

Caste Sensibility in the Poems of Pradnya Daya Pawar

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Abstract:

For ages, the caste system has been a part of the social structure. Different interpretations exist among those who benefit from the caste system and those who are oppressed and victimized by it. This paper focuses on the portrayal of caste sensitivity in the poems of Pradnya Daya Pawar. People are deeply entrenched in the bonds and influences of the caste system. The majority of individuals find themselves categorized and confined within the rigid framework of caste identities.

Keywords:

Caste, Gender, Sensibility, Poetry, Dalit Poetry, Hierarchy, Hegemony, Varna System, Feminism.

The majority of people from the upper echelons of society are highly responsible for perpetuating the caste system. Casteism has been deeply ingrained in Indian social structure for centuries, serving as a stigma to humanity. The notion of caste is pervasive in every sector of society, defining individuals from birth based on their caste identity rather than their actions or other characteristics. Children inherit their parents' caste and traditional occupations, limiting their freedom to choose their own path in life. This rigid caste system poses a significant obstacle to human development, as many individuals prioritize caste preservation over other considerations. The upper class, in particular, plays a key role in perpetuating and nurturing the caste system, further entrenching its influence in society. The hegemonic order reinforces caste divisions, turning caste into a detrimental force in social structures.

Throughout history, there have been revolutionary movements aimed at dismantling the caste system and promoting human emancipation. Figures like Charvak, Jain, Buddhist, Kabir, Saint Ravidas, Chhatrapati Shivaji, Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj,

Saint Gadge Maharaj, and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar have led these movements, advocating for equality and fraternity among all individuals, regardless of caste.

Dr. B R Ambedkar's "Annihilation of Caste" is a critique of the oppressive caste system that elevates upper castes while marginalizing lower castes. It exposes the injustices faced by the marginalized communities and highlights how caste hinders the formation of a cohesive society. The text emphasizes the importance of social reform in driving political and economic progress. It not only critiques the limitations of the caste system but also offers solutions to address the pervasive issue of caste in India.¹

Pradnya Pawar has the potential to express herself effectively through her poetry, using a rich vocabulary in Marathi. Her poems delve into the social landscape and challenge existing social norms. Her notable anthology, 'Drushyancha Dhoval Samudra', has garnered numerous awards and has been well-received by readers.

In the poem "Love in the Time of Khairlanji," Pawar depicts a tragic event that occurred in the remote village of Khairlanji in the Bhandara District of Maharashtra. The victims were a Buddhist family, all of whom perished. The family was targeted by upper-caste individuals who proudly identified themselves as Patils. The incident in Khairlanji was a heinous act of caste-based violence, leading to a case being registered as a caste atrocity at the local police station. Consequently, Khairlanji gained notoriety across Maharashtra as a village associated with criminality. The mother and daughter of the family were subjected to brutal rape and murder, with their bodies callously discarded far from the village.

This mindset is prevalent among the upper-caste individuals who used to take pride in their status and identify themselves as Patils, the village headmen before independence. Even though the title of Patil no longer exists post-independence, individuals from this particular section of society still hold on to this belief and continue to see themselves as Patils to this day.

*“Not a single leaf on the branch
the body is fully filled like a leafless branch
fully filled
with flexible...”²*

-translated by researcher himself

The excerpt is from an anthology titled "Drushyancha Dhubal Samudra" (the Vague Sea of the Scenes), which delves into the struggles of marginalized individuals who often face depression and oppression within the social hierarchy. The poet expresses the hardships endured by these individuals through her poetry.

In her poem, Pawar emphasizes the struggles and predicaments that define human life, likening it to a constant battle. "Love in the Time of Khairlanji," an epic poem from this anthology, delves into the essence of human existence and the daily struggles that shape our lives as we navigate our identities.

The stanza suggests that life is defined by struggle, particularly for those in lower societal strata, such as Dalits. The term "Dalit" now encompasses Buddhists and other marginalized groups who face similar challenges. The poem serves as a poignant reflection on the lives of Dalits and their resilience. Overall, the poem underscores how individuals are inherently endowed with life, only to have it taken away by those seeking to maintain caste-based hierarchies. Pawar sheds light on the oppressive nature of hierarchical systems that grant power and privilege to those at the top of the social order.

Furthermore, the disparity between castes is created by those who hold power among the people. The Brahmanic mentality is solely responsible for the perpetuation and rigidity of the caste system.

Bramhan Jari Jhala Bhrasht Tari to Tinhi Loki Shreshth³

-Tukaram

Even If a Brahmin becomes corrupt, he is still considered superior to all in the three words
Tukaram's message, conveyed through his couplets, must be understood accurately. The Brahminic mindset outright denies the humanity of individuals and imposes the hegemonic varna system on lower caste individuals through the promotion of Manusmriti Philosophy.

Pradnya Daya Pawar's poem is celebrated for its poignant exploration of the human condition under the weight of oppressive social structures, making it a powerful form of poetry.

*"The sharp and effective
spots have been given on that
something demanding on fingers and
on lips."*⁴

The stanza vividly reflects the plight and intense agony experienced by marginalized groups in society, particularly Dalits and economically disadvantaged individuals. It portrays a constant state of conflict, symbolizing the challenging and impoverished lives they lead. These individuals are economically deprived, socially oppressed, and often victims of their circumstances, including caste and class discrimination, as well as gender inequality.

At the we must recognise the philosophical segments teaches by Kabeera way back in 14 hundred years ago regarding disparity between castes.

*Hamaare kaise Lohu,
Tumhare Kaise Dudh,
Tum Kaise Brahman Pande,
Ham kaise sud⁵*

-Kabeer

Our blood is the same, your milk is the same, you are a Brahmin Pandit, we are Sudra.

Biologically, every human being has the same type of blood in their body. So, why do people create such disparities between them? Through his couplets, Kabeer strongly criticized the inequality within the social structure. After independence, constitutionally, every human being is considered equal and nobody is superior or inferior. Pradnya Daya Pawar, through her poetry, has embraced the same poetic genre to fight against caste-based biases and promote humanity over a biased mentality influenced by caste. Ultimately, Caste is a human-made concept, not a divine one. In the modern era, superiority is determined by knowledge, not by caste.

References

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