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Concepts and renderings of gender and race in Babytai Kamble's 'The Prison We Broke'

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Abstract---This Research Paper first evaluates the twin concepts of Gender and Race from multiple perspectives, particularly in the Indian context. Subsequently, it critiques the rendition of these concepts in the lives and works of Jyotiba Phule, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Periyar E.V. Ramasamy and their relentless attempts in forging Gender, Racial and Caste-related equality. Finally, the paper probes deep into the psychobiography of BabytaiKamble and critiques her unique autobiography 'The Prisons We Broke'.

Keywords---gender, race, caste, inequality, Brahmin, womanhood, female, girl-child, marriage, freedom.

Introduction**Gender and Race: A Brief Critique, In The Indian Context**

Before delving deep into the trajectory and psychodynamics of the twin concepts of Gender and Race in BabytaiKamble's epoch-making autobiography, translated into English by Maya Pandit, a Professor at C.I. F.L, Hyderabad as 'The Prisons We Broke', first published in 2008, and reprinted later multiple times, it would be pertinent to initiate the discourse with a critique of the meaning and dimensions of Gender and Race.

In the context of Feminism, Gender is not regarded merely as a biological reality. Gender, therefore, is more a socio-cultural reality that is attributed to a male or a female child, long after their births, by the process of clarification of their biological differences. The Society also teaches them this biological difference should and would spring forth orientation differences in case a male and a female child. It is also argued strongly in the present times that the difference of sex is a

biological reality whereas the difference in gender is a socio-cultural reality. In their seminal work entitled 'Feminism and Sexuality: A Reader', published in 1996, Jackson and Scott eloquently argue:

The term 'gender' was adopted by feminists to emphasize the social shaping of femininity and masculinity, to challenge the idea that relations between women and men were ordained by nature. Sometimes a distinction is made between 'sex' as the biological difference between male and female and 'gender' as the cultural distinction between femininity and masculinity along with the social division between women and men. (Jackson and Scott, 1996, 2)

Oxford language Dictionary very rightly indicates that the term 'gender' broadly indicates the range and issuance of identities and may not necessarily have to do with males and females. Side by side, with the term 'gender', another new critical term called 'genderlect' has found coinage and much prevalence now. It implies a linguistic usage and characteristics, which is a construct of the society or culture. It indicates the difference of a narrative or discourse, penned by a male as compared to that by a female. Subtle yardsticks of measurement come into focus when 'genderlect' becomes a tool of evaluation.

Gender discrimination is a grim reality in India. It has always remained in overt and covert ways, as exists in truncated forms even among the so called highly educated even today. It begins with the difference of roles and difference of responsibilities between the female child and the male child. Feticide of female embryos, despite the ban and strict strictures of the Government, still exists. It has made the ratio of male and female become so uneven, with females depleting in ratio to such a level that all grown up men would not find a female spouse, from the mathematical point of view. The number of women had gone down so drastically in states like Rajasthan and Punjab, that brides must be procured from other States; and even two or more grooms married to a single bride. Maharashtra, the State of Babysai Kamble's birth, theoretically offers a slightly better picture, but the darkness there, in terms of gender-discrimination, is only a shade lighter.

A Textbook of Class XII in Maharashtra emerged as a sexist and gender-discriminatory one, when it claimed in the year 2017 that the parents of the girls with homely looks should keep arrangements of dowry, if they have to get their daughters wedded decently. It further claims that the parents of the girls who are handicapped must do the shame. This small example is indicative of the patriarchal psyche absorbed with beauty, handicapped and dowry. It automatically forces upon the girls of impressionable age that if they belong to any of the two categories, they are nothing more than a burden to their families that may procure their marriages against the payment of a hefty dowry.

