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# Non/Dalit Women Identity between Compliance and Defiance

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## **Dedications**

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to:

My parents, my husband, my children, grandchildren, brothers, and sister.

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## Abstract

In this era of globalized thoughts of democracy and human rights, the forms of women struggles across the nations are very similar. No matter how different the socio-economic, cultural and political ambiances are, literature becomes a weapon in the hands of women for self-assertion and realization. In this thesis, the focus is to compare the representation of the Indian woman by Dalit and non-Dalit women writers. The selected works are *Sangati* by Bama Faustina Faustina, *The Prison we Broke* by Baby Kamble, as Dalit writers; Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, as non-Dalit novels. The study draws from aspects of the idiosyncrasies of narratology through which I examine to what extent the comparative approach methodically investigates the homogenization of differences, under the lens of postcolonialist and feminist theories, in order to identify the harmonious coexistence of the nation-state diversity and its unity. Then, based on history, psychology, sociology, and politics how the focus of intertextuality broadens the horizons of homogeneity to provide regional literature a valid category. Consequently, the common denominator theme is identity (de)construction. Furthermore, the study shows how Indian women, utilize literature to represent the odd issues of their society claiming that discrimination and oppression of the underprivileged, woman and Dalit, is at the core of the three dogmatic social rules: gender, caste and class. The authors' remarkable insight grew primarily from their own experiences. With a hope of erasing the past and building a bright future, they form an arena for the suppressed to get representation and gain a voice to achieve a sense of self-knowledge and mobilized resistance against the rigid social codes. They also make efforts to empower their society and redefine the authentic identity of the universal individual/woman.

**Key words:** Dalit, Indian/Dalit woman, Indian literature, patriarchy, caste, identity

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# **General Introduction**

## General Introduction

*A person who had never known another human being . . . could not know anything about himself, no matter how long he lived with himself. And a person who had never listened to nor read a tale or myth or parable or story, would remain ignorant of his own emotional and spiritual heights and depths, would not know quite fully what it is to be human.*

Ursula K. Le Guin (1979), *The Language of the Night*

Today, when globalization seems to have taken over every form of art and culture everywhere in the world, there is still one form of writing that thrives on being different. driving home the idea that every country, and every local community within that country, has different claims and different histories. The chronological progress of technology and the facilities of communicating effortlessly have narrowed the world to a community where its members' situations in life are known all over the world community. Women are part of those marginalized whose situation is problematic and a stimulus to flourish away from the mainstream and express themselves by their artistic writing.

Literature is an artistic production of the creative imagination of the human brain. It is generally acknowledged that literature is not developed from nothingness. Thus, the writer's imagination is not absolutely devoid of the presence of real matters. Literature is a simulacrum of human lives reality and every work of art is a product of its social and cultural events of the human stages of life. Consequently, every writer is a product of his/her socio-cultural and



historical milieu. The Indian novel as a medium of literature is not an exception because the society with its traditions and norms remains the source of materials that inspires writers. Globally, every society has gone through one experience or the other; such experiences are what writers artistically depict in their creative writings. The purpose behind such depiction, according to the nature of the tackled trend, is either to appraise or criticize. The commonly known about Literature, rather than appraising, is the depiction of the social odds and the unpleasant realities of life. It is in this light that the discussion in the present work entitled *Non/Dalit Woman Identity between Defiance and Compliance* becomes relevant.

Indians have driven out the colonizers in order to enjoy freedom on their lands altogether. However, a category of the Indian population inherited thoughts and behavior of the colonizer to put them in practice against a category of Indians. The higher privileged groups in terms of class and caste scales are discriminating Dalits; the underprivileged - ex-Untouchables. For Dalit women, more than being a Dalit/Untouchable, they are undeniably coerced to be oppressed in patriarchy. Dalit women are alienated and degraded and their body is under the mercy of men's caprices and violence from their own and other communities. Dalit women are the most deprived humans and at the bottom of the social structures. They are poor, illiterate, sexually abused and unfairly exploited at both economic and physical levels. They face discrimination from every social institution: family, work place, school, police and also temples. Thus, they line at the edge of survival and struggle for basic elements to be alive. Without being determined and courageous for struggling, Dalit women would be in wretchedness and despair.

When the Indian novel in English, after the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, has been accepted as a worth getting good impression as an international literary product, Indian women writers in English were still claiming recognition since the critical

studies considered their writings far from reaching the triumphant international top. However, after the publication of Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize of *The God of Small Things*, Indian women writers have gained more detailed critical consideration in recent years and their gain of considerable literary prizes brought them recognition and triumphs.

My objective in this thesis is to place Indian women writers in English in the frame of significance that is central to their claims as worldwide influent writers. It also draws a proof that their devaluation is due to the patriarchal assumptions that women's mind and writings are not worth of any literary triumph since their imagination, as women, is restricted to their domestic space only rather than more important themes. Furthermore, Indian women writers are also undervalued by their own counterparts in terms of the English proficiency token. In India, presumably, English proficiency belongs to the higher social strata in terms of caste and economic class. Thus, their writing is viewed as the real reflection of the society. In this context, the psychological trauma of the downtrodden woman belonging to the lower castes is of no existence in the Indian male's writings in English. In this work, the researcher intends to dismantle the prejudices of male intellectual supremacy on one hand and the impression of differences vis-à-vis the caste, class, and linguistic tool of writing on the other.

As an attempt to break this stereotype, I have chosen two categories of novels by contemporary Indian women authors: Indian English novels and novels written in regional languages by Dalit women. Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, first published in 1998 and won her international acclaim and common wealth prize for the best first book (Eurasia), and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* -- winner of the Booker Prize in 1997 represent the reality of a distinct section of Indian womanhood in a high/middle class environment. However,

Arundhati Roy delineates the destructive consequences of the inter-caste sexual relations in a presumably caste-less Christian and/or communist community.

Simultaneously, Bama Faustina Faustina's *Sangati*, written in Tamil Nadu, and Baby Kamble's *The Prison we Broke*, written in Marathi, both translated into English and other languages, (Spanish and French) represent the reality of the most underprivileged section in India: Dalit womanhood and the suffering of their from the curse of untouchability and patriarchy.

Selecting *The Prison we Broke* and *Sangati* for a reflection on Dalit women's writing in the perspective of a generational experience is also supported by the fact that Bama Faustina and Baby Kamble are not only female writers but prominent writers of their generation as well. They are widely read since both autobiographies have been translated into foreign languages, including French and English. The Dalit authors have combined their social activism with art. They are broadly viewed as intellectuals of political agency, in spite of their different reaction to that 'label'.

It is seen that the writers tend to represent cultural and social notions in their writings. These notions are "normally" the stereotypical social categories and beliefs about roles of men and women as distinguished groups and individuals. Groups belonging to the upper caste are shown as having entirely different characteristics than groups excluded from the caste system. Man means the superior and woman is symbol of weakness according to the social norms. Such characteristics are the result of the religious dogmas and the cultural expectations of the society they live in. Power, then, is exclusively in the hands of the upper caste man.

This has enabled me, as a researcher, to highlight how cultural consensus assigns stereotypical roles to men and women and how religious beliefs enslave a group of human beings to another group sharing the same ecosystem. These conventional cultural rules and religious beliefs are perpetuated in texts and through texts.

Now, let's see the researcher's location and positionality which have been among the reflective points in focus for this research. I am trying, modestly, to analyze literary texts that stem from cultural context, to a certain extent, different from my own. The study of the selected works brings about both drawbacks and advantages. The obvious drawback may be an insufficient penetrating into the Indian social and cultural context and missing some important nuances. The advantage, on the other hand, may be a little direct influence of the context (political, social, power-discursive, etc.) that is usually strange for the insider.

In that regard, I have been deeply inspired by what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak said in an interview with Sneja Gunew (1986). Spivak emphasizes that learning about other cultures through language, specific programs of study and reflecting one's position as an investigating person is advantageous; which she calls "homework". Not doing that "homework" means, especially for a person coming from a "dominant" culture speaking about a culture of a colonial experience, the risk of being shallow or simply wrong. (Gunew, 1986: 3). However, the culture that the researcher comes from is not "dominant". the "Algerian culture", a mixture of Berber, Arab and North African cultures which can easily be understood and labelled as multicultural and postcolonial. Much of its experiences originate from the reverse side of the power discourse since Algeria was one of the colonies of one of the dominant powers of Europe, France, from 1830 to 1962, though it was not an experience of a classical colonialism as that of India.

The interdisciplinary relevance of this study lies not only in the importance of language and literature but finds ways also in Sociology, Psychology, History, Geography, Anthropology, Philosophy, etc. The type of the selection falls in similarity with African literature, Afro-American writings and also with Palestinian literature.

My engagement is to explore the comparative methodologies to bring visibility to the local literatures for the motif of representing the subaltern narratives in the metropolitan literary market. Accordingly, drawing a net of connections between women writers living in different ethnic communities, natives of different languages, holders of different religious beliefs and cultures and separated by relatively long distances under the wings of their mother land of India, is of great necessity to be measured with the global parameters of the literary tradition.

My engagement with Indian/Dalit women is viewed as a means to embrace and understand the complexity of the Indian culture and the diversity of its literature. I feel myself involved in building positive relationships with women from the other side of the world, to earn trust of the missing half of the Indian population and bridge the cultures of both countries. It also gives the Indian/Dalit women confidence and empower them to have a voice and ownership in asserting their individuality in the family, the society and the world. Similarly, it facilitates coordination and cooperation of activities to enhance the universal woman's life.

Naturally, a study of diverse novels written by writers of different social classes differentiated as upper caste authors and outcaste authors rely on evolving eclectic inclination to panoramic philosophies and methodologies to conduct the research-based orientation. Still, a sort of subaltern experience, be it political, social, gender or whatever forms it may be, can perhaps, and hopefully, make researchers from this part of the world more sensitive to all types of oppression and share this experience in a way, being, of course, aware of the distinguished

and simplified parallels. However, because these Indian women and ‘Other’ Dalits are not present in the researcher’s location, because of the geographical distances, I am in a rather strange position as reader.

The selected novels under study have several aspects in common apart from their major themes. First of all, the stories focus on the Indian women as subaltern. Through the technique of establishing strategies for telling the stories and introducing the issues all of the writers expand their narratives into larger socio-political as well as historical subjects. Via their narratives, the women writers introduce the reader to a country belonging to the Third World where Hinduism, blended with inflexible practices and beliefs, is the dominant religion over Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.

My affiliation to the Third World deepens my reason behind the choice of the novels. These literary works come across as the post-colonial gendered responses that serve the topsyturviness of the man-made social structures, generating aesthetics of opposition in their process of writing. I could, though not entirely, identify and relate to the culture in terms of being from the Third World. Moreover, and relating the facts to the emancipation of women, I find the experiences lived by some characters in the chosen works for analysis resembling to a certain extent those I lived, heard or witnessed during the different courses of life in my surroundings. Thus, such an experience is not strange in my culture in terms of gender biases. In fact, the caste system has no existence in our religion/Islam but tribal traditions of endogamy still exist, though disappearing, in some regions. Moreover, I have a clear understanding of the inner feelings and the sufferings of the Indian women which initiated sympathy and compassion towards the underprivileged woman regardless her caste belonging and social institution.

Likewise, the stories in *Difficult Daughters*, *The God of Small Things*, *The Prison we Broke*, and *Sangati* considered as literary works reflect several textual features that define a radical engagement with postcoloniality in creative literature. Postcolonial condition of melancholy, denial and disadvantage are signs of a special responsibility and devotion on the Indian writers. In its attempt to reinstate local culture and engender self-esteem to Indian nationalism, as Franz Fanon (1925-1961), the famous revolutionary theorist in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) suggests, postcolonial literature must evolve thoughts of consciousness and empowerment for struggle from the complicatedness phase of assimilation.

Texts are being discussed from feminist and postcolonial point of views. These writers have broken the barriers of the 'established' pattern of language used by the earlier writers. They have shown in their production of a great variety of works that they enjoy various possibilities to express themselves. Their strategies open up not to one language but many more are there, as there are multi cultures in their society.

The texts, under the analytic lenses, are of value because they still speak relevantly as of today. They are culturally and regionally specific and different; nonetheless, they are related to one another through the interlocking of identity layers, social concerns, and writing objectives. This interrelatedness evolves differences and inequalities between not only men and women because of gender biases but also among women themselves. Thereby, the various female characters analyzed in the chapters of the present work do not neatly align with an inexpugnable state and coherent female image or experience. Another characteristic of the narratives is their possibility to theorize a multitude of women's stories.

Furthermore, the selected texts weave various stories of female's oppression and exploitation in order to incite transformation in a postcolonial world that is not always willing

to accept equality between the sexes and the economic classes. These texts create alternative spaces for resistant females countering oppressive forces, thereby arguing that postcolonial women writers share feminist concerns and critical views to decolonize the Indian women and envision a world of pride and dignity. Their texts, ideological inclination, and visions are contemporaneous and relevant to the researcher's society since, first, Algeria, as India, is a postcolonial and multicultural society in which the lives of women, from all cultures, are still under patriarchal control and because they inspire, change for justice and equality and mobilize for duty and action. They do so through, skillfully adopting various perspectives akin to the diversity of postcolonial literature in terms of representation of the underprivileged colonized individual, under either the patriarchal force or the caste system oppressive doctrines, as it will be argued in the next sections.

So many women have written on gender related issues, but one's choice of the stories in the scope under study is inspired by the fact that the works focus on gender issues with special attention on moral decadence. These autobiographies are chosen for textual analysis because they are typical examples of the concept of the subaltern's identity, Indian Feminism and Dalit Womanism, in particular, in postcolonial India. In addition, they, at the universal scale, concern the "woman" and the underprivileged "minorities".

Me, the researcher, as a teacher of English Literature, feels concerned by the duty to facilitate the proliferation of the postcolonial women's writings in the educational institutions. A specific reference to the Indian women writings is important to build a bridge connecting my culture to the Indian one since it is widely known that twenty first century is the age of globalization, multiculturalism, telecommunication and digital technology that have turned the world to a small village. Particularly, the growing popularity of Indian women literature outside



India prompts inquiries about opening doors to literature written by postcolonial Indian women to take specific part in the new curriculum of English Literature in the Algerian universities. Arguably, education today is considered as a functional mechanism and effective means to develop creative and effective human resource (Gould 1993: 148).

The purpose of this research will discuss and compare the themes in *Difficult Daughter*, *The God of Small Things*, *The Prison we Broke*, and *Sangati*. The linking point of the selected texts revolves around the identity crisis and its representation in the different stages of female's lives: childhood, wifehood, motherhood, and widowhood. Although it is shared by the chosen texts, the conjuncture is treated with different perspectives by the authors.

My main objective is to explore the themes, based on a thorough analysis of characters. The themes of caste, gender and class will be seen through the lens of feminism in a postcolonial setting, which is a prevailing theme in all of the novels. Furthermore, my focal point will be the question of discrimination, alienation and oppression, as these issues are related to all of the discussed themes.

This study will also consider the effects of social class and caste on Dalit women and Dalit community in particular and on the society at large and as well, and proffer solutions on how to redeem the image of women and restore her individual identity from the abyss of sadness, fear and loss. It also demonstrates that women, besides their houses and family duties and chores, have played considerable roles in the building and growth of their society. Subsequently, they are demand to be trustworthy, acknowledged, respected and appreciated by the male gender.

In order to get my line of thought straight vis-à-vis my concern and preoccupation in this work, there is the need for me to state in clear terms, where my work will begin and where it will end. Going by the title *Non/Dalit Women Identity between Compliance and Defiance* I will examine the issue of identity realization in the context of gender ideology, social crises on the one hand and the manifestation of feminism as raised and presented in the four books on the other hand. For this to be done, I will attempt to examine the influence of patriarchal thoughts, caste doctrines and class rules upon the woman's self and her individual identity.

I have joined non-Dalit writings to Dalit writings for eventual comparison for the purpose of generalizing and seeking the convergent features connecting the Indian women at large. The relevance of the literary comparison is justified by the fact that the narratives are written in different languages (English, Tamil, and Marathi). They are from different cultures and regions in India (north, south, centre, east and west). In addition, the authors are affiliated to different social classes (middle class and lowest class), different castes (Dalit/outcaste and upper caste) and different religions (Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist).

Dalit literary production is an experience-based literature. While dealing with the trends of Dalit literature, I will make a humble attempt to point out the core issues of its characteristics, ideology and purposes. In this context, it can be said that Dalit literature questioned the mainstream literary theories, upper caste ideologies of religious and social differences and inequalities. In addition, it explored the atrocities and neglected aspects of the Untouchable's life. Similarly, the Indian/non-Dalit women literature generally deals with gender discrimination and men's social supremacy that subjugate women and deny her knowledge and realization. Concerned with the nation's destiny, non-Dalit writers, also claim Dalits' rights and liberation.

In this context, there is a great need to address major theoretical issues connected with Indian women writings and the increasing significance of Dalit literature. The important questions which will be addressed in this thesis are the following:

1. To what extent are the readings, analyses and comparison of Dalit/non-Dalit novels, invitations to a critical dialogue via their provocative and illuminating meanings and sought to manage visual representations of woman identity?

2. In what measure do the novels reinvigorate debates from alternative textual interpretations and open new avenues of cross-disciplinary research in which literary criticism is part of a collaborative project to define the features of both the postcolonial world and feminist philosophies?

3. In what measure have the Dalit and non-Dalit writings made the full dimensions of the cruelties and humiliation, of the socially under privileged people, find a way to literacy expression and experience?

4. And where do the present trends in Indian Woman (Dalit and non-Dalit) Literature lead to?

To answer the questions, my hypotheses suggest that:

1) The provocative meanings of the scope under study evolve a critical dialogue vis-à-vis the different representations of woman identity by Dalit and non-Dalit women authors.

2) The novels open new avenues to literary criticism to define the features of both the postcolonial theories and the distinctive feminist philosophies in India.

3) Indian women writings have, indeed, transformed the full dimension of the pains and agonies of the oppressed sections of people, castes and outcastes, into literacy expression and experience of triumph.

4) Furthermore, the present trends in Dalit and non-Dalit Woman literature lead to the construction of individual identities worth of human dignity and a society of equality and justice for all citizens.

Consequently, Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy, Baby Kamble, and Bama Faustina, the authors of the scope of study, create several resistant/confining female spaces as a way of speaking and being. Besides, they represent diverse identities and histories and speak with different and even conflicting voices, all of which are acknowledged and heard, inside as well as outside India. This signals a key aspect of the research, namely the need to approach the texts as artefacts constructed from various authorial positions, social contexts, and women's standpoints, thereby developing a rich cultural and literary archive of Indian women's voices and stories.

Dealing with methodology, the methods used to analyze the novels are mainly close reading and comparative techniques. Close reading has been necessary when exploring the absolute similarities and differences embedded in the Indian women's novels, as all texts are contemporary and tell stories about women of different classes and castes sharing a unique society. However, I have also been drawing on some secondary material like postcolonial theories and feminist theories, as these discourses have been useful in terms of expanding my knowledge about the themes, definitions and reflections. My major focus has been on Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Simone de Beauvoir, Elene Showalter, Ambedkar, Limbale, Mukherjee, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who are central figures in this respect. My reliance has been placed on books, journals, and online database as well as on conversations with Indian researchers and Dalit women whom I met in international conferences as well as questionnaires to important Dalit intellectuals. The Doctoral thesis of the eminent Professor Fewzia Bedjaoui

has also guided me and enlightened my path to deep understanding since it projects the Indian literature written by women in the postcolonial era. Moreover, I regards my work as being a continuity of one of the many branches explored in the different chapters of Prof. Bedjaoui's Doctoral thesis.

This research is limited in its targets when it narrows the concentration on five major points. The first is the limited focus in history which goes to the postcolonial period of the independent India; the second limitation focuses on society and goes to the lowest social rank, the 'Untouchables', and middle class rather than the higher categories of social class and the caste system. However, the third limitation is concerned by the restriction to the women writings rather than the male's ones. The fourth point limited my research to the comprehensive thematic analysis of the four novels whereas the fifth limited the exploration of the autobiographies of Bama Faustina and Kamble (written in Tamil Nadu and Marathi) to the English version only without dealing with the translation issues to make the target analysis go in parallel in all of the books. The choice of the novels for discussion is another major limitation in the study within time academic constraints.

The design of this thesis depends on the collection and analytical interpretation of the selected novels and is divided into five chapters. In chapter one entitled "*Dynamics of the Indian Context*", the main focus will be on the Indian society and postcolonial theories. I, also, explore how these issues are related to gender discrimination and the oppression of the Dalit community by the caste system. Questions like external factors, historical and cultural aspects, will also be discussed. Furthermore, Dalit and non-Dalit women's literature is viewed to question diverse issues notably modernity, feminine sensibility, caste, class and culture.

In chapter two, labeled “*Women and Literature in India*”, the gender issues and the literary genre adopted by the authors will be in focus. I will refer to the characteristics of the Indian Literature written by Dalit and non-Dalit women. In addition, there will be an attempt to show how social codes are linked to femininity and masculinity and to what extent caste, class, and gender and their strong connection to culture and religion are fundamental in the development of the literary genre and the writing creativity of the Indian women in particular.

The thematic chapter three, “*From Ideal to Real: Manju Kapur’s Difficult Daughters and Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things*”, I will attempt to analyse the way the Indian woman is represented from the view point of authors belonging to the upper castes through the analysis of their textual production in terms of the sociological and psychological de-construction and re-construction of the individual’s identity.

Chapter four, under the title of Bama Faustina’s “*Discrimination all around: Sangati and Baby Kamble’s The Prison we Broke*”, will discuss the themes of oppression, and alienation, the various daily issues raised in the stories of Dalit Indian women and the hierarchical distinctions between individuals and communities will be the focal point as well. Both the physical and psychological impacts of class and caste system will be of emphasis and comparison. The chapter will also pay attention to what the various characters long for, what possibilities they have and how they struggle towards independence from male and caste powers.

The last chapter, the fifth one, entitled “*Synthesis: Woman’s Identity*”, will obviously concern the discussion of the findings of the research and the literary comparison of the novels under study. The comparison will be threefold: the first comparative approach includes the autobiographies written by Dalit women. The second comparison concerns the two novels

written by the upper caste authors, whereas the third comparison will regard the similarities and differences between the four literary works under focus. A General Conclusion will be drawn to summarize the generated thoughts of the research tackled in the whole chapters and confirm or disprove the hypothesis. A future vision for eventual researches in the field of the Indian woman writings will be of interest to be seen.

Finally, Harvard Referencing Style is at the basis of all the resources cited in-text and reflected in the Bibliography of this thesis.

# **Chapter One**

## **Dynamics of the Indian Context**



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# Chapter One: Dynamics of the Indian Context

*"Literature is where I go to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and in the human spirit, where I hope to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart."*

Salman Rushdie, (26 February 1995) *The Hindu*

## 1.1. Introduction

As the present work is written in a society where India is known only through Bollywood movies and serial stories, I view that dealing with the Indian context is of great importance. This chapter acts as a prelude to the thesis by providing the authentic back ground about India and paves the way to the understanding of the following chapters in terms of representation, theories and interpretation.

India, the land of diversities, has preserved its rich cultural heritage in spite of numerous transformations in all the areas in the recent decades. The multiplicity in social life is reflected in its aspects as a multi-lingual, multi- religious, multi-social and multi-caste society. The vital feature of the Indian society, after its independence, is its progression and the economic development of both the nation and its citizens. Since it is necessary to know about the authors' background to decipher the contexts of the novels, this chapter concerns the Indian society, the Hindu religion, the caste system and Dalit issues.

## 1.2. The Indian Context

The nature of the Indian society has been represented in the thoughts of the theorists, travelers and researchers for long centuries. For instance, Abu Rayhan El Biruni<sup>1</sup> (973-1048) has depicted the Indian social features to bring knowledge about the way people live in the “Sind”<sup>2</sup> to the whole world, and so have done the British travelers. In the Indian society, every geographical region, religious rituals, caste affiliation, and occupation has its specific characteristics. Indian-ness implies oneness. The diversity in India lies in geographical variations, tribes and ethnic belongings, religions, castes, languages, cultural and sub cultural beliefs, and political ideologies. Progression and developments within the Indian society evolve measures to eliminate poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and equality among citizens in terms of caste class and gender.

The Indian society consists of group of people belonging to different castes, ethnicities, religions and socio-economic backgrounds. Each community has its own traditions, cultures and norms. The distribution of the Indian society, as any society, is on the basis of urban, rural and tribal classes. Indian people, through times, have obtained various characteristics, based on region, tradition, language, life style, beliefs and so forth. In spite of the diversity of aspects

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<sup>1</sup> Abu Rayhan El Biruni Is one of the greatest scholars of the medieval Islamic era known as the Golden Age. Most of his work was devoted to astronomy, mathematics, and related subjects like mathematical geography (Kennedy, p. 152). He was also well versed in physics, geography, geology, natural sciences and linguistics. He was also famous for speaking several languages and for being a historian chronologist. For his remarkable description of early eleventh-century-India, he is referred as the founder of Indology (the study of cultures, languages, history and literature of India).

<sup>2</sup> Sind is the Arabic old name given to India by the Muslem travelers and invaders. Now it is replaced by the word ‘Hind’. It is probably derived from ‘Hinduism’.

within the Indian society, a strong relation links the individuals belonging to different backgrounds. This type of linkage has been and still is the mysterious feature of the Indian unity.

Historically, the travelers for the discovery of India required careful documentation to support the truth of resources, people, cultures and geography through which the world would recognize India and the Indians. During their occupation of the Indian lands, known as the British Raj<sup>3</sup> (1858-1947), the English were producing a narrative which shows how much India is wealthy and worthy for colonization. They described its richness, cultures, myths, legends, histories and geographies. They brought to the world knowledge about the other part of the globe, the sub-continent. Yet, they remain selfish in the consumption of the wealth. They took India as their own property and its richness automatically becomes theirs. However, mysteries were to be discovered and studied to facilitate their exploration and exploitation. India was, for the British colonizer, an object that had to be put under lenses of studies and analysis which demanded the implementation of adequate methods and techniques.

The specificity of the Indian society lies in its multifaceted characteristics to the point that makes its details unique and hard to be put in comparison with the great civilizations of the world. The Indian features are difficult to be generalized. The structure of the society, the variety of cultures and their co-existence, the long lasting of the old myths and legends have made the comprehending of researchers stretch to more than one possible meaning. In this context, the diversity of the authors' social backgrounds and affiliation justifies the relevance of the literary comparative approach of their narratives. Their variation lies in their regional and linguistic particularity.

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<sup>3</sup> the British Raj (rāj, lit. "rule" in Hindi) —the British rule over India, this term is used synonymously for the region, the rule, and the period, from 1858 to 1947, of the British Empire on the Indian subcontinent.

In addition, the strict distinction between classes in the Indian society is far away from the possibility. According to different estimates, the upper classes include about one percent of the whole Indian population. The upper castes people are virtually the top executives, wealthy property owners, former royalty, and prosperous entrepreneurs. Just below them is a larger group of the upper middle class. The spectacular development of the Indian economy has contributed to the expansion as well as the prosperity of the above mentioned classes. At the bottom of the scale lies nearly the half of India's population. This proportion consists of the low-wage workers. The lowest social class, the outcaste, includes hundreds of millions of people in virtually extreme poverty and need. Though the Indian progressive prosperity in business and economy they- the outcaste- are still illiterate, houseless, unemployed, and unhealthy. The more the upper castes enjoy modern and best conditions of life in terms of health and wealth, the more the outcaste suffer the economic hardship, bitterness of want, and roughness of life experience.

Cities in India are getting larger and more fashionable with the growth of commerce and science, the development of educational institutions, the increasing opportunities for employment. Cities over India is for the upper classes whereas, the lower castes occupy the peripheries of the cities in general. India is also famous for its prosperous villages, where the main agricultural business takes place. Indian villages, like cities, take great benefits from the social or economic progression of India. While villagers enjoy specific and colourful cultural and religious rituals and festivals, they also relish the multiplicity of occupations at economic and social scales. Occupations of the people living in the villages typically classify from priests and cultivators to merchants, artisans, and laborers. The development of rural India is the result of the increasing size of the villagers who are involved in the wider world via travel, work, education, science and technology which increase production and quality in the economy of

India. In the peripheries of the villages live the outcastes groups of Indian population where they lack hospitals, schools, houses, and any other opportunity for employment.

The development of India and its industrial expansion is a continuous process. As a result of, there has been a progression of national income, regression of the conditions of poverty and differences in socio-economic classes. India is inhabited by people of different social characteristics; religions, values and customs, cultures, traditions, and languages. Apart from the apparent diversity of the Indian people, there is a sophisticated unity amongst them; it is specific for the Indian inhabitants. In terms of the Indian geographical unity, Mother India referring to India, is very large in size and has always referred to the great expansion of the lands stretching from the Himalayas in the North to the Cape Comorin in the South and from the Brahmaputra in the East to the Indus in the West. However, the Indian religious unity is featured by the co-existence of many religions. The various religions are practiced in temples, churches, mosques, or at home. Since India is a secular country, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, Parsi, Islam, and Zoroastrianism are in the hearts of their believers and contribute to the unity of the Indians' spiritual life. Religious principles of life after death, immortality of the soul, morality, charity and destiny are at the core of the whole bulk of religions.

When it comes to the cultural unity within India, the history of the country reveal the inner inclination of the Indians to philosophy, values, literature, art, traditions, norms, and customs. Respect, positive attitudes, harmless behavioural traits and courtesy among the Indian inhabitants have created harmony in the differences of the social institutions, such as the caste system and the joint family and strengthened the cultural unity in the Mother India.

Consequently, influences resulting out of the contact of religions are implicitly absorbed like the aspects of social hierarchy of the Hindu caste system.

Beside the cultural unity, traditional unity in terms of slavery, family kinship and marriages are also characteristics of the Indian society. The historical aspect of slavery, from the classical Greek and Roman methods and principles of slavery, refers to the slave as not born but becomes a slave in the aftermath of wars when his community is defeated. He is, then, kidnapped from his home to further lands to become unpaid labourer or servant. Yet, slavery is not perpetual condition. However, slaves in India are born slaves and remain slaves till death. The outcaste/slaves have no chance to become free under the rigidity of the Hindu caste system which has influenced the other religions in the Indian society. Fortunately, recently such behaviour is decreasing, mainly in urban areas.

The family is traditionally viewed to be the primary unit of the society in which the maintenance of kinship is crucial to empower the joint family. This joint family is commonly patriarchal and patrilineal. The oldest male member is at top of the household and the absolute administrator of the family properties. A sense of security and assistance in times of happiness and distresses and sorrows is the common quality of the members' connection and responsibilities.

Marriage, actually, is of many kinds such as, hypergamous, which joins a man belonging to high caste to a woman belonging to low caste, or hypogamous, linking man of low caste and woman of high caste. Marriage occurring regardless the differences in man's and woman's Varna belonging is called Pratiloma. Hence monogamous, polygamous and polyandrous marriages are based on how many spouses the male may marry. Examples of all kinds of marriages can be found within the Indian society.



Furthermore, the perception of the Indian political unity is unquestioned among the individuals of the nation. Tolerance and acceptance of the diversity in terms of religion, caste, ethnicity, race, language and so forth are at the basis of political success, force and unity. It has been found that all Indians are aware of the concept of political unity. The concept of 'Chakravarty' which rejects any discrimination refers to the political unification of India and that the division of occupations among the groups of people insures the political power. The political unity has been preserved in India for centuries by kings and rulers.

Yet, the scientific advancement in the fields of technology, communication and industry has reduced the efficiency of the caste separation of people in terms of their roles in the society. Nowadays education is no more specific to the Brahmans, Kshatriyas can perform other jobs than trade and business and the Vashiyas are found to do all activities with perfection rather than focussing on agriculture. Whereas, the Shudra enjoy their ability to fit as educators, business men, labourers and whatever is in accordance with their qualification and abilities, the outcaste section of people can legally go to schools and can engage in different employment opportunities. The political unity primarily means when individuals, irrespective of their status and backgrounds should be given equal rights and opportunities. Consequently, the prevalence of political unity has unified the individuals in terms of opportunities and empowerment though not to the needed extent of the social equality.

In India, both English and Hindi are the most widely spoken languages. Virtually, all India's intellectual elite speak English. An attempt in 1965 to make Hindi, India's widely spoken language, the official national language, to strengthen the Indian identity, failed when people from the South opposed to the idea of positioning the English language back according to the new law. As a compromise, the Indian policy promised to maintain English in the position of a

national language. According to their origins, a number of local languages are also Indian official languages of different states (22 official languages and 1500 dialects).

Socially, as in any society, in India gender distinctions are strictly pronounced. The difference between man's and woman's behavior is of great expectation. Conventional ideal gender roles designate the actions and behavior of both sexes in public and private spheres. When men enjoy full freedom and supremacy in the family, women are strictly limited to expand their roles beyond a wife, and a mother. Therefore, though the large diversity of the Indian ethnicity, cultures and languages, the underlying principles concerning male-female social roles unite their patriarchal understanding. Yet, Hinduism helps in consolidating their perception.

### **1.2.1. Hinduism: the Soul of India**

Some have called Hinduism the "soul of India." Archaeologists, arguably, have determined that highly developed civilizations flourished throughout the Indus Valley<sup>4</sup>

between 4000 and 1500 B.C.E. throughout various researches within the remained ruins of the ancient Indus Valley civilization, archaeologists have discovered many artifacts of Hinduism that were not found in any Vedic<sup>5</sup> civilizations.

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<sup>4</sup> The Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) was a Bronze Age civilization (3300–1300 BCE; mature period 2600–1900 BCE) extending from what today is northeast Afghanistan to Pakistan and northwest India (see map). Along with Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia it was one of three early civilizations of the Old World, and of the three the most widespread, covering an area of 1.25 million km<sup>2</sup>. It flourished in the basins of the Indus River, one of the major rivers of Asia, and the Ghaggar-Hakra River, which once coursed through northwest India and eastern Pakistan.

<sup>5</sup> The Vedic religion is practiced in India. Its name is derived from Veda which means knowledge or the action of knowing something. It was the religion of the Indo-Aryans of northern India. It is a historical predecessor of modern Hinduism, though significantly different from it. The Vedic liturgy is conserved in the mantra portion of the four Vedas,[6] which are compiled in Sanskrit. The religious practices centered on a clergy administering rites. This mode of worship is, largely unchanged, being practiced by a small fraction of conservative Śrautins who continue the tradition of oral recitation of hymns learned solely through the oral tradition.

In this sense, it is argued that when the people from central Asia came to live in India, their Vedic persuasion and beliefs were incorporated with the traditions and faith of indigenous Indians. Therefore, it is likely that the Indus Valley tradition and Vedic beliefs and cult brought together to form the modern Hinduism.

According to *Oxford English Dictionary* 12<sup>th</sup> ed. (2011), the word Religion is brought from the Latin word “religio” which consists of two words, viz., re (back) and ligare (to bring or bind). That which binds the soul back to God is religion. Religion shows the way for the attainment of God-realization. Hindus’ practical religion is Hinduism. It is the religion of the majority on the Indian lands. It is considered as the oldest of all living religions. Hinduism, unlike the other religions, has no prophet in its origin and no fixed date of birth.

Hinduism is also known by the names “Sanatana-Dharma” and “Vaidika-Dharma”. “Sanatana-Dharma” means eternal religion. Hinduism is thought to be as old as the world itself. Hinduism is considered as being at the origins of all religions. The Hindus think that all of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and other religions derive from Hinduism. Thus, it is believed to be the infallible eternal religion which makes its believers eternal too. “Vaidika-Dharma” means the religion of the Vedas. The Vedas are the foundational scriptures of Hinduism. Hinduism is considered to be exceptional because it has no single founder and no single book of theological law. Hinduism is a code of life and truth. It is based on the individual’s life experiences and the continuous spiritual practices. The additional meaning of experiences and practices in Hinduism is “behaviour”.

What is challenging the spiritual practices is that the Hindu devotee might worship Vishnu and Shiva in a public temple, while, without any difference in faith, another Hindu might

worship less common deities in privacy at home. This willingness to accept both Hindu devotees makes Hinduism not easy to be defined, but it does explain its tolerance.

### **1.2.2. History of the Patriarchal Conviction**

Simone De Beauvoir's formulation is "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (1987: 301). This leads to the meaning that the "human female" in any patriarchal society is not born so. She is forcefully conditioned to grow in the likeness of her mother who has submitted to trivial abuses, demands, social discrimination, social stigmas and social disorder. In the conflict of class she is the prime sufferer between personal aspirations and social demands she is forced emerge as looser.

The existent paradoxes only confuse her that she does not make an effort to rise above them to make a niche for her neither in the family nor in the society: woman is stumped to the extent that she fails to search for her assertiveness, identity and freedom; she is enmeshed in a society that satisfies male dominance. A woman is moulded into a dish befitting to be served to the domineering man.

Women are the essential part of human development. A nation can progress only with the active participation of women for its advancement. The position of woman universally or narrowing down within the social group, has been at variance from society to society and from time to time. One common truth found in almost all civilizations is that, women are certainly not been regarded as equivalent to man because they have been encouraged to be submissive and passive by not raising their voices against men and by accepting themselves as weak. their prominence depends mostly on the simple natal fact that they are substandard to men and so,

they are habitually constrained to them customarily consigned responsibilities. Mary Wollstonecraft in her magnanimous work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* stated:

*The puritan reformers, good religious fundamentalists, encouraged submissiveness in women, passivity, dependence on men, limited education, a general containment and restriction of the 'weaker vessel'. (1792: 31).*

A woman has become a prey to man's supremacy to his tyranny and subjugation. She is looked down like a beast and an entity for gratification. Moreover, many religious convictions of different civilizations have given consent to female's suppression to the males of that society. Simone de Beauvoir in her work *The Second Sex* understood the manner in which a woman recognizes herself as she opined:

*Woman herself recognizes that the world is masculine on the whole; those who fashioned it, ruled it, and still dominate it today are men. As for her, she does not consider herself responsible for it; it is understood that she is inferior and dependent. (1989: 609).*

Woman is bound within the norms that are laid by the society and subsequently leads a miserable life, as she is not born to either affluence or position. She has to bend to the terms and conditions dictated by the men within the family unit and in the society. A woman is born to be free, but she is unceasingly persecuted and cowed in patriarchal traditions. She has been the inferior sex, 'the second sex' and has to be conventional to the principles set by the males. The term "man" typically means the whole human race, while the term 'woman' is unvoiced. With the interference of man she is labelled as "other" but not his equivalent as Simone de Beauvoir says in *The Second Sex*: "Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an 'Other' " (1989: 295).

Woman is a subsequent being in the male dictated society and is not allowed to pleasure the same prominence with man. Her education and career do not redeem her from familial obligations. Her potentialities are at stake as she has to attend home and career. This disconcerting depiction of women is not new or exceptional to a particular nation but it is quandary to all women worldwide. As Ernestine Rose in her lecture – *Friends of Women's Suffrage*, in Boston pointed out:

*Humanity recognizes no sex; mind recognizes no sex; life and death, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery recognize no sex. Like man, woman comes involuntarily into existence; like him, she possesses physical and mental and moral powers ... like him she has to pay the penalty for disobeying nature's laws, and far greater penalties she has to suffer from ignorance ... like men she also enjoys or suffers with her country. Yet she is not recognized as his equal.*  
(1851: 1)

When compared to man, a woman lacks support from the society to define her status. The patriarchal system of that society determines it by considering social, cultural and biological factors. In *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* Martha C. Nussbaum points out:

*Women in much of the world lack support for fundamental functions of a human life. They are less well nourished than men, less healthy, more vulnerable to physical violence and sexual abuse. They are much less likely than men to be literate, and still less likely to have pre- professional or technical education.* (2000: 1)

Women are put down, disgraced, tortured, and tormented not only within but also outside of her family. She loses her identity as man expects her to depend on him. Whereas woman

carves to be adored, loved, identified, pampered in all the aspects of her life. As Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* opines:

*The supreme happiness of the woman in love is to be recognized by the loved man as a part of himself; when he says 'we', she is associated and identified with him, ... - even to excess – this delectable 'we'. (1989: 663)*

Since the dawn of civilization the biological difference has enabled the males to affirm their status as solitary and supreme subjects. The power is bestowed to male members of the family by the patriarchal system which attacked women in nook and corner of her life and eventually women became, inept, abstemious, unvoiced and inferior. Stephanie Hodgson-Wright in her work *Feminsim and Postfeminism* edited by Sarah Gamble remarked patriarchy as:

*The term 'patriarchal' refers to power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men. These power relations take on many forms, from the sexual division of labour and the labour and the social organisation of procreation to the internalised norms of femininity by which we live. Patriarchal power rests on social meaning given to biological sexual difference. (1998: 3)*

Woman is not privileged to enjoy the decorum and dignity of being as an individual person. She is considered as a part of man and family at large. When a woman gets married, she is transferred to her husband from her parents.

### **1.2.3. Myths and Feminine Construction**

The status of Women especially in an Indian society as portrayed by Manu in the *Manusmriti*, the law maker in Hindu Mythology, opines:

*Girls are supposed to be in the custody of their father when they are children, women must be under the custody of their husband when married and under the custody of her son as widows. In no circumstances is she allowed to assert herself independently. (5/151) (<http://nirmukta.com/2011/08/27/the-status-ofwomen-as-depicted-by-manu-in-the-manusmriti/>)*

A woman in India is considered as the personification of Shakti the goddess of power. Her faithfulness, her patients and her obedience are her admired characters. A married woman is supposed to be like an ideal wife, kind, affectionate, dutiful, reliant and submissive. In this twenty first century she should play multifarious roles as an excellent wife, exemplary home maker and good money maker. Her individuality is of little importance. In the words of Mary Ann Fergusson in her work *Images of Women in Literature*, opines: “In every age women have been seen primarily as mother, wife, mistress, and as sex object-their roles in relationship to men!” (1973: 4-5).

During every stage of woman’s development she is tuned with the ideas of subjugation, pride in patience, need to accept inferior status through the Hindu mythological models of Sati Savithri, Sita, Draupadi and Damayanthi. In the view of Nabaneeta Dev Sen, in *Modern Criticism*, the epic women are the “victims of male bonding: they are born to suffer the epic purpose. They are used as pawns to prepare the ground for the heroic deeds” (2002: 253). A Hindu woman is taught to be meek, kind, devoted as a wife, and unselfish, affectionate as a mother.



A traditional Hindu wife has to live up to the expectations personified in the famous “Sloka”<sup>6</sup>, Grihini, Sachivah, Sakhi, Mithah Priya-Shishyalalite Kala Vindu; meaning that a woman as a wife has various roles to play. She should be a good wife, an analyst, and also a play mate to the partner.

For centuries the Indian woman though considered as the embodiment of Shakti was made to idealize and inspire the archetype woman like Sita the silent sufferer. She is made to depend upon man – her father, her husband and her sons at every stage of her life. The role of woman has been full of contradictions so far as Indian customs and traditions are concerned. However this depressing representation did not exist in the pre-historic age as there was no gender based discrimination.

According to the historians like Altekar (1962), Indira (1955) and Kapadia (1958), in the Vedic period (2500-1500BC) women were treated with due respect and responsibilities in all matters including religious, economical social and political aspects. They were valued and termed as ‘Grihalakshmi’. In this period, women were free to pursue education, dancing and painting. Their participation is significant in Hindu rites like Yagas and upholding dharma.

Friedrich

Max Muller (1823-1900), the Anglo- German scholar, in his work *A History of Ancient Sanskrit*, (1859) quoted in Prasanna Sree, *Woman in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande: A Study*, opines:

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<sup>6</sup> sloka means that a woman should serve her husband as minister while counselling, by her looks she should be like the goddess Lakshmi, like the earth in forbearance, as a mother like feeding her child and in bed, she must be like a celestial beauty.

*... has the Vedic age ... upon all succeeding periods of Indian History ... so deeply have the religious and moral Ideas of that primitive era taken root in the mind of the Indian nation, so minutely has almost every private and public act of Indian life been regulated by old traditional precepts, that it is impossible to find the right point of view for judging Indian religion, morals and literature without a knowledge of the literary remains of the Vedic Age. (2003: 4)*

During the Vedic period women were allowed to choose their life partners through “Swayamvara” or even remain unmarried if they desired. They could even fight wars. They were treated on par with men. Women had freedom, when compared to their state of life in the advanced societies where struggle for existence is the order of the day. A.S. Altekar in his work, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization* claims that the status of women is one of the best gauges of the “spirit of a civilisation, its excellence and its limitations”. (1938: 9) He declares that the Vedic age was one in which women enjoyed singular freedom. However, this honour for women did not last long. There has been a gradual decline in the status of woman during the subsequent periods. The virtues and privileges enjoyed by women during the Vedic time were long forgotten. During the Atharvaveda period, the birth of a son is preferred to a daughter as he is treated as a blessing to the family. A daughter who was regarded as a trust of the father later turned out to become the property of her husband. The status and position of woman degraded and deteriorated with the passage of time.

Lack of education, child marriages and double standards of Hindu dogmas worsened the status of women in the society. Women were treated as commodities. Series of invasions by foreigners jeopardized the security of women’s life. Women were carried away as “commodities” they were taken as prisoners by the foreign invaders which led to lack of security

of women's life. Jauhar, Child Marriages, Sati, Purdah came into being, further impinging on the social liberties of women.

When India witnessed the advent of Buddhism, there was equal status between man and woman in the society, further it allowed women to be educated, to travel as missionaries, and even to remain unmarried. Buddha's compassion and respect for human beings served to raise the position of women. Child marriage, bride price, Sati, etc. were discarded. As Buddhism believed in the individual independence and right to ultimate liberation, women became truly unshackled. This was closely followed by Jainism.

According to Indians, after the entry of Islam into India women were prohibited from participating in public affairs or recreational pursuits. Women were confined to the family and for providing pleasure and relaxation to men. A feeling of insecurity pervaded in the minds of men and it has become their prime duty to safe guard their women. Women under the belief of men safeguarding them without their knowledge submitted themselves totally into the governance of man. In return women were expected to be devoted and submissive, docile and tolerant. James Mill sharply points out the predicament of Indian women, in the journal *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and its Dependences*:

*Nothing can exceed the habitual contempt which Hindus entertain for their women. Hardly are they ever mentioned in their laws or other books, but as wretches of the most base and vicious inclinations. On whose nature no virtuous or useful qualities can be engrafted. (1818: 53)*

During this period, with the advent of English missionaries India has observed the pathetic plight of women. The missionaries who were socially liberal had involved themselves by applying new social reforms. They were active in putting a stop to social evils like Sati,

infanticide, forced labour and slavery. The dawn of the British Rule has raised hope in the lives of many women. It was also at this time that India witnessed social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Rao who raised his voice against social evils like Sati, Purdah etc. Indira Kulashreta in *Indian Women Images and Reflections*, observes “After centuries of social stagnation, the Indian woman was now encouraged to come back to the main stream of social life and resume her rightful place” (1992: 5). The objective for women seemed to take a new leap forward by defining it as complete equality with men in all spheres, setting a new tone to the whole movement. The diversity of cultures in India plays a primordial role in the stability/instability and rigidity/flexibility of the conventional ideologies.

#### **1.2.4. The Indian Culture**

Since this thesis also focuses on culture, naturally, the main point to clarify is: What is culture? Many definitions are purposefully distinct and scholarly meaningful. According to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (2014) the word refers to “the beliefs, way of life, art, and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society”. The *Oxford English Dictionary* 12<sup>th</sup> ed. (2011), definition of culture is ”The distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, products, or way of life of a particular nation, society, people, or period” The common denominator of the definitions of the noun on question is the words “way of life”, “art” and “customs”. The focus of our analysis is indeed based on these concepts, too. While *Longman* briefly refers to the different groups as “particular society”, Oxford seems more precise. Consequently, the meaning is that different groups of people have different cultures.

To explore more the definitions and deep understanding of culture, one can turn to the most renowned anthropologists of the 20th century, Clifford Geertz, in his collection of essays, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, he says:

*“Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretative in search of meaning.”* (1973: 5).

This definition highlights that culture is conventional. Culture is undoubtedly man-made. It is related to his ecosystem and vulnerable to change over time and place. One of the main features of culture is its specificity for people and their space. Depending on this specificity and the phenomenon of evolution, its perception is changing and developing.

Katan also states that culture is “a shared mental model of the World” (2014: 26) and that the focus is on “what goes without being said” (2014: 26). Culture is the sum of ideas, beliefs, ways of life, customs, etc. that a certain group of people share at a certain time in a certain place. Cultural performance by Indian people affects the actual status of the Indian woman.

### **1.3. The Status of Women in India**

Historically speaking, the status of women in India has passed through fluctuant phases: the phase of subjugation and the times of liberation. The Indian women have been oppressed for ages and also have been traditionally considered as the deity in her home.

From the Vedic henceforward, her position has been defined by the interpreter of the religious norms. Hinduism, like other religions, is thought to be patriarchal. While women culturally play the role of goddesses, they are socially limited and oppressed by the males. From the text *Understanding Gender*, Kamala Bhasin states:

*Every woman in this country is dishonoured, degraded, with your hand on your heart, say, how can such a country be free? In this country, they say, there are goddesses without number, Tell me, have they loosened even a link of our chains? Have we gained anything of honour from the veil? Beneath the veil we have remained smothered, beneath the veil we burned... make the veil into a flag, unfurl it everywhere, we will bring humanity's rule to this land you will not be able to challenge the power of women now! We are resolved to take on even the form of Kali Mata. (2002: 83)*

To achieve the Marxist objective of equality between the two sexes in a religiously patriarchal society like India is a goal hailed with uncertainty and a path obscured by man-made tyrannical traditions. However, recently, women have got access to education and they could present their own lives through personal narratives.

A woman besides man in the society contributes to the development of the human civilization. However, unlike man, her efforts are denied, and she is classified the 'second' in nearly all societies and cultures over the times in this world. As Neena Arora points out in the text *Nayanatra Sahagal and Doris Lessing- Feministic Study in Compassion* "the place of woman in society has differed from culture to culture and from age to age, yet one fact common to almost all societies is that woman has never been considered the equal of man" (1991: 8)

No exception is given to Indian women. They have been suffering the patriarchal social doctrines for centuries, though there have been resilience and resistance to achieve their liberation from the shackles of man-tyranny, subjugation and oppression. Earlier movements led by Indian women were provided supports from men, as Savitribai Pule, Tarabai Shinde, B.G. Tilak, and M.K. Rande, whose concern about the nation destiny was to involve women in social, economic and political development rather than limiting her mental and physical efforts to the house chores and to attain the social equality between the two sexes. Women's emancipation went in parallel with women's literary tradition. The more women reveal their bitter subordination and oppression to the world, the more they become strong and courageous to assert their liberation. Their literary tradition is different from the men's in which woman's representation was at the margins, a postcolonial representation, serving the moral and physical satisfaction of the 'hero' man.

#### **1.4. Postcolonial Literature: For the Sake of Representation**

To define exactly what is meant by 'post-colonial literature' has never been a task without difficulties. It is because 'post-colonial' means various issues to different people, and because of the bulk of art and literary writings under its umbrella. In another sense, post-colonial literature is the writing which reflects, virtually all, the effects of colonialism upon both the colonizer and the colonized.

It is widely recognized that post-colonial writing is a definite response to empire; however, it does not necessarily include only the opposite thoughts. The postcolonial literary topics include the experiences lived not only during the colonization, but, as "post" implies, also the experiences lived after the independence.

In this context, post-colonial literature talks differently in terms of authors' origins, topics and purposes than the colonial literature. The 'colonial writing' is writing produced by authors who belong to the colonising power whose thoughts and opinions might praise or criticize the legacy of the colonizer. It encompasses also the products written before independence in the the own or occupied territories. Colonial writing also stretches from the 16th to the 20th centuries.

Obviously, the literatures in English include the literature written by the British authors. Yet, post-colonial literature is also one of the basic proportions that contributes to design the literatures in English. In this sense it seems far away from the possibility to separate the two literatures since the English language is itself embedded in the origins of Britishness.

English literatures were brought to the colonial territories via the empire will to introduce its culture and language as the primary objective of its missionary of civilization. Teaching English literature on the occupied lands was amongst the foremost subjects in the curriculum of the educational institutions. Conversely, English literature is now exported from the ex-colonies to the ex-empire. Yet, it is written by the hands of the previously colonized authors who are interested in representing the colonized not as the savage, mysterious, superstitious, and the feminine but as the rebellion, protestant and resistant to the colonizer's oppression, the exploitation, and marginalization. Dealing with the implication of that shift of English literature and the ideological representation, the Indian novelist Salman Rushdie writes his most influential book: *The Empire Writes back to the Centre* (1989). Theoreticians like Frantz Fanon and Edward Said were also instrumental in representing the "voiceless". Both of them devoted their efforts to unearth the reality of the hidden attitudes of the western literary expression, which insidiously projected the eastern and oriental life experiences in a sarcastic



way of representation. They reflected the colonized behavior of negation and dissolution towards the colonized 'self'. Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* states:

*neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition . Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations, which include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination , as well as form of knowledge affiliated with that domination.* (1993: 9)

Differences in origins, languages, cultures and geographies, in the whole European colonies over the globe, were retracted when it comes to revealing the truth to the world concerning the abominable conditions of the so called, by the supreme colonizer, the "indigenous" people.

However, the uniqueness of the artistic creativity remains specific to each geographical region albeit the "West vs rest" commonality in the postcolonial written outputs. Consequently, the issue of effacing local languages was among the foremost topics to be treated in the African writings as examined by writers such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1938) while the exploration of the issues in the local societies was in the works of Wole Soyinka (1934). Nevertheless, in the Indian subcontinent literature writings attempted to combine the study of its old-aged Sanskrit literary bulk to the newly adopted literature in the imported language of the English speakers (Iyengar, 1945). In South America, writers such as Gabriel Màrquez (1927-2014) used the Magical Realism<sup>7</sup> to exhibit his new forms of writing such as magical realism in order to adopt originality in telling his stories.

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<sup>7</sup> The term "magic realism" has been in use for over 60 years, it was coined by the German art critic Franz Roh (1890-1965) in 1925 to describe a tendency in German painting.. The magic realist painters looked at everyday

Nevertheless, globalization is narrowing the gap of the binaries in front of the phenomenon of migration, business, communication, technology and the easy access to information. The postcolonial writer nowadays is either an immigrant dealing with his original cultures and social odds or local representing the daily experiences of life. Yet, for a wider audience and fame, publishing the literary work in the western countries. For instance, when Michael Ondaatje and Rohinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Bharati Mukherjee to name few, gain their fame out of India by talking about their native cultures and society, like Kiran Desai, Amitav Ghosh and others, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur as well as Bama Faustina Faustina and Baby Kamble gain prominence in the literary world in their homelands. The common denominator that relates the postcolonial writers is their standing against the narratives of the colonized which shadowed the truth about their identity.

When Arundhati Roy and Manju Kapur enjoy facilities through their linguistic tool of writing; English language, translation, for further access, is Bama Faustina's and Baby Kamble's tool to raise the voice of the unheard in India and over the world. Thus, enduring sustainable 'orientalist' ideologies and the struggle to move from the margin to the center are still at the core of the postcolonial professional as well as social lives. According to Nirmala Menon. (2010), in fact a number of native texts, particularly from the Indian subcontinent have not received enough attention and need to be taken into consideration. Dalit women's writing in their local languages is a rejection of the colonized language as the only means of literary expression in India and a proof of a will to a self-knowledge and self-realization.

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objects and life and expose that there were different ways of perceiving everyday objects. They make it that normal, plausible events co-exist authentically on the same level as supernatural, extraordinary and even fantastic events.

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin state that post-colonial theory is constructed upon a discussion of issues like:

*migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe ... and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. (1995: 2)*

The world's movements for people's liberation in the middle of the twentieth century appealed for a necessary revision of the literary works and the reinterpretation of the worldview. Hence, recently the postmodern movement claims a new vision in the artistic and literary streams.

#### **1.4.1. Postcolonialism and Postmodernism**

Literature and art during the period of the post-Second World War took certain characteristics beyond the modernist limit. Postmodernism is the term used to refer to the non-realist and non-traditional literature and art. The term is also used to refer to the general human condition in the aftermath of the wars of the 1950s.

A common ground shared by the postmodern theory and the postcolonial theory is the primary concern about the differences. Modernity requires activity from the postcolonial societies to be optimistic and to work for progression by their insistence for moving from the margins to the center to realize their identity and recognition in the postmodern era.

In this context, it is thought that the postcolonial artistic works should not be oriented towards refusal and opposition, but towards acceptance and competition with Western

ideologies. Postcolonialists, then to a certain extent, should try to take advantage from the thematic and structural level literary tradition of the westerners and learn from their experiences.

A strong shared concern with the notion of marginalization, thus, relates postmodernism to postcolonialism. In this sense, Salman Rushdie in Shame wrote/

*History is natural selection. Mutant versions of the past struggle for dominance; new species of fact arise, and old, saurian truths go to the wall, blindfolded and smoking last cigarettes. Only the mutations of the strong survive. The weak, the anonymous, the defeated leave few marks. ... History loves only those who dominate her. It is a relationship of mutual enslavement." And who writes history ? Those who have the power to write it down, to shape it.... (1983: 98)*

As a result, the high and low cultural tradition virtually disappears in the postmodern discourse. To consider the 'self' assertion, the once- marginalized and alienated is no more, thanks to postmodern theory, silenced. According to Ihab Hassan, the postmodern text, oral or written, requires performance and participation from everybody. The postmodern discourse is actually featured by the multiplicity of voices and the annihilation of differences. The postmodern theory is based on its rejection of basic spirituality and its focus on materialism. Meanwhile, feminist critiques rely on multiple voices to join the postcolonialist.

Postcolonialism emerged as a distinct category in the year 1970 and opened avenues for literary critics to discuss the marked impact of colonialization on culture. Postcolonialism in the words of G. Rai is "an enterprise which seeks emancipation from all types of subjugation defined in terms of gender, race and class" (2005: 19). It deals with the problems like migration, slavery, oppression, discrimination against class, gender and caste. Many critics are of the opinion that

literature of Dalit people should also be considered as postcolonial literature. It mainly concerns culture but pertinent to other areas as well. Postcolonial writers generally focus on and discuss themes like migration, identity crisis, alienation and rootlessness. They analyse these problems with a historian's eye. Migrants, subalterns and minorities who represent alienation and loss of identity become symbolic representatives in postcolonial literary studies.

Post-colonialism rose along with Postmodernism. Postmodernism refers to literature that has been produced in the mid-fifties and after, mainly in America and Britain. Post modernism deals with profound changes in society and culture. Postmodernist literature having emerged in the years after World War II is to be considered as a "new kind of polymath" (Bedjaoui, 2009: 31). Post-war literature is truly postmodern because it indicates a new sensibility thus departing from modernism. It must be admitted that there are several key issues which emerge from the great diversity of societies and civilizations around the world.

A writer of Postmodernism writes in a simple and lucid style thus making it easily comprehensible but it is difficult to find significance and value in his writings. By adopting free style and common man's language they make literature more meaningful and less confusing in their effort to cater to postmodern readers. Postmodern writers live in a world where cultures are overlapped so they not only question the orthodoxy of modern living but also mock at the conventional lifestyle of modernism.

Indian women writers have made their presence felt in the Indian society, culture, politics, and economy. Writing about common people, minority experience, identity, spiritualism, racism, East-West relations, feminism, sexuality, and the Indian diaspora, Indian women writers have carved a niche in the world of English/Indian literature. They are astute observer of human behaviour, writing with elegance, perception, clarity, and humour. Some of

these writers are academics, teaching in Indian schools, colleges and universities. They have produced anthologies, poems, novels, short stories, plays and essays.

Indian/Dalit women writing broke new ground from the 1970s on. One consequence of this has been a proliferation of women writers. In large Indian cities, one can easily find their books. Their readership has widened, with many women reading novels and short stories in order to learn about their own communities. Indian, Dalit and non- Dalit, women authors write about experiences of life, which become reading materials for thousands of Indians. The proliferation of book clubs headed by women, publishing houses, and the networking of women writers has made their writings popular. Their themes are sometimes controversial, including gender problems in family, cultural alienation, prostitution, and incest.

#### **1.4.2. Post-Colonialism and Feminism**

Feminist discourse and post-colonial theory are thought to have common characteristics. Hence, the two fields have long been complementary. Both discourses are almost political and deal with the struggle against the absolute domination of the “other”. Moreover, both reject the patriarchal ideology and the oppressive masculine authority.

