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A Study of the Dalit Voice in Nagraj Manjule's *Fandry*

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In 20th century i.e. in 1960 Dalit writing or literature has been emerged as the new form of writing in Marathi language. It has created its own circle of discussion about the oppression, injustice of the society with them. This literature is about an oppressed Indian caste under Indian caste system. From the beginning of it, Dalit literature is the voice against the upper caste society in India. Actually is it the voice of voiceless communities in India. Dalit literature is also about the writing of victims of such society who oppressed and exploited them under the name of Indian caste system. Such communities were deprived of their rights of living with respect, education, business and customs too. *Fandry* is also the result of the same.

The present research paper is a study of the Dalit voice by highlighting the various themes handled by Nagraj Manjule against caste based society

Who are Dalits?

Those who are beneath the entire caste system – and are therefore literally ‘outcaste’ as well as ‘untouchable’ – call themselves ‘Dalits’. The word “Dalit”, meaning “broken” or “ground down”, is used by ‘outcaste’ people themselves to describe at the same time their oppression, their identity and their collective power for emancipation. They are the non-people, the ones that all belonging to the ‘varnas’ (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vysyas and Shudras) can content themselves with being above. The caste system has nevertheless been applied to Dalits to divide them into many sub-castes. The use of the word ‘Dalit’, encouraged by great Dalit leader Dr. Ambedkar, has enabled the development of a collective identity among all the ‘outcaste’ people, whatever their sub-caste, ethnicity or religion.

Fandry, a Marathi film, is based on Dalit writing and deals with the realistic condition of marginal section of people. The present film is about the world of a child who is affected by caste system and the puppet of Indian society. Nagraj Manjule, the director of this movie, has rightly pictured the disturbed and pathetic life of the child Jabya affected by caste system by discussing the various issues in the light of the themes of the movie ‘*Fandry*’.

Fandry illuminates many of the problems of marginal section, humiliation, injustice, discrimination, pathetic, gloomy condition, and lower status, miseries on the back drop of dalit identity and most humiliated life on earth without any crime.

Education

Fandry rightly discusses the theme education in Indian society. It depicts the realistic situation and condition in case of education in Indian society. The protagonist of the novel Jabya whose actual name is Jambuwant is a student and a good artist. The story mostly takes place

around and at the school campus. Not only the opening but the plot also has the climax that takes place around the school campus. Nagraj Manjule pictures beautifully the situation of education. Fandry can be studied as a satire on recent education system. There are many characters in the film. Jabya's family consists of five persons but only Jabya is educated and knows the value of the education. His parents are illiterate and don't not give much importance to education. They want only to earn to live their daily life. They work whatever they get to survive due to the lack of money. They are not even aware about their pathetic life which is the only result of illiteracy. In caste based society, such untouchables or marginal people are not allowed to educate themselves.

The film is a satire on the present education system also. India is a country where Mahatma Phule, Savitribai Phule, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj have dedicated themselves to bring changes conservative education system and opened the doors of it to all. But upper caste society people even in 21st century don't allow such marginal communities to take education. Manjule has skillfully directed and focused the images of such social reformers like Saint Gadge Baba, Savitribai Phule and Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj symbolically to show untouchability and status of education of dalit even after 100-150 years when Jabya and his sisters carry a pig. Jabya's schoolmates harass him a lot and tease also. Jabya, the hero of a film, is somehow clever in study. He has good writing skill also but due to the traditional attitude towards the education of his parents, he misses the school and attends the work allotted by society of catching pigs.

Lack of education also gives birth to superstitious. The characters belong to this community in a film believe in the concept '*Bhutacha maal*'. In fair, Palakhi falls down because of a pig is remarked as ill-omen. Film itself starts with the superstition of searching a black sparrow. As a strong believer, Jabya, the hero, dreams of killing a black sparrow and throwing an ash on his so called beloved Shalu to enchant her. Jabya is always in search of such a black sparrow to get her love. Not even this but his friend Chankya, the owner of 'Aashiqui' cycle mart is a strong believer in love, God and superstitious. He goes to forest and meditates.

