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The Question of Identity: An Analysis of Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess*, and Urmila Pawar's *Motherwit*


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Abstract

The present article explores the complex trap of identity as depicted in Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess* and Urmila Pawar's *Motherwit*. It aims to elucidate the multifaceted dimensions of identity, specifically focusing on social, cultural, and gender aspects within the confines of marginalised communities in postcolonial India. *The Gypsy Goddess*, Kandasamy's poignant narrative, is centred around the 1968 Kilvenmani massacre of landless Dalit laborers, while *Motherwit*, Pawar's candid autobiographical account, examines the trials and tribulations of Dalit women's lives in Maharashtra. By juxtaposing these two works, the

article seeks to investigate the interplay between collective historical narratives and individual lived experiences, and their implications on the formation of identity. The article explicates how Kandasamy's novel employs a kaleidoscope of narrative techniques to articulate the voice of the oppressed, while Pawar's work explores the intersectionality of caste and gender through her personal journey. This paper employs various theoretical frameworks, such as postcolonial theory, feminist theory, and subaltern studies, to unravel the nuances of the characters' identity crises and quests for self-actualization amidst sociopolitical upheaval. Moreover, the article scrutinizes the role of memory and storytelling as pivotal components in the construction and preservation of identity. The juxtaposition of Kandasamy's historical fiction with Pawar's autobiographical narrative enables the reader to discern the ways in which individual and collective identities are continuously shaped and reshaped through the prism of historical events and personal experiences. The article aims at illuminating the intricate pathways through which identity is negotiated within marginalized communities, and asserts the significance of literature as a potent tool in amplifying marginalized voices and fostering a more inclusive understanding of human identity.

Keywords: Identity, Marginalized Communities, Postcolonial India, Dalit, Gender, Narrative Techniques, Intersectionality, Historical Fiction

“The female characters in Dalit Literature are dynamic and not static. Dalit writers do not look upon widows, prostitutes, depraved women, as Dalit, the exploited, with compassion alone; but they make them towards radiance.” (Prasad 46)

This paper presents an analysis of the Dalit identity by showing the multiplicities and heterogeneity of it. Using two texts; Meena Kandasamy's *The Gypsy Goddess* and Urmila Pawar's *Motherwit*, the paper shows how gender and class interact with caste to form multiple, intersecting and complex forms of identity-based discriminations. In contemporary Indian literature, primarily as depicted in Modern Indian texts, social problems have been a primary focus since the early 19th century. Dalit and Adivasi authors from the low caste and tribal backgrounds have established Dalit literature as a major Indian genre in recent decades (Gupta 8-9). Dalits and Adivasis are India's most economically disadvantaged groups. They are often published in prominent Hindi literary journals for their short narratives, poetry, essays, and autobiographical works. Several examples have been included in academic curricula, indicating a continuous attempt to infuse Dalit literature with a fresh voice. Dalit literature is becoming more accessible and distinct, and new voices speaking out against injustices on Dalits are emerging. Incorporating the history of Dalit atrocities and injustices into the school curriculum has the potential to link these changes to broader processes of social representation, identity discovery, and academic achievement. Although Adivasis and Dalits continue to be

denigrated for their social discrimination and economic marginalization, their literature has emerged as an important means of expressing and strengthening their social identities.

An analysis of the manifestations of Dalit identity in *The Gypsy Goddess*

The Gypsy Goddess is an exploration into the plight of a group of Dalit farm workers who live and work in appalling conditions, constantly exposed to unrelenting subjugation and devastation at the hands of their cruel upper-caste landlords in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and who are the subjects of the investigation into their predicament. This book is primarily concerned with the tragic incident that happened on Christmas Day 1968 in the hamlet of Kilvenmani. By using the book as a literary form, she was able to highlight the faults of traditional linear narrative novels, criticize the exoticism that is often shown in Indian literature, and deconstruct the 'other' (Das 18). Moreover, as this chapter shows, Kandasamy's experimental nature allows readers to face a terrible reality of this world.

She was motivated to write about contemporary issues in India since she had been a child. She has accomplished it in various forms, particularly societal norms and beliefs that create caste and gender-specific and set positions in society. Interestingly, the poetry was the first form that piqued her attention. Upon being questioned about why she chose poetry as a tool against discrimination, she said that it enabled her and the other Dalit activists to break away from the constraints of academic language and become activists. She claims that there are no restrictions on poetry imposed by larger institutions that force poets into adopting certain methods in order to communicate their ideas in the way in which academic language is used to do so. Despite the fact that she is an academic, she's worried about the hyper-intellectualization that is occurring in academia. The lack of academic discourse in Kandasamy's work is mostly because it is "not the language of the oppressed [...] any victim," as he puts it (qtd. Duarte, 2010: n.p.). Kandasamy began writing English poetry when she was seventeen years old, and she also translated works by Dalit authors into English. It was *Touch* (2006) that served as her first book of poems, and it has now been translated into a further five languages. She recounts Hindu and Tamil stories from a feminist anti-caste viewpoint in her second book of poems, *Ms. Militancy* (2010).

