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AN ANECDOTE OF TWOFOLD OPPRESSION- AN OVERVIEW ON THE SELECT WORKS OF BAMA, SIVAGAMI AND ALICE WALKER

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ABSTRACT

This paper titled, "An Anecdote of Twofold Oppression- An overview on the select works of Bama, Sivagami and Alice walker" explores and analyzes the divergent forms of oppression carried out on the African-Americans and Dalits of American and Indian societies by the upper caste people of these societies. People focus on the man-made twofold systems namely man/woman, man/living thing, wealthy/deprived, privileged class/ unprivileged class, and higher race/ lower race and so on. As these twofold systems are man-made, man is not ready to discard these twofold systems to lead an equal sharing serene life. Hence, it is certain that women undergo suffering in the hands of men and also caste oppression. Consequently, the present paper discusses the women characters Bama in 'Karukku', Thangam in Sivagami 'The Grip of Changes' and Cecily in Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple' to mark out the depiction of two fold oppressions faced by them as they belong to the under-privileged groups and how they voice against the oppression. Their voice is the microcosm for the macro change.

Keywords: Privileged class, Oppression, Discrimination, etc.

In this 21st century, People are astonished or even they ridicule if we point out the word discrimination. They state that the subjugated take pleasure in lot of privileges rather than upper castes with regard to Govt.jobs and such other benefits .If this is the case, then why do we find lot of news that detail the oppression. As it is mentioned the " rich always become richer and the poor becomes poorer" Those Dalit men and women enjoying the benefits as offered are enjoying by expunging their identity. Even if they happened to meet their own people they naturally avoid speaking to them. When the cause was scrutinized, we took up two literatures Dalit and Afro American Literature.

Literature of Marginality

Dalit literature is a journey from main stream literature to marginal literature, from grand

narrative to little narrative, from individual identity to group identity, from ideal to real, from vertical literature to spiritual literature, from self-justification to self-affirmation. This is the 'celebration of difference'. (Trivedi, "Literature of their Own," 7) .These sorts of genre are considered to be marginal literature. Marginality is the juggernaut of social, religious and caste oppression under which the Dalits of India and blacks in Africa and some parts of America eke out their too heavy a burden of life. The writers of this genre are either a good portrayers of the oppression or depictees of the cruelty done to the Dalit community. They tried their level best to depict the suppression of the Dalits. But actually their portrayal was not very effective as they are not really the sufferers. At this juncture the Dalit community people tried barriers

by protest. They carried out different sorts of protests including literature. Most of them opined that literature is the best way to broadcast the abuses. The writers of Afro-American literature like Maya Angelou, Tony Morrison, etc were considered a milestone of Black Literature. The trauma is almost a protest in the southern countries. They suffer a double or a four time Oppression.

The current study examines two writers who actually focused on one theme-Protest against the Oppressors. Both the writers faced the suppression due to the race. Alice Walker is actually from a black family who do sharecropping and dairy farming. Though many advised and warned Alice parents, they gave education to her. She faced innumerable troubles being a black woman. This later provoked her to write works that focus on this theme. Her first Novel 'The Third life of Grange Copeland' published in 1970 depicted the life of Sharecroppers. Followed by 'Meridian' a semi-autobiographical work written in 1976, based on her experience. Later in 1982, she published her best work **The Color Purple** which depicted the struggle of young black woman not only with white culture but against patriarchal black culture. On the other hand, we have the first autobiographical Dalit writer Bama Faustina Mary. Bama belongs to Christian Dalit community. When she actually took an incident comically it has been considered seriously by her brother. It is only when he explained the behavior of upper caste she understood their status in the society. From then, she had the habit of noting down in her diary. Later by the duress of her friends, she published her first novel in Tamil under the title *Karukku* 1992. Not only did I pick up the scattered palmyra karukku in the days when I was sent out to gather firewood, scratching and tearing my 124 skin as I played with them . . . The driving forces that shaped this book are many: events that occurred during many stages of my life, cutting me like *Karukku* and making me bleed. (*Karukku* xiii). Both the writers had suffered under the name of oppression which made them come out with the works that depict their suffering. Bama and Alice Walker used language with a measure of social consciousness. These two writers portrayed the untold trauma of their lives, suppression by upper

caste, and suppression within the community to bring up the courage of transforming their suffering to empowerment.

When compared with Bama, Walker's contribution is remarkable because she is not only a novelist, short story, poet etc. She took weapon in different genres and participated wide to liberate. She is a notable Afro-American writer, who had done wonders. Bama on the other hand is really modest. She is purely a short story writer and a novelist. The study on the works of both the writers clearly prove that the writers motive is to clear prove that writers motive is to liberate the downtrodden and they are in no way less intellectual when compared to other community people.

