

Representation of Dalit Masculinity in Literature

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Abstract: *This study deals on how the concept Dalit Masculinity has made command over the conventional concept of hegemonic masculinity. The term Dalit literally means 'oppressed' and is used to refer to the untouchable casteless sects of the society. Dalit also called outcaste is a self designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchables. Dalit literature in India has emerged as a separate and principal category of literature in many Indian languages. Several writing of Dalit literature has emerged as a vigorous voice of Dalit community in different literature over the last five decades.*

Keywords: Dalit Masculinity, Literature, Hegemony, Untouchables, Harijan

1. Introduction

The definition masculine is something more or relating to or suitable for a boy or man. Masculinity refers to the behaviors, social roles and relating of men within a given society as well as the meanings attributed to them. Having the regarded facets of men such as boldness, strength and vigor and also the possessing quality such as aggressiveness. The term masculinity relates to the perceived notions and ideals about how men should or are expected to behave in a given setting. American society socializes boys and men to conform to a definition of masculinity that emphasizes toughness, forbearance and self-sustenance.

Beyond Machismo; the strong aggressive pride, men are defined by Caballerismo that is about accepting personal responsibility and safeguarding the family. A caballero opens the door for others. Conventional manhood is often defined by the protector role and most markedly masculine is tied to that role. They are supposed to be dynamic and not to show fragility. Latterly sports have come to be a leading definer of masculinity in popular culture and in many institutional organizations.

Studies show that men are the product of millions of years of evolutionary selection for aggression. Masculinity is often defined by their hormones. The combatant roles of men are caused by the hormone testosterone. The characteristics of rivalry and the desire to take chances are linked with the hormone testosterone. Studies show that a man is hit with dopamine when he becomes victorious in a fixture and a surge of testosterone makes him keep on competing. Higher testosterone men showed stronger reacting to masculinity threats than those lower in testosterone.

As humans evolved from apes, we became less masculine emotionally and horizontally but more masculine vertically. This is probably because it's an efficient draft as being tall and thin consumes fewer calories than being short and strong. Jungian Psychologist Robert Moore took the concept of Jung's archetypes and used it to create a framework that explained the development of mature and integral masculinity in men. According to him, masculine psychology is made up of four major archetypes: King, Warrior, Magician and Lover. Moore says in order for a man to achieve mature masculine strength and energy, he must be in touch with all the four.

An ideal of manhood and the language of the tactical virtues remain, but the concepts become more metaphorical; strength of body expands to include strength of character, moral and intellectual bravery are added as categories of courage, the vital facet of manhood.

2. Dalit Masculinity

An individual masculinity can be both hegemonic and subordinated at a time which is effected by situation, social, and economic differences and circumstances. Indian history is well acquainted with the hegemonic masculine figures such as Janga Bahadur Rama, Prithvi Narayan Shah and Bhimshan Thapa. Though have alike hegemonic masculinities Dalits for centuries are deprived of it and are suppressed and restricted in the social field which resulted in the subordinated masculinities among them.

The subordinate variants of masculinities are valid for most of the population who remain relatively powerless. Those men who do not or cannot conform to the hegemonic masculinities are treated by those who do as effeminate and inferior. It is in the working field that Dalit masculinities are challenged in their daily regime. Between work and masculinity there exists a close-knit relationship. Dalits themselves become the reason for their segregation in their communication with non dalits at their working place due to the fear of indirect partisanship.

Equipoise is pursued by Dalit manhood between masculine subject hood and caste oppression. Constructing of Dalit masculinity is neither entirely guilt-free nor adhesive, since gender identity was not immutable but formed by obscurity and uncertainty. Masculinities was a per formative act, whereby Dalit men tenuously sought entry in to a modern public sphere.

3. Representation of Dalit Masculinity in Literature

At the beginning of twentieth century a section of educated Dalit men wrote their caste genealogies; advancing claims to marital status. The formation of Adi Hindu Movement (1924) becomes a milestone in Dalit history. Histories such as Pasi Samaj, Chanvar Puran, and Nishada Vanshavali were written during this time. The grim side of caste, untouchability and social agony was conceptualized by Chokhamela one of the leading saints who is an untouchable

produces a genre of far-reaching and liberating theology that seeks justice.

