CHAPTER IV
WRITING DALIT GENDER:
DALIT AMONG DALITS

This chapter sets out to explore the significance of Dalit gender and its construction by examining Baby Kamble’s *The Prisons We Broke* (2008). An attempt is made in this chapter to study the evolution of Dalit gender as a separate entity that demands its own autonomy in terms of literature, culture and political domains. Baby Kamble, who has been influenced by Ambedkar movement and its ideology, sets an agenda that Ambedkar’s ideology is the right solution for the emancipation of women in the Indian context. She exhorts that Ambedkar has envisaged an egalitarian society by introducing Hindu Code Bill in the Parliament for the upliftment of the Indian women.

I

This section examines the evolution of the Dalit feminism. The terms ‘sex,’ ‘gender’ and ‘feminism’ need to be qualified to understand them in the present context. Sex refers to the biological aspect; gender indicates the culture of sociological and political dominance of men over women; feminism, as a theory questions the gender dominance based on sex. The
subordination of women had been fundamentally justified on the grounds of the biological differences between men and women. The subordination of women needs to be theorized for it helps in challenging, subverting and expending not only other (male) theories but its own positions and agenda.¹

Both feminism and postcolonialism share the mutual goal of challenging forms of oppression. The Western feminist criticism argued against the three fold dominance. According to Peter Barry, “Debates and disagreements have centered on three particular areas, these being: the role of theory; the nature of language, and the value or otherwise of psychoanalysis.”² The Western feminist theory questioned the dominance of gender. Indian feminist critics like Kamla Bhasin and Nishat Said Khan opine that feminism is based on historically and culturally concentrate realities and levels of consciousness, perceptions and actions.³

Madhu Kishwar draws a line between Western feminism and feminism in India, “In the West, feminism undoubtedly played a liberating role for women, feminism evolved from women’s own struggles against oppressive power structures which excluded them from equal participation in many aspects of the economic, social and political life of their society.”⁴ In

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India, new opportunities were made available for a small number of western educated women who gravitated towards feminism. Indian feminism is Western imported and failed in studying the sociological problems that come across sex and gender dominance. Indian feminism failed in studying women in the light of caste and it could be called exclusivist feminism. Madhu Kishwar observes that both Western and Indian feminists fought for their entry into educational institutions, employment and power structures. In this context, it is important to note that Dalit and tribal women are excluded from voting, education and employment.

Kancha Ilaiah argues that for a long time the position of women was perceived as a private domain, and therefore political scientists took little interest in studying the views of both male and female thinkers on women. Greek thinkers like Plato and Aristotle have developed a narrow kind of opinion on women. Ilaiah writes, “on the one hand, Plato provided provision for equal education and equal right to become philosopher queens to women belonging to the upper class and on the other he believed that the female sex was created from the souls of the most wicked and irrational men. Women are granted equal rights to education but attainable only by the
ruling class. Aristotle seems to represent more reactionary patriarchal thinking, “Women are naturally inferior to men, and that they are therefore naturally ruled by them...Women’s main function is reproduction. The main via his semen always provides the soul of the offspring, while the female via her menstrual discharge provides the matter.”

Regarding Manu’s views on women, Ilaiah elaborates:

Manu deprived women of their basic political rights even at home. Forbidden to decide anything for herself, she was to be completely deprived of her initiative...If a woman flouted this law, according to him, society should condemn her, and the sovereign should punish her.

