

Negotiating Dalit Identity in Daya Pawar's *Baluta*

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Abstract: *Identity crisis is a socially central issue in the whole world as it develops the images of an individual, a country, a community or a part of the general public. It has involved concern particularly for the minimized areas over the globe. The persecuted and discouraged social gatherings of India are exceptionally cognizant as they have been abused more than several many years in the past in Indian history. The presentation of abstract structures by the young generation of these areas called Dalits, Adivasis and so on picked up force in the twentieth century. The voice of the voiceless could be heard through scholarly manifestations. A powerful approach and presence of Dalit life account shook the apparently tranquil scholarly universe of Indian composition and stirred it from profound sleep of 'void' making 'space' for the misused ones. Numerous Dalit life accounts are viewed as a social archive as opposed to only a record of the creator's very own encounters. The 'recovery' of exceptionally sensible and logical progression of collection of memoirs starts with an extraordinary writer Daya Pawar with his personal history 'Baluta' considered being the primary ground-breaking and complete Dalit life account which an effective depiction of battle be to made by an individual from discouraged and untouchable community to be taught and make his own personality in severely caste ridden Indian social structure.*

Keywords: *Dalit, autobiography, identity, split identity, humanism, injustice, castigation.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

“The Dalit’s subaltern status is inherited from birth and sanctioned by sacred authority. It is eternal and unalterable” – (Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature, Limbale 3)

Dalit personal histories share an inseparable connection with some predominant issues like environmental issues, cultural censure and the enduring battle between mistreated oppressed community and individuals getting a charge out of advantaged economic wellbeing. Daya Pawar's accepted content *Baluta* articulates the adventure of an outcaste community called "Mahar" in inside towns of Maharashtra and in Mumbai. The present paper tries to show how the harmful effect of casteism makes Mahars a simple prey to social and natural shamefulness. This paper likewise attempts to brighten an understanding into the mental torture and mortification distributed to the Mahar while they attempt to acquire a lot of *Baluta*. It ways to deal with feature how names, undesirable residence at the borderland of the town, linguistic patterns and word related characters attest the disgraceful social situation of Mahar people group. The paper proposes to focus on certain social and social changes brought by Ambedkarite or Dalit-Buddhist development in the lives of Mahar individuals. It likewise examines how the constrained and mass movement of the Mahar people group to urban areas, their change to Buddhism and the dismissal of performing age-old calling of insignificant subservient disparaging positions give another measurement to their social, ethnic and social identities.

2. Dalit Autobiography

Dalit autobiographies share an inseparable connection with some hostile and associated issues like cultural reprimand, politics, and perpetual battle of embarrassment and lowness of the abused discouraged community on account of individuals getting a charge out of special economic wellbeing. Daya Pawar's authoritative work *Baluta* articulates the adventure of an outcaste community called "Mahar". *Baluta* is not just a novel displaying the story of a Mahar child from adolescence to maturity; it is additionally the narrative of a distant position called "Mahar". The Mahars become a simple prey to double abuses specifically social exploitation and ecological bad form. Daya Pawar's canonical text *Baluta* wrestles with the numerous layers of periphery which influence and shape the identity of Mahar community. In any case, before featuring the predicaments and injuries of a Dalit community, one need to understand the very meaning of the expression

"Dalit". The term Dalit as characterized on the page of "Public Campaign on Dalit Human Rights" goes as follows:

The word "Dalit" comes from the Sanskrit root dal- and means "broken, grounddown, downtrodden, or oppressed." Those previously known as Untouchables, Depressed Classes, and Harijans are today increasingly adopting the term "Dalit" as a name for themselves. "Dalit" refers to one's caste rather than a class; it applies to members of those menial castes which have borne the stigma of "untouchability" because of the extreme impurity and pollution connected with their traditional occupations. Dalits are 'outcastes' falling outside the traditional four-fold caste system consisting of the hereditary Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra classes; they are considered impure and polluting and are therefore physically and socially excluded and isolated from the rest of society. ("Who are Dalits? & what is Untouchability?")

According to Sharankumar Limbale, "Harijans and neo-Buddhists are not only Dalits, the term describes all the untouchable communities living outside the boundary of the village, as well as Adivasis, landless farm labourers, workers, the suffering masses, nomadic and criminal tribes." (Limbale 30)

Presently the paper would approach towards making the nexus among Dalits and social marginality. In the paper named "Ideas in Social and Spatial Marginality" by Assefa Meheretru, Bruce Wan, Pigozy and Lawrence Sommers find fluctuated orders of Marginality:

Marginality is a complex condition of disadvantage which individuals and communities experience as a result of vulnerabilities that may arise from unfavourable environmental, cultural, social, political and economic factors. Although most discussions of marginality deal with distressed economic and ecological conditions of life, the concept of marginality can also be applied to cultural, social and political conditions of disadvantage. (p.2)