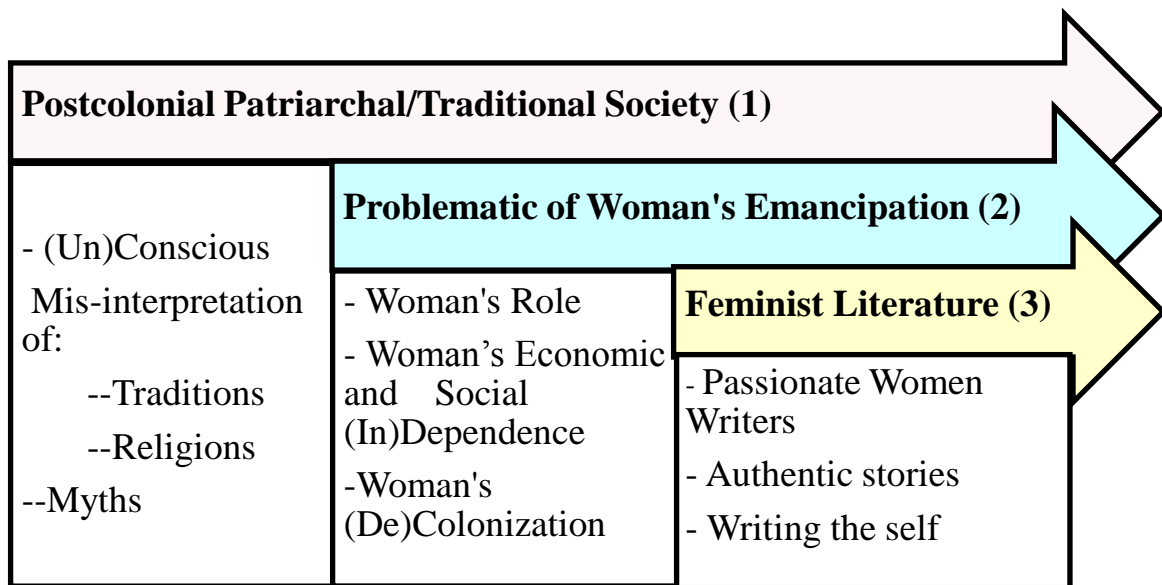
Imperialism is basically phallogocentric based on the idea of subjugation. Both the woman and colonized subject are oppressed under the umbrella of patriarchy and imperialism. Basically, post-colonialism consists of rejecting colonialist attitudes in the political and economic sense while feminist theorists reject colonialism of the dominant male. In this sense, Professor Bedjaoui, in her doctoral thesis, states:

*Post-colonial feminism could be perceived as a tentative to throw light on the concerns of the women on both sides, as an investigation into the ways in which the super masculine ideal affected the status of both native and European women and as an examination of textual representation of women during this particular time. (2005: 68)*

Similarly, women and 'natives' are minority groups in the society. They are reduced to unfair stereotypes, like; virgin, whore, savage, heathen, and denied their identity and human rights. In the last decades, post-colonial studies have showed concern about the issue of gender. The analysis highlights to what extent colonialism influences the lives of the female in the colonized society. Actually, women's discrimination and oppression is double folded; first because their position as colonized people, then for being a women.

Both feminist and post-colonial literatures oppose the social hierarchies of gender, class, and race, since, globally, women are discriminated and oppressed by men on the basis of natural sexual difference. "Both literatures explore women's sexualized and realized otherness by locating their marginality and oppression with a three-tiered structure of discrimination maintained by colonial and neo-colonial indigenous patriarchies" (Code, 2003: P. 395)

Generally, women in virtually all societies have been relegated to the position of "Other", marginalized. As a result, women have to construct a language of their own as a vehicle through which they reveal their pains and suffering.



**Figure 1 Elements of Postcolonial Feminist Literature (Own)\***

*\*Postcolonial feminist literature has always dealt with issues of misinterpretation of traditions and religions. At the centre of this dilemma is the role of woman and her (in) dependence, economically and socially.*

*(1) The patriarchal social organization of India is built upon a system of sex – role stereotyping and oppressing of woman from times before colonialism. The misinterpretation of religions and traditions has reinforced patriarchy which has tried to debase, alienate and repress women through the images, conventionally, represented in the cultural norms.*



*(2) Passionate women writers raise the questions about the role of woman in contemporary postcolonial India. The women writers also ask fundamental questions that shake the ideological beliefs of man's patriarchal primordial role in a traditional society. The existence of an alternative reality is at the core of their problematic either. The women writers question whether the role of a woman living under oppressive patriarchal systems should be restricted only to their roles as wives and mothers. In such a world, woman's role is limited to reproduction regardless of her own desires and needs.*

*(3) The experience of the female characters is shared with the readers. Through the authentic stories, the passionate women writers explore the multiplicity of themes which focus on the characters' struggle to outgrow traditionally inherited cultural values.*

*To sum up, the more traditional a society is, the more problematic is the question of women's emancipation and therefore, the more passionate its women writers are.*

Colonized people and women are powerless, exploited in the course of their lives. Feminist and post-colonial discourses are built upon the ideology of resistance and resilience to assert a recognized and acknowledged identity of their own rather than accepting the dissolution of their past and culture. Moreover, post colonialism and Feminism are opposed to Marxism since the Marxism theory is based on the thought that the ruling class constructs and circulates ideas which secure its power for the absolute control over the working class. This ideology for Postcolonial and feminist theorists is Europe and man. It is, in fact, creating a distinct view of identity theory.

### 1.4.3. Identity and Context

Concepts of identity are rather accumulations of cultural norms which underline socio-cultural and political changes. There is no universal post-colonial identity. In post-colonial literature the diversity and plurality of men and women experiences seem to be particularly heightened by the interrelation between gender, social life and religion. In the context of women writing postcolonial identity, Prof. F.Bedjaoui opines in her article *Woman Gender and Identity in Indian Women Writings, Dialogue A Journal Devoted to Literary Appreciation*:

*If women narratives are purely fictions, they include stories set by the narratives within which their lives are intertwined. Indian women's voices seem still very much present in post-colonial literature, certainly more audible than ever. They need to claim their right to exist and have to clear a psychic space for themselves. They can afford to be not only parodic but playful and highly sophisticated as well. (2012: 40)*

The literature of post-colonialism, then, tends to celebrate ethnicity and the formation of a new shaped character, notably in narratives of diaspora. Increasingly, post-colonial narratives of identity addressed questions about the traditional socio-cultural values and the representation of women, whose experiences of the intersection of colonial and patriarchal discourses had been associated with images of dehumanisation, sexual perversity and racial contamination . The quest for Indian women writing in English has emerged as a recurrent theme, i.e. to portray Indian woman differently from the way she has been perceived within patriarchal discourse outside the limited casteist socio-religious principles and to crystallize for herself a sense of who she is.

## **1.5. The Caste System: Breathing Discrimination**

The caste system is a rigid social system in which a basic social hierarchy is maintained generation after generation on the account of people's occupation, food and lifestyle. It allows almost a very slight mobility out of the family in which the Indian individual is born. The term is often applied to the hierarchical divisions constructed from the religious beliefs and established by the Hindus people on the Indian subcontinent. Originally, the word caste was first used by the 16th-century Portuguese traders. It is derived from the Portuguese *casta*, denoting family strain, breed, or race. The Sanskrit word, denoting the same meaning, is *jati*. The Sanskrit term *Varna* means a group of *jatis*, or the system of caste.

The old-aged caste system of India was constructed more than 3000 years ago. The Aryan priests who are thought to be the nomadic groups migrating from the north, according to the ancient sacred literature of India, divided the entire population into groups for the well development of their society into a basic caste system. Their purpose was to maintain social order and facilitate control over the whole population. Earlier between 200BC and AD100, the *Manu Smriti*, or Law of Manu, was written. In it the Aryan priests and created the four hereditary laws of division in their society to ensure stability and tranquility. The Aryans defined the individual's specific jobs in building a highly developed society, and then assigned groups of people to them. Social mobility was strictly forbidden and individuals born into any of the castes should work, marry, eat, and die within that group. The legend behind the caste rigidity favored its long lasting life.

The Hindu Brahma, views himself as the creator of the universe, is the supreme deity worshiped by the Hindus. According to the Rigveda<sup>8</sup> texts, the stratification of the Indian society was based on Brahma's divine manifestation. Up to down, Brahmins, the priests and teachers, were cast from his mouth, Kshatriyas, the rulers and warriors, from his arms, Vashiyas, the merchants and traders from his thighs, lastly, Shudra, the workers and peasants were caste from his feet. Subsequently, each group has a specific occupation a diet, and lifestyle. Other justification for the social division is the biological inheritance of qualities; whether it be of intelligence, wisdom or any other traits.

Despite the fact that the caste system emerged many centuries ago from Hinduism. Today, its traditions of discrimination and classification of human beings have influenced all religions in South Asia. Muslims, Christians, and even Sikhs which, at the beginning, and justified their cessation from Hinduism by rejecting the caste system 400 years ago, have their own hierarchical ranking that defines which group is positioned “higher” or “lower” in society. (Bronger 1996: 110) The caste system can, arguably, be compared to the feudal estate system of Medieval Europe. However, the strict rigidity of the caste system is incomparable. Conversely, changes started to act upon the caste system by the twentieth century. Its level of its rigidity is regressing under the forces of globalization and modernization.

### **1.5.1. Concept and Origins of the Caste System**

The caste system, called also the “Varna” system, includes four castes. Each caste consists of a group of people selected according to their purity, jobs, food, rituals, and habits

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<sup>8</sup> The Vedas are considered as religious book which constitutes a collection of hymns and other ancient texts of religious beliefs written in the sub-continent-India between about 1500 and 1000 BCE. It also contains fundamental constituents such as liturgical material, mythological accounts, ancient poems, prayers, and sacred formulas specific to the Vedic/Hindu religion.

and so on. In a the descending order (see appendix 3.1). the highest caste people are the Priests (Brahmins); they are the holders of knowledge and their duty is to teach people. The second caste belongs to the Warriors (Kshatriyas); their concern is in military affairs and the defense. The third caste is dominated by the Merchants (Vaishyas); all they have to achieve in their lives is the welfare of trade and the financial issues. However, the Workers/Servants (Shudras) are ranked at the bottom of the caste. They are viewed as the slaves of the above three castes.

The above mentioned castes do not include all the members of the Indian society. Nearly 20 per cent of the population remains not classified in the caste system by the Hindu religion, which preaches that they are born ‘polluted’ because of their “karma”. Thus, they are “Untouchable” and do not deserve to belong to the Hindu caste. The Hindu “dharma”, in its turn, condemns the Dalit to live as a slave all his/her lifelong. Accordingly, the dirtiest occupations like cleaning latrines, removing waste and dead animals, tanning and all other jobs related to pollution, dirt and disgust, are the Untouchables’/Dalits’ occupations in the Indian milieu.

According to Hinduism, karma and dharma which denote successively deeds and moral obligations are the forefront beliefs. Ahuja state their connotations as follows:

*The idea of karma teaches a Hindu that he is born into a particular social group (caste/family) because of his deeds he has performed in his previous life. The idea of dharma tells him that if he follows good deeds in the present birth, he will be born in a high social group in the next birth. (2004: 5)*

In this sense, the way Hindus worship Gods and Godesses is based on their Karma and Dharma respecting with absolute respect to the predicted occupation and class in the caste. Thus, the Untouchable/Dalit generations would never purify themselves.

### **1.5.2. Construction of the Caste System**

The Indian society has been promoting inequality from times immemorial. Its structure is marked by graded inequality, based on Varna, caste and untouchability. Indian economic inequalities also are due to these piles of castes variations. The power of ‘caste’ cannot be fully grasped without asociological discussion of the relation between Caste and Varna. The term ‘Varna’ was initially used in the Rig-Veda to distinguish between the Aryans and the Dasyus.

The word caste system comes from the Portuguese word “Castas” and the Portuguese got it from the Greek word ‘Castus’ which means race or a kind, breed; “Homem de boa casta” is “a man of good family”. The caste system is not merely division of labour. It is also a division of labourers. Time passes by, generations come and go, new age is coming, things go on changing, old ideals perish, new ideals take their place, old values decline, new values prosper. However, from ancient age up to the recent age one thing that remains perilous is the caste. The Indian Caste System is historically one of the main dimensions where people in India are socially differentiated through class, religion, region, tribe, gender, and language.

K.G.Sankarapillain his article *Voice of Oppressed Dalit Literature* states that “historically the caste system is a socio-cultural menace of Hinduism. But it is followed by Muslims, Sikhs and Christians in the country” (2008: 1). The Indian Caste System is considered a closed system of stratification, which means that a person’s social status is obligated to which caste they he was born into.

The origin of the caste system is in “Hinduism”, which is always seen through the prism of a caste. The religious form is simply a division of society in which there are four castes, which affects the whole Indian society that is arranged in a hierarchical order. The myth of the origin

of the man founded in the “Pusrusha Sukta” illustrates the Hindu tendency to divide mankind into vertical division: the Brahman was His mouth, The Kshatriya was His arms, and His thigh became the Vishay, from feet produced the Shudral (see appendix, 2.4). The division is done according to the Guna (quality) and Karma (kind of work), which determined the caste of a man. This is supported by Lord Krishna in the ‘Gita‘ who advocates that “the four castes were emanated by Him as well as, He is the author of them and thus one needs to know Him” (Rig Veda X 90).

The Indian caste society gradually came to be established in between 500 BC- 500 AD periods. It is during this period that many caste laws and restrictions were made for the Shudras to keep them permanently away from the so-called dwija society and degrade them to the position of virtual slaves without rights of citizenship. The rules of caste were mostly made by the Brahmans with the active support of the orthodox Kshatriya kings. Thus, the caste scheme proved to be a very effective instrument of domination and exploitation. As a result, a huge number of people remained ignorant and submissive. Moreover, the system further weakened them by increasing divisions and disunion among them.

Pushyamitra was a Brahman and the commander-in-chief of the last Mauryan king Bruhadatra, who was a Shudra by caste. Pushyamitra is understood to have killed Bruhadatra and established Brahman rule which continued till AD 800. Manu codified all inhuman and unethical laws against the Shudras in the name of religion. His work was later known as the Manushastra or Manusmriti. It is with the Manusmriti that the full elaboration of the caste hierarchy can be seen. This was the beginning of Brahmanism. According to Dr. Gokhale, *History of India:*

*The Indian terms used to describe the caste system as Varna and Jati, complexion of birth. The former refers to racial difference and the latter means 'birth' and 'decent'. It was to mark of the racial difference between Aryan and non-Aryans that the terms Arya- Varna and Das- Varna first came into use, and they are used as such in the Rig-Veda...there came about the conquerors the non-Aryans the conquered and racially the former were of fair complexion whereas the latter were dark (1986: 86).*

Henceforthward, racial segregation became at the basic of religious practices and racial discourses nourish ideologies providing power to the dominant and creating codes for human relationship and communication to present days.

### **1.5.3. Untouchability in India**

The caste system is the highest considered feature of the whole Indian society. It is rooted many centuries ago from the codes of Hinduism. The caste system marks its existence among various religions in South Asia. People in South Asia profess different religions: Christianity, Sikhs, Buddhism, and Islam. However, all of these religions have not escaped the social hierarchical classification of their believers. Though all of them preach equality among human beings whatever their race or skin color may differ, mainly Islam. These conventional traditions in religions “have their own hierarchical ranking that defines which group is positioned ‘higher’ or ‘lower’ in society” (Bronger1996: 110).

The Hindu caste system works with codes similar, to some extent, the system that prevailed in the Medieval Europe where nobles were at the top of society followed by the clerics in the second class whereas the peasants occupied the lowest rank in society. However, and without contest, the Indian caste system remains the most rigid and strict in codes. Ahuja (2004:



35), 'caste' is a "closed-rank social group" because each of its ranks is firmly closed to any mobility of its members. The Hindu caste system has classified the Indians in terms of their occupations, the type of food and diet, the clothes they wear, and their spiritual rituals. It is at the basis of the pure race and the obligation of its preservation as a duty towards the human kind in India. Thus, marriages between people belonging to different caste are illicit and should be blindly obeyed. Consequently, a huge difference in all fields of life remains between the upper caste group of people and the lower caste. The latter is the most underprivileged in society but better considered than those Indians who have not been classified at all. They are considered as the polluted people; the 'Untouchable', they have no right to consider themselves equal to those belonging to the Hindu caste system.

### **1.6. Dalit: A Perpetual Discrimination**

The term Dalit means people coerced from the groups. The Schedule Caste group refers to one's caste rather than class; it applies to members of those menial castes who are born with the stigma of "untouchability" because of the extreme contamination and pollution connected with their traditional occupations.

The term was first used by Jyoti Raj Phule (1827-1890), a backward class social reformer, to describe the 'Untouchables' and 'outcastes' of India as the oppressed and 'broken victims' of the Hindu society. The term is a constant reminder of their age-old oppression and deprivation. According to Moleworth's Marathi-English Dictionary (1975), the word 'Dalit' means 'broken' or reduced to pieces generally.

The Dalits were designated with a variety of nomenclature such as 'Ashprush' (Untouchable), 'Harijans' (Children of God) 'Dalits', (Broken People), often classed as

depressed classes, servile classes, weaker sections, Panchamas, Atisudras, Avarnas, Anthyajas and scheduled castes. The Dalits (Chandalas), who built the history and culture of Indian, were pushed out of their villages as 'Untouchables'. Their shadow was a source of sin, as designated by the Brahmins, and was implemented by the Guptas.

The term 'Dalit' came into prominence in 1972, when a group of young Marathi writers-activists founded an organization called Dalit Panthers. The name expressed their feelings of kinship and solidarity with Black Panthers who were engaged in a rebellious struggle for African-American civil rights in America.

Dalits are the part and parcel of the society. But right from ancient period, they have been subjugated under the pretext of subordinate, and treated as beasts in Hindu society. Before Aryan invasion to India, it is presumed that there was no division in the name of caste among aboriginals and the aboriginal's main religious belief was to worship nature and the earth as goddess. In the process of Sanskritization they become separated socially from each other, their original culture, customs, beliefs and tradition, remained as Hindus. Srinivas opines in *A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization*: "The process by which a low Hindu or tribal or other group changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of high, and frequently, the twice-born caste" (1956: 15).

To illustrate more, the Brahmin/priest is constantly and dogmatically viewed as pure and performs exceptionally noble occupations like teaching and ruling. In contrast, manual scavenging, disposing dead animals, and leather making are attributed to the polluted population. Since the jobs allocated to the Dalit to perform are impure, then, Dalits are polluted physically and spiritually.

For the higher caste members, to be contaminated by the Dalits is not confined to direct contact with them, but even items they touch and their shadow is contaminating. For this reason, they are not allowed to drink water from the wells, to enter the temples, to walk beside any upper caste member.

The caste system laws has labeled the Dalits as wrongdoers and suspects every negative upon their actions. They were sometimes condemned and beaten up in spite of their innocence. Sharan Kumar Limbal recalls the atrocities his community experience by the high caste. He recounts:

*Whenever an animal in the village died, the villagers grew annoyed. They consider the Maharwada responsible for it. They tied us to a pole and beat us like animals. They accused us for having poisoned the animal. Our women and children cried and shrieked. All the men in the Maharwada were very badly beaten. The village then ostracized the Maharwada for a few days. We wouldn't get any work on the farms. We were denied any provision at the shops though we had the money and were ready to pay. We had reached a dead end. Such humiliation was agonizing.(1984: 78)*

The upper caste condemns the Dalits for the least negative event without any investigation for the truth. Dalits are defenseless in the Hindu society.

Consequently, their discrimination and alienation at schools and work places are justified. Children of the Untouchables are at the back of the classroom far from the teacher and the children of the higher caste for fear of pollution. This state of humiliation brings but insult, rape, beating and distortion.

When it comes to marriage, the caste impose endogamous marital union to prevent hybridity and conserve the pure race. The ancient Hindu law of Manu has dictated the horrific consequences of the catastrophe of marrying a higher caste woman to a lower man and the destiny of their offspring, 'Chandalas':

*The dwellings of the Chandalas[...] shall be outside the village [...] and their wealth shall be dogs and donkeys. Their dress shall be the garments of the dead, they shall eat their food from broken dishes, black iron shall be their ornaments, and they must always wander from place to place. A man who fulfils a religious duty shall not seek intercourse with them; their transactions shall be among themselves and their marriages with their equals (Manu in Moffat 1979, quoted in Kohlweg 1995: 41).*

Manu perpetually condemns the Untouchables to be rejected by the society. They had to drink mucky water in which the high castes had washed their clothes, buffaloes, and shit. Restriction to use natural resources is the cruelest kind of discrimination one hardly witnessed in the world. But unfortunately, Dalits had to face it. Limbale recalls the incident:

*After school we used to go to the river sit on the sands to eat. Then we went swimming. The high-caste villagers filled their water pots and their women washed their clothes upstream. Downstream the kumbies and shepherds collected water in their vessels and carried them off. They also washed their clothes and bathed. Those who looked after the grazing cattle washed their buffaloes and bathed themselves. The water at the lowest end was meant for us." (1984: 7)*

Urmila Pawar's autobiography whips us back to reality and compels the reader to see the exhausting and agonizing side of that labour. Pawar opens her narrative with the description

of the women of her village who risked their lives every day as they used to walk along a tortuous mountain path in order to sell their goods at a far-off market. Pawar writes:

*Women from our village travelled to the market at Ratnagiri to sell various things. ....Between our village and Ratnagiri the road was difficult to negotiate as it wound up and down the hills. It was quite an exhausting trip....Women were compelled to make the journey to the market for they had to sell their wares for survival: bundles of firewood or rice bags or grass or whatever merchandize, covered with leaves or woolen blankets. With their emaciated bodies covered in rags, bony stick-like legs, bare feet, pale, lifeless faces dripping either with sweat or rain, sunken stomachs, palms thickened with work, and feet with huge crevices like a patch freshly tilled, they looked like cadavers... (2003: 1-2)*

The tragic part is that the caste system is sanctioned by religious writings and religion itself banishes off low castes out of its socio-religious regime. Its religious sanction has gripped the consciousness of the people that does not allow any disorder in the hierarchal restrictions. It clearly implies that the religious sanction made the system sacred and it drastically affected the conscience of the people that they cast off low castes from the socio-religious mingling and entrapped them in the notion of ‘purity’ and ‘pollution’.

Gandhi<sup>9</sup> thought the caste system was a wonderful system of organisation and he believed that Untouchability was a “mere distortion” of Hinduism which could “gradually be removed through social reform and education” (Abraham and Misrahi-Barak 6), but Ambedkar knew that it was not only untouchability that was the problem, but the whole caste system itself.

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<sup>9</sup> Mahatma Gandhi (October 2, 1869 to January 30, 1948) was the primary leader of India’s independence movement and also the architect of a form of non-violent civil disobedience that would influence the world. Until Gandhi was assassinated in 1948, his life and teachings inspired activists including Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela.

He believed that it was not just the prejudice or the degrading concept of “pollution” and untouchability, but caste itself that had to be dismantled as a whole. The practice of untouchability, although it was cruel, was only “the performative, ritualistic end of the practice of caste.

### **1.6.1. Dalit Consciousness**

Dalits have been systematically neglected and ostracized in the Indian society for ages. Dalits still suffer the stigma of untouchability, even after caste discrimination has been declared an offence under the law. They are socially frail, economically needy and politically powerless. According to Alok Mukherjee translator of Limbal’s *Towards the Aesthetics of Dalit Literature* opines:

*Dalits are landless frame-workers; they have no means of their own to produce goods or engage in business. Until they are able to stand on their own feet, they will be compelled to take up dirty jobs. Dalits are not just Untouchable, they are poor too. Their untouchability must end, and their poverty along with it. Dalit slavery will not end with the destruction of untouchability- for this class struggle is important. (2014: 78).*

In India Dalits are considered the most stratified; they are socio-culturally placed in a marginal position. For centuries Dalits are questioning for their rights as a human being. Dalit movement varied from leader to leader, place to place and time to time. “Dalit consciousness” came to the fore in different forms and shades as collective agitations which led to Dalit

movements. These movements have led to some alleviation in the plight of the Dalits and resulted in breaking of various social barriers.

The first challenge to the caste system came from a band of rationalists known as “Lokayata” which literally means restricted to the world of common experience or “Charvakas” which came to be established in the sixth century BC. Headed by the famous materialist philosopher Charvaka, the movement was a protest against the slave system, caste exploitation and the existence of God. ‘Lokayata‘ propagated materialistic philosophy as opposed to the idealism of the Upanishads and the Vedas. They preached the abolition of slavery, rational behaviour and beliefs rejecting all forms of sacrifices, rituals and ceremonies. Thus, the Lokayata emerged as a progressive and optimistic philosophy supporting the cause of the oppressed people. During the sixth century BC, both Jainism and Buddhism set for themselves the task of questioning Brahmanic orthodoxy.

The religious scriptures were scrutinized to interrogate the truth. Buddha was the first social revolutionary who challenged Vedanta philosophy and rejected the authority of the Vedas. His simple way of preaching righteousness of conduct over social tyranny, slavery, inequality etc. made his philosophy understandable to the common people. Buddha did not prevent any caste or class from becoming his followers.

### **1.6.2. Dalit Movements for Self-Respect**

Mahatma Phule fought against the oppression of the upper castes. He was the first major social reformer that modern India has produced. He fought for the liberation of women, removal of Untouchability and upliftment of oppressed castes. He felt illiteracy of Dalit men and women was mainly responsible for the dominance of the upper castes. Jyothi Rao Phule spread his

movement of abolition of caste ‘Satya SodhakaSamaj’ through this he wants to have direct contact with people; Phule toured the countryside like missionary. Dhanjay Keer says in his book: *Mahatama Jyothi Rao Phule*:

*Awakening self-respect movement in the peasants and toiling masses, he infuses courage in them to stand up against the poverty and social injustice, and against the oppressive, unjust and inhuman Hindu priest craft and the caste system. (1970: 126)*

The Self-Respect Movement is a movement with the aim of achieving a society where backward castes have equal human rights. It was founded in 1925 by E.V.Ramsamy in Tamil. The movement was extremely influential not just in Tamil Nadu but all over India. The Self-Respecters insisted that the term ‘non-Brahman’ was a misnomer, and that they should in fact be called Dravidians, the inheritors of a proud cultural tradition, a tradition superior to that of the Brahmins. Such a highly cultured community had been tricked into accepting the cultural values propagated by the Aryans when the latter arrived in the South.

Naicker pointed out to the non-Brahmins that Manu: The chief Brahman law giver, degraded the bulk of the population to a position of Shudras, prevented them from accumulating wealth and advocated that their vocation should be to serve the Brahmins. (Manu 24-25) Socialism was gained in Tamil Nadu in 1930’s and it is to be noted that the members of self-respect movement were drawn towards Marxist theories of the state and society and that socialist ideas of an egalitarian society underlined their writings. K.A. Geeta opines in her text *Contesting Categories, Remapping Boundaries*: “But Marxism was all inspiring force not only for self-respect but also congressmen” (2014: 58).



The Dalit movement in South India has witnessed the new rise of ‘Dalit assertion’ in the arena of politics and religion and it charted a distinctive course highlighting the Dalit questions. Dalits fought breaking all obstacles and barriers. It is only because they have become united and organized. Struggle which was a part of the daily life of the oppressed became their life’s struggle. The Dalits articulate as a collective voice with will emerging Dalit conscious in Tamil Nadu. With the Marxist, Periyarist and Revolutionist interpretations the Dalit movements arise out of such conceptualizations. Taru Susie and Satyanarayana opine in their book *No Alphabet in Sight* says that:

*This movement on Dalit pasts to close with a brief discussion of writers who access Dalit past-personal and communal-through that achieves memory, experience and mythic forms. With that memories and autobiographies such as Bama Faustina or Sivakami or Gunasekaran are social histories that introduced a Dalit voice and infiltrate the counter-current of Dalit experience into the official record of past. (2013: 5)*

Marxism is a scientific theory, with revolutionary based on economic class struggle. In *The Communist Manifesto* (1988), the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles (Marx 55). Marx claims that communism opposes the power of oppression. The movement produced great personalities like A.K.Gopalan, P.Sundarayya, Charu Mazumdar, T.Nagi Reddy and others. The Communist movement also produced great persons from the depressed sections like Gaddar, K.G.Satya Murthy and so on. In an article by Ajith, *Against Avakaianism*:

*We develop new principles for the world out of the world's own principles. We do not say to the world: Cease your struggles; they are foolish; we will give you the true slogan of struggle. We merely show the world what it is really fighting for, and consciousness is something that it has to acquire, even if it does not want to. (2013: 7)*

In this context, raising awareness among Dalit people to know about their unfair and unhuman marginalization and exploitation and to join the social movement to raise their voice for change and liberation would be possible only through education and knowledge which became primordial.

### **1.6.3. Education: The Prime Avenue for Dalit Emancipation**

In India the propagation of people's art and culture, different from those representing the Hindu culture have been flourishing since ancient times. The Hindu culture has been progressing, exploiting the other superstitions and other weakness of the people. The popular literature, art, sculpture and painting have marched ahead, the literature of languages of suppressed castes and tribes were brought in light. Without education there was no scope and hope to a Dalit for progress.

Dalits have started a movement to protect their status and get recognition in economic, social, cultural and in political fields, which provoked growing oppressions, lawlessness and assaults. Raj Kumar opines in his text *Dalit personal Narratives: Reading Caste, Nation and Identity* that; He underlined the agenda of the upper caste people:

*“The Upper caste wear afraid of Dalits. If once Dalits are given a chance to education, they will go on to become powerful. More over who will do their menial work if all of them are educated”.* (2010: 173)

Education is the prime avenue for a Dalit. It is considered as the most powerful instrument for social change. The greatest single factor which can extremely improve the status of Dalits in any society is ‘education’. It is indispensable that education enables Dalits not only to gain more knowledge about the world outside of the heart and home status, but also positive self-esteem, and self-confidence, necessary courage and inner strength to face challenges in life. In fact it also facilitates them to acquire a job and supplement the income of family and achieve social status. Dr, B.R.Ambedkar argues that:

*It is the education which is the right weapon to cut the social slavery and it is the education which will enlighten the downtrodden masses to come up and gain social status, economic betterment and political freedom* ([www.legalserviceindia.com](http://www.legalserviceindia.com)).

Dalit writing in its formative years have been largely about articulating protest, self-respect, angst, torment, identity, dignity, critiquing religion, politics, patriarchy, Dalit patriarchy and the demand for space for Dalit’s in social, cultural, and political spheres. Instead, Dalit literature has established its own tradition with anticaste or Untouchable thinkers like Buddha, Kabir, Phule and Ambedkar as its sign post.

The Dalit literary movement reached various parts of Indian, though Dalit literature is written in different languages coming from different geographical, background. There are common denominators that bind these literary efforts in a thematic unity, such as the roots, the

sensuality, the common suffering, discrimination, exploitation and injustice. Hence it brings solidarity among all Dalit writers. Omprakesh Valmiki writes in his text *Joothan, A Dalit Life*, states that:

*Dalit literary movement is not just a literary movement. It is also cultural and social movement. It is also cultural and social movement. Dalit society has been imprisoned for thousands years in the dark midst of ignorance, deprived of knowledge. Dalit literature is portrayal of the wishes and aspirations of these oppressed and tormented Dalits.*(2003: 97)

The most progressive and revolutionary minded writers who have tried to describe the sentiments of Dalits are not accepted. They portrayed Dalit women as the victims of lust of higher caste men never as rebels to fight against the injustices perpetuated upon them.

According to Dalit writers only a Dalit by birth can have the sensitivity and experience to be a genuine Dalit writer. Their writings are letters of their own blood, a natural outburst of the feelings and thoughts which have been blocked up for centuries.

Dalit women are not excluded from Dalit literature. If they are not the authors they are characters in the males' writing. However, their representation does not provide the real experiences lived by the Dalit woman and her contribution to build the society.

#### **1.6.4. Dalit Woman and the Social movements**

Women, all over the world, have been treated as the 'other' by the patriarchal social order. There has always been a 'gender line' drawn between men and women. The line drawn between the genders not only divides people into two opposite categories but it also implies a

hierarchy: men are seen as strong, rational and superior, where women are shown as weak, emotional and inferior.

Women have the burden of bearing these negative role models in their day-to-day lives, real or imagined. These discriminations have been long fought sporadically in distinct ways, culmination in the women's liberation movement, which witnesses in the seventies of the twentieth century across the globe. Anil Dutta Mishra Gender Justice, *Women Empowerment: Issues and Challenges*:

*Women represent half the global population and third of the work force, they receive only one tenth of the global income and less than one percent of world prosperity, and does two third of all working hours, still day in and day out our conscience is shocked by news of violation of human rights of women. (2014: 225)*

The emergence of Dalit consciousness in this contemporary Indian society awakened the people of Dalits to understand the social practices imposed on Dalit. Such a fact makes an exhaustive list of discriminations associated with Untouchables in traditional Indian society which includes banning of women of Untouchable caste from covering the upper part of their body in front of upper caste. This rigid caste also forbid them from wearing gold ornaments and their men from wearing dhoti below their knees. They are not allowed to use public facilities and to go for occupations beyond their caste prescriptions. Untouchables at large were supposed to carry a thorny branch of the tree to remove their footsteps from the road; they were supposed to hang an earthen pot into their neck to spit which may otherwise fall on the ground making higher castes impure. The list of discriminations associated with Untouchables is exhaustive which ends with the note that Untouchables were supposed to start their day drinking the water

into which the Brahmins dip their toes. Uday Kumar opines in the text, *The Political Philosophies of Antonio Gramsci and B.R. Ambedkar*:

*Have no precise consciousness of its own historical identity; it is not even conscious of the historical identity or the exact limits of its adversary. The lower classes, historically on defensive, can only achieved self-awareness via a serious of negations, via the consciousness of the identity and class limits of their enemy; but it precisely this process which has not yet come to the surface, at least not nationally. (2013: 160)*

The idea of a Dalit consciousness is a central concept in both the creation and evaluation of Dalit literature. The goal of liberation results in the Dalit awakening from the atrocities levied on them. According to Omprakesh Valmiki, in his autobiography *Joothanin* 2003, Dalit consciousness is elemental in opposing the cultural inheritance of the upper castes, the notion that culture is hereditary right for them and one that is denied to Dalits.

Dalit consciousness has emerged during the late 19th and early 20th century in South India. Ayothee Dasa's construction of Dalit consciousness, in Tamil context at the wake of 20th century, is pertinent to understand the appearance of Marxist ideology in Tamil region. M. Singaravelu (1860-1946), celebrated as the first communist of South India, started his political career along with Ayothee Dasa. Pandithar, too, participated in the Buddhist revival in South India and entered into certain debates with Ayothee Dasa to get involved into a communist after the demise of the latter.

With the emergence of Dalit consciousness and Dalit voices across India during the last three decades, the term has received considerable attention in the realm of social sciences. Dalit consciousness opposes gender bias as it opposes regionalism, casteism and linguistic biases and

issues. It is a revolutionary consciousness motivated by the desire for freedom from slavery. Its inspiration is Ambedkarite thought on ending caste, rather than a caste spirit (2010: 77). It is based on the ideas of equality, liberty, justice and solidarity, rather than pleasure. Quoting Limbale's explanation from the *Towards the Aesthetics of Dalit Literature*:

*The Dalit consciousness in Dalit literature is the revolutionary mentality connected with struggle. It is a belief in rebellion against the caste system, recognizing the human being as its focus. Ambedkarite thought is the inspiration for this consciousness. Dalit consciousness is an important seed for Dalit literature; it is separate and distinct from the consciousness of other writers. Dalit literature is demarcated as unique because of this consciousness (Ibid: 32).*

Dalit women authors, like Baby Kamble and Bama Faustina Faustina were influenced by Ambedkar ideology of social equality and human dignity. They were aware about their situation and thought that the only way by which they assert their identity as women and as Dalit was to take their pens and delineate all their day to day experiences to expose their suffering to the world. *Sangati* and *The Prison we Broke* were written to raise awareness among the Dalit and to hope for change. Bama Faustina and Kamble questioned the brahminical dominance and colonization of the Dalit subaltern in this age of modernity, communication and globalization.

## **1.7. Globalization Narrowing the Gaps of Casteization**

Since the 1980s, globalization and postcoloniality have been viewed as the most influential paradigms for explaining the ambiguity of political and economic relationships in a world where multiculturalism has absorbed the definite border lines of cultures. Topics and

debates on globalization and postcolonialism in the literary works have become thought-provoking and universal. Both globalization and postcoloniality seek to transcend boundaries of different cultures in the world.

In these modern days and age, most nations are heading towards globalization. With the current changes and development of technology, people easily share and exchange products and services for economic and social development. A lot of chances are given to many people on the scale of employment. However, there are still countries beyond the borders of the speedy progression because of their internal problems on account of the social and economic injustice.

The Indian Constitution under Articles 15 (4), 16 (4), 46 and 340 refers to the issue of the “socially and educationally backward classes” or “backward class citizens”. It concerns the insurance of equality amongst all Indian citizens without any race, caste or class discrimination. Marginalization of the Indian individual is then to be completely abolished.

It was the Nehruvian project of modernization, based mainly on the social issues of land reform and revolutionary movements in rural India, which made changes in the caste structure. The lower castes benefit from this improvement to take part in the economic and political institutions shoulder to shoulder with the upper castes and manifest their competence and performance in all social fields. Paradoxically, these castes, thought to be the backward, prove their full social control of the entire rural and semi-urban India and dominate politics and significant parts of the Indian economy. The caste differences are less sharp, then. This caste dynamics turned to be reduced to only division between Dalits and non-Dalits, as the rituals of purity/pollution are deeply rooted in the cause of stratification.



For eternal times the caste system bears problems for the Indians. In spite of the efforts of Mahatma Phule and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar<sup>10</sup>, to eradicate one of the most dehumanizing systems the humanity has ever seen. In fact, the laws of the constitution for the dissolution of untouchability have never been applied to save the Dalits from the social injustice and harshness.

In the Hindu world where the cow, or any other animal, is more precious than the life of an “Untouchable”, Dr. Ambedkar’s main dream and desire was to establish social justice and equality. In order to spread knowledge about their case, the Dalit writers have opt for the literary expression to describe their day to day experiences, and expose the humiliation and exploitation they endure because of the existence of the caste system.

Obviously, the path is not easy for the Dalits since the upper caste are not ready to change their prestigious situation nor do they accept to be equal to the ex-polluted people. But, the phenomenon of globalization favors the flexibility of the castes and the rapprochement of the minorities to the majority over the whole world through business, studies, travels, facility of communication and the free access to the world’s media and information.

Due to globalization with the development of transportation and communication, nations are competing against other nations of the entire world. In a modern society, where time and resource are truly valued, the Caste system has held back India by wasting some incredibly talented individuals of lower caste. Also, as the people of India were informed about how neighboring countries and countries across the continents give rights to all citizens, frictions

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<sup>10</sup> Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, (April 14, 1891- December 6, 1956, New Delhi), was the first highly educated, politically prominent member of the Hindu "untouchable" caste. He is best remembered for leading colonial India's only autonomous struggle for Dalit rights and social recognition; for his extensive writings that reprimed caste as a form of inequality and historical injustice; and for his role as Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution.

appeared. The world is one, and how a nation deals with its immigrants is really important for the future of the nation. The Caste system cannot make India a stable country anymore, since there is no spot in the system for immigrants to India. The caste system is making a big gap between the rich and the poor. The trends in inequalities and poverty in India affects global trends because of its large population size.

## **1.8. Conclusion**

Knowledge about the context is primordial to the understanding of any literary text. The Indian values and norms, traditionally, implant social and cultural differences in the minds of women and men. Through generational transmission of the traditions, culture is maintained. It is implicitly learned in the family and it influences the individual. In a patriarchal society, it forces women to accept their discrimination as being natural and thus perpetuate male domination. Women are trained to live with their cultural and the social and mythical structural constraints. Women all over the Globe represent the same constant. Their faith, now, is to overcome the dictum of the society that makes the woman as object not subject. The next chapter will shed light on Indian literatures, mainly women crafts in writings their social experiences in both Dalit and non-Dalit communities. These theories will certainly pave the way to the understanding and analysis of the novels in focus.

# **Chapter Two**

## **Women and Literature in India**

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## Chapter Two: Women and Literature in India

*One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in the society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature,.. which is described as feminine.*

(Simone de Beauvoir, 1974: 301)

### 2.1. Introduction

To understand the literary context in which Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Bama Faustina Faustina, and Baby Kamble, it becomes necessary to inform the reader about Indian Woman Literature as their “own” context of writing. The present chapter deals with, by way of introduction, the subject of Indian women novelists writing in English and Dalit women writing in their own local languages. Focusing on the women as authors and their achievements at the individual as well as the social levels I will deal with the position of the Indian woman’s writings in the literary stream. The work of Indian women novelists helps to trace the status of women in the Indian society through their writings over ages. Comprehensive understanding of women in Indian fiction is explained in this chapter. It contextualizes the selected women writers of first and second generation, the genre of Dalit women writers, and their contribution to Indian writing is broadly explained as the primary source for the research. The details gathered from the extensive survey made on other contemporary women writers to understand the common and the divergent chord in their works is also presented in the following part of writing. The selected

authors try to show the impact of age old traditions that condition women and the impact of modernity on them. These women, who are caught in the shackles of tradition, did not lose hope till the end.

## **2.2. Improvement in Women's Conditions**

The birth of the two movements the Social Reform Movement and the Nationalist Movement during the colonial rule in India paved the way to create consciousness of the need for improvement in women's condition, and the inspiration to impart education to woman was revived. Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy not only made zealous efforts to bring about the legal abolition of certain loathsome customs, he also advocated the need for widow remarriage and opened opportunities in the field of education for women. The awareness of education has become the most important objective for women which seemed to take a new leap forward by defining it as a "complete" equality with men in all spheres, setting a new tone to the whole movement.

Consequently, women's education received an impetus in the 19th century. Uma Alladi remarked in her work *Woman and Her Family: Indian and Afro-American: A Literary Perspective*. as "... it was designed to develop in a woman those qualities that were seen as essential to making her a good housewife – reticence in speech, subservience of manners, fortitude and conscientiousness." (1989: 7)

However, education infused necessary confidence in women and soon a larger number of women entered many fields of social service like working for reformatory reforms, fighting against alcoholism, cruelty towards children, slavery and fought for feminine causes like reforms in marriage and divorce laws. The Indian Nationalists Movement under the leadership

of Gandhi led to further emancipation of Indian women in 20th century by involving them in the struggle for political freedom of the country. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, may be claimed as the first and foremost person who has wakened and fought for the emancipation of women from the traditional roles imposed by the society and encouraged them to walk on equal fronts with their male counterparts. Gandhi wanted women to come out of homes and participate in the freedom struggle on par with men. He worked for the eradication of social evils, which suppressed the identity of women in Indian society. With the growth of educational and vocational opportunities, the educated middle and upper-class women, particularly in urban areas, have become aware of their rights. More and more enlightening opportunities and employment avenues were thrown open to women.

Revelation to reformist movements, economic independence, influence of western feminist movements, all helped women to go a long way in bringing about radical changes in their positions and attitudes. Provoked by a desire to realize their aspiration for a new way of life, women began to accent their feelings freely. As Meena Shirwadkar in work *Images of Woman in the Indo- Anglian Novel*, opined as:

*As women received education they began to feel an increasing urge to voice their feelings. The awareness of individuality, the sense of compatibility with their tradition-bound surroundings, resentment of male dominated ideas of morality and behaviour problems at home and at place of work or in society-all come up in a welter of projection. (1979: 201)*

In order to move towards a breakthrough of independent identity and to break away from the colonial hangover, there was felt a return to the ethics of the original tradition, which led to an excessive stress on orthodox social values. Women were encouraged to imitate the epic



archetypes of Sita and Draupadi, who were symbolic of absolute fidelity. There was an anxiety to preserve the figure of the woman as the epitome of all that was pure and chaste. Shanta Krishnaswamy, aptly explained about the true state of Indian woman in *Glimpses of Women in India* thus:

*.....as child, she is sold off to strangers for a bridal price or when she grows up, serves as a supplier of dowry for her husband's family or who, as a widow in a final act of obliteration immolates herself on her dead husband's funeral pyre to be acclaimed as 'Sati Savithri', as an immortal. (1984: 2)*

The Indian women, though in an age of isolation, of growing intellectual crisis, are now beginning to stir out of their placid stoicism. The arising of political and social consciousness around them has brought in them courage to protest and women acquired strength to march against discrimination and evils like, dowry deaths, rape and exploitation. The deep rooted myths about women have not allowed them to lead a genuinely free life. The disadvantageous position of women is seen to be perpetuated by the conventionally accepted critical perspectives.

The Indian society was under the impact of the West in the wake of Renaissance. The monumental 'Minute' of Macaulay prepared in 1833 provided for the adoption of English as medium of instruction in educational institutions, important offices and judicial courts. This opened up fresh avenues of thought in culture, art and literature, science and technology and hence was strongly backed by progressive thinkers. In the words of Macaulay in *Selected Speeches* remarked "we must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood but English in taste, opinions, in morals, and in intellect". (1952: 359)

Education helped the Indian woman to realise her individuality, determined to acknowledge her potentiality her power within and as a woman no longer willing to be dominated by men. Women realised their pain and took courage to stand on the ground which there have fallen down as preys into the hands of man long ago. Because of education women were no longer ignorant to what they have lost, and of what they are undergoing. Men have attained the status of colonizers and women the colonized.

Education gave a pathway for the betterment of life. English no more remained as an alien language it has occupied the position of a global language. There were specific activities in India during the 19th Century which enhanced the status of women under the Reformist Movement. It demanded more humane treatment for women. Liberal male crusaders, their wives and a few British administrators worked against the cruel customs affecting Indian women's lives. During the period of Indian Renaissance, nationalist spirit was kindled. There was more emphasis on humanitarianism. The strange encounter of the society with the west marked the beginning of a new civilization, the impact of which vastly benefited Indian literature.

### **2.3. Women's Willingness and Social Reform**

Exposure to Reformist Movements, economic independence and influence of Western feminist movements played significant role in bringing a change in the attitude and position of women in India. Driven by an urge to seek a new and just way of life, women began to voice freely their feelings and experiences. However such women were a few in numbers, while a majority of women still conformed to the tradition-bound concept of womanhood mainly for the fear of ostracism. T.D. Brunton describes the Indian scene in *Indian Fiction. The Heritage of Indianess*, as:

*India had many of the cultural conditions favorable to the novel before she came into contact with the Europe. But now she has social forces actively favorable to the production of fiction – a large audience, an educated class, a new questioning of age old socio religious Dogma and a consuming urge for knowledge and interpretation of society... (1977: 214).*

The fiction, of the late nineteenth century, has become a powerful form of literary expression. It has acquired a prestigious position in the Indo-English Literature. Rightly called as a social document, the advent of the Indo-Anglian fiction coincided with a wave of patriotism and social reforms, including the amelioration of the status of women. K.S.Ramamoorthy in *The Rise of the Indian Novel in English* (1987) claimed “the emergence of women writers during this period is of a great significance and he remarks that it marks the birth of an era which promises a new deal for the Indian Women” (Ramamoorthy 66). Further, he also recognizes the fact that the lot of the average Indian women remained relatively unchanged, shackled by the superstitions and customs that are perpetuated in the name of tradition. Hence, women started to read and write the act of writing is an opportunity to break their silence of ages because of a number of reasons: the patriarchal set up repressed them and the racial society has taught women to be culturally and intentionally silent. Thus, women came forward to express themselves and in due course of time writing has become the mode of expression.

Before women could pen their feelings there were men who already established as renowned writers in a language of their own. Still women took it as a challenge to write. Women wrote differently from men. What made women to write is that the women writers in the eighteenth century were disregarded by men by restricting their ideas; their creative writing was

restricted only to permissible areas of life. Hence, the creative talent of women writers was suppressed and it was not possible for them to express their thoughts.

Women presented in literature by male writers are from their point of view. This made women to realize more of their potentialities and sometimes less encouraged and proved wrong by their own counterpart. Hence, in order to gain their stance intellectually in the field of literature or may be in any prospect women started to read. An immense reading enabled them to take the path of Renaissance. It can be admitted that all women's writing need not be feminist; there has been a sustained interest to listen to what women want to say especially in a context where she needs a breakthrough from the shackles within and outside.

Women writers of India no longer delayed to know the contribution laid by their Western counterparts, as the various feministic movements provided scope for many novelists which in turn boosted them with courage and inspiration to free themselves from traditional and patriarchal strings that were tied to their legs since many centuries. These feministic movements helped them to realise how women have been exploited and oppressed. This made women to write about them because women found that men writings are filled with what they assumed about women. Men wrote about associations of state, warfare, industry, surveillance, and sexual encounters. Mary Wollstonecraft remarked in *A Vindication of the Right of Women*:

*The reformers who wrote about women interest us not only in what they proposed but also in what they assumed. Many appear progressive, proposing the advancement of female learning, but often they clung like the puritans ... that necessarily limited any substantive change in the status of women. (1792: 32)*

Change in the position of women all over the world did not take place over night. Over the past decade there has been noticed a shift in focus from revising the existence of readings to

a consistent examination of women's writings. There lies a great contribution of women revolutionists, who always aspired to give a better future for women. Understanding woman's writing, studying female psyche, discovering a new identity of "Her" marks the inner story of female writings. This was easy only with the advent of feminism; every female oriented subject has become an issue of contemporary literary debate. Feminists' consciousness has certainly given a fresh ardour and excitement to literary studies. A reasonably new perception of women in literature and the works by women writers have unveiled some of the prejudices at work in the traditional approaches to literature hitherto dominated by a masculine perspective. Helen Cixous in *Castration and Decapitation* (1987) quoted in *Feminism: A Paradigm Shift* by Neeru Tandon opines:

*For woman, writing is the passage way, the entrance, the exit the dwelling place of the other ... To be signed with a woman's name doesn't necessarily make a piece of writing feminine. It could quite well be masculine writing and conversely, the fact that a piece of writing is signed with a man's name does not in itself exclude femininity. (2008: 28)*

### **2.3.1. Feminism**

Feminism as a term emerged long after women started questioning their inferior position and demanding amelioration in their social position. The term was coined quite early but it came to be identified with those campaigning for women rights much later. Precisely defining feminism can be challenging, but pragmatically, a broad understanding of feminism includes women acting, speaking and writing on women's issues and rights, identifying social injustice in the status quo and bringing their own unique perspective to bear on issues.

The 1960's in America was witnessed as the period of the Renaissance of feminism. It took place within the counter – cultural context of the Civil Right Movement, the Hippie Culture, and Anti-Vietnam war protests. This phase is also known as the second wave of radical feminism, which linked not only feminist's activities but also women's liberation movement. The first wave took place during 1848- 1920, where women won the right to vote. Women's suffrage movement was extremely significant in highlighting the need for reform in the political, social and economic spheres of the American society. There was also the realisation that the oppression which tied both White and Black women was patriarchal oppression. As Patricia Meyer Spacks in *The Female Imagination* (1975) notes "There seems to be something what we call a woman's point of view,... an outlook sufficiently distinct to be recognisable through the centuries." (p.5), In *Personal Politics*, Sarah Evans asserts:

*The feminist resurgence in the 1960s and the 1970s makes sense only when one looks deeper under the surface of the apparent placidity of the 1950s, for there lay a dramatically changed reality for women, one that the old ideologies about women's place could not explain. The "feminine mystique" in operation offered a modernized version of the Victorian notion of women's sphere sharply separated from the public male realms of paid work, politics, and historic action. As an ideology it shaped women's and men's perceptions of reality, but its life was limited at the outset. (1980: 6)*

It is believed that the most oppressed group in the Western societies are women, and the greatest benefits men received were from their sexual exploitation. Patriarchy, more than capitalism, was responsible for women's oppression. Patriarchy oppressed women across class. Monogamy, marriage, child rearing, the nuclear families were all patriarchal traps to continue women's oppression. David Bouchier in *Idealism and Revolution* notes: "In the absence of

ready-made tradition of analysis, radical feminists have generated much of their own theoretical material, using elements from anarchism...radical psychiatry and the counter culture”. (1978: 106)

Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963 was an influential work. Friedan, a journalist, was also the daughter of a mother who was a journalist and had to give up her job to be a housewife. The book exploded the patriarchal myth of the housewife as a fulfilled woman. She argued that women were made to believe that their primary role was to look after their husbands and children. Friedan pointed out how women by consenting to such roles attributed to the feminine mystique were reproducing patriarchy. She asserted that the feminine mystique perpetuated the image of the housewife who:

*Stunts her intelligence to become childlike, turns away from individual identity to become an anonymous biological robot in a docile mass. She becomes less than human, preyed upon by outside pressures, and herself preying on her husband and children. And the longer she conforms, the less she feels as if she really exists. She looks for security in things... She lives a vicarious life through mass daydreams and through her husband and children. (1963: 297)*

Friedan’s work touched the hearts of many middle-class American housewives who had been feeling frustrated all along without understanding the cause of their frustration. In 1953, the American translation of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* was published. It described women as second class citizens. De Beauvoir rejected the idea that femaleness was biologically determined: “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” was the central thrust of her argument. Women were slowly becoming acquainted with these ideas, which provided them with an ideological frame within which to fight against patriarchal oppression.

However, in the second wave of radical feminist Mary Ellmann in her book, *Thinking About Women*, published in 1968, together with Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* started the radical strand of American literary feminist criticism. This early phase is also known as "Images of Women" criticism. The writers in this phase search for female stereotypes in male works and examine the critical categories used by male reviewers in commenting on women's works. The main idea of the text *Thinking About Women* written by Mary Ellmann, is to shape women as weak, helpless, formless, unstable and irrational. Ellmann attacks phallic or patriarchal criticism:

*With a kind of inverted fidelity, the discussion of women's books by men will arrive punctually at the point of preoccupation, which is the fact of femininity. Books by women are treated as though they themselves were women, and criticism embarks, at its happiest, upon an intellectual measuring of busts and hips. (1969: 29)*

Kate Millet's book, *Sexual Politics* also comes under "Images of Women: Criticism". This work is essential because it breaks away from American New Criticism that dominated American academia during the 1970s. Challenging the New Critics who privileged the text, its language and imagery over everything else. Millet argued that social and cultural contexts must be studied for a "Proper understanding" of literature. By the mid-seventies, feminist criticism was slowly moving into a new phase called *Gynocriticism*, that is, the study of women writers and women identified themes. In 1975, Patricia Meyer Spacks published *The Female Imagination*. Spacks was one of the first women to group women writers systematically in the "female literary tradition." She shifts feminist criticism from androcentric to gynocentric criticism. Spacks argues that a special female self-awareness emerges through literature in every period. Despite, the changing social conditions, she still further argues regarding the important



role for women. For one it is the only viable opportunity for freedom whose constraints of patriarchal society deny them. For another, it enables women to escape from the dullness of their routines and acts as a substitute for accomplishment that patriarchy refuses them.

### **2.3.2. Feminist criticism**

Elaine Showalter's work *A Literature of Their Own* (1999) also moves on to celebratory criticism. She gets the title of her book from James Mill's *Subjection of Women* which was published in the year 1869, in which James Mill had said that women need to create "a literature of their own." Elaine Showalter's aim was to create a separate canon of women's writings. Basically, she distinguishes between two forms of feminist criticism. The first type is concerned with women as readers which Showalter labels "feminist critique", and the second deals with women's as writers, "gynocritics."

Showalter suggests that one should stress the latter because one can learn "what women have felt and experienced." but she assumes that this experience is directly available in the texts written by women. She speaks of three phases: *feminine*, in which women imitate men's writings, *feminist*, in which women protest against patriarchy: and *female* which celebrates womanhood.

The first phase labelled, "feminine," extends from 1840-1880, with women writers, such as Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot. These writers internalized the dominant patriarchal values in the construction of women, which manifested themselves in their works. The second phase, called "feminist," ranges from 1880-1890, in which women writers including Elizabeth Robins and Olive Schreiner, protested against patriarchal domination and adopted separate spaces for women. The third phase labelled "female" stretches from 1920 onwards. It talked

specifically of women's writings and experiences. Katherine Mansfield and Dorothy Richardson were its early exponents.

Showalter maps a history of literary women, in which she includes less known 19th-Century writers, for example, Sarah Grand and George Egerton. She thus foregrounds a female subculture and points out that the women writers of the nineteenth century adopted masculine names or emphasised their material status. There was an 'all-inclusive female realism' which narrated the exploration of the daily lives and values of women within the family and community.

The radical feminists phase is characterised by Showalter as a protest phase, where women authors rebelled against prevalent patriarchal attitudes. They rebelled against the Victorian sexual stereotypes and tried their best to explore the woman's position in terms of work, class and the family. Women demanded autonomy with full force and vigour in this phase in which women writers, including Elizabeth Robins and Olive Schreiner, protested against patriarchal domination and advocated separate spaces for women. Women demanded autonomy with full force and vigour in this phase.

Many women in 20th Century have proved their creative writing skills in their novels and short stories. Famous among them are: Edith Wharton (1862–1937), Shirley Jackson (1916–65), Patricia Highsmith (1921–95), Sylvia Plath (1932–63), E. Annie Proulx (1935), Alice Walker (1944), and Tama Janowitz (1957). Apart from these Western feminists Indians are too familiar with the word 'Feminism'. The patriarchal-religious tradition of India aims of 'Indian feminism' resides in the spread of education, economic self-sufficiency and preservation of human rights. Such ideas of emancipation or in other words 'feminism' are tentatively prevalent only in the exclusive masses that have had the privilege of education.

### **2.3.3. Feminism in India**

The Indian context of representing feminism is the need of the honour to liberate women from their enclosed space so that they can redefine their secular identity and realize their claims and rights. The ultimate goal of such representation politics is in the preservation of human rights or else, in the long run, such ‘representational feminism’ could be self-defeating.

With the rise of feminism in India in the seventies, the feminist literary critics came to believe that women had to create a literature of their own, in which the feminine sensibility could consider and confront the peculiarly feminine issues and experience. The later part of the seventies and eighties saw a spurt in feminist writing which condenses in its pages the vivid range of the exploited female against “male dominion” that characterizes both the Western and Eastern patriarchal cultures. The works of Indian feminists present women as oppressed, exploited, tortured, cheated, angry, alienated and rebellious or taking different forms, mostly sexual promiscuity and lesbianism.

However, this towering rage against the male patriarchal categories and male domination resulted in biased and distorted presentation of man in the fiction. In India, to study female psyche is an effort to liberate women from more structures that have marginalised them; it is also an attempt to reinterpret their status in the world. Feminist consciousness has certainly given a fresh ardour and excitement to literary studies. A woman’s experiences of life as a member of a gender biased society formulate her psyche. Feminist critics have attempted to understand how social restrictions influence lives of women and how it has affected their relationship to art and literature.

Mostly Indians view feminism as an off-shoot of Western women liberation movement or Marxism and looked down on it as a sacrilege of tradition. India too needs feminism as a social and literary movement. It is essential for women's emancipation. In fact the women's psyche and their problems in India are totally different from that of Black America or White America. The lower middle class, rural based women who contribute their labour to agriculture and industrial production, are illiterate and bound by superstition. They are not even aware of the extra burden which is put on them and they suffer willingly, thinking that it is their fate.

The middle class women face a different kind of problem. Their education and employment have not given them much relief and equal status. These women have to cope with the burden of domestic responsibilities as well as the demands of the career, i.e. double jeopardy of the upper class. A few of them are aristocrats and the rest are the neo-rich and the first educated generation. Indian feminism spans all these categories.

The stream of consciousness technique offered them a voice to speak out their hearts and rendered their musings, emotional vicissitudes in their natural, musical prose and it helped to secure a high pedestal. Writers like Virginia Woolf, Bronte sisters, Toni Cade Bambara, Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison in Western societies, and Kamala Markandeya, Anita Desai, Tehmina Durrani, Kamala Das in the East and many more, are the examples of a microcosm of the feminine world and words. Consequently, a major area of concern to feminism is the recovery and articulation of women's experience in history and in contemporary societies, and a wholesale reconstruction of the fundamental intellectual assumptions of social practices and many areas of study, especially sociology, psychology, history and other social and humanistic disciplines.

There has been an explosion of feminist writings displaying the urgency and excitement of a religious, historical, and social awakening. A number of feminists have concentrated on gynocriticism which concerns itself with developing a specifically female frame work for dealing with works written by women, in all aspects of their production, motivation, analysis and interpretation. Women write differently from men. A woman as a subject matter in Indian fiction in English is not something recent but the approach of the novelists is certainly different. The main contention is that there is such a perception as a distinctive women's sensibility, and that it reflects itself in the literature of our times. 'Indian writing in English' mirrors these concerns.

#### **2.4. Modern Indian Literature: a Historical Background**

The Renaissance in modern Indian literature begins with Raja Ram Mohan Roy. The novel as a literary genre was imported to India from the West and others who learnt English started writing novels thereafter. It must be mentioned here that before the novel, as a genre, took roots in the Indian soil, there were a few people who started writing poetry and one such unique poet was Toru Dutt.

Although certain Indians who learnt English started writing novels during the second and third decades of the twentieth century, they are not so important to deserve attention at the moment. Convention recognizes Bankim Chandra Chatterjee as the first Indian to have written a novel in English titled *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864).

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Indian Writing in English* is a ground-breaking work which is authentic and unique. It may be regarded as the Bible of the critics as well as the students of Indo-Anglian literature. Iyengar is, indeed, the George Marshall of Indo-Anglian literature who

had unearthed most interesting and least known facts and brought them to light. Subsequent critics of Indo-Anglian literature cannot proceed with their work without referring to this unique work. Fiction has acquired a prestigious status in Indian literature written in English.

It is generally agreed that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experiences and ideas in today's context, and Indian English fiction occupies its proper place in the field of literature. Critics and commentators in England and America have articulated their appreciation of Indian English novels.

## **2.5. Indian English Writings**

The actual history of Indian novelists writing in English began with the celebrated trio, namely, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan. Mulk Raj Anand, the oldest of the three became famous with the publication of his first novel *Untouchable* in 1935. Mulk Raj Anand is a socially committed writer championing the cause of the underdog. Raja Rao became known to the literary world with his first novel *Kanthapura* and it is a novel written with Gandhian influence in the background. His sixteen short stories published under the title *Ganga Ghat* are based on the Hindu philosophy. And his most famous novel, *The Serpent and the Rope*, a novel with epic dimensions and almost encyclopedic in its scope, deals with Advaita philosophy. R. K. Narayan established himself as the most popular and the most prolific of the three, having written about fourteen novels. R. K. Narayan is committed to Hindu ethos. He is known as a regional novelist and *Malgudi* is his immortal creation of a small town somewhere in South India. Narayan's most popular novel, *The Guide* was filmed and brought him fame and a considerable amount of finance.

Another novel of his, *The English Teacher* is purely an autobiographical novel into which Narayan had put his heart and soul, since it deals with his marital bliss, be it for a short time, followed by a harrowing of suffering and sorrow with the sudden death of his short-lived wife. No Indian writer writing in English has won titles and awards in such abundance as him. The common theme in all his novels is in accordance with his Hindu ethos, fate that governs an individual's destiny.