Kandasamy's defiant attitude may have evolved as a consequence of her political and literary awakening during a period of concerted violence towards India's so-called lower castes, which occurred during her lifetime. She was reared in an extremely strict Hindu household and was also subjected to maltreatment by her husband, whom she eventually decided to divorce. Violence serves a 'universal' societal function in India, despite the fact that she portrays herself as a nonviolent protester (quoted, Kidd, 2014: n.p.). Her goal was to raise awareness of the suffering of Indian outcasts and the constant, violent portrayals of them, which forced her to temporarily forsake poetry in the process. A postmodern/metafictional novel with foreboding political overtones was her goal when she tried to write *The Gypsy Goddess*. It is described as "a novel of self-aware exploration and unequivocal anger" by James

Kidd (n.p.). The story revolves around his father, who is a landless and orphaned farmer. The latter was able to emancipate himself from rural poverty by moving to Chennai, where he eventually completed his doctorate. On the one hand, the slaughter that took place in Kilvenmani, a village in Tamil Nadu, on December 25, 1968, served as the primary source of inspiration for this unique dalit novel *The Gypsy Goddess*. Through the use of active expression, montage, polyphony and postmodern techniques, Meena Kandasamy critically interacts with the norms of the novel as a literary form in her work *The Gypsy Goddess* which was published in 2012. Kandaswamy exposes the faults of traditional linear novels and criticises the self-contained exoticism that pervades contemporary Indian writing in this book. It is the goal of the narrative to engage non-Indian readers and to explore an alternative version of official Indian history by uncovering the tragic story of a complete Dalit community fighting for freedom and, as a result, silencing Dalit.

In the postmodern era, the authenticity of truth has always been in flux. It has always been questioned on the grounds of its reliability and objectivity. The relative nature of truth, which is intimately linked to power, as well as the urgent need of putting this ideology into action, is discussed. Rather, it is something with which we must fight via its remnants, rather than the other way around (such as documents, testimonies, archival materials, and so on). Linda Hutcheon, one of the pioneering and foundational postmodern literary theorists, has cautioned, the word “facts” refers to occurrences that we have given meaning to. Therefore, different historical viewpoints extract divergent information from the same historical occurrences. (Hutcheon 57). The fact that different people may come up with different interpretations, some of which are contradictory, does not take away from the significance and utility of these stories in any way. Instead, the proliferation of narratives of shows that reality is never monolithic.

Besides demonstrating that we cannot escape representation, *The Gypsy Goddess* pays homage to metabolism as a genre whose lowest common denominator [...] is to produce fiction while at the same time making a comment on the process of creating fiction. “Interpretation” and “destructure” are terms that are used to describe how both processes are intertwined in a formal tension that subsumes the differences between “production” and “criticism” under the rubrics of “interpretation” and “destructure” (6). Originally published in Spain in 1984. Metafiction, in general, is driven by the search for one’s own identity against the background of historical events. To establish the notion that literature may reveal realities that cannot be comprehended via conventional or dominant historical narratives that focus on marginalised people based on their class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or cultural heritage. Contemporary Dalit writing, on the other hand, strives to bring Dalit issues to the forefront, sometimes with a vengeance, while mainstream Indian literature continues to neglect and misrepresent them. These thoughts are well evident with the fact how Dalit writings like *Joothan*, *Karukku* etc. faced public retaliation of mainstream society at the time of their publication.