Ilaiah criticizes Koutilya’s views on women that Koutilya had the intentional view that every married woman was to be kept strictly under control and constant surveillance:

According to him, every married woman was to be kept strictly under control and constant surveillance trade relations into the marriage system. He gave enormous powers to the state to punish and fine them if they did not behave according to Arthashastra law...Thus Kautilya did not consider the home a private place, but one where the state could intervene for every small violation of
patriarchal-brahminical law, even within the four walls. Like Manu’s law, Koutilya also did not grant social and political rights to married women.\(^8\)

Regarding Vatsayana’s arguments, Ilaiah states that Vatsayana categorized Hindu women into two types. They were the ganikas and the wives. The ganikas are meant for giving sexual pleasure to men and the wives are with the duty of producing the off-spring:

Vatsayana reduced the position of women to mere toys in the hands of men by prescribing at length what a ganika should do to keep a customer happy. He gave a detailed list of things that a citizen should possess: the decorated rooms and equipment for feasts and festivals where the women could be used for amusement.\(^9\)

Vatsayana had not visualized any place for women in politics and state affairs. Manu gave the men right to punish women, Koutilya gave powers to the state to punish and penalize women. Vatsyana reduced the position of women to mere objects in the hands of men at sex. The Hindu thinkers, argues Ilaiah, provided a theoretical framework for the enslavement of women within the framework of the monogamous family. Chastity, prostitution, marriage and every
institutional arrangement was used to reduce the position of a woman to that of a slave.

The Western and the Hindu thinkers provided a theoretical framework for the enslavement of women within the framework of the monogamous family. In contrast, the philosophy of Lord Buddha strengthened women to encounter the limitations and personal ambivalences. Ilaiah enlists five significant points of Buddhism about women:

With all his limitations and personal ambivalences about women, Buddha can be credited with five significant achievements: (i) Buddha recognized the political right of women to join the sangha; (ii) he forced the sangha to recognize women’s right to be leaders; (iii) against the dominant Hindu view, Buddha held that a women can develop her own personality and individuality independent of any male support; (iv) he broke the myth of family and the importance of producing male children to attain salvation; and (v) he was the first to recognize the need for women’s education and political initiative.¹⁰

Another significant move in favour of women is the arrival of Bakti Saint Poets who challenged the Brahmanical hegemony in India. A Dalit critic G. Aloysius calls the ‘Bakti’ school of saint
poets the ‘Mukti’ Poets. Aloysius has the sense that all the Mukti Saint poets have strived for the devotional liberation. The Bakti poets represent a cultural revolt. The Bhakti poets are from different backgrounds but the common goal they had is to debrahmanise India.

The Bakti poets Basava, Haralayya, Akka Mahadevi from Karataka, Namder, Chokhamela, Tukaram and Savata Mali from Maharashtra, Kabir, Ravidas, Dadu Dayal, Rajput princess Mira, Kranti Nanak, the potter Gora and the barber Sena from North region of India Pothuluri Veerabrahman, Yogivemana and Nagadass from Thumulur in Andhra questioned the dominant historiography of Hindu religion and its orthodoxy.

Braj Ranjan Mani states, “The general backdrop of the [Bakti] movement was the chaos in the wake of the Muslim invasions, the worsening economic conditions, and poverty made worse by the Brahmanical lightening of socio-religious restrictions.”11 The Bakti poets’ emphasis lies on spiritual equality, social justice and deep sympathy for the common people. According to Braj Rajan Mani:

Many Bhakti leaders, particularly Kabir and Nanak, transcended sectarian differences and consciously incorporated the bright elements of all faiths, including
Islam, in their teachings. They protested against the low position given to women and encouraged them to join their men folk in various activities. When the followers of Kabir, Ravidas and Nanak gathered together women were included in the gathering.\(^\text{12}\)

Following Buddhism and Christianity, the Bakti movement gave vital importance for the development of women. Apart from the depressed women, the non-Brahman women also took active part in the Bakti movement. For example, Mirabai, the Rajasthan Rajput princess who was known for her finest hymns in Hindi become a disciple of Ravidas, an untouchable saint. Braj Ranjan Mani states that a high caste princess taking a guru from among the untouchables represents a rebellion against the casteism and patriarchy of the medieval society.\(^\text{13}\)

Virashaiva movement in Karnataka, one of the counterparts of Bakti movement is known for the combination of egalitarianism and spiritual excellence. Braj Ranjan Mani writes:

A sparkling feature of Virashaivism is the strong presence of women who played a significant role in the movement. There were many influential female ascetics in early Virashaivism...The movement severely criticized the brahminical legitimation of female subordination and tried
to build a new version on the man-woman relationship. It was characteristic of Vishaivism that there was place in it for the most unconventional of women like Akka Mahadevi and Muktayakka.14

The philosophy of Hinduism and Brahmin domination lowered the women’s status. But it is only through the Bakti Movements, the women of suppressed castes and anti-Brahmin women like the princess of Rajput Mirabai, Akkamahadevi and Muktayakka take active part, accepting the untouchable saints as their gurus.