Poverty

Poverty, another theme, can be studied here. Poverty is the root cause of their development. Jabya's family lives in a hut which is far away from the village. They don't have strong financial background so as to buy new things and have their daily bread and butter. Kachrya, father of the protagonist, work whatever he gets though not so much healthy. Jabya is the character who is the representative of the poverty. He studies at night. As they don't have electricity at their home, he takes the help of kerosene lamp. His father shouts at him for wasting the kerosene for study.

Due to the poverty the characters have to manage many of the things in their daily life. Kachrya, though poor, has to bear the dowry system vice versa Jabya dreams of buying a jean trouser but in vain. He is search of work, meets everyone and requests to assign him work or let him know in future also.

Untouchability and social discrimination

One can discuss untouchability as the main issue or the theme of the film. The producer and director himself experienced such life. Untouchability, a blot to Indian society, is rightly shown in the film. Gandhiji who fought against such untouchability in India but the situation remains the same after the independence too. He once said, '*God never made man that he may consider another man as an untouchable.*' But the villagers defy this thought and strongly believe in caste based system like untouchability. Society in the film gives much importance to God's animal i.e. horse image in village fair but a living human being, dalit is neglected. The characters like Kachrya's family belong to lower caste community and so they are considered as untouchable. The name of protagonist's father 'Kacharu' itself symbolizes dust who doesn't have right to live in society so they live on the outskirts of the village. They are forced to do their traditional work. They are humiliated and oppressed in the village. The protagonist Jabya himself feels the situation and harassment in school and even in village fair also. Many of the villagers call him as '*fandry*'. When he goes to his friend Vedant Kulkarni's house, Vedant's mother refers him as untouchable and calls her child by mentioning his caste '*kOkDyaacaM paor AalayaM baGa*' (Kaikadi's son has come to meet you). Jabya even is not asked for entering the house and to have something to eat. Villagers believe in not to touch to touch such communities as they catch pigs. They live abusive life. Jambuwant often is abused by his friends in school as 'Kalya' (Black).

Atrocity and Sexual harassments

Dalits in film 'Fandry' are literally exploited by upper caste society. It is inhuman to exploit such dalits. Dalit family in film is the example of the same. Villagers think that it is only dalit's work to catch and kill the dirty animal like pigs. Headperson (Patil) of the village orders to throw out the pigs out of the villages even two days before of Kacharya's daughter and the bride accompanies with her father to catch pigs. Women are exploited, abused and insulted. Some of the villagers make the fun of Jabya's sister Dropadi while catching pigs by calling her 'Cheergirl'. So called upper caste villagers shoot the pictures of those dalit people and also post on social network like facebook to humiliate them.

Women characters

Women characters in this film are so much submissive. They are suppressed in their own family. They can't raise their voice against patriarchal society, caste system and bad practices like dowry system. Kachrya dominates his wife and daughters. Women are not allowed to express their views or opinions. They are illiterate and insulted in society. Upper caste women as compare to dalit women have rights to get education, to get outside of the house. Upper caste society has a special angel towards the dalit women. They consider dalit women as a thing for enjoyment to quench their lust and demands.

Voice against caste system

The present film 'Fandry' is the finest example of rebel against caste system in India. Jabya who is exploited and suppressed teenager boy raises his voice against the untouchability not forcefully but silently through his actions. He is in love with upper caste girl who is his school mate Shalu. He feels ashamed of his traditional profession so that he never reveals his

caste to her or even to anybody. He strongly protests headperson of the village when he is ordered to take out a pig out of the gutter. In order to save his identity, he hides himself in the market as soon as he sees Shalu. He feels ashamed of selling the wooden buckets in market. He feels shy and rejects to join his parents to catch 'fandry'. He hides himself when he finds students in school are observing them how to catch pigs. He strongly believes in education and a good student too. He attends his school regularly as he knows well the way of the progress is only the education in front of him. He proudly speaks Marathi language instead of the language of his caste even at home also.

The film ends with the voice raised against the exploitation. At the end of the film, Jabya throws stone against the rude villagers who insult his sister while catching pigs to show his protest.

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