In spite of the fact that Dalits continue to get little attention, a large number of Dalit authors emerged at the regional and national levels in the late 1980s. Many Dalits are now able to write in nearly every Indian language, which is a significant achievement. *The Gypsy Goddess* is an excellent example of this rapidly expanding Dalit genre of literature which is gaining popularity every day. *Assume Kuruthipunal*, the novel written by Brahmin writer Indira Parthasarathi and published in 2006, portrayed the assassination of Dalit agricultural labourers in Kilvenmani, a crime prompted by the assassin's sexuality, as P. Sivakami claimed in a 2006 article 'The Grip Change'. Similarly, Kandasamy's novel revolves on the same tragic event, but this time he emphasises the significance of caste and non-touch ability over sex as the driving forces behind it. In the words of Sivakami, the vast majority of Dalit narratives "are mainly concerned with the Dalit people's history and present realities as well as with their historical fight, language, and culture" (436). The Dalit aesthetic is adopted at the same time as a symbol of their fight against "exploitation, repression, and marginalisation, as expressed by Ambedkar's concept of Dalithood," (Ambedkar 439). In this context, Kandasamy's work is aligned with the revolutionary political objective of the time. In contrast, it observes that since Dalit literature is "subjective and based on a narrow identity politics . . ." it functions as a celebration of the marginal while simultaneously rejecting all other problems. It is based on advanced postmodern concepts and challenges the traditional knowledge of literary academics in its conception and presentation (Sivakami 436).

First section begins with a letter or memorandum written by Gopalakrishna Naidu, the President of the Paddy Producers' Association, presented to the Chief Minister of Madras, conveying his worries about the spread of communist ideas among farmworkers in the region and demanding immediate redress for paddy farmers' grievances" (Kandasamy 9). Section (titled "Hinterland") is a literary and, to a certain extent, philosophical exploration of the author's anxieties about telling her story; about the subversive power of the hybrid English novel, which has been amusingly dubbed "taminglish," "the crime against the [English] language," and of humble prose over despotic poetry; and about the author's choice of setting. As a result of the stories' mentions, and retellings of parts of the district Nagapattinam's history (which includes Kilvenmani) are provided: from Greeks to Danes to Dutch to Portuguese and ultimately to British, it is possible to get a sense of the present geopolitical condition in the region. Another recurring technique is intertextuality, which gives the impression that the book is packed with literary references and allusions to writers like Conrad, Dostoevsky, Kundera, Steinbeck, and Vonnegut. In this novel, the reader is continuously addressed, scolded, and pressured to engage actively and put up with the absence of a 'system,' a 'sequence,' or an 'output' (31). As expressed,

If you are finding this difficult to follow, remember that the task of telling a story weighs me down and that you are equally responsible for your misery. [...] life is linear, I can hear you argue. It is, but it is cyclical, too. If you ask a mathematician, she will

tell you that life possibly exists in the nth dimension, and beyond the third, none of your fucking senses can perceive anything at all. That's where stories unravel themselves. Those of you stressed out by this haphazard storytelling; please relax. Stay, those of you who have thought too many times of wandering away. How far from me can you stay? This is a joint venture. We collaborate on the critical condition that we do not abandon each other. (32)

Consequently, when using the traditional way of beginning a write-up, "once upon a time," there are many alternatives to consider: "Once upon a time, there was an elderly woman who lived in a little hamlet," says the narrator. Another old woman resided in another little town once upon a time," says the narrator. However, none of them provide any information on the "old woman" who formerly resided in the "small town of that size" (13-14), nor do any of them clarify who this "old woman" is. This is the narrator-declaration on page 29: "I'm willing to do whatever it takes to survive this story". He is challenging the coherence of established critical concepts such as realism, modernism; postmodernism and even postcolonialism (Dirks 2001). Her creative mission statement is built on the concept of subversion. "My art plagiarizes and defiantly rejects the most discouraging critique," she claims of her work (30). Even the title of the book is called into doubt. Using well-known post-structuralism ideas, the narrator – the author demonstrates once again how title coherence is a moot point in this story.

In spite of the fact that a condensed version of *The Gypsy Goddess* is provided, and while some parallels can be drawn between this mythical figure and Maayi's character, who is charged with uniting his village following the massacre, readers will be unable to unambiguously connect this religious goddess to any specific character in the novel. Due to the belief that *The Gypsy Goddess* symbolises, and can readily connect with, all of the book's victims, seven gypsy moms and their children were killed along. The end of Part One, on the other hand, forbids readers from reaching the conclusion: "You may now ignore this and go with your reading. Postmodern authors are fucking fucking fucking..." (46).

