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**DOUBLY MARGINALIZATION OF DALIT WOMEN ‘ A STUDY OF  
KAUSALYA BAI SANTRI’S DOHRA ABHISHAP**



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## **ABSTRACT**

*Indian culture has grown from the amalgamation of castes, religions, tribes, languages. Over the ages the Indian society has embraced the caste system, segregating people from one another. The society is divided on the basis of caste hierarchy, Varna system. Brahmins occupied the highest rank and the shudras the lowest according to the social stratification. This paper tries to engross with the idea of the self as a detailed, social identity, as this is explored and articulated in Dalit women autobiographical writing.*

*The term 'Dalit' came into use sometime in the nineteenth century to denote the oppressed and subjugated 'untouchable' communities of India, traditionally considered as 'impure' to the extent that they were not allowed to live with other human beings in the society. They were the outcastes. In the stratification of the society they were at the lowest position*

*Dalit Literature is a literature of struggle which primarily focus on the exclusion and marginalization of oppressed communities. Caste system is the harsh and inevitable reality of India. Dalit literature is the voice of the voiceless, oppressed communities who challenge the severity of caste system and claim equality. Dalit literature represents the bitter, suppressed lived experiences of Dalits.*

*The paper tries to examine Dalit women's autobiographies as the multi-layered expressions of their engagements with oppressions effected by the commonality of being Dalit and oppressions effected by the fact of being women in a profoundly patriarchal society. The paper focuses on analysing the autobiography of Kausalya Baisantri's 'Dohra Abhishap'. It emphasises first person insights, experiences and individual pains.*

## **KEYWORDS**

*autobiography, Dalit, marginal, oppression, patriarchy, caste*

## **RESEARCH PAPER**

### Introduction

Dalit women in India are considered as distinctive social beings. They have lived and are still living a unique life as their identity is deep rooted in the intersectional oppression of two groups: 'Dalits' and 'women'. Their doubly marginalised position makes them different, unique or a separate category. Their experiences as Dalit women cannot be understood simply from the point of view of being a woman or just as a Dalit.

It is around the 1980s and 1990s Dalit women claimed their own issues and their own movement, the Dalit women's movement, to fight both patriarchy outside, in the society and within Dalit households. The movement marked their separate identity outside the unitary category of women and Dalit and their presence in the political sphere. The writings or autobiographies written by Dalit men do not give space to Dalit women, who only have a guest appearance. They were represented only as self-sacrificing mothers or mothers patiently enduring pain and suffering a devoted wife or an affectionate mother, who is ready to sacrifice her life for the family and in turn to the men. Very rarely they were shown as the agents for change. It is this subordination, suppression, sufferings that provoked Dalit women to write their own autobiographies, 'the politics of presence' that has led Dalit women to announce their arrival in the 'Dalit counter public'. Their presence has also added value to the subversion value of the counter publications. In the case of Dalit writings, Marathi literature was an undeniably front-runner as far as the intensity of the Dalit movement in the area was concerned. Dalit life writings in Marathi can be found in the late 1950's and the first Dalit autobiographies published in Hindi were translations of Marathi works. The development of the Dalit autobiography as a literary genre was not a straightforward adoption from Marathi with similar guarantees of success. Rather a Hindi readership of Dalit autobiographies was explored and consciously cultivated by Hindi Dalit writers through shorter autobiographical articles published in journals and anthology collections

In Hindi Dalit literature, Kausalya Baisantri's autobiography *Dohra Abhishap* (1999) left a very massive impact due to the fact it was once written by using ability of a Dalit woman who

expressed her emotions and occasions very candidly. The title of her narrative is very giant in denoting the doubly marginalised reputation of Dalit women. According to Sharmila Rege:

Dalit feminism is limited to educated Dalit women working in universities and white-collared jobs and it questions their knowledge and concern about the material realities of the lives of rural Dalit women (2000. P.494)

Reghe continue her opinion:

split between the educated Dalit women as the spokes-women versus the illiterate dalit women as the listeners is observed by Datar at Dalit women's gathering is underlined and further the women leaders of the feminist movement are graded as more democratic rather than those in the Dalit women's movements(Ibid)