Race is similarly a highly debated terms, with critics and commentators largely differentiating its intrinsic qualities. Britannica considers race as the group-divisions and tropisms among humans, with respect to their outward and inward, physical, and behavioral differences. It also pinpoints 15 Century as the time when racial differences, as emblems of discrimination, emerge. During the 17 Century, it became a means of easy categorization, like 'European' and 'African'

Around 20 Century; such concepts underwent a paradigm shift, to consider racial difference emerging not from biology or genetics but from cultural differences. Today the term 'Race' is also used to indicate linguistic, religious, and even political differences that segregates the world into small clusters. Race, indeed, emerged as a strong archetype or a recurring theme in Afro-American literature, particularly from the late 1920s, during the Harlem Renaissance. It later allowed the tributary of the 'Black Aesthetics' emerge from it during the 1960s and the 'Black Arts Movement' to forge forth, a decade later, in the 1970s. It is their Race and their relentless attempts to return to its roots that emerged in the writings of LeRoi Jones, who renamed himself Amiri Baraka, and Don I. Lee, who renamed himself Haki R. Madhubuti, in their endeavor to wash away the Western tropes, and reclaim their long-lost racial identity.

From the concept of race, finally emerged the ideas of racialism and racial discrimination. Bogusly basing themselves on the ideas that some Races are superior to the others, in morals, culture and intellect, the concept automatically sprung forth that one Race has the right to conquer and dominate another. Colonization intrinsically depended upon the premise that one Race has the right to rule the other. The Europeans envisaged the Africans and the Indians as inferior races, who should be dominated, put to slavery, and ruled. This led to conquest, and subsequently dominance. Though Article 15 of Indian Constitution strongly prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth, racial discriminations have always existed in Indian, with its ethnic diversity of having at least 2000 diverse groups existing here.

During a time, the State of Assam was noted for its racial intolerance. Depending on the concept of 'Assam only for the Sons of the Soil', many non- Assamese people, particularly the Bengalese living there, had to pay a ransom to several Militant Groups simply for staying there. Bengali School Teachers, Doctors, and Engineers working there had to sacrifice half their salary, as gate-passes, for continuing to live there, without any harm. The U.L.F.A or the United Liberation Front of Assam strongly decimated against the non-Assamese and made most Hindi or Bengali- speaking residents flee from the State unless they paid up. In the month of May of the year 2007, U.L.F.A Militants gunned down 9 non-native persons and 26 more, the next month.

Discrimination against the people of the Northeast States of India is a rampant truth. Due to their skin tones and facial features, they are often accidentally or deliberately confused with the Chinese and treated insultingly. Their language, dress-code, food-habits, even hair styles are called in question. They are often refused, when they seek to rent a house in other parts of India, and often made an easy punching bag by people of the other States. Females from the Northeast are often harassed, molested, and raped. The incident of 14 January 2014 against two Females from Manipur at KotlaMubarakpur, Delhi goes on to prove this.

Jyothiba Phule's Concepts of Gender and Race

Jyotiba Phule, full-named Jyotirao Govindrao Phule, came to prominence as a social activist of Maharashtra during the mid-1850s, and continued to influence thoughts regarding Gender and Race very strongly, till the end of the century, and

even beyond. It was against the ills of the Caste systems and Untouchability prevalent in India that he first raised his voice. Realizing that female students are often ostracized and marginalized in a coeducational School, where all her intellectual, emotional, and economic needs are never addressed, Phule, almost in line with Merry Wollstonecraft in England, opened the first School exclusive for the Females in Pune, through the aid of his able and co-activist spouse, Savitribai Phule.

Just as Raja Rammohan Roy in Bengal became the harbinger of the Bengali Renaissance by preaching for the abolition of the *Sati* system, where a Hindu wife was instructed to climb her husband's burning pyre after his death, the Phule couple also championed the spread of education among the Females as a means of repudiating the Gender and social discriminations against them. Realizing that true emancipation should begin from home, Phule taught his uneducated wife the 3Rs, -- reading, writing and (a) rithmetic.