The next noted writer is Dr. Bhabani Bhattacharya and he has five novels to his credit. All his works portray the challenging problems of Indian life. They reveal his wide range of experiences, his close association with men and his deep understanding of their manners. The theme of freedom is an important recurrent idea in Bhabani Bhattacharya's novels. The two themes of hunger and freedom usually go hand in hand in his fiction, and both are quite exhaustively voiced.

Next comes Manohar Malgonkar whose famous works bear the exemplary note of historical themes and are the significations of his wide narrative skills in presenting historical events. *A Bend in the Ganges*, like Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, takes up the theme of partition and the riots after it. Malgonkar presents here a powerful story against the background of the troublesome events which start with partition.

During the eighties, yet another class of Indian fiction writers occupied the scene. Emerging next on the scene were novelists like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh. It is observed that the most significant and praiseworthy outcome of this emergence is that Indian English novelists are now writing with a new vision and mission, new technical and linguistic devices, and absolutely new confidence. Indian writing in English witnessed a Renaissance in 1980s. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Shashi Tharoor's *The*

*Great Indian Novel* (1989), Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995) are good examples for this.

The important thematic concern of these novelists is that from the outset they have been attempting to establish or rehabilitate the self against either European appropriation or rejection. Due to poststructuralist influence, novelists of this period bring together the past, the present and the future to solve many tensions prevailing in the present world. Also it is done to explore the residual effects of foreign domination in the field of political, social and economic spheres. Some of the major narrative devices the writers of this period employ are non-linear plots, multiple narration, flashback and flash-forward, anti-heroes and heroines, more about common men, magical realism, intertextuality, mixed genres, story within a story, and so on. The novelists after 1980 have also experimented them with the use of English.

This experimentation with the English language strategy is used to decolonize, to dismantle the hegemonic structures to show the distrust and finally to convey the idea of cultural translation, cultural dislocation, cultural weightlessness, cultural crisis, hybridity, identity crisis and multiple identities.

## **2.6. English Language and Indian Woman Literature**

Much of the world's literature has been dominated by a canon that dismissed women's writing. The role of women was most often to inspire rather than to create. But in due course, women have proved themselves. Women's literature has evolved to show common experiences, a sense of sisterhood that questions the recurring face of patriarchy. Thus, women started to occupy their stance in the genre of Indian writing in English.



There are few Indian women novelists who sowed their seed in the Indian soil whose fruits are being enjoyed right now. The women writers of the first and second generation highlighted through their writings the predicament of women, their sufferings as a whole.

Writing in English by Indian women novelists is an effort to engage and grapple with living realities of women of various strata of society and their endeavour is to project life in all its richness and complexities. The women writers are moving forward with their strong and sure strides, matching the pace of the world. One sees them bursting out into full bloom spreading their own individual fragrances. They are recognized for their originality, versatility and the indigenous flavour. They have garnered critical praise for their scintillating literary prowess and making social issues a key part of their work. The postmodern era has witnessed a spurt in women's creative writing as well as in feminist literary criticism uncovering the ideology of patriarchal society in works of art.

Creative writing or literature in other words 'fiction' has become the most unique and existing form of literary expression and has acquired an esteemed place in the Indo English literature. As a distinct literary form, the novel is undoubtedly of recent birth. The novel came to be well-known from old prose or verse narrative that preceded it; it also supplanted the latter and became the leading literary genre from the eighteenth century onwards. But what makes the novel special is that it personified a new way of apprehending the world.

Indian English fiction has evoked a widespread interest in India and abroad during the recent decades. Indian literature is not only about novels, it is also about poetry and short stories. Before the rise of the novels, several women writers composed songs, short stories and small plays. It is still believed that, women are upholders of the rich Indian tradition of fables,

storytelling and many more. In the mid 19th century more women started to write in English. With the passage of time English literature has witnessed several changes in the written pattern.

What was not recognised and brought into daylight by the second generation is that women writers were carried forward by the women who migrated to alien countries. This gave way for a new genre of women writers as Diasporic women novelists. These diasporic women writers who knew the fragrance of native soil have been uprooted and planted in the Western soil, which resulted in the outcome of Indian diasporic writings. In women diasporic writings one finds women caught in the crux of past memories, longing for home trying to build new relationships, finding themselves as strangers, coping hard to adjust, sense of belonging and nostalgia are the prime focal points in their writings.

Women writers in post-colonial India have created a “literature of their own”, so to say, placing women in the context of the changing social scenario, specially concentrating upon the psyche of such women. But increasing education, better job opportunities and awareness of rights and privileges of women have forced her to contemplate. Indian women today are exposed to a new set of values with education and economic independence putting them in a rather conflicting state where they desire independence while they dread their traditional role but are still not courageous enough to walk of the situation. At this juncture the woman has redefined her status; certainly it is not an easy venture.

Women novelists have incorporated the recurring female experiences in their writings and it affected the cultural and language patterns of Indian literature. Writing in Indian English started with authors like Sarojini Naidu. She is a great poetess who mesmerized her readers with her writings. The last quarter of the 19th century, was a land mark in the history of Indian novels

in English, on account of the emergence of a host of women novelists, who gave a new direction in fiction writing in English.

### **2.6.1. Early Indian Women Novelists**

The pioneers of the novel in English made their appearance in the last quarter of the 19th Century. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee had the distinction of writing the first Indian novel in English with his *Rajmohan's Wife*. Torulata Dutt (1856-1877) dealt with the archetypes of Indian womanhood like Sita and Savithri. Of the two novels of Toru, one is *Binanca* (1878) in English, in which she gives vent to her true feelings about the attitudes of the Indian women and the other in French, *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d; Arvers* (1879). Torulata Dutt creation of women characters in English reinforcing the conventional myth in a patriotic manner was a necessity in contemporary society. She followed Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the social backwardness, stifling conformity and cruelty of Indian caste-society in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The thematic concerns of the early women writers led to the emergence of the Indian woman in the fast changing social milieu. Rajlakshmi Debi's *The Hindu Wife or The Enchanted Fruit* (1876) raised a banner of revolt against the prevailing social conditions. Mrs. Krupabai Sathinanadhan's (1862-1894) *Kamals: A Story of Hindu Wife* (1894) and *Saguna : A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895) were autobiographical. *Saguna* was portrayed as a very bold young girl who encountered women missionaries of Zenana School. Nikambe's *Ratanbai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (1895) was a semi-autobiographical sketch with characteristic emphasis on subjectivity and private experience. Since these novelists lacked literary models, their work sometimes descended into sentimentality and didacticism. Rockey

Sakhawat Hossain's (1880-1932) *Sultana's Dream* (1905) presented topsy-world in which men were kept behind "purdahs". Man takes the status of a woman and the narrator had a caustic laugh at man.

Swarna Kumari Ghosal (1856-1932), elder sister of Rabindranath Tagore, was a novelist, poetess, playwright, songwriter and a journalist. *The Fatal Garland* (1910) *The Unfinished Song* (1913) and *An Indian Love Story* (1910) were her major works. Ghosal works mainly reflect the middle class milieu and as an editor of a journal "Bharati", she was mainly publishing scientific articles to educate the non-English speaking Indian women in new scientific concepts.

Pandita Ramabai Saraswati (1858-1922) is described as the greatest woman who laid the foundation for women's liberation in India. She wrote a work *High Caste Hindu Women* in which she described a typical arranged marriage and aptly commented on the conjugal satisfaction of women in terms of their marriage. Susi Tharu and K. Lalitha in *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present*. observes:

*When the conjugal relation is brightened of mutual love, the happy wife had nothing to complain except the absence of freedom of thought and action; but since wives have never known from the beginning what freedom is, they are well content to remain in bondage.* (1995: 247)

Shevathi Bai Nikambe (1865) is a champion of feminism. She combated injustice and ill-treatment meted out to simple sober, unsophisticated housewives. She focused particularly on the tragedy of unsuccessful marital life and of widowhood. She advocated the freedom, liberty and emancipation of women in order to extricate them from obsequious servitude and inhuman torture to which they were subjected by their husbands, mother-in-laws and others. Cornelia Sorabji (1866-1954), the Oxford-educated lawyer, with a spirit of adventure and

missionary zeal, fought for the cause of women, especially widows. Her works, *Love and Life Behind the Purdahs* (1910) *Sun-Babies*, *India Calling* (1935) and *India Recalled* (1936) served as instruments of social reform. Iqbalunnisa Hussain (1900) has brought to limelight the tragic life of Indian women in her fiction *Purdaha and Polygamy: Life in an Indian Muslim House* (1944). She has panoramically portrayed the evils and abuses of customs and traditions that had enslaved the married women and rendered them practically helpless and voiceless.

Ashapura Devi (1909-1955) advocates a revision of traditional community, reformed traditional womanhood, women's right to a more humane status. In her trilogy *Pratham Pratishruti* (1964), *Subarnalata* (1967) and *Bakul Katha* (1974), she traces the progression of the feminist movement from colonial to post colonial periods in India.

Women in most of the early novels are essentially Indian in sensibility, endowed with the traditional feminine qualities of sincerity, love and resignation. The autobiographical element in these novels, the transition from a concern with objective social reality to an exploration of the feminine sensibility find their echoes in the works of latter women writers and as such they established their position as the forerunners of the Indian literary tradition in Indian English literature.

Thus the first generation women novelists depicted woman who were traditional in outlook and resigned to their life. Under the influence of the popular British writers, these women's writings tended to be imitative while some focused on the romantic idealization-reformative zeal were the option for others. On the whole, these women writers wrote mainly to voice their concern for and sympathize with the suffering of Indian women rather than to censure the society. Hence, there was no room for anger, irritation, or tension in their works despite intense sociological and reformatory motivation.

### 2.6.2. The Post-Independence Women Novelists

The post-independence India witnessed a spurt of fiction writing by women writers of greater quality and depth. The period between 1915 and 1950 had not produced any significant woman writer. Consequently a clear gap of 35 years existed between the post-independence writers and their forerunners. These writers were more realistic in their approach than those of the first generation and were able to project a vision of their own with the onset of modernism and post-colonialism.

Venu Chitale, (1912) the early post-independence novelist portrayed in her novel, *In Transit* (1950), the emotional trauma of a traditional middle- class Brahmin widow weighed down by the age-old traditions and customs. Zeenuth Futehally's *Zohra* (1955) provided real glimpses into the Muslim life, culture and manners. Shakuntala Shringesh took up a psychological study of her characters in her *The Little Black Box* (1955).

Santha Rama Rau (1923 –2009) appears to believe in the innate strength of the traditional Indian culture even when it comes in contact with the western culture as shown in her first novel; *Home to India* (1945), and her second book; *East of Home* (1950). Her third novel *Remember the House* (1956); her characters are portrayed mostly with international background. She sketches her women protagonists as the ones who go in search of fulfilment and as attempt is also made to probe into the feminine psychology. Her women are mostly depicted as victims of political incidents and they are at times declared as war criminals. They aspire to have the experience of “living”, and so they go in pursuit of artistic careers.

Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004) is one of the most accomplished and outstanding second-generation women novelists of India. Her women protagonists are subjected to binary

pulls torn between tradition and modernity, between duty as a daughter, a wife and a mother and dignity as a human being. Kamala Markandaya's works are *Nectar in a Sieve* (1955), *Some Inner Fury* (1956), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *a Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Coffey Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), *Shalimar* (1982), *Bombay Tiger* (2008). She successfully handles cross-cultural issues and her authenticity lies in the portrayal of the Indian culture. Her works mainly focus on themes like East-West encounter, confrontation between tradition and modernity as well as clash of values.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala (1927) through her writings depicts how the selfish people violate all norms of social values to earn money and wealth. She has written ten novels. Among her ten novels, *To Whom She Will* (1955), presents a pathetic picture of the plight of the refugees in New Delhi after the partition (1947)<sup>11</sup>. *The Nature of Passion* (1956) her second novel projects a horrifying picture of the rich people in Delhi. *Esmond in India* (1958) and *A Backward Place* (1965) deal with the East-West encounter. *The Householder* (1960) is a domestic comedy based on a conflict between tradition and modernity. *Get Ready for Battle* (1962) is a war against post independent class of the rich amongst the vast ocean of the poor. *A New Dominion* (1972), a tragicomic novel again refers to the East-West encounter. *Heat and Dust* (1975) won her Booker Award and throws light on the lack of any qualitative improvement in human existence in this country.

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<sup>11</sup> The partition of India in 1947 accompanied the birth of India and Pakistan as two independent dominions, Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan (East: Pakistan, West: Bangladesh). They, respectively, became the Republic of India in 1950 and in 1957 the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In 1971, the creation of People's Republic of Bangladesh came after the Bangladesh Liberation War. Mass migration and ethnic violence are the bitter legacy left by the process of partition. Thousands of women were raped and at least one millions of people were killed.

Nayantara Sehgal, (1927) a niece of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was a political columnist. Most of her novels are political. But she did not favour any political creed in her novels. Her first novel *Time to be Happy* (1957) deals with political activities of 1942. *This Time of Morning* (1965) portrays many political figures of her time. *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) shows the aftermath of the division of the Punjab into two states. *The Day in Shadow* (1971) deals with the problem of divorce and disintegration of the marriage system in India. *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977) reveals the Naxalite movement and political unrest after the death of Pandit Nehru. *A Plan for Departure* (1986) is a historical novel. Most of their women are aware of the injustice done to them in marriage. As they go out of their home, they go in quest of their freedom.

Jai Nimbkar's (1932) novels - *Temporary Answers* (1974) and *A Joint Venture* (1988) tackle the middle class married woman's identity crisis in the contemporary male-dominated Indian society. The protagonist in her first novel gives us a sense of reality, making the novel most autobiographical, authentic, not only in terms of details of a "lived life", but in terms of a psychological reality as well. Her protagonists in general suffer, due to the existing inequality between the sexes.

Shashi Deshpande, (1938) an Indian novelist in a true sense, maintains a unique position among the contemporary Indian writers In English. She deals with middle class woman who represents the majority and covers a wider area of modern society in her fiction. The women characters of Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal and Ruth Jhabvala present the women of upper strata of Indian society, while Shashi Deshpande presents the middle class educated women and their problems while living with realities. She is regarded as one of the most accomplished contemporary Indian women writers in English. Her novels are: *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980); *If I Die Today*; *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983); *Roots and Shadows* (1986); *That Long*



*Silence* (1987); *The Binding Vine* (1993); *A Matter of Time* (1996) and *Small Remedies* (2000). Shashi Deshpande has written four volumes of short stories, viz., *The Legacy* (1978); *The Miracle* (1986); *It was Dark* (1986), and *It was the Nightingale* (1986), and books for children too. Her female characters are either married women who suffer silently are rooted in Indian tradition at the same time influenced by modern education. Hence they are traditional and unconventional, emotional and rational at the same time. She deals with various phases of Indian woman's life as a daughter, sister, wife, mother and grandmother.

Shoba De (1947) is one of the brilliant names in the galaxy of Indian Women novelists in English. With her great works, she has enlightened and enriched Indian English fictional world. Her works have realistic touch and sensitive appeal. She is the writer with commitments. She, generally, gives utterances to women's problems and their position in the society. The main focus in her works is on man-woman relationship.

This new generation of women writers wrote about women's feelings and their gender related problems. It is to be noted here that earlier women characters were shown as sub-servant and submissive that never raised a voice against the dominance of male in society. In other words, women were shown as ideal Indian wives. The limiting and deciliating norms of womanhood kept women away from material and psychological independence and trapped them in the autonomous domain of men.

### **2.6.3. Modern Indian Women Novelists**

But in modern era, women disapprove the dominance of men in society. In other words, women were shown as ideal Indian wives. They have started demanding for their human rights and fight against unjust norms and tradition too. So the ideal image of a woman has disappeared

with the arrival of a new modern spirited woman. This new woman shatters the earlier ideal image of a woman.

Manju Kapur (1947), the selected author in the scope of this study, treats with the theme of travails in self-identity vis a vis social-cultural identity in *Difficult Daughters* (1998). Through Ida, the narrator and daughter of the protagonist Virmati, the novelist unfolds a saga of revolt against deep rooted family tradition, self-doubt, resolution and acceptance of life. Virmati in the *Difficult Daughters* of Kasturi, is the mother of another difficult daughter 'Ida'. Ida embarks on a quest to know her mother's legacy, after her mother dies.

Githa Hariharan (1954) is a novelist who uses her novels as a vehicle of protest against male dominance over women. In her novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1993) she denounces the subservience of Indian women and advocates their emancipation from the bondage of male domination. She depicts the tragedy of women, who in their inner mind react to this kind of subjection and persecution.

Indira Ganesan (1960) made her contribution to Indian fiction by publishing her two novels, *The Journey* (1990) and *Inheritance* (1997). The first novel proves that fictional India is still a saleable commodity in the West, whereas the second novel has a protagonist, the youngest of the three sisters, all with different fathers. Her father is an American and the girl keeps fantasizing about him.

Arundhati Roy (1961), also selected in the scope of the present work, is the author of the novel, *The God of Small Things*, (1997) which received the prestigious Booker Prize in the same year. Arundhati Roy's maiden novel, *The God of Small Things* claimed immense critical acclaim from readers and critics throughout the world. The novel received praise for various aspects like the shifting of past and present with extraordinary finesse, her flair for description

and its narrative style which includes magic, mystery and sadness. Roy has never admitted that she is a feminist but *The God of Small Things* reveals at many places her feminist stance and her protagonist represents feminine sensibility.

Jaishree Mishra's (1961) novels reveal the man-made patriarchal traditions and restlessness of the modern Indian woman in being a part of them. Mishra presents social reality as it is experienced by women. To present the world of mothers, daughters and wives is also to present indirectly the fathers, sons and husbands, the relation between man and woman, woman and woman. Her young heroines are rebel against the traditional way of life and patriarchal ethics. Some of her famous novels are *Ancient Promises* (2000), *Accident Like Love & Marriage* (2001), *Afterwards* (2004).

Uma Vasudev's women characters can be called truly liberated. They are not bothered by traditional middle class attitudes, views, opinions, and taboos, which render them destitute and condemn them to live within the four walls of their homes. In her novels, *The Song of Anasuya* (1978) and *Shreyu of Sonargrah* (1993), her characters are described as liberated women their own clandestine affairs.

Shinie Antony is a writer in Bangalore who has compiled the anthologies Kerala. She has written two novels: *Kardamom Kisses* (2005), *Forth and Multiplied* (2011). She has won the Asia Region Prize from the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association for her story *A Dog's Death* in 2003. She sees life, literature and love with tinted glasses when she writes. She says in her writing "When Mira went forth and multiplied, Sam is 'the one' for Mira. Mira is Sam's better half". The characters are funny and impactful at the same time.

The postcolonial generation of women writers have surpassed their male counter parts, out numbering them quantitatively as well as by maintaining a high standard of literary writing

equally applauded in India and abroad, experimenting boldly with not only technique but also by cooperating tabooed subject matters in their novels and short stories. The result being that Indian women of all categories or bourgeois, high caste or Dalits have been studied with an intensity and concern never attempted earlier. Such a richness in techniques, strategies and themes makes a result which inspired the researcher to join narratives of upper caste writers to the narratives of the Dalit women writers for the objective of comparative literature. Furthermore, the enormous diversity of the Indian ethnicity, traditions, languages and geographical regions residing in each category incites one's curiosity to first handle the comparative literary approach for the upper caste English narratives in one part and the comparison of the narratives written by Dalit writers in different local languages in the other one. These generation groups of Indian women novelists have favourably responded to the changed psychological realities of Indian life, they understood the crises in the lives of Indian women who subjected to mental and physical torture in the male dominated society.

Nevertheless, the emergence of a generation of writers of Indian origin in America, Canada and England in recent years has been a defining moment in literary circles in those lands as well as in India. This body of writers is radically different from that of the first generation expatriate Indian writers in its attitude and relationship with both, the country of their adoption and the country of their origin. But there is also the New Woman: the bold fearless creature who will not yield to social pressures, who will rather break than bend.

Diasporic writing has flourished much thanks to the significant contributions of such luminaries like Salman Rusdie, Naipaul and female writers of the Indian Diaspora too have carved a niche for themselves. They include writers like Bharati Mukerjee, Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kiran Desai, Gita Mehta, Anjana Appachana, Abha

Dawesar, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Anna Bhalla, Kaavya Vishwanathan, Dina Mehta, Bharati Kirchner, Sujata Massey, Indira Ganesan, Shani Muthoo, Marina Budhos, Anuradha Marwah-Roy, Rani Dharker, Meera Syal, Anita Rau Badami, Uma Parameswaran and Ameena Meer etc. To illustrate the authors' concern and themes, instances of some writers are given below, just to name a few since one's work is not concerned with 'diaspora' as a theme.

Shauna Singh Baldwin (1962), an Indo-Canadian writer, who belongs to the Sikh community, was born in Montreal and her family returned to India in 1972, when Shauna was ten and grew up in Delhi. She addresses herself as a second generation diasporic writers, such as Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banarjee Divakurani. Baldwin has initiated her career as an author of English *Lessons and Other Stories* (1996) and co-author of *A Foreign Visitor's Survival Guide to America*. Her debut novel, *What the Body Remembers*, was published in 1999. On April 14th, 2000 she became the recipient of Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book in the Canada Caribbean region. Her second novel, *The Tiger Claw* (2004) was the finalist for the 2004 Guller Prize.

Kiran Desai (1971) is the daughter of the distinguished Indo English writer, Anita Desai. Her first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* published in 1998, won the Betty Trask Award, a prize given by the Society of Authors for the new novels by citizens of the Commonwealth of the Nations. Her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* won the 2000 Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award. Kiran Desai in her novels explores with intimacy and insight the contemporary issues like globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence.

Uma Parameswaran (1938) incorporates the South Asian Canadian immigrant experience in her works. As an Indian born Canadian, she has successfully portrayed the

diasporic consciousness of an immigrant. Her cultural affinity with India makes her an alien in Canada where she makes repeated attempts to transmute and transform her identity. Her writings comprise various genres like short stories, plays and poems with common themes which ascertain her Western experience with the Indian realities. Through her writings she has been projecting Indian culture in Canada.

Anjana Appanchana (1956) is a recipient of O-Henry Festival Prize and Creative Writing Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in the US. Her first novel *Listening Now* (1997) speaks about love, brutal effects of marriage, hypocrisy of traditional roles and tragic relationships. Her first work *Incantations and Other Stories* (1991) and debut Novel *Listening Now* (1998) are unflinching portrayals of battered matrimonial ties.

Globalisation, cross-fertilization and multiculturalism have brought many changes all over the world. An inflow of people started to migrate to the western countries for the enhancement of better life, economy, education etc., as it has provided opportunities for them to grow in the midst of controversial issues in a foreign land. Robin Cohen defines diaspora as “a group that scatters for aggressive or voluntary purposes including revolutionary minorities struggling for an imaginary homeland as well as travelling for commercial trade” (1997: 24). The immigrants faced opposition, up rootedness, and loneliness they even witnessed discrimination, intergenerational conflicts and cultural dilemmas. These issues are covered by the diasporic writers, in their literary genres since all of them have experienced at some point of time in their life. Nevertheless, none of the selected authors refer to the Anglo Indian woman since the Anglian woman has an “in-between” space in the post-colonial debate “which allows for much diversity and flexibility in identity.” (Bhaba , 1990: 211).

However, some literary critics consider *The God of Small Things* similar to the diasporic novel for many reasons. First, its publication occurred outside the Indian lands. Next, Roy criticizes Christianity. One of the features of diasporic literature is the critics against religions as Salman Rushdie did against Hinduism and Islam. Then, Roy deals with homelessness and lost, an experience felt by the immigrants, of Ammu when expelled by her brother Chacko for loving the Untouchable Velutha and also of the twins, the children of the divorced mother. Finally, her concern with the subaltern and discrimination based on race and caste which lead the transgressors of their boundaries to tragic ends: death of Velutha, the outcaste/Untouchable and Ammu, the upper caste/touchable.

Dalit writers in their homeland have come across with various obstacles, challenges, distractions and setbacks. But this situation did not pull them back or made aloof; it made them believe that change is good. Those on the top, the creamy layer, get all the accolades and laurels; those at the bottom, end up in the dustbins of history. The inequalities of the pure and of the polluted people are more often not reproduced, not negated, in Indian literature.

Hence Dalit writings actually include two types of people: those are doubly underprivileged and the others who are doubly privileged. This is where one has to be able to make one's own distinctions. Though, the fictitious representations of these writers are common, their views, resonances and narratives are different. They have different socio-cultural backgrounds and literary ancestry and hence the thematic preoccupations and literary styles are also different.

Dalit writing today links the past and the present and brings forward identities across communities. It makes way for the birth of new expressions of a global culture. It is the basis wherein the struggle against racism, class structures, gender and other forms of oppression

would gain momentum. It is a paradigm of bringing together literary writers, critics and other cultural activists which provide new opportunities for the birth of different social movements. This reinforces the conviction that democracy in the form of a struggle over values, practices, social relations and oppression consolidates the foundation for a congenial social order.

Dalit writings showcase the mental agonies and trauma in humankind when discriminated and oppressed from their homeland. The reasons behind the perpetuation of their situation by the Brahminic hegemony could be economic, social and political, but their experiences are common. The Dalits suffer from anguish and trauma because they are exploited in their homeland. Dalit writers have made valuable contributions towards the progress of Indian Literature.

## **2.7. Dalit Literature: Subverting the Monopoly**

India is identified for its rich culture and heritage, and for enormous diverse population that had added to its vibrant characters since ages. In India, the caste system is labelled as a group varying in size from the handful upper caste people for many thousands of years. The caste system has a history, which traces its evolution through the ages, and the people belonging to these they are called as low castes and termed as ‘Untouchables’. After the British era, the ‘Untouchables’ have chosen the word through which “Dalit” came into existence. The history of struggle for self-liberation, made Dalits to organize into Dalit movements which became pathways for Dalits to raise their voice of protest for equality and justice which was heard through their personal narratives, as a result, Dalit literature appeared around 1960’s.

Literature produced from the pen of Dalit writers is a new emerging trend in the Indian literary scenario. Often called as “Dalit Literature”, this genre has emerged with new concepts



of indulgence, with the set values of principles in the social engineering structures of ‘human streams of consciousness. This phenomenon gives an overarching occupation with the location of Dalit’s in the caste - based Hindu society, and their struggles for self-esteem, righteousness and excellence. This literature is a natural possession of Dalits reflecting their harsh reality. The arts were the most potent tools of giving sanctity and significance to a natural phenomenon, not to be equated with what were considered to be the animist world of ‘primitive’ people.

The idea, that the low-caste birth, which was taught to be the curse of one’s sins in the previous birth, should be lived accordingly so as to get relieved of the curse and have a noble birth in the following one. This had been dinned into the minds and psyche of the people belonging to the lowest strata of caste system through various arts and literary forms. Myths and Puranas<sup>12</sup>, folk-tales, proverbs, riddles, games and sports, traditional fictions and so on, and along with this continuous brainwashing, these people have also been threatened that it would not be proper on their part to think and act rationally in matters pertaining to physical labour.

Even in this modern age of immense scientific, technical and technological advancement, even the psyche of the youth belonging to these castes is burdened with this sense of guilt. In addition, they live on with the inferiority-complex that they are sinners and that their low-caste birth is the divine punishment meted out to them. In fact, this psychological construct of the oppressed castes was the foremost of all information that one could gather about their life.

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<sup>12</sup> Myth refers to any story that explains the origin of some practice and traditions generally based upon history, religions or supernatural. It may not be entirely true or may not be true at all, but it does reinforce people’s beliefs to be put in practices. However, the Puranas are religious works belonging to ancient times. Which are rich in spiritual and philosophical knowledge. Their essential purpose is to elaborate upon the wisdom and the teachings of the Vedas, with the help of stories, drama and allegories so that people who have no access to the knowledge of Vedas can understand them. Puranas do not necessarily deal with past only. They may also speak about future Examples and case studies are used even in today’s education to help students learn the basics or understand difficult topics. Traditionally, the Puranas helped religious students engage their minds in the contemplation of God and pursue religious knowledge in a less stressful way.

Thus, believing themselves to be sinners and accepting all the oppressions and humiliations meted out to them at the hands of the ruling castes as the ‘divine punishment’ for the sins committed by them in their previous births the ‘marginalized sections of the society live on, feeling resigned to their abominable state of affairs.

While the folklores and the terms used therein construct religious aspects, beliefs and ingredients; another dimension of it plays a divisive role in their lives, segregating people. This can be clearly seen in several folklores. The folk-song called “Ponnar Shankar Kadhai” (The Tale of Ponnar-Shankar which is the song that tells the story of Annaamaar Saami.) This folk-song which is so beautifully constructed with a magnificent story-line which is firmly rooted in the rich tradition of the region called KonguNaadu, telling the tale with such clarity and finesse that invariably brings back to mind the battle-scenes of Kurukshethra has always proved very successful.

## **2.8. Characteristics of Dalit Literature**

The born out of such a situation is determined by resistance and struggle for change. The literature of suffering is the literature of change. Via literary works cultural spaces of various communities are protected and preserved. Literature has the power and ability of construction in the society. It also provides opportunities for self-realization to both the individual and the community by revealing and remembering the cultural, historical and traditional practices. It is being adopted as a strategy for social change and social movements by the people in power, since literature possesses a greater value in the political dynamics of any state. The new category of writing “Dalit literature” has established itself as a new literary movement in several regions in India in the last four decades.

Dalit writing is revolutionary in its aims: the destruction of the caste system and the establishment of equality in the social and political spheres. It identified two of the important functions of Dalit writing. Firstly, Dalit authors attempt to deconstruct conventional caste dominant identity of India and seek to construct a distinct Dalit identity in relation to the postcolonial Indian identity. It seeks to reject those conventions and cultural norms which not only marginalized the Dalit voice but also the voice of other oppressed communities including women. It reveals the collective consciousness of community whose voice had remained suppressed through the annals of history. It inaugurates a new era of cultural transformation in the Indian context, and inevitably reaches out to the global phenomenon called postmodernism.

Dalit literature is a literature of protest, pain and agony. The works of Dalit feminists like Sivagami, Bama Faustina and Sugirtharani assume special significance, because they reveal the specific problems of Dalit women. Dr Jyoti Lanjewar (1950-) is one of the foremost Marathi women writers, widely acclaimed and much anthologized and also a pioneering Dalit women poet today. She is recognized as noted critic, poet, columnist, activist, short story writer, biographer, linguist, feminist scholar and academic. She has authored more than fifteen books and remains one of the leading voices in Modern Indian Poetry today.

Dalit writing is addressing the oppressed, the Untouchables, the victims, and the oppressors. Dalit writers have employed various genres for self-articulation. Their choices have begun to leave a positive impact on mainstream literature. Poetry comes first, followed by other kinds of writing such as autobiography, drama criticism etc. it is not just modern, but a new kind of writing in terms of experience and sensibility, structure and style. The most notable among the Dalit poets are Narayan Surve, Nandedo Dhasal, Keshav Meshram, Mallika Amar Sheikh, etc.

The Dalit poets destroy and reverse the established symbols and myths, and construct their own myth. Narayana Reddy's poetry speaks on diverse themes as womanhood, motherhood, friendship, honest commitment, human values and love. In the postcolonial era Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable* (1935) and *The Road* (1961), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (1975), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) have faithfully documented the social history of the Untouchables.

Collections of short stories have been published throughout the nineties and thereafter. Apart from Sivakami's three collections and Bama Faustina's two collections, there have been many more writers who have brought out collections of short stories and continue to publish in journals and little magazines. Some of the short-story writers have written novels, poetry and plays as well. Abimani has brought out three collections: *Nokkadu* (1993), *Tettam* (2001) and *Oorchoru* (2003). Short stories bring out the gender pressures over Dalit women and caste hegemony over women at large. Dalit writers, thus offer thought-provoking subtexts to gender-caste traffic in Dalit lives.

## **2.9. The Militant Spirit of Dalit Writers**

Dalit writers write from several regional languages into English, which contributed their segment of regional transformation to this new eco of just awakened Dalit consciousness. According to Dangle in his text *A corspe in the Well: Translation from Modern Marati Dalit Autobiography* quotes:

*Dalit literature is not simple literature...Dalit literature is associated with a movement to bring about the change...At the very first glance, it will be strongly evident that there is no established critical theory or point of view behind them (i.e. Dalit writings); instead, there is new thinking and a new point of view. (1994: 8)*

Dalit literature is the best to represent the ‘realistic experience’ of Dalit’s. It is the experience of this exclusive Dalitness that Dalit literature has been challenged to represent the reality. This literature uses both in positive and negative force, by portraying the social realities both the oppressive systems of power and of the working conditions. This has produced a literature that is at level mimetic. Dalits are no longer people without history, and are much less the subalterns in the society’s history, its demonized Ravana or violated Angulimala, Ekalavya or Shurpanaka. Hence, they are the central figures of their own history, and from this history they originate the confidence and the right to assert their humanity. Dalit literature has emerged to enable the development of new consciousness and identity among Dalits.

“Dalit consciousness” entrenched with ‘Dalit aesthetics’, is a free expression of authentic feelings of being Dalit and as writers. Dalit literature shows dynamism with the taste of their Dalit experience, a kind of Untouchability, not simply referring to growing brutalities of the past but also to the insidious violence of the present, with the categories of beauty, justice, truth and honesty. The writers did make a humble attempt to point out the core issues of its ideology.

The beginnings of Dalit literature are often located in medieval Bhakti Literature<sup>13</sup> for two compelling complementary reasons. One, most of the Bhakti saint-poets were low-caste

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<sup>13</sup> The Bhakti Literature is the most important development of the medieval India (800-1700). It is an influential social reformation in Hinduism. It provided an individual-focused alternative path to spirituality regardless of one's caste of birth or gender. The movement's major achievement was its abolition of idol worship. It emphasized people's everyday speech, rejecting the elite tradition of Sanskrit.

local preachers, as Kabir, Namdev, Chokhamela formed the backbone of the medieval anti-caste movement. They launched a blistering attack on canonical Hindu practices.

Dalit literature is a consciousness of its radical identity that has allowed itself to emerge through antagonistic, quasi-militant ways of protest. The aesthetics of Dalit consciousness has undergone strategic shifts, since the Bhakti-period when for the first time some smoldering of discontent grew against the Brahmanical orthodoxy by the low-caste Bhakti poets. The Bhakti Movement, a socio-religious expression of the revolt of the masses began to originate. It was first in Tamil Nadu but soon spread to Karnataka and Maharashtra, and eventually swept through the whole of North India. It is undeniable fact that the Bhakti's represented the aspirations of the demoralized masses as against the interests of the twice born. Bhakti Movement was quite paradoxical in nature in the sense that seemingly, it was a doctrine of submission and devoutness. Yet it is pooled with a high-degree of activism. It was an unfathomable mix of renunciation and protest or both. A whole range of poets straddling across entire India descended upon the literary firmament unsettling the given standards of aesthetics as well as social practices. Ajay Navariya, who is a media representative for the Dalits literary studies opines in a group discussions that is quoted by Udaykumar in *The Political Philosophy of Antonio Gramsci and B.R. Ambedkar* as follows: "The authentic representation of Dalit experience is the elements that combine the idea of Dalit consciousness chetana the fundamental component of an emerging Dalit aesthetics Soundarya Shastra" . (2013: 148)

Dalit literature is the literature which is apprehensive with the socially deprived, and which emphasizes the socio-political physique of the downtrodden and the oppressed. Though the novels of Indian English writers like Mulk Raj Anand his work *Untouchable* (1935), Prabathi Mukherjee's *Beyond the four Varna* (1988), was the first literary work to focus upon

the plight of the outcaste. Though very few non-Dalit writers have written about the lives of Dalits which are mostly of mere sympathy or so, it does not produce revolutionary literature. However, the Dalit movement started in literature in the state of Maharashtra and Karnataka under the leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. It is a literature of militant protest against upper caste.

The rise of Dalit literature is based on the Dalit consciousness and it represents the harsh lived experiences of marginalized Dalit people. Dalit literary production represents a considerable emerging trend in the Indian literary scene. Giving its over awing obsession with the location of Dalits in the caste-based Hindu society, and their struggle for dignity, justice and equality, Dalit literature is by nature oppositional. Dalit literature is the mirror of the caste society. It is through Dalit literature that the reader became aware of the social reality and inequality. The Dalit writers view Ekalavya as their forefather.

However, in later times it is Dalit literature that has emerged basing on the ideas of Dr. Babaseheb Ambedkar, in spite of the movement for equality it was started in different states. For example pioneers in Malayam literature: Narayana Guru, in Tamil: E.V. Ramaswami Naikar, in Kannada: Mahatma Basweshwar, they were the greatest personalities who fought for equality.

The aim of Dalit Literature is to protest against the mainstream caste system which incubates heavy injustice on Dalits and exposes the evil and hypocrisy of the higher castes. R.G. Jadhav quotes from, *Dalit Feelings Aesthetics and Detachment*:

*That social awareness and an aesthetic outlook are present in Dalit literature in a natural way... social content and aesthetic forms are indivisible in literature. Dalit Literature is prominently a literature of social awareness but*

*formal matters are also to be looked into. Social awareness can also take a distinct form in each writer, in each work, thus showing that it is not merely a matter of realistic content. (2013: 303-304)*

There is an urgent need to create a separate aesthetics for Dalit literature when figuring in terms favour for Dalits, an aesthetics based on the real experiences of life. According to Limbale in his work *Towards the Aesthetics of Dalit Literature* he opines:

*Upper caste Hindu society was not content with avoiding the Dalit in its literature. It also made sure that Dalit's could not speak in the tongue of the upper caste. Having determined that Dalit's were impure and polluted, it legislated that they were not to learn or read Sanskrit, the language of the God's and so, the ultimate trope of Brahmanism. (2004: 4)*

Dalit literature has many qualities which distinguished it from mainstream literature. It has a scorching strength, an authenticity, a scene of social mission and expressive vigour and vibrancy. It is a literature that calls for a change in the attitude of the society towards certain basic issues concerning individual relationship, social organization and caste-based discrimination. Its message is clear and resounding and its quality of literary expression is also demonstrably of a higher order.

## **2.10. Dalit Literature Written by Women**

Writing about oneself is a conscious act as it represents the subject's desire to express and thus record feelings and emotions as well as event. It helps the formation of distinct identity and of the sense of self, as a writer able to physically view on palm leaves or what she feels



about herself. Often it can be followed by period of reflection, observation and even recantation. Out of all this, a being emerges, a creation often of fractured, disjointed account of life which does not always follow a chronological pattern.

In India the previous British-Raj society is a male dominated society, all men inherently tend to dominate women. Thus, Dalit women are thrice oppressed: by the upper caste men, upper caste women and their own men. They have to fight against all kind of atrocities and poverty. They are weak and deprived of money, they have to double their struggle against both the hierarchic and patriarchal systems in India. Therefore, the plight of Dalit women in the Indian society can be simply perceived as horrible as they are oppressed on the basis of class, caste and gender. They are considered as the symbol of sex and object of pleasure. In the text

A Dalit woman feels disillusioned, deprived and alienated. The position of women is both pitiful and humiliating. Dalit women are thrice oppressed by patriarchy, class and caste. She is subjected to severe exploitation at work places and at the same time beaten up in her house as well and located at the lowest socio-economic strata of the society; i.e. Dalit women are the most unfortunate in free India. They are always treated with such a low esteem that they have no status but the one of a mere slipper worn by men, and always regarded as inferior to man.

Indian literature and Indian English literature have misrepresented Dalit women. Most of the upper caste male writers biased toward Dalit women. They portrayed Dalit women as the victims of lust of higher caste men and were never revolutionaries to fight against the injustices perpetuated upon them.

In the Beginning of 19th century women condition was miserable. They did not get equal treatment and were denied education. So many reformers tried to salvage it by various attempts

aimed at purifying it like: Dayananda Saraswathi the founder of “Arya Samaj”, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Eswar Chandra, Vidhya Sagar of Brahma Samaj etc. unfortunately, the practices of “Sati”<sup>14</sup>, child marriages, caste system which they wanted to destroy are still being practiced in India. Any movement that has tried to destroy Hinduism fails, because reformers have tried to help Hinduism survive rather than liquidate it. As Leela Mullatti quotes in her *The Bakthi Movement and the Status of Women*:

*The cruelest custom of ‘Sati’ and the suffering of widows are well known.  
If the widow did not become a ‘Sati’ her life was worse than being in hell- with  
regular torture and exploitation by all male and female members of the family.  
(1989: 2)*

The high caste Hindu women started writing their autobiographies in the beginning of 19th century. The question of caste and the issues of Dalit women were invisible in their writings. Since, like upper caste women, Dalit men neglected the cause of the women of their communities, Dalit women have written their own autobiographies. Most of these women write in regional languages, and their works have been later translated into English. The arrival of Dalit women writings into arena of Indian literature is a recent phenomenon. Dalit women writers find the labels “Dalit” and “Feminist” too restrictive and they demand a separate space

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<sup>14</sup> Sati (also called suttee) is the practice by which a recently widowed woman commits suicide after her husband's death. The word is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘*asti*’, which means ‘she is pure or true’. The best known form of Sati is when a woman immolates herself, either voluntarily or forcefully. However other forms of Sati exist, including being buried alive with the husband's corpse and drowning. Sati is now illegal and no longer practiced.

for themselves. Mohanty Talpade mentions in his text *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* that:

*Narration of Dalit women historical experience become crucial to thinking and theorizing not because they present an unmediated version of 'truth' but because they destabilize received truths and locate debate in the complexities and contradiction of historical life. (2003: 244)*

### **2.10.1 Black American Women Vs Dalit Women**

looking at the struggles of the Dalit women's movement, one finds a clear similarity with the movements led by Black American women in the United States and that of the Aboriginals in Australia. These movements are born out of the anguish of their unjust social system based on caste, class inequalities and racial discrimination and have become expression of the agony suffered by these deprived groups for ages.

All of the three movements are in a more or less similar situation where their interest is represented by others or they only had a token appearance in other Rights Movements. Like black women and Aboriginal Women, Dalit women were also oppressed. Though they had played an equal role in the movement for liberation from slavery, they never got a similar status as men even after slavery was abolished. Elements of patriarchy had a strong hold on the minds of Black males and they demanded a secondary and subservient position for women.

Numerous prominent writers contributed to the movement, like: Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of Rights of Women* (1792), Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Virginia Woolf's *A Room of one's own*, Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, Fredrich Engels's *The Origin of The Family* (1884), John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of women* (1869) etc. These writers speak

out the real woman who struggles with social norms, which are extremely propagated by a patriarchal society.

### **2.10.2. Dalit Feminism**

In the Indian social ladder Dalit refers to on the lowest step. Dalit feminism points out repeatedly that Dalit struggle has tended to forget a gender perspective. In Dalit society every woman lives under the double power of caste and patriarchy. They are doubly oppressed. Women's are considered as the symbol of sex and object of pleasure. A study of Dalit feminist writing reveals a tale of endless miseries, inhuman victimization and shocking gender discrimination. Neeru Tandon opines in the text, *Feminism a Paradigm Shift*:

*A Broad understanding of feminism includes women acting, speaking and writing on women's issues and rights identifying social justice in the status quo and bringing their own unique perspective to bear on issues. (2008: 2)*

All over the world woman problems remain the same, whether she is an American, Canadian, Australian, and African or Indian. In India, women were not privileged enough to write. It was during the late nineteenth century that some upper caste Indian women started writing about their personal narratives, which includes the full-length structured autobiographies, personal letters, diaries, memories mainly from West and Eastern India. This could be because these two coastal regions in the East and West came in touch with the British. It is through English education that liberal ideas brought about reforms, which were often discussed, debated, and contested. In families with liberal and reformist perspectives, women were sometimes encouraged to be liberated, and to become the earliest writers of autobiographies.

The marginalized sections have been profane with their singular experience of oppression, exploitation, subjugation, suffering and endurance and remained silent for long humiliation, which had sensitized their identity and urge them to make themselves move from invisibility to visibility. Bama Faustina, Angelou, Santha Bai, Sharan Kumar Limbale, Toni Morrison are the best example of marginalized ones in their respective countries. Dalit women writers and Black women writers have been in search for meaningful isolation but against scored meaningless and moral decay. The journey made by Dalit women writers and many other contemporary Black women writers marked a new herald of women's writings from the marginalized worlds. Patricia Waugh explains the process of recognition as:

*Women writers are beginning to construct an identity out of the recognition that women need to discover, and must fight for, a sense of unified self-hood, a rational, coherent, effective identity. As male writers lament its demise, women have not yet experienced that subjectivity which will give them a sense of personal autonomy, continuous identity, a history, and agency in the world. (1989: 6)*

Feminism implies a vision of reality from the women perspective. Women are oppressed and exploited within the family, at work and in society, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation. On women agitation which has taken the basic issues of women, Nero Tandon argues in *Feminism: A Paradigm Shift*:

*Feminist consciousness has certainly given a fresh ardor and excitement to the literary studies. A responsibility new perception of women in literature and the work by women writers have unveiled some of the prejudices at work in the traditional approaches to literature hither to dominate by a masculine perspective. (2008: 23)*

Dalit feminism recalls the joint oppression of the caste and gender faced by multiple Dalit women. Dalit feminist standpoint is a protest of difference to main stream feminist movement and its inherent Brahmanical and patriarchal connection. It argues through analysis of the material basis of patriarchy at different access and control over labour, sexuality and reproduction of caste, classes and community. Neru Tandon in her work *Feminism a Paradigm Shift* opines that:

*Feminism implies a vision of reality from the perspective of the women. The Third World feminism have used definition of feminism to mean and awareness of women's oppression and exploitation within the family, at work and in society, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation. Women agitation which have taken the basic issues of women, subordination in family and which have challenged political economic system supporting the traditional status of women, constitute the core of feminist movement (Ibid: 27).*

But nowadays women have started protesting against discrimination; oppression and injustices leveled upon them and are trying to create a female space for them. Education is being denied to them. Their life is a world of difference between theory and practice. In *Journey to Freedom: Dalit Narratives*, B. Kesharshivam declares that, apian, anger and consciousness gave birth to Dalit literature:

*Like Black literature and women writing, Dalit literature is engaged in search of self-identity. Guided by Ambedkar ideology, Dalit writers use their literature as a movement against mainstream literature that supported inequality. (2004: 183)*

For many centuries in India, Dalit women are seen as the property of superior caste men, for them life is very miserable and they are considered to be the most underprivileged group left out at the bottom of the hierarchal caste society. These women, who are primarily agricultural labourers, live outside the villages in their ghettos. Daily chores of work would make an encyclopedia on working culture. they bear the effects of the hard manual labour on their body patiently. A Dalit woman is natural creative force. She creates songs and sings aloud to amidst the pain of work. According to Kofi Annan, [www.betterworld.net](http://www.betterworld.net): “Women themselves have the right to live with dignity, in freedom from fear. On this International Women’s Day, let us eradicate ourselves to making that a reality” (Koffi Annan).

The best example for Dalit women today are: Mayawati, an Indian politician who served four terms as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, and as head of the Bahujan Samaj Party. She focuses on a platform of social change to improve the welfare of the weakest strata of Indian society. Aishwarya Rai Bachan the Bollywood actress, Meira Kumar the first Dalit Lok Sabha speaker from (2009-2014) and five times Member of Parliament, Sivakami, the Indian Administrative Services officer and writer, Prof. S. Prasanna Sree is a poet, activist and wrote tribal script of more than eighteen languages, Bama Faustina Faustina a teacher as well as Dalit writer and so on.

As long as the problems of women remain as ‘her’ problems, and are not treated as social problems, the attempts to foster solution to these problems cannot be sped. Indian women are socially politically economically are equal to men. They have to change their mindset and come out of the shackles of social evils. After that they can get greater freedom, better education, self-reliance, independence, good jobs better treatment from men.

Gender discrimination is of perpetual existence within the Indian society. Traditionally patriarchal norms have relegated women to secondary status within their household and workplace. This drastically affects women health, financial status, education and political involvement. With equal wages for men and women gaps can be reduced. Marginalized women should know that they have constitutional rights such as the right to quality healthcare, economic security and access to education and political power. These can be possible only through active participation of women. In *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory from Structuralism to Ecocriticism* Wollstonecraft proposed that:

*Women must be treated as equal because they play a crucial role in society, namely bringing up children. Women themselves should strive to become ‘\_companions’ rather than mere wives to their husbands. For this change in status and role, women should acquire an education. (2009: 85)*

The term gender connotes the power difference between men and women in all spheres of life. Gender is the most pervasive form of inequality, as it operated across all classes, caste and communities. Gender based violence is yet another implication of gender where in women continue to be victims of violence and exploitation from womb to tomb just because they happen to be women. Gender equalities can be explained from different perspectives like biological, psychological, materialistically, sociological and religious, according to Trilok Sharma in his book *Dalit Women Issues and Perspectives* states that:

*Generally in the male-dominated society, polygamy is allowed and more so in many Dalit families. Because of this the position of the women deteriorated. Joint family system, polygamy, property structure, early marriage, and permanent widowhood were hurdles for the development of all women in early period. (2011:*

6)



Being a Dalit, refers to a woman who fights injustices perpetuated upon her in this patriarchal society. The Dalit women are subjected to severe exploitation at the work place also suffer on caste ground and gang rapes from upper castes, while at the same time they may be beaten up in their own house. The Dalits are living under the horrific tension of being burnt alive.

### **2.10.3. Masculinity vs Femininity**

Femininity and masculinity or one's 'gender identity' (Burke, Stets and Pirog-Good 1988; Spence 1985) implies the extent to which any individuals, regardless their biological sex, see themselves as masculine or feminine, with reference to the meaning of man or woman given by the society. Femininity and masculinity are initiated in the social codes rather than the biological nature: the former refers to 'gender' whereas the latter means 'sex'. Since the first building of the society in history, it is generally known, according to the social rules and roles, that men are masculine whereas women define themselves as feminine. However, these definitions do not reflect the absolute truth about the human inner psychological state. In fact, not all men are absolutely masculine and not all women are necessary feminine. Thus, though the terms "sex" – "gender" differences recall notions as male/female and masculinity/femininity which are traditionally defined in the society as the psychological and social projection of the male's self, and similarly is femininity for the female's self.

According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (Sally Wehmeier), Masculinity is defined as "the quality of being masculine" while femininity is defined as "the fact of being a woman; the qualities that are naturally seen to be typical for women". The inner feeling of belonging to a distinct gender, masculine or feminine, is viewed in different ways: a biological

based meaning; a sociological based meaning and finally, psychological based meaning. In this context, the biological translation is constant and relies on the physical physiological state of the individual's body whereas the social and psychological are variants and depends on the individuals' minds.

In nearly all cultures, stereotypically, men are active, competitive and aggressive while women are docile, cooperative and passive. These ideologies were thought to be natural characteristics of males and females. Therefore, those measures were at the core of the social problems of gender identification in cases of the existence of masculine females and feminine males (Terman and Miles 1936).

Some characteristics are socially conceptualized as being masculine or feminine such as the colours: blue and pink, weak and strong, tough and soft and so on. The social descriptions as pink, weak and soft are signifiers of the feminine traits and have given advantages and prestige to the man over the woman for long centuries. Some scholars still argue that these differences are rooted in the individual's biology while others insist on the fact that the differences are not innate but socially constructed.

Dalit women are downtrodden among downtrodden. They suffer in the family first, because they are women and then they have to face the society as they are Dalits. Caste based discrimination and atrocities against Dalits increased alarmingly all over India. Majority of the stories read and heard are of bright young Dalit girls who are punished by the upper caste teachers in rural area of India, for daring to score good grades. Such feelings rejected most girls in this situation who drop out of school and have nowhere to turn but seek profession to be manual scavengers and other repulsive jobs.

Dalit women suffer an endemic gender and caste discrimination and violence. Their socio-economic vulnerability and lack of political voice increase their exposure to potentially violent situation. Dalit women are clearly subjected to widespread exploitation and discrimination. Kamala Bhasin , says in her text, *Understanding Gender*

*Patriarchy is a contagious system of oppression. It is like a virus, it creates an unending spree of exploitation of women. If one looks deeply at the family in India, there is serious discrimination against women.*

(1993: 56)

Dalit women face violence when they try to access rights and entitlements provided by the constitution and the government. The recent years have also seen a rising violence against Dalit human rights defenders, and Dalit women activists are all the more vulnerable in this scenario as the violence against them takes the shape and form of sexual violence: rape, gang rape, being paraded naked etc. Aloysius Irudayam, P.Jayshee, P.Mangubhai, Joel G.Lee quotes in the text *Dalit Women Speak Out:*

*Violence is also the core outcome of gender based inequalities, shaped, compounded and intensified by caste discrimination. In an Indian context, violence acts as a crucial social mechanism to maintain Dalit women caste and gender subordinate position to men and particularly dominant caste men. (2011: 3)*

#### **2.10.4. Dalit Women and Community Belonging**

Dalit women have been active throughout history, though often this has not been recorded. They continue to play a critical role in the movements for land rights. They are making their mark as independent thinkers and writers in the literary world and visionary leaders in the

Panchayat Raj institutions. Violence and impunity are used to keep them in their place. Dr.B.R.

Ambedkar states:

*I am conscious of the fact that if women are concentrated with the Untouchability will progress. I believe that women should organize and this will play a major role in bringing an end to social evils...the progress of the Dalit community should be measured in terms of the progress made by its womenfolk. Every woman should stand by her husband and not as his slave but as his contemporary, and his friend. (15)*

Since the late 1980s, Dalit women have increasingly felt and articulated the need for a separate platform, created, developed and controlled by themselves, through which they could forge their own identity, fight for their rights and find solutions to their particular problems as Dalits and as women. Conscious that the call for a separate platform could be interpreted as a divisive move by both Dalit men and non-Dalit women, the proponents of such a special forum emphasize that their initiative must not be mistaken for a separatist movement. Rather they assert that there is a need for strong alliances between the Dalit movement, the women's movement and the Dalit women's movement if their common vision of social, economic and political equality and justice for all is to be realized.

Unlike Dalit men, only a few Dalit women have written their autobiographies, their narratives of pain. Most of them have been written in regional languages and they have hardly been translated into English. The position of Dalit women is as marginalized in Dalit literature as they are in their community. Education gave them the chance to narrate their voices of distress, and sorrows in their autobiographical writings.

A Dalit woman is yet to emerge to give society a common platform. It is heartening to see however, that for the last under the banner of National Dalit Women Federation, they have started organizing themselves. But it has not been able to reach Dalit women across the country. Having distinct socio-cultural backgrounds and diverse language groups, Dalit women will take time to forget their differences to forge unity among themselves. The fact that Dalit women's literature and more particularly Dalit women's autobiographies have started coming to the forefront, shows that Dalit women, if not collectively, at least individually, have started raising their voices.

Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak categorized women, non-whites, non-Europeans, and oppressed castes and frames them in the subaltern description in her *Can the Subaltern Speak?* She brings forward a series of questions regarding representation, resistance, cultural subjugation of the perspectives of marginalized, exploited, oppressed. She centers the debate on the women as 'Satis' on the husband's pyres as subjects and constructed as property and objects in the lengthy discussions of the representatives of the society. She says: The Subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as pious item. Representation has not withered away. (1988: 4)

The literature after 1980's and 1990's raised the Dalit voice could that find a place in the Tamil literary canon. Until then the Dalits' voices remained unheard and the Dalit consciousness was submerged within the greater mainstream ideology of discourse. With the emergence of Dalit women writers, patriarchal hegemony became the central subject of exploration. They prepared the ground for a sustained critique of not only domestic violence, abuse of the Dalit women but also of the hegemonic bureaucracy and social structures.

Before the analyses of Dalit women's personal narratives, it is, perhaps, necessary to know their socio-political and economic conditions in the Indian society. Dalit women today need special attention. They are one of the largest socially segregated groups all over India. They are discriminated against three times over as they are poor, women, and Dalits. Dalit literature breaks thousands years of silence in the literature and tries to sensitize the society through writings. The traditional taboos are the same for Dalit men and Dalit women. However, Dalit women have to deal with them more often.

Men are dominant in Dalit communities. Even in the 21st millennium, gender alienation, age-old-caste dehumanization and perpetuation of the cruel forms of discrimination continue to be practiced. The discrimination that Dalit women are subjected to is similar to racial discrimination, where the discriminated is treated as Untouchable due to descent, for being born into a particular community. The caste system declares Dalit women as “impure” therefore Untouchable, and hence socially excluded. This is a complete negation and violation of women's human rights.

Thus, Dalit literature aims at the welfare of the society. It plays a vital role in creating awareness among the people and shows solutions to their problems. The writers who create such a literature remain in the history as the visionaries and pathfinders. Dalit novels and stories can be treated as historical, functionalized autobiographies and retrieval of social memory.

With the emergence of autobiographies, Dalit literature is significantly related to the role of memory in projecting both individual and collective consciousness within the same narrative form. The women writers have begun to construct an identity out of the recognition that women need to discover, and must fight for a sense of unified self-hood, a rational, coherent, effective

identity. There are few Dalit women writers hardly ever speaking their mind but there is fight for recognition to restore their integrity as: Shantabai Kamble's (Marathi) *Majya Jalamachi Chittrakatha* (1983), Bama Faustina's (Tamil) *Karukku* (1992), Sivakami (Tamil) *The Grip of Change* (2006), Baby Kamble (Marathi) *The Prison we Broke* (2008) and Urmila Pavar (Kanada) *The Weave of my Life* (2009).

Only a few of Dalit women have written their autobiographies in their local languages since English is still a dominant language for the upper caste and class. Nevertheless, there are many narrated autobiographies of illiterate Dalit women who cannot write but can recount their life-stories to others who can document them.

Studying such a genre of literature will definitely give a new insight and enrich our understanding about autobiographies. Indeed, Dalit women write to articulate themselves to record their experience of their humiliation and hurt of age old oppression. Neeru Tandon in *Feminism: A Paradigm Shift* declares: "Through this quest journey, female consciousness has excavated the truth that the desire for power is very close to her heart despite perilous consequences". (2008: 29)

## **2.11. Indian Comparative Literature and Translation**

Comparative literature is one of the most widely explored and academic literary disciplines. Any literary work that emphasizes on studying two or more texts to explore the similarities and differences among them can be labelled as "comparative literature". The examination and understanding of the text structure, the writing style, the embedded themes or the philosophic vision of the writers could be at the core of the literary comparison. It is the

study of the artistic creative imagination written in different places and in various linguistic codes.

In his article, "Comparative Literature in India: Theory and Practice" (1989) Amiya Dev bases his discussion on the social characteristics of India: the multiplicity of the languages, the cultures and, thus, the literatures in the different regions of India are in fact symptoms of diversity. He problematizes Indian literature as being in a singular form. Meanwhile, Dev also argues that to speak of Indian literature in the plural is a similar problematic. Both options identify the convergence and divergence concerning the unity and diversity of India through the comparative approach of its literature. The aim of comparison, in one's opinion, should be to examine and find out the underlying components that distinguish the works as great literary arts and their valuation in the world literary stream. The comparatist also checks any resemblance and defines the differences between those literary works produced in different countries or continents and/or in different languages by different authors with deep understanding of their backgrounds. In his article, "From Politics to Poetics : Dalit Literature and Indian Dalit Fiction in English." *The Odisha Association for English studies*, R.Narayan Dash writes:

*Dalit literature, which is most often autobiographical narrative connecting the individual self with the community, has been bracketed with literatures of the oppressed like Black American Literature, Aboriginal literature of Australia, Newzealand and Canada that have been collectively known as Fourth-World Literature. They do share a common postulate: resistance to establishment as power centre. (2019: 68)*

In India, there could be only few kilometres separating two regions/tribes speaking different languages, with different religious beliefs, and embracing totally different cultures. Then, automatically their literary production, if any, would be of different features and heritage.



Hence, Indian narratives, from different geographical regions, are worth to be compared in literary studies and criticism. One of the main characteristics of comparative literature is to explore the inter-relationship between different literatures, their philosophical position, the juxtaposition of the structural components and the existence of the same praxis in both.

The tension and strain that exists in the Indian society is primarily because of the socio-cultural relationship. The portrayal of Indian society that is reflected in the chosen novels is supposed to be the most authentic portrayal. The society is under the heavy burden of age-old-caste system, traditions, and religious beliefs, and inevitably influenced by the Western ideas of freedom and equality. The Indian culture is thus switching between tradition and modernity.

In the twenty-first century as it has become easy for people to communicate and share knowledge from every point in the world, translating literatures has gained a great deal in Literary Studies. Translation is breaking down strangeness of the literary texts. It is continuously widening the size of the audiences and diversifying the origins of the readers. In India, translation is organic since it not only achieves the widespread of the literary text throughout the globe, via the translation into Western languages as English at the top, and also the widespread in the Indian subcontinent when vernacular languages are targets of translation.

Recently, deconstructionists have argued that translation occupies no more the second position after the original, but the original is itself a translation of thoughts into writings. Jaques Derrida (1930-2004) and Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) agree on the idea that the original language used by the author in his/her writing is but a translation of the author's imagination and thoughts. The originality of the story lies, then, in the mind of the author. Edwin Gentzler, in his *Contemporary Translation Theories* points out the position of translation in the communication of thoughts and ideas in his passage. He states:

*in translation, what is visible is language referring not to things, but to language itself. Thus the chain of signification is one of infinite regress-the translated text becomes a translation of another earlier translation and translated words, although viewed by deconstructionists as ‘material’ signifiers, represent nothing but other words representing nothing but still other words representing.* (1993: 147)

Comparative Literature Studies are meaningless without dealing with the translation issues, mainly in the multilingual context. Translation of the target texts increases clarification and insures understanding. In their book *Translation, History and Culture* Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere highlight the importance of translation and state that:

*With the development of Translation studies as that draws on comparatists and cultural history, the time has come to think again. Translation has been a major shaping force in the development of world culture and no study of comparative literature can take place without regard to translation.* (1990: 2)

Consequently and inevitably, Translation Studies go in parallel with Comparative Literature Studies for the sake of the oneness of the World Literature. The scarcity of translators and publishers for Dalit literary narratives limited the size of their audiences and influenced negatively the fame of both Dalit authors and their artistic production.