Kausalya Baisantri, even though is an expert Dalit woman alternatively she stays a housewife at some factor of her life and suffers with maltreatment of her husband on one element and caste hatred of caste human beings on some different side. As Alam has noted with regard to intra-caste patriarchies at work amongst the oppressed castes, "with the improvement of the forces of production, the labour and abilities of woman of OBC and dalit communities have suffered a notable downward mobility" and "there is an imposition of ethical codes in communities and women and are confronted with the risk of retaliation as the basis, Baisantri's autobiography describes all she has confronted for the period of her strained relationship with her husband and the behaviour of a Dalit who has actively participated in dalit movement. Her work is in line with Susie Tharu's observation when she opines, "Not a single Dalit woman is each happy or contented from the heart. She is commonly worried" (1996.p.1313) She in a similar way adds: Women identification has exceptional use-value in the schema of gendered society alternatively little change value, in view that gender can via no skill honestly be exchanged or obtain a issue the area it establishes an equivalence with each different element of identification as rooted so deeply inside each the self and society. Any alternative at all takes the vicinity inside the gendered subject, who scrambles to compromise her non-public identity; the bartering of gender roles and distinctive aspects of identification is for that motive an individual, internal,

symbolic act in no way uninformed via skill of the surrounding society. For a subaltern girl this skill is subordination to the patriarchal codes that signify her subjectivity, for she wants to be, to a high quality extent, validated by means of the usage of these in power. (p.308)

The autobiography of Baisantri fills a gap in Hindi Dalit literature as it brings centre stage the question of female and focuses larger on the patriarchal hegemony inner and outdoor the nearby in the context of Dalit lady in special and Dalits in general. However in the case of Dalits, the women's subject is imperative for two reasons. First, many of the expressions of marginalisation of the Dalits are manifested with the aid of their women. Second, Dalit ladies have over the years superior their non-public grasp and critique of women's country of affairs that ought to symbolize a part of Dalit lookup howsoever it is understood. Most of erstwhile works have been in Marathi mainly *Jeena Amucha* by way of Baby Kamble (1990) and *Antasphot* by using the capacity of Kumud Pawde (1995). In addition to Mukta Salve's essay "Mang Maharachya Dukhavisatha" (1985), these works express properly the ontological and epistemological kingdom of their existence in India. Even although there are feminism shadows in dalit males' writing, their works lack legitimacy when representing women's struggles in first man or woman narratives. In unraveling these complexities of Dalit girls' subjectivities in north India, her autobiography is a treasured contribution. The incessant and unending effort of her dad and mom in upbringing her siblings are an occasion of how women's education is hated in Dalit neighborhood and how Dalit guys put barriers in their route of self-assertion. The patriarchal shape is larger or an awful lot much less the same as caste people and as a final result she finds herself 'doubly cursed' in the social setup. Though Dalit guys are struggling difficult for their place and admire in Indian society, when it comes to women, their frame of mind is related to others and they take women as their property or a slave who have to obey them at any rate as she writes in the Preface:

I am neither a writer nor a litterateur. But being born as an untouchable what I had to undergo psychologically left an indelible effect on my mind. I have written about my journey with an open heart. The male dominated society does no longer like openness in women. The husband is looking for pretexts to blame his partner of loose persona for her openness. My sons, brothers and husband can be irritated about me. On the other hand I

favour freedom to categorical my opinion previously than society. Other girls may additionally have the same journey like me and have suppressed their voice due to fear of family and continue to be in angst in the course of their life. Such a trip wants to come beforehand to open the eyes of society (Baisantri.2012.p.8).

Baisantri starts off evolving her narrative by way of giving essential factors of her family, her existence and childhood. How due to lack of sources her mother has to wash her hair with clay, how her family lives with meager incomes of her parents, how they use broken rice (khuddi) for ingredients as it is cheap. Her mother often curses herself for giving birth to five daughters as female children were not welcomed in any Indian family Five of her siblings die due to various diseases and dearth of health facilities nearby. The economic status of her parents becomes evident by her description at the beginning. She also shares how clay and cow-dung was used to cover broken walls and this work was only done by daughters or females of the family.

When Baisantri was admitted to university she had no availability to iron clothes. She used to keep garments below her pillows at night time so that it turns into wearable clothes. Her family eats beef as it is low-cost and is available in shut by way of Muslim butcheries. Baisantri then narrates the situation of her grandmother, who had to suffer a lot because of illiteracy, child marriage and then widowhood at the adolescent age. She moreover describes how untouchability was practised and the Dalits find it difficult to manage their needs or even basic necessities. She brings the question of women's suppression centre stage suited at the outset with the story of Aaji, her mother's mother, who suffered a lot in her own dalit community. Be it a Mang woman or a Mahar, the story stays the same and women are compelled to acquire the false beliefs and customs. They have no right on their husband and later their husbands thrash them and workout polygamy. Baisantri's grandmother got married to Modku ji his first wife and children were already in the family. She laboured for days but could not complain to anyone when her children saw her situation and told her to move to another place, Nagpur. Women had no right to make any decision. Her grandmother, like other women, was kept away from the decision about her daughter's marriage. Her Aaji had no say in it.