Phule knew the devastating effects of inter-racialism and caste-discriminations in India from his very childhood, as he was born in the *Mali* caste, next to *sudhra* or *harijan* in India. As he and his brothers had taken up the profession of a flouriest or a *phool-bepari*, he later came to be known as Phoole, which he adopted as his surname, to break loose from the Caste domains of retrogressive India. Insulted for participating in a marriage of one belonging to the upper caste, Phule entered a life-long crusade against caste discriminations and racism prevalent all over India, though he closes particularly the caste-ridden Maharashtra as the primary field of his activities for social and women welfare.

During his childhood, Phule had witnessed the demeaning practice of women of lower castes carry brooms at their back and forced to sweep the place through which they went, to save the upper-class from their polluting shadows. He also saw how widows were exploited and robbed off the legitimate property of their husbands and sons. India had always considered widows as a soft target for molestation, rape, abuse, social shaming, and strong discrimination. Anyone could come and impregnate them. As a grotesque joke, the upper Caste men and women often stripped a widow of a lower Caste naked, and made her parade all over the place, for people to laugh and pelt her with stones or garbage. Seeing such miserable plights of widows and influenced by the thoughts of Raja Rammohan Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar of Bengal, Phule, in the face of staunch criticism and life-threats, introduced widow remarriage, as a means of alleviating some of the miseries of the widows.

Phule also found that impregnated widows had no social respect, and had no place, where they could give birth safely. Questioning the moral character of a widow, who had conceived, the society shut its doors against her. Consequently, the widow, with no money and no prestige, either committed suicide with her unborn child in her womb, or attempted feticide or infanticide. Attempting to do his humble share in saving a widow in such a miserable state, Phule built his own orphanage. He sent the message that pregnant widows were free to come there and stay there before giving birth. In case after giving birth, they were incapable of taking the baby with them for fear of social stigma or other problems, they were free to leave their babies in the orphanage.

Phule coined the word “Dalit” from a Marathi word, which later became the umbrella phrase to incorporate all victims of caste discriminations under its gamut. Phule was the founder-father of SatyashodhakSamaj, then can be loosely translated as the ‘Society of Truth- seekers or Truth- regulators. Though not highly educated, Phule had made life his textbooks, and penned many works, extensively in regional language. Of them, *ShetkarayachaAasud*, later translated as ‘*Cultivator’s Whipcord*’, published in July 1881, is the most remarkable. It is no doubt that Dr. Ambedkar considered Phule his messiah and prime influence in his crusade against Gender and Racial inequalities. As a life-long preacher for female education, widow remarriage, adoption of orphans, particularly orphan girl children, were a few steps through which Phule attempted women empowerment. By fighting against untouchability, caste discrimination, treating women as cattle, he revolutionized the Indian sensibility and paved the path for the creation of a true progressive mind, by allowing the sun to shine equally on all hearths, and not only a few.

Ambedkar’s Ideas of Gender and Race

A thinker and ideologue, who had profound effect on the thought-process of BabytaiKamble and her autobiography, was none other than Dr. B.R Ambedkar, the scion of racial, social and gender justice in Indian. There are six sections in the Indian Constitution, thanks to our great creator of it, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, which directly speaks of Gender equality:

- a) Article 14 of the Indian Constitution speaks of the equal rights and opportunities in political, social, and economic spheres for both males and female.
- b) Article 15 of the Indian Constitution directly and strongly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual identities of a male and a female.
- c) Article 15 (3) of the Indian Constitution enables affirmative discrimination in favor of woman, meaning that in case of equal merit and qualifications of two candidates, one male and the other female, it is to the female that the job or assignment must go.
- d) Article 39 of the Indian Constitution ordains that a male and a female must have equal means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work. This means that a woman has as much right to choose her career, thrive at it and get the same pay for it, as that of a similar male employee.
- e) Article 42 of the Indian Constitution voices the urgent need for just and humane conditions of work equally for a male and a female as well of Maternity Leave for females. Indeed, he was the first person to feel the need of mentioning this in the Indian Constitution, to legalize this essentiality in a woman’s life.
- f) Article 51 (A) (c) of the Indian Constitution emphasizes on Fundamental Duties essential to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of a woman.

