



## TRIPLE MARGINALIZATION OF DALIT WOMEN IN BABY KAMBLE'S, 'THE PRISONS WE BROKE'

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### Abstract :

*Baby Kamble is the first Marathi Dalit Autobiography writer who focuses on her Mahar community and the triple of marginalization of Dalit Women on the basis of class, caste and gender. Being born in Mahar community, women's are sandwiched and oppressed. The novel suggests the emancipation of women through the preaching of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*

**Key words:** *marginalization, class, caste, gender, Dalit women, patriarchy*

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### Introduction :

Baby Kamble, the first Dalit Woman Autobiography Writer, penned 'Jin Amuch' in Marathi in 1986, which was translated into English in 2008 by Maya Pandit as 'The Prisons We Broke.' She was the pioneer who put on record the agonies and hardships of Dalit Women due to their oppression on the basis of class, caste and gender. The present paper attempts to point out triple marginalization of Dalit Women and the way out suggested by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Baby Kamble's, The Prisons We Broke is not only the oppression of women which they encounter but it is the exploitation and marginalization of Dalit Women on class, caste and gender fronts. So we can call it, 'Sociography.'

Marginalization is a term defined by online Oxford Dictionary as "treatment of a person, group or concept as insignificant or peripheral," rather than, we find that it is a process for center less people who are pushed to the edge of a group of Marginalized people do not have control on their lives and the resources available to them. In other words, it is a social phenomenon in which exclusion of a minority is prevalent and this group of people is subsided by ignoring them and their needs. The concept of Marginalization was pioneered by Robert Park. (1928) The term 'outsiders' can be substituted to refer to the marginalized group of people. We can say that the marginalized group or community of people is socially excluded, or blocked systematically. Or denied access to participate in mainstream. In the present autobiography, Triple Marginalization is focused which is intersected with Caste, Class and Gender. Though class is a set, kind, type or quality having some property in common which differentiate from others, here,



we expect hierarchy in society based on socioeconomic status. Being born as Dalit, women's status in the social order is low or out of social order like varna in Hindu Religion - four varnas - Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Dalits do not have any place in these varnas even they are not counted in Shudra.

Caste is another aspect which is hereditary, endogamous and includes an occupation, ritual status in a hierarchy, customary social exclusion based on cultural notion of purity and pollution. Shrinivas, the well-known and reputed research scholar defines,

"Caste is a hereditary, endogamous usually localized group having traditional association with an occupation and a particular position in the local community."

The third important facet of triple marginalization is Gender which is a social construction, expression and identity of women. We cannot replace 'Sex' with gender because Sex is a biological category. Several social institutions like family, education, media, religion and legal system contribute to the construction of gender and reinforce patriarchal values.

Class, Caste and Gender are correlated to each other as we find in the autobiography by Baby Kamble, 'The Prisons We Broke,' which is the expression of protest against the Pathetic conditions of existence to which the Hindu Caste System has subjected Dalit woman for thousands of years. In other words, it is the painful journey and triple marginalization of Dalit women in the public and private spheres.

They were the worst victims of patriarchy, caste consciousness and Gender proclivity. Mahar women are supposed to behave like slaves in front of the upper caste people and are instructed by their own men as how to beck and call the upper caste Hindus as their masters. They had a sense of threat for these upper caste people. They used to earn curses and abuses for their hardships and laborious work. The upper caste community threw abuses at the Mahars, if they did not fall at their feet or if they did not give way to their masters when these upper caste people come across in their way.

"When the upper caste man came close, they had to say 'the humble Mahar woman fall at your feet, master!' (52)

Dalit woman was treated as a sexual object and she was available for upper caste men whenever they had sexual urge. Dalit men were supposed to offer their wives to upper caste people to please them sexually in every possible manner. Sharankumar Limbale asserts in his autobiography, "The Outcaste," that her mother was kept by several upper caste men. He also boldly tells, his siblings were not born from the same father. It was the inhuman Dalit customs and rituals fixed by the upper caste people that degraded Dalit women so low.