Chapter one of Part Two ("The Cutthroat Comrades") provides a critical assessment of Gopalakrishna Naidu's personality and the self-helpful manner in which the Paddy Producers Association Emergency Executive Committee meeting was conducted, followed by other chapters that are not only unrealistic but also linear in their presentation of events. Even if this and the next parts are seen as experimental, they nevertheless offer an accurate account of a time in India's long history of caste conflicts and farmworker uprisings. Tanjore District, Tamil Nadu, southern India is the setting for this documentary on the suffering of a group of farmworkers, mainly Dalits, who live and work in terrible circumstances and must deal with their cruel upper-caste landlords. In 1968, when the book was first released, the Green Revolution was well underway, and yields from paddy fields were rising rapidly. Agriculture workers meet under the leadership of the Communist Party in order to demand a larger part of the crop, and they decide to go on strikes. Kilvenmani, on the other hand, is a rebel that has

decided to disobey its landlords, to keep its red flags flying, and to refuse to work for them. At some point during the night of December 25, 1968, the landowners sent a group of thugs to assault these rebel workers. After learning that he was after them, the village's most competent men leave to save their lives, but the vast majority of women, children, and the old stay in their hamlet to await his arrival. They all attempt to seek shelter in a hut, but their assailant's barricade the entrance, flee through the open door, and set fire to the building, murdering everyone trapped inside it.

As a result, in corrupt courts and biased investigations, the vast majority of offenders are acquitted, and any proof of their involvement in the crime is swiftly destroyed or hidden from sight. The survivors of the massacre, meanwhile, are charged with murder and armed rebellion, condemned to jail, or abandoned and brutally brought back to life again — “We have set fire to the entire thing,” one of the victims' cries — until they are totally “forgotten” by society. The debate came to a close at this point. That was the extent of the situation. “This brings the debate to a close” (217). Aniket Jaaware's well-known statement that “the Dalits manage to consume the Dalit without having to eat the Dalit” (222) calls to mind the Dalits and their suffering, which is also “easily absorbed” by Hindu castes. The widespread circulation and consumption of Dalit poetry among non-Dalits, which diminishes the Dalit experience, is also alluded to in Jaaware's poem, which is a reference to the convenience at which the upper castes constantly assimilate and discard the Dalit problems.

Caste/Class/Gender

One of several problems that critics like Kavita Bhanot failed to address was the incorrect and, in general, the evasive portrayal of the complicated connection between caste and class in this struggle against landlords, which has been a recurring issue for communists and Dalit activists. A distinction between caste and class, as explained by Anupama Rao, is important since they should never be confused. Caste society, in contrast to capitalist labour relations, was not founded on the amassing of bourgeois property. As a result of their previous classification as filthy and unclean, the Untouchables' labour was not deemed “legitimate” in this system; rather, it was regarded foreign. The issue is summarised as follows: it includes a collision between two different histories of the body: the worth of the body and the body's tired and disposable existence. The year is 2013, and the number 53 has been added for emphasis.

Rao thinks that “caste history as (Hindu) violence” is simply ignored in order to turn caste into a kind of social stratification (2013: 55). A common conclusion among Marxists and many Dalits is that the Dalit movement is not a self-sufficient political force with a clearly defined political agenda: Marxist opponents insist on giving primacy to their class category at the expense of disregarding the caste movement, which obstructs full understanding of the stupid Dalit identity.

The Gypsy Goddess also raises the questions of the Communist Party. During the party's interaction with the existing political system, the party attempted to criticise it while complying with its rules and regulations. The Party had deceived itself into believing that it was taking pleasure in the pleasures of Parliament and had consoled itself with the idea that the rules of this new game were being observed. Nonetheless, in order to carry out its revolutionary mission among the proletariat, the Party's local leadership organised public meetings in various locations across the nation (125–26). The Communist leaders in the book are also adamant about classifying “the bulk of working-class peasants” (95) as untouchable castes, and they are certain that caste is their most formidable adversary, and that it must be destroyed and derailed since it separates the labour classes (79). In order to avoid this, when the question of caste was brought up, it was done “at the wingtips, just before [they] all started fighting” (218–19).

Another intriguing subject that the novel subtly addresses is Dalit women's specific issues and strength, thereby contributing to the creation of a distinct space by echoing the primary concerns of the Dalit feminist movement, which, according to K. A. Geetha, are essentially three: “the recognition of contradictions in mainstream feminist movements' thinking and exercising, which lack space for them”; “the recognition of contradictions in mainstream feminist movements' thinking and exercising, which lack space for them” (416). This book, which is named after a famous female character, emphasises the importance of Dalit women in their village's struggle for dignity and independence, not only by portraying the Dalit women of Kilvenmani, but also by naming the book after this legendary female figure. Throughout the book, we see both their servile life and the strength of their soul shown. Unlike the Muslim man, who Agamben describes as “a broken prisoner in a death camp who can no longer react in a way that has robbed him of dignity, humanity, and humanity” (Agamben 20), these women are willing to confront their oppressors and risk their lives in order to preserve their humanity and fight for a better life:

