

Dalit Autobiographies are the Narration of Their Social Settings

Shashikala.S

Assistant Professor, Govt. First Grade college and PG Centre., Davanagere University,
Davanagere, Karnataka,
Email: shashikalasomanatha@gmail.com

Abstract: *Dalit autobiographies are the marginalised voices of dalits. Their main intentions are not just narration of their selves but to present the social setting and social reality of their community where their life is pushed lesser than the animals because of their low birth. That's why a Dalit focusses more to "we" than to "I". to make this point clear I have taken the Kannada Autobiography OOrukeri by Siddalingaiah , for the analysis.*

Key Words: *Dalit, OOru Keri, Humiliation, Untouchable, Caste*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Dalit is a name given to a person who has been trampled since Vedic period in the name of caste. Dalit is more than just a word because the word itself presents the harsh reality of exploitation, humiliation of a particular community which is hungry throughout the centuries. So Dalits are exploited, oppressed, suppressed and humiliated socially, religiously and economically in the society throughout the ages, as a result their position become worse than the animals. In the name of untouchables they were neither allowed to live nor to die in the society. They are the voiceless people and got their voice recently in the twentieth century due to the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar and others. And they started representing their voices in their writings which later labelled as Dalit literature. Dalit literature often called protest literature because through writing they not only questioned but also protested the age old brahminical values and rituals which trampled them since vedic period. Most of the dalit literature is in the form of autobiographies, where they protested by their honest narrations, by mirroring the society.

Siddalingaiah's *Ooru keri* is very unique compare to the other Autobiographies because unlike other autobiographies it does not provoke pity and sympathy among readers though it presents humiliations, exploitation and hunger like other Autobiographies, because it mainly focuses on the social settings of Dalit locality that's why he gave the title *Ooru keri* to his Autobiography which means neighbourhood, that's why the critic and writer Dr. D R nagaraj said that this autobiography is fresh and invigorated with slightly distorting the hunger and humiliations, it tries to find the way out for humiliations, it is new imagining of Dalit experience.

Ooru keri in the beginning itself presents the social environment in which the writer's parents lived and spent his childhood. He writes that his house was the last in their colony ,beside his house there was four feet wall of the ruined house. Whenever his parents had been to work in the field , he along with his friends from his colony claimed up this broken wall and their eyes search for their parents who were working in the field, once Siddalingaiah saw a strange scene of two men carrying the heavy yoke on their shoulders and the other man swaying the whip in hand and farming the field, it was very amusing scene for Siddalingaiah but when he recognised that one of the two men who bearing heavy load on their shoulder was his father , a sort of unexplained pain replaced in the place of amusement. This was the sad plight of Dalits who struggle beyond our imagination just fulfil their hungry stomachs.

In spite of such hard work these Dalits were either under fed or unfed and they have to rely on the leftovers of upper caste people to fill their hungry stomach. Birth and hunger are the issues which troubled Dalits throughout the centuries. In *Oorukeri* also we come across many incidents highlight the hunger of Dalits. Like other Dalits Siddalingaiah's parents were also very poor and for their livelihood they work in the field of Ainoor and the leftovers of their food, one day when Siddalingaiah was standing near the tank, he heard a voice of Dalits, shouting and running, followed by many Dalits of his locality, he too ran along with them and found that they were running to the house of Ainoor for the leftover pooories and lemon rice. He felt very sad to reach there late but when he saw his parents were already there he was satisfied. This situation was narrated by in a casual manner by Siddalingaiah because Dalits left with no other option than accepting leftovers from the upper class people, this is the part and parcel of their life.

Siddalingaiah also writes that his father had many non-Dalit friends and many times he accompanied his father to their houses, there they were made to sit outside the platform and sometimes gave some eatables, Siddalingaiah submerged himself in the taste so he did not mind the humiliation of receiving the leftovers, even in the hotels also they were made to sit far from the other people but before the taste of idli and sambar they did not even think that though in spite paying for idli and sambar like others they humiliated by allowing them to sit far and providing food in a separate plate like thing. Once he and his grandmother returning from a function accidentally he touched an outcaste who became very angry and was about to burst then Siddalingaiah's grandmother begged forgiveness and he warned her grandson that not to run like that in the streets especially when upper caste walk over

there .Even though these incidents narrated in a casual way but it presents the conditions and exploitation of Dalits who remained outcastes and untouchables, who humiliated for no cause of theirs. This Autobiography also the superstitious believes of untouchables which clearly highlight the ignorance and the lack of awareness.

2. CONCLUSION:

Generally Autobiographies are written either by celebrities or by the achievers. These Dalits are neither achievers nor celebrities infact they were not even treated like human beings yet they wrote their Autobiographies at very early age because their main intention is not just narrating their self but putting forth the pathetic conditions of Dalits before the society in which they are humiliated and exploited. That's why they give more importance to the narration of their social settings.

REFERENCES:

1. Kumar,Raj.(2012) *Dalit Personal Narrative*. Kolkatta: Orient Blakswan, India. Print.
2. Ghurey, G.S. (1969) *Caste and Race in India*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan.. Print.
3. Mohan, Narendra,(Jan-Mar. 1975) *Protest and Literature*, Indian Literature. Vol.18, No.1.. Print.
4. Siddalingaiah, Ooru Keri,(2006) Bengaluru: Sahitya Akademi.. Print.