

Dalit Feminism and impact of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar**Mr. Sachin Kamble**Department of English
Lal Bahadur Shastri College, Satara.**Abstract:**

Feminist movement got importance in the 20th century in western countries as well as in India. But last decade of century became crucial because of the rise of dalit feminism in India. Many dalit women came forward with issues and problems. They subside themselves from mainstream feminist movement. Problems faced by dalit women were different from of upper-caste and middle class women. Dalit women's voice was less heard in mainstream feminist movement. They were facing subjugation at three levels as a woman, as a dalit and as a poor. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is a prime source of inspiration for dalits in India. Dalit women were greatly affected by thoughts, ideas, philosophy and work of him. He instill self-esteem in dalit women which result in a great change in dalit women so in the community. Jyoti Lanjewar's poem, 'Mother' rightly presents image of dalit women and impact of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on dalit women.

Key words: Dalit feminism, caste, patriarchy, upper-castes and discrimination.

Feminism is a political movement which demands rights for marginalized women. It demands equal social, economic, political, rights to women. It tries to show inequality in construction of gender. As Simone de Beauvoir says, "One is not born woman, but becomes one", it suggests gender is socially created fact and discrimination, oppression and patriarchal system in the society. Feminist movement came into exist in mid twenty century, at the outset it focused on basic rights of women. It started in European countries. Literature is one of the ways to present anguish of women and create social awareness. Many female writers wrote about marginalization of women. Issues of women are different according to different religion, region and culture. To understand the condition of women we first should understand its background it may be religious, cultural, conventions, economic condition, social condition, rules and regulations to women etc.

In India women are more marginalized, discriminated compare to western women. Social, economic, cultural, religious condition of India is different from of western countries. So problems and issues of Indian women are little different from western women. There are three phases of Indian

feminism; first phase began in mid nineties, when European colonists began to speak about problems of women in India. Second phase began when Gandhi Started movement of independence with the help of of women's organizations and Third phase started after independence which focused on basic rights for women.

Until 1990, problem and issues of upper-caste and middle-class women had prime concern in Indian feminist movement. But India is diverse country; it has different classes, castes, cultures. So problem to have one criterion to understand problem of women was aroused. 1990 was an important year in Indian feminist Politics. When dalit women ask questions about their place in the movement In mainstream feminism more stress was given on the issues and problem of upper caste and middle class women. Indian feminist movement focuses too much on women already privileged. They neglect needs and presentation of lower caste women. Marginalization of dalit women in mainstream feminism and male dominant in dalit movement resulted in dalit women's need to find new way to express them, this gave birth to a new kind of platform called dalit feminism. They fight against marginalization, subordination in mainstream indian feminism, male dominant dalit movement, and in lower class society.

Many feminist organizations established by

upper caste and middle class women in India. Many dalit women were member of such organizations but these dalit women had very less importance in organizations, they were more in numbers, they were denied leading position in main stream feminist organizations, they didn't have any important role in decision making. Their oppression was not recognized by mainstream feminism. These mainstream organizations were not giving proper attention for issues like caste. For mainstream feminists dalit and upper caste and middle class women are equal and they think their problems are also same. It gave birth to dalit women's organizations where women can present themselves, their suffering and wishes. Women in india were facing many problems, many bad traditions, Conventions like Sati, religious laws, patriarchal system, subordination and marginalization of women were prevailed. But problems of dalit women were different from mainstream women. So there was great need of platform for dalit women to present their issues and problems which they are facing as a woman, as dalit and as a poor in the society.

Patriarchy and family structure of dalit castes is different from of the upper-caste. Problems faced by upper-caste women were dowry, violence to women, property issues, husband worshipping etc. mainstream feminism trying to deal with these issues which are less applicable to dalit women. It may be because family structure of dalit is different from of upper-caste. Dalit family structure is more democratic than upper-caste and middle class family structure. But violence in dalit family to women was considered normal thing those days. Male dominance was accepted within the families. Dalit women mostly busy in daily labour and these dalit women are earners of the family, so dalit women were double oppressed in the family compare to upper-caste women.

In the case of divorce among dalits, property wasn't an issue but purity or chastity of dalit woman may arise as an issue in case of divorce and remarriage. If husband dies there is little change in the life of many dalit women. She runs to work at dawn and comes home after sunset, whether her husband is alive or dead she follows the same routine. Family children and community

were prime concern for dalit women.