Women who demonstrate do not look back . . . Their demands are often directed only at women [...]. They almost always fight for everyone . . . Prisons are teeming with Madonnas engaged in combat. You are not afraid. They have no fear of arrest. They are not afraid of suffering. . . The landowners, who are nearly naked, punish these shrill-voiced women by tying them to their trees and lashing them in front of the whole town. They are punished by the police by kneeling and walking many kilometres on their knees until they are unable to walk. They are not shattering these records. Beyond the gushing flesh and knee, they are brazen. (75–76)

The Representation of Dalit Women in Urmila Pawar's *Motherwit*

Urmila Pawar's *Motherwit* is an echo of the other half of the Dalit population – Dalit women. Her stories are a story of judgment, abjection, contempt, ignorance; stories of stares, whispers, and caresses. Not just a woman but also a Dalit, the author is no stranger to disdain or dejection.

Her own experiences may be relevant to her stories. She makes good use of the short story. She does not set the stage for her women, but to allow them to just face in the crowds, to perform their parts on a location which the world has already set for the world, and to allow another sister, for another fight story, to take away the parts left that are still unfathomed. The same stage is repeatedly utilized, but each story questions the reader's understanding of female oppression, otherwise limited to physical attacks.

We sometimes forget or disregard the world around us while we live in the 21st century with all the comforts of contemporary life. We are unaware of the social stigma, inequality, injustice, or crimes around us, either as meaningless daily occurrences or as the culture teach us to overlook them entirely. This is her most significant accomplishment; she does not provide spectacular or heroic actions but ordinary stories of people far apart from our worlds, from people's viewpoints, the ideas of which may serve as bridges between them and us. Most of her stories, dating from the late 20th century, and maintaining the distinctive flavor of Marathi, provide an insight into her existence as Dalit, a feminine, and a Buddhist, functioning in rural and urban India as a representative of a much broader class. Her works bear witness to her rude, vivid, and unrestrained form, which are significant works of current Dalit and Indian feminist writing. It transmits the thrill of a conscious waking. Her women don't seek inspiration from the world but try to reinvent their "selves" in their own culture, free from the influence of patriarchal society.

Dalit women use literature to express their relationship with society and as a guide for raising their identity, which falls under the threefold weight of class, caste, and sex discriminatory. since literature and life are intertwined. Urmila Pawar makes each of her characters extremely representative of the current day and refuses to accept or violate their expectations of the patriarchal system. Her short stories like "Mother," "Pain," "Justice," etc., describe women who are courageous in the face of caste discrimination, unaware of the jibes of society and resistive to their family demands, rebellious and relentless in their interest.

These stories provide insights into topics essential for the redefining of women's roles. Their language includes unique components, indicative of their Marathi version in highly unrestrained forms — apparent in their daily life, a form of expression that was recently attracted by millennial content, even though it had begun a long time before. Phrases regarded as explicit or immoral to be utilized in literature; were employed to meet the requirements of their characters. Her stories are not as colorful or gorgeous as artists like R.K. Narayan's; they exemplify how her characters think.

The stories are seldom reflective of her Dalit heritage. However, even if the protagonist is not connected with a Dalit gift, her accounts usually include caste nuances or class differences, even if one cannot anticipate them. The described could be quite an example in the story "The Odd One" (Vegli), where the Pant Nagar region is thought to be too high for a lady of the caste or class of the protagonist (56). The same story also bears witness to the

impediment to the development of women's society as a whole when women themselves are the barriers their sisters have to overcome. It also illustrates the intricacies of the very contentious issue of caste reservation from a learned woman's point of view. With the same stories to serve the many problems, it has successfully unified two very distinct social revolutions in India, that of women and Dalits; perhaps to remind Dalits of the distress of women in their society and that they need to improvise the conditions of their most weak sect to develop beyond the constraints of oppression genuinely, and to the feminists, so that they can't ignore a Dalit woman.

The first story in the book, "Aaye" (Mother), is about a widow striving for a future for her kids. Since the period of Sati, widows suffer tyranny, with others dictating their life for them. Closely modelled on Pawar's mother, this story is a genuine depiction of ordeals that widows go through every day and find both ends together, as they depict their acceptance and sadness. It is the story of women willing to get an education at the expense of segregation, a story perhaps based on the author's experience when he arrived in Mumbai. The image of a calm and obedient Indian lady also cracks when Aaye names her dishonest brother-in-law sarcastically. She acknowledges her deceased husband: "My darling husband...my lord... my love... You left your kids and went away. You warned me not to trust Taty, your brother. You've got my Raja correct" (Motherwit 10).

