

Oppression and Resistance: Reflections of Mohan Parmar on Dalit

Woman in *Beyond the Threshold*

Abstract

The current research looks at how Mohan Parmar's short story "Beyond the Threshold" portrays Dalit women's oppression, subjugation, and abject position as women and Dalits. Higher caste people have historically subjected Dalit women to physical and emotional abuse and subjugation. As a method of achieving their vile goals, oppressors take Dalit women for granted. In this short story on the repressed plight of Dalit woman, Mansinh, an upper caste farm owner, despite his admirable friendship with her husband, sexually harasses a Dalit farm labor Revi. Because Dalit women are at the bottom of the social structure, they come across caste prejudice. In a diversified and highly stratified society, caste becomes a deep-rooted factor in the exploitation of Dalit women, as depicted in the short story. The study focuses on caste, a marker of the social status and source of power and privileges, and the concerns of the author induced and articulated in the story against this backdrop. While the story highlights a Dalit woman's struggle outside of the home, it also depicts the limitations placed on her by her family. Revi's life becomes awful through Chaman's connection with Mansinh. Apart from that, the paper tackles Dalit women's independence from such lustful people, with the author pushing for resistance to oppression and servitude as gender roles change over time. In this story, the author's purpose is to increase awareness among Dalit women.

Keywords

Introduction

Dalit literature emerged as a distinct genre of Indian literature in the post-independence era, providing Dalits with a platform to fight injustice, discrimination, oppression, and marginalization. Dalits were previously known as untouchables and were the forgotten facet of society. It is based on the revolutionary ideology of Dr. Ambedkar, which sows seeds of consciousness, resistance, and revolution in the minds of Dalits and other oppressed people. Dalit feminism originated as a result of Indian feminism's sole deliberation on upper-caste women, which utterly overlooked Dalit women's predicament. The purpose of Dalit literature for and by Dalit women is to portray Dalit women's status, which has previously been overlooked. Shantabai Kamble's *The Kaleidoscopic Story of My Life* (1983), Urmila Pawar's *Weave of My Life* (1988), Bama's *Karukku* (1992), and Babytai Kamble's *Prisons We Broke* are other prominent Dalit feminist novels (1987). Mohan Parmar is a well-known Gujarati Dalit author who utilizes his works to highlight the challenges that Dalits face. For his collection of short stories *Anchalo*, he earned the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2011. *Beyond the Threshold*, a short story on Dalit women's plight in a male-dominated culture, is a noteworthy example of his creative ability. Dalit narratives depict Dalit groups' social and cultural marginalization and subordination. It illustrates the hardships and pains that Dalits pass through. This study looks into the subjugation and persecution of Dalit women as shown in Mohan Parmar's short story *Beyond the Threshold*. The purpose is to look into how Dalit women are oppressed and discriminated against. And it also incorporates resistance against such practices in order to achieve freedom. Dalits are a social class that used to be known as untouchables and were regarded to be at the bottom of society. Dalit women, who live in the lowest social strata, are poor and underprivileged, as well as humiliated and oppressed.

People were classified into *varna*, *jati*, *gotra*, and *kula* as social markers, and Dalit women were at the bottom of a highly diverse and stratified caste society. Caste as a rank or hierarchy indicator in Hindu civilization is an age-old construction based on social concepts and religious manipulation, which further empowers specific caste groups culturally and socially. Women confront a variety of challenges in a traditionally male-dominated society, but Dalit women face deep-seated subordination and persecution due to caste discrimination. "Traditionally, Dalit women have been subjected to tremendous filthy verbal abuse and sexual epithets, naked parading, dismemberment, tooth and nail removal, and violence, including murder, after declaring witchcraft," says Ruth Manorama, founder and president of the NFDW. Dalit women are threatened with rape as part of a larger attack by the upper castes" (qtd. in Brueck 156). Because caste is an established system in society to determine power and privileges, Anupama Rao elaborates that "the bodies of Dalit women are seen collectively as mute, and capable of bearing penetration and other modes of desire and/or sexuality because of the over-determination of this violence as caste-privilege" (qtd. in Brueck 156). Dalit women face oppression on three levels: class, caste, and gender. According to Uma Chakravati, they are "the thrice oppressed" because of "economic power and labor exploitation; the stigma of the caste system and oppression experienced through the power of dominating castes; and their gender through regular abuse of their dignity and endemic sexual violence" (38).

