

A Wave of Dalit Feminism

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Abstract:

Dalit Feminism is a movement or ideology that carries Mahatma Phule's and Dr. Ambedkar's thoughtful teaching, "fights for justice, fraternity, dignity, and equality." Dalit feminism led these agendas towards Dalit women's empowerment impartially and de-imperialization from the social, the religious, and the political overpowered all the men's authority. This movement envisioned not only a solid resistance to the Hindu beliefs, practices, hierarchical divisions of caste, and triple marginalization but also to organize for the emancipation of Dalit women and Eliminate gender-based oppression. Dalit feminist emphasizes critique on the social change of the orthodoxy religious culture and, synchronically, in terms of the Opposition to the dominant philosophical, political, and economic ideology and a voice for victims of domestic violence, social abuse, brutal Rape, and huge women massacred. This is the postmodern world, and Dalit women definitely talk differently than Dalit men's critical representation, evaluation, and exploration of women-centric issues or Subjugation.

Keywords: Dalitfemo, Dalit feminist, critique, Heterogeneity, Dalit Womanism, Ecriture Feminine.

Introduction:

From the Vedic period to British imperialism, post-colonialism, and till now in the 21st century, there has not been a drastic change in the socially stratified or cast-class-gender psychology of the Indian people; they consider women as objects of lust. The definition of feminism in the Indian context is a complicated debate, especially when we apply the feminist perception to understand the life of the Dalits, Minorities, and Tribal women. Hence, the emergence of Dalit feminism does appear with its own characteristics, agenda, motif, and objectives; this is contradictory or paradoxically different from mainstream Indian feminism. The following prominent Indian feminist writers are Sashi Deshpande, Bapsi Sidhwa, Amrita Pritam Nayantara Sehgal, Mahasweta Devi, and Anita Desai, who openly talked about the women's issues of rights in their writings. The well-known Indian feminist Bengali writer and activist Mahasweta Devi's '*Breast Stories*,' translated by Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, this book has three sets of stories: "*Draupadi*," "*Behind the bodice*" and "*Breast Giver*."

Mahasweta Devi discussed and significantly emphasized women's Labour, internal anguish, annihilation, and devastation of bodily exploitation by brutal exploiters. Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak wrote an essay entitled "*Can the subaltern speak,*" and Dalit women come under the subaltern marginal group; the Dalit feminist movement is an example of Dalit women's conscious voice and emerging as a wave of Dalit feminism. Another important Dalit feminist critical book, "*Dalit Women Speak Out: Caste, Class and gender violence in India,*" by Aloysius, Jayshree P. Mangubai, and Joel G. Lee. "*Women always face violence from men. Equality is only preached but not put into practice. Dalit women face more violence every day, and they will continue to do so until society changes and accepts them as equals.*" (Bharti from *Adhra-Pradesh*). This book explains the different kinds of violence against Dalit women, like domestic violence, sexual and physical assault, threats, and intimidation of verbal abuse by the dominant caste. Indian feminism is exclusivist and religious-oriented; on the other hand, Dalit feminism was born out of a new wave of Dalit men's literature and Indian feminism.

'Dalitfemo' as Term:

"A group of inferior-subordinate-marginal-subaltern Dalit women tries to break the wall of all kinds of Stereotypical imposition, all kinds of a constructed prohibitions around them in terms of restriction of patriarchy, Gender, caste-class, degraded status, traditional enslavement in the perception political, economic and social from the dominant group's men and women as well as their own communities' men."

Indian Dalit feminism:

The mainstream scenario of Dalit feminist writing started with Mukta Salve, a Dalit girl student of Savitribai Phule. She wrote an essay (About the Grief of Mahar and Mangs), "*Amhi Mahra-Mangacha Dukkhavishyi?*" Published in the periodical "Dnyanodaya" in 1855. Dalit feminist literary criticism stands on their feminist agenda to confine all Dalit women from the patriarchal forbidding norms, men discrimination, abuse, and anti-violence. The revolution of the feminist movement intersections between subordinated Dalit Cast, cast-gender (Female identity), and Dalit women's contemporary experience. Dalit feminist critical canon started in the 1980s and 1990s with the flourishing genre of Dalit feminist autobiographies. Baby Kamble published the First Dalit feminist autobiography entitled 'The Prison We Broke' in 1983. Shantabai Krushnaji Kamble's Autobiography "Mazya Jalmachi Chitrakatha" "*The Kaleidoscope Story of My Life*" was Published in 1986; later, her autobiography was translated into English and French. It was television-serialized as "*Najauka*" on the Door Darshan in Mumbai on 10 August 1990. Shantabai was a Prominent social activist. She highlighted feminist themes like doubly oppression and marginalization with caste discrimination in her autobiography and other critical work, too. Sumitra Bhave's book "*Pan on Fire: Eight Dalit Women Tell Their Stories*" (1988) includes eight Dalit women's anecdotes from Biographies. Another powerful Dalitfemo book by Rege, Sharmila, "*Writing Caste, writing gender: reading Dalit Women's Tenstimonio 's.*"