Her comments also reveal another element of rural India when she says that her husband did not indicate that his brother was the best person to trust while he was there. Perhaps she saved herself from being labeled a madwoman by passing on the notion as her late spouse, as a typical practice in India. However, not many women dare to resist society; Jyoti in Pain (Shalya) is the example. Jyoti must have torn her heart in two to make her son happy when she swapped her daughter with a baby other. Her overwhelming distress at her daughter's separation must have been increased to consider her daughter's chance of death. This story ruthlessly depicts the women's sacrifices to satisfy their society. To remove a portion of her from herself shows the kind of strain women have. The self-reflection, "All her heart appeared blurring in the middle. She pondered who she could ever expose her heart to" she questioned. This portrays the feeling of isolation of women, even in the middle of everything. However, it is her sisters who mock their empowerment and bring about real improvements. "Unlike the rest, she wore a contemporary five-yard sari, making her a mockery of their mockery" (61) showcasing the internal opposition to modernization and social standards. In a culture where women are evaluated on their saris length, it really ought not to be surprising that the speaker in Justice (Nyay) observes the curves of a lady before glancing at her temple to check if she is sweating.

The Oxford dictionary defines feminism as "the promotion of the rights of women based on gender equality." But people frequently mistake equality with commutability in contemporary times. Sexes are 'not intended to be equal, complementary, mutually supportive,

respectful, caring and cherishing. It restores this respect, which must be the real objective of feminism, and does not exchange gender roles. The same situation is shown quite powerfully by Paru when she firmly informs the village elders that she intends to raise the “illegitimate kid” (38). In her words, her femininity, her desire to be a mom, “I am a woman and every woman wants to be a mom. I’ve had sentiments too. Who the kid is doesn’t matter, but I’m the mother of the infant” (38). In the author’s own words, “This ignorant lady has covered everybody’s humiliation swiftly and delicately. The community was there to award her justice, but she had given her righteousness.” A question that is considerably closer to Sixth Finger (Sahav bot) is the character of a woman. That a loving husband becomes a skeptical partner and leads her wife to death reveals the concerns people ask about the essence of a woman.

As metropolitan women are exposed to contemporary lifestyles and converse comfortably with male coworkers or acquaintances, concerns about their character and purity are frequently addressed. The narrator’s representation expresses that mental infliction may be deeply reflected in one’s personality. “Kavach” (Armor) is the story that speaks most about rural women’s empowerment. When a young boy, Gaurya, who worries about his mom but does not talk openly about women who see her profession, often finds herself out of disgrace, is beaten by his mother. She sees him as the only source of income, having unnecessary problems. His father is a drunkard. It is a frequent story in rural and urban regions where women are compelled to support their families while their husbands feel comfortable spending on spirits or games. A distinct separation of job and social ideology is apparent because women frequently save for their families while their husbands take advantage of the freedom to squander hard-earned money. They seldom speak up to their spouses; they take their waste as expenses.

As the narrative continues, we discover the reason for her son’s attitude - at school; he learns the meaning of “Cholice ambe,” the name of the place he belonged to, the word choli, and also the English language for blouse, which was very provocative for a woman’s breasts. The refusal of male instructors at his school to think the word offensive, or rather offensive enough to cease using it, is also shown. Recalling how several customers and spectators shouted out a mango vendor to his mother, he was embarrassed. He even attempts to deny his connection to himself. His embarrassment, however, goes away when his mother hits several intoxicated guys and asks her to “show her mangoes”, “Yes, yes, these are mangoes from choli, but they’re choli from your mother. If you are so interested in examining them, you may go and get your mother’s choli” (86).

Instead of battling Gaurya’s wife, the abreast comments shut them up effectively. This also shows the substantial difference that Indian men regard women around them, place their moms and sisters on pedestals and consider all other women as unconcerned sexual objects. Indeed, not just the stories covered here but also other works by Urmila Pawar all try to uncover

the remarkable unit of ordinary women. The term *Motherwit* refers to the Wit, the agency, the fortitude of the mothers in challenging circumstances and exercise.

Women don't write slogans in their stories and march in movements, but in daily situations, they combat prejudice. As Veena Deo puts it, "reading the stories of Urmila Pawar provides not only a multifaceted appreciation and understanding of the lives of the women of Dalit in different contexts but also a very ancient and sophisticated articulation of an emerging voice that moves them. *Motherwit* refers to a particular wit, agency, and grit that these mothers have and practice in challenging circumstances. As we begin our quest to reveal the stories, it is essential to remember what Pawar's stories portray. These are not just fiction, but every account has a track in Pawar's actual experiences.