Upper-caste women had social protection of sexuality to maintain their social status but in case of dalit women there is less protection because of their low birth. There was religious prostitution and exploitation of dalit women. "Subordination of dalit castes to the upper-castes do not make dalit women free from patriarchal oppression and control over their sexuality and labor by dalit men. Upper-caste women's subordination ends in their families but dalit women's subordination extends from the families to upper castes (Bama2005). The same caste and gender construction of the society sets different norms for upper-castes and dalit women. Dalit women were forced to religious prostitution and sexual exploitation was due to their economic conditions and caste position.

In such situation where dalit women mistreated by upper caste men their problems did not take into consideration by upper caste and middle class feministic groups because they are culturally bounded labors and took the side of their male partners. Fight of women to save women was challenged by the incident happened in 'chundurur' case, where upper caste women had taken the responsibility of protecting their men from being punished. 'Khairlanji' is another incident which can raise suspect in the mind. Dalit women were the victim of sexual exploitation by upper caste due to the vulnerability of their caste position.

As Sharmila Rege pointed out "There was a complete invisibility of experience of dalit women or at best only a token representation of their voice. There was thus masculinization of dalithood and savarnization of womanhood, leading to a classical exclusion of dalit womanhood". Dalit women were wrongly presented in literature by dalit writers and some non-dalit writers also. Dalit women were shown stereotyped as a victim, powerless, and in search of help and sympathy. They completely ignored facts that dalit women can fight back. She has self respect, she can guard her dignity. Her role is shifted, emphasis is given on active role in the betterment of not only their family but also of their whole community and here her self-respect is raised by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. He is the prime source of inspiration to dalit to develop strength and to struggle.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is true champion of the rights of not only dalit women but also of women in general. Babasaheb said, in the name of sanskara indian women are tied to bondage of superstition", Babasaheb's announcement to leave these superstitions made dalit women self-esteemed. He finds remedy of women's oppression in buddhist religion where buddhist ways respect and treat women equally. He thinks that social and economic structure of indian culture is root cause of subordination of women in India. He was firmly committed to equality, liberty and fraternity. Participation of women in satyagrah, burning of manusmriti such incident instills self esteem in dalit women. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had great impact of the minds of dalit, he thinks that development of women can develop community so he calls for women education and equal participation in different satyagrahas.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in scheduled caste meeting of 1942 advised women, "To educate children, remove inferiority complex, not to have many children, let every girl whom marries claim to be her husband's friend and equal and refuse to be his slave". In Mahad Satyagraha near about 500 women took part. Babasaheb addressed women here, he instill in them of getting education, cleanliness, equality and giving up evil conventions of Hindu culture. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar also raised issues of women in Bombay Legislative Assembly on 10 Nov. 1938, as a labor minister he introduced maternity benefit bill. In Constitution of India he gave equal status for women. After independence he introduced Hindu Code Bill for the rights for women. Dalit women have great impact of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on their mind. So dalit women were more concerned about her family and society.

Impact Of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar can be seen in the poem 'Mother' by Jyoti Lanjewar. She has presented true image of dalit woman in this poem. In 'Mother' poem woman is not only an object of beautification, She never desire for ornaments, she did hard labor in harsh situation, she faces adverse situation even she shows love for children, she care a lot for education of her child, she is aware of self esteem and self respect, She took part in dalit movement such and other aspects

of dalit woman are shown in the poem.

"Study, becomes an Ambedkar,

And let the baskets fall from my hand"

The very line shows the impact of Babasaheb on dalit women that she is more concerned for education of her child, for that she is ready to do more hard labor. She thinks education can make man wise like Babasaheb.

"Don't you have mother or sister?"

To anyone who looked at you in lust his eyes"

This shows she is also concern for her dignity and self esteem, she did hard labor in public even she protects herself from others. She is not ready to sacrifice her honor. When her only child died, she said:

"You died for Bhima,

Your death means something"

This very line shows impact of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on dalits. She worked hard her whole life to give proper upbringing to her only child she did not even repent for his death for the movement, for the community and for the name and thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, on her deathbed she said:

"Live in unity...

Fight for Baba...

Don't forget him....

And with your very last breadth

Jai Bhmi."

Dalit women are more concerned for community; it is result of Dr. Babasheb Ambedkar. This poem rightly pointed out true image of dalit women. He not only inspire but instill in them morals of equality, liberty, fraternity, high ambitions and Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts and philosophy of equality and humanity.

Conclusion:

Issues and problems of dalit women are different from mainstream indian feminism. Dalit women feel suffocated in the movement, so they need to present their voice where they can present their agony, anguish, suffering, violence, thoughts and ideas. They started a new movement called dalit feminism. There was subjugation, marginalization and subordination at three level gender, caste and class. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, a true champion of women's rights, has a great role in changing life and thoughts of dalit women. Jyoti

Lanjewar in her famous poem '*Mother*' truly presents image of dalit women.

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