



Representation of Crude and Roadside Experiences of Dalit People in Baburao Bagul's *When I Hid My Caste*

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Abstract

This piece of research aims at portrayal of crude and roadside experiences of Dalit people throughout the life, who migrate to the city of Gujrat to the work for the railways. Initially, he is forced to keep his caste a secret to find the residence, but later, throughout his duration of service, which lasted only for a month, his secret comes out in the open and he barely escape being lynched by an upper caste Hindu mob. Kashinath, another Dalit rescues him from the mob. The most striking features of the story are the language and style of Baburao Bagul. He has articulated the pain and suffering, and dangers that Dalit face from birth onwards. He does not need extravagant language of colloquial slang to portray the hurtful, belittling, and often violent treatment Dalit receive for no other reason but their caste. The story, like his other works seek to add dignity to the undignified.

Keywords: Dalit, roadside experiences, violence, caste system, operation, Representation.

Introduction

In the age of globalization, India is one of the fastest growing countries in the world, yet, it is notorious for its rigid caste system. It is believed that all Dalit literary creations have their roots in the Ambedkar thoughts. Baburao Bagul's "*When I hid my caste*" shows dramatic accounts of socio-political experiences of Dalit community in the

caste based society of India. In this short story he shows how society is psychologically affected by caste system. Baburao Bagul shows how both Educated and Uneducated are equal in discriminating others by the name of caste. The title "*When I Hid My Caste*" itself shows the process of hiding the caste by protagonist. He does so for being accepted by the upper class people. The author has not disclosed the name of protagonist, because in day today life there are many Dalit people who have been facing such situation. In the modern society they are facing discrimination. Whenever he hides his caste, he feels guilty and pretends as if he is from the upper caste. The single and most repeated complaint of all Dalit writers has been the extremity of their suffering and condition.

"When I Hid My Caste" is the anthology containing ten stories written originally in Marathi by Baburao Bagul and translated into English by Jerry Pinto. It is the last story in the mentioned anthology. It is a Dalit short story which explores new dimensions of aesthetics which pave the way to new kind of criticism in the realm of Dalit Literature. There are many Dalits who have hidden their caste identity and have adopted new and fashionable surnames of higher castes. This story is a kind of message and suggestion to those Dalits who are enjoying the respect and honor by adopting pseudo-social status. Later or sooner, if their real identity is revealed, they would face the same consequences as encountered by the anonymous protagonist of the mentioned story. Baburao Bagul's short story "When I Hid My Caste" would be critically evaluated in the light of traditional Indian aesthetics i.e. Indian rasa theory along some new traits of the aesthetics of Dalit Literature portrayed in the same.

Dalit writers have always only focused on the seemingly unending sorrows of Dalit community. Baburao Bagul explains that Dalit do not just need sympathy but respect too. Voicing concerns has the primary objective of writers like Baburao Bagul. The story ends with a criticism of the religious texts *Manusmriti*, which teaches and urges upper caste Hindu to be violent and discriminatory towards the lower classes.

Explanation

The protagonist of the story goes to Gujarat for the job. When he goes there he was asked the caste, he replies,

"Why do you ask me my caste? Can you not see who I am? Me, I am a Mumbaikar. I fight the good fight. I give my life in the defense of the right. I have freed India from bondage and I am now her strength. Got that?" (When I Hid My Caste P. 2)

He moved on, the workers in there were talking about him. Devji said to Ranchhod that he was a Marathi manus and a fearless one too. He might be Kshatriya, possibly a Brahmin so do not let him go. Call him back and give him a room for rent. Ranchhod asks Devji to approach Masthur and Ranchhod said he used to ask all strangers they meet. This is the way in this country. Five rupees a month for a room rent. By interrupted Devji said,

"Brother, one can eat mud with a caste brother, but one shouldn't attend a feast with someone of a lower caste" (When I Hid My Caste P. 2)

The protagonist replied a man that he is not going to live with the same poverty. He gets furious tells he is a new citizen of Bharat, well we're all the creator of the new nation, there are no dhedas, no poor, no Brahmins. He liked a rent room he heard a

crack of a pistol-shot: 'Mahar'. While he is hearing the caste name his mind was brought crashing to the ground words were danced like demons in front of his eyes. Ranchhod's question fell upon his ears. "Tiwari, what does 'Mahar' mean?" And Tiwari replied from his half-knowledge: 'Mahar means Maharashtrian. They are like Shivaji the Great: warriors.