However, recently some publishing houses like Kali for Women, Zouban, Navayana committed their efforts to enrich Indian postcolonial literature and consider Dalit writing as a branch worth of respect and visibility at the national, as well as the global levels in spite of its thematic political opposition and resistance to the social norms. The writers focus on the

pertinent efforts in advancing the contextual issue of the iconoclastic nature by making the post-independent Dalit literature visible worldwide.

The critical and analytical literary theories and approaches used to study and evaluate the texts of the third world literatures are still fundamentally drawn from the Western tradition. In spite of the rising tide of globalization, the field of literary theory is not ready to approach texts beyond its Eurocentric tradition. The comparison as well as the assessment of the literary production in the field of Postcolonial Studies remain under the domination of Western ideological inclination and philosophical theories.

Creative imagination plays the role of the mirror that reflects details of the human life experiences in their private as well as public spheres. Representation of reality is pictured fictionally via the colorful artistic nuances of meaningful linguistic units and their smart arrangement. The sociological approach to study literature emanates components of empowerment, consciousness and awareness in the environment, and irradiates social evolution. One's guiding assumption to implicate sociological theories in the study of Indian literature is considered of importance since it is compatible with Postcolonial Studies as a literary discipline.

## **2.12. Conclusion**

Thus, it may be stated that the concept of "Dalit Literature" constitutes a contribution to the aesthetics of literature based on authenticity and opens up an ever-expanding world of Dalitness before creative minds of today and tomorrow. This perception is basically a perception of eternal human sufferings.

Dalit literature is seen, mainly, as a protest against the establishment as commitment to inculcating new values aiming at a new order. It breathes freedom with hope. Dalit women have

begun organizing themselves and have come together autonomously to make their voices heard. Dalit women are no longer going to accept submissively patriarchal economic, political, social, cultural and religious institutions that oppress them. The image of the Dalit woman that is emerging is that of a stronger person, and yet becoming a voice of strength in the community too.

The following chapter is intended to deal with the thematic analysis of two novels written by Indian women belonging to the upper-caste strata: Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998) and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997).

# **Chapter Three**

**From Ideal to Real:**

**Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters***

**and**

**Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things***

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## Chapter Three:

### From Ideal to Real: Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

*Tell us what is it to be a woman so that we may know what it is to be a man. What moves at the margin. What it is to have no home in this place. To be set adrift from the one you knew. What it is to live at the edge of towns that cannot bear your company.*

Toni Morrison, (1993). *Nobel Lecture*

#### 3.1. Introduction

In this chapter one will expose the analysis of two non-Dalit women's novels. One's choice upon the two literary works is based on the fact that both are debut novels of the authors and also both won significant rewards in the literary world. Furthermore, both were published in the same period of time though the settings of the stories are different time and space. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), winner of the Booker Prize, and Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998), winner of Commonwealth Writers Prize discuss similar as well as different themes. The researcher sees to start with the writings of the non-Dalit woman. This intention is not to put the Dalit writings, again, in the second position, rather it is done in the sense of going from the general to the specific, from Indian literature to Indian Dalit literature, since Dalit literature, like Sanskrit literature, Odia literature, Vedic literature, Hindi literature and so on, is considered as a section in Indian literature.



Both Manju Kapur and Arundhati Roy are writers who do not write in isolation; their writings include social reality. In fact, the relation between literature and society is reciprocal; both serve as cause and effect to each other. their literary creation does not come into existence by itself; its emergence is determined by the Indian woman's social situations. The chosen authors write with deep insight and consideration, in a language that is expressive as well as uncomplicated. In both novels, they take the readers deep into the multi layered world of characters, the world that is crammed with disaffirmation, disallowance , negativity, optimism, hope and discovery.

### **3.2. Manju Kapur`s Difficult daughters**

Manju Kapur has written five novels: *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2009), and *Custody* (2011). Her very first novel, *Difficult Daughters* which received a great international acclaim, was published in 1998 and was awarded the 'Commonwealth Writers Prize' for the best first book (Eurasia) and was number one best seller in India. Manju Kapur has been highly acclaimed as a renowned novelist writing in English by critics in India and abroad.

In each of her novel, she presents a woman protagonist endowed with distinctive traits that render her different from any other character of her novels. Each central character is cast against social and familial background with problems peculiar to her. All of them are sufficiently educated and hail from upper-middle-class families. Since they are educated, they are well aware of the structure of the society to which they belong. All the protagonists of Kapur realize that they are beset by certain factors that hinder or stunt the growth of their personality. They have their aspirations, ambitions and certain goals in their lives to realize. Kapur expresses her

concept of womanhood by creating different types of characters and in doing so she delves deep into women's psyche and shows certain complex and surprising aspects of their personalities. It is here that Kapur proves to be a past master at delineating human characters, especially, women characters. With her keen insight, she hunts motives that propel her central characters into unpredictable actions.

Manju Kapur is one of the distinguished postmodern Indian women novelists writing in English. She has five novels to her credit and all of them deal with educated middle-class protagonists who struggle to extricate themselves from the meshes of tradition and patriarchal hegemony, by setting their back against tradition and finally emerging as women with their own identity embracing modern views. She may, therefore, be described as the chronicler of the lives, especially, of women of the educated middle-class families. She is a raconteur with a copious, creative imagination; the dialogues are so realistic, the situations so natural that there is little scope for improbability. Authorial exegeses sometimes seem to be somewhat lengthy and it is because of the minutest details that cramp the movement of her narrative.

Manju Kapur's purpose is quite obvious in her novels. It is to create modern women, who by grappling with the snaggle of restrictions that impede their efforts from going forward, deeply wish to get rid of the age-old burden of tradition. Moreover, despite all the hurdles in their way, they finally liberate themselves from those shackles that prevent them from realizing their own selfhood that is being stifled at every step. In this process of transforming themselves, they become metamorphosed into modern ones. Kapur makes the reader feel the process of their transformation, both through their words and deeds. She has created a new face of woman on the canvas of traditional society and has depicted how the modern woman, in the process of self-realization and self-actualization, struggles and finally overcomes the 'dependence syndrome'.

The protagonists of her novels try to break the image of submissive, docile women and emerge as strong, self-assertive and self-fulfilled women.

Manju Kapur's female protagonists, aspiring individuals caged within the confines of a conservative society, are mostly educated. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society turn intolerant towards them. They struggle between tradition and modernity. As qualified women with faultless backgrounds they plunge into a dedicated effort to carve an identity for themselves through their individual struggle with family and society. The novelist has portrayed her protagonists as women caught in the conflict between the passions of the flesh and a yearning to be a part of the political and intellectual movements of the day. The predominant theme in all her novels is the middle class women trying to make their life elastic and resilient in a world where everything is rigid or has been made rigid for a free movement and consequently they feel suffocated almost to the point of extricating themselves from the erstwhile barbed wire, spiky customs and conventions.

The major theme in all her novels is how the younger generation of educated middle class women emerge out through their persistent struggle against outmoded traditional values and retrogressive clutches of patriarchal system into modernism. A few of them go beyond this stage vehemently flouting tradition, to the bent of their inclination creating a wider space for an easy, unfettered life of economic independence, showing least regard for moral values. Chastity, especially for women, a virtue held in highest esteem, by one and all, is a mere sound signifying nothing for the postmodern women. These women wriggle out of the coils of tradition, emerge into new consciousness of modernity and in this process, they exhibit grit and gumption and, above all, unflinching courage of conviction. In this respect, they are prepared to face consequences, be they ever so dire mainly when they think that their identity is at stake.

### 3.2.1. Women's/Girl's Compliance in Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*

Manju Kapur, in delineating Kasturi, one of the major characters in the novel, *Difficult Daughters* as an embodiment of tradition, has chosen a few incidents quite characteristic of what is called 'tradition'. She is nothing if not traditional to the hilt. Kasturi, mother of Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*, becomes a formidable force of patriarchal system. She is the very replica of a traditional woman. She is the very embodiment of all the traits of a traditional woman. Kapur's characterization of Kasturi stands in striking contrast with Ida, her granddaughter.

The instances or incidents dealt with by Manju Kapur in order to bring out the quintessential features of tradition in Kasturi are most admirable. Firstly, traditionally it was no crime to give birth to a large number of children. Secondly, she staunchly opposes Virmati's proposal to go for further studies and thirdly, she arranges Virmati's marriage with Inderjeet without her consent. Kasturi's concept of education was the result of her traditional upbringing and this creates a situation which renders Virmati quite helpless as an individual.

Kasturi comes from a well-to-do middle class, traditional, Arya Samaj family. She is trained even from her girlhood that marriage is her destiny. As such, Kasturi was trained in the culinary art which was an essential qualification for a young girl to be married. Marriage changes the status of a daughter into the status of a daughter-in-law and her chief duty as a daughter-in-law is to please her in-laws. Traditionally, she is well-equipped to be a daughter-in-law whose chief duty is to be a good cook. Sudhir Kakar asserts that a traditional woman is pontificated by the society in such a way that: "In addition to the 'virtues' of self-effacement and self-sacrifice, the feminine role in India also crystallizes a woman's connection to others, her embeddedness in a multitude of familial relationships." (1998: 51)

The concept of traditional womanhood consists in being a little educated and to be well-trained in domestic chores. Kasturi fulfills both these qualifications and so her uncle pays her tribute that she was one of the finest flowers of 'Hindu Womanhood'. One conspicuous feature about Kasturi is that she is a mother of eleven children. To a modern reader this appears to be shocking since birth control has become a common rule but tradition permits a woman to give birth to any number of children and society accepted it in her days. Thus, one sees the indelible mark of tradition on Kasturi when Kapur realistically presents the scenario thus:

*By the time Virmati was sixteen, Kasturi could bear childbirth no more. For the eleventh time it had started, the heaviness in her belly, morning and evening nausea, bile in her throat while eating, hair falling out in clumps, giddiness when she got up suddenly. (Ibid: 7)*

Kasturi has never been happy with giving birth to children, one after another. She could not remember a time when she was not tired and carrying her children was a strain, even when they were very young. She becomes the butt of ridicule in the eyes of her sister-in-law, Lajwanti who says, "Breeding like cats and dogs, Harvest time again" (p.7). Manju Kapur condemns the practice of unlimited procreation of children and highlights its adverse effects on women's health.

Kapur seems to have understood thoroughly the psyche of a traditional woman. The way that Kasturi speaks to Lajwanti and Shakuntala confirms that she represents traditional wisdom. The views of Kasturi regarding marriage of a daughter are quite traditional. She firmly believes that a girl who attains marriageable age must be married. In the course of a conversation between Kasturi and Lajwanti, during their stay at Dalhousie, the former broaches the topic of Shakuntala's unmarried state speaking, "Still, it is the duty of every girl to get married" (ibid:

15) and in her conversation with Shakuntala, Kasturi says: “*Hai re beti!* What is the need to do a job? ...Now you have studied and worked enough. Shaadi. After you get married, Viru can follow.” (ibid: 16)

As a traditional woman Kasturi fails to understand the significance of education for women. She attributes it to Virmati’s inability to cope with her studies. There is such an unbridgeable gap between the mother and the daughter in understanding anything. She found Virmati’s making fuss about failing her exams unreasonable saying: “Leave your studies if it is going to make you so bad-tempered with your family. You are forgetting what comes first ... At your age I was already expecting you, not fighting with my mother.” (ibid: 21-22)

Manju Kapur brings out Kasturi’s deeply ingrained traditional point of view. She believes that the real business of a girl’s life is to get married and look after her home. She uses her pet phrases to express her traditional views and tells Virmati that marriage comes as the first priority in the life of a girl. It is time to quote Simon de Beauvoir in this context, for she says in *The Second Sex*, “Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society”. (1989: 221)

Kapur shows very clearly that it is impossible for the traditional minded Kasturi and Virmati, with her modern thinking, to look at things, eye to eye. The traditional idiom used by Kasturi sounds like Greek and Latin to Virmati. Kasturi thinks that going to college will make girls more obedient to their elders. She is innocently ignorant that new knowledge makes one think independently and oppose the obscurantist traditional thinking. Kasturi’s (mis)understanding of issues gives rise to a conflict between tradition and modernity and is always nagged by one worry, i.e. the marriage of her children, girl or boy. The term ‘marriage’

has serious connotations in tradition. The dialogue between the mother and the daughter presents a live discussion on education versus marriage.

When Virmati in a point blank manner tells her mother that she is not going to marry the canal engineer, Kasturi loses her temper at her impertinent answer and beats her, grabbing her by the hair and banging her head against the wall, crying out, “May be this will knock some sense into you! What crimes did I commit in my last life that I should be cursed with a daughter like you in this one?” (1998: 59)

Virmati is the child of modern times and unlike her mother, her concept of education is pragmatic. Kasturi’s traditional view of education is clearly revealed when she reflects that, “going to school had been a privilege, not to be abused by going against one’s parents. How had girls changed so much in just a generation?” (ibid: 60)

Kasturi holds the values of patriarchy as an ideal and thinks it is her responsibility to uphold those values by imposing them on her daughter, and when her daughter rebels against such values, she takes it to be a rebellion against her. As Simon de Beauvoir (1949) in her seminal work, *The Second Sex* points out:

*Most women simultaneously demand and detest their feminine condition, they live it through in a state of resentment, vexed at loving produced a woman, the mother greets her with this ambiguous curse: ‘you shall be a woman’ ... sometimes she tries to impose on the child exactly her own fate: ‘what was good enough for you, I was good enough for you, I was brought up this way, you shall share my lot. (1989: 533-534)*

Kasturi, *Difficult Daughters*, in her bitter agony at heart tells Virmati almost by a way of helplessness and disappointment, “God has put you on earth to punish me”.(1998: 111).

Realization dawns on Kasturi that Virmati has become stubborn and independent after joining her college, in Lahore. The conflict between mother and daughter comes to an end and it resolves in Virmati's triumph.

The brief discussion between Kasturi and Suraj Prakash about sending Virmati to Nahan as a Headmistress of the school reveals that Suraj Prakash is inclined towards progressive views although he does not overtly emphasize. Yet, Kasturi with the weight of tradition on her mind, fails to summon her confidence to agree with the views of her husband and plaintively tells her husband : "What kind of Kismet is ours that our eldest daughter remain unmarried like this? ... stubborn as a rock, never mind the disgrace or what the whole world is thinking, or what her future will be" (ibid: 181).

Kasturi is implacable to the end towards her difficult daughter, Virmati. Virmati's formal visit to her mother soon after her marriage with the professor enkindles Kasturi's unspent, accumulated hatred and indignation against her and she bursts out like a volcano. She becomes furious and in her uncontrollable anger takes her chappal and beats her shouting:

*You've destroyed our family, you badmash, you randi! You've blackened our face everywhere! For this I gave you birth? Because of you there is shame on our family, shame on me, shame on Bade Pitaji! But what do you care, brazen that you are!* (ibid: 221)

Kasturi becomes hard-hearted, indifferent and harsh towards her daughter and does not move with the times. She does not appreciate the freedom that her daughter Virmati craves for. Thus unknowingly the mother becomes the voice of patriarchy. Manju Kapur very vividly and



realistically presents Kasturi as the very embodiment of the spirit of tradition. Every act of Kasturi was prompted by her ingrained sense of tradition.

Lajwanti is traditional in spirit but not overtly. If one critically analyzes her words, one finds that her traditionalism is skillfully veiled and sounds to be progressive. Whenever there has been any reference to Shakuntala's unmarried state, Lajwanti prevaricates by saying: "How can anyone see her when she has no time? Such a talented teacher, so popular, what an inspiring example she is for the younger ones." (ibid: 15)

Lajwanti, like all mothers in Kapur's novels, is traditional. She is very much obsessed with the marriage of her daughter, Shakuntala, who has the aspirations of a modern woman. She wants to be well educated and be economically independent. Thus she proves to be a difficult daughter. Lajwanti unlike Kasturi is not so harsh with her daughter since she knows that her daughter is intractable. Though it is a great insult to her and she herself does not understand or care for the achievements of Shakuntala, she continues to say: "She lives for others, not herself, but what to do, everybody in our family is like that. And with all this reading-writing, girls are getting married late. It is the will of God". (ibid: 15)

It is quite natural on the part of a mother to be a little worried about the unmarried state of her children when they attain marriageable age. But in the case of Lajwanti, this worry seems to be more accentuated when she says that her daughter Shakuntala's unmarried state causes her 'enough heartache' and she persistently insists in the same way about her son Somnath's marriage. She points out that it was "his duty to see that her old age would not be spent in darkness and loneliness" (ibid: 32). She becomes hysterical about her children's unmarried state and she regrets that so much of her son's handsomeness is being wasted. Such thoughts are nothing but the promptings of the traditionalist woman in her.

Next in the order of traditional women is Ganga, the illiterate wife of the professor in the novel *Difficult Daughters*. Ganga as a wife has been perfect in running the household and the professor is thoroughly satisfied with his wife in this respect. Ganga is seen as another victim of the traditional society. She has entered her in-laws' house at the age of twelve and tried to prove herself to be a good house wife but could never become an intellectual companion to her husband. There is a painful intellectual incompatibility between them and this leads to her present plight. The reader really sympathizes with the sad position of the professor. The adverse effects of early traditional marriages have their own evil consequences on society at large.

Kapur presents Ganga as a thoroughgoing traditional wife; every inch in her means a traditional wife. She attends to every trivial duty not to win her husband's love or affection but as a part of her duty as a traditional wife:

*From washing his clothes to polishing his shoes, to tidying his desk, dusting his precious books, filling his fountain pens with ink, putting his records back in their jackets, mending his clothes, stitching his shirts and kurtas, hemming his dhotis, seeing that they were properly starched...Ganga did it all. (ibid: 216)*

As a traditional wife, Ganga wants to be the sole mistress of her domain, the kitchen. When Virmati tries to go into the kitchen, Ganga weeps and wails all day cleaning and cleansing all the pots and pans. In this way, she asserts her right as a traditional wife lest her right as a wife should be wilted out. Ganga's grievance is more against Virmatithan against her husband whom she still holds in high esteem. Kapur brings out this scenario thus: "Her husband continued to be Ganga's public statement of selfhood. Her bindi and her bangles, her toe rings and her mangalsutra, all managed to suggest that he was still her god." (ibid: 278)

This is the way that all traditional women follow. Manju Kapur has thoroughly imbibed Hindu ethos and prevailing traditional values. These are very faithfully reflected in the delineation of the character of Ganga and the relationship between the professor and his first wife.

Harish's mother, Kishori Devi, a woman of wide experience is able to understand life and its ironies. Although as a woman she feels sympathetic with the sad situation of her daughter-in-law Ganga, with the arrival of Harish's second wife Virmati, yet, as a traditional woman, she is forced to accept Virmati as Harish's second wife. She is an apt example of traditional notions that force people to behave in such strange ways. Since she has belief in the horoscope that her son would have two wives, she is easily convinced when he brings Virmati as his second wife. She knew "she could only bow before the inevitable." (ibid: 208)

As a mother Kishori Devi cannot but, be it ever so reluctantly, compromise with the situation, while the woman in her grieves too much for her daughter-in-law, Ganga. Kishori Devi is all sympathy for her daughter-in-law whom she loves and respects as an able, traditional housewife.

Kishori Devi feels deeply sorry for Ganga who is an embodiment of all domestic virtues. In this context, Kishori Devi contemplates: "...if this was to be her fate, what could anyone do? She would have to accept it." (ibid: 210) Manju Kapur depicts the character of Kishori Devi as a typical traditional woman who believes in the efficacy of astrology and the inevitability of fate. It is apt to quote Kavita Tyagi's observation in this connection that,

*The notions of patriarchy were so strongly embedded in the psyche of women of older times that they, so fearful of their physical and financial*

*security, dare not cross their patriarchal thresholds for the fear of being discarded by society. (2014: 207)*

Like all traditional women Kishori Devi, in a resigned mood, resorts to fatalism in trying to console Ganga in the hour of her deepest distress and says:

*He Bhagwan, we are all in your hands, ... Who can predict anything, or decide anything on their own? ... Since our destiny is predetermined, that is the only way we can know any peace. Duty is our guide, and our strength. How can we control the things outside us? We can only control ourselves. (Kapur, 1998: 210-211)*

In traditional philosophy men attribute things beyond their control to fate or to the sins of the past life. In response to wailing Ganga's question as to what wrong she has committed that things should come to such a tragic pass, Kishori Devi consoles Ganga saying that they cannot escape their fate and should accept it as their lot. Clara Nubile aptly replies in this context,

*In modern India the situation is still far from an ideal, liberated, democratic model. Indian women keep on struggling against the burden of tradition, against the legacy of the past and the orthodoxy of the patriarchal system. (2003: 271)*

### **3.2.2. Mother Vs Daughter: Misunderstanding and Conflicts in the Novel**

Childhood, in general is the glorious period of innocent pleasures. But unfortunately, owing to the force of circumstances, Virmati is deprived of these pleasures. The immediate

reason for this is that her mother has given birth to ten more children after her and the sad lot of looking after these children has fallen on her. She has to play the role of a de facto mother to all the children. She is often tired and exhausted because of her continuous attendance on her siblings, even at the tender age of ten.

Virmati is deprived of her legitimate pleasure of being loved by her mother who is almost impatient owing to her repeated pregnancies. Kasturi has never expressed even a single word of sympathy towards Virmati who is actually overburdened with all the domestic chores besides looking after her siblings. Kapur very realistically presents the scenario thus:

*At times Virmati yearned for affection, for some sign that she was special. However, when she put her head next to the youngest baby, feeding in the mother's arms, Kasturi would get irritated and push her away. 'Have you seen to their food milk clothes studies?' (1998: 6)*

There has never been an occasion when Kasturi showed any sympathy for her daughter, Virmati, who is tired and exhausted looking after her siblings. Kasturi's overbearing voice in giving instructions to Virmati sounds more like the voice of an irascible mistress of the house towards her servant maid. To the reader it seems as if the motherly instinct in Kasturi has been totally paralyzed that the language of feeling had never flowed between them and "this threat was meant to express all her thwarted yearnings" (12). It is clearly perceptible that their perspectives run along parallel lines hardly meeting anywhere. For Kasturi, Virmati seemed to be restless all the time, which spells disaster in a girl, and on the contrary, Virmati feels it was so difficult saying anything to her mother. Kasturi's relation with her daughter does not let her realize her need for a separate identity and an independent existence. So Virmati has to rebel. She has to fight against the power of her mother as well as the oppressive forces of patriarchy,

symbolised by the mother figure. In *Virmati*, one finds a yearning for a way of life which would give her freedom and some sort of identity.

The first seeds of deviation from traditional thinking are perceived in *Virmati* when she is all admiration for Shakuntala, her first cousin. She, almost unconsciously, comes under the irresistible spell of Shakuntala's dynamic personality. *Virmati* has been very much fascinated by the very attractive personality of her cousin. She senses something indefinable in Shakuntala and soon comes to an understanding that it is, indeed, the supreme self-confidence that Shakuntala is imbued with. *Virmati* sees something dynamic and positive about her and feels the inner strength of Shakuntala's vibrant personality reflected in her person. It is Shakuntala who sows the seeds of aspiration for modernity in *Virmati*'s young, fertile mind. To *Virmati*, Shakuntala in her most sophisticated dress appears like a vision in a dream. In spite of Kasturi's disapproval of Shakuntala's appearance and dress, *Virmati* is drawn towards Shakuntala, "whose responsibilities went beyond a husband and children" (ibid: 17).

Although Shakuntala gives expression to her own views about the advantages of being independent in a casual tone, *Virmati* almost without her own knowledge passes through a kind of metamorphosis within. The impact of Shakuntala's words on *Virmati* is clear from the latter's words,

*"I want to be like you, Pehnji, ... If there are two of us, then they will not mind so much" (17) and she emphasizes her modern views by asserting thus, "It was useless looking for answers inside the home. One had to look outside. To education, freedom and the bright lights of Lahore colleges."* (ibid: 17)

The fascinating words of Shakuntala bring about visible change in *Virmati* when she tells her that, "May be I will also one day come to Lahore, Pehnji, I wish I too could do things."

(18) And as if in response to her, Shakuntala rejoins that times are changing, and women are moving out of the house. Virmati is influenced by Shakuntala by imperceptible degree and unconsciously develops a sense of independence. Inspired by the words of Shakuntala, who, having done her M.Sc. in Chemistry and tasted the wine of freedom, Virmati decides that, “She too had to go to Lahore, even if she had to fight her mother who was so sure that her education was practically over.” (ibid: 19)

### **3.2.3. Kapur’s Depiction of Woman’s Sexuality**

The major crisis in her life, however, springs from her love for a professor. Her craving for education and desire to be like her cousin, Shakuntala, drives her to the threshold of the Oxford returned English professor, Harish Chandra. When Virmati who is already engaged to a canal engineer is certain that the professor is deeply in love with her, she does not yield to him downright and her mind becomes a battle field of conflicts.

She cogitates about the pros and cons before she arrives at a decision like a well-brought-up higher middle class traditional young lady. She thinks first and foremost of her family prestige and is afraid that her family prestige as a whole would receive a dent if she rejects this proposed marriage. Her sentiments about her grandfather and her father momentarily revolt within her and yet there is another powerful sentiment that dominates this, namely, that her being touched by the professor. It is the traditional woman in Virmati that comes in conflict with the present reality. She feels that her body belongs to him entirely and as such there could be no second thought on the issue. Virmati knows full well at what cost she takes this decision which is tantamount to flouting the trust her grandfather, father and others implicitly reposed in her.

Virmati finds herself in a terrible grip of crisis created by the professor's relentless pursuit after her.

The turning point of what Virmati's life would be, is clearly foreshadowed in a brief but important dialogue between Virmati and her mother. Manju Kapur, very tactfully brings in a very serious matter from what otherwise seems to be a trivial, insignificant act of spinning the threads for Virmati's trousseau. It is in this connection that Virmati boldly tells her that she would not marry so soon, as she would like to pursue her further studies. Kasturi becomes infuriated, grabs her by the hair and bangs her head against the wall. Virmati's stubborn decision to pursue higher studies in Lahore marks the beginning of a new chapter in her life.

It is clearly discernable that there has been a conflict in the mind of Virmati when it comes to taking a decision with regard to her future life. As she feels it beyond her strength to take any decision, she decides to commit suicide. Here one perceives the ponderous weight of tradition in her mind working against a bolder step by negating the proposed marriage. Later she is saved by the servants of her grandfather and subsequently she is locked in the godown as she refuses to marry the boy of their choice.

There is a kind of volcano like eruption in the mind of Virmati who is always fidgeting to achieve something noble which will illuminate her life and cherish the dream of education. She appears as an emerging new woman when, in one of her letters to the professor, she boldly says that she would rather die than be a rubber doll in the hands of others, "If I was to be a rubber doll for others to move as they willed, then I didn't want to live." (ibid: 92)

When Virmati comes to know, for certain, that Ganga, the professor's wife, has become pregnant again, it is like a bolt from the blue and leaves her in deep distress and disillusionment.



She is at the height of her hopelessness and gives free vent to her suppressed anger in the letter taunting him thus:

*It seems to me ... that you can do what you like so long as you go on saying you love. I know this cannot be true ... Just as you must do your duty to your family and your wife, so too I must do my duty to mine. (ibid: 107)*

As a protest against the professor, Virmati informs him of her determination to go to Lahore for further studies with a view to becoming a teacher like Shakuntala and himself. In Virmati there is a deep sense of remorse over the conspiracy of circumstances that led her to this tragic pause. She feels that she has, once and for all, fallen from the grace of her family who considers her a black sheep.

After her admission into the college, her mother, Kasturi, takes the opportunity of talking to the principal, perhaps, to tell her to take special care of her daughter. Virmati imagines that her mother must be speaking to the principal that, “She was to be supervised like a jailbird on parole. Marriage was acceptable to her family, but not independence.” (ibid: 115)

Now that Virmati is in Lahore to pursue her studies the professor is completely out of her mind. She feels autonomy and independence around her and the geographical distance between the professor and herself also helps create psychological distance between them. It is for this purpose that Virmati has left for Lahore in spite of herself. But the professor follows her like her shadow and knows that the present situation is so difficult for him that he is at a loss as to how he could come close to her. The professor, from the beginning, seems to be a pastmaster at juggling phrases and uses sophistry to gain his own ends. He tries to convince Virmati that it is nothing strange especially in the Hindu Society that a man has two wives at a time. The

professor warms himself into the consciousness of Virmati with subtle insinuations like, “Darling, ... Co-wives are part of our social traditions. If you refuse me, you will be changing nothing. I don’t live with her in any meaningful way.” (ibid: 122)

Virmati tears herself off the natural filial bonds and gets into illegitimate relation with the professor who turns out to be the real villain of the piece. He exploits Virmati’s helpless situation and moreover, he has the gift of the gab and a pen that can invent alluring phrases to bait Virmati. In spite of Virmati’s insistence that they be married, the professor enjoys his clandestine love affair with Virmati and succeeds in convincing her to see reason in his arguments and initiates into sexual act. Virmati, in a casual mood, welcomes the professor to have his gratification with a least sense of moral obsession. But it is amazing to see that Virmati, who was first attracted to the professor for his love of freedom and individuality, willingly loses her identity.

Though she understands the wrongs done by the professor, she is not prepared to face the situation. She, who has evinced much spirit in defying her parents and the parochial society, gets mired in the principles of patriarchy that suits the professor. The harbinger of emancipation reduces Virmati to the position of a concubine. Manju Kapur very adroitly presents how Virmati willingly surrenders to the professor, thus: “She thought he was right, she was meant to be his, what was the point in foolishly denying it on the basis of outmoded morality.” (ibid : 125)

#### **3.2.4. The Evolutionary State and Inner Conflict of Kapur’s Characters**

Manju Kapur very adroitly, as time passes, presents Virmati as one in an evolutionary state, standing on the periphery of modernity. Obviously, there are two persons in Virmati that come in conflict with each other. The Virmati under the influence of Swarna Lata, her roommate

at Lahore, wishes to be almost like her, the modern activist involved in other people and waiting for no man when she thinks that, “This is what is going on around me. This is the life I should be involved in. Not useless love and doubtful marriage” (ibid: 134) and the Virmati that has almost surrendered herself to the professor. It is the latter that pulls her back from the thoughts of modernity. The conflict in Virmati’s mind is very well reflected in her own words that, “Not everybody is like you, Swarna, thought Virmati. I’m not, though I wish I were ... How long do we have to be secret man and wife, hidden from the eyes of the world. I hate it, but what can I do?” (ibid: 140)

Virmati feels the contrast between those women who have imbibed the spirit of modernity and her present situation which is almost opposite to theirs. This sense of contrast looms larger whenever she is under the forceful influence of SwarnaLata. When Mohini Dutta, speaking at ‘The Punjab Women’s Student Conference’, goes on to explain the true benefits of freedom, Virmati starts reflecting on her present situation and asks herself thus:

*Am I free, thought Virmati. I came here to be free, but I am not like these women. They are using their minds, organizing, participating in conferences, politically active, while my time is spent being in love. Wasting it. Well, not wasting time, no, of course not, but then how come I never have a moment for anything else? (ibid: 142)*

The emerging new world which one calls the modern world is not for Virmati. It has been sealed for her once and for all as she lives for the most part of her life in a romantic world reliving her past experience with the professor. She remains a spectator of the emerging world deriving vicarious pleasure listening to the activities of Swarna Lata and other women.

In the realistic presentation of human life with its vicissitudes that contain moments of elevated joy quickly followed by abysmal depths of depression, none can surpass Manju Kapur. The novel, *Difficult Daughters* is full of such vicissitudes especially in the life of Virmati in relation to her married lover, the professor. Since the beginning of her love life with the professor, the only carping obsession at the back of Virmati's mind has been marriage with the professor. But she experiences the most tantalizing moments as the professor dodges and prevaricates when the matter of the marriage comes to discussion. It is quite obvious to the reader that the professor although in deep love with Virmati, is not able to summon up his courage to make her his own through wedlock. Somewhere at the back of Virmati's mind, some sceptical thought lingers as the professor resorts to delay tactics with regard to their marriage. When her thread-bare patience is on the wedge of collapse, Virmati almost in a despondent tone tells the professor that:

*I break my engagement because of you, blacken my family's name, am locked up inside my house, get sent to Lahore because no one knows what to do with me. Here I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find out, not being able to live in peace, study in peace ... and why? Because I am an idiot. (ibid:149)*

Virmati is just clever enough to see through the hypocritical statements of the professor, regarding their marriage. She concludes that her plans must not include marriage and confine herself to the furtive meetings in borrowed places; she thinks in a mood of despair that it is far better to be like Swarna who is, "involved in other people, and waiting for no man." (ibid: 150)

Virmati's love, if it is called love, for the professor is her chief tragic flaw. From Virmati's conversations throughout the novel, she betrays one flaw, that is, she is not capable

of taking a firm decision on anything that is intimately related to her life and this, of course, is largely responsible for her own tragic life. This flaw in her becomes more accentuated when she is compared to Shakuntala and SwarnaLata who stick to their decisions. SwarnaLata speaks to Virmati in her own modern idiom of participating in active politics and going to jail as an alternative to marriage. This idiom is quite alien to Virmati's thinking. Though, on the spur of the moment, Virmati feels convinced of SwarnaLata's words, she is still doubtful whether she is capable of leading a life by herself without marriage. Virmati seems to be more inclined to compromise with her present unalterable situation than to court any new life as suggested by SwarnaLata.

There are problems of various kinds. But the predicament in which a young unmarried lady like Virmati is quite peculiar. Kapur rightly highlights the pregnancy of an unmarried woman. Virmati seriously broods over her unpleasant, vexatious situation which becomes an obsession with her. The situation becomes much worse for her as the professor is out of station. Virmati, instead of sinking into despair against this background, summons up her courage to deal with the situation on her own and she feels that, "She was worthy of independence." (ibid: 163)

One prominent feature about Virmati's character is that she oscillates between tradition and modernity. Here one must recall the situation when Virmati and the professor indulge in sexual congress for the first time, she flouts the tradition without any qualms and justifies that it is an outmoded morality to be chaste before marriage. Though she sounds like a modern woman, she thinks like a traditional woman and agrees that a woman once touched by a man entirely belongs to him. She feels that she could never look elsewhere and entertain another choice as her body was marked by him.

Virmati's family decides to send her to Nahan as the headmistress of a girls' school. She welcomes the opportunity, though dispassionately, as it helps her widen her vision and serve the nation's literacy. Kapur voices Virmati's state of mind thus:

*“Her BT had left her restless and dissatisfied, hungry to work, and anxious to broaden her horizons. She had had a taste of freedom in Lahore, it was hard to come back to the old life when she was not the old person anymore.”* (ibid: 181)

At Nahan, Virmati happily settles and becomes acclimatized to the new environs and busy with her teaching and administration of the school. The separation caused by their distance has been bridged by constant exchange of letters between them. The letters written by Virmati have fired the imagination and he romanticizes the whole situation which prompts Virmati to consider her stay there as a period of waiting for the professor rather than the beginning of a career. Virmati, in one of her letters, writes to him about the constantly nagging problem of her marriage. When the professor visits her a second time, Virmati in no uncertain terms demands about what he is going to do with her and for how long she should remain in the present condition saying, “You think it's so easy for me! It isn't! People wondering all the time. Why I'm not married” (ibid: 193) and she also insists that, “I want to know where I stand before anything else.” (ibid: 189)

Virmati's leaving her family for Nahan apparently seems to be a change from a place of embarrassment to a haven, peace and rest. The Nahan period appears as the one utopian moment in Virmati's unfortunate life. She attains a near exemplary level of female autonomy. For the first and only time, she has her own place to live. But ironically enough, her stay at Nahan proves to be a curse in disguise. The employment in an isolated but well-ordered ministrate also

constitutes in her some kind of psychological and mental poise but the professor's night halt with Virmati once again brings her to the previous position.

A month later, it is discovered by the Prime Minister (Diwan Sahib) that there is some scandal about Virmati's character and consequently, she is dismissed from her job. Here it is clearly understood that for Virmati, "love and autonomy could never co-exist" (ibid: 183). She is determined to pursue her further studies at Shantiniketan and on her way to Shantiniketan she gets down at Delhi to catch the connecting train.

The long awaited marriage has at last taken place and Virmati feels that it is her personal triumph. This makes the beginning of another chapter in her life after a long period of suspenseful, anxious and torturous agony. She has realized the ultimate aim of her life that is the marriage with the professor. She is drunk with a sense of personal pride. Though Virmati is sure that neither her parents nor her grandfather would forgive her, she feels happy about her blissful married life and her parents, grandfather and all her near relatives are relegated into the background of her consciousness. For the present, Virmati finds her own identity as the wife of the professor. One sees that Virmati is more traditional than modern since she gives such religious importance to her union with the professor and feels that, "Her husband would be everything to her. This was the way it should be, and she was pleased to finally detect a recognizable pattern in her life." (ibid: 207)

There is an element of irony in Virmati's being so happy over this situation as the things that follow at home embitter her thoughts. When she reaches Harish's home for the first time, she feels like a fish out of water. Kishori Devi, Harish's mother and his wife, Ganga were very indifferent towards her and Virmati senses another alienating atmosphere and she realizes that, "It was going to be difficult to live separately from everybody else." (ibid: 212) There is nothing

more painful for a person to realize that one is an alien in one's own house. The unpleasant reality of the situation makes her tell the professor that, "I should never have married you, and it's too late now. I've never seen it so clearly. It's not fair." (ibid: 212)

It is evident from the present situation that Virmati has lost all sense of belonging; neither her old house claims her nor does the professor's family avowedly accept her as the member of the family. She is just a pawn in the hands of destiny and nothing more.

It is, indeed, an arduous task to estimate the relationship between the professor and Virmati, one can clearly see that whenever Virmati tries to assert her separate identity, her efforts are threatened and she is forced to be a part of the contemporary society, its culture and rituals by the psychotherapy of the professor.

Virmati's academic achievements also fail to be of any consequence as compared to the intellectual height of the professor. Space in her house has been narrowed so that her movement has become completely restricted which causes a sense of suffocation in her. She lives in a cramped space and is forced into submission, though in a very subtle manner. She feels that she is no better than a pariah in her own house and she wonders drearily that, "Whether this isolation would continue till the end of her life." (ibid: 215) Jaidev aptly puts it saying that, "Indeed any sophisticated structure today functions not by direct, visible exploitation but by making the victims willingly, freely and happily give in to its imperatives." (ibid: 57)

Virmati visits her mother with a hope against hope that the latter would welcome her with a motherly affection but her mother proves to be implacable and uses the words of unbearable abuse and even goes to the extent of beating her with a chappal. Virmati feels that the last vestiges of love and affection between them have been broken after all those years of care, concern, sacrifice and responsibility.



The irony of her present life as the second wife of the professor is at the cost of dispossessing everything, her family, identity and her freedom. The whole domain of domesticity is under the hegemony of Ganga. She feels that she had been deprived of all her legitimate rights as a wife except the right to sleep with the professor. After her marriage, Virmati's quest for identity is replaced by the struggle for existence. The woman, who was supposed to be an intellectual, keeps craving for an opportunity to wash her husband's clothes. Her notions of self-assertiveness become confined to that of domesticity. Washing Harish's clothes becomes an important matter whereby Virmati has to assert her right as a wife.

Love acquires another synonym for her, that of servitude. Virmati is forbidden from entering the kitchen. Ganga feels that Virmati's entrance into the kitchen would make everything unholy and profane; she (Virmati) felt intimidated and is forced to be content with what she has, i.e. her husband, the professor. Manju Kapur very realistically presents the scenario, thus:

*It was clear that not an inch of that territory was going to be yielded. If Virmati had the bed, Ganga was going to have the house. Even Harish said, 'poor thing, you have me, let her have the kitchen'. Virmati looked at the domain of her kingdom and was forced to be content. (ibid: 230)*

Virmati undergoes a gradual self-effacement and her energies are directed towards pleasing him while she remains parched. Hence she fails to break the "Dependence Syndrome" as used by Chaman Nahal. It seems that the way to hell is paved with good intentions. Virmati finds consolation in the thought that, "A woman's happiness lies in giving her husband happiness." (ibid: 227)

### **3.2.5. Kapur's Women Breaking the Rules**

Strangely enough, the independent self of Virmati who always defied social conventions, could not tolerate the same in her daughter. Virmati has proved herself to be a difficult daughter to her mother and now she is a difficult mother to her own daughter, and Ida is by no means, a docile, tractable daughter.

A clear image of Virmati emerges through the pages of the novel as one less assertive and more wavering in her decision and above all a tendency towards romantic leanings and this finally proves to be her tragic flaw. One perceives that Virmati struggles to free herself from the tight grip of tradition in order to pursue her strong inclination for education, which is a mark of modernity. When the reader critically analyses Virmati's life, the root cause of her tragic situation is that she married the professor, a refined villain of the piece, who with his subtle sophistry wins over inexperienced, naïve and simple Virmati. Virmati's idealism has luminous wings but they are too ineffectual to have a flight into the desired realm of realization. Virmati's quest for identity and aspirations in life is finally quenched with her eventual death and extinguished in the funeral pyre.

Manju Kapur, in a highly realistic manner, delineates the character of Virmati, giving no chance for sentimentalizing anywhere. No man's life is without some element of mystery. It is this element that lends reality to human life in the absence of which it would look like a fairy tale. The dull, drab, dreary routine work of looking after her siblings day in and day out in that claustrophobic atmosphere within the four walls of the house makes her life unbearable. Virmati has had a good share of her sufferings for no fault of others. Her sad lack of discretion and her thoughtless passion, rather infatuation, for the flamboyant professor are the main factors for her misery. Fate also played its inexorable role by causing the death of the father of her prospective

bridegroom at that untimely juncture. Had he not died at that hour, her marriage would have taken place; and the appearance of the foreign returned professor almost at that hour also contributed to her prolonged trouble. Virmati is determined to emulate Shakuntala in every respect but fails to rise to the level of her aspirations. She is in a vulnerable situation, caught up in the web of the professor's amours, which subsequently proves to be a millstone round her own neck. Her predicament is such that she can neither bear it nor has the strength to throw it off.

Shakuntala, the daughter of Chander Prakash and Lajwanti, the first cousin of Virmati, has been endowed with a clear vision for future against the background of tradition which her mother, Lajwanti represents. It is not difficult for the reader to guess that some kind of conflict must have been there between Shakuntala and her parents, especially Lajwanti. Not dealing with this conflict at length the writer leaves it to the imagination of the reader. Shakuntala is intelligent, independent, sophisticated and above all rebellious in her attitude. She deprecates the concept of marriage as the summum bonum of life and reacts to this traditional idea.

Shakuntala has emerged as an anti-traditionalist and is impelled by a new vision that stubbornly opposes the traditional point of view. The first unconventional view of Shakuntala is that a woman should have higher education so that she could lead an independent life and to her, marriage comes next. While these two cousins namely, Virmati and Shakuntala are going for an evening walk, the latter tells the former thus:

*These people don't really understand Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading your own life, in being independent. Here we are, fighting for the freedom of the nation, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else.*

(ibid: 17)

Shakuntala possesses the traits of a young lady emerging into modernity. Virmati has been indelibly impressed by the new style of her cousin. Virmati lags behind Shakuntala in respect of social changes that take place outside home. Manju Kapur very tactfully creates the situation which allows Virmati to have certain glimpses into the new world to which Shakuntala belongs.

When Virmati, in the course of their conversation, asks Shakuntala that women also go to jail with Gandhiji, Shakuntala adds that they conduct political meetings, demonstrate, join rallies and wishes that Virmati were introduced to all that agitation that is going on in Lahore. Shakuntala continues rather sadly, “But for my mother, marriage is the only choice in life. I so wish I could help her feel better about me.” (ibid: 17)

Shakuntala is exposed to a wider society and speaks of her colleagues who have come from different backgrounds whose families are worried about their being unsettled in life, i.e. not getting married. She talks vibrantly about their life style saying:

*My friends are from different backgrounds, and all have families unhappy with their decision not to settle down, as they call it ... We travel, entertain ourselves in the evenings, follow each other's work, read papers, attend seminars. One of them is even going abroad for higher studies.* (ibid: 17)

Although the role of Shakuntala is limited in the novel, Kapur brings out certain prominent traits in her to illustrate the unmistakable manifestation of her life style that is out and out modern. Shakuntala has imbibed the spirit of modernity so much that she has left behind an unbridgeable gulf between the old world of tradition and the new world of modernity to which she belongs. She seems to be self-assertive and a woman who can make decisions

independently. She appears more unwavering and emotionally stronger to accept the hegemonic structures of the traditional society. During her stay at Dalhousie, Virmati watches Shakuntala's unconventional way of life:

*She watched her ride horses, smoke, play cards and badminton, act without her mother's advice, buy anything she wanted without thinking it a waste of money, casually drop in on all the people the family knew. Above all, she never seemed to question or doubt herself in anything. (ibid: 18)*

Virmati, unconsciously, has become enamoured of her glamorous cousin whom she would like to emulate but feels diffident and timid, and hesitantly tells Shakuntala that she is not clever enough to follow her footsteps. On the eve of Shakuntala's departure to Lahore from Dalhousie, Virmati strongly expresses her desire to follow her one day, to which Shakuntala rejoins and encourages Virmati saying, "Arre, times are changing, and women are moving out of the house, so why not you?" (ibid: 18)

Shakuntala feels overjoyed that her family at last realized the importance of women's education and the role of women in the society when Virmati is admitted in RBSL College for her B.T. Dora Sales Salvador, in her note to her Spanish translation of this novel, appropriately points out:

*Kapur emphasises the efforts made at that time by numerous women who, while demanding equal opportunities, equal access to education and life opportunities going beyond convention, were a visible force in the non-violent resistance to the British. (2004: 365)*

ShakuntalaPehnji having done her M.Sc. in Chemistry, had gone about tasting the wine of freedom, gets on her soapbox with regard to marriage, education and independent life. Thus the main role of Shakuntala in the novel consists in bringing about a total metamorphosis in Virmati and thus she stands apart from the other transitional characters as one with a dynamic identity.

SwarnaLata is another modern woman character introduced a little after nearly one-third of the novel is over. She happens to be the room-mate of Virmati at Lahore where she does her M.A., postponing her marriage to an indefinite date.

SwarnaLata is portrayed as a young, dynamic lady with a keen social consciousness. She is very much inclined to be engaged in some kind of social service; she, like a good many young educated ladies of those times, comes under the dynamic influence of Mahatma Gandhi. It is against this background, Swarna's mother insists that she be married as she completed her B.A.. By then, SwarnaLata has had a different mindset. She believes that there are other things for her to pursue besides marriage. Obviously, she is not against marriage; it is a question of priorities. Like a good many young and educated associates she wants to pursue further studies in Lahore.

She pleads with her parents that she might be left alone at least for two years before she could think of her marriage and she would be highly grateful to them if they concede to her request; otherwise, she would offer Satyagraha along with other Congress workers against the British and continue until taken to prison. She tells Virmati as to what has transpired between her parents and herself before coming to Lahore. Christopher Rollason remarks in this regard:

*The pages of Difficult Daughters speak not only of Virmati, but of other 'difficult daughters' who succeed better than she did in their parallel struggles for independence in their lives. At the centre of the narrative, we are confronted with*

*a woman who fights but falls by the wayside; but at its edges, as no doubtless representative but still symbolic figures, we encounter ... other women, whose relative success points the way to the future. (2001: 3)*

The part of the novel that deals with Swarna Lata reconstructs her whole personality. Swarna Lata seems to have been possessed by a strong spirit of patriotism and is very much against segregation of Hindu-Muslim communities. A vision of united India floats before her. In her brief discussion with Ida about the horrible conditions that prevailed at the time of partition she says:

*That was the time when people were very aware of what was happening around them. I got involved with IPTA, we agitated against rising prices, we organized singing squads with songs based on folk songs to arouse awareness, we wanted rationing centres opened, we wanted profiteers punished, we wanted more equality between men and women, and we were against, totally against, segregation on religious lines. (Kapur, 1998: 136-137)*

SwarnaLata's voice is the voice of millions of Indians, Hindus and Muslims. It is against the artificial segregation especially on religious lines. SwarnaLata's inspiring talk addressed to Virmati is noble and lofty sentiments that are capable of enkindling those people in whom these patriotic thoughts are in a dormant stage. Obviously, Manju Kapur creates the character of SwarnaLata as a representative militant figure of a multitude of young educated youth who readily respond to the magic call of that dynamic leader, Mahatma Gandhi. Kapur has thoroughly succeeded in creating an ideal, young educated lady who is the very embodiment of that patriotic zeal, at a time that enslaved India needed the most.

Swarna Lata is a young lady who lives for her ideology which includes political and other activities which are meant to ameliorate society. Only when her fiancé concedes to her request that she must have complete freedom, she is prepared to marry him. This shows the stout champion in her towards the upliftment of social values and most importantly, women's empowerment. It also breeds ideas of radicalism and militancy but what is admirable is the fact that she can build these ideas of independence into her marriage without destroying the structure of the family. Her marriage rests on the condition that it would not hamper her work. Although a minor character in the novel, Manju Kapur has very powerfully delineated Swarna Lata.

SwarnaLata appears to be a clear-headed social activist. Unlike Virmati, she channelizes her energy in new directions which gives her a sense of group identity. She is a committed activist and is projected as the mouthpiece of contemporary women who fight for their rights. She is bold, outspoken, determined and action-oriented. Swarna's words as well as actions reveal her as a staunch feminist, fighting for every right of women. SwarnaLata, in her second encounter with her old friend and roommate Virmati, who comes to Lahore to study M.A. Philosophy, asks her to join the demonstration against the Draft Hindu Code Bill and exhorts Virmati that, "It's important that our voice be heard, Viru, ... Won't you add your strength to ours?" (ibid: 252) B. R. Agrawal writes in this context:

*The novelist seems to be questioning the traditional systems of child marriage, gender discrimination, women's education and other outmoded value systems which lie at the root of modern malaise. Hence, there is a need to modify and not to change them. (2008: 246)*

Manju Kapur portrays three women characters against the background of transition, who are modern in their perspective and challenge the idea of traditional womanhood. SwarnaLata



dominates the others as a woman with an inflexible will and steady determination to break free from the rigid clutches of tradition. As a staunch feminist and a woman of progressive views, SwarnaLata leaves an indelible impression on the readers' mind by her spotless character, as one wedded to her ideology.

As a clear-sighted young educated lady with a perfect poise of mind, she seems to be an apotheosis of reason and common sense. She is fervent but not emotional in contributing her mite to the society and the country. SwarnaLata's role in the novel, though limited, has its own significance. By contrasting SwarnaLata with Virmati, the author seems to reveal the hollowness in Virmati's character. SwarnaLata has the courage of her own convictions who upholds higher values over her personal pursuits.

The three characters, namely, Virmati, Shakuntala and SwarnaLata are definitely at the twilight of tradition and almost at the threshold of modernity. Manju Kapur has rightly captured the mood and characteristic features of the spirit of the times. As the country is emerging into a new state of consciousness breaking the shackles of centuries of thralldom, the new generation of men and women liberate themselves from the rigid clutches of tradition.

### **3.2.6. Kapur's Conviction : Feminist Movements and Emancipation**

Feminism is a broad socio-political movement specially advocating women's welfare in the society. Deriving upon this philosophy many women writers, thinkers and critics have formulated a school of thought that searches for such instances in literature. The main task of the feminist literary critics seems to stand guard against the curbing patriarchal norms which are inherent in the society. Marginalization of women, their predicament, struggle for identity, finding their own space and celebrating the female body are the chief subjects of this trend.

Feminism is, indeed, a serious attempt to analyze, comprehend and clarify how and why femininity is or the feminine sensibility is different from masculinity or the masculine experience. Feminism brings into perspective the points of difference that characterize the 'feminine identity' or 'feminine psyche' or 'femininity' of woman. It can be studied by taking into account the psychosomatic, social and cultural construction of femininity vis-à-vis masculinity.

Male writers have mostly seen women as inferior and weak. Gendering and some sort of misogyny are evident in the texts written by men. They see men as 'superior sex' or the 'stronger sex' while women are seen as the 'inferior sex' or the 'weaker sex'. Men are considered as logical, rational and objective where as women are perceived as emotional, inconsistent, intuitive, subjective and lacking self-confidence. But the modern woman has raised her voice against the atrocities and injustice done to her by the system. And it is their pronouncement in an overt tone that has created the difference also in sexuality. It was mainly after the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960s that the contemporary feminist ideology evolved and the female voice was heard with special concern. The focus of the literary studies was shifted to women's writing with a view to re-reading, re-visioning and reinterpreting it in the light of long-existing gender bias and sexual politics in history, culture, society, family, language and literature.

There is a conscious and concentrated attempt towards representing biological differences and their implications, revaluing women experience, rethinking the canons of text, discourse and language, revising the socio-cultural, economic and political conditions in the society. The content includes various fields like the history, styles, themes, genres and the structures of women writings, the psychoanalysis of female creativity, the trajectory of the

individual or collective female career and the evolution of laws of a female tradition. Writers like Jane Austen, Mary Wollstonecraft and Virginia Woolf pledged for the equality of opportunity for the women based upon the equality of value. But it was Simone De Beauvoir who came out with a bold manifesto for a frontal attack on the patriarchal hegemony in our society. In her famous treatise, *The Second Sex*, she has, like a raging rebel, hit hard at the androcentric customs and conventions, art and culture, philosophy and religion which have always assigned women the secondary or rather slavish position to men.

Feminism focused on women's struggle for recognition and survival and made them realize that the time has come when they stop suffering silently in helplessness. Gayatri Spivak in her article *Can the Subaltern Speak?* writes:

*Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and objectformation the figure of a woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization. (1988: 80)*

The protagonists of all the novels of Manju Kapur are seen as women struggling against all odds. She has always tried to depict the sufferings of women at a deeper level in her novels. The strains of feminism are obvious in her writing. This is overtly seen in the struggles of her women characters, their vulnerability, struggle for identity and their liberating attitude. The female psyche and the female biological world are the main features in her writings. A woman's attempt to succeed in her fight to assert herself is to be esteemed for she has made an attempt. She not only comes to value education and the higher issues in life but also deals with the darker aspects of life. The endless vicissitudes of life make her a matured woman. She crushes and defies the patriarchal restrictions and expectations to assert her identity and achieves self-

satisfaction and selffulfillment in her life. Kapur's novels present the long struggle of women to establish an identity.

### **3.2.7. Ideal Woman: an Outdated Fashion in *Difficult Daughters***

The concept of ideal Indian woman has become outdated. A modern woman is career oriented because she knows that it is her economic independence which empowers her and enables her fight against patriarchal hegemony. This chapter discusses those factors that have been at work in bringing about certain conspicuous changes in the status of women in our society.

Manju Kapur while championing the cause of women, creates her women protagonists as being modern in their attitude to life, setting their back against tradition, flouting conventions and deviating from customs; and in this process they encounter many a hurdle in their way and being well equipped to brave the storms of life, emerge as finished modern women. Kapur imbibes the spirit of the fast changing times, renders her protagonists capable of adapting themselves to situations that challenge them at every stage in their lives.

Manju Kapur is a past master at creating the atmosphere of place and time which reflect the general character of the people living in that atmosphere. She creates characters with the stamp of time to which they belong. The reader finds three generations of women in her novels, each generation having its own distinctive traits so that one can easily place them in time and characterize them easily as the traditional, the transitional, the modern and the postmodern.

The postmodern women fiction writers since 1980 down to the present day vehemently champion the cause of women empowerment in every sphere of life. Their voice is felt louder

and louder with the passage of time. The enlightenment that women have gained through their education has made them ignore customs and castes.

### **3.3. The God of Small Things: Content and Context**

Arundhaty Roy, as an intellectual, emerged in the period of the great thinkers; Noam Chomsky, Albert Camus, Alan Watts, Jean Paul 2, Judith Butler, Vandana Shiva, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Julia Kristeva, Martha Nussbaum, and Sam Harris and so on. This era is regarded as a time of richness and prosperity not only in such fields as science and economy and industry but it was also rich and fruitful concerning literature and fiction. Altogether with the growing popularity of novel, aroused automatically popular writers, Roy is definitely amongst one of the brilliants.

Roy combined the personality traits of the author with psychological analysis of her female characters, frequently introducing events of her life into the lives of her fictional women. The reflected images of her characters take priority over the plot where the heroine, amongst her female fellows, is contrasted with the Indian society and its rigid rules. The linguistic strategy of depicting the main female characters, are ingeniously used, where the author's fusion of her personal thought inclination serves to show the attitudes and ideas of the author herself. Roy guides her audiences towards the positivity in understanding and accepting the moral values and the compatibility of the individual in the twenty first century. Being a writer, an actress, an activist and a woman, her book reflects a variety of matters of her society without romanticizing the female struggles for a peaceful life with reciprocal respect and human dignity.

As women endowed with a postcolonial identity and deeply influenced by feminist ideologies and philosophies, Arudhati Roy devotes her efforts and ingenious imagination in full

representation of the contemporary social class hierarchy and patriarchy of India. Via her output, the author contributes to strengthen theories and develop systematic body for concepts of identity and belonging. All of the author's protagonists are women hence; as feminist and a postcolonial write, she faced no difficulties in revealing the contemporary woman's sorrows and plights. However, her uniqueness lies in her ability to represent women in their real specific context.

The distinguished Indian woman writer, Arundhati Roy is actually worldwide viewed as an idolized element of post-colonial literature. As an Indian post-colonial woman writer, she produces specific feminine insights and brings into sharp focus the question of Indian woman's identity. Since caste and gender have a constitutive spectrum with gender in the lives of women, they influence to a great extent of negativity women's social experiences of inequality and injustice.

She has achieved international degree of fame because of her fiction production and her commitment to social issues. Her devotion underlies the cause of the marginalized and oppressed sections in the Indian society and the world. In her *The God of Small Things* novel, Roy deals with caste rigidity and its harsh principles against mobility. Furthermore, she insists on revealing the woman's discrimination, exploitation and control of her sexuality and love by the destructive patriarchal forces of Indian traditions and customs. When it comes to language *The God of Small Things* remains a proof that English literary expression is a part of the memory that remembers the legacy of colonialism.

### **3.3.1. Cultural Codes in Roy's Novel**

Her novel is unique in its kind. It reflects life in Kerala and it shows the struggle for existence of middle class Indian women balancing across the paradoxes that come across their life. Women in her novel are sensitive and strong to the changing time and situations. They are aware of the social and cultural disorder to which they are subjected in the male-dominated society. Women like Ammu and Rahel want to rebel against the issues like women subjugation, gender discrimination, and marital disharmony in order to search for their assertiveness, freedom and identity, but they find themselves caught up against well-entrenched social inertia.

Roy's woman, Ammu, could not succeed in overcoming social stigmas asserting her potential in education arena. In fact, Roy's characters, Ammu, Rahel, Kochamma, and Mammachi, are victims of man and society. Arundhati Roy, a supporter of women, knows the difficulties faced by women in their castes.

Apart from women, her novel tightly fits into the framework of social, political and historical milieu. The author broods over alienation sense of belonging are commonly found as the impact of post-Independence is also found in her themes. The women centered themes in the novels are marital disharmony, shattered dreams, dashed hopes. Her novel is feminist in outlook. Furthermore it reminds her readers the glimpses of cross caste and traditions that she belongs to.

Every theme, gender, class, caste, is like an open door where a writer can enter and exit. It is a panorama of cultures, traditions, coming across different people with different ideas and motives. They are not just stories alone as we dive deep into her characterisation we realise the essential qualities that are required for human beings.

Arundhati Roy is an optimistic writer who is very clear in her thoughts, her style of writing is simple and lucid one can read and reread her novel. Sometimes the subjectivity is thin; yet she is a very skillful in bridging her characters. At the same time one sees the concern that the author has towards her women characters make one believes that the reader too may easily fit in any one of them.

The writing of Arundhati Roy is viewed as the contribution of a person, though writing in English, who pride herself on being of Indian heritage only, without any label of social discrimination as caste. Writing fiction is not a strange question to the author of *The God of Small Things* she adopted this quality in her early teens in school. Thus Arundhati Roy, the Indian woman novelist par excellence, writes for two reasons: one to express her deepest feelings and the other to protest an injustice or outrage.

Roy's woman protagonist, Ammu, from her debut novel *The God of Small Things* is being discriminated within her own family. Furthermore, she undergoes through different hardships in her marital life. Women, like Ammu, in general are the susceptible victims of certain ideological constraints perpetuated by the institutions of family and religion from times immemorial. The wretched condition of the women in patriarchy which has its roots spread deeply into gender discrimination and marital status becomes the other major issue in the novel.

The protagonist Ammu in her early days of her marriage that was expected to bloom with care, mutual trust and conjugal bliss, withered as days passed by. She realized that her marriage strained into a loveless relationship. Where her relationship with her husband became mandatory, Ammu started to live for the sake of living and it has become a habit for them. She slowly realized the position given to a woman by the society. Even her life at her parental home and her marital home made no conspicuous change.



Ammu, who was previously imprisoned within the walls of her family and shackled by traditions, now, as Velutha awakens her warm feelings of love and desire, looks upon herself from a different angle. She decides to make her own choice in her future prospects without any regard to the family traditions and shackles. She, then, clearly celebrates her transgression. Like any other Indian traditional woman, Ammu has been tuned as a woman, as a preserver of her family. She is bound by the traditional pulls; women, right from their childhood, were taught that their main duty is to obey their men whom they come across in roles like father, brother, husband and so on.

The writer sincerely broods over the fate and future of modern woman, particularly that engulfed her in a male-chauvinistic society and her annihilation at the altar of marriage. As Simone de Beauvoir remarks in her work *The Second Sex* “Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society.” (1949: 445) Through the ages the Indian family and society have been throwing new strains and challenges. As a result the life of married women has undergone gradual changes, torn between traditional and western models, married women have to face new challenges.

