalayan awe and devotion to Ambedkar, Kamble shows her clear allegiance to the modern-day superhero. Ambedkar strengthens their backbone. All the Dalits, man, a woman took Baba as the milestone and whenever there is any discrimination, they took him as their inner source of strength. Baba was to them, a superhuman entity, almost like the heroes of legendary sagas and cultural text. She shows her vitriolic disgust against the post-Ambedkarite segregation among leader for their power mongering. She concludes "I am a product of the Ambedkar movement" (125). So, the prisons would remain, as Baby Kamble thinks, as far as the Dalits disperse and distract themselves from the true vocation of Baba Saheb-"educate agitate and organize".

By the end of her Autobiography, Kamble asserts that "Baba's words show me the way; I decided to begin my struggle through my writing. I followed Baba's advice verbatim, to the best of my ability"(135). Her promise attests her commitments. Karl Marx asked his follower in chapter-1V of The Communist Manifesto that "Workers of the World, Unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains!"(Emphasis mine). Dalits have nothing more to lose to the savarna Hindus. Though Baby Kamble through her autobiography never mentions any kind of Marxist influence on her, the book has become another manifesto that calls her fellow members to disrupt all the chain catapulting them into eternal slavery and inhuman indignity.

She gives a call all the Dalits to participate into action towards the destruction of the prison through education. The principles of Ambedkarite movement are to develop Dalit economic freedom. Maya Pandit questioned Baby kamble in her interview like... "But people did come together at the time of the Riddles controversy, didn't they?" (152 ). Baby kamble answered. "Yes, only something like that will bring all these groups together."(The prison we broke: 153). Baby finishes off in the tune of Balbir Madhopuri's 'mahua formulae' of 'humanist slap' on the face of savarna poet(ChangiyaRukh- Against the Night : An autobiography :198) and Baburao Bagul's adjuring

*"...That's why I say you have made the mistake of being born in this country  
Must now rectify it: either leave this country or make war.... (Poisoned Bread:  
81).*





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