Dalit literature is rich with autobiographical accounts. Daya Pawar's autobiographical work 'Baluta' (1978) shows us the sexual proclivities of Dalit manhood. His work highlights the sexuality and bullying of a Dalit man who is the bread winner of his family explores the psyche of the narrator's father who gets indulged in an unruly life which results in the imbalance of the financial status of the family forces the significant other to become the bread winner.

Kishore Kales' autobiographical work 'Kolhatyach Por' (1994) highlights Dalit men as a kind of parasitism on their women and detach themselves from their work. Panegyric poetry; the formal or elaborate praise on a person or a thing also well explored the Dalit masculinity. Panegyric poetry such as Powassan, Tamasha, Jalsas and Lawani are well acquainted with this. Powassan has the connotation of a courageous man.

Writer Omprakash Valmiki's account of his early life is an account of the heroic struggle by a Dalit boy from the sweeper caste against impossible odds to get education. In Omprakash's work 'Joothan' (1997) instead of quietly suffering the indignity, the courage and fortitude shown by protagonist's father is indeed remarkable. The struggle he made to send his son back to school thus ensuring that his own son as well as others is not denied education because of their caste. Valmiki's own struggle made him realize that the condition of Dalits can only change through revolutionary transformation of society and the human consciousness.

In 'My Father Baliah' (2011) by Y.B. Satyanarayan it shows us Baliah, the Dalit man who took education as a weapon to fight against social discrimination. The way he brought up his children, his sacrifice, his pride and his never die attitude really shows how much he wants to show the world education came as a saving grace to many. 'Thottiyude Makan' (1947) by Thakazhi shows us the story of three generations of scavengers. The struggles of the former generations enables 'Mohanan' the third generation to assert his individual dignity and leads his fellow untouchables to rise against oppression and prejudice.

4. Representation of Dalit Masculinity in Mainstream Films

The identity of the Dalits in mainstream perspectives is necessarily linked with his/her body. The prejudice against the Dalit body is so deep rooted that there has been no significant Dalit participation and intervention in Indian film industry. In Indian cinema, the body of the male Dalits presents a stereotype contrast to the body of the upper caste Hindus, Muslims and Christians viewed as untouchables. Male Dalits are depicted physically untidy, emotionally weak, intellectually hollow and an object to be abhorred because of their apparently low birth.

The film Sairat (2016) by Nagaraj Manjule which depicts the love affair between people from two different castes, the hero is depicted as a charming and confident low-caste young boy who falls in love with a girl born of upper class.

His character is able to break a certain notion of masculinity, because even though he resembles a typical hero he got thrashed by Maratha men unable to resist or hit them back. The hero's character is represented as the one who is unable to resist the upper-caste men or the men who harass him on the street and their relationship becomes a victim of the casteism. The film succeeds in making visible the everyday reality of life.

Similar in the case of the film Fandry (2013) by Nagaraj Manjule which centered on the infatuation of a Dalit teenage boy towards an upper caste girl in Maharashtra village. Jabaya the hero is an awkward yet winsome teenager from a Dalit family who lives in a shack at the fringes of the village gets suffocated due to family pressures, his love for upper caste girl and killing of his innocence at the hands of upper caste boys. The film succeeds in representing the Dalit boy as someone who overcomes the pressure of society and as the one who undergoes self realization.

Film is a prominent visual medium which has been an integral part of the modern social and political life of Tamils. For them masculinity is often associated with the idioms of valor and honor found forms in Jallikettu and cock fighting. In the film Madurai Veeran (1956) by Yoganand in which the actor M.G.Ramachandran was lifted as the one among the subaltern masses. The folklore legend of a subaltern hero who was hired by the kings for specific purposes has been used widely over generations and when the actor acted in the film it evoked huge response making it a blockbuster.

The film Komban (2015) by M. Muthaiah faced troubles on its release as Pro-Dalit Parties called for a ban on the film alleging that it is glorifying a particular community. The issue brings to fore issues of freedom of speech and censorship. Petitioner counsel W. Peter Ramesh Kumar claimed that the movie was portrayed as a caste Hindu and the villains belonging to lower caste by representing such as tying of red and green Tamilagam flags and threads on their wrists which would lead to unnecessary unrest among people.

S. Ravikumar – Producer, Educational Multimedia Research Centre Madurai says that in most of the films, the feudalistic caste markers were kept intact and even if the narrative seems to be affirmative while showing an inter-caste marriage or romantic relationship, it was overtly or subtly showed in a way that either the protagonist dies or the heroine dies thus reiterating the fact that there was no mixture of blood.