Women managed to survive in the old centuries of patriarchal system. They did not know any option about liberty and were not able to emancipate themselves. A Scholar Neena Arora in her *Nayanatara Sahgal and Doris Lessing: A Feminist Study in Comparison: Feminism* observes:

*Woman’s oppression is traced not to individual male malevolence but to the social and familial structures based on patriarchy. The problem as identified was that a woman’s identity was expected to merge with, and grow from her role as a wife and mother. (1991: 16)*

*The God of Small Things* is a well knitted novel, which mirrors the contemporary life, society and situations. The author depicts the changing fate of woman on a par with the change in the society, its attitudes and beliefs, values and behaviours, morality and hypocrisy. Roy's women characters are staged under the broad light of the family system. However Roy chooses a wider canvass to portray human relationships. As Diana Jackson-Dwyer in her book *Interpersonal Relationships*, opines: "Humans are essentially social beings. As countless novels, films, songs, plays and poems testify, our ultimate happiness and despair is founded in relationships" . (2014: 1)

Ammu as a daughter was raised with her brother; she remembered quite well with her mother's special treatment towards her brother. Her mother's favouritism towards her son in the family made her realize how low a woman is being treated. According to Gerda Lerner, in *The Creation of Patriarchy* "it is this feature of male hegemony which has been most damaging to women and has ensured their subordinate status for millennia". (1986: 223)

Gender discrimination, grown out of social norms and tradition, goes hand in glove with patriarchy. Women have not been able to get rid of its shackles and remained as captives captured by men. Under the patriarchy canopy, mothers prefer sons to daughters. The birth of a son is considered a blessing whereas a daughter a burden, sometimes a curse. So mothers under the patriarchal ruling prefer sons rather than daughters. As rightly remarked by Andrienne Rich, *of Woman Born*, "Patriarchy depends on the mother to act as a conservative influence ... certainly it has created images of the archetypal mother, which reinforce the conservatism of motherhood and convert it to an energy for the renewal of male power" . (1986: 273)

The mother who is a victim of patriarchy raises her daughter, inculcating in her the principles and values of patriarchy. A mother passes on to her progeny unquestioned submission

to male dominance. Sue Monk Kidd (1996), holds the same view in *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*:

*Women themselves condition their daughters to serve the system of male primacy. If a daughter challenges it, the mother will generally defend the system rather than her daughter. These mothers, victims themselves, have unwittingly become wounded victims. Women need to attack culture's oppression of women, for there truly is a godlike socializing power that induces women to "buy in" or collude, but we also need to confront our own part in accepting male dominance and take responsibility where appropriate. (<http://www.notable-quotes.com>).*

As a result either of the two things happen: one the daughter succumbs to the patriarchal system or revolts against it. In both cases the result is hazardous for the girl child. If she subjects she will have no identity of her own. By revolting she snaps relationship with her mother. It is not just a few women but the whole of the community of women come under the impact of gender discrimination. In this regard, Ammu can be compared with Martha, a protagonist in the novel *Martha Quest* (1952) by Doris Lessing, a British woman novelist. Women are discriminated irrespective of their country, caste and creed. Both Martha and Ammu walked through the path of discrimination by their mothers. Martha becomes aware of how gender discrimination is practiced in her family. Martha's younger brother with "half her brains" was getting educated in an "expensive school, like a visitor from a more prosperous world", (1952: 34) while she was sent to a local school. This kind of prejudice incites Martha to break free of her parent's subordination and find her own identity.

So Martha dared to revolt against her parents and rose above the patriarchal system in which the birth of a girl child is not welcomed as the male. In doing so she grew to the stature of an ideal woman. Ammu, on the other hand, never nurtured the idea of revolting against her

parents. That the male child enjoyed privileges denied to her made her realise how deplorable the condition of women is. When her brother Chackko was sent to Oxford University for higher education, she was not allowed the continuity of her studies, just because of her sex.

Mammachi always tries to implant in Ammu the gender based role. She continuously attempts to make Ammu understand that she is a girl and she is substandard to her brother, in every possible way. For certainly the terrors exist within her. So her behaviour pattern will not be like a male. She has to obey certain restrictions to which, she is bound to follow. This exposes the gender bias ingrained in Indian mentality. Indian women have been discriminated against not only by the colonisers but also by Indian men. Boehmer Elleke, in *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature* remarks “Colonized women were, as it is called, doubly or triply marginalized. That is to say, they were disadvantaged on the grounds not only of gender, but also of race, social class, and, in some cases, religion and caste”. (1995: 224)

The protagonist Ammu, from Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, Uma in Anita Desai’s (1999) *Fasting, Feasting* and Coomi in Thrity Umrigar’s *Bombay Times* (2002) all these women are no less exception to gender bias in their parental home. These novelists through their literary world want to expose the hypocrisy of male chauvinism and the idiosyncratic reflections found in the domineering Indian family system. Along with Arundhati Roy women novelists like Thrity Umrigar, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya stress the several contemporary problems faced by women on social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds. Gender inequality was practised by the Indian society for ages. Adversely affected by it, the confused Indian woman does not defy the conversations and drifts into a pathetic state. And if she tries to be independent, her effort is looked down upon as a weakness in character.

A French feminist Colette Guillamin (1995), in *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology*, emphasises “the degraded position of a woman in common: A woman is never anything but a woman, an interchangeable object with no other characteristic than her femininity, whose fundamental characteristic is belonging to the class of women” (Guillamin 178). This oppression of women is not even tried to be understood or is purportedly connived at because women hold social security for their children and themselves before their individuality and try to avoid the social stigma of being marked as an abandoned woman. This weak point has given strength to patriarchal male dominance which is universally present.

Woman is discriminated on various grounds. She is considered as a secondary object, undeserved made to lead her life that is set by patriarchy. As Amar Nath Prasad, in his book *Women’s writing in India: New Perspectives* opines

*...apart from many other things, how women have to lead a life of suffocation and undeserved sufferings both physically and mentally in the male – dominated patriarchal frame work; ... how a girl child craves for parental affection but in the end, gets nothing but frustration, isolation and unhomely treatment and, above all, how the neglected child solely develops the horrible sense of trauma and other associated psychosomatic diseases. (2002: 37)*

Mammachi continuously inculcates to Ammu that education is a waste of time for girls and that she has nothing to do with it in her marital life, whereas for Chakko, her brother, the family is ready to spend their fortune. To be a good wife and a good mother does not need education, then, what else is a woman going to be if not only being devoted to obey her husband’s commands? Before Ammu was forbidden to continue her studies her idea of a woman’s education is to enlighten her with knowledge and identity. But later she realized from the idea of the society around her, that an unequal treatment is meted out between Ammu and

Chacko. Pappachi means father, also viewed that education was an unnecessary expense for a girl:

*Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl ...Since her father did not have enough money to raise a suitable dowry, no proposal came Ammu's way. Two years went by. Her eighteenth birthday came and went .Unnoticed, or at least unremarked upon by her parents. Ammu grew desperate. All day she dreamed of escaping from the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long suffering mother. (1997: 38)*

When Ammu was denied college education, her brother was sent to Oxford University for higher education. Women getting educated is not encouraged because a woman's life is confined to kitchen. A linear thought to this is expressed by Nishas's mother in Manju Kapur's *Home* where Nisha is confined to the kitchen, in return expects the same from her daughter too: "This is the life of a woman: to look after her home, her husband, her children, and give them food she has cooked with her own hands." (1998: 126)

Similarly Saroja from Anita Rau Badami's (1996) *Tamarind Mem* can be compared with Ammu. Saroja is been discriminated on the basis of education. She is not allowed to go for higher studies whereas her brother, Gopal is sent to England for his further studies. "He is the first person in our family to cross the seas, and she is filled with superstitious dread". (1996: 162-163) Saroja's father is willing to spend money for his son for organizing a ceremony but not for her. "We will have the ceremony at home for Gopal. I am still capable of spending for my son" . (ibid: 164)

Ammu as a young woman is expected to fulfil all the expectations that are placed upon her. Society expects from her to be meek and malleable without any trace of assertiveness and

individuality. Ammu understood ultimately that the world she is living in is a man's world.

Simon de Beauvoir, in the *The Second Sex* opines:

*Women herself recognizes that the world is masculine on the whole: those who fashioned it, ruled it, and still dominate it today, are men ... Shut up in her flesh, her home, she sees herself as passive before these gods with human faces who set goals and establish values ... She has no grasp, even in thought, on the reality around her ... (1949: 609)*

Ammu is perpetually under patriarchal domination; the discrimination she underwent made her tough; in due course of time she realised she needed to change. She opted to be an individual, a woman who is confident in taking her own decisions pertaining to her life.

This shift in Ammu paved the way for her to have her own choice regarding her marital life. Her final decision is to put an end to her relation with her husband; a man, who exploited her body and is willing to present his wife as a gift to his corrupted boss for sexual satisfaction. In her husband's eyes Ammu is an object, a sexual object. Unfortunately Ammu's decision to divorce is an open door to accumulate discrimination and alienation for her and her children.

In India women as divorcees are more harshly judged than men. In *The God of small Things* Roy delineates Ammu's case. "Ammu left her husband and returned , unwelcomed to her parents in Ayemenem. to everything she had left from only a few years ago , Except now she had two children . And no more dreams" .(1997: 42)

Ammu's marriage and fast divorce have unbearable consequences upon her and her twins. The socio-cultural stigma of divorces in India has no pity for the woman. As any other Indian divorcee who finds no place to go, Ammu returns to her own family where she is not heartedly welcomed. Traditionally, a divorced woman is another burden on her family,

particularly if she has children. Without doubt, difficult life is waiting Ammu. Whatever the husband might be and do in the Indian society, woman should cope and never complain. She is not allowed to think about an end. She then would Die-voiced; as pronounced by Chacko: “die –voiced? his voice rose in such a high register that it crack on the question mark. he even pronounced the word as though it was a form of death “. (ibid 130) Concerning Ammu’s children they are not less discriminated and humiliated for being children of a divorcee woman and being fed by Ammu’s family. In this context the son, Estha, is sent to her and the daughter, Rahel is allowed to stay in the house with as much indifference and neglect as her mother, hence, as Prof Bedjaoui writes in her thesis “restoring both the sense of non-place for daughters in their parents house and this dimension of exclusion for women in general”. (ibid: 168)

Ammu as a ‘wife’ thought at least by getting married would give her a happy life, recognition as an individual but it proved wrong, her idea of marriage before and after did not remain the same. The writer primarily focuses on family life; Roy admirably depicts its tensions and pretensions, over possessiveness, insecurities, which are found as a common phenomenon in the lives of Indian wives. The woman’s mind filled with ideals and prejudices that urge from deep within find a true sense of belonging to be pampered and loved.

The sufferings of women as a wife have been brought into limelight, with a perfect understanding of the predicament of an Indian wife. Ammu, who belongs to the Indian middle class, is brought up in a traditional environment where men are prioritised to women who are treated as secondary. According to Marion Reid, in her *A Plea for Women*, “Womanly behaviour, in practice, means ‘good humour and attention to her husband, keeping her children neat and clean, and attending to domestic arrangements’”. (1843: 41).



Ammu, after divorce, aspires to become independent, aims to find completeness in her. She saw Velutha as quite different from others. Ammu and Velutha are from different castes and classes; Ammu is an upper caste woman, Velutha is an outcaste/Untouchable. What Ammu liked in Velutha is his sense and his person. The couple varies in caste and class ways but love joined them. This love made her happy.

The novel, *The God of Small Things*, is centralized around Ammu's life. Roy portrayed Ammu right from her childhood crossing all the stages of youth to adult until the final point in her life: death. Since the birth of Ammu nothing has drawn pride or happiness. She lived her life struggling family and social troubles till the end. The pressures and restrictions brought but humiliation and alienation to Ammu from different members of her environment. For her, the family orders come not only from men but from women too. Ammu is surrounded by cruelties. The husband of Ammu, culturally owing the right to command her body and soul, tries to trade her body. For the sake of saving his position at work, Ammu's body to satisfy his boss' desire is the price. Impossible to bear the situation, Ammu decides to put an end to her marital relation; divorce is the solution since her husband fails to consider her sensitivity as a woman.

Being faithful to the Indian social doctrines, Ammu returns back to her father's house with her children; switching from the dependence of her husband to her father's again. Roy's fictional creativity succeeded in influencing the readers' mood. Throughout the reading one feels but sympathy and contempt towards Ammu's situation. Unexpectedly, her new state as a widow, moreover with two children, is hard-heartedly unwelcomed in her father's Ayemenem House.

The reading of Roy's story makes the reader aware of the similarities between Roy and her characters as a woman, the relations between the females and womanhood, and the relation

between females and the male characters in the novel. The reading also traces the evidence that Roy as well as her main heroine suffer from comparisons to typical feminine symbols traditionally labeled to the 'ideal' Indian woman. They assert themselves as real rather than ideal.

### **3.3.2. Social Contrasts in the Era of Globalization**

Roy's interest in feminist ideologies, her hunger for moral values and thirst for intellectual nurture are clearly remarkable from the different stages of her characters' experiences and lives as well as from herself as an Indian woman intellectual. In *The God of Small Things*, Roy consciously stresses the relationship between, and the influence of, an individual self and the social standards.

Roy points out the man-made social norms, ethical and cultural codes, as well as feminist issues of this modern era in the Indian setting through her personal point of view. She raises thought provoking and serious topics in her novel such as female acknowledgement and minority marginalization or exploitation. Her moral beliefs and disapproval of the abominable situation of the Dalit community and the Indian women in the age of globalization and modernization can be felt from which the events of the story are narrated and also from the story of her life as an Indian Syrian Christian woman.

Roy devotes her writings to contribute to the welfare of the minority population. She condemns the exploitation of human beings due to their gender or to their descents, and its long existing even in this era of globalization. Roy is influenced by the twentieth century philosophy of the globalization of knowledge and human rights. Her in-depth knowledge about her culture is deeply reflected in her work. Roy advocates reform of the existing system, and supports the

eradication of the conventional discourses of discrimination and alienation of the ethnic minorities and women everywhere in the world.

The existing system of patriarchy is derived from the religious concept of marriage, in which the husband and wife were made one, and were considered a social unit. This religious concept becomes a tradition inherited by generations and preached by almost all religions. In Europe, for instance, the system left a legacy in the legal codes in which women had no value as human beings separate from their husbands. Their dependence upon their husbands confirm their existence.

Roy must have been, according to *The God of Small Things*, of the rapidly changing status of the female in society, her writings prove her intellectual perspectives for social reform. The traditional expectations for what the woman must and must not do and the understanding of the tribulations of the inner psyche of women are skillfully treated in her novel. The succession of the events in her life from childhood to adulthood make her conscious about the suffering of the Indian woman and the exploitation of the Dalit community where human beings are denied their basic human rights to live worthy of respect.

### **3.3.3. Roy's Feminist Inclination**

Mary Wollstonecraft published the first major document of feminism, *A Vindication of Rights of Woman*, in 1792. A friend of Thomas Paine and of French revolutionaries, she was sufficiently in touch with the radicalism of her era to insist upon the cause of the marginalized by the man-made social dogmas which make the woman's world under the supreme force of man. The reaction to her document was wide, negative, of rejection and violence. Unfortunately, the attacks were falling on the author; Wollstonecraft's personal life. Her love affairs,

illegitimate child and attempted suicide wide spread the word among the readers that the book is dangerous, and consequently, it should not be in the hands of any woman. A few women only could read it. Still, open agitation around the “women” question and her struggle for political, economic, and social equalities did not really begin until the sixties. John Stuart Mill with the assistance of Harriet Taylor published the *Subjection of Women* which claims the eradication of the deplorable conditions of woman’s life at work and the amelioration in the fields of education, politics and economy.

In reading Roy’s essays, and *The God of Small Things*, one is firmly convinced that she is adherent to feminism and to the cause of the Dalits as a marginalized minority. Being formidably intelligent and knowledgeable across *The God of Small Things*, Roy’s method and achievement as a novelist met at many planes. She made herself known in the field of the English novel in her own particular way too.

As far as the contemporary struggle for female emancipation was concerned, Roy feels no fear about any substantial change in woman’s status that might mean the loss of those traditional “womanly” qualities, which were vital to the more stability of the patriarchal Indian society and to the conservation of the old-aged caste system. It is a proof of her courage and emancipation. It is a challenge since the social norms installed to govern the woman’s life are deeply rooted in the Indian woman’s mind and psyche.

As one looks at Roy’s *The God of Small Things* and its themes, the first of these is realism, or basically an attempt to write about the surrounded truth. Roy wanted to capture artistically what she saw: real people struggling with their real problems. Understanding the human psyche holds an appeal for her attention and concern.

The novel, *The God of Small Things* as a lively story in which the characters' emotions and feelings are all tangled up. Arranged marriage or marriage without the bride's consent with unrequited love is but a source of sadness and sacrifice. Roy's mission is undoubtedly clear; *The God of Small Things* is about the whole society. It touches the cause of those who are underprivileged and silenced for a long time. Authenticity and the artistic selection of the story events and the beauty of the language used make the output just outstanding. But reality matters.

#### **3.3.4. Roy's Concerns: Gender and Caste**

Social norms or rules are ways of doing things or patterns that become routine over a certain period of time. These patterns are so socially legitimized that they become reproduced, because of the complex way in which identity and roles are intertwined. There are three fundamental institutions in society which combine their practice and reinforce the ideology of the social construction of gender, notably the state, the community and the family. It is also critical to realize that those social rules and norms impact on women in different ways depending particularly on their caste.

The power of social rules lies in the fact that they appear to be unquestionable and non-negotiable while in fact they are man-made and perishable because of inequalities and injustice. Those who are found willing to cross the borders of their own culture are labelled rebellious. Any transgression of the natural order constitutes a threat to prevalent beliefs, values and culture. All boundaries are sites of struggle. Defiance and compliance are antagonist in a perpetual struggle.

The context of Roy's story is complicated: Ammu's and Chacko's divorces, deaths of family members, family conflicts, illtreatment of women and children, discrimination and

humiliation of Velutha, dominance by Chacko. All the characters seem to be living on tensions and fears. These conflictual situations lead to Ammu's desire to leave.

Ammu's transgression is then viewed in terms of resistance and a rejection of her cultural repressive morals, values and constraints. Velutha and Ammu both violate the traditional social norms and create an atmosphere of hatred and discomfort in the family and the village. The solution to reinstate the normality becomes tragic.

Particularly in *The God of Small Things*, the Indian society is dominated by males and has not improved much. Roy shows that it is probably difficult to understand why in this age of enlightenment, some Indian women still keep old values and attitudes about gender roles and sex. The family values of Indian culture, as well as the English one inherited from the Victorian era, were set up to give women a subordinate role in society, assigning them a status closer to slaves. Indeed, social rules are so entrenched that not only do women who deviate get punished, but also women who are seen to participate in their own subordination.

It seems that the traditional Indian woman in *The God of Small Things* does not want to lose the old codes which provide her security and tranquility. Yet, post-colonial India conceals not only a trenchant chauvinism but a fear of women liberty and creativity.

Everything has changed in India from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial era. The political system is of no exception in the process of change nor are the cultural and economic situations, whereas the diversity of the society, the multi ethnicity and the religious tenets remain robust though the immense progress of the state's economy and the growth of the Indian population. The period of independence of the Indian state from the British rules brought prosperity and a wealth of knowledge and art but could not erase conventional thoughts and

ideologies of social discrimination and the religious and cultural taboos, which stick any woman in the state of submission and subaltern.

Furthermore, Roy emphasizes Dalit atrocities of life. She had an upper caste Syrian Christian upbringing and witnessed the differences between the outcastes and the upper caste lifestyles in rituals, food, clothing, occupations, houses, and their relationships. Her novel has focused on realistic characters in Kerala. The 'Untouchable's relation to the upper caste people is not less than the relation between the master and the slave; it is rather more complicated in terms of 'purity'. Roy thought it is important to focus on this, because Dalit/Untouchable people are viewed less worthy of respect than animals and thus closer to dirt and pollution. Furthermore, Dalits are conditions to accept their faith unquestionably. In other words, in Roy's perspective, the woman's and the outcaste's way of life, their opinions and their struggles were just more real than man. In general, the people, especially males, of the higher caste exhibit no compassion and struggle to keep them silent by force and humiliation.

Arundhati Roy relates her novel to the question of women's role with the contemporary issues of feminism. The story of the upper caste Syrian Christian took place in a real land, a real place Kerala and Ayamenem in the near last decades. Since then, things remain stagnant in terms of cultural rules, caste's rigidity, and the root of the suppression of woman by men is not old fashioned yet. This marked *The God of Small Thing* with authenticity and realism. The story confesses the truth about human relationships between men and women and furthermore, between upper caste people and the Untouchables in the Indian society.

One of the axioms of the novel's authenticity is the assumption of the author's point of view in dealing with the discriminated Indian individual in the different stages of life. *The God of Small Things* provides relevance for the woman issues as a wife, a widow, a mother, a

daughter, a sister and as a sister in law. Its relevance extends to the question of the 'Untouchable' cause to highlight the atrocities of the perpetual human discrimination and exploitation at both the individual (Velutha) and the community, (the Parayas) by the Hindu caste system.

### **3.3.5. Postcolonial Issues in Roy's Story**

The contrast between the transgression of Ammu against the patriarchal rigid rules and her mother's, Mammachi, blind obedience to the man in the family shows the gap between two generations of Indian women on the one hand and the change in society's expectations of a young woman on the other hand. The contrast, then, shows the transition of woman's way of life from the ignorant of her rights to the aware; from Mammachi to Ammu, two faces of standards are at the meeting point.

The other face of contrast is the case of Chacko, the fortunate who can abuse of his women workers and make love whenever he wants and Velutha, the unfortunate/the Untouchable, who because his feelings of warm and love to Ammu is punished and beaten to death on account of his belonging to the outcaste community. Another obvious contrast for the issue of feminism to be muted is also the case of the fortunate Chacko/'man' who enjoys his life as a divorced man, and his sister Ammu/'woman' whose life became a hell after putting an end to her marital relationship when she said 'no' to sell her body to her husband who would present it as a price to his boss for preserving his job. A contrast also raises in the case of children when the daughter of Chacko is more privileged by her father and her grandmother while Rahel and Estha, the children of Ammu are not welcome in the family. In addition, the poor women workers are corrupted to satisfy Chacko's sexual needs whereas Ammu is punished because of



her desire. When it comes to inheritance, Chacko becomes the owner of the factory but Ammu remains a simple worker.

*The God of Small Things* had been recognized as Roy's work that combines idealism and realism, as well as the portrayal of her real life. In her novel Roy created a heroine, Ammu, for feminine emancipation. The patriarchal ideology and female oppression in the novel were affected by the genuine life experiences of the author. Yet, the injustice against the social exclusion of the Untouchables is rooted and naturalized in her family, Ayamenem, Kerala and India.

Ammu's resistance and transgression reflect the author's emancipation and revolution. Roy is a realistic writer. In her work, she produces images of the twentieth century social attainments in terms of class hierarchy and gender biases. In addition, as a feminist, "Arundhati Roy also portrays her struggle against male dominated society and the doctrines that alter woman's self, femininity, love, and emotions and reduces her chances in education, marriage, and economic independence". (Bedjaoui, 2005: 196)

The heroine, Ammu, thirsted for true and warm love. She destructed her conjugal life for the sake of respect and asserted her 'self' as free to choose her companion against the marital codes that put the wife under the obligation of accepting whatever her husband wants or suggests without questioning the reason behind nor the consequences later on. Obviously, in contemporary postcolonial India, the silent, obedient, docile and soft women are still the decoration of men's strength and honor; the ideal submissive and compliant women are the decoration in the house and the family.

Women's natural role is restricted to her productiveness. Her function then is limited to bearing children, taking care of them and more importantly to worship her husband for his

capacity of making her a 'wife'. The woman's social competence and performance are evaluated by the production of her womb and ovaries. Her self-identity and function are, yet, under the control of man/the colonialist and the limits of the society.

Roy's heroine wants to have her distinctive importance in the life of Velutha. She looks with longing towards love and desired happiness as well as feminine fulfilment as a woman. However, she suffers the unfair Love Laws for females and the caste strict control of endogamy. Both the woman and the outcaste are colonized and cannot speak or make full use of themselves; they have to knee to the Indian social reality. Roy, in her realistic *The God of Small Things*, artistically joins her aesthetics to the absolute reality of her society and lived experiences of her family.

The postcolonial Indian society can be compared to the Victorian society of the 19th century in which the status of females was discriminated and inferior to males. The English society was a men-dominated society. Men were superior to women, no matter in politics, economy, society, family and marriage. Though Queen Victoria was at reign, women's status was not equal to men. Women were limited to work in education and limited social activities. A wifehood or womanhood should be the best profession of a female. An ideal lady should be what Virginia Woolf called 'the Angel of the House'.

Continuously in India and as traditions want, people took for granted that a woman should not be educated for self-development, but for self-renunciation. They are trained, by their mothers and mothers-in-law to be peaceable, obedient to males all their lives long, and not having personal thoughts. In such a patriarchal and postcolonial society, women are born to suffer and to be in a disadvantageous status in family, education, occupation and marriage.

Marriage is but a transition of dominance and absolute dependence from the father to the husband over the female as a daughter and as a wife.

Ammu's feminine sensibility draws her attention to Velutha, a Paravan/Untouchable, and falls in a love affair with him. The reciprocity of their feelings and emotions binds their souls and hearts without caring about the class and caste boundaries of the society. In contrast, the family's member preoccupation is their reputations in the village and the purity of their caste. A total refusal was waiting the love-relationship of Ammu and Velutha; it is fatal. The family's disaster is brought by the union of an outcaste, impure, man with a supreme woman born in an upper caste family.

### **3.3.6. The Subaltern in Roy's Novel**

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is a thought provoking and discerning story of the resilience and resistance of the subaltern "other" portrayed via the characters of the females in the novel and their communication but more importantly in revealing Ammu-Velutha's love and union. Throughout the examination and analysis of the novel, what is impossible to be ignored is that the political hegemony, caste discrimination, male domination, the colonial lasting predominance, class distinction, and economic disparity, are at the basis of inequality and subalternization of the "other"; both women and the Dalits in the Indian society. Arundhati Roy, the Indian woman belonging to the Syrian Christian upper caste, without hesitation attributes voice to the subaltern "other"; the voiceless woman and the downtrodden Untouchable in her penetrating novel.

Among the issues that enhance the subaltern's articulation and resistance both as an individual and as a community, Roy revelations focus on the patriarchal ideology of dominance

and subjugation, injustice in public administrations, social institutions, the discrepancy of the caste system, and the corruption of religion. Roy's ideological inclination and determination to raise the voice of the subaltern 'other' and her devotion to bring the marginalized to the centre are automatically detected in the reading of *The God of Small Things*.

Roy managed to direct her artistic creation to attribute a voice to the voiceless, the subaltern. She skillfully directed the attention of her audience to the hidden issues of two distinct groups of people, Dalits and women, and confesses their suffering and pains as well as their hope and will for self-realization in a fair society deprived of dishonored codes of injustice and inequality. Her revolutionary intention and support for the liberation of the subaltern are evident in her portrayal of Ammu and Velutha's relationships and struggle. Under conventional forces of human discrimination in the sub-continent Dalit community and women are the ultimate victims. In Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*, Ayamenem is a village at the image of the society, presents events frequently occurring all over India.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is written to condemn patriarchy and the proliferation of the injustice, exploitation and oppression upon the women as the powerless in the society. The female characters in the novel; Mammachi, Ammu, Baby Kochamma, Margaret and Rahel, referring to three generations of women, are cases in point. Mammachi lived her marital life suffering from her husband's negative attitudes towards her person. For instance, his harsh expression of jealousy deprived her from enjoying her talent in music and for a matter of being appraised by her music teacher, Pappachi, chauvinistically, puts an end to her lessons prematurely. His attitudes extend to domestic violence. Mammachi was frequently beaten by her husband for futilities. However, she has always considered his behavior as natural and normal since he is a man. Eager to exercise more power on the powerless, he continues to

disparage his wife and decide to put an end to interact with her forever, though her total devotion, to his tranquility and satisfaction was great.

Through the reading of *The God of Small Things*, the reader notices the flagrant male supremacy, sadism, and chauvinism. Chacko exploits his employees, the women workers, physically and economically; he not only does pay them less than what their efforts deserve but also exploits their bodies sexually. He is the supreme power in the factory and the family by inheritance. In addition, he is an upper-class Syrian Christian 'man'. For Mammachi, her son as a man, naturally, his sexual desires should be satisfied with any human female of his choice; women workers under his command are then the feeblest preys, ready to be caught without resistance. Women workers, the subalterns without a voice, accept Chacko's sexual harassment because they are poor, they have to bring bread to their children and families.

Roy protests against women exploitation on the name of their poverty and their gender. *The God of Small Things* is her means to raise awareness among the subaltern people and encourage their resistance to the oppressive supreme powers in the temples and churches as well as in the social institutions and families.

### **3.3.7. Sexuality of the Subaltern/woman**

Throughout generations and generations woman's psyche has been conditioned to naturalize her fate and absorb all thoughts and ideas that man and society have inculcated to shape her as the subjugated individual and intensify her subalternity and dependence. In such a case, woman's feminine sensibility has been of contribution to swallow the abominable norms leading her to submissiveness.

Mammachi, instinctively assists, Chacko, her son, in his exploitation of women workers' bodies via corrupting them by giving them money for the sexual satisfaction of her son and also for their silence. Meanwhile, she supports her son to poorly pay the women for the long hours they spend in the factory. Her patriarchal behavior pushes her support to Chacko's subjugation of women. For her son's prosperity, women should keep good humor. Roy recounts: "She secretly slips them money to keep them happy. They took it because they needed it. They had young children and old parents. Or husbands who spent all their earnings in toddy bars". (Roy, 1997: 76)

Roy's novel encompasses woman's thirstiness to assert her individuality. Ammu's longing of sincere love occupies a very significant place in her life. She repulses all faces of a forced physical love. However, she craves for union with man for the fulfillment of love spiritually and physically, but her expectations are defeated when it degenerates into rejection and disgusting by her social environment. Such beautiful love went to be spoiled without getting comfort and peace of mind. Furthermore, Roy audaciously shows how much sexual assault without love and feelings the woman experiences silently in the name of marriage. Hence, the woman feels her body as being beaten instead of pleased.

Ammu has resentful attitudes towards her relation with her husband and also her family's preoccupation concerning her urge to build a relation with another man. When it comes to woman's freedom to live her true love, she is but victim of man-made codes of tradition and honor of the family. Her self is minimized to the weak and the ignorant which cannot differentiate between the good and the bad for her life, then, there should be a power of control, that is man, to ensure her security in the society,

Roy's aim as a writer is to underline the predicament of contemporary women beset by the crisis of identity. She wants to bring harmony out of existence and realization. Her novel is remarkable because it reveals her feelings of anxiety towards social segregation, women alienation, community exclusion, and meaninglessness futility, acute sense of isolation, fragmentation and loss of identity. The women, in the roles of wives have to obey their husbands totally and be subservient to their desires. Thus this venomous inclination of male dominance is injected into even women's veins through the religious scriptures and social orders. Women, then, are unquestionably condemned to be inferior to men all their lives long.

Roy's literary work represents the sensibility and sensitivity of a modern Indian woman. She, though not directly in contact with the feminists of the sixties and seventies, takes up the causes of women and the downtrodden people in her environment with all the zeal and vigour at her command. She deals with the trials and tribulations of the woman who is struggling hard to find a place in the male – dominated society. She also finds herself vigorously very concerned with the voiceless/subaltern as a whole marginalized community.

Frustrated by love and loneliness, Ammu longed for a happy life with her body and soul. She loved her body as much as she loved her soul. Since her desires could not be satiated by her actual life as a divorcée she wants to achieve it by a life in the arms of a tender man regardless his class/caste belonging.

*Suddenly Ammu hoped it had been him that Rahel saw in the march. She hoped it had been him that had raised his flag and knotted arm in anger. She hoped that under his careful cloak of cheerfulness, he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against .She hoped it had been him. (ibid: 175-176)*

As Christianiy could not promise her such a life, she transgressed and disobeyed its dogmatic rules. By loving Velutha, she reserved a life where she could attain the spiritual fulfillment in man-woman relationship which she missed fortunately or unfortunately, in her early life. Her love caused much ire and furor among classe fanatics of her family and they started threatening. Most dejected she bade goodbye to her family norms and traditions and sought refuge in her love consumption with Velutha.

Naturally, love is the central emotion in woman's heart. She craves for union with man, as a man does for union with a woman, for the fulfillment of love but, unlike man, she is disillusioned and frustrated when it degenerates into sheer lustfulness and bodily pleasures. Her story also deals with the subaltern's unfulfilled love and the celebration of sex.

The Indian women fiction writers vehemently champion the cause of women empowerment in every sphere of life. Their voice is felt louder and louder with the passage of time and diversity of their languages. The real persuasion that women have gained through their life experiences has made them ignore customs and castes.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

In Manju Kapur's and Arundhati Roy's narratives the characters seem to be lost in a labyrinth of anti-forces that stunt the growth of their respective personalities and stifle their individualities which make them feel suffocated for want of freedom of thought or action. Generally, tradition appears in the person of 'a mother' and the protagonist, naturally, struggles to extricate herself from the oppressive clutches of tradition and patriarchal system in the society. Meanwhile, Roy's intention behind her writing is to participate intellectually in building up a society free from caste prejudices, economic discrepancy, gender discrimination, class



inequality and religion corruption. The next chapter will reveal the thematic analysis of Dalit women autobiographies: Bama Faustina Faustina's *Sangati/Events* and Baby Kamble's *The Prison we Broke*.

# **Chapter Four**

**Discrimination all around:**

**Bama Faustina's *Sangati* and**

**Baby Kamble's *The Prison we Broke***

## **Chapter Four: Discrimination all Around: Bama Faustina Faustina's *Sangati* and Baby Kamble's *The Prison we Broke*.....203**

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## Chapter Four:

### Discrimination all Around: Bama Faustina's *Sangati* and Baby Kamble's *The Prison we Broke*

*“I am conscious of the fact that if women are conscientised the Untouchable community will progress. I believe that women should organize and this will play a major role in bringing an end to social evils ..... the progress of the Dalit community should be measured in term of the progress made by its womenfolk.”*

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Speech to the Dalit Mahila Federation  
in 1942

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to examine the intersections of the devastating effects of evil from caste tyranny and gender politics on Dalit women in the post-independence era. It also seeks a critical investigation of the struggle of the low castes in general and low caste women in particular to reach to the central locus of all the fields of society.

Bama Faustina always fought for the rights and freedom for Dalit women. She believes in independent life where there should be no liabilities. The writing of Bama Faustina is based on the feminine themes with self- determination. *Sangati* is in the voice of many women speaking to and addressing one another as they share the incidents of their daily lives. These

voices sometimes are raised in anger or in pain, as they lash out at each other or against their oppressors.

Similarly, Baby Kamble's narratives concern the community of the "Untouchables" and the minority of Dalit women. Kamble confesses all the social odds that impose dirtiness and pollution upon the Indian born people and delineate their oppression and marginalization by the hegemony of the caste system. She also raises her voice to put an end to the exploitation and discrimination of the Dalit woman.

#### **4.2. Bama Faustina's *Sangati***

*Sangati* was originally written in Tamil in 1994. It was translated by Laxmi Halmstrom into English. The word "Sangati" means events; the whole narrative is divided into twelve chapters. It is an autobiography of Bama Faustina's community, which moves from the story of an individual struggle to the perception of the paraiyars<sup>15</sup> women, a neighborhood group of friends and relatives and their joined struggle. It has no plot in the normal sense or any main characters but just few powerful memoirs through those protagonists.

In each story the writer chooses to speak about the plight of a single woman. It encapsulates the author's experience of working with in a heterogeneous and oppressed society. It includes series of several interconnected anecdotes, experiences, news and events of the people around. Bama Faustina in her own words writes:

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<sup>15</sup> "Paraiyar" or "Parayar", formerly anglicised as "Pariah" and "Paree", is a group of Untouchables found in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Adi Dravida, which means "Ancient Dravidians", was the substitution of Paraiyar given by The British Raj with the intention to eradicate slavery in India. The Paraiyar's skin is blacker and their main occupation is manual labourers. They have their own priests like Valluvars, and their own Mother Goddesses like Mariamman, Gangaiamman, and Pidari.

*My mind is crowded with many anecdotes: stories not only about the sorrows and tears of Dalit women, but also about their lively and rebellious culture, passion about life with vitality, truth, enjoyment and about their hard labour. I wanted to shout out these stories.* (1994: 9)

Bama Faustina's thoughts and ideas are embedded in narrative strategies and skillfully gathered to produce successful novels like *Kurukku* and *Vanmam* and other short stories.

#### **4.2.1. The Invigorating Self in *Sangati***

Bama Faustina, also known as Bama Faustina Soosairaj (1958) is a Tamil novelist. She was born at Puthupatti village of Virudunagar district in Southern Tamil Nadu in 1958. Her real name is Faustina Mary Fathima Rani and Bama Faustina is her pen name. The name Bama Faustina generated from the author's real name Faustina Mary Fathima; since in Tamil, Fathima is pronounced as Bathima and hence the name Bama Faustina comes. Was born in a Dalit family, her father was in the Indian army. She has two brothers and three sisters.

Bama Faustina is one of the first Dalit women writers to be read and published. Bama Faustina's life is a process of self-reflection and a recovery from institutional and social betrayal. Bama Faustina is a famous Dalit woman writer in Tamil whose works have been translated into English, French and several other languages.

The Tamil Dalit writer Bama Faustina Faustina's works are weapons of words, flags of consciousness, lamps of awareness and paths of empowerment which have deeply strengthen Dalit feminism. Therefore, they are considered as the source of awakening to the oppressed of

her community. That is why her writings are published in English and French. Some of her writings are *Karukku* (meaning: To wound the feelings) (1992), *Sangati* (meaning: Events) (2000), *Vanmam* (meaning: Revenge) (2002) and the collection of short stories *Kisumbukkaran* (Prankster) (1996), *Oru Thathvum Erumayam* (meaning: A Grandfather and an Elephant) (2004) and *Kondattam* (2006).

*Sangati* (1994) is the second work of Bama Faustina that was originally written in Tamil and Lakshmi Holmstrom translated it into English nearly after a decade of its publication in Tamil. As Lakshmi Holmstrom points out in her introduction to the text:

*Sangati means news, events, happenings, and the book is one of the interconnected anecdotes ... These individual stories, anecdotes, memories of the personal experience are narrated in the first person . . . (ibid: xvi)*

Bama Faustina a leading name in the growing Dalit literary tradition and in India, and her two side struggle is directed towards cultivating self-respect among people in her own community while emerging an important voice of protest. Her contribution to Dalit literature is significant. She writes from marginalized sections of the society. She discusses various forms of violent oppression unleashed on Dalits, specifically on the Paraiyar caste. A significant aspect of this work pertains to the oppression of the Dalit at the hands of the church. *Karukku* depicts how Dalit Christians are not allowed to sing in the church choir, are forced to sit separately, away from the upper caste Christians, and are not allowed to bury their dead in the cemetery within the village.

“Parayars” who converted to Christianity in order to escape castiest oppression at the hands of orthodox Hinduism are shown to be greatly disillusioned as they are not able to escape



caste oppression within the church fold. Bama Faustina traces her personal disillusionment with the church and her walking out of a nunnery after seven years as she fought injustice and discriminatory conduct of the church towards Dalit Christians.

*Sangati*, her second book, is originally written in Tamil (1994). It is translated to English by Lakshmi Holmstrom in 2005. The word *Sangati* denotes news or events or happenings. Accordingly, it makes us delve deep into the life of Dalit men and women through the occurrences and confrontations to which they come across. This novel is unconventional, in the sense that it has neither a plot nor protagonist rather day-to-day cases and events of Dalit community are incorporated in the framework which the novelist has herself witnessed in her real life. Lakshmi Holmstrom, in the Introduction of this book, makes its theme clear:

*Sangati moves from the story of the individual struggle to the perception of community of Paraiya women, a neighbourhood group of friends and relations and their joint struggle. In this sense Sangati is perhaps the autobiography of a community.* (ibid: xv)

*Sangati* describes Dalit women's everyday lives and identifies in them a home-grown feminism. *Sangati* explores the changing perspectives from generation to generation as it is the story of three generations of women: the narrator's grandmother, the narrator herself and the generation coming after her. The canvass is larger in the context of caste and church. Her counterparts are subjected to humiliation, caste and gender discrimination and remain marginalized in the new social spiritual space.

Tamil Dalit writer Bama Faustina puts questions which help to reshape literary criticism and challenged the traditional notions of writing, thereby redefining the subject and the mode

of narration. Her writings deals with oppression overtly but concomitantly it contain an aesthetic vision. The central concern of Dalit writing is with the raising an awareness of the Dalit experience and explaining a changing Dalit identity.

*Vanmam* is a novel of real life event which took place in Tamil Nadu. In two decades of Dalit literature in Tamil, *Vanmam* occupies a unique place as it brings to the fore centrality of the issue of caste and the atrocities of Dalits. This novel depicts Dalit victimhood and focuses on the nature and function of caste in Tamil family. It highlights the animosity between the Pallars and the Parayars of Kandampatti village who identify themselves as Hindus and Christians respectively-and describes how the landowners of the dominant Naicker caste stoke the fires of intra-Dalit hostilities to benefit themselves, ignoring the human costs paid for time and again in misery, loss, and death. The story starts with a calm note, and a situation of a family.

The novel represents pains and pangs of the Dalit existence. It is the lived reality of many people, living. It verbalizes the suppressed anger and pride of those existing outside the caste identities. It is aimed to remove social injustice by highlighting the harsh realities of Dalit life. It fights against the different forms of caste discrimination and becomes Dalit's gun to fight for justice. In the words of Bama Faustina:

*The main message of the present novel is to the Marginal people, those who have been pushed to the very edges of the society that they have to put aside their internal enmities if they are to reclaim their self-respect and their rightful place in society. (1994: vii)*

It is said that a piece of writing that springs directly from the grass roots stays close to Mother Earth. The people are real natives of Kadampatti, they live and breathe, and they love

and hate and kill. Bama Faustina was with them, and have spent many months in that village. The translator of the Novel *Vanman*, Malini Seshadri says in the Preface:

*For me what stands out in this novel is honesty', the lack of artifice, they tell it like it is gutsiness that speaks to the heart without resorting to mechanisms of word play. While translating, I have attempted to retain this element of understatement and let the story speak for itself. (2008: v)*

*Vanman* is a story which comes out from the author's self and the deep pain within her. The oppressed are so internalized and victimized by the dominant group that they turn against other oppressed classes to relieve their self-hatred. The Pallar and Parayars, both Untouchable communities, treat each other as an outcaste within their own social habitat. Deficient of money and education, they are ill-treated, discriminated, humiliated and kept aside at the periphery by the upper caste. Their ignorance makes upper caste win all the time as they are holding all the posts.

Living in such an environment where insecurity reigns, Tamil Dalit always has to work hard and lead a life of compromise and alienation. Apart from such social taboos, Bama Faustina speaks about the atrocities in *Vanmam*, in the same way Arundathi Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* (1997), depicts the cross caste conflicts between touchables, the Syrian Christians, and Untouchables. It shows that Untouchables are not only suffering and torturing from Hindus but also from other religious communities' in this democratic India. *The God of Small Things* is a story about love and brutality, the brutality against Dalits. Velutha from *God of Small Things* and Maraassu from *Vanmam*, were the victims of upper caste/ these both were brutally killed. Arundathi Roy recalls:

*The newly converted Christians were born between two worlds one rejected by them and other not ready to accept them. Mammachi recall to her memory the rigid caste system that existed in our country (1997: 73-74)*

The Paraiyar community, thanks to education accessible through missionary-run schools, is considered advanced socially and economically. “The English priest and nuns were offering free education. (2008: 44) There is a greater political awareness among them and they are highly resented by upper castes for emulating Ambedkarite thoughts. Dalits, because of their caste, systematically were denied education. Now that education is available to them, they are using literacy to their advantage to protest against all forms of oppression. Bama Faustina accounts how youngsters wanted to install a statue of Ambedkar. The educated Parayars were able to organize cultural activities, sports competitions and awareness campaigns to spread Ambedkar’s thoughts to their community.

#### **4.2.2. Deplorable Situation of the Outcaste Community**

Bama Faustina Faustina is the most distinguished Dalit fiction writer, and one of the most acclaimed of all Dalit women writers. Her autobiographical novel *Karukku* in Tamil version published in (1992) is translated into English in 2000. *Karukku* is the first Tamil Dalit text on the Christian Dalit community. *Karukku* was awarded the “Crossword Award” for the translation in 2001. The novel stands as a means of strength to the multitudes whose identities have been destroyed and denied. It breaks the barriers in many ways. It has journeyed widely as a great contribution to the development as a marginal literature, literature in translation, and finally to Dalit literature.

Bama Faustina feels that for the better survival of women, empowerment of women is necessary and is possible only by eradicating inequality and untouchability, by empowering them through education and employment and by taking pride in their identity. It is in this context that Bama Faustina's *Sangati* becomes relevant.

Bama Faustina was born in the Dalit family of Paraya, which is an Untouchable caste, her mother was a housewife and father was an army man. Bama Faustina was a voracious reader from her childhood days. However, in the very beginning, she was not able to understand the double standards of the society. She does not even know; how her village comes to be divided on the basis of communities: the lower and upper caste. However, as she grew aware of it, she writes:

*We only went to their side if we had worked to do there. But they never, ever, came to our parts. The post office, the panchayat board, the milk depot, the big shops, the Church, the schools all there stood in their streets. So, why would they need to come to our area besides, there was a big school in the Naicker street which was meant only for the upper caste children. (1994: 6- 7)*

In an interview with Azhagarasan, Bama Faustina shares her childhood experiences, about her family and her education. Bama Faustina says:

*My native place is Uathirayiruppu Puthupatti in Virudhunagar district. This is a village taluk. The 'oor' (village) ends there. Buses will not go beyond that. There is no road beyond that. It is on the slop of the Westen Ghats... a beautiful oor. Appa was in the army, Amma was a coolie, and My Patti was doing menial jobs in the houses of landlords. (ibid: 142)*

Through her novel *Bama Faustina* exposes the caste oppression, poverty and inequality she herself had experienced as part of a particular community. *Bama Faustina* reflects her childhood, in a caste divided village in Tamil Nadu, made her recreate her experiences as a Dalit. *Bama Faustina*'s novel based on the experience of a Tamil Dalit Christian woman has been bestowed with many nomenclatures in different field of studies as marginal literature,

*Bama Faustina* has never heard of untouchability until her third standard but she had seen, felt and experienced humiliation and oppression. As she was child, she could not understand why the difference prevails, but for the first time she comes to know the deplorable and piteous situations of her community. She feels bewildered and perplexed over the passivity of her community and the subtle measurement of superiority by the upper class and religion in society. *Bama Faustina* questions:

*How did the upper castes become so elevated? How is it that we (Dalits) have been denigrated? And in my heart I have even grieved over the fact that I was born as I am. Are Dalit's not human beings? Do they not have common sense honour self-respect wisdom, beauty, dignity? What do we lack? (ibid: 27)*

From then *Bama Faustina* focuses on education, became conscious of their rights. She realized only education brings drastic changes in Dalits lives. Education infuses necessary confidence in women, fight against all kinds of oppression. Nowadays women began to voice their feelings freely. As Meena Shirwadkar in *Indian Woman Novelists: Perspective of Indian Fiction in English* observes:

*As women received education they began to feel an increasing urge to voice their feelings. The awareness of individuality, the sense of compatibility with their tradition-bound surroundings, resentment of males dominated ideas of morality and behavior problems at home and at place of work or in society-all come up in a welter of projection. (1985: 201)*

She decides hardly to prove herself. She starts studying hard, with all her breath and being. She stood first in her class. And because of that, many people become her friends, even though she is a “Paraichi”. She says, “as Annan had urged, I stood first in my class and because of that; many people became my friends, even though I am a paraichi”. (ibid: 18) But throughout her education she faces many hurdles regarding her caste and community. Wherever she goes, she has a painful experience of untouchability. Dr. Amarnath Prasad, has opined in his text *Indian English novel in English: Critical Perspective:*

*Yes even a Dalit or an Untouchable can become an engineer or a doctor or lawyer or a professor if he is given proper education and proper facilities. God never makes any difference between the poor and the riche; between the rough and the sublime. The minds of all men are almost equal. (2000: 199)*

Bama Faustina studies up to eighth class in her village, and then she goes to high school in a neighbouring town. She feels very shy and almost fearful by seeing the children who attended and the clothes they wore. She gets used to it soon and begins to work at her studies eagerly. All children living in the hostel used to wear smart clothes, they all are from upper caste families. The warden sister of that hostel could not abide low caste or poor children; she had got hold of Parayar’s and scolds them for no rhyme or reason. These have people nothing to eat at home; they come here grow fat. In *Tamil Dalit Writings* Bama Faustina says; “it was really

embarrassing. Unlike the upper caste children we too paid our fees, for our food, yet we had to listen all this abusing”. (1994: 199).

Alice Walker discusses the issue of education by presenting the harsh realities of the biased education available to the African American girl and highlighting the heavy price she must pay to be education. From her works, one can infer that she stresses the need to discard mainstream history that is thrust on the marginalized groups. Bama Faustina projects the handicap of poverty of rural Dalit families that obstructs the girl from getting education. He examines the corruption involved the educational system.

Education facilities for women were minimal in the nineteenth century and those that existed remained largely unutilized. There were strong Hindu families who did not “condescend” to send their girls to such schools. Only converted Christians from Harijan and the lower classes sent their daughters to these schools. Vijayalakshmi Seshadri quotes in *The New woman in Indian- Englishwomen writers since the 1970’s New World lit series*, Toru Dutt, around the end of the 19th century saw the entry of women in work places, “nursing and teaching profession came at an opportune moment”. (1994: 38)

The Dalit movement in Tamil Nadu, the spurt in translations ensures the Dalit voice to become accessible where casteism is exposed. In the article on *A Palmyra leaf that sears us in Hindu*, on September 16, 2001, Bama Faustina also deals with the oppression that Dalits face from the state and a brutal police force. The core of her work, however, is her indictment of Christianity, her reflections on the low status of Dalit Christians in the Roman Catholic Church. When she completes her education and goes to teach in a school, she realises that the nuns there do not care for Dalit people.



People taught that God is a loving, kind, gentle one who forgives sinners, patient, and tender, humble, and obedient. Nevertheless, nobody had even said that God is just righteous, is angered by injustice, opposes falsehood never countenance inequality. Bama Faustina works in a Christian religious order where Tamil people were looked upon as a lower caste and then among Tamil, “Parayar” were a separate category. Every one of those who are training Bama Faustina to become a nun are anxious to find out to which caste does Bama Faustina belong. She answers everyone honestly without any hesitation. During the completion of the training, sister tells to Bama Faustina that there is a separate religious order for Harijan women to become nuns. Pope Paul VI says in his *Lumen Gentium*: “Holiness is the responsibility of everyone, because, the Lord Jesus, the divine teacher and model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to each and every one of his disciples regardless of their situation”. (1964: 40)

Because Christianity stands for love, helping and service to humans convents are service oriented. But, there also, they repeat the same caste differences. Their services favored upper caste people rather Dalits. That convent is attached to a school and that convent too was not without its caste divisions. They speak very insultingly about low caste people and do not even consider them as human beings. In *Sangati* Bama says

*They are put to degrading jobs like sweeping, swabbing, cleaning, washing and even cleaning the lavatories. And in the convent, as well, they spoke very insultingly about low-caste people. They spoke as if they didn't even consider Low-caste people as human beings. (1994: 25)*

Bama Faustina portrays the subjugation of poor Dalit children in convents. The Paraya people from her caste perform all the menial jobs regardless their age or sex.

### **4.2.3. A Journey from Weakness to Strength**

In order to seek change in the fate of Dalit's, all Dalits who have been deprived of their basic rights, should raise their voice, piercing through ever heart instead of being more and more beaten down and blended. Bama Faustina claims that they must be united and fight for their rights. Bama Faustina says, the life of Paraiyars is hard to live from very childhood. Right from her childhood she sees people working hard, her mother and her grandmother labored from sunrise to sunset, without any rest. They can survive only if both men and women work hard. Their work is of various types. Agricultural labour works in ploughing, manuring, watering, sowing the seed, planting them out; then weeding, spraying the fields with fertilizers, reaping the grains etc. Apart from that, there is construction labour, digging wells, carrying loads of earth, grave land stone. Sometimes people have to go up to the hills to gather firewood. They must work with palm leaves or at the kilns making bricks, people had to work something or the other in order to survive.

Although, they were poor and backward they used to enjoy their life like any other castes. Bama Faustina writes about her village life in such a way that the readers feel themselves in the village enjoying along them as well.

Bama Faustina's autobiography reveals that conversion to Christianity was a mistake on the part of her grandmother because it failed to change their status. The claim of the missionaries that Christianity offered them a life of dignity and a chance to live in a casteless society proved to be fatal.

#### 4.2.4. Bama's Double Concern: "Self" and "Community"

The Dalit Christian women suffer from identity crisis apart from being discriminated for their low social order, and also discriminated within and outside the churches. The author finds out that with education, awareness, and income to support Dalit Christian women, she can question their rights and fight for their individual identity. When writers like Bama Faustina took their pens and wrote about their life-experiences, particularly about their positions in their families and communities, then, women-related issues got highlighted properly in Dalit literature. Graham Green in the preface of *Graham Green's Literary Life* has a revealing sentence that:

*Writing is a form of therapy: sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose, or paint can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in human situation.*(2003: Preface)

What is essential about that "self" is not found primarily in its difference from others, but in its freedom to pursue a story line, a life plot, a drama carved out of all the possibilities every society provides. *Sangati* (1994) moves from the story of an individual struggle to the perception of a community of Paraiyar women, the neighborhood groups of friends and relations and their struggle. Unlike *Karukku*, *Sangati* also draw autobiographical elements in order to create strikingly new literary forms.

In *Sangati* her critique of the church is attained. She mainly touches the question of conversion, which happened in her grandmother's time. It deals with the several generations of women. While, Bama Faustina's *Karukku* speaks for her 'self', in *Sangati* she speaks on behalf

of the whole Dalit community, especially with a woman centered voice. Eliane Showalter has named such women centered practice as *Gynocriticism* she states that:

*The programme of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories. Gynocritics begin at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on newly visible world of female culture. (1986: 131)*

Bama Faustina states that *Sangati* which means 'news/events' is all about what it means to be a Dalit and a woman drawing attention to the facts that are happening alive with mainstream society. She discusses the position of woman, whose plea is unheard, in an interview with Harrison Mandindi, 15 August 2006 she says:

*We have all come across news, broadcast widely and everywhere telling us of the position of women in our patriarchal society, and of the rights that have been plucked away from them. But news of women who have trapped but only by the patriarchy but also by the caste hatred is often side-lined, hidden, forgotten. (15 August 2006)*

Bama Faustina's writes in Tamil, but the significance of her work lead to its translation into different languages like English and French. Bama Faustina's works reflect the pain and realities as in Dalit writers like, Sharankumar Limbale *The Outcaste* (1984), Lakshman Gaekwad *The Branded* (1987) and Arjun Dangles *Poison Bread* (1992) are echoed. These writers wrote about the remorseless violence in their stories, the anguish, that the Dalits were submitted to throw their emotions in their narrative voices.

Dalit authors suffer from unique problems. Baby Kamble (1929-2012) and Shantabai Kamble (1923) both located to Western Maharashtra bring into the foreground the life of the Mahar community in the pre-Ambedkar era and highlight the transformation that came with the emergence of the Ambedkarite movement. Baby Kamble states in her novel *The Prison We Break*:

*Baby Kamble's autobiography deals with three major problems of the society: firstly, the oppression and exploitation and of the Dalit by the upper class: secondly the discrimination towards women in patriarchal society and finally the influence of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar on the narrator. Kamble was discriminated by the upper caste teachers and students; she was resilient in facing them. (2008: 136)*

Kumud Pawde's *Anthasphot* which means 'outburst' is not an autobiography but a critical narrative of hifact. Pawad feels that all Dalit life stories are critical narratives and not biographies. *Anthasphot* unlike many of the Dalit life narratives does not keep to a linearity of life experiences. More importantly as the first published narrative by a Dalit woman, her attempt is to analyse the experience of individuals and communities. Some of them give joy while others have resulted in anger. Her analysis of lives cannot exclude caste and women exploitation based on gender. Dalit women are victims of a double exploitation. Kumud Pawde explains:

*When a culture based hierarchy a in the case of Indian society literally bite the flesh of the minds of individuals and communities and wound them, then how do I see my life and that of my wounded community as human beings? This question keeps eating at my brain. Because of this I began itself in words. (1981: 4)*

Kumudtai Pawde presents reflections on life in the Varhad region characterized by the early entry of the Mahars into textile labour, and the legacy of self-reform based on Ambedkarite movement. She reflects on practices of Brahmanical patriarchy; inter caste marriages, sisterhood in the movement, the question of class among Indian women, as well as the other issues. Her testimonies bring details of Dalit life in the Konkan region while also charting a Dalit feminist map of the relationships between the different new social movements in Maharashtra. Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My life* written in a realistic fictional mode, is characterized by an honest, frank, and bold articulation of Dalit woman's experiences and may easily be compared with Bama Faustina's narrative. The English translation by Maya Pandit is quite successful in bringing out the ethnic flavor of the Marathi original memoir Urmila Pawar writes:

*Life has taught me many things, showed me so such. It has also lashed it me till I bled, I don't know how much longer I am going to live, nor do I know in what form life is going to confront me let it came in any form; I am ready to face it stoically. This is what my life has taught me. This is my life and that is me. (2009: 27)*

In *Sangati* one can hear the voices of many women: some in pain, some in anger, some in frustration and some out of courage.

#### **4.2.5. Deciphering Blows in *Sangati***

The tripple oppression on the basis of caste, class and gender makes Dalit women more powerless because it is sanctioned and legitimized by religion and the patriarchal culture. The blending of religious and social myths, that reflect and justify the male-dominance and caste culture, keeps them passive, dependent and inferior to men and prevents them from rebelling. Bama Faustina thinks that Dalit women are in subversive strategies to overcome their

oppression. Women are presented in *Sangati* as wage earners and bear the financial burden for running the family. They are also constantly victim to sexual harassment and abuse in the world of work. *Sangati* focuses generally on Dalit women on various issues such as gender, discrimination, exploitation and sexual abuse. According to Bama Faustina, all women in the world are, second class citizens:

*The first edition of Sangati in Tamil appeared in 1994 and the second edition followed in 1995. Sangati, came after Karukku, attracted many people. It was felt widely and often that its glowing message of self confidence in place of self-pity was its strength as well as its voice that directly addressed what was in the heart (1994: Preface).*

*Sangati* explores the changing perspectives from generation to generation as it is the story of three generation of women; the narrator's grandmother, the narrator herself and the generation coming after her. The novel starts with the birth of Bama Faustina and it goes through her own life experiences and more with her community. *Sangati* is narrated in the first person, the narrator as a young girl of about twelve years old, as a child, she questions the unequal treatment meted out to her at the hands of her own maternal grandmother ( Patti) Vellaiyamma Kizgavi. The story deals with several generations of women and reveals various cultural aspects of her community. Sharamila Rege argues in her article: *Dalit Feminist Standpoint*:

*The position of the Dalit women shapes the Dalit Feminist standpoint through their distinct experience; any analysis of the advantage position of the dominant group leads to its political not being exploitative. It frees the laboratory force autonomous women's position from its Brahminical renderings, paving an alternative in Dalit Feminism. Rege also argues that although Dalit Feminist Standpoint, being either and experience of Dalit women, it does not flourish in isolation from the experience of other groups, as it poses a danger of turning into*

*narrow identity politics. She envisages dialectic between Dalit women activists and academics and women of the autonomous groups to build and sharpen the nature of the Dalit Feminist standpoint. (2014: 3)*

Bama Faustina narrates the story by making use of a colloquial style with its regional and caste inflections thereby overturning the aesthetics of the dominant group. By resorting to this method she shows before the readers the cultural identity of the Dalits who resist the other caste norms. Thus the privileged-caste readers can enter this language only with a degree of effort and with a sense of unfamiliarity.

Bama Faustina is able to convey the experience faced by the Dalit's as the language she uses is the language of affect. It is the language that captures the intense, everyday violence of caste. Here the language of pain works as an act of persuasion and appeal. Through this novel, she delineates aspects as economic inequality, control of man over the woman, pains of women, child labours, and so on. In the text, *Feminist Social Thought. An Introduction to Six Key Thinkers* the Marxist feminist, Sheila Rowbotham states:

*Sex and class are not the same. Oppression of women differed from class also because it does not come out of capitalism and imperialism. Sexual division of labour and possession of women by man predates capitalism. Patriarchy is contradicted by the dominant mode of production because in capitalism, the owner of capital owns and controls the labour power, but not the persons of his labourers. Capitalism temporarily strengthened the control over the men by the middle and upper class men in the 19th century by removing women from production. But this tended to whittle away at the economic and ideological basis of patriarchy. (2004: 354)*



Bama Faustina grows into young woman, she emphasizes on the needs for change and is calling out for action against the atrocities that heaves on girls and women in her community. *Sangati* deals with gender bias faced by Dalit women right from their childhood. Girl babies are always considered inferior and take less care. Dalit girls are hardly seen enjoying their childhood. They have little time to play as they have to take care of their younger siblings. While boys can play Kabbadi and marbles, girls have to play cooking, getting married, home keeping and minding babies. The Indian system cared more for male child, than for the girl child. Kancha Illaih in his texts *God is Political Philosopher: Buddha challenges Brahmanism* He quotes:

*Aristotle saying seems to represent more reactionary patriarchal thinking. Women are naturally inferior to men, and that they are therefore naturally ruled by them... Women's main function is reproduction. The main via his semen always provides the soul of the offspring, while the female via her menstrual discharge provides the matter. (2001: 202)*

In India, women are treated as lowest, exploited or suppressed either by women themselves or by men, such a treatment starts from their infancy. They face many hardships as Bama Faustina recalls in the text of *Sangati*:

*Women are wage earners as much as men are, working as agricultural labourers, by earning less than men do. Where as women has to bear the financial burden, to run the family. They are constantly vulnerable to sexual harassments and abuses in the world of work. Their suffering starts even when they are babies. The case is different for boys, if a boy baby cries; he is instantly picked up and given milk. It is not so with the girls. (1994: 7)*

Bama Faustina continues by saying that this scenario did not change even after many years of passing time though they have grown old, boys are given more honour. They would eat as much as they wish and run to play. As for the girls, they must stay at home and keep on working all the time. Bama Faustina recalls how she ate the left over skin of the mangoes fruit, her grandmother brought:

*If she brought anything home when she returned from work, it was always the grandsons she called first. If she brought cucumbers, she scooped out all the seeds with her fingernails, since she had no teeth, and gave them the remaining fruit. If she brought mangoes, we only got the skin, the stones and such; she gave the best pieces of fruit to the boys. Because we had no other way out, we picked up and ate the leftover skins. (ibid: 8)*

#### **4.2.6. Assault and Domestic Violence**

Dalit women are represented as highly courageous and hardworking. Patti is a very courageous lady; she adopts every possible way to save her family from the clutches of outer world. She is bold yet traditional, illiterate yet aware. Society, for Patti, is the ultimate reality. Everyone has to enter it, face it and reacts accordingly. Nevertheless, the reaction differs from generation to generation.