The first Dalit feminist gathering was organized on the national level in 1987 at Bangalore; further, it was considered a pioneering incident of the Dalitfemo

organization. Two conferences were arranged on Dalitfemo's issues and subjects in the following years: i) the First National Federation of Dalit Women in 1993 and ii) the All Indian Dalit Women's Forum in 1995. A national conference on violence against Dalit women was arranged in India's capital city, New Delhi, and this particular conference created a new ideology or thought of '**Dalit Womanism.**' Later, in 2017, Dalit feminist activist Sharmila Rege founded 'Kranti Jyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Study Centre' in Pune, Maharashtra. This path-breaking or changing scenario of Dalit study and this center held a conference on the subject of "Dalit Women speak out," and 450 prominent, influential Dalit women became part of the Dalit feminist conference.

Uma Chakravarti, in her book **Gendering caste: Through a Feminist Lens**, 2002, is an essential Dalit feminist work that represents historical thought through the lens of feminism, caste, and gender. Both terms have their critical Perspective. According to her, *Women in this reproduction system are mere receptacles and transmitters carriers of the line*". Dalit feminist social activists became an energetic voice for the large, muted Dalit women who became victims of the brutal violence and oppression suffered. The Dalit feminist writer wants liberalization, freedom, and social and political equality.

Paper-Khabar Lehriya (News Waves):

This revolutionary Dalit newspaper newspaper represents the thoughts and writings of Dalit women all over India. It is an epoch-making newspaper. In 2009, it made a golden history in the Dalit feminist movement and literature by winning a UNESCO Literary Prize.

Marathi Dalit Feminist Literature:

Marathi Dalit Feminist standpoint came into existence from Dalit literature, the Indian feminist movement, and the Marxist-Leninist theories/ideology. Further, some Feminist ideology developed from the thoughts of Ambedkar ideology and Mahatma Phule 'sss too. Before that, two crucial resisted ideologies were a) the Dalit bhakti movement and b) the Self-Respect movement, which focused on community-centered issues. Most Well-known feminist social activist and active member of truth seeker society emphasizing the subject of Dalit feminism. Shantabai Dhanaji Dani was an Ambedkarite-Dalit-feminist-activist; she wrote her autobiography "For Us - These Days and Nights." Kumud Pawade's *Antasphot* (Thoughtful Insight, 1981), Kumud Pawade is an eminent Sanskrit Dalit scholar who portrayed her upbringing in a highly cast-based discriminatory atmosphere. Her sensitive journey of difficulty in fighting against gender-caste-based inequality in every phase of life and struggle to learn Sanskrit until she became a professor of it. Kumud Pawade is the founder of the National Federation of Dalit Women, who fights for Dalit women's rights. Contemporary leading Dalit feminist writer Sumitra Bhavne wrote a biographical book, *Pan on Fire: Eight Dalit Women Tell Their Stories*" (1988). It is translated into English by Gouri Deshpande. It is a biographical collection of Dalit subaltern women's stories set in urban slum life in Pune. These eight Dalit feminist women are called Rukmini, Chhaya, Rakhma, Sangeeta, Mangala, Ashoka, Savitri, and Leela. Sharmila Rege wrote *Writing Caste/gender: Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonies,*"

Published in 2006. This book is very significant in the Dalit-from movement, and Sharmila Rege emphasizes various issues in her critical books, such as caste-gender-based arguments and Dalit feminist literature. “*We Also Made History: Women in the Ambedkarite movement(1989)*”, initially written by Meenakshi Moon and Urmila Pawar in Marathi, was translated with another introduction by Wandana Sonalkar in 2008. This critical book is divided into two parts: 1) Part first deals with the active role and involvement of Dalit women in the Ambedkarite movement with historical chronological references and analysis, And 2) second part deals with the anecdotes of interviews and biographies of selected contemporary 45 Dalitfemo writer and activist. Leading Dalit Feminist writer Urmila Pawar’s Autobiography “*The Wave of My Life*” (Aidan,2008) Established the Dalit Feminist Standpoint within the canon of Dalit Feminism.

