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APPLYING D. WILLIAMS' TEMPORAL MODEL OF OSTRACISM TO THE SELECT DALIT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES: A CRITICAL STUDY

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Abstract:

*Ostracism is a temporal exclusion from a society to be faced by an individual, a family or a group of people belonging to a particular community. The selected Dalit autobiographies in this research paper such as Laxman Gaikwad's *The Branded*, Laxman Mane's *An Outcast*, Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke* and Sharankumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* unfold the intricate nature of ostracism. The present research paper is an attempt to critique the practice of ostracizing and the resultant variable reactions and solutions perhaps from the ostracized individuals with the view to control the damage or maintain the status quo as represented in these texts with the application of the stages given in D. Williams' 'Temporal Model of Ostracism' such as 'Reflexive Stage', 'Reflective Stage' and 'Resignation Stage'.*

Keywords: *Exclusion, Inclusion, Reflexive Stage, Reflective Stage, Resignation Stage, etc.*

Ostracism is the state of being excluded on the grounds of social values norms and traditions. It is an agonizing experience for most of the individuals, families or a group of people. Dalits (as a collective term for all downtrodden individuals belonging to different minor communities) frequently undergo the inhuman practice of ostracization resulting in their disability of regulating the 'self'. The ostracization appears in the form of frequent beating, purposeful ignorance, and imposition of restrictions, deprivation of accessing public resources so and so forth. Further, ostracization is a process through which Dalit individuals are forced to survive on the periphery of the mainstream society discursively disowning them from their properties, stigmatizing them as 'other', controlling their situations to live a recognized and dignified life and shrinking their social privileges to be a part of the decision-making process.

The selected Dalit autobiographies are exemplary texts dealing with several situations where an individual or a group of society is systematically forced to live helplessly having no control over their own lives. Upon reading these autobiographies, the present paper points out an important aspect which is that these people seek to regain or reassert for that matter, their status quo through various ways and through their docile behaviour.

D. Williams, in his article also co-written by Eric Welsman, entitled 'Ostracism and Stages of Coping', has formulated the three stages as mentioned earlier, viz, the reflexive stage, reflective stage and resignation stage. The present research paper takes up these stages to critically analyze the patterns of behavioural changes in characters through different situations given in the selected autobiographies.

The first stage is the 'reflexive stage' in which an immediate reaction is shown to the incident of an ostracization. The immediate reaction is an outcome of the 'threat' or challenges to felt by an individual to his or her needs or possessions, which leads the ostracized individual to undergo the process of distress and painful experiences.



The second stage is that of the ‘reflective stage’ in which the individual tries to recover from the negative impact of ostracization. The ostracized individual becomes more sensitive to social cues and thereby seeking to lessen the adverse impact of ostracization through his or her strategic steps while coping with the situation.

In the third stage i.e., the resignation step in the ostracized individual understands his or her sheer disability rejoin the group with dignity. Consequently, the ostracized individual voluntarily leaves his or her erstwhile group and sometimes claims to the other value systems, such as conversion to other religious beliefs.

Data Analysis:

The collected data on the selected autobiographies has been analyzed by categorizing various situations and incidents in the light of D. Williams’ temporal model of ostracism.

The Reflexive stage:

There are many incidents, which threaten the narrator and his family to be ostracized, for example, Mahar women are supposed to bow down out of respect, vacate the road for the high caste person, and violation to this is a calamity for the families of Mahar. Baby describes the situation when a newly married bride does not bow down to show the respect towards the high caste person. Later on, Patilgoes to Maharwada and warned that “No mercy would be shown to you..... think twice before doing any such things again!” (Kamble, 53). Similarly, youth of Mahar community resolves to excommunicate the families who eat carcass.

Sharankumar Limbale also noted down so many incidents. A school teacher referred mahar boys as “You, son of bitch’ come on, start writing! You like eating an ox, don’t you?” (Limbale, 4). It not only demeans their status but also degrades their food. Jani, Masamai and many other women had relationship with many mainstream persons, but nobody is ready to accept these women and their children, publicly.

A teacher denies little Laxman Mane to admit in the school as the latter belongs to Kaikadi caste. He commented that “Do nomadic beggars go to school?.....if they study, who will weave our basket ?” (Mane, 36). Bapu and Laxman’s mother were beaten up and insulted over the issue of cane cutting. The villagers had registered a police complaint and threatened the Kaikadi families to throw them out of villages. Raosaheb Khatla from Kamblisar started abusing the musicians, beating, brandishing, and lashing the whip as four upstarts were sent to play in the musical groups. Villagers of Sangavi snatched away their musical instruments, some of the musicians were grafted and finally the matter was resolved in a panchayat. Mane family was excommunicated because of Laxman and Shashi’s inter-caste marriage. These are some of the examples of initial rejection. School boys were abusing Laxman as dirty brat and glandered lamb. Punnappa mortgaged his wife while another woman Pariwas raped. Little Laxman sat for feast at Jintti along with his many Maratha friends. He was thrashed out of pandal for being a Kaikadi brat. A girl blamed that Laxman held her hand while taking common photograph of classmates. This caused beating to the family and kaikadi fraternity at village.