The Problems Focused by Women in Alice Walker's "Color Purple"

There are lot of divergence between a Dalit and an Afro-American writer. The Dalit community sees the racial discrimination in a caste ridden Indian Society. But Afro-American writers see the difference in the society they live in. Inequality is considered common in America. The white people never consider it a sin to discriminate hence they consider it a custom. A Dalit writer goes centuries back to bring in the fact of discrimination but an Afro-American writer lives in such an environment they write what they really experience. As Walker's contribution is more to literature, we are going to concentrate on her famous novel *The Color Purple*, where we can find a lot of similarity with the characters of Bama too. Walker depicts the status of Black environment from which they cannot be liberated at all. The liberation can be brought to them only by death. As Walker writes in her essay, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," a black woman is "the mule of the world, because (she has) been handed the burdens that everyone else—everyone else refused to carry" (237). To overcome this, Walker did not stop as a writer by just portraying the suffering she made the Black women comprehend that they need courage and confidence to tussle against oppressors. Walker states that the darkness is seen everywhere in the society together with nature and human heart. Her approach to life and its problem are different and she seems more

constructive. She appends that suffering or happiness lies within us. If there is no discrimination there will be no suffering, who is prime cause of discrimination it is none other than human. It lies within his heart. Once he comes out of it everything ends smooth. She states that we should start that from our community .i.e. we should make our community people understand that first as he is one who start up oppression within the community he drinks with no reason and brings down the black women. He never works for the betterment of the family and society she says that black men should restrict themselves from moving towards the desired destination. They should come out of their immortal practices like drugs, alcohol, and tobacco that lead to uncontrolled desires like sexual temptations. She adds that young men are addicted to petrol sniffing which may lead to death when they get rid off this they may come out of oppression. She says that spiritual concentration will help them a lot to get rid off this deadly habits. Once they do this they can join hands to protect against the oppressors.

The Problems Focused by Women in Bama's Karukku

Bama's the first autobiographical Dalit writer focused on putting an end to all atrocities faced by their community people for centuries together she wanted to erase her identity as an oppressed and live proud as a Dalit woman with dignity. She proved that and she wanted to see the same within her community people. She says that Dalit women with their patience waited for centuries with the hope that they will be liberated but actually they were identified as downtrodden. She (Dalit woman) is twice oppressed. When it comes to sexual exploitation, even the Dalit male is no exception as the oppressed becomes the oppressor. It should be noted that these women are not at the mercy of some immanent metaphysical force like Thomas Hardy's Tess, but are victims of materialist forces. (Rao, "Tale of Twice Suppressed," 57)

"In the face of such poverty, the girl children cannot see the sense in schooling, and stay at home, collecting firewood, looking after the house, caring for the babies, and doing household

chores." (Bama 68).Bama encourages them by stating that she should not get frustrated and never consider it a fate. It's in their hands to protest against them. Every Dalit woman should be educated once they are graduated they should come out and fight for their dignity .The society who called 'parachi' will no longer turn towards them with the motive of oppression and discrimination. They can turn and rewrite the oppressed history of India by their own hands with a new vocabulary and synonym that shows the liberated Dalit community.

The Problems Focused by Women The Grip of Change

The depiction of two-fold oppression meted on Dalit women in Indian society gets contextualized in P. Sivakami's works namely, *The Grip of Change* P. Sivakami is highly reliable as well as serious while difficult equal right for Dalit women through her novels. The title of the novel, *The Grip of Change* is sarcastic as the author thoughts for a misrepresented society in which women will be treated evenly on parity with man. In *The Grip of Change*, Sivakami relates a self-critical and deconstructive technique and depiction the deplorable realities of Dalit patriarchy. The protagonist of the novel is Thangam, a poor Dalit widow who bears not only for being a Dalit but also for being a woman. Paradoxically, she is mistreated even by her own Dalit community. She faces double marginalization, namely, women suppression and discrimination based on her caste. Seized by the jaws of patriarchy, she is abused, raped and beaten frequently. She does not eloquent against the oppression inflicted upon her. Thangam is treated as 'body' in this novel. She is often beaten physically, verbally and sexually not only by the upper caste patriarchs but also by her own community men. After the death of her husband, she becomes a 'surplus woman' for her brothers-in-law and they force her to become a prostitute. Even her right over her husband's ancestral land is denied as she is a childless widow. She can get her share of the property only if her body can satisfy their lust. As she tells Kathamuthu, —My husband's brother tried to force me, but I never gave in. They wouldn't give me my husband's land, but wanted me to be a whore for them! I wouldn't give in... (Sivakami, Grip