Marathi Dalit Feminist Work

Baby Kamble
The prison We Broke

Urmila Pawar
We Also Made History, The Wave of My life

Shamila Rege
Writing Caste/Gender : Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonios

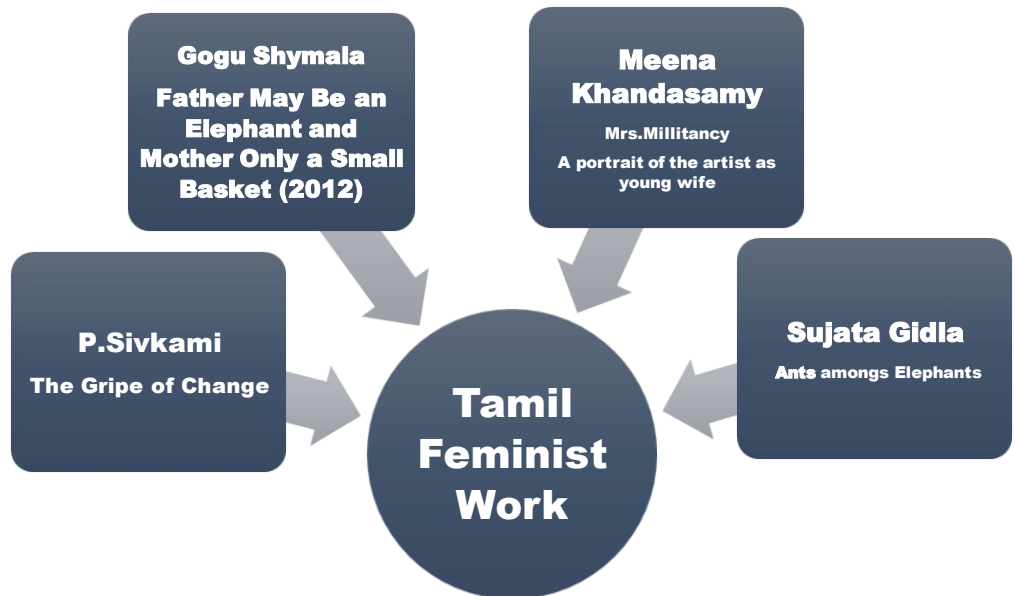
Jayashree Mangubai
Dalit Women Speak out : Cast, Class and gender violence In India

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Tamil and Telugu Dalit feminist Work:

These Tamil Dalit feminist literary and social movements have had a broad perspective and have a great impact on society. Bama Faustina Rani, P. Sivkami, Joopaka Subhadra, Gogu Shyamala, Meena Kandasamy, and P. Sivkami, women writers, have been actively involved and flourished Tamil Dalit feminist literary movement. These Dalitfemo writers used different literary forms, such as short stories, poetry, novels, plays, and Dalit autobiographies. P. Shivkami’s Novel *The Grip of Change* and *The Taming of Women* are necessary Tamil Dalit feminist fiction. P. Shivkami used a third-person narrative technique to portray the realities of Dalit women's hardcore lives. This novel emphasizes two important points of view: a) violence in terms of cast and b) gender dimensions and Dalit feminist gendered aspect. Gogu Shyamala is a Telugu language writer and a prominent Dalit feminist (Marxist-Leninist) activist. She has written several works from the Dalit feminist point of view: a) “*Gender Consciousness in Dalit Women's Literature: Gender Consciousness and its Consequence*” (2005), and b) a Novel “*Father Maybe an Elephant and Mother Only a Small Basket, But....*” (2012)”, this book changed the

scenario of Telugu Dalit feminist in Telangana. It is part of her project work entitled "*Dalit Women's Biographies*" in Perspective of the Dalit feminist movement. In 2001, she became part of the Dalit women's forum at the World Conference against Racism organized in Durban 2001. Gogu Shyamala focuses on the creative Biographies and writings of Dalit women and is currently working on the research project entitled Domestic Violence and Dalit Women Funded by Oxfam. A recent one, or contemporary translator and most active Dalit feminist activist Meena Kandasamy, and her feminist translations "*why were women enslaved*" (2007), "*The Book of Desire*" (2023), and her own written work "Touch," "*Mrs. Militancy*," and "*A portrait of the artist as a young wife*," these poetry collections and a single novel narrates in the lens of Dalitfemo feminist perspective, but her poetic discourse and different style of poetry writing is unique and deconstructive. Meena Kandasamy's writing encounters new oppressional aspects and casts discriminatory forms with the prime subjection of the Dalitfemo world.