Uma Chakravarti points out that there are many references to caste and gender discrimination in the abhagas, the poems written by Bakti saints. This kind of secondary citizenship in terms of gender paved the way for the emergence of Bakti School of women saints. Uma Chakravarthi locates a number of women saints that include Muktabai, Bahinabai, Soyarabai, kannopatra and janabai, among others, who questioned the gender discrimination.15

The philosophy of Lord Buddha and the movements led by Bakti Saints influenced Mahatma Jotibha Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar, the architects of modern India. Mahatma Jotibha Phule (1827–1890) was the first activist to launch a movement
in India for the liberation of the Sudras, Dalits and women. Phule is the ideological and political founder of the anti-caste movement. He saw a close relationship between knowledge and power much before Foucault and Edward Said. Phule adopted a more radical approach to gender inequality than any of his contemporaries.

Phule understood that exclusion from knowledge was the main cause behind women’s subordination and education was the key aspect to liberate them. Phule and his wife Savitribai established 18 schools between 1848 and 1852. They established a separate school for girls in India in 1948 and it was the first school meant for depressed girl children. In 1860s, Phule actively campaigned for widow remarriage and fought for banning the practice of child marriage. Phule, sensitive to gender, was conscious of the differences within women based on caste and productive culture. In his view the low caste women are doubly oppressed as they are oppressed both by the upper caste men and the men of their own families.

B.R. Ambedkar constructed his theory based on the teachings of Buddha, Kabir and Phule. He identified caste and patriarchy as the twin forces that arrest the progression of Dalit women. To root out gender inequality, Ambedkar introduced the
Hindu Code Bill in 1951, which envisaged the social security of women in India. It was however not allowed to be passed by the upper caste leadership who wanted the orthodox Hindu practices to be continued.¹⁸ Challapalli Swaroopa Rani writes that the contribution of Ambedkar in educating Dalit women is unforgettable. She also states Ambedkar dealt with the human relations on one hand and highlighted the need for co-ordination between male and female: “In India, both women and Dalits are equally exploited and strategically excluded because of caste. Ambedkar did a war against these two social evils.”¹⁹

Contemporary feminist critics Meenakshi Moon and Urmila Pawar write, “women actively involved in the early Untouchable Liberation Movement” and liberated many women out of the Devadasi profession and find husbands for them as early as 1908.²⁰ In the movements like Mahad Satyagraha of 1928, Nasik Satyagraha to enter the Kalaram temple (1930–35) in which Ambedkar declared that he ‘would not die a Hindu,’ hundreds of women held independent conference to support Dr. Ambedkar’s declaration to convert.²¹

Eleanor Zelliott examined the involvement of women in Ambedkar movement and other women organizations. She writes:
Vimal Throat reports that the National Federation of Dalit Women, as a code to the Mahad Conference of 1927, which are seen as the real beginning of the Ambedkar movement, has called for Dalits to gather at Mahad again on December 25, 1998. Just as the Mahad Conference of December 25, 1927, burned those portions of the Manusmriti which limited the rights of Untouchables and legalized extreme punishments for any supposed transgression, the Mahad Conference of December 25, 1998 will find women in the thousands burning the Manusmriti for its denial of human rights to women.22