of Change7). But she is unable to save her body from the jaws of hierarchy. Lacking of money, the destitute and dispossessed, Thangam moves outside her home to earn her livelihood by working as a laborer in the fields of an upper class landlord Paranjothi Udayar, who rapes her. She narrates, —I didn't want it. But Udayar took no notice of me. He raped me when I was working in his sugarcane field. I remained silent; after all, he is my paymaster. He measures my rice... (Sivakami, Grip of Change7). The brutality of class and caste hierarchy made her subaltern who cannot even speak.

Thangam , Bama and Cecily an overview

Cecily, a black American woman is considered the central character of the novel. Her life is portrayed in such way that describes the suffering of the Black Americans. Bama, a Dalit Christian woman who gradually realized that she belongs to a downtrodden community only through the treatment of the society.

Hence, the Afro-American woman, Cecily is the mouthpiece of Black American society while Dalit women represent the status of Dalit especially Dalit women in India boycotted society, where both the protagonist are degraded and robbed by white and Savarna Society. They underwent harmful sufferings that include humiliation separation racism casteism and what not. Cecily is shown as an partially educated black lady , molested by her step-father later forced to marry Mr.____.She is sexually and verbally abused and tormented merely for 30 years. When she bares a baby by her Step-Father she was threatened not to share with others except God as he never reveals. "What God do for me?He gives me a lynched daddy, a crazy mamma, a lowdown dog of a step Pa.....The God I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other men I know. Trifling, forgetful and low down" (Walker, *Color Purple*173).

Cecily does little to fight back against here step father, Alphonse. Later in life, her husband Mr.____, abuses her, she reacts in a similarly passive manner. However, Cecily latches on to Shug Avery, a beautiful and seemingly empowered woman as a role model. After Shug moves into Cecily and Mr.____'s home, Cecily has the opportunity to befriend the woman whom she loves

and to learn at last, how to fight back.

On the other hand Bama, protagonist born in Dalit community does not realize the oppression till she reaches third standard. The Narrator witnesses the spectacle of an adult Dalit male from her street carrying a packet of snacks for his Naicker Boss. The snack wrapped in a banana leaf, is future rolled in a newspaper. The Dalit worker holds the packet from the tip of the long string in which it is tied up. He delivers it to the Naicker landlord with visible signs of humility a bent back and lowered voice the girl finds this experience an amusing spectacle but it is informed by her college going elder brother that this how Dalits are expected to behave towards the upper caste because the touch contact is believed to contaminate everything. The young girl is both angry and anguishes. She witnesses lot of discrimination which she makes entry of such incidents and by the intuition of her friends. Afro-American woman Cecily is not aware of the liberty and doesn't think of liberation until she meets Ms.Shug. But Bama in turn comes forward to give awareness about liberation to her people.

Conclusion

Walker's Cecily undergoes suffering till the end and she is not portrayed as a brave lady. She accepts the dominators view .Let it be her step father or Mr.____. She never ever thinks of protest and liberation. It is Shug her only companion who give her comfort for a short period. When the characters of most of the Afro-American writers are analyzed most of the black women possess the same character as it is the real lifestyle of Afro-American women in the caste dominated society. In Bama's works *Karukku* , she documents series of women workers who cannot but work in order to survive and feed their children to help for Kanji a day. They work not to supplement their husbands and sons rather share the responsibility, in fact are loaded with the lion's share of it. Many women are the only earning members of the family .Thus Dalit women are workers in a fundamental rather that peripheral way in the works of Bama and Sivagami. Bama and Sivagami see women around them are engaged in work during the entire life.

When compared to Afro-American community, Dalit community has a number of

privileges in India we could see this in Govt.Jobs and other benefits. It may be controversial to mention that these Dalit community people have to come out and help their own people but most of them never turn or they even try to erase their identity once they get better position in the society. They even abuse people if they find someone degrading them this happens in most of the educational institutions. Dalit men and women are protected with special care by the Government of India by a number of beneficial policies. Where an illustration can be quoted today in India we have higher official from Dalit community. Mr.Ramnath Kovind the son of Dalit weaver is our president today not only this most of the higher officials come from the same community. When a research has been done to prove that the sufferers are downtrodden it is clear that steps have been taken to improve the status of Dalit community in India rather than the America with regard to Afro-Americans status.

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