The film star Rajinikanth represents the noir in Tamil cinema. He represents the suppressed, dark other side of Tamil society. He was introduced in to Tamil films through Apoorva Ragangal (1975) by K. Balachander though belonged to Maharashtra he represented well the Tamil society in to its own pride. The complexes about being dark skinned and not really being part of mainstream and a clear trace of cultural and political sidelining at a particular time all could be seen in a condensed form through the character of Rajinikanth and his screen persona.

It was Rajnikanth who made a deviation from the cliché concept of Rama the ideal man and accepted the possibility of Ravana the villain also as being good. Rajini is the prior among the dark stars of Tamil film industry which itself becomes a signpost for celebration throughout his 40 years in the film field by making a strong deviation from the cliché concepts of chubby fair skinned heroes. He emerges as a kind of updated masculinity through his lean figure which in its extreme sense seems to us as a concession to the concept of 'male lack'. Now the authentication of Rajini's dark skin has become a sub-caste in Tamil cinema.

Despite the failure of some of his films in the past few years the film *Kabali* (2016) directed by Pa. Ranjith was prophesied with much excitement. Much effort was given by the director to make a change by subduing Rajini's personal stylistics and on-screen antics to pave the way for an explicit theme of social justice and for re-establishing prominence of Dalits. However, he might actually end up becoming a Dalit icon and a new emblem on the side of Dalit assertion.

5. Representation of Dalit Masculinity in Malayalam Films (Post 2000)

The South Indian cinema narrative is largely around dual trope of Masculinity. The one being the symbol of lord Rama the ideal man and the other being that of lord Krishna the love maker. In Malayalam film history actor Prem Nazir symbolized Krishna and actor Satyan that of Rama. In the present this got shifted to the film stars Mohanlal and Mammootty respectively. The legendary symbol of dare devilry and masculinity with numerous aspirations, imitations and super human imagery are always appreciated here and this is achieved through a fair skin and muscular physique cultivated through body building.

The Malayalam film portrayed black bodies as taboo. The representation of Black as Black itself is hardly seen in Malayalam cinema. There were actors who could delineate Black through their body and its language. The performance life of many dark skinned actors can be described as a palpitation to achieve the range of that of fair ones. Even if there is their presence they are depicted through villainous character or as a thief or as a character subjected to be mocked at. There are also films in Malayalam that deviated from the much trodden path of representing Dalits as 'others'.

The post 2000 films represent such ones. In the film *Papilio Buddha* (2013) by J. K. Cheriyan, the director is putting those Dalit people in the mainstream and marginalizing the role of the regular mainstream actors. Masculinity is often conveyed through the diverse role models such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King and other freedom strugglers as how men can use their power appropriately and effectively. The film portrays the rebellious wars of self expression when statues of Ayyankali and Ambedkar are shown repeatedly to affirm their identity of Dalits within the nation.

The film traces the development of a Dalit young man Shankaran who realizes that he cannot escape from caste. Shankaran wants to be with upper-class while looking to the struggles of his own people. The film also portrays the

attempts made by Dalit community to establish their identity. The two male Dalit actors in the film represent two generations respectively. The story is told through the eyes of Shankaran, an educated youth who is uncaring to his father Karian a onetime communist who now feels betrayed by the movement.

The bisexuality of the protagonist is a mere expression of a refusal of niche human sexual conduct into heterosexual and homosexual. This film was banned by the censor board for effectively belittling Mahatma. The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) claimed that the film had visuals that portrayed an effigy of Gandhi being garlanded with slippers and then burnt apparently. There is also a dialogue that refers to Gandhi being homosexual. In the film there is collateral between the brutality faced by the young male protagonist in police custody and the gang rape suffered by the woman. Both characters here undergoes through terrible pain both physically and mentally. The film in all sense deviates from the cliché representation of rapes and in a way that is definitely anti-patriarchal.

The movie *Chithariyavar* (2004) by Lalji George is about a Dalit youth's attempts from escaping from the reservations provided for them. At the same time the film also shows us the very need of reservation for these socially and economically backward communities. The film exploits the degraded selves of Dalits.

The rise of the Dalit actor Kalabhavan Mani in to the stardom demanded reinstalling in narrative patterns. As a way to highlight the upper caste majority his characters were represented as someone who is physically or mentally challenged as in the films *Vasanthiyum Lakshmiyum Pinne Njanam* (1999) and *Karumaadikuttan* (2001) both directed by Vinayan.

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