

CASTE HEGEMONY AND IDEOLOGICAL SLAVERY OF DALITS IN *THE PRISONS WE BROKE*

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Abstract

Revolutionary social reformer Mahatma Phule had said that our society cannot stand without learning. He had said that in the name of theism, perversion is born, so injustice has been done to Dalits in a systematic manner, so we should stand by Dalits. It seems to be cleared that Hindu culture is not a rite of passage. In India, castes are religious. The country will not get the right name unless the chain of these castes is broken. He was adamant that love of caste was a threat to democracy.

Dr. Ambedkar set out to destroy the so-called ideals of Brahma, Soul, Delusion, Origin and existence of the universe. He said that even though I was born a Hindu in Hinduism, I would not die as a Hindu. Dr Ambedkar, who made many movements for the progress of the downtrodden class and sacrificed his life, for this, he gave an ear to the Dalits that 'the slave should revolt against slavery to make slave aware of slavery'. He said that our life should be based on self-esteem, self-reliance and self-confidence. Dr. Ambedkar took care of their mental cultivation for the 'escape of the untouchables'. To escape from this thousand-year human slavery he wrote several books on the origin and system of caste system. Such as, who was Shudra before this? Currently, the caste system has been abolished by law. But in reality, exploitation from every sector in the rural society has been going on for thousands of years.

For this, Dr Ambedkar burnt Manusmriti in 1930. This incident shook the whole country. Manusmriti was burnt because it contained restrictions on applying untouchability, social, economic and religious inhuman slavery therefore Dr. Ambedkar's role was to burn old Manusmriti and demand new scriptures for the social reconstruction of Hindus which should be contained guiding thoughts in human life. He spent his entire life to liberate Dalits from Hinduism and free them from human slavery and bring them on the path of conscience by giving their equal rights and religious justice.

The Prisons We Broke (2008) is an English version of Jina Amacha (1985), a Marathi manuscript by Baby Kamble. The writing which translated by Prof. Maya Pandit, as The Prisons We Broke is

actually, a 'narrative of pain' deals with the lives of Mahar community of Kamble's village Veergaon, in the state of Maharashtra. This writing describes an accurate portrait of the suppressive caste and masculinized dogmas of the Indian society. She has depicted the life of Mahar community which dominated under Brahminical power turns the Mahar into the human slaves. The strangest thing about Dalit women is that they do not have safety in their own homes. Due to the social, cultural, and economic crises in their lives, they are called the most vulnerable community in the Indian context. In the lives of Dalit women all over India, 'caste and masculinity' are the two dominant factors. In this letter, an attempt has been made to show the truth that Brahmins persecuted Dalits socially, economically, mentally, and politically in the name of God and Hinduism. However, this story also shows the agency in the life of Dalits. Some Mahar workers were inspired by Dr. Ambedkar as an agent of reformer of society. This change can be taken place only through the educational degree.

Keywords: Dalit Community, Caste, human slavery, Baby Kamble, The Prisons We Broke

The Prison We Broke describes that the Mahars were an irrational people. If someone feels uncomfortable, they define the illnesses possessed by the Gods and Goddess or possessed by the unsatisfied soul. It also justifies the death of a person by causing the disease to enter a person's genetic field. In the following given words, the writer says:

The possessed women were called goddesses or mothers. When they started dancing, the potraja too slipped into his element. The goddesses got more and more frenzied. The potraja would alter the rhythm and the women matched their dancing to the changing beats. The potraja would get tired, but the women? No way! In case a potraja wanted to stop, the mothers would get terribly annoyed. They fixed him with hard stares, and vigorously nodding their heads, signaled him to go on. The poor guy would get exhausted. Then he urged the mother, that is, the spirit of the goddess possessing the poor woman, I beg you, oh mother, please don't get so agitated! Please leave this tree, this woman whom you have possessed. I promise you, we will play again, but later, after sometime. Now please leave this poor woman and go home. (Kamble, 33)

They were just like animals, but without tails. They could be called human only because they had two legs instead of four. Otherwise there was no difference between Mahar community and the animals. But how had they been reduced to this bestial state? Who was responsible? The higher caste people destroyed their reasoning, their ability to think. They were reduced to a condition far worse than that of the bullocks kept in the courtyards of the high castes. The bullocks were at least given some dry grass

to eat. The bullocks ate the grass and slogged for their masters. But these people were merely given leftovers. They ate the leftovers without complaining and labored for others. The only difference, however, was that the beasts could eat a bellyful and they could stay in their master's courtyards.

But these people's condition was far worse. Their place was in the garbage pits outside the village, where everyone threw away their waste. That was where they lived, in their poor huts, amidst all the filth. They were masters only of the dead animals thrown into those pits by the high castes. They had to fight with cats and dogs and kites and vultures to establish their right over the carcasses, to tear off the flesh from the dead bodies. Their lives were governed by various calamities. They were imprisoned in dark cells, their hands and feet bound by the chain of slavery. Their reason was gagged. But it is because of that their world stands. They were the foundation. Shallow water makes a lot of noise, but still water runs deep. Like the ocean that covers mountains of sin under its huge expanse, they covered the sins of the high castes. That is why they were like the ocean which deserves the admiration of the whole world. (Kamble 36)