3. Representation of Dalit community in the Autobiography

In Pawar's *Baluta* the social minimization just as exclusion from utilizing regular assets like water, reveals the abuse distributed to the socially trashed Mahar community. Daya Pawar's autobiography not just tries to investigate the minimization of untouchables from privileged society yet additionally focuses on underestimation of Mahars inside the minimized Dalit community. The content additionally depicts through the depiction of characters how Mahar individuals are alienated and face "twofold marginalization". They are even isolated from collaborating and sitting at standard with other Dalit bunches like Thakars. From the starting part, the writer reveals the list of names that inarguably declare the discouraged individuals' despicable presence. Much the same as Ambedkar who was persuaded that caste was established in the Vedas and Shastras, Daya Pawar likewise reasserts a similar conviction by intensely flinging assault on Manusmriti which from old occasions offers beginning to the possibility of separation of class. The social minimization starts its excursion since nativity. The children are named dealing with their low-born miniature status. Daya Pawar says"

The Manusmriti has a list of names for Shudras; it requires that our names should reflect society's contempt for us. Brahmin's names signify learnedness "Vidyadhar", for instance, Kshatriyas' names signify valour – like "Balaram". Baishyascanbenamed after the goddess of wealth, say "Laxmikant". And Shudras? For us, names like declare our low-caste status. That was the order of things for centuries. (5)

The display of Dalit Literature inarguably shows the social prohibition of distant communities. Mahars face avoidance in the town of Maharashtra just as in metropolitan urban communities. Their reality in categorized rooms in Kawakhana in Mumbai demonstrates their dehumanized status. Pawar's experience proves this: "The Mahars lived in squalid homes, each the size of a henhouse, each henhouse having two or three sub-tenants. Wooden boxes acted as partitions. But they were more than that: we stuffed our lives into those boxes. At night, temporary walls would come up, made of rags hanging from ropes." (7)

However, likely this passionate act of social abuse instills and incites a solid ethnic holding among the Mahars. What comes to front with Daya Pawar's account is the ethnic holding between Mahar people. Their

covered presence at the limit of a town or in the boundary or edges of metropolitan urban areas makes them harbor a nearby bonhomie with one another. The feeling of solidarity, group ethos, and social rituals causes the Mahar people group to feel joined together and help them to oppose the attack of external power. The following excerpt bears close testimony to that: "We supported each other. During a fight, it would seem to the outsider that the combatants would never speak to each other again; that afterward we would go our separate ways, but nothing like that ever happened. If you try to uproot a bean pod creeper, all the bean-pods will fall. The Mahars were no different." (10)

Over the span of the novel, we would see that how the floods of globalization and the battle for presence sets the Mahar community's presence agitated at the town and lead towards the deterioration of the Mahar community's ethnic holding. From the absolute first part, the readers are acquainted with the uninteresting lifestyle and the disparaging positions forced on Mahars. The Mahars are entitled to work in function as scroungers in the city. The Mahar women are most exceedingly terrible influenced. They "scavenged scraps of paper, rags, broken glass, and iron from the streets, sorted those out and sell them in the next morning"(7). Mahar women get abrasive persecution because of their partners. They are doubly colonized. First by their inmates and furthermore by the rich individuals who might attempt to burglarize the honor of those Mahar women. Daya Pawar with meticulous authenticity prevails with regards to anticipating the situation of Mahar women who stay helpless against the lewd look of upper caste society. *Baluta* also shows that Dalit women are treated as substitutes. We discover how 'Religion' is utilized as an apparatus for charming the women from Dalit layer. The more elite classes appoint the outside women the undertaking of playing out certain ceremonial rituals. In this novel, we discover Taibai had been devoted to Khandoba (a town goddess) in adolescence. Sacrificing a young girl child at the raised area of society God or Goddess would qualifies them for watch deep rooted abstinence and wind up accomplishing sex work. Under the shroud of religion, the Dalit women are compelled to alleviate the licentious thirst of men. The weakness of Mahar ladies is brought into power by deftly taking care of and depicting the pathetic state of Taibai.

Baluta literally means a share in village's production or a share in village's harvest. In the introduction by Jerry Pinto (who translated Daya Pawar's *Baluta* in English) the term is defined as follows:

It is interesting that Pawar chose to name his book for a demeaning practice that kept the Mahar in something close to bonded labour to the village community at large. There were supposed to be baarah balutedars, twelve categories of labour which were to be offered free to the village by those who were born into certain castes. They would not be paid to perform those services but in return, they were entitled to *Baluta*, a share in all of the village's produce. (xii)

The list of services includes skinning and disposing of dead cattle, announcing deaths and births throughout the village, playing music at the wedding of upper-caste etc. As the narrative runs:

We were supposed to run in front of the horse of any important person who came into the village, tend his animals, feed and water them and give them medicines. We made the proclamations announcing funerals from village to village. We dragged away from the carcasses of dead animals. We chopped firewood. We played music day and night at festivals and welcome new bridegrooms at the village borders on their wedding days. For ball this, what did we get? *Baluta*, our share of the village harvest.(66)

The Mahars need to experience the trial of mortification while they line up to get a lot of grains from farmers. Their social reprimand and stigmatized social position don't allow them perform or choose any respectable profession to meet both ends meet.. The writer deftly extends the pathetic state of Mahar individuals. In such manner, it is pertinent to comprise a connection between's Pawar's excursion from adolescence to maturity with the hardships gone through by Dalit community.