"My mother was not an adulteress but the victim of a social system. I grow restless whenever I read about a rape in the newspaper, a violation anywhere in the country, I feel, is a violation of my mother." (Acknowledgement in "The Outcaste")

The exploitation and oppression of Dalit Women is the result of Brahmnical Patriarchy. The term suggests Dalit's imitation of upper caste. Dalit community members wanted to imitate upper caste people and wanted to show their dominance on others. But they did not have anyone, thus they began to enslave their own daughters -in -law.It



speaks about her uneasiness towards the suffering of her community. when dalit woman offers a bunch of wood to high caste woman, she used to say,

"oh! You, wretched mahar woman, take care not a thread of your cloth would come in my house. Otherwise, we have to clean everything of our house. Even we have to bath our Gods. They will also become impure." (P.61)

Baby Kamble expresses the anguish towards this untouchability practiced by high caste people. She responds,

"Your prosperity is based on the blood and sweating of dalit. When dalit woman brings a bunch of wood for you, her sweat and blood fall on wood which enter your house, you willingly accept it but, by mistake, thread of her cloth or saree enters in your house which impure you, your God. What you eat, we take pain for that.

Your skin doesn't rotten when you eat the food for which we take pains. You suck our blood. It doesn't make you impure? You took the undue advantage of our ignorance and helplessness, is this religion? We have come to know your selfishness in the name of religion due to our saviour Dr. Bababsaheb Ambedkar."(P.85)

To get relief from the life of utter poverty, hunger, exploitation Mahar women find solace in being possessed by ghosts, Goddess Satwai or Mari Aai. It is very interesting and amusing to know that the Mahar men possessed by Laman Pathan could be able to drive away the ghosts from mahar woman. Laman Pathan was the brother of Goddess. There was custom among Mahars of offering goats to the Laman Pathan.

To suffer from hunger and poverty was the fate of Mahars. Most of the mahar women die during child birth due to malnutrition and hunger. They could not even afford to buy the cheapest food like Jowar. They suffered from the diseases like tetanus due to careless attitude towards infection. Baby Kamble narrates the incident of the ignorance of the mahars led them to perform the rituals rather than going to doctor. She says,

"The suffering of the woman would be beyond endurance, Even the onlookers found it difficult to watch her plight. Her family smeared her forehead with ash from the chulha. Two or three days would pass like this. People around her would try to soothe her with kind words. Life of that poor woman gradually diminished and she would finally sink. Many young girls on the threshold of life succumbed to death. One in every ten lost their lives during their lives during childbirth. Infants died as well. The fear of death drove people to the goddess Satwai and they would perform all the customary rituals."(p.61)

In severe poverty, people in mahar community used to discuss about the woman who possessed by Goddess and a coloured stone God. They follow many rituals and worship many Gods. The entire community had sunk deep in the mire of such dreadful superstition. For this, Baby Kamble responds, "In reality, they don't have anything in their life. Man must have something in his life to live."

To conclude, we find that the book minutely and painfully portrays the triple torture based on class, caste and gender of Dalit Woman. Life was a burden for her in Pre Ambedkar era. The book is nothing but impulsive attack on heinous caste system and triple marginalization of Dalit Women. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Preaching of education is important to overcome the problems of Dalit women.


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**Declaration :**

I, Dr. Sachin G. Kamble hereby declare that the research paper entitled "Triple Marginalization of Dalit Women in Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke*" is original research work. And not copied from any other sources.

**Short Bio Note :**

Dr. Sachin G. Kamble has been working in the Dept of English since 2009 in Dadasaheb Jotiram Godse Arts, Commerce, Science College, Vaduj, Satara, Maharashtra. He has published 18 research papers in reputed journals and one book with ISBN entitled, "Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: Indian Society and Ambedkarite Literature." in 2021. He is research supervisor in Shivaji University, Kolhapur. He has also completed UGC funded minor research project on V.S. Naipaul in 2014. He has also successfully completed one orientation course and 4 refresher courses in reputed HRDCs.

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