The Branded also represents the same experiences. Policemen hit everyone including men, women and children at the Patrut hamlet. At this movement Dhondamai became helpless and mortgaged her *Mangalsutra* to bribe the police. A Patrutpanchayat resolved to kill the grandfather of Laxman Gaikwad for being a police informer. Manikdada was beaten up severely by putting chilli powder into his anus as he revealed the names of his teammates to the police.

The students from *Babhulgaon* School mocked, jeered, and slapped Laxman without any reason. Selling children and women is also darker side of the Patrut society. Narya, Dagdya, Padmni were sold out. School children were teasing and mocking at Laxman Gaikwad for eating crab curry.



The Patrutpanchayat also threaten family to ostracize for admitting Laxman in the school. The villagers at Kavatha attacked the Patrut houses because of rejection to pay the Mahadev fair contribution. Hanmanta Vadar was killed for taking water from well reserved for the dominant caste. The police have registered many false cases on Patrut, Masanjogi and others. These are the initially actions and situations which caused an ostracization of many Dalit individuals and families.

Reflective Stage:

Baby observed that some of the Mahar women were keeping fast on Chaturthi and Saturday, many of the Mahar tried to enter in to the Hindu temple. Mahar women considered haldi and Kumkum a holy mark as other Hindu women. Pandharinath did not allow his wife to step out of house as other high caste men treat their wives.

Sambhubaap, a devotee of God Vitthal, referred as a Chokhamahar of Mahawada in Limbale's *Akkarmashi*. He used to wear scarlet clothe and presents himself as a devotee of God Vitthal. Jatpanchayat forced masamai to divorce Ithal Kamble. Initially Hanmantta Limbale rejected to give his name as a father to the Sharan. Shantamai kept fast for every Tuesday and Friday to appease Goddess Ambabai and Laxmiaai, respectively. Shrimantanna threatened Sharan to break his neck, if he visits community hall. Once out of rage, Sharan declared that his parents were dead. Similarly, barber refused to cut the hairs of Mahar boys while cobbler didn't mend the footwear. Vani's husband Jumma, Rangoon's son disappeared but nobody has time to trace out them.

A Kaikadi woman herself intimated to the little child of grocery merchant to keep away to avoid touch. Kaikadi believes that it is God who made them nomadic. This fatalist attitude also shows their acceptance of life challenges without arguing. Most of the Kaikadi performs the exorcism and sorcery to boost their moral as well as to secure them. A class photograph has also put the Mane family into the trouble. This has forced the family to leave the village. Martimama did not like Pari's regular bath. When Pariwas raped, her husband deserted her. Later on, she became a psychologically disturbed. Pingala Joshi had set up a tradition for their women to return before sunset.

When Laxman actively participated in a village election, his father warned him "That's not our business! They will take our lives! They will burn down our houses! They won't allow us to live in this village!" (Mane, 110). Laxman Mane's family left the village Nirgudi because of threat over the fuss of classmate's photograph and migrated to the village Sangavi. Due to the hostile life, depression and rejection, Laxman resolved to behave according to the standard of his caste, fetch the canes and weave the basket. Narayan's wife expressed her will to commit suicide, as her father did not have money to pay dowry. Bapu believed that one couldn't survive without caste. Finally, Laxman and Shashihave been forced to remarry according to the Kaikadi traditions.

Laxman gave ripe berries to the Sulbha and Shakuntala while raw ones were kept for himself. Laxman started to sing many devotional songs, wear tulsi beads necklace, keeping fast, reading religious scriptures like Shivililaamrut, Ramayana, abhang, etc. Gaikwad Laxman and Shobha attracted towards each other but Laxman expressed that "I am so poor that I do not deserve to love a girl like you" (Gaikwad, 111). This statement is enough to conclude that he understood his limitations and ready to behave accordingly. Money lenders, Police Patil and village chief had developed an exploitative nexus for the Patrut. A letter written to Indira Gandhi is an attempt of Laxman Gaikwad to regain his status and establish justice. Laxman very soon became a skilled and favourite worker for the manager. This is the proof of his hard and devoted work ability. Being a Patrut nobody was ready to rent a room, which compelled many to speak lie that Laxman belongs to Maratha. Nomadic and denotified organization has been established strategically to raise the voice against the injustices. All these are the reflective attempts and strategies to cope up with the ostracization.



Resignation Stage:

The ostracized started Ambedkar Jayanti instead of Padava, Jaybhim instead of Namskara, Bhimrekha instead of Laxmanrekha, stands together under the leadership of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Sharankumar is talking of separate state 'Dalitsthan'. Jayaba and wife made an attempt to commit suicide by jumping in to the well. It is noteworthy to understand that Dalit initially made efforts to access Hindu Gods and Deities but later on discarded Hinduism and became a Buddhist.

To conclude, there were number of incidents, which can be classified as reflexive, reflective and resignation stages. It shows that ostracized made number of attempts for inclusion and not interested to resign the group membership. However, the situation, where inclusion seems impossible, humiliating and ignominious, forces an individual or group to resign his or her group membership.

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