Dalit women's work is a precondition for their daily bread. It comes as no surprise, then, that Dalit women invariably continue to work even when they are in their last trimester of pregnancy. Many of them deliver their babies at the fields or while collecting firewood, often on their own without any assistance of medical or human services. In *Sangati*, the narrator's grandmother recalls:

*How a neighbour had gone to collect fodder in the forest and gone into labour. She cut the umbilical cord with her sickle, dug up a pit to bury the placenta, picked up the bundle of fodder collected her new born baby and walked back home. Even if the women stay back home for a day, the family would have to starve, the cattle would go without their feed. (ibid: 5)*

Vellaiyamma's daughter Samudrikani had a dark past. Patti sadly enumerates the story of her elder daughter who was married at a very young age to a brute incarnate man, who tortured her day and night. Inside and outside the house, he is like a fierce animal; he broke her, and beat her to death. Vellaiyamma Kizhavi she recalls:

*I reared a parrot and then handed it over to be mauled by cat... My womb, which gave birth to her, is still on fire. He killed her outrageously, the bastard. You just wait and see. Heaven alone knows what kind of death he'll die... You ask me why? Because he was crazy man with lust. Because he wanted her every single day. How could she agree to his frenzy after she worked all hours of day and night, inside the house and out? He is an animal, that fellow. (ibid: 10)*

Till today a woman faces this kind of harassment and domestic violence, they are treated as pleasure objects, brutally killed by their husbands. Domestic violence comprises physical, sexual and/or psychological acts caused by intimate male partners.

Samudrakani can be compared with Sera, from the *Space between us* by Thrity Umrigar who is an Indo-American writer, Samudrakani and Sera are tortured with their husbands and their Marital life was ruined. Like Bama Faustina, Umrigar also depicts human sufferings and highlights the physical abuse faced by women from their men. Umrigar says: "Sera remembers the blow and the balm; the tormentor and the healer: Feroz and Bhima". (2006: 104)

Since 1993 when the ratification of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women and the Platform for Action on the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 occurred, the international attention has turned around this with increased velocity. In 1993 the UN General Assembly Declaration on of the Elimination of Violence against Women, Manderson and Bennett defined in the text *Essentials of Global Mental Health*:

*Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. (2014: 43)*

Bama Faustina narrates the story of Mariamma; there comes a description of her community and its day-to-day experiences. More than that, the predicament, touches the reader's mind. The description of her community like festivals, women's gathering at night to sing and dance, the experience at church like the licking of the priests shoes and being his slaves, their threatening by telling stories of God, heaven and hell, are also explained through this narration of her community. Wollstonecraft observes in *A Vindication of Rights of Woman* that; "She was created to be the toy of men, his rattle and it must jingle in the ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused". (1975: 118) Dalit women face double harassment from Dalit men and Hindu caste men. The society is not only patriarchal; it is also about caste supremacy.

Even Dalit men behave like caste Hindus when it comes to Dalit women, as they exercise that power. Dalit women suffer more than Dalit men in this caste system. Be it a clash in the name of religion, caste, for land or whatever, it is Dalit women who are the targets, not just the

targets of caste Hindu men but of caste Hindu women too. Gerda Lerner explains in her famous book *The Creation of Patriarchy*:

*The system of patriarchy can function only with the cooperation of women. This cooperation is secured by a variety of means: gender indoctrination; educational deprivation; the denial to women of knowledge of their history; the dividing of women, one from the other, by defining 'respectability' and 'defiance' according to women's sexual activities; by restraints and outright coercion; by discrimination in access to economic resources and political power; and by awarding class privileges to conforming women. (1986: 217)*

The police also treat Dalit women worse. Frequently during any clash, Dalit women are raped not because they are women, but because they are Dalits. Policemen respect caste Hindu women whereas Dalit women are heaped with sexist, vulgar abuse. They are sexually assaulted because of their caste. Bama Faustina reveals various phases of Dalit women in Paraya community, from childhood to adulthood. All women are slaves to men. Women are really worst sufferers; women are constantly vulnerable to sexual harassments and abuses in houses as well as at work places. The women who silently bear the burden are the domestic and social front feelings at disgust, boredom and exhaustion.

Samudrakani had three daughters: Mariamma, Annamma and Seyakkodi. Mariamma is portrayed as a young innocent and simple village girl whose life revolves around her sisters. From her childhood she is taught all the stereotypical ways of living. Mariamma stands as an example in experiencing the hardships of Dalit Woman in every stages of life. Her irresponsible father lives with another woman. He does not take care of his children. His cruelty and sexual harassment causes the death of his wife. She represents the life of a husband and a father in

every Dalit family of that village. Nivedita Menon, in the text *Seeing Like a Feminist* observes that:

*The anxiety regarding ‘increasing sexual harassment’ notwithstanding, the protesters demanded censorship not of the version that actually depicted violence against women but one that represent sexual agency on their part. (2012: 198)*

Mariamamma takes care of her two sisters and work restlessly in order to feed them. One day, while working she fell into the well thus hospitalized for months. However, poverty forced her to work. when she went into the hill to gather firewood, an upper caste landlord, Kumara Swami Ayya attacked and raped her. When she came home and told her friends, they warned Mariamma, “they said it is best if you shut up about this”. (Bama, 1994: 20)

In the Indian society, the Dalit girl is doubly oppressed because of her peripheral position within the marginalized community. In the book *Dalit Feminism: A Proposal or an Argument* Marx argues states that; “in the history of India more Dalit women have been sold into slavery and forced into prostitution”. (1997: 44) According to him even in this contemporary society, Dalit women are more sexually harassed in police stations when compared to their upper caste counterparts. In this sense, Spivak asserts in *Can the Subaltern Speak?*

*Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third-world woman’ caught between tradition and modernisation. There is no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak. The subaltern [as woman] cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with woman as a pious. Representation has not withered away. (1998: 102- 4)*

Millions of Dalit women live in an atmosphere of constant violence in their homes and in the society at large. Their struggle for survival is as complex as their existence. Violence, which lies from denying female children; the opportunities for education and development to child marriages, compulsory marriages, wife beating, harassment and humiliation are often meted to them by their alcoholic husbands. M.B.Gaijan quoted from the novel *Shos* by Damodara Daxa, about women's safety that:

*Women's safety was in when she was infanticide in boiling milk, and now when she is feticide in the womb. Then, the four walls are for her to become the victim of lust of brother-in-laws or father-in-laws. Four walls are for the thing which is done with other womanis known as the adulteration, unwillingly if it is done that is known as the rape but the same deed husband does with the right in the four walls. (2003: 14)*

Bama Faustina has linked together the caste as well the gender oppressions, in a process that redefines woman from the socio/cultural perspective. She has made herself heard in her attempt to move from the position of the subaltern to the center.

#### **4.2.7. Compliance of Dalit Women**

Dalit women are the victim of oppression and subjugation in multiple ways- firstly; upper caste men keep an evil-eye on them as Patti tells: —If upper caste fellows clap eye on you, you are finished. They'll drag you off and rape you that are for sure. If you go on alittle further, there will be escaped criminals lurking in the plantation(8). Dalit women mostly depend on land and nature for her survival; to collect firewood, to graze cattle, to collect grass, to collect some food materials such as grass, vegetables and medicinal herbs. “Right to life” is

not a natural thing for women; it is a concession given, an act of mercy shown by a men-chauvinistic society. A land lord has no hesitation to rape Dalit women. Too often one hears that Dalit women are molested, raped, abused and subjected to all kinds of sexual violence and often murdered. As they belong to an oppressed and vulnerable community, and they become the prime and easy tagget for caste, class and sexual violence. Whenever there is a caste conflict the first victims are Dalit women.

In order to defend himself from his illegal deed, Kumara Swami Ayya, himself complained against Mariamma and Manikkam, This case was brought before the community panchayat and says in a very dirty way; “I saw them with my own eyes. And it’s a good thing it was I who saw them. I’ve come straight away to tell you”. (1994: 20)

Therefore, they are always doing their best to protect the land lord, sometimes at the cost of Dalit’s interest. This is similar to feudal deception which has worked to entrap mainly Dalit women. The poor Mariamma was insulted publicly which injured her future and made her to suffer through her life. Dalit women cannot bear the torment of upper-caste masters in the fields and home they cannot bear the violence of their husbands. In connection with Anupama Rao quotes in her introduction with Bama Faustina’s writings *Caste, Gender and Indian Feminism*.

*Even though they are male, because they are Dalits, they have to be like dogs with their tails Dalit women are rightly seen as thrice- subjugated as women, as Dalit women, and as Dalit women who perform stigmatized labour.* (2003: 11)

Bama Faustina filled with pain and anger and says; “Because of some upper-caste man’s foolishness, she was made the ‘scapegoat’ and her whole life was destroyed”. (ibid: 42) She was forced to marry a wicked young man, Manikkam. Through this event of Mariamma, Bama Faustina shows how Dalit woman miserably suffers, when she has careless father and an



irresponsible husband. In this sense Bama Faustina says ; “Mariamma was humiliated in front of entire village. I filled with pity and anger on the other hand. The question kept on churning inside me. Why we are pushed aside always and everywhere?” (ibid: 28) similarly Bama Faustina comments to the situation:

*The position is both pitiful and humiliating, really. In the fields they have to escape from upper-caste men’s molestations. At church they must lick the priest’s shoes and be his slaves while he threatens them with tales of God, Heaven and Hell (Ibid: 35).*

Bama Faustina chooses only a woman protagonist for every story in her novel and yet comes up so clearly justified about her choices while doing so. She also raises the issue related to patriarchy in a very heroic manner. *Sangati* teases out the way patriarchy works with Dalit women. They are constantly vulnerable to a lot of sexual harassment in the world of work.

Rules for sexual behavior are brow-raising different for men and women. Hard labour and economic precariousness lead to a culture of violence, and Bama Faustina boldly explores this theme too. Ilaiah criticizes Koutilya’s views on women that Koutilya had the intentional view that every married woman was to be kept strictly under control and constant surveillance. According to Kancha Ilaiah in the text, *Why I am Not a Hindu: A Sudhra Critique of Hinduthva Philosophy Culture and Political Economy*:

*Every married woman was to be kept strictly under control and constant surveillance trade relations into the marriage system. He gave enormous powers to the state to punish and fine them if they did not behave according to Arthashastra law...Thus Kautilya did not consider the home a private place, but one where the state could intervene for every small violation of patriarchal-*

*brahminical law, even within the four walls. Like Manu's law, Koutilya also did not grant social and political rights to married women. (1996: 183)*

The Dalit woman is a Dalit amongst Dalits. She has suffered and is still suffering. She should walk through the burning desert of casteism in search of her true identity. Dalit women are being dishonored and molested. Ahmad quotes in his text *Dalit Assertion in Society, Literature, and History*:

*This complaint of mine is against the orthodox culture which has imprisoned us in a sealed room, which has given us the charity of life completely boycotted. Where the wind treats us as strangers, where the Monsoons give us only famines where the water plays with us the most inhumane game of mirage. We are rejecting this unclean and poisonous life. And to escape from these cruel curses will you give me a bright and auspicious moon? My countrymen, to your court I have brought a complaint. Will you give me justice? (2010: 129)*

#### **4.2.8. Ever-Lasting Economic Exploitation**

In the novel, Bama Faustina's conversation with her Patti sheds light on the issue of economic exploitation by the superior people on the part of Dalit men and by both on the part of Dalit women. These women are real wage earners but, were not treated equally. They do the hard work inside and outside the house but, whatever work they did, they were paid less than the men. "Even when they did the very same work, they were paid less." (1994: 18) Their plight is evident as Patti explains that women are mostly the wage earners of hard labour sweating it out in the fields, construction sites, and also match box factories. Bama Faustina's Patti says that:

*We have to labour in the fields as hard as men do, and they on of that, struggle to bear to bear and raise our children. As for the men, their work ends they have finished in the fields. If you are born in to this world, it is best you were a man. Born as women, what good dowe get? We only toil in the field and in the home until our vaginas shrivel. (ibid: 6-7)*

Gender discrimination is the central feature of patriarchy. In *Sangati*, from beginning to the end, Bama Faustina has dealt with gender issues at large so the term “gender” needs to be conferred. Since 1970, a line of demarcation has been drawn between sex and gender. Sex is the biological difference between males and females whereas gender is socially constructed. Women should be conscious that man, consciously, is trying to suppress, dominate, rule woman’s ideas, thoughts, feelings, in short “woman’s life itself”. Bama Faustina’s cry on the grounds of gender discrimination is audible in *Sangati*:

*Why can’t we be the same as boys? We aren’t allowed to talk out on our backs nor lie faces down on our bellies. We always have to walk with our heads bowed down, gazing at our toes. You tell us all this rubbish and keep us under control. Even when our stomachs are screaming with hunger, we mustn’t eat first. We are allowed to eat only after the men in the family have finished and gone. What, Patti aren’t we also human beings? (Ibid: 29)*

Women are considered as subordinate to men in patriarchal societies. Discrimination against women is found in every culture and society with varying degrees. She is considered as one of the excluded groups. Women have been discriminated for ages now. Dalit women in India, considered as ‘Untouchables’, are living in misery. Dalit women are primarily agricultural

labourers. Yet, lacking nutritious food and by giving birth to many children they are weakened and constantly remain anemic.

#### **4.2.9. Feminist Perspectives: Silence and Resistance**

The novels then create a Dalit feminist perspective. At the same time, the novel takes one to the inner premises of Dalit culture asserting its richness and tradition According to Francis Gros in his *Dalit Literature: My Experience*:

*Dalit communities do indeed have a very rich and deep cultural heritage, a folk tradition of tales, songs... anda wonderful world of Gods, Goddesses and devils, all elements contributing to the creation of an original, imaginary world, which is in no way less important nor less fascinating than...orthodox manners and customs.*(2004: 14)

In *Sangati*, Bama Faustina includes a feministic diction to show how the experiences of women are different from and often contradict those of men. Women are delineated deliberately so that they gain a multiplicity of voices in ‘a voice’. *Sangati* is about a community’s identity not about a single self. Spivak raises an important question in *Can Subaltern Speak?* She says:

*Of retrieval and representation of the subaltern voice and consciousness and the intellectual responsibilities in the process. She suggest that in order to avoid an essentialist construction of subaltern the historian must be able to read silences and welcome information retrieval in silenced area, but not claim to assume and construct subaltern consciousness. The position of the investigator needs to be questioned because the historically muted subject of the subaltern women.* (1988: 295)

Bama Faustina's narrative comprises the galaxy of Dalit women characters of different age groups. Almost all the female characters are subject to religious, patriarchal, and caste oppressions. However, some of Dalit women show resistance against upper-caste landlords and domestic violence. The Dalit women folk like Mariamma, Thaayi and Esakki are beaten by their own husbands though they do their jobs "religiously" both at home and in the fields.

The home that is considered the safest place for them is just like a legal brothel to satisfy the carnal desires of their husbands. Hence, women like Raakkamma and Kaaliamma cannot assume silence at the violent attitude of their husbands. They are so much disturbed that they cross all the boundaries of decency.

In the novel *Sangati*, Bama Faustina delineates variegated experiences of exploited women and acknowledges that sometimes a sharp tongue and absence words are woman's only tool to sham man and escape from extreme physical violence. Such a language grows out of frustration, anger and fear. Bama Faustina uses the raw language used by various women in her community. Rakkamma's husband abuses her in a vile and vulgar way and was about to hit her then, she screamed and shrieked „Ayyayyo, he's killing me (1994: 61). Pakkiaraj was wild with fury threatened to pull the guts out of her body. But Rakkamma's response would not let him continue. She shouts "Go on, da, kick me, let's see you'll see (ibid: 61). With along and loud spat 'thuu', she retorted with the sharpness of her tongue when he showed his muscular strength. Rakkamma got up after that kick and wailed out aloud. She shouted obscenities; she scooped out the earth and flung it both;

*"How dare you kick me, you low-life? Your hands will get leprosy! How dare you pull my hair? Disgusting man, only fit to drink a woman's farts! Instead of drinking toddy every day, why don't you drink your son's urine? Why don't you drink my monthly blood? (ibid: 61)*

The underlying idea of “Violence against Dalit Women” was to bring together at national level the testimonies of systemic failure of justice and legal mechanisms and hence seek a parallel course of justice for the victims of violence. Different categories of crimes such as discrimination, kidnapping, murder, physical assault, sexual assault, sexual violence and murder, trafficking and witchcraft are faced by Dalit women.

Lack of knowledge, ignorance, poverty and illiteracy only further exacerbate her situation in a society that is ridden by patriarchal and casteist mindsets. A Dalit woman is branded a witch, beaten and ostracized from the village; Dalit girls are gang raped every day by dominant or upper caste men. The women always had to pay a heavier price for the men sexual transgressions, without any fault of their own and were subject to public humiliation and censure. Addiction of men to alcohol has ruined many Dalit families. Examples of Rakkamma, Marriamma and Thaayi are worth noticing in this regard. They are badly beaten with chappals and belts by their drunken husbands.

If any passerby strives to save them, at once the anger and frustration of husbands get double and they beat them up more furiously. Thaayi’s husband, while interrupted by Karuthamuthu, retorts in this way:

*Who are you to speak for this munde? She is my wife; I can beat her or kill her if I wish. You go and mind your own business and then turns to his wife to abuse and beat her saying, —You common whore, you, any passing loafer will come in support of you, you mother fucker’s daughter. You will go with ten men.*  
(Ibid: 43)

In *Sangati* the reader comes across instances of frequent molestations, physical assault, rapes, and whippings by upper caste men and also by their own men. The upper caste men take advantage of their situation and when protested, they are labeled as whores and characterless women. Bama Faustina explores the cases of domestic violence and exploitation by upper caste men in very explicit words. Prerna Devi, from Bihar, questions these bad habits of their husbands. in *Dalit Women Speak Out* Devi says: “The women’s insecurity of life caused, by their husband’s alcoholism. For example, drunken fathers beat their daughters for talking back to them, or when they sought to protect their mothers from physical assaults.” (2014: 334)

Dalit men and women after hard labour come home. Men always go to “bazaar”, return home at meal time. But as for the women they have to do all the households, cooking, feed the children, though their bodies wracked with pain. But they were not allowed to sleep, they have to be pleasure objects to their men, as men do not bother for their feelings. Bama Faustina wonders why; “all that violence was because there was nowhere else for them to exert their male pride or to show off their authority” (1994: 65)

Like Bama Faustina, Sivakami’s *The Grip of change* translated in 2000 is based on patriarchy in the Dalit society. With comparison to Mariyamma, Sivakami female protagonists, Thangam, is subjected to violence at the hands of the upper castes. Being a widow, she becomes vulnerable to sexual exploitation at the hands of her employer, Udayar. She is deprived of her husband’s share of property by her brothers-in-law, who expect her to yield to their sexual demands. She maintains her pride by working in Udayar’s fields. Thangam maintains silence owing to her economic compulsions and continues to yield to his lustful demands. Even Bama Faustina’s character Mariyamma could not raise her voice she was mute.

#### 4.2.10. Hypocrisy and Complicity of Religions

Unlike upper-caste women, Dalit women are freer and not bounded by restrictions to be within the four walls of a house. Dalit women have always worked along with their man in the field. This does not mean that they are not at a lower risk of violence and rape. In fact, they are constantly under the threat of being molested, raped, murdered, and humiliated inside as well as outside the community. Bama Faustina comments on how the upper-caste women treat them with contempt. This is where she draws a comparison between the life style of those women and that of Parayar. Dalit women in Tamil Nadu are poor, illiterate and colonized as subalterns, not only by upper castes outside their homes, but also by men within their own community. Her works deal with women's problems, particularly gender inequality and violence, rape and sexual assaults within a community that are still socially oppressed. Bama Faustina says that:

*Even if all women are slaves to men, our women really are the worst sufferers. It is not same for women of other castes and communities. Our women cannot bear for torment of upper-caste masters in the field, and at home they cannot bear the violence of their husbands besides all this, upper caste women show us no pity or kindness either, If only as women, but threat us with contempt, as if we are creatures of different species, who have no sense of honour or self – respect. They themselves lead lives shut up inside their houses, eating, gossiping, and doing their husbands' bidding, and then they treat us like this. God knows they stay shut up within four walls, all twenty-four hours of the day. (ibid: 65-66)*

In *Sangati*, Bama Faustina pictures the life of a lovely Christian girl, Maikanni. A smart child with bright eyes who lives next to Bama Faustina's house. Via this story Bama Faustina depicts how a mother, a wife and a daughter in a Dalit Christian family who become victims of terrible events. Maikanni father was most irresponsible father. He wanders between two wives.



The day Maikanni learnt to walk; she started to work for the family. Her mother has to go out to work in the fields. It is Mikanni who looked after all the tasks at home. Whenever her mother has a baby, Maikkanni goes off to the neighbouring town to work in the match factory because her mother cannot go out and work in the fields then:

*Maikanni; from the time she woke up, she sprinkled the front yard with water and swept it, and then carried on with all the housework: swept the rest of the house, scrubbed the cooking pots, collected water, washing clothes, gathered fire wood. Went to the shops, cooked the kanji. She did it all one after the other.*  
(Ibid: 70)

She worked harder than her age demanded and behaved with a common sense far beyond her age. Girls hardly ever enjoy a period of childhood; before they grow up, they are burdened with the house work, taking care of the babies and going out for daily wages. Education is denied to girls by their fathers and they are destined to remain farm hands and drink only kanji (thin gruel of rice drained in starchy water). Bama Faustina says:

*In our streets the girls hardly ever enjoyed a period of childhood. Before they can sprout three tender leaves, so to speak, they are required to behave like young women, looking after the house work, taking care of babies, going out to work for daily wages.* (Ibid: 75)

There are many girls like Maikkanni who work both inside and outside the house. The Indian social system gives importance to boys to encourage the persistence of the male dominated society. So, the Christians do in India.

Dalit families are economically poor and are at the lowest rung of the social hierarchy. In the education system, Dalits endure a wide problem in a caste affected nation via alienation, exclusion, and physical abuse from primary education to university. Thus, illiteracy and drop-out rates among Dalits are very high. Dalit children face discriminatory attitudes from fellow students, teachers and the community as a whole. Migratory labour is another factor that adds to the high drop out rates. Many Dalits are landless and are forced into migrant labour, as this is often the only way to ensure the economic survival of their families.

Education helps them to define their realities in a better way to the larger community. Bama Faustina understood the curse of illiteracy that discriminates women in the social, economic and even in the academic level, since social upliftment is made possible only through education. Women are depicted in *Sangati* as hard working. However, Bama Faustina's characters take pride in their Dalitness by virtue of their freedom, mobility and economic independence over the upper caste women.

During the month of 'Vaiyasi', usually several weddings take place. In the Paraiyar community, the "parisam" system existed: it means a monetary gift is given by the groom's parents to the bride. There are five more weddings on the same day Muttharasi got married. Bama Faustina says:

*people who were planning a wedding had to save what they could from the previous harvest, boiled the paddy, mill it into rice, put it away well a head of time. They never could afford to buy the rice from the shop. So they boil the paddy. (Ibid: 85)*

In *Sangati*, Bama Faustina also talks about the widows, marriages, and remarriages in Dalit Christian community. A girl has no individuality of her own. She is socially imprisoned and kept in the web of masculinity from which she cannot come out. Bama Faustina does not say the widow re-marriage is the ultimate solution. But there is no rule that forbids a Dalit woman from remarrying if her husband died or she becomes a divorcée. Bama Faustina questions; “The Paraya women works at down and comes home after sunset, so, where does she has time to smear herself with termiri, have a bath and dress herself with pottu and flowers” (Ibid: 90)

Pecchiamma, the friend of Bama Faustina who studied up to fifth class, dared to put an end to her marriage and remarry for a second time, though in the Christian community, under the influence of Hinduism and caste beliefs, once a girl is married she has to live with her husband even if he is unworthy till her death. Paraiya Christian community believes in the chastity and the commitment whether it is for good or bad, Indian Christians have to accept it. Bama Faustina portrays such incidents as disastrous for her. Marriage is not that all for Bama Faustina:

*It means a woman need not spend her entire life, burning and dying, with a man she dislikes, just because of things called marriage. But it's also felt sad that Christian women didn't have their chance. (Ibid: 93)*

Here one point needs to be taken into consideration that Christianity does not preach casteism but Christians do. And Christian women are all the more powerless because of the factors of caste, gender and the corrupted religion. The church in *Sangati* is synonymous with casteist oppression on both Dalit men and Dalit women. Bama Faustina's narratives unearth the

nexus between priests and men-folk to tame Dalit women from awareness and progress. The writer's counterparts are subjected to humiliation, caste and gender discrimination and remain marginalized even after conversion to Christianity. The church does not come to their rescue rather it tries to normalise the oppressive situation by imposing its own religious dictates. Even Ambedkar was of the view that inter-caste marriage helps in removing the casteist barriers. From the *Annihilation of caste*, he says:

*Where society is already well-knit by other ties, marriage is an ordinary incident of life, but where society is cut as under, marriage as a binding force became matter of urgent necessity. The real remedy for breaking caste is inter-marriage; nothing else will serve as the solvent of caste. (1936: 67)*

#### **4.2.11. Can Dalit Women Enjoy Freedom?**

In this novel the writer was very curious to know about the voting. Bama Faustina asks Patti about how she votes. Patti says that she has stamped on all the pictures like a “blind old bat”. Patti replies, then: “whatever it is, what do we know about it? Whether it is Rama who rules, or Ravana, what does it matters? Our situation is same” (99). Thus Dalit women have been shown as having slipped into political hibernation.

In the end of the novel, Bama Faustina talks about the advantages Dalit women enjoy in her community. Apart from all the painful struggles, Dalit men and women led a life of joy. There are many good things in Parayas, when compares to upper caste. Women have their own beauty when they wear their saris with pleats at the back. The caste women after their husbands death cannot wear colourful saris, jewels, and flowers, whereas a Dalit woman is never objected to do that. In addition, widows can re-marry after their husbands death. Bama Faustina feels that

Dalit women work all the day just for the purpose to have a bowl of rice, but still feel free and not engaged by men: “what good their wealth does? The women submit themselves to their men, all the time and are as shut in and controlled, like snakes locked up in boxes” (1994: 111). In upper-caste community women are engaged in four walls and their conditions are worst. It is only an appearance when they look so good, just like in Bollywood. In fact, they are suffering alienation, oppression and marginalization all their lives long under the authoritative forces of patriarchy and the Hindu caste system.

Bama Faustina’s *Sangati* is about women’s history. It tells the experiences of Bama Faustina’s maternal grandmother and other generations it also corporates Bama Faustina’s life and her contemporary experiences. Ultimately, *Sangati* becomes a historical document of that whole Dalit community. *Sangati*, simultaneously, holds the powerful label of “feminist narrative”. It reveals the terrible violence and abuses against Dalit women in the hands of their fathers and husbands; sometimes even brothers. However, though in such a disastrous milieu, the determined and courageous Dalit women fight back. nevertheless, *Sangati* is primarily about a community’s identity not only about the individual self.

But, Bama Faustina conveys through *Sangati* that where ever they go the system of caste follows. Bama Faustina struggled for her livelihood, being a Dalit and unmarried. She had faced many oppressions and obstacles at work places and in the neighbourhood after she has rent a room for her own. for this Bama Faustina says in her *Sangati*:

*To live as an unmarried woman raises another huge problem, because remained unmarried all this time, people assume that I have known many men as a prostitute; they gossip about me. They feel that once a women is married and has a \_Tali‘ round her neck, she also signed , sealed and delivered over to one*

*man, They assumes that she is common property of many fellows, Bama Faustina say herself that the dog is barking at the sun and go. ( ibid: 121)*

In this context of inequalities and woman's struggle, the leader of the Dalit cause, in *Encyclopedia of Dalit's in India*, Dr. B.R.Ambedkar declares:

*Under the law of Hindu religion and social customs women were the most oppressed segment of the society, having no right and independent, they were forever bounds to obey the orders of their husbands. (2002: 29)*

Bama Faustina raises her voice through *Sangati* to speak up and reflect the way men humiliate women in thousand faces. Her purpose is to raise women's consciousness and inspire them that they should lead their own lives with self-respect. Dalit women, for Bama Faustina, should not let men gain control over them just because they are females. She says being a woman; a Dalit woman; an unmarried Dalit woman has been of great difficulty for her in everyday life, but she did not bother, she feels it is a barking of dog. Bama Faustina speaks to the universal woman. She says that freedom should be given to girls as boys:

*If we rear our children like this from the time they are babies, women will reveal their strength. Then the day will come one where men and women are equal. Then injustices, violence, and inequalities will come to an end. (1994: 123)*

Probably, making a general comment about the nature of Dalit men would obscure the nuances involved in this issue. Any random reading of Dalit women's narratives makes it explicit that these women possess great physical strength and far greater strength of mind. Bama Faustina in *Sangati* gives a glimpse of their fortitude as she says:

*It was always like this in our streets. Although both men and women came in after a hard day's work in the fields, the men went off straight away to the bazaar or the chavadi to while away their time, coming home only for their meal. But as for the women, from the minute they returned home they washed vessels, cleaned the house, collected water, gathered firewood, went to the shops to buy rice and other provisions, boiled some rice, made a kuzhambu or a kanji, fed husband and children before they could eat what was left over and go to bed. (Ibid: 65)*

### **4.3. Baby Kamble's The Prison we Broke**

Baby Kamble is the most distinguished Dalit fiction writer, and one of the most acclaimed of all Dalit women writers. Her autobiographical novel in Marathi version published in 1992 is translated into English in 2000. *The Prison we Broke* is the first Marathi Dalit text on the Mahar Dalit community. While reading the novel of Baby Kamble one could praise its fierce originality, exploration of female exploitation and sexuality, and its intense personal voice. Powerful feminist imagery is found in Kamble's prose, focusing on critiques of marriage, motherhood, women's relationship to their bodies and control of their sexuality, and the roles assigned to women in the traditional Indian Society.

Baby Kamble, one of the first Dalit women writers, articulates the thoughts, aspirations and anxieties, hopes and fears, past and present of her society. She explains the existential predicament of the Dalit women and the protagonist's struggle against patriarchy as depicted in Bama Faustina's *Sangati*. Baby Kamble desires to live a meaningful life. She feels that for the better survival of women, empowerment of women is necessary and possible only by eradicating inequality and untouchability. Empowering them must be through education and employment

and by taking pride in their identity. It is in this context that Baby Kamble's *The Prison we Broke* becomes relevant.

Much criticism analyzes Kamble as a 'Confessional' author and connects the emphasis on the self in Kamble's work to larger historical and cultural contexts and complicated, shifting postcolonial identities. Kamble is also lamented because of her lacked attention to structure and craftsmanship. Indeed, Baby Kamble had an unhappy, dissatisfied life even from her childhood. She was a victim to patriarchal prejudices and discriminations as most Indian women are and all Dalit women are too. The new-born girl has always been considered as a burden and a heavy responsibility for her family. Her obvious destiny is to become a premature wife and a premature mother.

This novel *The Prison we Broke* is embedded with the culture of Dalit women and the subtle voice of rebellion and dissent against the dual social oppression on the account of gender and caste classification. Strong disapproval flows through the novel in forms of use of language and actions. Kamble's *The Prison we Broke*, where she recalls her Dalit life experiences, opens a new dimension for the feminist scholars to express their views and opinions. In fact, the Dalit women's autobiographies are not like those life-stories written by the upper caste. The writing of autobiographies by Dalit women emerged recently in the last decades. Firstly Dalit women from Maharashtra, and later women writers from Tamil Nadu, have taken the lead to narrate their own lives and the situation of their communities without fictionalizing it. Their realistic creative imagination has linked the word to the world. These autobiographies are written in a particular linguistic code that is embodied in them.

Typically, personal narratives of the Dalit woman are written for the purpose of protest against the exploitation by the caste on the one hand and males on the other hand. Dalit women,



through their literary expression, protest against their discrimination and, perhaps, exclusion from the spheres of recognition all over the state; from the Dalit public, academic gatherings, literary manifestation, publishing activities, and also from the political parties. Dalit women gain manifestation, though mis-represented, only in the autobiographies narrated by Dalit males. Writing the self is about one's own story in the context of one's own region. It is realistic in setting, thus it does not only represent a promising future for the individual but also for the community. Thus the 'self', in Dalit autobiographies, represents both the individual and the community. The location and constitution of this self in the Dalit women's autobiographies is historical in time and sociological in context. It is this strong and specific relationship between the individual and his community that stimulates Dalit women to narrate dispassionate criticism of the life experiences and social practices of their masses. Dalit women's stories are characterized by important inward looking which helps them question the calamities of the Dalit community.

In the present work one has closely studied two selected Dalit autobiographies written by Dalit women written in their local languages, yet available in English translation. The first book of the scope has been tackled above. The second texts of the selection are Baby Kamble's *Jina Amucha* originally in Marathi which has been serialized in 1982 and later on published as a novel in 1986. The book is translated by Maya Pandit as *The Prisons We Broke* (2008).

*The Prison we Broke* realistically depicts the lives of the Dalits which start with mud and soil; a life of incessant toil and hard work which ends in the same conditions without any progress or change. As pointed out by Maya Pandit in the introduction that the main feature of *Jina Amuchais* Baby Kamble's Dalit feminist critique of the overwhelmed patriarchy and then the tyrannical caste system in the Indian society. She skillfully recounts the psychological and

physical violence the Dalit women have to undergo in her own society and moreover in her own home. If the Mahar community is oppressed and humiliated by the Brahmins, Mahar women are even more oppressed, humiliated and exploited by the Mahar men. Baby Kamble illustrates how the Hindu caste and man patriarchal thoughts continue to perpetuate oppressive practices against the Indian female during all the courses of her life. She remains the path finder for not only the Mahar but for the whole Dalit masses. Moreover, the purposeful use of the subject 'We' and 'I' in "*The Prisons we Broke*" shows Baby Kamble's devotion to Dalit individual consciousness.

#### **4.3.1. Understanding Mahar's Untouchability**

In the autobiography of Kamble, *The Prisons We Broke*, The first four chapters delineate the various evils the Dalit Mahar community is enduring all the time. The social odds are, perpetually, affecting the Dalit lives like superstitions, possession of women by demons and Gods, impawning, drunkenness, sexual harassment and domestic violence against women in their parental houses or/and the house of their in-laws. These social evils make the Dalits cloistered within their own local boundaries. Kamble exhibits her frustration for the Mahar community; she writes:

*Come to think of it, what kind of life did these people really lead? What was there worth living for? Generation after generation perished. But it is a basic human need to hope for change. The tiny sapling of hope was reared in their hearts too. It grew tall, drawing strength from the iron in their souls. (2008: 11)*

The inhuman practice of untouchability is constitutionally a punishable crime yet it actually and practically pervades the Dalits' lives. 'Untouchability' is taught to the younger generation of upper caste males to the extent that they constantly see the Mahar as Untouchable

and are allowed, following the example of their fathers, to use abusive and humiliating words against Mahar Dalit women. Kamble describes one of these cases for illustration. She says:

*He (the upper caste shopkeeper) would give the innocent children lessons in social behavior, 'Chabu, hey you, can't you see the dirty Mahar woman standing there? Now don't you touch her. Keep your distance.' Immediately our Mahar woman, gathering her rags around her tightly so as not to pollute the child, would say, 'Take care little master! Please keep a distance. Don't come too close. You might touch me and get polluted. The shopkeeper would come out and from a distance, throw the things into her pallav, which she had spread out in order to receive them. She would then respectfully keep her money on the threshold. That of course did not pollute him!' (Ibid: 14)*

Caste system has been declared illegal in India but discrimination based on birth is still in practice. The problems resulting out of such practices against Dalit women are what writer Baby Kamble focuses on. The novel of Baby Kamble represents Dalit women primarily as workers; honest hardworking, poorly paid, and exploited workers. She documents economic and sexual exploitation of Dalit women and argue that their Dalit identity renders them more vulnerable to injustice than other women workers. Simultaneously, she points out that Dalit women are subjected to violence, brutal oppression not only by upper caste, male landlords, police and state administration but also by Dalit men folk. However, more than being severely poor, these women suffered from various forms of caste, class and gender oppressions both at home and outside. Almost all of them recounted how the upper caste men took advantage of their poor economic conditions and attempted to physically assault them. If they resisted, they were immediately thrown out of their jobs or fields. Thus, as a solution to this injustice, in order to guard their honour, prestige and self-respect these women had to frequently change their jobs. Even outside their work places they were harassed by the upper castes. Many of them reported

how men in the streets lecherously commented on them and if they protested they abused those using filthy languages.

#### **4.3.2. The Dalit Woman Writer as an Activist**

Baby Kamble is a leading name in the growing Dalit Literary tradition in India. Besides, her two sided struggle is directed towards cultivating self-respect among people in her own community while emerging an important voice of protest. Dalit patriarchy became an important subject of concern in Mahar Dalit Literature. As Sarah Gamble opine about the term ‘patriarchy’ in *Feminism and Post Feminism* that:

*‘Patriarchy’ refers power relations in which women’s interests are subordinated to the interests of men. These power relations looks on many forms, from the sexual division of labour and the social organization of procreation to the internalized norms of femininity by which we live. Patriarchal power rests on social meaning gives to biological sexual difference. (1998: 3)*

*The Prison we Broke* was awarded the ‘Ambedkar Award’ in 2001, the novel stands as a means of strength to the multitudes whose identities have been destroyed and denied. And it breaks the barriers in many ways. It has journeyed widely as a great contribution to the development as a “Marginal Literature”, “Literature in Translation”, and finally to “Dalit Literature”.

Baby Kamble is the most celebrated contemporary Dalit woman writer. She has been in the forefront of caste literature activism and has given Dalit aesthetics a visibility. *The Prison we Broke* represents Kamble's life as a process of self-reflection and recovery from social and institutional betrayal since she is oppressed by caste, gender and religion. It is a painful journey

with open ending story, and many questions are left unanswered. In this novel Baby Kamble highlighted how caste remains sacrosanct and inviolable. She also reveals the dangerous consequences of what Ambedkar would call, the 'caste mindedness's'.

There are other books written by great personalities which tell about social maladies such as the caste system and untouchabilities. While Mahatma Gandhi had defended the caste system on the basis of division of labour, Ambedkar came out with a hard-hitting critique in his book, *Annihilation of Castes* (1936), pointing out that what was implicit in the caste system was not merely a division of labour but also a division of labourers. Dr. Ambedkar's attack on the caste had broader connection of economic growth and development. He argued that the caste system had reduced the mobility of labour and capital which are causes of the economic growth and development in India. Their hard and long lasting labour does not guarantee them sufficient food.

In India Dalits do not have their own lands but they work for a dominant caste landlord, In the preface of *Thangappan Kodi*, Azhagiya Perivan writes:

*In India, Dalits do not own lands. However it is not that they have never been landowners during various periods of time. They had lost their lands to people belonging to the dominant castes. Now, most of the twelve thousands acres of Panchami lands which were allotted by the British are not owned by Dalit's. At present, when the relationship between man and land has assumed importance, it was intrigued to explore the relationship between Dalit's and lands. This novel is an outcome of such an interrogation.* (2001: 6)

*The Prison we Broke* is written by a wounded self-esteeming Dalit woman about, specifically, the experiences of Dalit women of her clan. It also argues against patriarchy and caste oppression.

#### **4.3.3. The Subaltern's Resilience**

Kamble's act of expression can be viewed as a subaltern expression. It came out as a resistance against the ongoing caste and gender oppression. Also the book has become the testimonial of a Dalit woman as bitter experiences. Her act of witnessing turned out to be a source of inspiration to her fellow beings. Kamble's way of writing her autobiography is quite different from the usual style. Her deliberate attempts to deviate from the usual style of autobiographies resulted in a subaltern testimonial autobiography as a type.

Kamble's mode of self-assertion and identity is linked with that of her community both of which cannot be separated. At the end of the narrative Kamble celebrates her newly found freedom, a new brave world where there is no discrimination against Dalits. She exposes the caste oppression, poverty and inequality she herself had experienced as part of a particular community. Kamble refers to Dalit consciousness and the symbol is the new revolution, which aims at bringing a new social order into Indian society.

Unlike the earlier works and many of the Dalit writings, Kamble blows up the agonies and sufferings of the downtrodden. She loudly raises her voice and vehemently asserts the need for the unity and solidarity of the suppressed for a better future. In spite of their hard labour they have to remain half-fed with porridge. Kamble can be compared with Parisi writer Rohinton Mistry's second novel *A Fine Balance* where Mistry argues that:

*Untouchability and tyranny is deeply rooted in the village communities in India. One of the villagers rightly says in the novel, Government passes new laws, says no more untouchability, yet everything is the same. The upper-caste bastards still treat us worse than animals.*

(1995: 142)

Kamble focuses on the different caste formations within village stating how people meticulously followed caste rules while carrying out their day-to-day socio-cultural and economic activities. Kamble recollects, since the Untouchables had a separate settlement, far away from the main village. At times when the children were hungry the dried bread would be cooked along with the leftover curry and served to them. Most of the women worked in the fields. They received small quintiles of grain in return for their labour.

Kamble's personal struggle finds her own identity in *The Prison we Broke*. She left behind the life of renunciation and came out of the world, and then wrote *The Prison we Broke*. On focussing *The Prison we Broke* which was on Dalit aesthetics, Susie Tharu aptly says in a conference, *Literature for Life Fest*:

*Between 'healing and cure', cure is something like doctor decides you and says you are recovered, but healing something which happens to individual person and some senses outside the scope of making cure. The sharp transformation takes place between cure and healing. (2011: 2)*

Thus, *The Prison we Broke* is a reflection on different themes like religion, education and recreation etc. She gives a clear picture of the caste oppression meted out to the Dalit Mahar by the upper caste society. Sharmila Rege quotes in her text *Writing Caste/Writing Gender*:

*AnandTeltumbde finds the autobiographical narratives too individualistic, often glorifying the author, romanticizing Dalit backgrounds and failing to represent collective pain. Guru (2003), on the contrary, underlines the sociologically illuminating, politically subversive and aesthetically interesting character of Dalit autobiography. He argues that the Dalit autobiography that flourished under liberalism has come to be excluded from the cultural taste of Indian middle classes under neo-liberalism. (2013: 13)*

Kamble asserts her identity and presents the woman and the Dalit as the 'subaltern'. RanjithGuha states in his text *The Small Voice of History: Subaltern Studies* "the voice of a deviant subalternity committed to writing its own history". (1996: 12) In the book *Writing Caste and Writing Gender*, Pantawane's opines that: "Dalit life narratives challenges the bourgeois genre of autobiography and pull all the boundaries of what are considered the parameters of the life-world". (2006: 16)

Dalit writers are not willing to accept writings by upper caste writers, no longer as they do not want sympathy; do not want any portrayal of themselves by others. They do not want spokes men of other community; they are now able to voice themselves. The argument of the book is to do with the arc of the narrator's spiritual development both through the nurturing of her belief as a new converted to Buddhism, and the gradual realization of herself as a Dalit.

#### **4.3.4. Kamble's Double Devotion: "Self" and "Community"**

Kamble brings her voice forefront through her autobiography. *The Prison we Broke* narrates Kamble's life. She has found right space to articulate the laborious efforts and the suffering of Dalit women, which brought a whirl wind of change and captured the immediate attention of the readers. She firmly believes that Dalit's emancipation is only possible through



Dalit's empowerment and Dalits can emerge as a powered class if they are provided quality education. Quality education for Dalits is the burning issues.

Baby Kamble, a leading name in the growing Dalit literary tradition and in India, and her two side struggle is directed towards cultivating self-respect among people in her own community while emerging an important voice of protest. Kamble's contribution to Dalit literature is significant. She writes from marginalized sections of the society. Kamble discusses various forms of violent oppression unleashed on Dalits, specifically on the Mahar/Untouchable caste.

Marathi Dalit writer Kamble puts questions which helps to reshape the literary criticism and challenged the traditional notions of writing, thereby redefining the subject and the mode of narration. Her writing deals with oppression overtly but concomitantly it contain an aesthetic vision. The central concern of Dalit writing is with the raising of awareness of the Dalit experience and explaining a changing Dalit identity.

*The Prison we Broke* is a novel of real life event which took place in Maharashtra. In two decades of Dalit literature in Marathi, *The Prison we Broke* occupies a unique place as it brings to the fore centrality of the issue of caste and the atrocities of Dalits. This novel depicts Dalit victimhood and focuses on the nature and function of caste in Mahar family.

According to Ambedkar in *Annihilation of Caste* states that; "The Indian society was formed with an ascending scale of reverence and descending scale of contempt and gave no scope for the growth of sentiment of equality and fraternity". (1989: 13)

Dalits are being denied human treatment, when their self-respect as human being is destroyed, they raise protesting voices. The rise of Dalit literature in Marathi can be traced to

greatly extended as a movement of social change initiated by Babasaheb Ambedkar. In the texts of *Encyclopedia of Dalits in India*, Ambedkar opines that:

*The aim of Dalit literature was in making to highlight the disabilities and difficulties together with atrocities and inhuman treatment meted out to Dalit's. The main object was to produce social awakening among the downtrodden. (2002: 28)*

Dalit connotes marginalized group that has historically suffered exploitation and oppression in Indian society. This oppression is reflected, to an extent, in the genre of work comprehended as Dalit Literature. Dalit Literature delineates their consciousness, experiences, as well as their anguish. Dalits are being threatened for raising their voice. In the past too such instances were hushed by upper caste people but Dalits should not remain mute spectators and ensured that those responsible for discriminating against should be punished.

The destiny of an Untouchable has been a windowless room in which millions of man-made 'Untouchables' are still writhing with excruciating pain of exploitations deprivations, Suffering, want, pain, exploitation, hunger and social injustice. The marginalized Dalit community is continuously victimized by all these evils. Yet, it has a unique traditional and culture of its own. The word "Dalit" has become a synonym of scheduled castes and tribes because majority of people of these castes and tribes live under the below poverty level and have been the real victims of the disparaging and absurd caste system of the Hindus. Dr. S.K.Paul sates in his article, *Dalit Literature a Critical Overview* "Dalit consciousness sharpened to conclude not just anguish, but also anger and protest against upper castes" (2000: 277)

#### 4.3.5. Education of Dalits: a Fact and Necessity

Baby Kamble can be compared to Bama Faustina in the way they were subjugated. Kamble from Mahar caste would fight against their Hindu caste girl fellow students. The school in which Kamble was getting education was a girls' school. She and her friends were not scared of their classmates at all, but their teachers were in favour of the caste. Consequently, she was humiliated, harassed and discriminated against by her classmates as well as by her teachers. However, what is interesting to note is that Kamble's Hindu teachers punished Kamble and her Dalit friends when caste Hindu students made complaints against them to the teachers.

When Baby Kamble was studying in seventh standard, people in the community began to suggest that her father should get her married. Since she was educated, her brother and father wanted to find a schoolmaster as a groom. They tried to tempt her father with stories about the assets owned by the prospective groom's family. Nevertheless, both men were firm with their decisions. Baby Kamble can also be compared with Valmiki's *Joothan* (2008). He, also, has broken his community's rules at the early age by going to school. Even though he faced humiliation and insults from the upper caste teachers and students in school but still continued his studies. *Joothan* is not only the life story of an individual; it is also about the history of the entire Chahra or Chamar community, who has been pushed to the brink of caste-based discrimination for ages. Raj Kumar quotes in his *Dalit Personal Narratives*:

*Why is my caste my only identity? Many friends hint at the loudness and arrogance of my writings. They insinuate that I have imprisoned myself in a narrow circle. They say that literary expression should be focused on the universal; a writer ought not to limit himself to a narrow, confined terrain of life. That is my being Dalit and arriving at a point of view according to my environment*

*and my Scio-economic situation is being arrogant. Because in their eyes, I am only an SC, the one who stands outside the door. (2011: 198)*

The writings of Dalit women novelist P.Sivakami and those of Kamble are viewed as documents of sufferings and atrocities committed upon them. Every text functions as a collective document, as the narrative moves from individual to community through a retelling of trauma. The narrator becomes the witness recounting the trauma. Dalits have been outside the law, outside expression, outside genre, outside everything. Nevertheless, they have produced autobiographical statements about their lives as a part of large context. Unlike Shivakami, who uses folk language only in dialogues between her characters, Kamble uses folk language throughout her whole work. Moreover, she challenges the decorum and aesthetics of mainstream literature and breaks the rules of written grammar.

The situation of Dalit degradation and deprivation has been realistically unveiled by Baby Kamble in the beginning of the autobiography. She describes the houses in which they live. She narrates how the houses were scrubbed with mud. She attracts the readers' attention by capturing the stark poverty of the Untouchables. She realistically writes:

*The walls were nothing but stones arranged vertically with some mud quoting. They were tiny huts really. There would be a big clay pot with a small mouth kept at the entrance for drinking water. The pot was called keli. The mouth would be covered with a broken coconut shell which also served as a cup for drinking water. .. one corner of the hut would have a clay Chula, near which lay a couple of clay pots, a wooden pali, and a tawa...there would be a wooden katwat, for rolling the dough and a long piece of tin for turning the bhakri while baking it. A grind stone would be in the corner... (2008: 8)*

The oppression made a revolution in Kamble's person in such a way that she asks each person who belongs to lower community to raise their voice to fight for their rights and bring about changes in the society. Social interactions between the so-called upper caste and lower-caste communities were strictly prohibited except on special occasions when such interactions were inevitable for both. This confession clearly describes the wretched living conditions of the Mahar Dalit community in Veergaon. Baby Kamble observes to what extent poverty has devastated the lives of the Mahars in her village.

The story is not her own but that of others too. Kamble's life is related to her people. She had the opportunity to tell something that others in her community did not have. She portrays Dalit women experiencing discrimination and untouchability in the public sphere, as compared to men. In Maharashtra, Dalit women cannot enter village temples, hotels and eating places. Subordination keeps most Dalit women out of the public sphere. Kamble documents the realities of the whole people of her community who were not allowed to voice their own stories.

*The Prison we Broke* is radical, fearless and self-questioning. It can be compared with Viramma's *Life of a Dalit* (1997), Shantabai Krishnaji Kamble's *Majya Jalamachi Chittarakatha* (The Kaleidoscopic Story of My Life) (1998), Bama Faustina's *Sangati* (1996) and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* (2009). They are Dalit autobiographies in which the protagonists trace out the genesis of Dalit identity and celebrate the self of their community, in commenting on Brahmanical domination. In all the autobiographies, the woman writer speaks out for her community presenting unflinching portrait of its women subjection by both caste and patriarchy. The act of writing itself was a declaration for Kamble. The excessive oppressive force repressed her person and generated but anger resilience and rebellion within her.

Shantabai, was the first Dalit women teacher in Solapur district, at board school, like Kamble, she is also the Marathi writer who wrote her autobiography, and it was serialized in 'Purva' Magazine in 1983. The word 'Chitrakatha' literally means a picture story but also indicates a sense of pieces of pictures being together like jigsaw puzzle.

#### **4.3.6. Dalitism: Kamble's Feministic View**

*The Prison we Broke*, is the narration of painful and bitter memories, of despair, disillusionment and the pathetic conditions of the life and culture of people where women are subjected to sexual harassment and physical assault. Incidents are narrated, re-narrated and reinterpreted each time to express the oppression of Dalits. Similar to Baby Kamble's *The Prison we Broke*, Raj Goutaman's novel *Siluvai Raj Sarithiram* (2002) depicts clearly the hardships of a radical critique of the social institutions, K.A. Geetha has translated these lines in her book *Contesting Categories, Ramapping Boundries: Literary Interventions by Tamil Dalits* she says:

*Siluvai Raj Sarithiram relates the various experience of Siluvai from his childhood until he converts to Hinduism, in his mid-twenties. He spent his childhood in Roman Catholic streets in a village called Puthupatti. (2014: 80)*

In the author's journey in the novel, Baby Kamble describes her village in such a way that one can imagine the nature and beauty of the village. This skill reflects her quality of narration and also her love towards her native place.

The feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) states that: "it is time to affect a revolution in female manners - time to restore to them their lost dignity. It is time to separate unchangeable morals from local manners"

(www.brainyquote.com), as well as Kate Millett in her first major work *Sexual Politics*, in which according to feminists she states:

*The growth of the feminist movement is inseparable from feminist criticism as the increasing consciousness of women leads them to question and criticize misrepresentation of women. To understand the ways in which gender is acquired through language and perceive the role played by the language in creating women's subjectivities and their oppressions are the two important tasks which the feminists set for themselves. (1970: 93)*

Baby Kamble's writing reflects her feminist sensibilities as she tells the readers about her birth as she was not accepted as a baby girl in her family, even by the females. She also tells about the valued status of male child and his glorious birth to his family. She skillfully portrays the socio-economic situation of the Dalit community and also records the subjugation of Dalit women in her own house and her exploitation and humiliation by the whole society.

Hence Kamble pictured the women in her novel as brave. The literary mapping of the many faces of the women presents an aggressive protest against Dalit women oppression, voicing their problems loudly. *The Prison we Broke*, occupies a unique place as it describes Dalit victimhood and focuses on the nature and function of caste in Mahar society. Kamble shows the forced and restricted roles of household and its importance for the pride of the male and the family. Baby Kamble sheds light on the problems of women submission and alienation, and how their subjugation is at the basis of the prestige of the man-dominated family. She writes:

*In those days, it was the custom to keep women at home, behind the threshold. The honour enjoyed in the family was in proportion to the restrictions imposed on the women of the house. When no one could see even a nail of the women thus confined within the four walls of the house, then this 'honour' became the talk of the town- a byword among the relatives and friends in the surrounding*

*villages. Then people would tell each other, how one Pandharinath Mistry kept his wife completely hidden in the house and how even the rays of the sun did not know her. (2008: 05)*

This shows that in the Mahar community the women were considered like personal property of the husband and he has the absolute authority to lock up the woman in the house like a bird in a cage. Women, subsequently, lack all hopes and possibilities to be heard, supported or to be liberated. Fathers in the family, traditionally, condition the behavior of the male children in the family. The Indian father, then, would encourage his son to be a man and behave like one. If wives cross the line, he is the one who has the power and the authority to punish her. The father in *The Prison we Broke* advocates:

*You are a man. You must behave like one! You must be proud and firm. You must walk tall. Twirl your moustache and show us that you are a man...Never mind if you have to go to prison for six months! You must chop off your wife's nose and present it to her brother and father. They mustn't have any respect left to sit with the members of the panch. (Ibid: 100-01)*

Accordingly, women could hardly get any opportunity or hope to understand and control their own 'self'. They could not even imagine living a free life like men or to have any right to enjoy their existence in the society. Women could not be defined by themselves but by those who exert power upon them, i.e. Men. This wretched situation of woman has been pointed out by Simone de Beauvoir in her seminal work *The Second Sex*. She states

*Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him. She is not regarded as an autonomous being. Man is the subject, he is the absolute. She is the other. He sets himself up as essential as opposed to the other, the inessential, the object. (1989: 16)*



In terms of Dalits, the dominant high castes enforced them to labour so that their own business could flourish and the nation's economy advances. Dalit situation is closely similar to the African slaves in America and their exploitation in the cotton plantations. In another self-centered environment where males are at the center and women occupy but the margins, Dalit women's duty as a writer is to portray the way Dalit woman is treated by her husband in her home. A home in which she, normally, could find peace and tranquility. In *The Prison We Broke* Kamble writes:

*Every day the maharwada<sup>13</sup> would resound with the cries of helpless women in some houses or the other. Husbands, flogging their wives as if they were beasts, would do so until the sticks broke with the effort. The heads of these women would break open, their backbones would be crushed, and some would collapse unconscious. But there was nobody to care for them. ...Women led the most miserable existence. (2008: 98)*

Unfortunately, the Indian women's movements lacked the serious concern about and the attention towards the problems of Dalit women. It was mainly about the cause of the upper caste and middle class women. While recalling the days of her young age at the college, the radical academician and feminist writer Sharmila Rege points out in her book *Writing Caste/ Writing Gender* the realistic situation. She writes

*As an upper caste, middle class student on campus, I recall being part of a group that thought discussion about caste identities to be retrograde. In the women's movement too, caste was rarely discussed as it was assumed that caste identities could be transcended by the larger identity of sisterhood among all women. (2006: 2)*

On the other hand, Dalit male writers represented Dalit women from a Dalit's point of view, focusing on the adversities in their lives. Consequently, the crucial issue of multifaceted subjugation of Dalit women remained unaddressed for a long time. In this connection, Bela Malik rightly reveals the reality, untold by Dalit men, of Dalit women's lives and pinpoints Dalit women's worst kind of humiliation compared to men. She says:

*While it is true that Dalits in general are oppressed, Dalit women bear the disproportionately higher share of this burden. Given the division of labour within the household, women have to suffer more from the lack of access to water, fuel, sources and sanitation facilities, exposing them to humiliation and violence.*  
(2003: 323)

Dalit women work hard in the fields. However, at the end of the day, they cannot rest they rather start new long hours of the other job; as mothers house cleaners, cooks, and prostitutes for their husbands. Such are the rules, set by men, to be respected by women in Dalit community.

#### **4.3.7. Internalizing Oppression from the Home**

The internalization of the poisonous thoughts of patriarchal supremacy to the whole community including males and females the mothers in law are the most vulnerable to expand the patriarchal practices over their daughters in law. Their married sons become the 'masters' whereas their wives become the subaltern. Ironically, women contribute to the oppression and exploitation of another woman. Baby Kamble's life-narrative *Jina Amucha (The Prisons We Broke* in English translation) reveals the atrocities that were inflicted upon the brides by their mothers- in-law. In *The Prison We Broke* Kambley writes: "She would be worried all the time about his falling in love with his wife. Her daughter- in-law was her enemy! She would feel

terribly jealous of her youth. She would constantly keep complaining to her son about his wife.”  
(2008: 96)

Urmila Pawar, also a Marathi Dalit writer, reveals the unhuman torture experienced by one of her elder sisters. Pawar’s sister works at the airport but after finishing her hours in the office, she returns home to meet but humiliation and torture at the physical as well as the mental levels either from her husband or her in-laws.

Baby Kamble in her autobiography shows the sufferings and pains that Dalit women endure in her day to day life. These women have double occupation; the domestic chores in the morning and in the afternoon, among others, they have to collect firewood. Uncommonly, when they return home they have to face other housework to be finished. As a result, they are busy all their day long; they have no time for resting.

Baby Kamble is deeply concerned by the Mahar’s conditions of deprivation and by their poverty and filthiness inflicted on them by the tyrannical beliefs of the caste system. She says

*People would be covered in thick layers of dust and dirt, a black quoting on their skin. You could see the deep marks where moisture had trickled down. Hairs, untouched by oil, fell over their shoulders in thick tangles. They looked like rag dolls, nibbled and torn by sharp-teethed mice. The thick tangles of hair would be infested with eggs. Children looked as if they had rolled in mud, snot dripping from their nose in green gooey lines... (2008: 8)*

Kamble feels that women are always more oppressed and are victims of male domination. The plight of Dalit women in Indian society is horrible as they are oppressed on the basis of class, gender and caste. Women had started protesting against discrimination,

oppression and injustices leveled upon them and should try to create a female space for themselves. Elian Showalter states in *Theory of Gynocriticism*:

*Women's writing is a double voiced discourse that always embodies the social, literary and cultural heritage of both the muted and the dominant, and insofar as most feminist critics are also women writing, this precarious heritage is one we have; every step towards self-understanding as well; every account of female literary tradition has parallel significance for our own pale uncritical history and critical tradition. (1986: 263-4)*

Baby Kamble sheds light on the instances of Dalit's life with an objective point of view. The Indian caste system had left Dalits illiterate. Due to lack of education, Dalits remained ignorant. They could not get insights about 'self' and 'other'. They were deliberately kept illiterate to engulf their life with superstitions and false beliefs. The high castes consciously played with the lives of the low castes and it were all for no fault on their parts.

#### **4.3.8. Voicing the Subaltern to Break the Prison**

Kamble feels that Women are always more oppressed and are victims of male domination. The plight of Dalit women in Indian society is horrible as they are oppressed on the basis of class, gender and caste. The oppressions gave Kamble the opportunity to write and think positive and also question her place in the society. Generations of sufferings, endurance and survival have imbibed her with the vigour and stamina. She always carried with her a struggle to discover her true self and identity.