Dalit women meet the awful conditions and experiences imposed by a male-dominated society. *Beyond the Threshold* denotes Revi, a Dalit woman who receives tortures and enslavement at the hands of Mansinh, an upper caste man emotionally and physically. Revi becomes a victim of Mansinh's tyranny. He enters her residence in an intoxicated state after not seeing her for a long time and makes a slanderous display. His visit not only destroyed her life, but it also humiliated her in front of her neighbors, who derided her. Her neighbors made her feel isolated. Revi's fears and

concerns about Mansinh's lustful nature find evidence in her words below from the story: "He's so unpredictable! What if he grabs my hair and drags me away..." (Parmar 18). Only after Revi's concurrence to visit the field the next day he leaves. Mansinh's actions were widely publicized, humiliating and tormenting her mentally and physically. Residents in the area insulted Revi's situation, which worsens her already difficult situation. Revi feels frustrated with Mansinh's repeated torments and sufferings, and as a result, commits suicide. "She wishes to pass away. She stretched a rope between the horns of the buffalo on the wall " (19). Revi was on the edge of killing herself when her child's face appeared in front of her, saving her life.

Women's sorrows and the horrible conditions they face under male dominance are the focus of the majority of Dalit works for women. Revi represents a poor Dalit woman who follows male dictates in this short story. Dalit women are dependent on and obey the instructions of males in patriarchal societies since they hold the bottom place of the social hierarchy. Before leaving for work outside the locality, Chaman leaves Revi with an admonition message so that she would be unquestioned during his absence in the village. Others oppress Dalit women in society, but males hold the upper hand at home. He says, "I'll be back after Maha. Take precautions. None should be able to raise a finger..." (16). Revi comes out of home on the fourth day after Chaman's departure otherwise stayed inside the home. She keeps herself contained within the domestic four walls, recalling Chaman's command, until the lustful Mansinh's unwelcome and unplanned appearance. Revi's condition is largely due to her husband Chaman's connections with Mansinh. "Despite everything, Chaman and Mansinh maintained their friendship," she claims. Bhaga had tried everything he could to rouse Chaman, but he was not to listen (19).

As a marginalized minority, Dalit women are portrayed as feeble and vulnerable to male authority. They are seldom afforded freedom and are forced to live under man's control. In

Chaman's absence, Revi was told by Bhaga, Chaman's older brother, that "Mansang is a cruel man," and that she should let Chaman befriend him but stay away from him" (22). Women's natural passions and ambitions have been stifled, resulting in a major battle. In Dalit writings about Dalit women, the status of woman has always been repeated, expressing the difficulties of Dalit women trapped between the two worlds. Revi is trapped; if she does not go to the field, Mansinh will come to her house with terrible embarrassment and on the other hand, her family imposes limitations on her to safeguard dignity. "It was almost as though she was caught in the wall's fractures, trying to free herself with no one to help her" (22). In the face of problems imposed by the powerful, she must battle for her rights.

Women's physical exploitation is a key issue in Dalit women's writings in India, as women are viewed as objects to be used to fulfill their malevolent desires. Dalit women undergo discrimination and persecution since they are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. "The topic of rape cannot be grasped only in terms of class, criminality, or as a psychological aberration or demonstration of male brutality," writes Gopal Guru of sexual violence against Dalit women. The caste issue must also be considered, as sexual violence against Dalit or tribal women is far more severe in terms of severity and magnitude" (151). Revi is unable to find a solution to her abuse of her body. After Mansinh's visits, she realizes that "my honor is on the line" (Parmar 22). Revi's struggles to raise her voice in order to safeguard her and her family's honor are detailed in the text, proving her tenacity in the face of such hardships. She is adamant about breaking free from exploitation and servitude. The author has expressed this idea in a persuasive manner.