As a visionary, Dr. Ambedkar was able to realize the primary reason for the miserable plight of Indian women and Gender discrimination is the social and economic inequality that are meted out by the Society and Patriarchy. He opined that for the all-round development for a girl child, there must be education, formal and social, as well as socio-cultural rights reserved for women. He

particularly emphasized on the emancipation of gender discrimination against the Women through education, as evident from his invaluable observation:

It is the education which is the right weapon to cut slavery and it is the education which will enlighten the downtrodden masses to come up and gain social status, economic betterment, and political freedom. (Ambedkar, B.R. Annihilation of Caste, Verso Books, India, 2014, 102)

Through his systematic study of the Indian scriptures and religious texts, Ambedkar was horrified at the gender discrimination he found there. It said that women and cattle should be put in the same bracket and discriminated against. They are the lowest creation of humanity, and merely a tool for procreation, these Texts emphasized. For this elaborate falsification of the truth, regarding the abilities of women, Dr. Ambedkar considered religious Scriptures as one of the prime sources of gender discrimination in Indian society. In his seminal works like 'The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women', 'The Women and the Counter Revolution' and 'The Riddle of the Women', Dr. Ambedkar accuses the Hindu Religious Text as the prima face for the gender discrimination. He believed that many of such books cunningly idealize women as Goddesses who should mould their lives on the ideas of self-staking sacrifices, but should never get education, rights to property or divorce, and most importantly economic freedom.

He made a comparative study of several religions of the world and felt that Buddhism alone provided more freedom to woman than the others. The tripartite methods that Dr. Ambedkar preached for subsiding Gender discrimination to a great extent were: (i) Education, where boys and girls will receive the same amount of similar education, (ii) Inter-Caste Marriage, through which all the varied castes of India will be gelled into a common identity, and (iii) Inter-Dining, through which boys and girls, males, and females all over India will dine together, and receive equal amount of the same food. We are often reminded of his oft-quoted observation that without Social Democracy, Political Democracy becomes null and void.

Dr. Ambedkar's concept of **race** is equally insightful. Even as a student, he repudiated the concept of racial discrimination. He was surprised that the so-called educated people still nurtured and garnished the concept of a group of people being untouchables. Taking some of the ideas of Franz Boas and Alexander Goldenweiser, Dr. Ambedkar developed his own critique of the concept of Untouchables in India and added valuable insights to it. In an extraordinarily strong article which he later self-published, as the Inviters who requested him to deliver it, found it too offensive and suggested changes, which Dr. Ambedkar did not, he wrote:

Some have dug biological trenches in defense of the Caste System. It is said that the object of Caste was to preserve the purity of race and purity of blood. Now ethnologists are of the opinion that men of pure race exist nowhere and there has been a mixture of all races in all parts of the world. Especially is this the case with the people of India (as cited in The Logical Indian, Issue dated 14/04/2017)

Indeed, without the social activism of Dr. Ambedkar, whatever betterment has come upon the Indian Womanhood could have never occurred.

Periyar e.v. Ramasamy's renderings about gender and race

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, born as Erode Venkatappa Ramasamy, and later ionized simply as Periyar, may be considered as a social activist hailing from Tamil Nadu, who had lived almost for a hundred years, and had passed away, only four decades before, in 1973. He was a life-long preacher against the devastating effects of Gender inequalities and the Caste discriminations, preached and practiced by the Brahmins.

Periyar had joint the Congress Party but found that it catered to the dictates only of the upper caste urbanized. Realizing that the Party would not be able to fulfill any of his missions and visions, he resigned from the Party. Later, he became the founder-father of the Dravidian Movement. Self-respect of Women and their rights were of thetopmost priority to Periyar. Incidentally, the expression 'Periyar' in Tamil language means the 'noble and respected person'. Varied experiences forged Periyar's anti-Brahmin sensibility. During his visit to Banaras, he was demeaned and even denied Prasad in a *Langar* or Charity Hall, serving food to the common people because it was exclusively for Brahmins, and he was not one. Kicked out of the place, Periyar had to grope for food in the dustbins, fight with dogs, and finally manage to get some. His Banaras experience roused the atheist temperament in him from that of a staunch believer in God and His ways.