She made a commitment to promote Dalit rights and examined the nature of caste, gender, and class oppressions. She felt joy and pain while finding her identity. Kamble is one

who awakened consciousness about women's life and the problems she endures by her community. Neeru Tandon states in her text *Feministic Paradigm Shift* that:

*A feminist is one who awakened and conscious about women's life and problem, and feminist consciousness I the experience in a certain way of certain specific contradictions in the social order. That means the feminist apprehends certain features of social reality an intolerable, as to be rejected if one is to transform the society for a better future. (2008: 28)*

The physical and the psychological harassment is inscribed as permanent marks on the women's psyche which developed a sense of insecurity and inferiority in them and ultimately resulted into the loss of self-confidence and courage of self-expression.

Generations after generations, the Mahars served their masters very obediently. Moreover, the upper caste community abuses the Mahars if they did not fall at the feet of their masters, or if they did not give the way to their masters when the masters came across in the road.

Babita Kamble asks the question to the high caste people as why they subjugate the poor and docile low castes. Through the following question she challenges the validity of the discriminatory social order. She asks

*We were the people who lived in your house, yet we dared not drink even a drop of water there. We never dared to cross your path. We dedicated ourselves to the service of the civilization and culture that was so precious to you, in spite of the fact that it was always unkind and unjust to us. Why we would ever spread out our hands like spittoons for you if you want to spit! Then why did you treat us with so much contempt? (1998: 38)*

The caste system had assigned diverse jobs to different castes. No doubt all the respectable work was reserved for the high castes and odd ones were assigned to the low castes. They had to survive by doing these exercises unwillingly.

Kamble's narrative informs the reader that domestic violence in the homes of Dalit women is in its extreme degree of harshness. Women are defenseless in Dalit community. Kamble also directly attacks on the caste system and high castes for the treacherous conditions of the Dalits. She says

*Such was the condition of our people. We were just like animals, but without tails. We could be called human only because we had two legs instead of four. Otherwise there was no difference between us and the animals. But how had we been reduced to this bestial state? Who was responsible? Who else, but people of the high castes! They destroyed our reasoning, our ability to think. We were reduced to a condition far worse than that of the bullocks kept in the courtyard of the high castes. (Ibid: 49)*

Further she follows the words of Dr. Ambedkar to inspire her community and motivate the Dalit individual by raising his consciousness and erase his/her conditions of the subaltern in his/her own Mother Land India. Her purpose is to eradicate the caste supremacy over minority groups of Indian people. She states the following words:

*from now onwards you have to follow a different path. You must educate your children. Divorce your children from god. Teach them good things. Send them to schools. The result will be there for you to see. When your children begin to be educated, your conditions will start improving. Your family, your life will improve. Your children will bring you out of this hell. We are humans. We, too, have the right to live as human beings. Your children will make you aware of this (Ibid: 65).*

The Effect of Ambedkar's speeches is seen in the last part of Kamble's narratives, too; when Rani Sahiba organizes Mahila Mandal in Phaltan, she called Brahmins, Maratha and Mahar women for this Mandal. The second round meeting was organizing in dining hall where all the Brahmins women occupied the chairs. Unfortunately, Mahar women stood on one side at the same time when Rani Sahiba and her followers move towards stage;

*suddenly Thakubai shook shoulder and told her, Your women are not allowing our women to sit on the chairs. Our Ambedkar has told us to demand our rights. I am going to forcefully remove your women from the hairs and sear my women there. ' The Rani Sahiba was taken back for a moment. But she immediately arranged chairs in the front for all of us (Ibid: 133).*

Hence, *The Prison we Broke* is the living story of a particular people in a particular village, in which Kamble, the narrator is part of that group. It talks about their style of living, hard work, culture, belief system, entertainment, spirituality, love, fight, struggle, pain and agony, their joy and sorrow, tears and dreams. The texts have never worked on the victimhood of Dalits. The agency of Dalits has been powerfully presented in all her writings. Her works lay a lot of emphasis on empowerment of Dalits through education.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

Both Kamble and Bama Faustina are self-made women, from their childhood. From their narratives one comes to know that they went through very difficult phases in their lives before they became established writers. As writers are frank and direct in their approach on the subject they write. In their writings they portrayed how Parayar and Mahar women, as Untouchables, are badly treated in their communities and the upper caste society. In fact, they make use of

local dialects of each language (Tamil and Marathi). Bama Faustina and Kamble speak about the Dalit women who are constantly vulnerable, Through the many women characters they have made a deeper investigation into the lives of Dalits. In both novels the mentally strong women fight back physically and verbally against the dominant patriarchy to lessen their mental strain. Like the Black Women, Dalit women also suffered from different oppressions, the most harmful of which is the issue of untouchability. The next chapter will be the discussion of the findings in the thematic analysis of the whole selected novels. one will show the results of the literary comparison of the scope under study.



# **Chapter Five**

## **Synthesis**

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## Chapter Five: Synthesis

*Whether I am meant to or not, I challenge assumptions about women. I do make some people uncomfortable, which I'm well aware of, but that's just part of coming to grips with what I believe is still one of the most important pieces of unfinished business in human history—empowering women to be able to stand up for themselves."*

(Hillary Clinton, December 2009. *Vogue* )

### 5.1. Introduction

The present study deals with the narratives of four Indian women: two of which belong to the Hindu caste whereas the remaining ones are totally excluded from it. This chapter, then, explores, comparatively, the similarities and differences found during the course of the textual analysis that characterizes each text of the corpora. One sees that the best method is to divide the corpus into two pairs: Dalit narratives and non-Dalit narratives. For the literary comparison of the whole scope one finds it easier to draw the comparison of each pair separately, then, heads to the general comparison of the four books together. The purpose is to come out with their common denominator and their absolute distinction in terms of the different themes like the feminine sensibility and the identity crisis in postcolonial women writings. Ironically, in this 21st century, the status of females is still discriminated and inferior to males. Simultaneously,

when the “Saudi Arabian” women are struggling for the right to drive their luxurious cars, in the neighbouring lands (India) Dalit women are struggling for the right to say ‘NO’ to violence and rape besides the right to drink “clean” water, survival and decent life.

## **5.2. The Voice of the Indian Women**

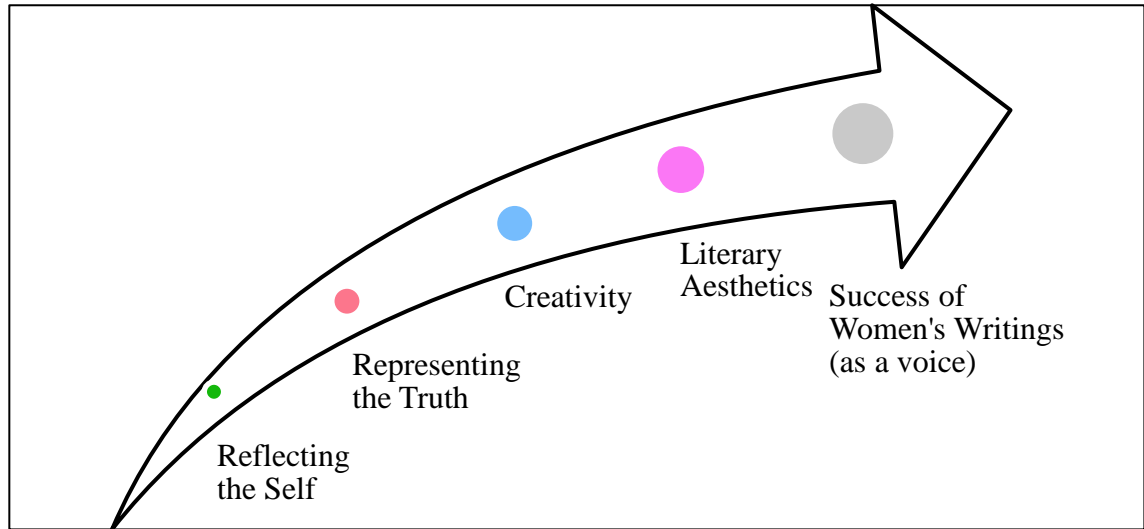
One’s work is basically about texts written by women. One wonders: what is the difference between woman’s literature and feminist literature? Based on thorough readings one understands that women’s literature is different from Feminist literature. Women’s literature which results out of women’s identity struggles creates new awareness in men and women whereas feminist literature expresses the shared experiences of women’s oppression. Feminist literature highlights and condemns the inequalities and injustices in the treatment of women; the disadvantages women have to bear on account of their gender. Its emphasis is on the ideology rather than on the text. Feminism primarily evolved as an opposition to patriarchy or the dominant sexist ideology.

This study examines how ideology affects women and how it is both challenged and how it manifests itself in writings by women. In order to address this question, one has compared the leading works of the Indian women writers in the contemporary age of postcolonialism, Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*, Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, Bama Faustina Faustina’s *Sangati* and Baby Kamble’s *The Prison we Broke*.

The Indian society was and is a men-dominated society. Men are superior to women, no matter in politics, economy, society, family and marriage. Women are limited to work in politics, science, education, social activities, and literary and so on. To be a wife, a mother or a woman should be the best profession of a female in the society. An ideal woman should be what

Virginia Woolf called 'the Angel of the House'. In this context, the Indian woman started writing her life experiences without romanticizing her pains and alienation.

Dalit autobiographies by women writers are haunted by these double images of self-assertion and self-renunciation. Historically, the genre of autobiography was particularly popular in the Victorian Period. Not only did the publication of autobiographies increase enormously during the era, but also the term autobiography was created in this century. Spiritual autobiography was developed in memoirs by pioneering missionary women. Victorian women's writing was especially rich in the field of life writing in this nation that celebrated home, family and private life. The autobiography written by women is a literary genre that reflects her determination, success and participation in remembering the past and building the future of the society. The following figure illustrates the process of women's success as writers.



**Figure 2 . Components of Woman’s Success as a Writer to Raise her Voice (own)\***

*\*Woman’s autobiography is a composed literature produced on the basis of lived experiences faced by the authors. The selected works are featured as autobiographies since each of them reflects the author’s self and her social context. The characters and their roles represent the real Indian woman and her real social role as lived by the authors in their families and neighbourhood. When Dalit authors expose their pains and suffering authentically, they contribute to raise the value of Dalit aesthetics via their creative imagination and the choice of their vernacular language to reinforce the pride of their belonging. Consequently, they achieve their objective of moving from the silenced to the voice*

writers write with sympathetic overtones The domestic memoirs, for instance, allowed women to write as mothers, daughters, and wives. Yet, the genre did not provide a space for them to develop or challenge their personal or intellectual self. The reason women embraced

this genre could be twofold, because they valued the private sphere, or, because they had no place in the public sphere. However, this tradition of the domestic memoir put pressure on women writers and it was difficult for those trying to avoid it or to reclaim another tradition. One writer who found this domestic pattern limiting, was George Eliot. She attempted to write within alternative autobiographical traditions and to push beyond the limits of domesticity. Along with many contemporaries, she worked to reclaim lost generic autobiographical traditions, namely the primary masculine autobiography either as an account of professional life or the introspective, developmental form. The latter form is also called psychological exploration and contrasts the domestic autobiography (Peterson, 1999).

In the nineteenth century, the genre focused on exploring the authors' emotions and development of the self. The popularity of this genre connects with the newly found interest in psychology, and women were not supposed to have psychology in the sense that no one was really interested in their thoughts and they were considered dangerous. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) proposed a new model of human mind by the end of the Victorian era. His theories created a description of the mind that stressed the major role played by unconscious drives, especially those of sexuality (Landow & Sullivan, 2009).

Freud showed that for the neurosis physiological state, normal gendered consciousness can be viewed as a distinct case. In his view, normal implied the heterosexual male. He introduced the heterogeneous source of infantile sexuality to the service of civilization and the middle class society and this model was upheld by dominant Victorian institutions and writers. In relation to the woman question, Freud was the first to recognize the question of: what does a woman want? His theories did not provide an answer to this; however, he opened up for a theory on femininity (Felman, 1993). For the first time in history, Freud voices that society does not

know what a woman is; what constitutes masculinity or femininity is an unknown characteristic which anatomy cannot lay hold of (Freud, 1964).

According to Toril Moi, Freud's psychoanalysis has provided a whole series of invaluable concepts. The unconscious, desire, fantasy, identification, projection, transference, counter transference, alienation, the belief that the literary and personal experiences of a woman writer should exemplify current standards of female behaviour.

In the 1970s, feminism revealed anxieties about the roles of women which paralleled historical changes in Anglo-American feminism. It was particularly reflected in women's increasing participation in higher education. Over the next forty years, feminist critics continued to express concerns about the issues of gender, but their analytical positions widened into more complex analysis of feminism, i.e. what womanhood meant to women authors, and how their position can be placed in modern feminist criticism. Indian women writers have written the stories of their own lives at a particularly interesting moment in the history of human consciousness.

### **5.3. Dalit Women Voicing up: a Convergence**

The two autobiographies subject to study are of great importance because they capture issues of two different communities living in two different regions and speaking two different languages. Baby Kamble's *The Prisons we Broke* symbolizes the 'open-door' towards energy and hope of the Dalit women writers of the 1980s and support the Ambedkarite movements, while Bama Faustina's *Sangati* unveils the lacuna of the 21st century. Consequently both are stories of metamorphosis from helplessness, humiliation and limitation to hope, pride, courage



and self-identity. *Sangati* and *The Prison We Broke* with their contour and content contribute largely to the development of Dalit aesthetics.

Dalit aesthetics is a literature written by Dalits with the consciousness of being Dalit and which deals with the life experience of a person labeled as a 'Dalit'. Dalit writers and poets felt the need to be educated and own their leadership; Dalit aesthetics articulates the ideological position of the Dalit writer. It evolves over a period of time and space, and Dalit aesthetics is imbued within Dalit consciousness. Dalit literature is a movement of self-identity, movement of self-respect, a movement through which Dalits expressed their world-view. The purpose behind Bama Faustina's and Kamble's autobiographies celebrates Dalit movement. It is not confined to mourning about their lack or revolting against injustice.

Dalit literature is self-critical; it lost its initial homogeneity and split into many atoms. In spite of the division, Dalit Christian Literature, Dalit Marathi Literature, Dalit Tamil Literature, Dalit Feminist Literature and so on..., Dalit novelists have found their literary voice now they are in search of their own aesthetics. Dalits have appeared in history not only in the role of victims, but also as resisting and struggling against their subjugation. Dalit's revolt, their protests and assertions against oppression and injustice, have occurred all over India and in all periods of history. *Sangati* and *The Prison We Broke*, authors and characters, breathe resilience and resistance of Dalit communities and more importantly, Dalit woman.

More and more women writers have come forward and fight for the women's cause. Since, basically dealing with woman's issues, one's selection of the scope fell on Dalit autobiographies from different cultures, languages, regions and religions, one thinks there is a need to study thoroughly the different dimensions and issues related to human relationships and the feminine sensibilities in Kamble's and Bama Faustina's writings. Dalit autobiography has

become a cult and so it has to be studied deeply to understand the strength of the woman author's mind.

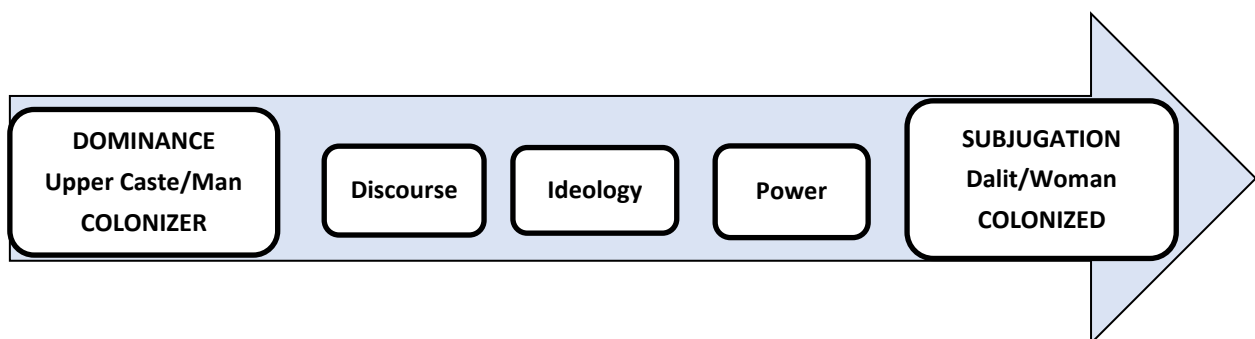
Despite its diverse nature, modes of organization and scale of these struggles were generally ignored by mainstream historians and scholars. For some caste literateurs, Dalits being low-caste are uncivilized enough to have any sense of aesthetic. Dalit writing in its formative years has been largely about articulating protest, self-respect, angst, identity, dignity, critiquing religion, politics, patriarchy, Dalit patriarchy and the demand for space for Dalits in social, cultural, and political spheres. However, writers attacking traditional icons and symbols were not equally vocal as to what to replace them with. Dr. Ambedkar publicly burned the Manusmriti in 1927; this needed an alternative icon, and Buddhism that he embraced in 1956 provided this alternative.

The Indian society, like others, consists of two parts of population; one of which inclusion is 'women' while the other is 'men'. The progression of any society could not be possible with the participation of only the half of its population. Women play an active role in the development of their countries.

Although the place of woman in society has changed from age to age and culture to culture, one fact common to all societies is that a woman has never been considered equal to a man. She is treated as subordinate and second rate citizen. Her identity and status are derived from her relation to the gendered categories of mother, daughter, daughter-in-law and wife. She is always defined not only in relation to man but as dependent on man and subordinate to him. The discrimination between males and females is inculcated in her mind right from her childhood as all the members of her family treat her differently.

The apartheid manifest its practice against Dalits' segregation of housing, burial grounds and separated cups for Dalits in tea shops. Sexual violence on Dalit women is treated as a right of Hindu caste men. While the rules are set against the basic existence of Dalit men or women that they should not wear a shirt or pant and blouse in caste Hindu presence, then, they are forbidden to access to common water sources. The perpetual caste- Hindu pressure sticks Dalits' destiny to unpaid traditional occupation (scavenging). Curbs on use of footwear and cycling of the Dalit are prohibited in caste- Hindu area. They are not allowed to enter into temples and barber shops or to be educated and economically well-off. Dalits are not rented apartments in cities; their place should be at the margins of the villages.

Dalits are unrepresented in the higher echelons of judiciary, bureaucracy and hi tech institutions; in literature, cinema and media too Dalits are marginalized. This apartheid regime proves that Brahmanism in fact predates fascism. Such discourses are rooted in the colonizers ideologies to gain authority and power over the 'other/subaltern' and lead to the domination of the upper caste and subjugation of the outcaste, though both humans and Indians. The process can be illustrated in the following figure.



**Figure 3 The Process from Dominance to Subjugation (own)\***

*\*This figure shows how dominance is established to colonize the weaker individual, which could be woman as it could be the Dalit/Untouchable in the Indian context. The binary of pure/polluted, upper caste/low caste, centre/margin, is internalized among the Indian people to become an inevitable doctrine, which put all the power in the hands of the upper caste and make the outcaste/Untouchable poorer and worst. Such a process is also valid for the subjugation of women by the patriarchal ideology and its propaganda via gender role discourses to gain perpetual power and authority over the female which lead to her subjugation by the dominator/man.*

Women and girls from lower caste face double exclusion by virtue of being both a Dalit and a woman. Dalit women are until today experiencing multiple levels of oppression, violence due to caste, class and gender. They are subjects to rape, killing, and sexual torture. In India Dalit girls are sacrificed for Hindu religious rituals and offered in temples as prostitutes, to be accessed freely by priests, under the name of 'devadasi'. Untouchability is constitutionally abolished but, actually, still practiced.

Democracy says that all people are equal, but still in many rural areas Dalits are forced to live outside the village. They have to live discarded from the agglomeration. Still in some part of the Indian country, boys and girls of Dalits/Harijans are designed to clean the toilets in school surrounding. If they refuse to do they are bitten. Dalits/Harijan are served tea in glass cup and has to wash them. Whereas other cast peoples are given their tea in steel glass. Dalits are not allowed into temples, their offering are given from outside. Woman is source of birth, all births happen by same natural procedure than why after birth this discrimination of the Varna system?

The forefathers have started the existing tradition of the caste system. Parents and older generations have been brought up knowing and practicing only this system. It is deeply rooted in their heart and mind. They do not know anything better. Therefore caste cannot be abolished so easily. It is the Indian's own responsibility to abolish the caste system completely, which does not grant equality to everyone, which does not allow children, the new generations to come, to think in a progressive way. That is why it is essential to finally start different kinds of campaigns to motivate the old generations and to make them realize that the caste system has died and that they should all take part in a funeral ceremony of the caste system.

For the development of the Indian country, social change is a crucial need. There should not be any kind of dissimilarities in the developed and civilized society. Everybody should have the same rights and same opportunities politically, socially, and economically. The caste violence against Dalits has, in some cases in history, caused armed conflict between Dalits and upper-caste landlords. The caste system, for economic balancing of the society, was misused by power mongers to shift some people to the periphery as their servants.

Though the Dalits have fallen into the pits of depression and have been living as prisoners for centuries, they have gathered to accentuate their tribulations lately. Dalits have recognized the importance of education in achieving their goals and find the possibility of action through literary domain. Dalits are deprived of education, right to possess assets and weapons to protect them. They are always considered as a property of upper caste people.

Their difficulty to access to education is a factor of backwardness for the Dalit community. Many Dalit families living in rural areas are unable to send children to school because of geographical and financial constraints. Even today young women are often married

young and thus unable to continue their education. Although untouchability is abolished by laws in India, the Dalits still experience its repercussion in all walks of life.

The publication and translation of Dalit literature depend on the demands of the markets inside and outside India. Its politics draws the material to be published, the translation of the product, the importance of the genre, and to which social category belong the writers as well as the readers of the literary output. Traditionally, translating the literary production was confined to only the writings of the higher caste authors by virtue. In an interview, Dalit scholar Ravi Kumar in *Touchable Tales*, observes:

*...where translation into English plays mischief is in the politics of selection the norms are set by non-dalit theoreticians, non-dalit publishers and non-dalit translators whose choices are inflected by what they find to be the least threatening. (2003: 8)*

Combined with indomitable pride and impregnable hope, a sum of anger, sorrow, pain and shame are the stuff of Dalit literature. The suffering of Dalit people has sharpened their experience in literary expression. Therefore, the contribution of Dalit literature has been marked by greatness.

- First and foremost, it undoubtedly threatened the Brahmanic hegemony over the Indian literature.
- Second, it mobilized Dalit masses for identity assertion and realization.
- Third, it actuates thinking in Dalit literates and brings into existence an organized organic of Dalits intellectuals.

- Fourth, it brings the evidence that the Dalit is no more the illiterate and that the emergence of such a bulk of literary products is a proof of their smartness and creativity.
- Fifth, it is one of the most powerful factors that is paving the path to social change in India since the number of its readers and writers is in a spectacular progress.
- Sixth, it universally seeks to overhaul the subaltern's experiences in life.
- Seventh and finally, Dalit women are affected by the various social customs like marriage, divorce, re-marriages, childbirth, etc.

In the caste struggles the first layer to be affected are young women and children. It is one reason why the Dalit girls are pushed in marriage cages as soon as they attain puberty. The parents do not wait for them to complete eighteen years. Giving them in marriage during their early teenage led to high rate of maternal and infant mortality. Dalit women and men are not equally treated in the villages. The government has made a few efforts to put an end to this practice but did not succeed. Particularly disadvantaged are the women and girls from caste groups, who face double exclusion by virtue of being both Dalit and women.

Both Bama Faustina and Kamble have voiced their dissatisfaction against the unequal social order through writings. Dalit writers write with social commitment and staunch believe that the society may change and understand the problem. Dalit women are living a life of pain, misconduct, maltreatment, and agony in their own homes. They are not only victims of the male's vagrancies but also to the upper castes caprices.

Moreover, the life of Dalit women is spiraling downward from bad to worst. Dalits use their voice not only to expose the atrocities faced by them, marginal representation of the lower-

caste writers and their life experiences result in the psychological alienation and the anger that boil within them as a reaction to these prejudice.

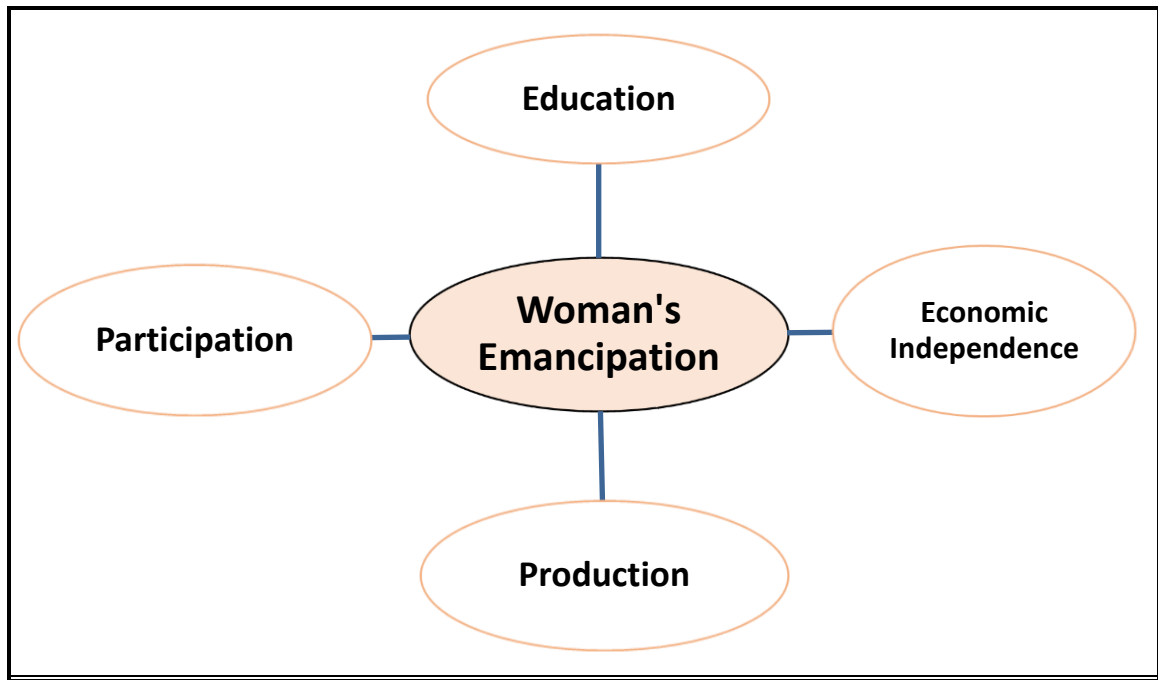
Dalit women seek liberation and should break the torment as they are being victims since many generations; they exercise their power as rebels into the world of liberation to redirect their own destiny. The Dalits of today are receiving wide attention from both government and non-governmental organizations by way of policies and welfare schemes to improve the position of these women.

The Constitution of India provides for reservation in jobs, educational institution for the Dalit under Scheduled Caste (SC) category. There has been a rise in educational access to Dalit as a result of the post-independence educational programs. Apart from reservations in educational institutions, other major programmer for upliftment of Dalit includes, exemption from school fees, processions of stipends or scholarships, precisions of facilities like book grants and maintenance of hostels or assistance to hostels for Dalit students.

There has been remarkable increase in the number of women going out of their houses for working in different sectors. They are teachers, doctors, nurses, advocates, bank employees, clerks, typists, telephone operators, receptionist, personal assistants, i.e. this can be seen at all the position throughout India. Employment has given their economic freedom to women. This has boosted self-pride and self-confidence among Dalit women. One is aware that women cannot attain their emancipation unless they are educated enough to know their rights and duties, to be independent economically; that is having a room of their own as Virginia Woolf claimes it.



To be socially active and be able to produce pieces of work would make the world attracted to contribute to her liberation and emancipation. This idea is summarized in the following humble figure.



**Figure 4 Factors Leading/Contributing to the Woman's Emancipation (own)\***

*\*This figure shows that for women to live dignified life, she needs her emancipation and liberation from the shackles of the patriarchal society. Her liberation is to be taken by the woman herself via her continuous struggle. One thinks that there are four elements that ensure her social emancipation: her education via which she enrich her knowledge in different fields of life, her work to gain own money and get rid of her economic dependence. With knowledge and work, the woman participates in the social development as well as her individual empowerment. Her participation increases the production. Furthermore, the four features are influenced by one another yet, education remains the most important key to emancipation of the subaltern (woman/ Dalit).*

In the Indian society the primary place is given to caste. One can change his/her religion but not his/her caste. This was done to ensure Brahmin supremacy. The County's president, Mr.K.R.Narayanan cannot enter the sanctum of even small temple because of his birth as a Dalit. He says; "Untouchability has been abolished by law but shades of it remain in the ingrained attitudes nurtured by the caste system". The oppressed people are not expected to raise free voices. They are supposed to remain slaves. Even the authorities and the state believe in this. When Dalits try to say "we are as human as other" and that they can wear decent clothes, can be educated and work; then they were beaten up brutally.

The caste system is a burning reality of the Indian society and makes a large number of people, the victim of this inhuman exploitation and persecution. Dalit writing aims at eradicating social discrimination and ushering in an egalitarian and democratic society. Dalits have been raising their voice through personal narratives. Dalit autobiographies became an evidence of how Dalit writers comprehend the situation of marginality. Their autobiographies stressed several issues: a source of truth expression, reading personality development, historical investigations, study of psychological development, reading gender and reading of subaltern experience. To write an autobiography is purely a personal act, there are certain preconditions which enable one to write one's autobiography.

Dalit autobiographies provide a record of the neglected social history of the lowest sections of India's population. This literature has breathed a new life into the emotional world of the Dalit community because it has blossomed to provide expression and meaning to the life of a set of people who had been undergoing severe oppression and isolation for many centuries. This new literature started questioning the atrocities and injustice inflicted upon the Dalit's life.

Dalit autobiographies are realistic in depictions of the life of torment and anguish experienced by the Untouchables.

Baby Kamble is the leading name in the growing Dalit literary tradition in India. Her two sides of struggles are directed towards cultivating self-respect among people in her own community, while emerging an important voice of protest. Kamble's texts are path-breakers in the history of autobiographical narrative because here she scrutinized her personal self before the public with honesty and integrity. Kamble's writing celebrates Dalit women's lives, their art, their humour, their resilience and their creativity. She dreams of the oppressed Dalit community, who are getting united to fight for their rights. Her works have been translated into English, French and several other languages.

Kamble's quotes with slogan '*I am a Dalit*'. She proves that Dalits joy in struggle and it is supported by the mental strength and courage that could anchor them firmly. The resistance to oppression by patriarchy has been given her impetus to survive the exploitation and suppression and led her go beyond the state of despair. With writing her past history, she could neither produce the present situation nor could visualize the future. The subject hood of 'self' is the main focus in every Dalit writings. Dalit who have been raising their voices for quite some time, thought their respective personal narratives.

Kamble wrote from the heart, her dreams, her aspirations and desires. Due to her own experiences during her life long, she engaged her activity and efforts to alleviate the pains of the underprivileged. Kamble in order to make visible the experiences of Dalit women, she had narrative voice of the community which imposed upon the voice of the individual, she changed the quality and style of canonical narratives as literary so that her writings will accommodate the stories of silenced people and articulate a differentiated kind of aesthetics, that of

authenticity. Even as a child, Kamble experienced the bitterness of sexism. She was a victim of patriarchal prejudice basically at the core of her home with her own parents and relatives. It is therefore proved that Kamble tries her best to uplift the position of woman and thus resist the dominance of man. She knows the influence of patriarchy is found in all religions as well as all societies over long periods of times.

In the case of *Sangati*, Bama Faustina also discusses the functional forms of oppression unleashed on her community, the Paraiyar. Bama Faustina also portrays how Dalit Christians are not allowed to sing in the church. Their places in the church are isolated. Furthermore, even the dead Dalits are discriminated since they are not allowed to be buried in the cemetery of the village. The Paraiyars who converted to Christianity in order to escape caste oppression at the hands of orthodox Hinduism are shown to be greatly disillusioned as they are not able to escape caste oppression within the church fold. Bama Faustina disillusionments with the church and walking out of nunnery after seven years of stay found injustice, marginalization, and discriminatory conduct of the church towards the Dalit Christian.

The strong desire for freedom, including the freedom to rebel, forms the central strain in her writings. She enumerates the caste and male felonies in her prose and builds up a structure of protest and rebellion. The novel of Bama Faustina may be considered a tale of her experiments with her society and the repeated failures of her experiments force her ego to be resentful and defiant. According to Raj Gauthaman in *We have no Need for Haloes*: “Dalits who have for so long been treated as commodities owned by others must shout out their selfhood, their ‘I’, when they rise up.” (1995: 97)

Like Baby Kamble, by using regional languages commonly spoken by the Dalit speech community, their writings are featured by an unmistakable sense of anger and protest against

the social injustice of the Brahminical regime. Such a language has been used in multiple situations and for various purposes. While in Dalit male writing, the use of their linguistic codes is addressed to the Brahmin men who have exploited Dalits as being slaves and ignorant, Dalit women often use it to express their anger and as a weapon against their own husbands in order to save their bodies from being beaten up.

Bama Faustina's *Sangati* is purely of Dalit feminism perspective and explores the impact of number of discrimination. *Sangati* is about a community identity. Besides, the Parayar women were always vulnerable even when educated independent and living alone like Bama Faustina herself. Dalit women confront frequent threats and menaces of rape, sexual assaults, physical violence and damage at work place, in public arena, and violence at home by their husbands. It seems right to define Bama Faustina's work as of feminine aesthetics, since her stories and novels consist of ideas produced by women that clarify a standpoint of and for women.

It is an aesthetic which assumes that women possess a unique perspective of their experiences and express commonalities of perceptions shared by women as a group that demands the ideology of self-definition and self-valuation. Moreover, Bama Faustina also represents the humour and wit of the lower classes through their rural dialect and idiom, a skill that had captivated readers and helped to establish her as a writer of pathos, and social realism.

What bind the two Dalit narratives, also, are the rebellious spirit of protest and the militant spirit of struggle. These writings are seminal in the way they expose how Dalit women are not passive in their communities rather they fiercely face man's violence and brutality. Moreover, the writings delineate how these Dalit women authors successfully transform their individual experiences of pain into a collective social consciousness, political awareness and

psychological empowerment. This is a consciousness achieved through personal experiences, events they witness and stories they hear from the older generation. Dalit women have achieved the position of a standpoint which places them within the new knowledge system and brings opportunities for narratives written from a Dalit feminist perspective.

One is tempted to draw a conclusion from the autobiographies of both Baby Kamble and Bama Faustina that for the exploitation and oppression of the Dalit neither Hinduism nor Christianity offers any solution. Both are strongly convinced that the unique way to liberate Dalits from the shackles of the Hindu caste system is through their own initiative towards equal opportunities for men and women in education and social activism. Kamble explicitly criticizes the educated Dalits who ignore the Dalit cause and seek prestige through their adoption of the upper caste way of life. In this context, since such a behaviour is also common among the educated Tamil Dalits for the same reasons, Bama Faustina's narratives focus principally on the suffering of those less educated and illiterate Dalits and Dalit women.

Consequently, *Sangati and The Prison We Broke*, as Dalit literary products, symbolize a significant historic phase in the awakening of a large mass of suppressed people in India. It is their voice for liberation as well as of protest, dissent, and rebellion. What makes the difference between the narratives is the projected effect upon the readers of their communities. While Bama Faustina emphasizes the raise of awareness, inspiration, and motivation, Baby Kamble focuses on finding solutions for empowerment and consciousness.

Dalit literature is nothing but the literary expression of Dalit consciousness. While going through Bama Faustina's and Kamble's novels one can feel agony and pain suffered by the whole community. It shows that both Kamble and Bama Faustina are the mouthpiece of their

respective communities and themselves are merged with the community. Thus, Dalit Literature is a one of the most important developments in twentieth- century Indian Literature.

#### **5.4. Non-Dalit Women Voices: Different Concerns?**

The crux of the matter is that from the very starting point of humanity, the human society has been dominated by the male, otherwise literature of the world would have another face and the woman's resistant movement would not exist. So woman writing is autobiographical to a greater extent and at times she universalizes what is personal. This in turn could result in a conflict of identity, between a being's comprehension of herself and the concept of woman which has been constructed by ideology. In their inner psyche, the conflict is that women know that their ability and appointment are of more values than what are they told to be by males and traditions.

Since the motivation behind this study is to examine how the narrative of the female self is expressed in writing, the comparison of the non-Dalit narratives shows the similarities and differences of the strategies that the Indian women authors attempt to adopt to discover their own identity, both in concord and in conflict with the tradition of their society. The focus is on the challenges facing women while writing themselves. They feel themselves different from what society ordains them to be and what they feel and think themselves are. The alienation of the self, experienced by women in the course of history has frequently been combated through and as writings, and particularly writings of the self.

The Indian concept of woman is varied and changes in keeping with the modern ideology of the time, and this has provoked a number of challenges for women. These narratives of the

female self are expressed in writing and in women attempt to discover their own identity, in concord or in conflict with the dominant ideology in their contemporary society.

In the Indian society, the feminine ideal is centered on the family, motherhood and respectability. Consequently, the ideal woman limited or non-existent responsibilities in relation to society as a whole had little or no connection to a functional or responsible role in society. Yet, while in this twenty first century, women are gaining ground within education, politics and the work force, there are still images of women that cause concern. As long as women live in a culture saturated with social conventions of what it means to be a woman, there will be a pressure for women to conform to certain rigid ideals.

Arundhati Roy had been interpreted as a woman writer who had successfully fought patriarchal Indian rules that have denied woman's happiness. Such a portrait has made her a feminist writer. In the writing of Roy one finds the best expression of feminine sensibility. Being a woman and wife, she has a minute and thorough knowledge of feminine sensibility, its exploitation, its hurts, its anguishes and its suppression in a male-dominated society.

Next to traditional women, characters appear in Arundhati Roy's novels. Roy chisels her characters with well-defined features so that the reader can easily identify the time period and their social background against which they are cast. For instance, there are certain unflinching characteristics of traditional women, Ammu as a wife, and in the same way one can pick out her characters, as a lover to Velutha, with no difficulty. It is because people, wherever they are, imbibe the spirit of the place as well as the spirit of the time known as 'zeitgeist' which singles them out as special individuals from their predecessors. But, people do not and cannot take a sudden jump from one period of time to another period of time. Their growth and development mark an unbroken chain in time and it is quite analogous to the growth and development of



Rahel from childhood to adulthood. Each stage, in its development, markedly manifests certain distinctive traits.

Roy longs for emancipation for women: to be equal to men in economy, science, politics and education. She makes great efforts to make full use of herself in education and knowledge. But when idealism dashed against realism, idealism would be sacrificed. As self-deception brings tragic consequences for Ammu, through sufferings she learns tolerance for weakness and deception. Roy's construction as an acceptable (if not wholly ideal) woman writer occurred because her obvious understanding and acceptance of morality, demonstrated by her novel, provided a context within which her personal actions could be interpreted. Roy is a bilingual writer who wrote in English with equal ease, mastery and command as her mother language and like other contemporary Indian writers, her narrative also has to be examined critically from a post- colonial perspective.

Meanwhile, Manju Kapur, in her fiction, stresses women's need for independence, self-fulfillment, self-realization, individuality, autonomy and self-actualization. She presents women characters who in their quest for identity emerge as real women of flesh and blood. Kapur has made an important contribution to this field, by portraying the confident, ambitious, enterprising and individualized women through her novel which demands attention, equality and peace. The writer draws the images of women rising in power and strength, claiming responsibility for their lives and declaring that society will be better with effective and capable females. In the first place, she creates a type of a character that is caught in the complex web of tradition that appears in two forms: firstly, it manifests itself in the form of patriarchal form of society and secondly, in the form of male chauvinism.

Tradition is the accumulated thinking of the past that one inherits from the past. A traditional person thinks and acts as his/her predecessors do. It becomes a dead habit with them. They seem to be rational, but carry the burden of the past out of habit. This leads to stagnation of thought and consequently there will not be any progress or forward movement. Tradition assumes authority that is tyrant but, change, being the law of nature, is inevitable. The new generation of people, learn to think different from their predecessors and naturally there will be a conflict between the new and the old and this conflict becomes the cradle of progress. Thus, there is friction between the emerging generation and the preceding generation.

Whereas, the term 'modernism' implies a definite change in the attitude of people which stand almost diametrically opposite to those of the predecessors and the basic values of human life undergo a striking change. One notices in Manju Kapur as a novelist that she makes her protagonists grow and develop from one stage to another widening their space and embracing progressive ideas in innovating or establishing new relationships between characters. In other words, the traditional view point recedes perceptibly forming the transitional view point and thus transitional view point gives way to modern and modern to postmodern. She traces this subtle evolution from character to character corresponding to the conspicuous changes that take place in time as it advances. The third category of women that appear in her novels deserve the epithet 'Modern Women'.

Postmodernism is a concept that is often used with reference to characters that possess certain traits that are not to be found anywhere in the previous generations. So are the cases of Roy's Ammu and Kapur's Virmati. They may appear innovative, queer and bizarre; and there is little hiatus between their thought and action because either they are too confident about what they do or because they care less about the consequences of their actions. In a sense, they are

adventuresome and they are the very centre of their actions, independent of any thought that might endanger the interest of others. They have grit, confidence and, above all, they think in terms of self-fulfillment and self-realization to the total exclusion of the welfare of society. Manju Kapur similarly to Nightingale, her focus was on women's intellect.

Manju Kapur's novels are essentially feminist novels and have educative value too. The general stress in her novels is on the enlightenment of women and their empowerment. Her women protagonists are well educated, intelligent and talented and above all, career oriented women. Women, in fighting for their rights in general and their identity in particular in every field of activity, make perceptible progress especially in the domestic sphere. Unlike the women of the past, they assert themselves and grab the attention of everyone.

Men start recognizing women as a formidable force in all spheres of activity. She presents the hidden intricacies of a woman's psyche in her novels. Her protagonists make an effort to dismantle the gender polarization to a great extent. Women in the novels of Manju Kapur are not traditional women who think that marriage is their destiny and they have to obey their husbands. They differ from traditional women; breaking all social taboos and conventions they emerge as new women, who are aware of themselves. Women in the novels of Kapur are the personification of the 'new women' who are projected as convention. Bashing new women, subverting male chauvinism.

Roy's fiction portrays diverse facets of Indian women, their sufferings, socio-economic life, as well as Syrian Christian life, as she was born in this community and raised in its customs and religious manners and habits. She is very honest in portraying the characters' follies very satirically. Her work proposes to look at the anguish of women, their way of life wrapped up in thick coverings of Syrian Christian ethnicity with the essence of caste spirit. Roy is deeply

involved in the exploration of man-woman relationship within the ambit of love, marriage, the relationship between husband and wife traditionally based on mutual love, sexual gratification, procreation, family life, social interaction and cultural community. In this traditional set up of man-woman relationship regarding marriage, it is commonly found it is a woman's life that ended with compromise or adjustment, very often. The sufferings of Indian woman, her shattered dreams, her potentiality to sustain against all odds of life are found in the literary work of Roy.

Women discriminated within and outside the family, trauma of existentialism, annoyance and grievance of being alone are the major themes of Roy's narratives. Female quest for individuality has been a pet theme for many Indian women novelists and Roy deserves no less recognition like any of her other contemporary writers. In order to have a panoramic view of "Women" one should understand Roy's creative writing and her critical perspective towards her characters in *The God of Small Things*.

This thesis show tries to showcase the myriad reflections of 'woman', whose life reveals her strengths and weaknesses and how destiny shapes her fate. Most of Roy's characters are trapped in a love-less relationship where marriage becomes a bargain between two families, where two people live for the sake of living which results in women becoming victims at the end. Consequently, one finds the novelist as a person who has a deep understanding over the problems faced by women under the patriarchal system.

Arundhati Roy and Manju Kapur come from great families, whose members are qualified and hail from upper caste background. Their writings do reflect the nativity of caste culture but one's research is restricted to the women alone. Their women are educated, more or less, and courageous, yet they are weak enough to fall victims to man's authority and to his

dominating nature. The Indian society is framed by the orthodox, traditional social conditions in which women found it hard to swim against the patriarchal current. Some women found strength to react, retaliate and revolt but few were left, representing their traditional roles as mothers, wives and daughters, examining their lives and living conditions constrained to the four walls of a family setup.

Through Roy's and Kapur's writings, readers are exposed to the external and internal identities of their female characters. The readers probed into their mindset that was attuned to the traditional and modern systems in an insightful way. Though bound by the rules of marriage, single or divorcée, they not only voiced emancipation, but also attempted to map out the real processes by which women are marginalized.

Roy and Kapur, through their women protagonists show the evident and hidden means of women's bondage which has enrolled and held them as hostages to principles, stereotypes and limited choices which are the primary reigns of patriarchy. The tactics of re-adjustment of their female protagonists who later learn to adapt in order to create an identity of their own in their search for beauty of life. Their women characters struggle to seek a zone which is a safe haven to survive in like "one's individual place of safety".

Arundhati Roy and Manju Kapur are Indian Writers; their work has a strong sense of identity, patriarchy and sabalternity. Feminism and postcolonialism remain at the heart of distinguishing between the self and the other. Characteristics of Indian women literature and Dalit literature are likely similar because the authors are inspired both by the successful artists of the preceding periods and by the occurring events in the space time continuum of their lives and their production procedures. Their novels have much more similarities in qualities of language and period; both of them fall in the contemporary Indian women writers column.

While both non-Dalit women authors deal with the feminist perspectives in the Indian society and portray the suffering and resistance of the Indian woman, one sees that the difference found between Roy's narratives and Kapur's is a matter of concern. Kapur is interested in middle class women of upper caste whereas Roy stretches her interests to touch the downtrodden in the society; the Untouchable to universalize their cause and contribute to their emancipation and construction of identity.

### **5.5. Multiple Voices for the Sake of a Single Voice**

The present women narratives exploring female lives become particularly important in the way that they frequently have a complex relationship to the social contexts in which they were written. Unlike the man's ways and purposes in the tradition of writing, portraying the conditions of life and the society in which the writer belongs, female's writings become a weapon with which the woman fights to realize her own identity. This is due to the fact that through history women have had more social constraints and discrimination attached to their gender. Women have, as this thesis attempts to demonstrate, had an urgent need to realize and show how they fit in this world of humans.

What is more, the personal aspect of writing is also something that characterizes women's writing in the contemporary age, and this is something that Judith Gardiner has studied on *Female Identity and Writing by Women*. Gardiner found that identity is an important factor in women's writing and she states that female identity formation is dependent on the mother-daughter bond; the maternal metaphor of female authorship clarifies the woman writers' distinctive engagement with her characters and indicates an analogous relationship between woman reader and character (Xiao-hua, 2007).

Furthermore, she believes that woman writer uses her text, particularly one centering on a female hero, as part of a continuing process involving her own self-definition and her empathic identification with her character. Clearly, women seem more connected to their writings in which they represent themselves through narrating their true tales. As an illustration, the following table shows the diversity of the scope under study and the some of their convergent features.

**Table 1 the Diversity of the Characteristics of the Selected Scope of Study (own)\***

<b>Novel</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Caste</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Community Location</b>
<i>Sangati</i>	Bama Faustina	Tamil	Outcaste/ Dalit	Christianity	Tamil Nadu  (South East)
<i>The Prison we Broke</i>	Baby Kamble	Marathi	Outcaste/ Dalit	Hinduism to Bouddhism	Maharashtra  (Centre)
<i>Difficult Daughters</i>	Manju Kapur	English	Upper caste	Hinduism	Amristar/Punjab  (North West)
<i>The God of Small Things</i>	Arundhati Roy	English	Upper caste	Syrian Christian	Kerala  (South West)

*\*This table illustrates the rich diversity of the corpus under study. The novels of the upper caste authors are written in the same language (English) but they are from different regions in India where the authors are affiliated to different religions. Similarly, the novels of the Dalit authors are from different regions in India with different religious affiliation of their writers but written in different languages.(For the diversity of the geographical locations of the authors see appendix 2.1).*



Beside such a wide diversity of the authors' social background and the context of the novels, as illustrated in the above table, what connects authors and texts is that the authors provide a response to the different male attitude towards female identity in their contemporary society. The texts are analysed with a special interest in the narrative of self from a social and feminist perspective.

Having a feminist perspective incorporates as an approach those critiques of societal norms of gender, race, class, sexuality, and other social inequalities. Hence, it seems useful to study, compare and discuss the texts with reference to theory from both these approaches. The feminist theory employed in this study incorporates some of the most classical texts from the twentieth century, such as writings by Simone de Beauvoir, Elaine Showalter and Toril Moi. All of these female theorists share similar ideological inclination with those of Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy, Bama Faustina Faustina and Baby Kamble which are of great importance to clarify and illustrate the textual analysis. As Simone de Beauvoir focused specifically on how her theory of woman as the other relates to what the selected texts present, Elaine Showalter's writings are helpful in terms contextualizing women's literature in relation to cultural and social issues.

The terms sex and gender are often seen as divergent ways of describing the differences between women and men. Biologically sex marks the differences between males and females, while gender refers to the social roles allocated to both of them. Women characters in the novels suffer not because of their biological difference but because of the social and cultural discrimination in predicting specific roles for each sex. For long ages, women were thought that, because they are of a certain sex, as female, that they must behave in a certain way, as feminine. In fact, as feminist theorists focus on the self and advocate the rights and equality of women,

such discrimination should disappear. In Showalter's view, the gender concept is simply irrelevant to the task of producing a concrete historical understanding of what it means to be a woman, a problem which was faced by all of the female writers that are selected with in this thesis. In other words, Showalters claimed that if women's writing is described as feminine writing, it will cause a position of marginality in relation to a patriarchal society. Therefore, this distinction between the terms is crucial in literary criticism.

Another term that was frequently used is 'ideology', which implies the way people see and think about the world. Bennett &Royle say that Ideology defines the subject from the inside as well as the social norms that people are expected to behave according to. Ideology is closely connected to language as it reflects attitudes and social concepts (Xiao-hua, 2007).

As Fairclough (1993), in his *critical Discourse Analysis*, states that: chauvinist or male-dominated language not only reflects, but also helps maintain sexist attitudes in a society, one of the problems faced by all the women writers that were dealt with in this study are that language fails to provide them with concepts that adequately describe what it is that they are facing, and that language is saturated with patriarchal thoughts. This appeared to be a reason both as to why they struggle so much in their writing and why they must write in the first place. In all of the texts that were discussed there is the need to find a language and a text that explain both their own situation and, possibly, that of other women.

### **5.5.1. Identity Assertion for Human Dignity**

Throughout history, women have faced challenges because of their identity. Identity may be defined as the distinctive feature of belonging to the individual; it also could be shared by all the members of a specific social group. Actually, in all societies of the world woman is branded

the second position after the man she is labeled as the weaker/weakest sex. In fact, in all times and places, she is denied the social security, economical liberty, justice, and political activity.

In this sense, in *The Second Sex* Simone de Beauvoir reveals that women have been accorded an inferior status. Males are believed as productive, political and public and rational whereas women as non-productive, non-political, private and emotional. In their interaction with men, women have taken nothing, they have only received. For men, humanity is male and man defines woman as relative to him, she is not regarded as an autonomous being for him. Women's position is limited to not more than a sexual entity.

All the traditional theories are based on a male dominated knowledge. To illustrate, Aristotle remarks that the female is female by virtue. She is inferior because, naturally, she is deformed and in lack of human qualities, and that her state should be subject to tests. Her maturity is also approached and related to the phenomenon of old aged inferior issues. The German philosopher Nietzsche declares that, woman is the source of all unreason actions and reactions, and that she is God's second mistake.

For the known philosopher Bentham, the country has nothing to do with the woman's affection. It does not embrace the welfare of any nation. Her natural qualities, as emotional and tender bring benefits only to her own children, much less to all human kind. For Rousseau, women's position and functions are those that are natural and relative to her own sex; for J.S.Mill, the great social functions of a woman should be to invest her beauty to make man's life wonderful. The European conceptualizations of liberty, equality and fraternity also exclude the participation of the women class.

Accordingly, as a common denominator of the four novels, patriarchy in the different regions of India and within the different religions and cultures, has imposed the second position

to the woman in her interaction with man to be completely submissive in both the social and economic spheres. Woman is culturally denied freedom and space. The human female voice is distorted in a world ruled exclusively by men. She is totally underprivileged in a male dominated world.

Yet, feminism is a protest movement fed by the ideology of social, political, legal, moral and cultural equality with men. It is launched by the Western women. Feminist theory is the proliferation of the movement of feminism into the theoretical and philosophical studies. It consists of different branches, among them is literature. The feminist theory brings discrimination, objectification, stereotyping, oppression and patriarchy from local understandings to universal debates and discussions. It is essentially an attitude against sexism and male domination led by the women and for the women. In this context, the feminist movement fought for equality all over the world and in all fields of life: education, work place, politics, and the household.

In spite of Wollstonecraft's advocating of the basic human potential, self-worth and intelligence of women in her time, feminism did not become a reliable movement worth of consideration until the late nineteenth century. The other prominent figure from this period is, again, the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir, whose ground-breaking and provocative study *The Second Sex* is seen as the initial effort to challenge human history from a feminist perspective.

As a matter of fact, the first wave of feminism was generally driven by middle class white women but the second phase included women of colour and developing nations in search of sisterhood and solidarity. Feminists devote their efforts to show the relationship between race,

class, and gender discrimination and marginalization. The most influential feminist literary critic from this wave is Elaine Showalter who connotes an *A Literature of Their Own* (1977).

Drawing on the legacy from Woolf, she outlines a literary history of women writers starting with the Bronte sisters with focus on women's experience. Her views on the female tradition, is that it has been neglected by male critics and that women's writing is different than that of men's. Showalter was committed to retrieve the invisible precursors in the literary tradition. The third wave of feminism came to the world in the mid-1990s and is lasting to the present time.

Feminists in this wave debate the fact that the universal female identity focused only on the experiences of upper-middle-class white women rather than on all women regardless their class, race and caste. Such is the case of Dalit feminism which came to existence only when Indian feminism was concerned by the middle class woman and the upper caste women have excluded the Untouchable women from the feminist movement in India.

Concepts of body, gender, and sexuality that the first two waves of the movement identified with male oppression, were further confronted and in accordance with the situation of the contemporary woman. In fact, women of the third wave reject the role of victim while being feminine. They want to become subjects rather than objects of the sexist ideology. In addition to that, the word feminist spread in some circles became a negatively loaded concept, that is, one that carries negative connotation to such an extent that women are reluctant to use it.

This phenomenon is explained by Toril Moi, who claims that they are witnessing the emergence of a whole new generation of women who are careful to preface every gender related claim that just might not come across as unconventional with 'I am not a feminist', but, Moi's understanding is that most young women are reluctant to consider themselves as feminists.

Since long ages, in India, the ideal had been the perfect wife. The perfect wife was an active and vital part of the family and her primary task was childbearing. Women in lower classes were expected to contribute to the family income, but in the middle-classes their contribution was child rearing, food preparations and clothes making. In the upper-classes they would help with these tasks and their role as an organiser of the household. This model for the ideal wife reduces her functional role in society as well as her responsibility. The predominant ideal was that before marriage a young girl would be brought up to be innocent and without sexual feelings at all.

The desire for motherhood was considered innate and girls were kept under her family's watchful eye in order to be ready for marriage. Once married, her social and intellectual growth was limited to the family whereas her economic status depended upon her father then her husband. Women's function in society was also reflected in women's fashion.

Thus, feminine literature included the activeness of women rather than docile, aggressive, and ambitious rather than retiring and submissive but successful in forging their way. Thus, women in the postcolonial period participated in society within charity work and other philanthropic activities. They realized that they had little influence and power to change problems.

### **5.5.2. Woman's Exploitative Powers in the Indian Context**

Nevertheless, these women authors were, in hindsight, proved to be significant in the development of modern feminist thought. Indian literature illustrated the challenges not only political, economic and educational but also concerned the manner in which women were regarded and how they regarded themselves as members of the society. In the book *A Literature*

*of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter connotes how women's literature has evolved, starting from the Victorian period to modern writing.

Through works, it was evident that women writers played a major role in shaping the terms of the debate about the Woman Question. It seems evident that many Indian women felt suffocated by the dominant social codes of their society, which ascribed different roles to men and women. For women, in lack of an interactive scene, and their constitutive estrangement from representation, one way of understanding and challenging the patriarchal order was to write. To summarize the authors concerns in one's study, the following table may be significant. This illustration shows the main themes explored in the novels and the similarities and differences of the themes between Dalit writings and non-Dalit writings.

<b>Novel</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>Caste</b>	<b>Identity and Individual Assertion</b>	<b>collective Identity of the Minority</b>
<i>Sangati/Events</i>	+	+	+	+	+
<i>The Prison we Broke</i>	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Difficult Daughters</i>	+	-	-	+	-
<i>The God of Small Things</i>	+	+	+	+	+

**Table 2 Similarities and Differences of the Novels In Terms of Themes (own)\***

*\*When gender is the primordial concern of the Indian woman writer, Dalit and non-Dalit, her search for her individual knowledge and realization remains the common denominator in her intellectual expression and literary production. Identity crisis is the first preoccupation of the Indian woman author, regardless her caste affiliation and social background. Nevertheless, the people's liberation from the oppression of the caste system and the social equality of all the Indian communities is not their common concern. Perhaps because upper caste women have not experienced caste atrocities and marginalization.*

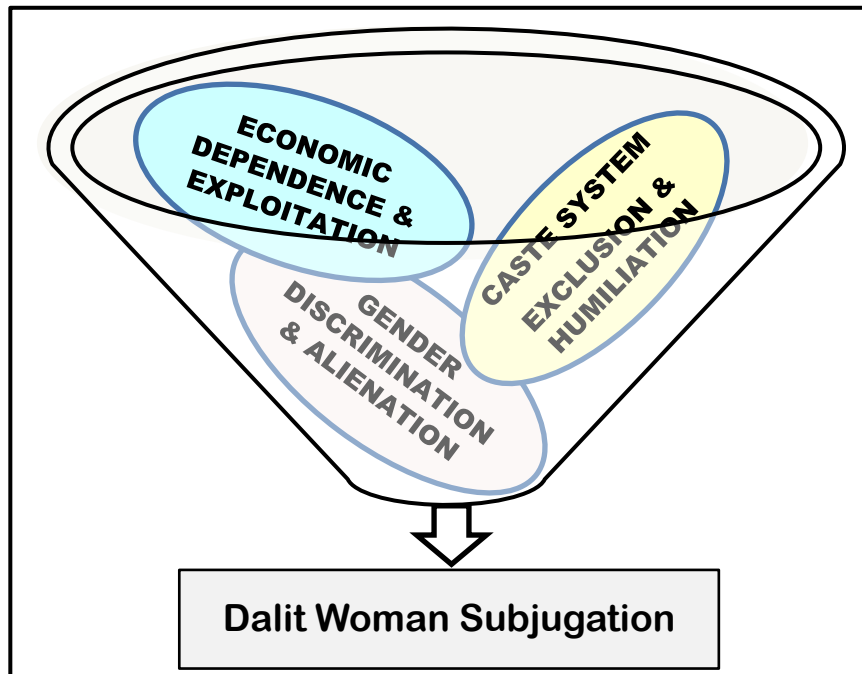
*Social exclusion of the Untouchables is detailed by Bama Faustina, Baby Kamble, being themselves Untouchables, and by Arundhati Roy where *The God of Small Things* is an Untouchable (Velutha). Whereas, in manju kapur's *difficult daughters* no space is available for the Untouchables's cause. Her main interest remains patriarchy.*



What is clear is that all Indian women writers under study deal with gender biases in their writings whereas the issue of caste and its social problems does not interest all the non-Dalit authors. Probably because they were not discriminated on account of their caste belonging. Nevertheless, Roy's excellence in understanding the taboos of the Indian society leads her thoughts to make the suffering and oppression of the Untouchables in the hands of the readers of the world. To explain more, in these works women describe how they have to conceal their drive for independence, and how they differ from "normal" women. Thousands of term papers and books may be written on Dalit women but the writer of the most scholarly of papers may be far from understanding what the life and problems of Dalit women are to them.

The best way of knowing what the life of a Dalit women is to experience it, to be a Dalit woman; through her oral history, in which she expresses herself in such a way that we can feel and identify with her and vicariously live through her experiences. The appeal here it is not only to the mind but also to her heart (Frances xiv). The centuries old paradigm, in which Dalits remain socially dispossessed, needs to be re-worked or revisited into a more acceptable frame of social coexistence. Bama Faustina plays the visionary social philosopher and reformer by drawing everyone's attention to the role of Education in the journey of the Dalit community towards an identity and social respectability. She demonstrates through her many intrepid acts of rebellion the impact of education in one's life. Hence, *Sangati* shows different levels of victimization of youth, elders, children, and women all are situated within the oppressive system of caste. The caste clash result is widows, orphans, school dropouts and starving people and elders abandoned to their fate.

Dalit women subjugation can be illustrated in the following figure Personal destinies of Dalit women and their vocational fulfilments are limited by the conventional social fabric, and man-made inherited ideas, as well as flaws in the individual moral will. Thus, Dalit women writers are particularly concerned to expose the colonizing structures and reform the misery of subjugated women.



**Figure 5 Main Social Constraints Involved in Dalit Woman Subjugation (own)\***

*\*The figure shows the main social forces backing the Dalit women emancipation. The forces are nurtured by economic, religious and patriarchal (de)constructive discourses, which are rooted from the beginning of the Indian social building. The more the Dalit woman is economically dependent, the caste system preach division, and men control women's lives, the more Dalit women are far from reaching their liberty.*

A woman's elastic sense of adjustment, her shock-absorber like patience and, above all, her deep sense of dedication and devotion to her family fortify the traditional system. The reason for all this is not far to seek. Indian ethos has instilled certain ideals into her consciousness right from her childhood and this sense of dedication to her family, with a genuine sense of self sacrifice, can no more make her go against the existing traditional system. And the patriarchal mode of hegemony, especially in India, fortifies that system. Tradition, indeed, is tyrannical and is quite impervious to the new ideas that come from outside.