Highly influenced by Ambedkar Movement, many Dalit writers in the post-Ambedkar period produced excellent works, who include, Urmila Pawar, Jyoti Langewar, Hira Bansode, Surekha Bhagat, Pradnya Lokhande, Mina Gajbhiye, Baby Kamble, Shantabai Kamble among others. Telugu has produced such stalwarts as Challpalli Swaroopa Rani, Gogu Syamala, Vinodini and Jupaka Subadra and Siva Kami, Bama and Veeramma have been writing powerful works in Tamil. Writing about the emergency of Dalit Feminist literature and its need, Challapalli Swaroopa Rani states:
It has a long time for Dalit women to overcome their oppression, as Dalits and put to creative use the gains of social and literary movements. There are of course common issues that bind Dalit men and women, like untouchability and caste oppression. But women also suffer from patriarchal oppression. These concerns are constantly foregrounded in Dalit women’s poetry in Telugu and are evident in the form, content and the emotions that they express. However, Dalit women’s poetry in Telugu still needs to develop beyond the confines of patriarchy.  

She further states that the poetry by Dalit women is far more powerful and has a far greater impact than the poetry of Dalit male poets or upper caste women poets. Dalit women’s issues have less in common with Dalit men’s issues when compared to those of the upper caste women.

In the Post-Ambedkar period, Dalit women used literature as a weapon to counter the mainstream feminist writing that include the genres, like poetry, short story, essay, novel and autobiography. Of all the genres, the autobiography is found suitable to write the women’s experiences in their local idiom. The Dalit women’s autobiographies include, Bama’s *Karruku* (2004), Viramma Josiane Racine’s *Viramma: Life of a Dalit*
(1997) in Tamil and Urmila Pawar’s *The Weave of Life* (2009) and Baby Kamble’s *The Prisons we Broke* (2008) in Marathi. Jasbir Jain writes that ordinarily the autobiographical form presents a consciousness of the ‘self’ which retrospectively traces the process of the self-evolution. The autobiographical narratives work backwards in time, and are selective in the choice of events which have impacted the writer. Further she identifies that the gender is an important category for women’s autobiography.\(^{24}\) The following section examines Baby Kamble’s *The Prisons we Broke* as a text representing the aspect of the double oppression of the Dalit women.

**II**

Baby Kamble presents in *The Prisons We Broke* (2008) the development of herself as well as her community. In an interview with her translator Maya Pandit, she says, “I wrote about what my community experienced. The suffering of my people became my own suffering. Their experiences become mine. So I really find it very difficult to think of myself outside of my community.” (Kamble, 136)\(^{25}\)
The narration deals with her family background, village customs like worshipping local deities, superstitions, Mahars and yeskar duties, school education, experiences of discrimination, marriage customs, experiences of new brides with their in-laws, cooking beef, Dalit culture, exploitation of the upper castes, the influence of movies, the influence of Buddha and finally the arrival of Dr. Ambedkar as Dalit messiah and Kamble’s active involvement in Ambedkar movement.

The experience of insecurity is one among the major aspects in Kamble’s autobiography. The position of Dalit women in a Dalit family, which is full of experiences charred by insecurity, domestic violence and social violence, is an important theme in her autobiography. The patriarchal system in India made the Dalit women feel insecure and dependant on men.

Stating the importance of sons in a family, Baby Kamble writes, “The eldest son was the pride of the house. He would be offered to the deity as vaghya or potraja. Fathers had a loin’s share in preparing their sons for this role. To offer the son as vaghya or potraja was considered a great honour and prestige for the family. The father very diligently saw to it that his son was properly trained.” (18-19) The elder sons are given high
priority and the prestige of daughters is not considered by the parents.

Another aspect of domestic violence that Dalit women experience is the hegemony of husband and the dominance of in-laws at the bride groom’s place. The author illustrates, “But we too were human beings. And we too desired to dominate, to wield power. But who would let us do that? So we made our own arrangements to find slaves – our very own daughters in-law! If nobody else then we could at least enslave them.” (87) She writes that young girls, hardly eight or nine or ten years old, were brought home as daughters-in-law. Girls, even younger were married off. There were children who could not even remember their marriages.