He also found the system of not allowing low Caste people to enter several Temples all over India and the South of India very demeaning for the human dignity. He also saw several roads closed to the people of the lower Castes and preserved exclusively for the upper Caste people. This he found detrimental to the basic dignity of human beings. He found the manual scavenging system hazardous to the health and demeaning to the dignity of the have-nots of the society. While forming the manifesto of Self-Respect Movement, Periyar emphasized on a few elements worth mentioning: (a) Universal brotherhood and sisterhood, (b) irradiation of superstitious beliefs, (c) irradiation of Caste discriminations, (d) pretension of child marriage, (e) equal rights for women, (f) encouragements of widow marriages and love marriages, (f) establishment of home for orphans, (g) conduction of inter-Caste and inter-religious marriages.

Later, Periyar went on to form Justice Party, as a compendium of all his experience to irradiate social, caste, gender, and racial injustices in India. Freedom and self-respect were two principles that Periyar crusaded for throughout his life, as well as right to education and right to property for the women kind. Seeing that arranged marriages often became a cage for women, almost in line with Ibsen's 'The Dolls House', Periyar believed that women should have the liberty to choose their husbands. Dowry related deaths of women made him preach against the practice of giving dowry during marriages. Speaking against child marriage, he spoke of the necessity of getting a girl married only when she is mature enough in body and mind to understand the complexities of life.

Periyar was much ahead of his times in thoughts and action. He even spoke of the necessity of birth control for women, so that they were not burdened with the responsibility of bringing up too many children, which jeopardized their scope for self-betterment. Patriarchy constantly attempts to over-burden a woman with several children, to keep her at leash like a domestic animal and remain dependent upon Patriarchy for the maintenance of herself and her children. He believed that contraceptive measures provide a better freedom to a woman to determine the number of children, she wished to have.

He also believed that if a husband is afflicted with a venereal disease, the women must have the right to lie separate from him. Similarly, a widow must have right s to inherit her be-ceased husband's property, even if she marries for the second time. He also supported that if a husband turns out to be a rake, a sadist, a demented or an irresponsible person, a woman should have the right to legally separate from him, through divorce. Periyar wanted women to be truly educated, and then join compulsory armed training and police training, for aiding themselves in self-defense.

He also believed that it is hypocritical of the Patriarchy to innovate and implement codes of conduct for women, and term any woman 'unchaste' for the violation of any such code. He believed the Brahmanism and Patriarchy; the twin sponsors of social evils like *Devdashi* System, where a woman was formally married to idol of a God, and then left on the mercy of the priests and landlords to abuse her physically and economically, are not in a position to dictate what should be good or bad for a woman. Such people could create only caste divisions and contribute nothing to the betterment of the society. With discussions regarding the seminal ideas of Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar happening all round her, and gradually changing the fate of the Indian women, Babytai Kamble picked them up and used them in their own accord, in forging forth her sensibility and autobiography.

The Twin Concepts Of Gender And Race In Babytai Kamble's Autobiography '*The Prisonswe Broke*'

Analysing Babytai Kamble's Life: A Psychobiographical Approach

Babytai Kamble's sensational autobiography '*The Prisonswe Broke*' is a perfect manifestation of the marginalization of the poor Dalit women all over India. It testifies to the truth of Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak's oft-quoted observation that women all over the world are twice-Subalterns, which particularly prevailed about women like her. She had seen the dogmas, Brahmanism and Caste orientated discrimination so pervasive in Hindu religion that she eschewed it all together, and embraced Buddhism like Dr. Ambedkar, and remained its life-long devotee. Her autobiography is a manifesto of lived experiences of a woman born in the untouchable community of Maharashtra, and her subsequent victimization in the hands of the upper Caste people, as well as the males of her own caste. The significant use of the word 'they' in the title indicates that she is not speaking exclusively about her, but also about the shared fates and similar miseries of women like her in India, and the world over.