### **5.5.3. Literature for Women Empowerment**

The idea of women empowerment is, relatively, of recent origin. Very few writers voiced forth their opinions as a protest against the suppression of women in the society during the last two centuries. But, it did not draw the attention of the public in a male-dominated society. With the advent of education for women, there has been awareness of women's rights and some women writers like Virginia Wolf who came as a liberating force with their inspiring and empowering works made their mark, towards the close of the nineteenth century. Her book, *A Room of One's Own* is a clarion-call that contains seminal ideas championing the cause of women's rights. And then, drawing inspiration from books like this intensified their struggle for recognition of women as equal to men.

Education and media have spread women's fight for equal rights along with men in every sphere of activity. But, there has been a silent opposition from men and so women's movement for their rights goes limping. But in recent times, women realize the fruits of their struggle through legislation. In India, for instance, women empowerment, although gains ground in slow degrees, still faces certain hurdles like gender bias, poverty and backwardness in education in

the way of women's progress or advancement in society. Still Government continues to do its best for the advancement of women and it is heartening to note that in many fields of activity, women compete with men, occupy elevated offices in our country.

Women empowerment means emancipation of women from the vicious grips of social, economic, political, caste and gender-based discriminations. It means granting women the freedom to make choices in life. Women empowerment does not mean deifying women rather it means replacing patriarchy with parity. In this regard, there are various facets of women empowerment, such as they should be able to express their thoughts, opinions and imaginations freely.

Individual empowerment refers also to have enough self-confidence to articulate and assert the power to negotiate and decide. A critical aspect of social empowerment of women is to promote gender equality. Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Education empowers women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. Economical and occupational empowerment reduces women financial dependence on their male counterparts by making them a significant part of human resource. Political empowerment means the existence of a political system favouring the participation in and control by women of the political decision-making process and in governance.

Dalit literature is typically Indian not only in its roots but also in its purpose and goal. Dalit literature is the postcolonial nativistic movement aimed at the cultivation of creative urges of the masses of numerous castes, tribes and communities condemned for centuries to voiceless existence. Influenced by post-modern literary movements, it questions mainstream literary

theories and upper caste ideologies, and made use of writing as a method of propaganda for the movement. In fact, it concerns all the Indians not specifically the Dalit for the reason of living in harmony and respect of all human beings. The Dalit cause is universal and need to be questioned in every debate of human concern. The Hindi writer Kashiram Singh argues that it is not necessary to be a Dalit to write about the life and experiences of the Dalit people.

When any literary writer is concerned with finding solutions to people's problems and difficulties within his surroundings by picturing the reality of the cultural and social odds, one finds it legal that Manju Kapur takes defense of the middle class woman cause. Furthermore, the highest purpose of Dalit writers, Bama Faustina and Kamble, is not beauty of craft, but authenticity of experience which nurtures a belief in rebellion against the caste system, recognizing the human. They fight for their own cause because their lived reality, but recount it with human dignity.

Unlike Virginia Woolf, the middle class born woman, who considers woman emancipation is the cause of the middle class woman, Arundhati Roy, the non-Dalit born novelist, fights for the cause of the socially downtrodden Untouchables/Dalits. The situation is similar to Black women in America, as F. Bedjaoui explains in her article, *Feminist Trends Towards Permissiveness*, *Journal for Odisha Association for English Studies*:

*In most women's movement writings, the experiences of White/middle class women were described as universal women's experiences, thus ignoring the differences Black and White women's experiences due to race and class; and Blacks women work was accepted as representing only the Black experience and rarely challenged or criticized. (2012: 137)*

Virginia Woolf thinks that the emancipation of the woman is to have a room of her own and servants to do the house chore for her; in doing so she absurdly excluded the poor woman of the working class. However, like Simone de Beauvoir who has never belonged to the lower classes and fought for the liberation of women regardless their race or social class; Arundhati Roy has excluded neither men nor women without discriminating the cause of any underprivileged in the Indian society and the humanity in general.

#### **5.5.4. Individual and Social Belonging**

Dalit and non-Dalit novels reveal an image of feminine attitudes, convictions, motivations and degrees of coherence. These female autobiographies of the Dalit literary movement from different regions (Tamil and Maharashtra) are undoubtedly documents of anthropological and ethnological value. This moral conviction of the necessity of human efforts against poverty and the indignity have raised the value of freedom.

Subjective determinations of self-awareness are forged and fed on wounds and repressions. Indeed the feelings of inferiority and frustration are inseparable from the degradation of identity. In their respective styles, they are indignant at the injustice done specifically to women, and denounce the issue of the privileges granted for ages to men. They also demand that the Indian state and constitutional law impose compulsory schooling / education for Dalit women and girls. These resolutions run counter to the principles of the dominant castes,. They symbolize a social awareness working towards the imposition of education, the defense and protection of women against all kinds of aggression, their collective and political participation.

The recognition of the equality of men, the rejection of Brahmanic religious hegemony, the reconstruction and reappropriation of their communities and the status of women, are the perspectives and activities that emerge from the philosophy of Ambedkar. Education brings relative security and access to lucrative professions and prestigious positions. It is with effort and patience that the improvement of the lot of the marginalized can succeed. Deeply imbued with the healthy principles of Ambedkar, each woman writer's position as an Untouchable educated woman and their ardent need for social recognition guided their writing to unveil the plagues of a society deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions. It is this decisive will of the women's struggle to put an end to the abusive practices of Untouchability, that these two women writers exhort the Untouchables to transgress socioreligious laws. They are the testimony of the firm will of women in search of identity dignity. Their writings illustrate hatred, violence, but also honor. Dalit women's literature or the literature of the oppressed is marked by a particular originality: it bears the seal of individuality and the universal feminine.

As these Untouchable women have consciously transgressed the traditional laws, risked contempt, hatred, rejection, dishonor of marginality and anomaly, there is a double transgression, resulting from nature and function. In search of their authentic identity, they become spokespersons for a common consciousness that brings together specific sections of devalued and misunderstood human beings.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

Dalit literature is typically Indian not only in its roots but also in its purpose and goal. Dalit literature is the postcolonial nativistic movement aimed at the cultivation of creative urges of the masses of numerous castes, tribes and communities condemned for centuries to voiceless

and passive existence. Influenced by post-modern literary movements, it questions mainstream literary theories and upper caste ideologies, and make use of writing as a method of propaganda for the movement.

For today's generations, feminism divides the human society into two antagonistic camps, men and women since it has deviated from its pure ideology which includes mutual understanding and respect. The expected order is partnership and co-operation between the members of the human race, be it men and women and the equal diversification of their roles in the family and the society.

All the selected women authors fought for the rights and freedom for Indian women. They believe in independent life where there should be no liabilities. Their writings are based on the feminine themes with self- determination. The novels are the voice of many women speaking to and addressing one another as they share the incidents of their daily lives. These voices sometimes rose in anger or in pain as they lash out at each other or against their oppressors in search of their identity.



## **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

*The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity.* George Bernard Shaw, (1901). *The Devil's Disciple: II*

Writing is a means of creating a place in the world; the use of the personal voice and self-revelation are means of self-assertion. The selected women novelists Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Bama Faustina Faustina and Baby Kamble, opened areas in which previously forbidden or ignored rights, roles and emotions could be expressed in ways which reflect the true voice of feeling and living. They showed how an Indian woman novelist could create a space for herself in the public world. One's study is to grasp a deeper understanding of and more sensitive appreciation for women as positive forces. There is no denying of the fact; however that in spite of gender politics, a substantial body of women's writing has emerged as a result of women's literary vision. It is of great value, as it has enabled women to create and claim attention and status through their writings. The scope of this project work is focused on feminist aesthetic in Indian literature written by women, from different backgrounds in terms of caste and class affiliations, with a close study of the novels: *The God of Small Things*, *Difficult Daughters*, *Sangati* and *The Prison we Broke*, as autobiographies written by and about Indian women.

A major preoccupation in Indian Woman's writing in the last decades has been a delineation of life experiences, the inner thoughts and feelings, and interpersonal relationships. In a culture where the woman's role at home is undiscussed for ages and individualism and protest have been thought as disobedience to the supreme divine orders, it is obvious to see the emergence of an essential Indian woman sensibility that leads to the defiance of the social and cultural inequalities and injustices.

This thesis investigated how Roy, Kapur, Bama Faustina, and Kamble challenged the ideology in their respective regions and attempted to reformulate what it means to be a woman. As a counter discourse to male-centric parameters, feminism interrogates dominant patriarchal ideologies and seeks space for women as potent forces in social configuration. Although feminism is political construct, it has been the main factor of postcolonial discourse. While feminism in West grown up in a different matrix, it reshaped with its whole power in a distinct style in the Indian context which opened huge debate all over the world. Broadly speaking, there are two different kinds of feminism; Postcolonial feminism and Western feminism. Roy, Bama Faustina, Kamble and Kapur are the advocate of the former one. Western feminists only argued to widen their sphere of political independence for women while post-colonial feminists reclaimed their history by explaining their stories and struggles for survival in this problem stricken world.

In the entire history of the world, whether it is colonial or post-colonial era, any female has been marginalized and subordinated by the dominant power of male. The selected novelists might have experienced the same situation under patriarchal dominance in the region where the authors hail from. They have unequivocally expounded every issue related with gender, class, caste, tradition through their narratives. Actually the woman writer represents the whole Indian

women in general and herself in particular, whose actual value and symbolic value have been marginalized by man.

Every Indian community follows the patriarchal system of dominance where the male will be the superior loaded with whole reputation and high respected status in society, whereas women are considered as inferior to men, deprived of rights even the right for a decent speech, expression. They are only supposed to be subservient for their husband, always to be in the control of a male. Similar happenings are faced by Dalit women authors mainly. Their pains and agony expressed through their narratives do not represent themselves only, but it inwardly speaks of the plight, and pathetic condition of an Indian wife or woman.

All of the selected authors, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Baby Kamble and Bama Faustina Faustina, are very determined to revolt against the conventional society's definition of womanhood. They even challenge the traditional sex-roles. In their writings, they bring out the emotional emptiness of married life and the intensity of misery of the wife who surrenders to her husband who is repulsive, and with whom she has no emotional contact at all. Hindu symbolism has a powerful impact on the construction of masculinity and femininity within Indians.

*The God of Small Things, Difficult Daughters, The Prison we Broke* and *Sangati* taught one a lot about the way Indian families view themselves and how they perceive the world around them. The whole concept of preferring boys to girls was not necessarily new to the researcher, but what was so striking to one was the amount of disgust the family members direct towards a female. Yet, there are gender pressures and differences in one's society, but they are not of the same rigidity than those in India.

Kapur and her female characters break the barriers, evolve their personalities and ideological beliefs both intellectually and emotionally and verbalize a message of awareness and empowerment to all women. Kapur's mission, as elite, is the evolvment of women in this world as an independent, powerful and respectful individual as well as epitomizing Indian sentiment.

For ages, Dalits have had their tales told by upper-caste writers. Premchand wrote of Dukhi, Mulk Raj Anand of Bakha, Arundhati Roy of Velutha and Mahashweta Devi of Doulati. But what if Dukhi, Bakha, Velutha and Daulati take up the pen and decide to tell their own tales? Dalit literature first found its voice in Marathi in the 1960s and 70s, and then soon appeared in other languages like Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada.

One has chosen Bama Faustina's *Sangati* and Baby Kamble's *The Prisons we Broke*: two seminal and confessional novels in Dalit literature written in different regions of India. *Sangati* is from the Southern India/Tamil Nadu, *The Prison We Broke* is from the Central region/Maharashtra, in order to examine the existence and the functioning of the exploitative powers that affect Dalit women lives. Not only the upper caste people (both men and women) exert oppression, humiliation and exploitation but also their own lower caste community practices infect their existence in their own homes.

In this research, one has attempted to provide a broader meaning of narratives dealing with female compliance and defiance. The narratives function as spaces of utterance and agency which, regardless of caste belonging and social and economic class, include not only the geographical locations of Third World women but also their literary and critical productions and feminist remits. This makes postcolonial writings by women a discourse of activism for social change and reclamation of women's identity. It also represents voices and bodies which are

represented, deconstructed, and reconstructed. One of the goals of one's research is to read postcolonial women's writing as a transformative and metachronous discourse without overlooking interconnected notions of oppression and resistance, given that they are a complementary part of women's texts and realities.

Specifically, the reading of Indian women novels caught one's interest to develop one of the branches of "Postcolonial Women Writing in English". Hence, the interest for the identity construction theme developed further. One, consequently, opted to join the theories to the term in order to spot the light on the path stretching from problematics to hypothesis and expand knowledge. Researcher's curiosity digs deeper to also reveal the connections between texts and contexts of the novels also among the authors' backgrounds and their conceptual approaches too.

Notions of female diversity and particularity justify one's hypothesis that postcolonial women's writing is a dynamic discourse which has the potential to constitute a cultural, literary, and historical archive of women's subjective experiences and of different authorial concerns and modes of representation narratively reconstructed. The discourse is produced by postcolonial women writers about several female modalities and is consumed by readers from various cultures. Besides, it does not exclusively represent stories of female oppression; rather, it reclaims women's voices through the use of different themes and structural styles in order to map spaces of resistance. This signals the possibility of producing texts from diverse female margins and spaces in order to articulate what is suppressed or neglected in the masculine order; that is, female creativity, voice, and body, all of which are brought together in the body of the text.

The pedagogic discipline of women writing as a distinctive area of literary studies is based on the concept of the experiences of women. Historically, it has been wrought by their gender. Women as writers through their writings emerged very different from those writings produced by men. Women by nature are excellent story tellers. They are marvelous masterpiece of creation and constitute half of the human population.

Traditionally women bare primary responsibility for the well-being of their families, (children and husband) which is the nucleus of society. Their situation has been grim for centuries; they are deliberately denied opportunities of growth in the name of religion and socio-cultural practices. Women, usually are perceived as a weaker sex and forced to play secondary role in the society and are often neglected, discriminated and oppressed. Women constitute half the world's population, perform nearly two thirds of its work hours, receive one-tenth of the world's income and own less than one- hundredth of the world's property (UNR1980). These traditional views on women contrasted in fictional characters, such as in Manju Kapur's where she articulates passionately the view that women are not different from men, but need a field of action much as their brothers do. This is also the desire of Arundhati Roy, Bama Faustina Faustina and Baby Kamble. Via the women characters, Virmati, Ammu, Maryamma, Rahel, Ida and Kasturi, they speak passionately of the transformation of women's existence into something that is fruitful and meaningful.

Based on one's discussion and comparison in this research, one has found that there are links between the stories in terms of the three themes of caste, gender and class in *The God of Small Things*, *Difficult Daughters*, *The Prison we Broke*, and *Sangati/Events*. The linking point of the selected texts revolves around different stages of female's lives, such as: childhood, girlhood, wifehood, motherhood, and widowhood. Although it is shared by the texts, the

conjuncture is treated differently by the authors because the texts are culturally located and analyzed. This is why the shared conjuncture becomes more complicated by the power relations that affect women. In fact, degrees of agency and the choice of action between the principle female figures are also different.

It is arguably acknowledged that Indian literature is a rich and complex block on the account of its linguistic and cultural diversity which is a strong reason that widens the horizons of the comparative approaches, literary theory and literary criticism. However, it is single since it is limited by the Indian frontiers. In this sense the comparatist focuses on themes, literary movements, structures and styles to enrich her illustration and precise the findings. These links are particularly visible in cases of oppression and discrimination. In most cases the links are between two of the various concepts, for example between caste and class or gender and class, but sometimes, all three themes are linked at the same time. Hence, one's conclusion coincides with the theory of Spivak, who claims that women from the Third World are the most vulnerable, as they often are discriminated against due to their race, their gender and their class. The concept of power is closely linked to all of the three themes.

To a large extent, the main points of the chosen writers emphasize the role of the British Empire in South Asia and the difficulties which followed colonialism, both on the global/universal and the individual level. As a result, they stress the consequences of the postcolonial period, and the fact that colonialism has delayed and prevented Third World countries from taking part in the dynamic development and progress of the West. The writers' main interest is to illustrate discrimination in relation to caste, gender and class. In particular, their project has been to give voice to the silent subaltern women of the Third World, who suffer the most, mainly Dalit women.



The approaches underpinning this work are also informed by feminist theory. One examines the views expressed at the time by the women writers themselves and accords their views to the status of material evidence. In terms of researching a variety of feminist research methods. Reinharz (1992) explains the relationship between feminism and methodology and questions the prevailing stereotypes. She argues that for text analysis more than a single feminist method can be at usage. Yet, a variety of perspectives are spoilt for choice. She concludes that such a diversity of approaches has been of considerable value to feminist researches.

When it comes to comparative literature within the Indian context, the artistic product of the Indian authors is rich in terms of regional cultural and linguistic variations and the vast area of the country favors the distinct differentiation between the works from distant settings. The different narrative conclusions in the previous chapters point to differences not only in ways of representing women but also in degrees of agency, inequality, and choice of action between the principal female figures. This adds a great deal of interpretive variety and complexity to the texts which defy neat conclusions about homogeneous female oppression which the reader makes. Female characters such as Ammu, Virmati, Maryamma, Rahel, Mammachi, Kochamma represent different experiences and models of women, where a woman is traditional and modern, oppressed and rebellious, silent and active.

Female diversity emphasises that postcolonial women writers portray female characters who are reflective of “the social ills as well as the cure. Their novels imply that women must begin the process of change by internalizing their own versions of social and economic equality” (Uraizee, 224). This explains why the authors appropriate negative female images and roles constructed by dominant discourses such as patriarchy and nationalism. The appropriation of these images is a central issue in this research and is explored through a deconstructive, cultural

reading of the texts. For instance, although both women are subordinated by gender, among other power structures, Virmati who is a middle-class woman in *Difficult Daughters* does not experience the same socio-economic hardships experienced by Maryamma, in *Sangati*; who is a lower-class woman. This example highlights the differences in the authors' concerns and modes of representation. For Arundhati Roy, the colonial legacy, class, and female sexuality determine the construction of the female body in *The God of Small Things*, while for Baby Kamble gender power relates to colonisation, class, and the religious caste exemplified in the theme of 'subaltern' in *The Prison We Broke*.

Specific literary critics have been drawn to discuss the relevance of the problematics and the appropriateness of the hypothesis. One's goal in this doctoral thesis was to highlight each writer's individual view to the themes of race, gender and class and to examine the unity that specifies their approaches to tackle the social problems. One would also like to measure the weight of the exploitative powers that construct or deconstruct social equality and how they perceive the woman's identity in the novels written by a Dalit woman and those written by a non-Dalit woman.

More importantly, this thesis has helped one to acknowledge the female authors' efforts when one discovered how long and difficult, unlike their counterpart men, is their struggle to reach their goal and make their dreams come true to be recognized in the stream of the traditional literary canon. Texts are being discussed from feminist and postcolonial point of views, which already proved quite productive and adequate to track down different forms of situated sociopolitical critique voiced by a genealogy of committed women. These writers have broken the barriers of the "Established" pattern of language used by the earlier writers. They have shown in their works that they are free to not follow the standards of the colonized language.

Yet, they painted it with their local terms, untranslatable, to reflect a culture of their own. Moreover, they feel themselves not confined to one language but many more are there, as they belong to a multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual society.

The works of emergent writers have ceased to give attention to patriarchy as the only system that subjects women to oppression. Consequently, their works show a great deal of consciousness, serious concern and great interest in their political, economic and social environments. The writers' state of social consciousness is depicted in their autobiographies; mainly *Sangati*, *The Prison We Broke*, as they identify the ills in the society and thus makes an attempt to correct the perceived socio-economic and political imbalances. The most frustrating of these societal ills are the Hindu caste system and class.

The stories illustrate the mental strength of their female characters. Their positive and optimistic view of life seems to be prevailing throughout all difficulties. They portray the alienation of all kinds in the world of women, complexities of entangled and inter-caste relationships, sexuality, oppression, domestic violence, humiliation, pains and agony of poor Dalits woman, the middle class woman as well as the upper caste woman; their sufferings and humanity. Approaching Indian Literature with comparative techniques and strategies solidifies the uniqueness of the Indian literary product and contributes to its richness and wholeness. It, moreover, increases the adaptation of the critical theories at the basis of assessment and literary evaluation in the world of literature.

Dealing with the Indian novel in connection to the works of Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Baby Kamble and Bama Faustina Faustina, the first chapter entitled "*Dynamics of the Indian Cultural Context*", provides an introduction to the present study which explores the Indian social and historical elements. The chapter, also, overviews various notions in the light of postcolonial

theories, which are commonly available in the Indian Women's novels and particularly included in Roy's, Kapur's, Bama Faustina's and Kamble's fictional works. The second chapter, "*Women and Literature in India*", examines the contribution of the Indian woman, Dalit and non-Dalit, to the efflorescence of the Indian Literature in general and Dalit Literature in particular. It also overviews the dominant feministic theories present in the selected novels. "*From Ideal to Real: Difficult Daughters and The God of Small Things*", is the third chapter of the present thesis and is an endeavour to explore various elements of Arundhati Roy's and Manju Kapur's novels. It focuses mainly on the study of leading characters in the novels in connection with their moral will and personal destinies. Similarly, personal destinies and vocational fulfilments are limited by contingency, the social fabric, inherited ideas, as well as flaws in the individual moral will. In the fourth chapter, "*Discrimination all around: Sangati and The Prison we Broke*", one has attempted to explore how reconnoitering life experiences of Dalit women play a vital role in changing the people. In the Dalit autobiographies under study, Bama Faustina and Kamble achieved their most successful narrative, a method that has been compared to confession with reference to the story of Dalit women and Dalit community at large. In this novel, the authors' pervasive themes of caste oppression, class marginalization and gender discrimination through the influence of human love and communal fellowship are embodied, as elsewhere, in realistic events, drama, and dialogue, with currents of symbolic meanings that suggest a mythic structure of concrete universals. Bama Faustina and Kamble narrated stories with a realistic treatment.

The fifth chapter of the thesis, "*Synthesis: Woman's Identity*"; shows, how the themes of subjugation, moral freedom, spiritual autonomy, associated with leading characters in the four novels, the background of the authors and the various historical, religious, economic and political themes, are drawn with great care as well as the whole picturesque complexion of the society. However, the novels are generally held to be overloaded with details. The General Conclusion

provides a summing up for the study. It is concerned with predominant themes in a postcolonial and feministic perspective.

Depicting human companionship binding with moral will and spiritual autonomy leading to personal destinies as inevitable phases, Indian women writers treat both male and female characters with sympathy but are particularly concerned to expose and reform the misery of the subjugated women. their presentation of the themes with certain autobiographical elements are often explained as deriving from their own lives, and their remarkable insight grew primarily from their own experience and thoughts.

Thus, the study shows feminism as a struggle for equality of women: of all women of India regardless their caste belonging, an effort to make women “become” like men. The agonistic definition of feminism sees it as the struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist aggression. This study reveals the growth of Indian Feminism and its development. Indian women writers have placed the problems of Indian women in general, Dalit women and non-Dalit women, and they have proved their place in the international literary scene. All of the novelists have come up with tremendous contribution to bring forth the alarming issues prevailing in the Indian community. Though all of them belong to different castes and different ethnic groups, yet they share common ideological tendency and philosophical thoughts which would be of worth debate in this work

This research has sought to explore the significance of the cultural analysis and criticism of postcolonial women’s texts for the recuperation of women’s voices in diverse postcolonial locations. It has focused on the potential of postcolonial women’s texts to function as critical tools for transforming the status of marginalized women across cultures. The texts, as effective tools, seek to build a democratic society in which women and their writing become an

indispensable part of the larger struggle of society across several aspects of human experience, such as politics, history, gender, class, and sex. For this reason, one's suggestion for further research visions in the area of critical, cultural analysis is twofold.

Firstly, cultural and literary criticism can be employed as an integrated discourse in order to study other cultural and literary productions such as art, plays, museum, and photography, which are useful tools of critiques and also a historical archive. Then, one adds to this suggestion, the adaptation of women's narratives to be produced as stage performances, TV series, and films in order to reach a wider audience. In fact, the different ways of receiving a literary or cultural production invite us to rethink an alternative method to represent women's narratives with the aim of empowering other women in various locations and situations. This suggestion lends a wider dimension to the notion of a woman's space of enunciation.

A woman's text, both written and oral, signals the presence of other sites which are reflective of her experiences of oppression and resistance. This research vision is directed toward the study of various techniques of representation which deal with gender issues such as identity politics, memory, sexuality, colonisation, and transformation. The aim of this suggestion is not only to create and remember women's narratives but also to make use of the socio-artistic, emotional, and revolutionary aspects of women's daily experiences depicted in the aforementioned representations/narratives. This helps stimulate our critical thinking and mobilise our awareness and affect about the complex issues and struggles facing women today, locally and globally. In this way, postcolonial women's writing tends to be not only oppositional and challenging but also critical and transformative. Its mode of resistance underlines the function of the written word as a conduit for challenge and opposition as well as for reconstruction and progress.

The second research vision explores the connections between women's studies (gender), literature, and culture within the academy. This vision has a pedagogical goal related to one's future position as a female lecturer of English Literature from the Third World (Algeria). One is inclined to argue that there exists a lack of awareness or emphasis on the issue of women's studies and feminism included in the curricula taught in diverse institutions in Algeria. This issue relates to the methodology of using technology in teaching Women's Studies for undergraduate and postgraduate students of English Literature in one's home country, thus, adhering the twenty first century

English is no more the asset of native users or writers only. Non-native groups, crossing the national, racial and cultural borders, have been generating a kind of sensibility and yet a separate identity in the use of the English language and in creative writings. A sense of ownership of this language has grown. In such a non-native perspective, English is not a monopoly of only the native speakers and writers. Although English literature by English native speakers is great, literature produced in English by non-natives is of no less value. It has global and universal quality and circumstantial significance. In fact, literature is such a phenomenon with its wonderful universal appeal and artistic literary qualities that it needs no exact knowledge and information of the culture or the society it belongs to. Literature could be enjoyed for its great literary values and universality. Yet, in India not only the caste system but also gender can be taken as one of the axis through which society is divided into groups. The aim of this division is to gain control of one group over the other/s, caste/outcaste, man/women, and create the dichotomy of the dominant and the subordinate in various social categories. The implemented strategy makes caste/man groups the powerful and the dominant whereas outcaste/woman the weak and the subordinate.

All the selected women authors fought for the rights and freedom for the Indian women. They believe in independent life where there should be no liabilities. Their writings are based on the feminine themes with self- determination. The novels are in the voice of many women speaking to and addressing one another as they share the incidents of their daily lives.

Men and Women should live in harmony and respect believing in justice and equality. Indian man, and all men, should not imitate other beings in sexual indulgence, overpowering the female, if so, what differentiates human beings from other beings, then? Is the Indian culture and civilization leading the Indians to animosity? Even in this twenty first century women have less right than her counterpart man. This legacy of man domination has to be questioned. Women have every right to get out of their kitchens and houses and live equals to men. It is against this injustice in families and societies that feminists like A.Roy, M.Kapur, B.Kamble and Bama Faustina Faustina fight against. Thus feminism seems to be an inevitable ideology for the success of humanity and diversity.

Identities, individual or collective are considered as social constructions. The social construction of women must be considered as a social, cultural and political process of struggle against hegemony between individuals. Identity is constructed through the processes of socialization. Thus, women are socially constructed and capable of producing struggles against different types of oppression. Patriarchy is a social construction historically rooted in myths that allows male members to treat others. Therefore, in all these areas of life, patriarchy greatly contributes to the prevalence of inequalities and injustices.

Dalit women's autobiographies remain an illustration of the importance of secularism in education in the lives of everyone; these women writers show that their duty as teachers is to sensitize learners to difference and encourage them to tolerance, because any democracy can



only survive if it is based on the principles of secularism: equality between citizens without any socio-religious recognition of stratification and towards human dignity.

Dalit writers make use of their local languages. In contradiction to the upper caste beliefs, the linguistic codes of the under-privileged communities all over India are, then, useful and expressive. After all, women have come a long way although there is still plenty of roads to be taken. The ultimate goal is to increase an understanding of women's experience, both in the past and present, and promote an appreciation of women's value in the world. Then, 1) Are women fairly and fully (if they come to be represented at all) in these literary works? 2) Does any gender stereotyping or silencing affect the effectiveness of the Indian woman's literary production? 3) And how does the text treatment of ideas of masculinity and femininity subvert the notions of individual and social belonging? By those measures, one would open avenues for researches on similar topics and pave the way for future projects.

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# **Appendices**

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Author's Biography**

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**Appendix 1.2: Autobiography of Manju Kapur**

**Appendix 1.3: Autobiography of Bama Faustina**

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### **Appendix 2 MAPS and Facts**

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**Appendix 2.2: Overview And Facts About India**

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### **Appendix 3 Questionnaires**

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Appendix 3.2: Questionnaire to Prof . Prassanna Sree

Appendix 3.3: Questionnaire to Maya Pandit

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Author's Biography

#### Appendix 1.1: Autobiography of Arundhati Roy



Suzanna Arundhati Roy Born on November 24, 1961, is the child of a Christian mother from Kerala and a Bengali Hindu father, She grew up in Aymenem, Kerala, India. She studied architecture at the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi. She enacted the role of a village girl in the award-winning movie *Massey Sahib*, and wrote the screenplays for *In Which Annie Gives it, Those Ones* and *Electric Moon*. Roy became a celebrity overnight when her book *The God of Small Things* was published in 1996. Arundhati Roy won the Booker Prize in 1997 for her novel, *The God of Small Things*. In 2002, she won the Lannan Cultural Freedom Prize. In the aftermath of the runaway success of *The God of Small Things*, Roy has published many essays and worked for social causes. She has been a vociferous critic of the neo-imperialist policies of the United States and has criticized India's nuclear weapons programme. Roy wrote *The End of Imagination* (1998), in which she castigated the Indian government's nuclear policies. In June 2005, Arundhati Roy took part in the World Tribunal on Iraq. Roy was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in May 2004 and was awarded the Sahitya Akademi award in 2006, which she declined to accept.

## Appendix 1.2: Autobiography of Manju Kapur



Manju Kapur was born in 1948 in Amritsar. She graduated from the Miranda House University College for women and went on to take an M.A. and an M Phil at Delhi University. Manju Kapur lives in New Delhi, where she is a teacher of English literature at Miranda House College. She is the author of five acclaimed novels, *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *Home*, *Immigrant* and *Custody*. Her first, *Difficult Daughters* 1998, fetched her Commonwealth Prize for First Novels (Eurasia Section) and went on to become a bestseller in India. *Home* was shortlisted for the Hutch Crossword Book Award in 2006. *The Immigrant* appeared in 2009 followed by her fifth novel *Custody* a couple of years later in 2011. Manju Kapur presents for the middle-class and she has been labelled Jane Austen for her character portraits that are caught in tricky situations. The torch bearer of women's emancipation,

### Appendix 1.3: Autobiography of Bama Faustina



Bama Faustina was born in 1958 as Faustina Mary Fatima Rani in a Roman Catholic family from Puthupatti in the Madras State. Bama Faustina, also known as Bama Faustina Faustina Soosairaj, is a Tamil, Dalit feminist, committed teacher and novelist. She rose to fame with her autobiographical novel *Karukku* (1992), which chronicles the joys and sorrows experienced by Dalit Christian women in Tamil Nadu. She subsequently wrote two more novels, *Sangati* (1994) and *Vanmam* (2002) along with two collections of short stories: *Kusumbukkaran* (1996) and *Oru Tattvum Erumaiyum* (2003). She is the sister of famous Dalit writer Raj Gauthaman. In addition she has written twenty short stories. *Karukku* was, however, critically acclaimed and won the Crossword Book Award in 2000.

Bama Faustina's grandfather had converted from Hinduism to Christianity. Bama Her father was employed with the Indian Army. Bama Faustina had her early education in her village. On graduation, she served as a nun for seven years. Career After serving as a nun for seven years, Bama Faustina left the convent and began writing. Her father was employed in the Indian Army. Bama Faustina's grandfather had converted from Hinduism to Christianity. Bama Faustina's ancestors were from the Dalit community and worked as agricultural labourers. Bama Faustina had her early education in her village.

#### Appendix 1.4: Autobiography of Baby Kamble



Babytai Kamble was born in 1929, to a relatively affluent family. Her maternal grandfather and grand-uncles had worked as butlers for British officers. Baby Kamble, affectionately known as Babytai Kamble once older, is best known as a Dalit activist and writer. She penned *Jina Amacha (The Prisons We Broke)*. The book was translated into several languages. Babytai also wrote several poems and articles delineating Dalit lives and ran an *ashram* for children from vulnerable communities. Her father was a labour contractor who worked on the Mumbadevi Temple in Bombay as well as a milk dairy in Pune owned by the central government. He did very well for himself and was also incredibly generous, sometimes to a fault, spending his money on feeding his labourers until the Britishers paid their wages. Babytai's grandmother, Sitavahini, had led the revolution against eating dead cattle meat. Because her father travelled a lot, Babytai and her mother lived with her maternal grandparents, in Veergaon, western Maharashtra. The village (including Babytai's family) was inhabited by the Mahar community, the same community to which Ambedkar belonged. Babytai was accordingly married off very young, after which she ran a provisions store with her husband. She slowly started writing her own narration and therefore the community's. But she was very careful to keep this writing hidden from her husband and most of her relatives for twenty years. Babytai Kamble passed away on 21 April 2012, at the age of 82.



## Appendix 2 MAPS and Facts

### Appendix 2.1: The Administrative Map of India



Administrative Map of India: showing India's States with major cities and capitals\*

\*This map shows the diversity of the chosen authors' origins and their regional/geographical locations in India. Arundhati Roy was born in West Bengal but spent most of her life in Kerala. All of the authors write about their life experience in their communities. All of *Difficult Daughters*, *The God of Small Things*, *Sangati* and *The Prison we Broke*, are authentic.

## **Appendix 2.2: Overview And Facts About India**

India, legitimately the Republic of India, is a country in South Asia. It is the 7th-largest country by geographical area, the second-most populous country with over 1.21 billion people (2011 census), and the most populous democracy in the world. India is surrounded by the Indian Ocean on the south, the Arabian Sea on the west, and the Bay of Bengal on the east; and it is bordered by Pakistan to the west; Bhutan, the People's Republic of China and Nepal to the north; and Bangladesh and Burma to the east. In the Indian Ocean, India and the Lakshadweep Islands are in the neighborhood of Sri Lanka and the Maldives, while India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands share marine border with Thailand and the Indonesian island of Sumatra in the Andaman Sea. India has seashore of 7,517 kilometers (<http://www.toptourguide.com/toptour-indiamap.htm>)

### **FACTS**

#### **Republic of India**

- **Capital:** New Delhi
- **Population** 1.3 billion
- **Area** 1.2 million sq miles)
- **Major languages** Hindi, English and more than 20 other official languages
- **Local languages** about 1500 local languages
- **Major religions** Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism
- **Currency** Rupee



## Appendix 2.3: Indian Languages Map



(<https://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/india/india-map-languages.jpg>)

Map representing languages in India

There are 22 official languages and 1500 dialects in India. (English is one of the official languages.)

## Appendix 2.4: Scripts of some Indian languages

### Sanskrit: The original language of Rig Veda.

अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवं रत्वीजम् । होतारं रत्नधातमम् ॥  
अग्निः पूर्वेभिर्षिभिरीड्यो नूतनैरुत । स देवानेह वक्षति ॥  
अग्निना रयिमश्नवत् पोषमेव दिवे-दिवे । यशसं वीरवत्तमम् ॥  
अग्ने यं यज्ञमध्वरं विश्वतः परिभूरसि । स इद्वेषु गच्छति ॥  
अग्निर्होता कविक्रतुः सत्यश्चित्रश्रवस्तमः । देवो देवेभिरा गमत ॥  
यदडग दाशुषे तवमग्ने भद्रं करिष्यसि । तवेत तत सत्यमडगिरः ॥  
उप तवाग्ने दिवे-दिवे दोषावस्तर्धिया वयम् । नमो भरन्त एमसि ॥  
राजन्तमध्वराणां गोपां रतस्य दीदिविम । वर्धमानंस्वे दमे ॥  
स नः पितेव सूनवे.अग्ने सूपायनो भव । सचस्वा नः सवस्तये ॥

(Book 1 Hymn 1)

### Marathi Language: the original language of The Prison We Broke by Baby Kamble

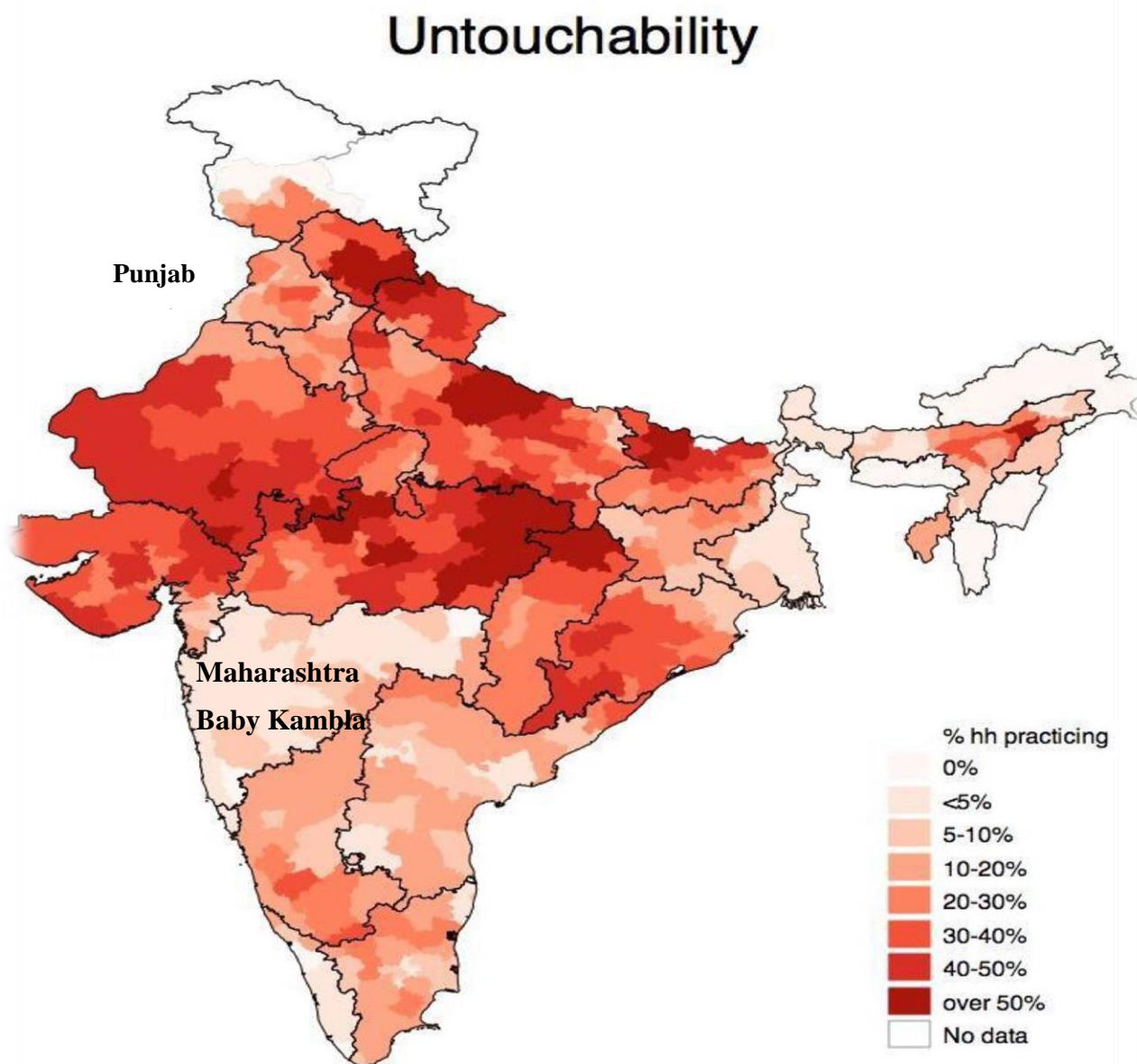
"आम्ही शेतात पुरुषांसारखे, आणि नंतर शीर्षस्थानी परिश्रम करणे आवश्यक आहे  
त्यापैकी, सहन करणे आणि आमच्या मुलांना वाढविण्यासाठी संघर्ष. पुरुषांसाठी, त्यांचे कार्य संपल्यावर  
ते शेतात पूर्ण झाले. जर तुम्ही या जगात जन्माला आलात तर तुम्ही जन्माला आलात  
माणूस स्त्रियांप्रमाणे जन्माला येतात, आपल्याला काय चांगले मिळते? आम्ही केवळ शेतात आणि त्यामध्ये काम  
करतोआमच्या योजिजाच्या श्रावेल पर्यंत घर "

### Tamil Language : the original language of Sangati by Bama Faustina

"मनिथर्कनाल कडनमाक उडैक्क नांम वयलिल उडैक्क वेण्णुं, पिनंनर्  
मेलंनङ्कळ कुडुन्तैकळ त्ताङ्क मन्नुळुं उयर्त्त पोराऱु. अण्णकणैळ  
पोऱुत्तवऱै, अवर्कळुडैय वेऱैळ मुडिवडैकऱुत्तु  
अवर्कळ वयलंनळिल मुडित्तुविडंनार्कळ. न्नीङ्कळ इन्त उलकिल पऱन्तऱुन्तुळ,  
न्नीङ्कळ पऱन्त ओऱु सऱन्तवर्  
अण्ण. पेण्णकळ एनप पऱन्तवर्कळ, नांम एतैप पेऱुकऱुऱोळुं? न्नाङ्कळ  
तुऱैकळिल मन्नुळुं मडुंमै उंनंनार्  
ङ्कळ वऱाङ्गिन्कळ सुऱुङ्कुवतर्कुं "

## Appendix 2.5: Practice of Untouchability over India

**Map 1: District-wise Map of the Share of Households Practicing Untouchability**



Map generated by Prof. Reeve Vanneman, IHDS, UMD.

<https://i.imgur.com/7D9XzUF.jpg>

## Appendix 2.6: Purusha sukta / Cosmic Man / Brahma

### Brahma and the origins of caste



Source: Alamy

BBC

[https://encryptedtbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQzi2pCgPwgbjGT4ne2BLJWHwKWNJZR0UYsE2FX\\_1FJe1SnxB10w](https://encryptedtbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQzi2pCgPwgbjGT4ne2BLJWHwKWNJZR0UYsE2FX_1FJe1SnxB10w)

### The Divine Division of Population in the Hindu Caste System

The myth of creation affirms that the four classes (castes) of Hindu society were born from the Purusha sukta, Cosmic Man, as divine justification of the Hindu caste (varna) system. It also implies that the priestly elite (Brahmana) emerged from the Creator's mouth, they are the purest; the warrior elite (Kshatriya) emerged from His arms and became kings, princes, soldiers; the farmers, artisans and merchants (Vaishya) emerged from his thighs; and the mass of labourers, servants and menials (Sudra) emerged from the feet, they are meant to be servants of others. The outcastes are not pure and are called 'once born' they are meant to do the dirtiest jobs any one cannot do.



## Appendix 2.7: The Untouchables' Way of Life



[https://idsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/6619978391\\_38d237d074\\_o-960x500.jpg](https://idsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/6619978391_38d237d074_o-960x500.jpg)

### B/ Main Occupations Allocated to the Untouchables: Scavengers



<https://qph.fs.quoracdn.net/main-qimg-ded340d2b6ffde55a5a57d9e3c11d21>

The “untouchables” are forced to perform the worst jobs, including cleaning public toilets, and sweeping streets.

## Appendix 3 Questionnaires

### Appendix 3.1: Introductory Letter

(Letter to introduce a questionnaire to important Dalit personalities in India)

Dear madam/Sir,

I am a PhD researcher supervised by Professor Fewzia BEDJAOUI. Indian culture and literature are of a great interest and admiration for me. My researches focus on comparative literature and Dalit/Indian literature written by women. In fact, it is a privilege for me to contact you and I would really appreciate if you could answer some questions in hope to enrich my research, generalize the findings, and deepen my knowledge.

Looking forward to your reply

Please accept my best regards and deep respect

Ms. Nadjia BOUSSEBHA FARHI

PhD Researcher in Djillali Liabes Universty

Sidi Bel Abbes

Algeria

### **Appendix 3.2: Questionnaire to Prof . Prassanna Sree**

*(Prof. Prasanna See is a University Professor at Andhra University Visiting Professor at Princeton University, New Jersey, USA.) She is the first woman in the world to have devised alphabets for 18 Indian tribal languages spoken in the hill and plain lands of India.,*

1. What are the reasons that make the Indian elite against the production of a freer, more intelligent and creative people out of the Dalit community and against the legacy of their contribution to the development of a greater Indian race?
  
2. How, do you think, should India handle the social integration of a section of excluded people in physical suffering and mental anguish?
  
3. To what extent could the Dalit give to the world a vision and a leadership beyond people's present imagination via the theoretical innovation and the historical and current significance of their literary production?
  
4. Do you agree that only a Dalit-born is qualified for writing Dalit literature?
  
5. Do you think that the Dalit authors are treated under the lenses of the 'orientalist' philosophy in India both as human being and as writers?
  
6. Do you think that the Dalit women authors have feared to expose some issues which are still unknown by the readers outside India?

### **Appendix 3.3: Questionnaire to Maya Pandit**

*(Maya Pandit is not only the translator of Baby Kamble's autobiography "The Prison we Broke", Maya Pandit is a translator of Dalit writing, poet and an activist in the women's movement. )*

1. Do you agree that only a Dalit-born is qualified for writing Dalit literature?
2. Have Dalit authors exactly conveyed the social trait and people's behavior, which they truly experience, in their literary work?
3. Do you think that the Dalit women authors have feared to expose some issues which are still unknown by the readers outside India?
4. Do you think that the Dalit authors are treated under the lenses of the 'orientalist' philosophy in India both as human being and as writers?
5. To what extent have Dalit writers practically welcome/overcome the literary critic evaluation?
6. Do the generic expectations of Dalit and non-Dalit writings to influence the perception of social transformation differ? If so, in what way?



### **Appendix 3.4: Questionnaire to Ravi Kumar**

*Ravikumar (1961) is a an anti-caste activist originated from Tamil. He is the founder of the anti-caste publishing house Navayana, along with S. Anand, and the former president of the People's Education Movement and People's Union for Civil Liberties (Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry).*

1. What are the strategies that the Indian government adopt to kill the doubt that the Dalit community would contribute to the development of a civilization and to the betterment of the world?
2. Do you agree that only a Dalit-born is qualified for writing Dalit literature?
3. In what way have Dalit writers, men and women, resisted the marginalization of their creative outputs in favor of the upper caste writers?
4. What are the materials and what opportunities have been given to the Dalit to be a benefit to India and thus, enrich the world?
5. Can the Dalit woman's horrifying picture of life, founded upon realities, be turned into an amalgam of fulfillment, progression and satisfaction?
6. Do you think that Dalit literary genres written by Dalit-born and non-Dalit born authors are, together, multiplying their efforts and raising their voices to negotiate an emancipatory politics of equality, re-construction of cultural life and re-vision of a democratic society?

# **Glossaries**

**Glossary 1: General Literary Concepts**

**Glossary 2: Indian Concepts And Terms**

# Glossaries

## Glossary 1: General Concepts

These words are characterized by extremely controversial definitions . The ones provided here are usually considered as the most suitable.

**Acculturation** : the process of becoming adapted to a new culture . Second language learning is often second culture learning .

**Alienation** : is a turning away ; estrangement ;the state of being an outsider or the feeling of being isolated , as from society; in psychiatry a state in which a person's feelings are inhibited so that eventually both the self and the external world seem unreal .In law, it is the transfer of property , as by conveyance or will , into the ownership of another, the right of an owner to dispose of his property .

**Assimilation** : when cultural groups give up their heritage cultures and take on the host society's way of life . Cultural assimilation refers to giving up a distinct cultural identity , adopting mainstream language and culture Economic – structural assimilation refers to equality of access , opportunities and treatment .

**Assumptions** : are facts that individuals are capable of representing mentally and accepting as true, they are manifest to an individual that are perceptible or inferable by an individual .

**Binary opposition:** a concept borrowed by structuralists and post-structuralists identifying a contrasting pair of signs.

**Colonial literature** : is often self-consciously a literature of otherness and resistance and written out of the specific local experience .

**Cross-cultural** : includes a comparison of interactions among people from the same culture to those from another .

**Crossing the linguistic border :** the border-crosser develops different speaking selves that speak for different aspects of his identity. Simply said it means that you decenter your voice.

**Cultural identities :** there are porous representations and are contingent on the author's singularity. The particular relations of writers to culture, the complex contexts within which they write , are always inscribed in the literature itself .

**Culture :** is a way of life. It might be defined as the ideas, customs, skills, arts and tools which characterize a given group of people in a given period .It is a repertoire of socially transmitted and intra-generationally generated ideas about how to live, to think and to behave. Cultural models are thus inherited from the preceding generation through socialization and they are learned intra-generationally and through imitation, teaching and from the media

**Deconstruction :**the tendency of binary oppositions within a text to shift or reverse their valuation.

**Discourse:** a literary work is rooted in a cultural and rhetorical context in which meaning is a collaborative construction involving author, text, culture and reader.

**Enculturation :** learning your personal culture from others .

**Essentialism :** It is the belief in the authentic essence of things . Essentialist critique is the interrogation of the essentialist terms . In the post-colonial context , it is the reduction of the indigenous people to the idea of what it means to be African , Arabic ... To Salman Rushdie , it is required that sources , forms , style , language and symbols belong to an unbroken tradition . Nationalist and liberationist movements reduce the colonizers to an essence which invert or ignore the values of the ascribed features .

**Ethnic identity:** is defined as the personal dimension of ethnicity or how one identifies oneself.

**Ethnicity:** is the sense of peoplehood derived from distinct commonalities.

**Existentialism :** denotes things active rather than passive. Sartre said that man can emerge from his passive condition by an act of will.

**Gender Identity :** The gender to which one feels one belongs, a continuous and persistent sense of ourselves as male or female.

**Hegemony :** A term used mostly by Marxist critics to delineate the web of dominant ideologies within a society. It was coined by the Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci; this refers to the pervasive system of assumptions, meanings and values that shapes the way things look, what they mean, and therefore what reality is for the majority of people within a given culture.

**Hybridity :** is transgressive, it refers to the integration or mingling of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures .

**Identity :** is always in process .It is a word carrying with it connotations of rootedness ( to engage in various aspects of being an individual within a world which is plural)

**Ideology:** dominant values, beliefs, ways of thinking through which culture understands reality. Similar to the phrase cultural mythology , it usually represents in tacit fashion the prevailing views of a particular class. Examples of ideology relevant to American culture: gender roles, value of capitalism, constitutional rights protecting individual liberties... But for Marxist, it includes the shared beliefs and values held in an unquestioning manner by a culture. It governs what that culture deems to be normative and valuable .It is determined by economics . Ideology exerts a powerful influence upon a culture. Those who are marginalized in the culture are most aware of the ways in which an ideology supports the dominant class in the society. Those who enjoy the fruit of belonging to a dominant group of the society are filled with what Marx called false consciousness and are not interested in the ways in which an economic structure marginalizes others.

**Integration:** a term which also implied assimilation but allowing for some linguistic and cultural residues. It can take place when the environment is favourable. The environment, to state John Dewey's own definition, consists of the conditions that promote or hinder, stimulate or inhibit the characteristic activities of a living being. Watts , 1962:2

**Intercultural understanding** : going beyond your own culture , understanding others' perspectives and points of view , assisting each other worldwide .A profound change in thoughts , perceptions and values can lead to changing how one views culture and one's place in it.

**Intraculturality**: occurs between individuals of the same culture .

**Literary Canon** : the group of texts deemed to be major texts of literary tradition.

**Metaphor** : a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another

**Modernism** : rejected the old Victorian standards of how art should be made and what it should mean ( Woolf , Joyce , Eliot , Kafka and Rilke were the founders of the 20th century modernism ) and emphasized fragmented forms and subjectivity in writing (stream of consciousness ) as well as in visual arts .

**Modernity** : appeared first in the 19th century in sociology to distinguish antiquity .

**Modernization** : Historically , this term was used to replace Westernization in the recognition of the universal meaning of the modernizing process . This latter originated in Western Europe and has fundamentally transformed the rest of the world. First used in North America by a sociologist, Talcott Parsons, in the 1950s. Forces such as Westernization or Americanization are to engulf the whole world under the labelling modernization thought of as being probably more scientific and neutral. Huntington, 2000:257

**Orientalism** : means a system of representations framed by political forces that brought the Orient into Western learning , Western consciousness and Western Empire . The Orient is a reflected image of what is inferior and alien, i.e. other to the West. Said claims that the Orient cannot be studied in a non-Orientalist manner but the would-be concerned would focus on the culturally consistent regions and that the Oriental is to be given a voice and not be given a second hand representation.

**Other** : The other is anyone who is separate from one's self . The existence of others is crucial in defining what is normal and in locating one's own place in the world . The colonized subject is characterized as other through discourses as primitivism as a

means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view .

**Othering:** It describes the various ways in which colonial discourse produces its subjects . Many critics use the spelling interchangeable , but in either case the construction of the other is fundamental to the construction of the self .

**Patriarchal :** An assumption of feminist criticism that culture is rather ruled with its institutions and traditions so structured to promote masculine values and to maintain the male in a privileged position

**Perception :** Reader's insight or comprehension of a text. From different critical perspectives, the reader's perception of meaning can be a passive receipt , an active discovery or a creative construction .

**Post-colonial / third world :** academics reacted to the term post-colonial more favourably than to the pejorative third world, administrators welcomed it as less threatening than Imperialistic or neo-colonialistic . Post-structuralists and post-modernists readily provided it a sympathetic audience .

**Post-structuralism :** in literature reveals that the meaning of any text is unstable .

**Protagonist :** is the central figure of a story (e.g. anecdote, novel ), and is often story's main character. Often the story is told from the protagonist's point of view. The protagonist's attitudes and actions are made clear to the larger extent than for any other character.

**Representation :** has a semiotic meaning in that something is standing for something else. Representations are constructed images that need to be interrogated for their ideological content. There is always an element of interpretation involved in representation . There are negative images that can have devastating effects on the real lives of marginalized people.

**Sexism:** defines the ideology of male supremacy, of male superiority and of beliefs that support and sustain it. Sexism and patriarchy mutually reinforce one another.

**Sexuality** : is a transnational issue .It is regarded as an innate human drive but its expression differs according to cultures . Sexual behaviours have different meanings and outgrowths in different societies .

**Socialization**: is the dynamic process that brings human beings into the human group, causing an individual to internalize the values, mores, traditions, language and attitudes of the culture in which they live.

**South Asian** : Nowadays it is the most popular term to refer to people from the area in and around the Indian Subcontinent , including the modern nations of Bangladesh , Pakistan , India and Shri Lanka .

**Status quo** : The class relationships determined by the base and reflected in the superstructure of a society . The ideologies of a culture work to keep those relationships .

**Stereotype** : when one judges people one naturally generalizes, simplifies and categorizes them. The classification is called stereotyping. Such stereotyping limits one's width of perception , while at the same time slowly killing one's ability to inquire and learn about others . Stereotyping is very useful in perpetuating self-fulfilling myths about people . So every body is an agent of change , the inner self should be allowed to modify and recreate . Subaltern: Everybody who has limited or no access at all to the cultural imperialism is thus subaltern . G.C. Spivak points that speaking is a transaction between speaker and listener, but it does not reach the dialogic level of utterance.

**Third World** : is a rather pejorative way to mean post-colonial world. It was first used in 1952 by Alfred Sauvy, the French demographer.

**Transnational feminism** : has enabled women's organizations from the South and North to organize jointly around a wide range of issues that have generated new problems and challenges .

**Trope** : any literary or rethorical device as metaphor which consists in the use of words in other than their literal sense.



**Understanding** : understanding oneself , one's action , thought , behaviour , mind , feelings , surrounding , nature , is a process . The natural learning occurs when there is interest, curiosity and enthusiasm .

**Women's emancipation**: freedom from oppressive restrictions imposed by sex , self-determination , and autonomy.

## **Glossary 2: Indian Concepts And Terms**

**Ambedkar, B.R.** : (1893-1956) was named Baba, BabasahibouBhim by his followers. He was born in the caste of Untouchable Mahar of Maharashtra and was the first leader struggling for Untouchables' dignity and education.

**Barat** ("buh-RAAT"): Groom's wedding party. These are usually quite large affairs, with dozens of people dancing in the street for hours while approaching the bride's family's house.

**Buddhism** : spread over various countries, Burma, Tibet, China, Japan . One of these schools was founded by Prince Gautama, who became Buddha, also called Butsu after enlightenment. Buddhism had divided itself into two schools: the Hinayana (closer to the teaching of Gautama) and Mahayana (closer to idolatized Hinduism)

**Caste** : the divisions into which Hindu religion is divided. Brahman( priest) Kshatriya (warrior) , Vaisya ( trader) and Sudra ( unskilled workers). Untouchables were out of these castes. The sanscrit word is jati.

**Dalit** : means reduced , oppressed

**Dalit Literature** : Literature against Untouchability

**Dayan** : witches

**Dharma** : conformity to religious law, custom and duty or one's own quality or character

**Djiva**: twice born **Dhingri**: Mushroom (mushrooms are rare in India, so it makes sense that Kapur would mention them as food for a wedding feast)

**Gandhi**: Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand (1869-1948) : was a peace-lover, a preacher of love, brotherhood and unity. He believed in his philosophy of passive resistance and humility. He was compelled by the social problems within India. He campaigned against Hindu intolerance towards the Untouchables who were considered as outcastes.

**Ghazal** : a Persian lyric poem consisting of from 6 to 26 lines

**Godown:** Factory, warehouse

**Guchchi:** A kind of wild mushroom

**Guru :** a preceptor giving personal religious instruction.

**Halwai:** Sweets seller

**Hindu:** means those who keep away from the path of violence

**Hinduism :** Hindu thought evolved the idea of a trinity consisting of Brahma, The Creator, Vishnu, the Preserver and Shiva, the Destroyer.

**Hindu nationalists :** claim they promote traditional values such as chastity , spirituality . The most expensive Hindu nationalist organization is the RashtriyaIwayamsewakSangh and its women's wing , the RashtriaSevikaSamiti . They strategically use sexuality to provoke emotions and channel them into violence against Indian minorities .

**Indian widow :** lives the rest of her life observing the strict codes of conduct laid down for widows of her caste and community.

**Infanticide of female :** The decision to kill a female or a male baby on the ground of its sex is intimately bound up with culture specific construction of gender , kinship and economic structures as dowries and patterns of inheritance .

**Kali :** is an echo of the woman warrior's fierce virginal autonomy ; In this context, she is considered the forceful form of the great goddess Durga. Kali is represented as a Black woman with four arms. In one hand she has a sword , in another the head of the demon she has slain, with the other two she is encouraging her worshippers. Kali's four arms represent the complete circle of creation and destruction which is contained within her. She represents the inherent creative and destructive rhythms of the cosmos. The sword is that of knowledge and freedom. Her three eyes represent the sun, moon and fire with which she is able to observe the three modes of time: past, present and future. ( Kali is the Sanskrit term for time)

**Karma:** belief in the quality of action

**Khas:** Probably poppy-seed extract (sweet); usually "Khas-khas »

**Kewra:** Sweet, rosy flower, used as sweetener (in English, this is called "Pandanus")

**Languages of India** : while English due to India's colonial past, is embedded in educated Indian circles and enjoys associate official status in the government system, it is not largely spoken. Hindi , in the Devanagari script, is the only official federal language of India, though the other tongues are endorsed as co-official by the central government . There are the Dravidian languages of Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu; and the Indo-Aryan languages of Bengali, Marathi Urdu, Gujurati, Oriya, Punjabi, Assamese, Kashmiri , Sindhi and Sanskrit. Recently, Nepali and Konkani languages were also added to the register of national languages.

**Mahilathanas** : women's police station

**Mazbi**: an Indian poor sub-caste

**Morabbas**: Dried fruit dipped in sugar

**Naaley**: tomorrow

**Natha** : practice in which women are getting married several times

**Paneer**: Indian-style cheese

**Pista**: Pistachio

**Purdah** : seclusion is not practised in all Muslim countries. Women have their own part in the house called zanânah as men possess their own section mardânah which is usually located in the front of the house so that males could not see or meet the womenfolk

**Punjab** : a former province in North West India, now divided between Punjab ( in India) and West Punjab (in Pakistan)

**Raj** : rule , reign, domination

**Samsara** : belief in reincarnation

**Sati** : bride burnt alive

**Sakti**: denotes the universal feminine creative principle and the energizing force behind all male divinity including Shiva ( Lord of destruction)

**Sikhism** : it was founded in the Punjab in the 16th century by Guru Nanak ( guru: teacher) who refused to recognize the supreme authority of the Brahmanical priests and the caste system. Their sacred book is the Grant Sahib

**Sita** : epitomizes marital fidelity, wifely loyalty and dutifulness

**Vedas** : the holy scriptures of the Hindus, date back to the beginning of Indian civilization and are the earliest records of the whole Aryan race. They are the perhaps the oldest written text on the planet today . They are supposed to have been passed through oral tradition for over 10,000years. They came to us in written form between 4-6,000 years ago. Aryan beliefs and daily life are described in the four Vedas, collection of poems and sacred hymns, composed in about 1500 BC . The Vedas, meaning knowledge, are divided into the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda concerned with rituals and philosophical hymns to the deities and the elements. Velutha : Malayalam word meaning the white one. The Untouchables are generally dark skinned. They are probably made to name children thus so that the white baby in the landlord's was not affected by evil eye.