In social programs and in wrestling matches the Mahar young boys play out the part of quiet onlookers. A division line is drawn among Maharwada and the remainder of the town. They generally stay as victims of social persecution. The outline zone extends its limits to the domain of environmental injustice as well. This paper shows how the natural spaces are denied to the Dalit community. The Dalits in *Baluta* particularly Mahar are defenseless against natural foul play. They are denied to get to normal assets. Be it land or water the Mahar, just as other Dalit Castes, get the revolting brunt of casteism. Natural bigotry or it will be immaculate to term

environmental politics is intently entwined with social prohibition of minority gatherings. In Daya Pawar's *Baluta* readers can find how the invisible demarcated line is drawn between the wells utilized by the Mahars and the wells utilized by individuals from upper castes like Marathis. The very presence of Dalit community is delivered as a contamination. The unpalatable act of segregation of natural asset finds the moving introduction in the embarrassing occurrence which Daya goes through while concentrating in a school. Indeed, even education fails to destroy this persevering issue. As the Mahars are viewed as pollutant to different caste people and abstain themselves from offering water to even a school-going children. Daya Pawar recounts "If we were thirsty, there was no water for us at school; we had to go back to the Maharwada to drink. The Chabharwada was close by but they too would not give us water" (45). Here is an excerpt of Pawar's experience on this: But it was the quarrel over water that continued at a low boil. The Mahar well was to the west of the village. To fetch water we had to cross the village, and walk past the Maruti temple too. The villagers' well was below the village. The local Board has a notice there: 'This well is open to people of all castes and creeds.' Be that as it may, no Mahar was ever seen there; (70)

Another setting which can be deciphered from eco-critical viewpoint is the episode that occurred with Thakras. In the memoir, the readers perceive how the privilege of indigenous destitute individuals in the forested areas of woodland has been grabbed away by backwoods monitors. The possibility of 'environmentalism of poor people' (a thought created by Ramchandra Guha) proliferates the privilege of nearby communities "to use nature for survival without (First World) intervention on behalf of animals or nature" (Nayar 249). Thus, here the privilege of Adivasi is grabbed away from under the mask of eco-safeguarding.

The Mahars are additionally censured from going into temples. It is expected that their very presence would contaminate the holy home of God. Indeed, even the Mahar women are victims of social belittling for letting their shadows fall on Maruti temple. Yet, the content shows the counter resistance utilized by Mahar individuals. They don't take resort to latent obstruction. The dissent against Marathas by Mahar community can be considered as a venturing stone towards upsetting the domineering power of Marathas.

One day the village woke up to the fact that the Mahar women were polluting the Maruti temple when their shadows fell on it as they passed up and down to fetch water. So they closed the road. The other route to our well went past the lake, a mile-long struggle against sludge and slime. The Mahars fought back; they took recourse to the law. 'We won't give up our right of way. You can install Maruti somewhere else', the Mahars announced combatively. (71)

The Mahar Movement in Maharashtra started by Ambedkar acquires different social and occupational changes in the lives of Mahar individuals. The paper proposes to concentrate on certain social and cultural changes brought by Ambedkarite development in the lives of Mahar individuals. From centuries Dalit community has encountered the aches of social oppression. Ambedkar tends to each stigmatizing issue and attempts to battle for the privilege of Mahars. The continuous social abuse of Mahar, nerve racking enslavement on account of upper castes impart in them an intense want to free them from the discernible servitude of casteism. The development began by Ambedkar for equivalent right likewise offers vent to this desire. In *Baluta* we locate the mass conversion of Mahar Community to Buddhism from Hinduism.

Pawar describes the occasion when Ambedkar changed over lakhs of his devotees to Buddhism. This acquires a social and cultural change the lives of Mahar individuals. They will not revere Hindu goddess and endeavor towards driving the life of Buddhist looking for peace. Their sheer abhorrence for playing out any Hindu customs discovers articulation in Daya's memory: When we changed over to Buddhism. We promised: "I will not worship the Hindu religion's Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, nor any of the thirty-three crore gods associated with it" (257)

However, neither Dalit Politics nor the Mahars mass transformation to Buddhism destroys the identity they harbor from their nativity. Their ethnic ways of life as Mahar consistently pull back them to the tangled interlacing casteism. To signify their subservient past legacy as Mahar they are delegated "Neo-Buddhist". Daya Pawar brutally scrutinizes this hypocrisy and doubtfulness and investigates with a hint of mockery. He asks "When a Hindu converts to Islam or Christianity, how come we don't hear terms like neo-Christian or neo-Muslim?" (259).

4. CONCLUSION:

So, the overarching umbrella of Buddhism even fall short to protect the Mahars from cultural and social castigation. They stay as an endless prey to cultural and societal exclusion and rejection.

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