Some women would become possessed and the spirit of some goddess would speak out, 'The girl would be possessed by an evil spirit. That hailed from the place, Shertati, possesses her. She has come into the house lodged in the feet of a neighbor. The girl met the spirit's eye exactly at twelve o'clock. Now they would use the remedy that. They would take some oil, jawar, beaten jowar, kajal, kumkum in a bowl, move the bowl over the girl's body and then put it under the banyan tree at midnight. That evil bitch ties a swing to the banyan tree and sits swinging thereto her heart's content. She was evil; they would tell her the evil. She would simply take away the body she has been possessed.' Thus, in the following words Kamble indicates how Mahar Community indulged in the ideological slavery. She states:

"The suffering of the woman would be beyond endurance. Even the onlookers found it difficult to watch her plight. Her family smeared her forehead with ash from the chulha. Two or three days would pass like this. People around her would try to soothe her with kind words. Life in that poor mother gradually diminished and she would finally sink. Many young girls on the threshold of life succumbed to death. One in every ten lost their lives during childbirth. Infants died as well. The fear of death drove people to the goddess Satwai and they would perform all the customary rituals" (Kamble, 68)

Thousands of their generations were sacrificed and their lives were utterly ruined. Millions perished but their essence of truth and morality did not. This endured, seeped into the soil, and enriched it. And then a small sapling grew out of this enriched soil. It went on to become a huge tree of light and truth. It gave shelter to millions who were suffering. The tree transformed beasts into human beings. This tree was that ideal human being, our very own Buddha. From 1930 onwards, his name started reaching villages like a gentle breeze that brings succor in the scorching sun.

Dr. Ambedkar decided to awaken his people who had sunk to the level of sub-humans. He began to organize small meetings and speaking to the people. But reaching out to millions of people was a stupendous task. Then the senior leaders in Mumbai decided to organize meetings at the time of Jatra because that was the time when all the people in the community would gather together. The leaders took up the job of enlightening ignorant people with Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's thoughts and their words found a way right into people's hearts. The first meeting was organized on the Pournima night in the month of Chaitra in Jejuri. God Khandoba of Jejuri had been the family deity of the Mahars for generations. They flocked to this Jatra from various places, walking for several miles. In following words Kamble says the message of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in the following words. She says:

All folks including the old men-women and children who have come to Jejuri from far off places, you walked barefoot for ten days to get here. While on the way, you were tired, your feet ached, you had nothing but a few stale pieces of bhakri to eat, yet you kept on walking and finally reached Jejuri. Why? Because you wanted to see your family deity Khandoba but tell me, did Khandoba see you? What did he say to you? Could he see your condition? Did he see your suffering? Generation after generation, our people have paid homage to this god. They did not mind the discomfort. You, too, came after an arduous journey. But did your Khandoba see you? Could you meet him really? Why have you come after having suffered so? You have no clothes to wear. You have nothing to eat. You have no place to stay! And yet you come here. Year after year! You walk barefoot for the sake of this god. Your god should at least have inquired after you. Did he? Now, if he can't do anything for you, why do you take so much trouble for him? (Kamble 70, 71)

Babasaheb's well-made shape, his glowing youth, his fair complexion, his high forehead, and his European attire, his suit and boots—all of these impressed people to no end. They basked in the warmth and glory of his words; words that were like elixir to them. It was as if all their suffering had finally earned them a glorious reward. They left with his words echoing in the innermost core of their hearts,

feeling deliriously happy. The mirage of their aspirations and dreams had taken a real form. His words and defiant spirit had electrified the women; but some people oppose the Ambedkar's Message, which Kamble states in the following given words. She says:

Listen, you can't make the river flow backwards. The village land is our mother. We have to carry forward whatever order she has given us. Why do we need foreign knowledge? The Yeskar's stick is the mark of the happiness of the land. We have in us real Mahar flesh and blood. And you preach us this Christian knowledge? God has drawn a line for us and you want us to cross it? Listen, we are born for this work. That's our sacred duty. Why should we give up our religion, our duty? We are the real original and pure Mahars! We aren't any of those half-baked converts! Listen, that Ambedkar has turned your head with his strange foreign knowledge! He has lived among foreigners. Listen, a murali woman is the first fruit obtained by a couple in their marriage. She has to be offered at the feet of our god Khandera. We have been doing so for ages; that's why we have his blessings and our children are protected. And the jogtin? She is also a woman offered to our goddess. And you don't want to do any of this? You are all set to burn and destroy a living tree. The string of beads and the sacred basket are the marks of the mother goddess. You take these things as ordinary? Do you know that if the goddess is displeased, she can ruin the entire house? She will burn our houses as punishment. The potraja is supposed to be the servant of the goddess. Do you think that this is an ordinary thing? It's a great honor given to us. Stupid man comes and tells us to forget our gods and gives us Christian gods instead! No, no. For us what our ancestors did is the right thing.' (Kamble 73, 74)

Baby Kamble demonstrates how caste domination converges of the exploitative practices against Mahar. It is here that the urge to define the self becomes most evident in women. Baby Kamble shows the remarkable dignity and resilience of the Mahar women in their struggle through which they have emerged as the agents of transformation in their community. *The Prisons We Broke* thus brings to light experiential worlds as well as discursive practices that have rarely been discussed in mainstream writings. It reveals the diverse ways in which the construction of the resistant selfhood and subjectivity of not just a person but an entire marginalized community happens. It also brings to the fore the tremendous transformative potential of oppressed people to change the world.

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