

Dalit Feminism: A Voice for the Voiceless in Aruna Gogulamanda's "A Dalit Woman in the Land of Goddesses"

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Abstract

Dalit Feminism is feminism, which has great significance in the contemporary casteist society. It aims at equality, right, and justice for the lowest strata of the society, that is, Dalit Women. Aruna Gogulamanda's "A Dalit Woman in the Land of Goddesses" focuses on the double-edged sword of marginalization, which a Dalit woman has to suffer in the patriarchal casteist era, both as a woman and also as a Dalit. She is a poet who articulates her voice for the voiceless section of the society, that is, the Dalit women, who are suppressed in the hands of male chauvinism.

Keywords: Dalit, Dalit feminism, Double-edged sword, Marginalization, Patriarchal and Male chauvinism.

Introduction

Aruna Gogulamanda is a Telugu- English Dalit Poet. She comes from a middle – class agricultural family. She was a research scholar at the University of Hyderabad. She worked on "Dalit and Non-Dalit Women's Autobiographies." She is one of the emerging Intellectual Dalit Feminist and Dalit womanist poets from Telangana.

She is noted for her magnificent piece of Literature titled "A Dalit woman in the Land of Goddesses." She capaciously worked on the issues related to Dalit women. Her other works include: "A Dalit woman in the Land of Goddesses," Poem in the "Anthology of Post Globalization Poetry," *Objectification of Women in Indian Media, Dimensions of Violence against Dalit Women, The multi-fold oppression on Dalit Women as presented in Bama's Karukku and Vinodini's poems and Short stories, Poem in the "Anthology on death Rohith Vemula- (Swaapnikudi Maranam)*

She pens down her poetry for those Dalit women who have to face the two-fold discrimination based on their caste as Dalits as well as their gender as women. Her poem "A Dalit woman in the land of goddesses" presents about the sanctimony of Indian culture that brags about celebrating women as goddesses. She exposes the difficulties or sufferings faced by Dalit women through her poem.

Her poetry is simple, witty, and short. "None of these are India's daughters," she says about the multi-fold discrimination of Dalit women in and outside families, as well as in the societies.

Aruna Gogulamanda's contemporary poem titled "A Dalit woman in the land of goddesses" reflects the suppression towards Dalit women. It is a satire on the casteist Indian culture that boasts about glorifying women as goddesses.

According to the Hindu Varna System or Manusmriti, there are four Varnas. The first fold Varna is Brahmins, who are the priests, scholars, and teachers. Then the rest of the Varnas in the hierarchical order are Kshatriyas, who are the rulers, warriors, and administrators; the Vaishyas, who are the agriculturists and merchants; and the Shudras, who are laborers and service providers. Those communities belonging to the four Varnas are called the Savarnas. The Dalits or the Scheduled Tribes, who do not belong to this four-fold Varna system, are called the Avarnas.

Feminism is a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies, which focuses on the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. It is divided into four waves: First-wave feminism, Second-wave feminism, Third-wave, and Fourth wave Feminism.

First-wave feminism occurred in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Its major aim was mainly concerned with women's right to vote, and for equal property rights of women. The Second wave of feminism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. It focuses on the women's liberation movement for equal legal and social rights. The third wave of feminism began in the 1990s. It is a reaction as well as a counter-current of second-wave feminism. The fourth wave of feminism aims at the movements and organizations in social media for the justice of women who were raped etc. The different types of feminism are Dalit Feminism, Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism, Marxist and Socialist Feminism, Cultural Feminism, Eco-Feminism, etc.

Dalit Feminism plays an important role in the contemporary casteist era. It is the feminism of marginalized sections of women. It aims for the equality and freedom of Dalit women in the society. Dalit women face double marginalization in this casteist patriarchal society; on one fold, the oppression towards them based on their caste as the Avarnas or untouchables, that is the Dalits. And on the other fold, their subjugation in this patriarchal era based on their gender as women.

"A Dalit women in the land of goddesses" is a Dalit feminist poem by Aruna Gogulamanda, which presents the sufferings or hardships of Dalit women in the present scenario.

Her eyes two dry hollows bear silent witness.
To hundreds of deaths of her mothers, daughters,
sisters
Their dreams, respect, and their bodies.
(“A Dalit woman in the land of goddesses”)

Dalit women are mere voiceless beings, having flesh and blood. They are voiceless and remains as silent witnesses to the injustices towards them by the casteist hierarchy. The casteism and the hegemony as well as the brutality by the upper-class people towards these Dalit women results in the death of their mothers, daughters, and sisters.

Tell the tales of living through fears and years.
Of centuries and millennia of violations and
deaths. (1)

Millions of years and ages of oppression towards the Dalit women are exposed through this poem by the poet, who is evident from the above-mentioned lines, which ultimately results in their deaths.

She was told
That she was dirt,
She was filth and
In this sacred land of thousands of goddesses
She is called a Dalit. (1)

In Sanskrit and Hindi, the term Dalit means broken or scattered. They are the outcaste community or the untouchables. They are the most oppressed or suppressed or subjugated group of people in society. The so-called patriarchal hegemony gives the Dalit women a tag of inferior ones in mainstream society. She is considered as dirt or filth, which can pollute other people. The poet here also makes a satirical remark towards the workshop of goddesses in the temples by calling those outcaste women as Dalit.

Aruna Gogulamanda's poem "A Dalit woman in the land of goddesses" is a poem for the voiceless, suppressed and subjugated group of Dalit women in this casteist male chauvinist era of the society.

Conclusion

Aruna Gogulamanda's Dalit feminist poem named "A Dalit woman in the land of goddesses" clearly portrays the injustice and violation of the so-called outcaste Dalit women. She pens down this

sword poem for the voiceless Dalit women in the society, which reflects her Dalit feminist approach.

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