Baisantri's description of her Aaji and her struggling gives us an introductory preface about the existence of dalit women and their situation. Baisantri's mother who luckily finds a good husband then again suffers the ire of dalit men and caste men. She decided to educate her children at any cost. The third generation is the writer herself, who faces a dalit woman's situation, suppression. She got married to a person, who was an IAS. In spite of his being a dalit and an educated person, his conduct to women was no longer precise from the feudal mind-set of caste men. The title of her autobiography ends up evident right here as it is entitled "Dohra Abhishap " which means double curse.

Dalit local itself is divided in many sub-castes and they exercise untouchability with different Dalits. She exemplifies the relation of Mangs who regard Mahars as untouchables. Marriage is no longer practised amongst sub-castes. Her sub-caste is Kosre and it is very difficult to find a suitor for her and her sisters as very few young people get education. Her elder sister is married when she is studying in class VIII. No one is geared up to pay interest to her.

Her scholarly life-style in Bhide Kanyashala introduces her to a variety of facets of untouchability rampant in Hindu society. The monetary difference of caste people and Dalits was moreover evident in her description of social status that she hesitated to open because she had no good food. I felt hungry at the heady scent of their food and used to wonder when I will have that lunch in my life."(p.41) Not fully the caste human beings despise them on the other hand the Kunbi who were Dalits themselves. She came to be conscious of a wide variety of sub-castes in Dalits and was all the time worried if her caste would get revealed to her schoolmates. The subject she experiences when she visits a Kunbi home shows the abyss of caste identification and she needs to return to her home earlier than each person recognises her. Her elements to the truth how caste hatred and varna system had percolated deep into the life of the Dalits and are divided amongst themselves:

I felt shameful that I was untouchable and due to this I felt very weak...I passed my time in loneliness during interval and before the opening of the school...The Kunbi girls asked my caste. Out of fear I told them I was a Kunbi. They asked if I was a Tilele or a Kaire...



I replied I was a Tilele... I had concealed my caste from them but I was fearful of its revelation. (P.41-42)

When she was in class IV she experienced alienation from the Brahmin girls who despised her because of her lowly clothes and blamed her for stealing their books. Her instructor punishes her and no one is geared up to pay interest to her that she hasn't carried out stealing. She also experiences the differences in the food habits. As Brahmins never used castor oil for cooking food, as a choice they use mustard or ghee for this purpose. She moreover is acquainted with the horrible economic state of affairs of her mother and father who are unable to pay the fees of her children. She is deeply moved to think about it and is revengeful of those who made this unjustified varna order:

My mother-father had no ability to pay our fees. Baba cautioned the Head Mistress that he may also choose to no longer supply the expenditures of his children. Anyhow she agreed and on the other hand warned us if our results are no longer appropriate she would take us all from the school. Baba bowed his head in the past than the Head Mistress fashioned a distance as he can also prefer to now not contact her ft as he used to be an untouchable...Tears bought right here out of my eyes and I quit moved if I have in mind these days. I feel humiliated and I prefer scratching the faces of those who made up this caste system. I desire to take revenge for the dishonour (47)

She completely gives the credit of her education to her parents, who struggled hard to educate their children. The name of Dr. Ambedkar in Kasturchand Park, Nagpur had motivated them in the route of it and they proceed their headlong battle to make children professional each by means of the usage of pawning the meager jewels they have or contributing in chit funds.

The condition of her sister also shows the worst situation of women in the society. Her sister gave birth to a baby every year. She gave birth to eleven children but most of them died of illness. Birth of male child was more welcomed. Even her mother gave birth to eleven children out of which only six daughters and a son survived.



Even the people of her own community do not like their going to school and criticised her family. Same is the case with her relatives. They conspire with their neighbours to trouble their parents, throw stones during Ganpati festival and her parents console them on such occasions not to become annoyed and continue their study. Some dalit youths spy on them and frame pretexts to defame them. Some of them even wrote abuses on their walls but her parents would never lose their balance. The caste people comment on them as, “See, a Harijan Bai is going. See her pride, her father is a beggar but she rides a cycle” (p.60-61). The caste women would laugh at them and expressed their wonder how daughters of a dalit could study in a school. The dirty gazes of men linger on them wherever they go. Once she faces an attempt of seduction by a gatekeeper of a hospital where her brother is admitted in illness. Thus there was a lack of assistance and support for women.