It touches us with its first-hand narrative account, the essential helplessness of a woman born poor and untouchable, without much education, without any means of livelihood, and constantly at the receiving end from Patriarchy, Caste and Sexist discrimination, and the societal impositions which made her feel like a burden both to her parents, her husband, her children and to herself.

BabytaiKamble made an amazing journey from being an untouchable, writing from the perspective of the untouchables, without any superficial finery and directly from her heart, to emerge as the loving Sister of all women all over the world like her, who are victims of Gender, Caste and Race discriminations, in one way or other. Hence, she came to be known as 'Tai', a Marathi word which means 'Sister'. Before her death in 2012, she was indeed able to build a Sisterhood for the Untouchable Subalterns, who's lives had been no better than a garbage can, where anyone can pour any kind of garbage, all through the night and day.

BabytaiKamble went to one of the rural schools, but her education came to its abrupt end, when she was a student of Class IV. The primary reason was of course economic, but the Patriarchy ordains that education is necessary for a male child, but a luxury for a female child; too much of education hinders a girl-child in becoming a docile wife, in future. At the same time, too much of education makes it difficult for their parents to find a suitable groom for her, in a community consisting overtly of illiterates. The husband and the groom's family are not comfortable with a girl who has passed out of school and suffer from inferiority complex before her.

Marriage is no less a drudgery for an untouchable girl. Married off at the age of thirteen, she finds her body degenerate further into a children-procuring mint, where her opinion is of no or secondary importance. The responsibility of childbearing, child-caring and making them grow with care falls entirely upon the onus of the responsibility of a female. She must remain hungry, but feed the several mouths of her family, where all sacrifices must be done by the woman alone.

The responsibility of the man of the house ends with providing a meager amount of money for the month to the female to run the family, keep the hearth enkindled, care for her children when they fall sick, and even pay for the cremation, if a few of them die. The family does not have money enough for any medical treatment, a costly luxury, affordable only by the affluent. BabytaiKamble learnt these bitter lessons from her life itself, when she found three of her ten children before her very eyes, without any medical aid.

BabytaiKamble's writings differ from the upper class, aristocratic Feminists, in not being theory oriented, thick with jargons and solipsism, but recording every moment of a lived experience, where life becomes the best text one can read. However, we are indebted to Maxine Bernstein, without whose encouragement, BabytaiKamble's autobiography could not have seen the light of the day. The entire work is a flashback of something called life, or one resembling life, she had lived, in which individual history, gender history and community history impinge upon one another.

A Critique Of 'The Prisons We Broke' From The Perspective Of Gender, Caste And Race

The striking analogy, with which BabytaiKamble's autobiography '*The Prisons We Broke*' opens, is comparing a female like her to an animal, without a tail. She felt that her parents, the society and the students and Teachers from the upper Classes overtly and covertly treat her as nothing more than a domesticated animal—a cow or a goat, or one from the extended team of cattle. Marriage is nothing joyous for the fair sex, particularly for one in her Caste. It seems nothing more than a passage from one tribulation to another. Looking after the extended team of brothers and sisters had already made a girl of eight or nine become almost second-Mother to them. She has already learnt the hard lesson at her formative years that life for the female is only responsibility and sacrifice, but neither wish-fulfillment, nor joy.