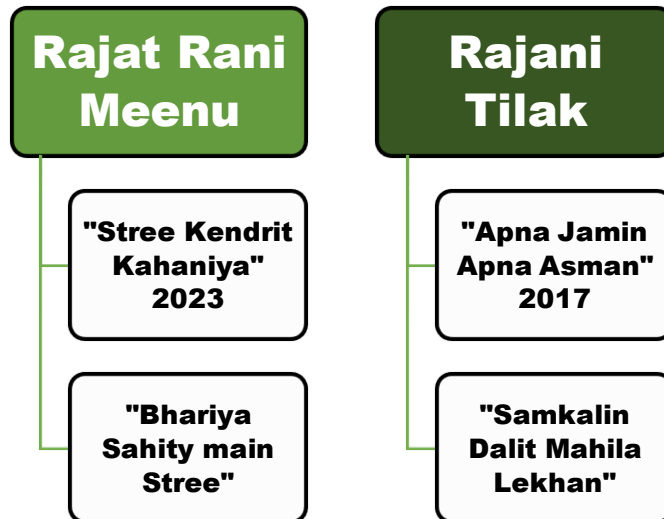
Bengali feminist Dalit Literature:

Bengali feminist Dalit writing came into existence after the publication of **Kalyani Thakur**, an epic-making book entitled "*Dalit Lekhika Women's Writing in Bengal*." Kalyani Thakur Charl is a renowned Bengali Dalit feminist Poet born (in 1965) in the village of Bagula, West Bengal. She grew up in the Matua Dalit community. The historical Dalit Matua Movement was the same community led by revolutionary leader Harishchandra Thakur. Kalyani Thakur confronts the incidents of domestic violence in her village, Bagula. Her mother's thoughts about women's

education empowerment and these two factors are highly influential, everchanging Kalyani's Foundational thoughts about Dalit Feminism. Her writing has been sharply attacking the Bengali Bhadra Lok, Kalyani's feminist literary Work 1) "*Why I Write Charal*" 2) "*Chandalini (The Untouchable Women)*" 3) "*Dalit Lekhika: Women's Writing from Bengal.*" These are the collective writings from the impactful feminist Perspective. "*Chaturthi Duniya*" is the Bengali Dalit feminist magazine, and Kalyani Thakur Choral is the Editorial Member of the Journal. The "NIR" is a literary journal started in 2003 by Kalyani Thakur Choral.

Hindi Dalit Feminist Writing:

Hindi Dalit feminist writing was not very popular because of the limited publication of Hindi Dalit books, which somehow translated into English, but a few Dalit feminist writings had a significant effect and impact on Dalit feminist literary theory/ movement. Two highly critically acclaimed Dalitfemo writers are Rajat **Rani Meenu** and **Rajani Tilak**. Raja Rani Meenu has written two Dalit feminist books: 1) *Stree Kendrit Kanhaiya* and 2) *Bhartiya Sahitya main Dalit Stree*. **Rajani Tilak** is an activist of the Dalit feminist movement; she was honored/awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award at the "*Dalit Women Speak Out Conference*" in 2017 for her social work and her autobiography '*Apna Jamin Apna Asman,*' (Contemporary et al. feminist writing) *Samkalin Bhartiya Dalit Mahila Lekhan*, 2017.



Though these Hindi feminist critical narratives foreground contemporary Dalit identities and the consciousness of Dalit feminists, these Hindi Dalit feminist writers are often viewed as simplistic Dalit women-centric subjectivity and an inner silenced voice.

Conclusion:

This study foregrounded many gender-identity questions of Dalit feminism in the Indian context. As different linguistic dialects with their radical representative critique of Hinduism, two premises: 1) the victimhood of a Dalit woman's

subjectivity, 2) the Dalitfemo literary movement regards the strengthening to the empowerment of the Dalitfemo providing economic and educational opportunities as an essential part of of the justice to eradicate the practice (the cultivation self-reliance or accomplishment of dignity in the society). According to Anupama Rao, a Dalit scholar, "It depicts the historical structures and practices of dispossession that experientially mark someone as Dalit and simultaneously identifies the Dalit as someone seeking to escape from the inequivalent structural society (2009: 16)."

Dalitfemo writers explicitly understand cast and gendered systematic oppression in their families, communities, workplaces, public spheres, and society. Dalitfemo, or the Dalit feminist literary wave, and Dalit women's organizations dedicate women's all kinds of voices to being the most crucial element in achieving this end.

As a primary motive to get economic stability, dedicated women in particular structures of oppression came out; rather, they insisted on dedication to the wave of Dalit feminism through consciousness-raising programs to resist all kinds of structural oppression and exploitation.

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