The stories in *Motherwit* are created by a lady who wants to write about glimpses of her history. It depicts what she saw in others fighting a hard reality at the core of this endeavour. Pawar's writing demonstrates the sheer willingness to speak for those who cannot speak or be heard. The driving force for these stories is the essential, fundamental desire to be heard for Pawar. "After the numerous Dalit women prose writers in Marathi, Urmila Pawar's short stories have a vital voice in Marathi short fiction," says Veena Deo, translator of *Motherwit's* book. "Urmila Pawar's short stories have a crucial voice in Marathi short fiction" (2013: xviii). Deo's introduction to the book also addresses the problem of language and the process by which it is produced. Because of this, we may see the short narratives as windows into the lives of Dalit women on the bottom level of society.

To depict the history of oppression that each character has experienced in the book, Pawar weaves Dalit women's experiences and meticulously unbundles each link—caste, gender, and class—that connects them. Women in their stories do not write slogans or march in protest movements, but they do fight against prejudice daily in the context of their stories, regardless of the circumstances. It is not uncommon for Pawar's actors to overturn the patriarchal framework and bend it in ways that are advantageous. Even though they are independent, the women are depicted as stoic, and they express their dissatisfaction with the men's position. There is a stronger sense of belonging, and they are always striving to reduce the effects of their inevitable subordination. The protagonist Nalini, for example, was shown to be very aware of her surroundings in the film "The Odd One," where she was the main character (formerly "Veglia"). Wherever she goes, she presents herself as being different, as the title suggests—at her job and when she is represented by attorneys instead of by her own. Moving from a crawl space to a new home may affect the family's life, and the story illustrates how she wants to break away from her old identity markers and forge a new one for her and her children (Guha 44). Some people believe that one's clothing may be used to determine one's caste and social position, which is incorrect. Because of her position as a government official, she is privy to information on how "Dalits...have it good...the government pampers" (57).

Nalini is eager to relocate out of government living quarters, and her husband promises her that he will convince her parents. Finally, her spouse accepts his mother's conviction, although he wants to transfer himself into the government. However, when we witness Nalini take her kid and depart without waiting to convince anyone or seek anybody's permission, the conclusion is impressive. She leaves. She leaves. The act of walking without awaiting a response from her husband is a stoic acceptance of reality and the tenacity of overcoming and acting. She did it even after knowing that he had already yielded to the pressure from his mother.

The female character Paru asks the members of her village to let her look after her child in another story called 'Nyaya' Because it was told to us by a person who used to live in the village but now lives in a town, it is interesting. He describes himself as contemporary, but we know nothing about him other than the fact that he signed a property deal and worked as an attorney. Pam is seen via his eyes as he progresses through the story with us. He inquiries about Paru and expresses sympathy for the villagers, who are said to be the probable father of Paru's little son. Part understands her position as a widow and views her as someone who belongs to her, someone she can raise on her own, without the assistance of a male figure. She doesn't dither when it comes to doing it. She is aware that she has been assaulted, but she now wants to discover the fate of the child, and is seeking restitution in this matter.

Furthermore, Pawar's book recounts a similar event that happened with a woman in her community: the mother is trying to end her pregnancy, and two other ladies are kicking her womb in protest. In this story, the mother is not asked if she wished to retain the kid, and she does not respond affirmatively. However, the identical incident is braided into another thread in the short story, and we see the mother deciding to keep the child. She expresses herself as follows: "This child is mine because I desire it. 'I'm going to take care of my child' (p. 38). She has "a strong and brave voice" (p. 36), which she uses to call into question the local authorities and their methods of enforcing the law.

It is not just Pawar's stories that are concerned with exposing historical injustices, but they are also concerned with the everyday gender interactions that people have. Gary, Indira's son, is a hard worker on the "Kavach" plot, and his mother is proud of him ("Armor"). The way she sells mangoes while strolling around the market or allows people to treat her poorly without responding, similar to how the teacher treats the male instructors, he considers her to be humiliating, and he compares her to the teacher at school. The story draws attention to the sexual undertones that are inherent in language. "Can you tell me where you got your mangoes?" the market sellers asked. Choli (both the garment and the place where Gaurya was born) mangoes? . . . Please allow me to taste them with my own hands" (85). Upon hearing his mother's response, Gary jumps to his feet on her property, rejecting his fear and impotence in the face of his enemies by overcoming them. The author is perplexed as to how "words may quickly lose their meaning" and how this could occur (86). As the child gets older and

develops, the image of his mother shifts from one that is delicate and sticky (like a mango) to one that is powerful and complex (like mango seeds). The exact translation of Veena Deo is full, but a gap in the translation exists, which renders what is an important metaphor in the language of Marathi seems simple when translated into English.