Baby Kamble presents how marriages take place among Dalit families even when the bride or bridegrooms are very young. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, however dealt with the child marriages in Hindu families. Being a young bride, a Hindu woman experiences patriarchy at domestic level. But a Dalit woman experiences violence at home and caste discrimination in public places. In this context, Dalit women experience double alienation. Kamble describes:
Thus girl would embark upon a new life that was harsh and arduous. She was a young girl, a child really, still immature. Yet, the poor child had to break all ties of love and go to her in-laws’ house to lead a married life, without even knowing what a husband meant, or what it was to be given away. (93)

As soon as the bride arrives at her in-laws’ home, she would be asked to make two baskets full bhakris. The new bride is not allowed to sleep until she completes the entire house hold duties. Baby Kamble also deals with how Dalit women are confined to live with in the four walls of the house, “In those days, it was the custom to keep women at home, behind the threshold. The honour enjoyed by a family was in proportion to the restrictions imposed on the women of the house.”(5)

The author depicts the experiences of social discrimination by the Dalit women. She writes that a Dalit woman needs to stand in the courtyard keeping a distance from the shopkeeper. She would beg him with utmost humility to sell her the things she wanted, “Appasab, could you please give this despicable Mahar woman some shikaki for one paisa and half a shell of dry coconut with black skin.”(13) If the shopkeeper’s children trickle out into the courtyard for their morning ablutions, the
shopkeeper would give the innocent children lessons in social behaviour:

‘Chabu, hey you can’t you see the dirty Mahar woman standing there? Now don’t you touch her? Keep your distance’. Immediately our Mahar women, gathering her rags around her tightly so as not to pollute the child, would say, ‘Take care little master! Please keep a distance. Don’t come too close. You might touch me and get polluted.’ The shopkeeper would come out and, from a distance, throw the things into her pallav, which she had spread out in order to receive them. She would then respectfully keep her money on the threshold. That of course did not pollute him. (13-14)

The Dalit women undergo severe caste discrimination and violence. Baby Kamble recounts how the Dalit women are not allowed to use the regular road that was used by the higher castes writes:

When somebody from these castes walked from the opposite direction, the Mahars had to leave the road, climb down into the shrubbery and walk through the thorny bushes on the roadside. They had to cover themselves fully if they saw any man from the higher castes close,
they had to say, ‘The humble Mahar woman fall at your feet master’. This was like a chant, which they had to repeat innumerable times, even to a small child if it belonged to higher caste. (52)

Mahar women find it difficult to face the discrimination at the work places. The Brahmin women consider that their mere touch pollutes them while buying firewood from them: “The Mahar women would check the bundles carefully, saying, ‘Kaki, we have taken out every stand of hair and thread from the sticks. Each stick has been checked. Have we gone mad that we will pollute your house? You are god’s own people. Don’t we know even that?”(55) The Brahmin women do not allow their children to play if the Mahar women are on the business of selling firewood.

Kamble narrates how the Dalit women are made to suffer because of the orthodox belief of the Hinduism, “The entire community had sunk deep in the mire of such dreadful superstitions. The upper castes had never allowed this lowly caste of ours to acquire knowledge. Generations after generations, our people rotted and perished by following such a superstitions way of life. Yet, we kept believing in your Hindu religion and serving you faithfully.”(37) She writes that the fear
of death drove people to goddess Satwai and they would perform all the customary rituals. The Brahmin priests intimidate the Dalit women so that they do not question them.

Baby Kamble narrates an accident that reflects the extent of superstitions in the lives of the Dalit women: "We must now give up eating dead animals. Ambedkar knows what he is saying. He has been educated in the white man’s land. Is he mad to say so without a reason? He says this because he knows something about it. It is time to discard this maharness...Don’t eat dead animals.”(66) But Karbhari who was a man of old customs and traditions did not accept Bhaikai Anji’s suggestion and said: “How dare you ask us to give up our custom of eating dead animals! You are asking us to revolt against the village...the village land is our mother. We have to carry forward whatever order she has given us. Why do we need foreign Knowledge?”(66-67) Karbari termed Ambedkar’s knowledge as foreign and labeled that yeskar’s stick was the mark of the happiness of the land and they had in them real Mahar flesh and blood.