'No Panditji, not like that. I'm one of Dr Ambedkar's party, of his caste. My name is Kashinath Sakpal, of Mumbai, Kala Chowky.' (When I Hid My Caste P. 3)

Kashinath's voice inspires and heartens him. Finally Tiwari comes to know it means an Untouchable. Tiwari screams in a rage tells to 'Smash the dirty dheda' come out from the canteen and do not touch anything's in this shop it is all used by this Dalit, many things are touched by his hands. Kashinath put both his hands in his pockets, cocks his head, inflates his chest and roars at them, a powerful, sensational roar. Kashinath begins to feel the courage he is showing. Inside, all the men are terrified into silence. They met Nanaji Panchal; a hirsute black man seems like the most uncomfortable. He looks straight at the foreman's office. All of them shouts by seeing him and starts to run saying that he is an Untouchable from Mumbai, and he cannot be the foreman or we'll all lose our jobs. Tiwari shouts that he will take care of this asks all of them to sit down, I am here. Then they allow how poor we were, and like a sick ox, he lowered my head and made for the foreman's office. Devji approaches him that you have to become that Untouchable's senior. In Devji point of view he said Untouchables are mostly thieves they rob bags from the peoples and lot of them are around here, they are terrifying as a ghost. He refuses him by saying "No need", He terrified because he has hidden his caste and he could see his caste prejudices clearly, so he has refused his support and encouragement. Kashinath's speed shocks him and grabs his arm and said, 'Wait. Tell me.' But Kashinath freed himself with a jerk and pulling the knife out of his pocket, he told him to get away from that place or else he will kill him. He replied in panic that he is a Mumbai dweller. Indeed Ranchhod is quiet stubborn to now Ranchhod was stubborn to know his caste. He climbed upstairs, to quit my job in protest. He went and stood near the desk of Mata Prasad Tiwari, foreman-clerk. Next to Mata Prasad Tiwari, perched on a stool, was Ramcharan Tiwari. Both brothers' faces were red with rage. There was violence in their eyes.

Hey, what were you saying to that unruly Untouchable? To shatter their arrogance to pieces, he said: "Who is Untouchable? Fire is untouchable. The sun is untouchable. Death is untouchable. The five basic elements in their ideal forms are untouchable". (When I Hid My Caste P. 4)

The protagonist tries to save Kashinath from the brothers and co-workers. They are continuously discriminate, torture him and try to beat him because he was a Dalit. Ramcharan said him to move from Kashinath but he didn't because he hide his caste and shows him as an upper-caste. Ramcharan asked him to visit his house so he went to his house. Ramcharan was an upper-caste man when he enters his house Ramcharan's wife welcome him by giving a greetings. He refuses to enter the house but Saraswati Ramcharan's wife compels him. Immediately afterwards, she came out with a bucket of hot water, a small bowl of oil and a lump of soap, and with great enthusiasm Ramcharan said him to sit there and have a bath, and he will rub down with oil. He said that she had

made a mistake by touching his feet. Saraswati said from behind the door that our guest is as our God. After the bath he said, shall we eat outside. But they said that he was not the guru of a Brahmin, 'he took his hand and drawing him into the house.

"When I Hid My Caste" is a Dalit short story which unveils the opportunist mentality and inferiority complex among Dalits who hide their castes and modify their surnames to overcome the inferiority complex and try to upgrade themselves by changing their surnames or adopting fashionable titles to hide their social reality of lower castes. The protagonist-narrator of this story also hides his caste and becomes silent on this issue consequently people think that he belongs to some upper caste and most probably to Brahmin caste. He does so to escape from the fear and agony of caste prevailing in Indian societies. But he faces insult and humility when his caste is known to the people who were his friends earlier. The upper caste friends of the protagonist become furious and violent when they come to know his caste and they give him a sound beating. Then a Dalit comes ahead to rescue him and saves his life. The moha bhavas of the upper caste friends of a Dalit transform into the asura bhavas after knowing the reality of his untouchable caste. This story also explores some new traits of aesthetics as far as Indian literature is concerned. The portrayal of an anonymous untouchable as protagonist and concealment of his caste have been considered as new aesthetics of Dalit Literature in this story by the author. Here in this story the unnamed protagonist might be any one from the untouchables who usually hide their castes and enjoy respect and honor in society. But the consequences faced by the protagonist are also the important trait of Dalit aesthetics discussed by Baburao Bagul in the mentioned story.

Conclusion

In all these passages, the nameless protagonist whenever tries to hide caste he is afraid of society if they know then his caste then he wouldn't be treated as same. Whether he is a senior or junior they don't get equal rights if he is a Dalit. In this story the protagonist was an educated and higher officer but they didn't give a dignity and don't treat as equal. At last the society finds his caste and they throw stones of anger, curse towards them. Kashinath said to complain them to police he replied that he was not beaten by people but Manu, this is only who said those are Dalit because of that he was beaten and cursed him. After saying all this he moved to live in the society that was created by Manu.

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