The teachings of Dr. Ambedkar influenced them to attain education and undertake cleanliness. It is totally due to lack of coaching amongst Dalits. Dalits consume the meat of dead animals even though it was unhygienic and fleas take a seat down on it. There is no concept and understanding of cleanliness in and around her basti as she writes:

When I came from Sitabardi I didn't want to enter our basti. One had to move through human excreta. Children were seen defecating. All the area was covered with it. The houses were just before it and one could only see human excreta at all sides...only three latrines were there for such a big basti...tapeworm and ringworms had infested the place...women would defecate outside at night... bad smell filled the air. (P.68-69)

There was no price of the work of dalit women and many of the Dalits(men) do not work at all. They beat women on pretexts of working or if they speak to any men. These situations tormented her and she bent upon turning to work for the education of her local and especially women who are doubly deprived. Her involvement with the Dalit action introduces her to exclusive realities of a Dalit's life. During Ambedkar Jayanti celebrations she actively took part in it and informed people about the teachings and works of Ambedkar. It is in the meeting of Unnao she meets Devendra, her future husband, who is doing D. Litt from BHU, Varanasi. He

belongs to Bihar and has contributed some essays on the dalit purpose in dalit magazines. Her marriage with Devendra in 1947 took her to Varanasi. Her married life very soon displays the conduct of her husband. She began to question how human beings live in duplicity and hypocrisy. Her husband, even though an ardent worker of dalit cause, is a rude fellow who has feudal frame of mind in the course of woman and their rights. He now does not take care of even his brothers and sisters and in no way seeks any advice in his affairs. He does not even care for her. He regards female as slaves:

He put his sisters in the house and didn't ship them to school. I preferred to ask why he had stopped their training then again couldn't lest he would anticipate I didn't like them here. Devendra through no capability requested for any recommendation from me in the affairs of the house... I received right here to recognize that he had no regard for anyone's emotions and wishes. (p.100)

When she accompanies him to Nirsa the area Devendra is posted as a Labour Inspector she comes to apprehend that the files about their caste have reached previously than their arrival. The caste personnel despise them and keep away from eating with them and shamelessly talk about their caste. Their journey in Asansol is greater or a whole lot much less the same. A Brahmin clerk conspires in opposition to her husband and conceals all the dependable letters to be posted. When Devendra enquires for it, these are determined in his closet. Devendra suspended him for his conduct; alternatively the clerk begins off begging for his mercy. She was conscious that caste pleasure works till one is safe, then again as shortly as one is in danger, he succumbs down and all pride vanishes like a bubble. She continues to have a one-sided relationship with Devendra as for him:

Devendra Kumar needed a wife only for satisfying his physical needs and making his food. He bothered only for his office work. He never cared for what I needed. I never interfered in his office work nor did I ever oppose him. Children were small and I was busy in household jobs... Devendra Kumar kept his money in his safe and gave it for milk and vegetables daily after counting. Often he forgot and one had to remind him...If I asked for money for my clothes and chappals he tried hard to postpone it for the next

month. The next month he quarrelled with me and would run to hit me. Later I stopped talking to him because he often spoke abuses. (p.104)

Women are solely for sexual pleasure and home chores. A range of pretexts are used to blame her for her marriage and to waylay her sons when they support her. He behaves as if she is an unpaid labourer. His conduct with his children used to be regularly strained. The way of thinking of an educated Dalit on a very high post has been uncovered by Kausalya Baisantri through her work.. It was weird that a man o who had worked for Dalits and their rights can't even provide his wife a share in the alternatives or decisions of his family and forgets his past. The miserly nature of Devendra was a different one than the one he showed to the people. different. In Baisantri's words :

My husband has got bronze certificate of freedom fighter and the government has praised his work. But the same man would fight with his wife. He neither praised his wife nor gave any penny to her, even if she did all his household work. He stopped giving the allowance of forty rupees decided by him. I stopped going for milk and carrying bags as I had to wait for ration and milk for many hours. I was ailing with arthritis and so I had stopped washing clothes. By this time the maid servant used to do this. He could not bear this and sent her back. He would often say that he has no obligation for her and would ask me to go out of the house. A freedom fighter saw his own wife no better than a maid servant. (p.106)

Devendra is a prototype of limitless irresponsible men who are unable to free themselves of their feudal state of mind in which their partner, women, was fully a doll who ought to proceed to be mute, succumbed and caged in household jobs. Their pleasure in being the bread earner is evident in most of their actions. His place of business assistant manages the money for her. The disgust at such base remedy at the arms of one's husband is intolerable for Baisantri. The anger and resentment of the writer results in submitting a request for divorce later as she concludes to lead an unbiased existence, free from the clutches and pangs of such a relationship where there is no warmth or love in life.

Thus, from her very personal experience, Kausalya Baisantri argues that each time Dalits are suppressed or the terrible is occurring, ladies go through the most, and consequently precedence ought to be given to the women's issue. A majority of Dalit girls work at one of kind areas and due to their mobility their teenagers are unable to study. Even wages are decided and given at the mercy of their employers. Often their earnings are snatched with the useful resource of parasitic guys who now do not work at all. If girls desire to prosper, they want to try for self-respect via standing on their feet and going forward. Instead of taking help from others, they will have to enlarge their personal energy. As a result, her autobiography sends a very robust message to girls who slog through society and family lifestyles and languish for the relaxation of their lives.

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