



**DOUBLE MARGINALIZATION AND CULTURAL VISIBILITY IN JYOTI
LANJEWAR'S POEM *MOTHER***

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Abstract

This paper explores the cultural visibility of the oppressed people belonging to Mahar caste commonly hailing from Maharashtra through the personal narrative expressed by Dalit poet Jyoti Lanjewar. The translated English version titled as Mother from the original Marathi poem Aai bears the original words to emphasize upon the poet's personal experiences and her perspective. The translated version brings out nearly the same impact as the original and therefore has been often employed as a study material in several higher education institutions. The powerful and thought provoking poem has also been translated into several languages. The poem sheds light on darker aspects of our growing society and highlights the social struggles faced by marginalized communities who are often neglected by the people in power. The working class women and their struggles to secure a place in a dominant patriarchal society. The paper also emphasizes the role of the labor community, lack of dignity towards the lower caste and their persisting struggles in a developing world. Lanjewar's depiction of the oppressed community and their determination to follow the social upliftment movement led by Dr. BR Ambedkar in order to rise above social injustice, is a stark reminder how unjust the social hierarchy has been since time immemorial. The paper is examined through qualitative analysis employing theories from feminism, socio-cultural and gender studies. Jyoti Lanjewar's poem urges the reader to comprehend and acknowledge the challenges of a Dalit woman who is otherwise ignored not only by the society but faces similar oppression within her community as well.

Keywords

Dalit, Culture, Translation, Caste, Gender, Feminism, etc.

Full Article

Introduction:

Jyoti Lanjewar, in her poem *Mother*, brings out a powerful commentary on women and their position in the society. The poem is a stark reminder of treatment of women in the post-independence era. The stanzas speak volumes about Dalit Womanhood and reflect their struggle to create their own space within their own community. It is also a reflection of how marginalized women suffered and continued to be marginalized for a very long time. The poem is a critique of prevailing social hierarchy and the injustice faced by marginalized and oppressed people of the society. Lanjewar offers her tribute to both women and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in her poem, she particularly emphasizes the role of women who come from rural backgrounds and toil day and night to meet ends, as she had seen her own mother struggling during her childhood days. The poem begins with an observation that Lanjewar has put forth by saying that 'Mother, I have never seen you wearing saris with gold border' the statement comes from a realisation that women who frequently work to run the house, in places where basic facilities are not available, do not have the means to buy expensive sarees, they wear the same sarees, which are half torn, worn inches above the ankle and is repeatedly stitched and dragged in dirt. Though it might just be a saree, it determines the class hierarchy, the upper class can afford luxurious, grand, designer apparels



while a woman who comes from a lower caste has a different priority, the priority to survive and feed her children, hence the golden-bordered remains a dream. The poem further talks about adornments namely, gold necklace, gold bangles, fancy sandals, it is quite difficult to imagine the oppressed woman with all these decorations at her working site, especially if her salary is not meant for adornment but rather a means for survival and education of her children. Lanjewar reminds us that this is a real struggle that marginalized women go through on a daily basis. It is not merely a matter of whether they can afford it, instead it focuses on whether they should spend money on momentarily happiness or ruminate on building a future with their kids.

The research aims to highlight the discrimination and prejudices faced by people belonging to the Mahar caste. The issue surrounding caste is quite sensitive but at the same time visible in many forms, however it has been persisting for a long time and hence exploiting people from lower caste has been normalised to the point that no one stops for a moment to think of its repercussions. The research also emphasises on the gender and caste discrimination which has been existing in the society since a long time and has continued to give ill treatment to both men and women, but women more in particular since they lack the opportunities to voice their opinions. The paper aims to understand how cultural visibility in today's scenario can bring a lot of awareness to the forefront. At the same time, people can comprehend that double marginalization is still happening, perhaps not in metropolitan cities, but tier 2 cities and rural areas still succumb to exploiting women of caste. The paper sheds light on the double marginalization of women in the society, being a woman itself is highly criticized on various platforms and additionally if a woman belongs to the marginalized groups; it is disparaged and met with negative remarks. The poem allows the reader to view the perspectives of Dalit women by representing their struggles, destitution and ill-treatment by upper caste men and women in all spheres of lives. In Dalit households, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is a revered personality, who is often considered as a God like entity, who not only saved Dalits from being outcast and abolished but made them aware of their oppression, gave them voice and dignity in the society. His contributions in bringing social revolution at doorsteps changed the way how people viewed him, not merely as a revolutionary figure but as a savior of humanity from inequality and humiliation. Jyoti Lanjewar brings forth the long years of caste based oppression practised in the society, how lower caste and their struggles are almost never-ending, her poem showcases the resilient identity of Dalit women who often carry out the hard labor yet carries pride and dignity. The only way out is through education and even then, life does not become easier just becomes tolerable for some. Dalit identity continues to take shape through their culture, art and literature; the cultural visibility might still be obscure yet many participate in challenging the stigma and accepting their cultural roots.