This incident between Aaja and Karbhari represents the struggle between Ambedkar’s knowledge which is termed foreign and the ignorance of the Mahars. They also said that the
yeskar’s staff was not just an ordinary stick with a bell. It was no less than a royal staff; it was the mark of the real strength of the Mahar who was a proud breed.

Even the poor, illiterate and ignorant Mahar’s did not find fault to offer young girls to the village goddess Ambabai as jogins and young boys as potrajas. As they have been practicing this custom of offering young boys and girls to the goddess for ages, they never dare to come out of it. They blindly believe that the Goddess Ambabai will give blessings and the remaining Mahars will be protected. The poor Mahars say, “We have been doing so for ages; that’s why we have his blessings and our children are protected. And the jogin? She is also a women offered to our goddess. And you don’t want to do any of this? Do you know that if the goddess is displeased, she can ruin the entire house? She will burn our houses as punishment. The potraja is supposed to be the servant of the goddess.”(67-68)

Baby Kamble states that people used to be afflicted with typhoid in the Maharwada. If anybody suffered from malaria, they believed that one was possessed by Hadal, a female ghost. Epidemics like cholera and plague used to be common among the Mahars, and they depend on superstitions:
When the patient had fits, ten strong men would sit on his chest and a couple of others pin his legs down. The onlookers would watch the scene in horrified fascination. They would wonder aloud about the terrible strength of the spirit possessing the man. ‘What a powerful spirit!’ they would exclaim. ‘Ten men cannot control him! We have seen it with our own eyes’. (80-81)

Internalization of the patriarchy is another aspect that Baby Kamble deals with. A Dalit woman who experienced the patriarchy and caste shows authority over her daughter-in-law. Baby Kamble writes:

In those days, at least one woman in a hundred would have her nose chopped off. You may well ask why. It’s because of the sasu, who would poison her son’s mind. These sasus ruined the lives of innocent women forever...They had no food to eat, no proper clothing to cover their bodies; their hair would remain uncombed and tangled, dry from lack of oil. Women led the most miserable existence.(98)

Kamble further depicts how the young girls are beaten up:

Once she was brought back to her in-laws, an even worse fate awaiting her. Her in-laws would take a huge square
piece of wood – weighing around five kilos – to the carpenter to have stocks made for her. The carpenter would drill a hole in the wood, big enough for her foot to go through. After this, they would put an iron bar through the sides so as to make it impossible for her to pull an iron tub. She would have to drag this heavy burden each time she tired to move...She was not a human being for her in-laws, but just another piece of wood. (98-99)

In Dalit families, Dalit women work equally as their men do. They work at home as well as in the fields. She further states that Dr. Ambedkar’s made the Mahar women to take a different path. Ambedkar asked the Mahar women to educate their children so that they will make the Mahar women aware of their rights. Influenced by Ambedkar’s speech, Bhikai Anji made a resounding speech:

Let me assure you, my sisters, what right. We must educate our children. We must not and will not eat dead animals. We must reform our community. Let us resolve to fight along with Ambedkar. He speaks nothing but the truth. Let’s follow him to the end. This is what I say. (65)

Ambedkar’s speech caught the attention of the Dalit women, and Baby Kamble was one among them: “I am a
product of the Ambedkar movement...Ambedkar taught us that character is the foundation of this edifice called the human society. When Compassion and morality follow character, society achieves its real strength. He wanted to transform society in the tight of this philosophy.”(125)

The author recollects the cunning nature of the upper castes. Hinduism confined the women to the superstitions and rituals:

Today many of our daughters and daughters-in-law are graduates. They are a hundred times more superior to ignorant women like us. Even if their husbands forget the father in the glory of their own so called greatness, it is their duty to reprimand their husbands. They should tell them, ‘Remember, what you are today is solely because of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar.(123)

To overcome this handicap, the Mahar women began to think rationally. Influenced by Ambedkar, Baby Kamble as a school going girl dared to pollute Rama in protest against not being allowed into the Hindu temple. She considers that giving up the Hindu worship is her first active movement. Later Baby Kamble involved herself in many other activities that include the demanding for Dalit women rights. She recollects an incident.
Rani Lakshmibai established the first women’s club, Mahila Mandal, in Phalton, which was occupied by Brahmin women. As the Rani decided to allow Mahar women into the Mandal, the revolutionary Dalit women activists like Thakubai Kakade, Mathubai More, Fattabai Kakade and Vithabai Kakade used to take women from all the houses to the meetings held by the Mandal. Baby Kamble involved herself actively in the meetings. Kamble writes:

All the Brahmin and Marata women had occupied the chairs. They wouldn’t allow the Mahar women to sit on the chairs. Helpless, our women stood on the side. At the same time, the ram sahib started to move towards the stage, accompanied by her other followers Godbole, Velankar and Bhad Kamkar. Our thakubai rushed forward. (133)

The encounter of the Dalit women with Rani suggests that the Dalit women are socially educated and politically determined. The Dalit women are more radical in questioning the caste discrimination and dominance Baby Kamble also states, “Attending meetings was a new activity for our women. By now they had become more aware because of Babasaheb
Ambedkar with such meetings their knowledge began to increase. They began to take firm steps ahead.”(133)

She is aware of social challenges that the Dalit women face. Baby Kamble became a political activist too. In Phalton, at the time of elections, Baby Kamble and her husband canvassed for their party candidates and participated in the demonstrations. She states that they are never out of Ambedkar’s movement and she devoted herself totally to the movement. Highly inspired by Ambedkar’s thoughts, she sent her children to school. She was very much inspired by Dr Ambedkar’s speech:

Educate your children. They, in turn, should spend one percent of their salary in improving the lot of poor children only then will their education benefit the community and the generation next to their will be educated. Once they are educated, they can organize themselves and find out various ways of directing the struggle. And I am sure my sisters and mothers will carry out this task with an iron resolve. (135)

She decided to begin her struggle through her writings. She established an orphanage for the backward castes. She is
the president of Mahatma Phule Duyan Vikas Prasarak Sanstha where two hundred children are studying in the school.

Thus Baby Kamble’s narration of various incidents vis-à-vis the Dalit women suggests that the nature of the problems faced by the Dalit women in India essentially differs from those that the upper caste women face. Since the nature of the problems differs, the solutions to the problems of the Dalit women too differ. As a staunch follower of Dr. Ambedkar, Baby Kamble illustrates how education and self-assertion redeem the Dalit women from the kind of the domestic and social problems that the Dalit women confront.

The coming chapter “Construction of Dalit Identity: Assertion of the Self” deals with various non-Brahman and Dalit movements lead by Bakti poets and later the influence of Phule and Adi movements that shaped the Dalit movements into a literary movement. It is the major aspect of the study about the arrival of Dr. Ambedkar which made great and influential changes on Dalit Panther’s movement which leads to establish a separate literary canon for Dalits.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

4 Maitraye Chaudhuri (ed.), 44.
6 Kancha Ilaiah, 202.
7 Kancha Ilaiah, 182.
8 Kancha Ilaiah, 183.
9 Kancha Ilaiah, 183-84.
10 Kancha Ilaiah, 184.
12 Braj Ranjan Mani, 154.
13 Braj Ranjan Mani, 154.
14 Braj Ranjan Mani, 166.
18 Branj Ranjan Mani, 405.


21 Eleanor Zelliot, 205.

22 Eleanor Zelliot, 208.


25 Kamble, Baby, The Prisons We Broke, New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2008, 136. Subsequent references are to this addition with page numbers given in parenthesis.

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