Rather than relying heavily on Pawar's own life experiences, I believe the story is based on a study of her surroundings, which I believe to be the case. The character of Aaye (Mother) is based on the author's mother, who is one of the five persons she describes in her memoirs as being influential in her life. She is a stern, silent, and unyielding mother, and she is modelled on her mother in many ways. The short story serves as an example of what happens to a family when the patriarch dies in a patriarchal society. It also shows how a woman is not regarded as qualified to make family decisions in a patriarchal culture.

The mother continues to weave her basket in order to support her family, but all she wants is to educate all her children to fulfil her deceased husband's vow. She is slim and slightly curved, with an out-of-face appearance, yet her hands are continuously weaving. The mother (she never discloses his name) opposes her in-laws and decides to remain in her current location to continue sending her children to school, despite family members' pleas to take the family home. Her autobiography's consistency remains an open question.

"Cheed" is an intriguing story in this collection ("Anger"). As a story on feminine friendships, I would say that this is not usually addressed, and in our chat, Pawar agreed and stated that she genuinely liked writing this story. She stated that she is always puzzled about how women's friendships alter when the spouse joins a connection that only two people previously shared. In a sense, I would say, it challenges the societal framework that makes up our intimate interactions a vertical hierarchy and places the spouse on a pedestal. This story also challenges the conventions through which women finally accept the spouse's view as correct and do not affirm their ideas. The narrative is multi-layered and discusses the woman's agency and how she alters her perspective and behaviour toward her husband each time she meets him.

She uses fiction to envision an alternative, better, and more sexually sensitive future results in her actual life. Dalit literature is written in a unique language that has subtle impacts on caste and gender, as well as on the reader. Combating social discrimination via Dalit literature involves first writing about the past and then drawing a history of prejudice, which is a method of fighting societal inequality. Pawar's short narratives emphasize the terrible socioeconomic circumstances of castes, classes, and genders, as well as the possible repercussions of these realities on women's lives, as well as the isolation and solitude of these communities. The chapter investigated how women can be rebellious in the face of the complexity of their lives, which includes caste, class, and gender restrictions. What is the nature of their agitation? In what way do they express their dissatisfaction? When it comes to these issues, the creation of different real life-based narratives assists Pawar in providing a

crucial revelation or entrance point. Through her short stories, she made it possible for readers to engage in unique acts of rebellion. Every one of her characters is based on someone Pawar met. Characters in her books and in the world of fiction emerge as real individuals with whom we encounter and interact daily as we transcend the pages of her books and dive deep into the real world created by her in fiction.

Immediately, readers are drawn in by the effortlessness of the words, which is evident in both writers' writing, and when you begin to embrace the uncomfortable, they pounce you right in the face. The writers need to address the problems head-on and do not want to waste any time in getting to the harsh facts of the situation. According to readers and critics alike, the books seemed to be more of a criticism than a self-portrait based on truth, and that they were portrayed via the presence of their kin, their family, in the novels. The personal moments seem to be quite confessional, yet they mix in with episodes of collective speech, while still lending a strong voice to the narrative.

The writers' lives, on the other hand, provide an interesting study for Dalit gynocritics. Both authors seem to have completely submerged themselves in their communities, given that they both live in a primitive male-centric environment in the middle of nowhere. The writers write in the first person from a later period, one that has seen the effects of urban innovation and women's liberation, and they bring out the self in a more forthright way, inviting critique from established Dalit authors. Their life stories, when seen in a broader context, are almost as comprehensive as any other women's work in any genre, as well as current Indian literature.

Further, it also demonstrates that Dalit oppression not only pays attention to the subjugation of a group or clan of people to their knees in every socio-economic manner but also confines them behind the bars and away from the sources of civilization. Although the authors have demonstrated through their works of depictions and imagery that Dalits continue to suffer from evils that have not been cured, they also demonstrate that there is an extensive body of literature, both oral and written, that will constantly bear the torch to motivate and monitor the young, to fight and bring about harmony at the same time.

The other essential element of the demographic epidemic of prejudice is shown in both the pieces. The writers have written on Dalit resistance, which encompasses the conflict over stringent religious customs as well as other issues. Although this is true, the hypothesis of diverse women's liberation and intersectional feminism clarifies how Dalit women's rights cannot be expected to be at par in their development and demands with the rest of Indian women's activist development and legitimize their reliance on financial disparities as the source motivation for their writings.

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