Gender and Caste:

It is bad enough that a woman is born in this patriarchal society but it is even more of a hardship that she belongs to a particular oppressed caste. The poem brings to light the circumstances of Dalit communities; those who are already oppressed are oppressed even further by both lower and upper caste men (Anand, S B, 2020). Women from Dalit communities are often ignored and are subjected to face injustice; their struggles are often considered 'normal' while the similar struggle by a man from the same community might be heralded as something great. Many women from underprivileged spaces strive to provide for the family while the man of the house comes home drunk and beats his wife and children. Their hardships do not make them any weaker rather it builds them stronger. As Anand S B points out that women of caste suffer as much as men of caste, however the system itself is patriarchal in nature, therefore Dalit women receive less to nothing in their work, as it is not without hardships, if their exploitation of caste was not enough,



the women being the 'second sex' suffers twice as much as their male counterparts. Caste based oppression is something that exists to this day as Nida A (2026) expresses in her research how people who belong to marginalized groups deal with caste based humiliation and discrimination. Caste dynamics at workplaces suggest that personal experiences of employees of lower caste play a key role in establishing their trust, loyalty and submissiveness to the upper caste employers. The common purpose is to avoid conflict, arguments and disagreement; the idea is to appease the employers so that they can continue to be employed in their current workplace. Women are given less opportunities in workplaces especially if they belong to any of the reserved categories. Apart from it, the discrimination might not be overt; instead subtle visible forms of biases may continue to dictate their work environment. In everyday situations, women hailing from rural villages face social exclusion owing to their caste and gender. The paper also stresses upon how women of caste gets targeted by men of both lower and upper caste, lust does not have any caste, as Lanjewar mentions in her poem how mothers at workplaces such as construction sites get harassed by men and she has to cover herself so that they would cease to ogle at her; it is ironical how certain traits are desirable even if the person is Dalit. The anti-caste ideology is well expressed in the poem, even though it highlights the agony of being born into a Dalit community and their unceasing suffering throughout their lives.

Social Injustice and Resistance:

The women from marginalized classes do not get sufficient opportunities for work owing to existing biases and stereotypes towards women of lower castes still prevailing in our developed society. Several of the women from Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes are still working for meager salary and are living in a state of poverty. Their contributions to the society is frequently overlooked, for instance, these are the same women who work as laborers at an infrastructure site for their daily wages (Anand S B, 2020) they are often employed in local healthcare in low ranking jobs or as janitors in school, colleges or at workplaces. The poem highlights the plight of working women in harsh conditions, in blazing sun, sometimes without food and water, carrying barrels of tar to a construction site while she puts her children to sleep in a hand-made cradle attached to an acacia tree. The author mentions in the poem how her mother would often feed her children but she herself remains half-fed, the painstaking efforts to keep her family alive by working at multiple houses by washing dishes and clothes to sustain for as long as possible. These incidents make the readers understand the circumstances of women house helpers who often belong to the lower caste and are still treated the same way as before. The notion of women working in different households to keep the house running is not new; however, one can comprehend the amount of struggle mothers have to endure because of poverty and marginalization (Nida A, 2026). The poem emphasizes on inequality of opportunities and lack of dignity of labor in the society, for instance, a daily wage worker may not be able to withdraw a salary as much as an average educated individual, however their job is equally important as the constructions cannot be built without the people working at a rank below or so.

Ambedkar Ideology:

“Fight for Baba..... don't forget him.....And with your very last breath, “Jai Bhim.”

The poem ends with encouraging words that reiterates not to forget the man who showed path to those who were not even aware of their own oppression, the one whose legacy shaped the mentality of Dalits and inspired them to be aware of their own fundamental rights. The only way to combat casteism, discrimination and stereotypes is to be educated; the only ladder towards success goes through the medium of education, the ideology of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, fondly known as Baba Saheb in Maharashtra. Lanjewar in her poem mentions the struggle of people of



caste and how Baba Saheb fought the existing radical system to create space for the excluded ones, she mentions in her poem to go to Deekshabhumi join the march, protest and fight for your equal rights and opportunities. The poem becomes a symbol of resistance for the underprivileged and marginalised. The words “Study, become an Amedkar” highlights the plight of those mothers who never got the opportunity of education; however, they save money for their children and inspire them to become just like Baba Saheb. These words carry enormous meaning where a struggling mother insists her children get education and make their lives better. Her days of hardships must get over as she hopes that her children will take the burden off of her shoulders. The poem also highlights the contribution of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in his journey to bring lower caste citizens to the mainstream. Many of his followers converted to Buddhism on 14 October 1956, at Deekshabhoomi, Nagpur to reject the class hierarchy in Hinduism. The event is also called as Dhammachakra Pravartan Din, symbolising the renouncement of Hinduism and establishing Navyana (Neo) Buddhism to mark a revolutionary shift and paved the way for progress (Shogun Gaikwad, 2024). In the poem, the author mentions how several people donated their hard earned money for the establishment of Deekshabhoomi, she insists her daughter join the fight for equality and justice. For Dalits, Baba Saheb is not just an ordinary man who fought for equal rights but rather he was considered as a God like figure, who eventually became a symbol of resistance, courage and inspiration. His followers related with him because of the commonly shared experiences of the Dalits.

Conclusion:

The poem stressed on the double marginalization of Dalit women by emphasizing that society turns a blind eye to women who belong to lower caste and sometimes because she is a woman in a patriarchal society. Lajewar’s poem Mother is a startling reality of inequality and injustice taking place to this day; she draws attention towards her own mother in this autobiographical writing wherein she underlines the struggle of her own mother in order to survive and encourage her children to become like Dr. B R Ambedkar, the messiah for Dalits in India. There comes a turning point when readers begin to comprehend how casteism is deeply rooted in our society and culture as dignity of labor is unobtainable to individuals who belong to Dalit community. Though the poem concludes by inspiring words to become like ‘Bhim’ and encouraged to follow his legacy, it presents a harsh reality of many Dalit women in society. The paper highlighted upon the multiple marginalization of the underprivileged while also showcasing the cultural visibility of Dalits.

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