A Dalit woman's resistance is distinctive in that it becomes a trademark in Dalit literary storytelling. Revi is well-liked in the hamlet, and her family and neighbors are courteous to her. This prompted her to retaliate. She makes a mental note to discipline Mansinh. The story also

reveals Revi's opposition to Mansinh's exploitative behavior. She makes the mental decision to be free of Mansinh and the humiliations he creates after contemplating her child, husband, and relatives. She gathered courage and came up with a strong determination to free herself: She yelled, "You villain!" It's past time for me to pay you my dues, and I'm not going to stop until I've turned you into a eunuch " (24). She defies his attempts to molest her in the agricultural field, and when Mansinh witnesses her defiance, he stresses and tells Revi to "let things go on as they are" (25). Revi, on the other hand, is adamant: "I have put off all shame." Otherwise, what remains of my honor?" (26). When Mansinh learns that he has publicly insulted her and that if she retaliates, his honor would be compromised, he is taken aback. He tries to silence Revi because *Thakranas* is about to arrive.

Revi is portrayed as a bold woman who insists on marrying Mansinh despite the fact that she is already married in order to be rid of the latter's constant persecution and agony. The chapter depicting their chat about marriage and social life reveals Mansinh's caste-ridden thinking as a representative of higher caste. He refuses to marry Revi because he regards her as a low caste woman and is consequently barred from marrying an upper high caste male. It reveals Mansinh's deeply established caste prejudices and outworn conventional outlooks, as he rejects marriage proposals despite his previous and current connection with her. Through above episode Revi makes Mansinh realize that her caste went unnoticed all through her physical mistreatment but that come to light as significant for legal relationship. "I will not harass you," says Mansinh bidding apology realizing his mistakes, "from now on. Please accept my apology" (Parmar 26). The upper caste males attempt to conserve and replicate the previous identity to claim privileges over other castes, exemplified by Mansinh in this story. In her book *The Caste Question*, Anupama Rao expresses similar sentiments on Dalit women, as follows:

Rape, the stripping and parading of women and other forms of gendered humiliation reproduce upper-caste male privilege. Sexual violence is particularly indecipherable and experienced as an unspeakable form of intimate humiliation. Secrecy around sexual violence is doubly inflected. Perpetrators do not conceive it as violence except when they encounter resistance, in which case they brutally assert their rights. Its victims experience humiliation as gendered violence and as collective punishment of the family and community. (222)

Revi is intended as a touchable character who becomes untouchable the moment the need is met. "The Dalit female body was both at the same time – ugly and appealing, untouchable and available, reproductive and productive," argues Charu Gupta in *Writing Sex and Sexuality: Archives of Colonial North India* about the Dalit female body. Sexual exploitation of Dalit women was commonplace, and it was frequently described in terms of Dalit women's claimed "loose" character" (25). Revi slips into Mansinh's trap at first, but she rises with mental fortitude to end the cycle of exploitation, mental and physical agony. Caste serves as a shield to protect her from the humiliation and exploitation to which she has been subjected. Dalit women are obliged to suffer in this way in this tradition-bound culture.

Conclusion

Thus, the current study looks at how the author considers the Dalit woman's oppression as doubly vulnerable and wretched situation in a caste-ridden and gender-conscious repressive society, as well as her struggles to achieve independence. Revi's encounter with Mansinh, a member of the higher caste who sexually exploits her for more than five years, is depicted as traumatic in the short story. Thus, the research illuminates Revi, a Dalit woman who endured physical and emotional abuse, persecution, humiliation, and exploitation, as well as her brave quest for freedom. The study looks into a circumstance when a helpless Dalit woman is mistreated, resistance to exploitation and

persecution becomes essential. As a result, she has no choice except to fight back. Revi goes beyond the call of duty, overcoming the hurdles that fall in her path in order to save her dignity and honor. Caste is once again fueling Dalit women's servitude and exploitation. Despite abusing Revi for five years, Mansinh refuses to marry her because she is a Dalit. The study addresses how Dalit women are emotionally and physically tortured and exploited via Revi's experiences. Revi's bravery in the face of atrocities against Dalit women provides a ray of hope for other oppressed women.

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