A girl of eight or nine is nothing more than a burden; the sooner she is disposed of in the name of marriage, the greater is the relief of the parents. With more daughters in the family to be disposed on a similar manner, the responsibility for the married daughter ends for the parents on the very moment she starts for her In-laws place; now whether she lives or dies matters little. On coming to her In-laws house, with a dowry, the essentiality necessity for the marriage of a female, even before she had entered the house properly, far from thinking it to be her own, she is forced to enter the kitchen, as a test of her culinary skills. The poor, nervous, sweating girl is forced to prepare two baskets of breads or '*bhakis*'. Burring her fingers and hand, drenched in sweat, criticisms hurled upon her, unknown people peeping through the kitchen door, joking, and laughing, a girl like BabytaiKamble must complete her imposed task with hours of rigorous labor. What she did not know was that her handiwork would now be evaluated in public, to make her a laughingstock before everyone, soon. The burnt or slightly unbaked breads are displayed before the public, for all men and women, not only of the groom's family but for all his neighbors, well-wishers, and others, to see, analyze and evaluate.

The permanent epithet of a useless girl is then tagged to the new wife, with direct questions being asked about what the bride's mother has taught her at her home, all these years. BabytaiKamble has lived through all such experiences and know how a misery, of a newer kind, and constant monitoring and task-assigning, in the name of preparing herself for the future, starts the moment one like her steps into the house of her In-laws. This is only the beginning of the tortures a mother-in-Law will impose upon her Daughter-in-Law, as long as she lives, in the name of disciplining her and teaching her the art of living. She will never restrain her tongue; and her pet epithetic to address her new daughter-in-Law is 'slut' or a 'slut's daughter', or the 'daughter of a beggar.' BabytaiKamble does not hesitate to observe that a mother-in-Law ruins the life of a daughter in Law and had been doing this for generations.

The pain is that such rigorous hardships are imposed primarily by one generation of women upon another, as a continuation of legacy. When the Grooms mother had first come to her In-Laws, she had been treated similarly, and now must hand over the same humiliation to her Daughter-in-Law. She does not ask herself

for once what this retrogressive practice will make her gain, but continues this practice, as if, it is an unshakable tradition and must be practiced. Next, steps in the husband, or the person one must call a husband, who is also a hard taskmaster and punisher. He has his ears reserved for the words of his mother; any will lift his hand on his wife at the slightest provocation, if asked by his mother.

With his eyes on the body of the nimble girl, he wants instant consummation of his marital rites and rights, by bedding her instantly, and waits for the night he can bed her. He does not think for once that a little girl will need some time to adjust herself to the new situation, after all the humiliation she has received from her in -Laws. Now it is the turn of the husband to humiliate her further, by forcibly possessing her body, and indulging in the first domestic rape that her entire life would now become synonymous with.

BabytaiKamble says unequivocally that daily trashing by the husband, without any rhyme or reason, becomes the essential part of the life of a girl like her. The newly married girl is nothing more than a Maid and Slut, combined into one, in her new house. She can be starved, if food is scarce; she made be not given a new wear for decades and must depend on the few she had brought from her home, in marriage. She is therefore often seen in tattered clothes and even without a drop of oil in her hair, as that is an extra and dispensable luxury.

Any kind to complaint or protest, on the part of a girl-bride, would only intensify the torture. Unable to put up with the daily quota of torture, even if a girl-bride ran away, she would not find any shelter with her parents, who would clearly state that their responsibility as parents have ended with getting her married off. Other men would hound upon her as one unprotected and therefore easily available, therefore, a runaway girl-bride must return home with further humiliation, and chances of more torture.

BabytaiKamble speaks of the prevailing practice of chopping off the nose-tip of a runaway girl-bride, who made them known as 'mudy', giving thereafter a chance to the husband to abandon the socially condemned woman, and remarrying. BabytaiKamble also speaks of how the entry of a small group of girls, termed untouchable by the Society, into a Temple, proved extremely traumatic for them. The priests chased them away and said that they had polluted the temple. However, the same priest did not hesitate to attend the marriage of one such girl, perform the rituals from a distance, and demand a hefty amount for his service, and not take one coin lesser than his demand. Yet they considered the Mahar untouchables as dirt to be condemned for ever. Such contradictions and Caste-oriented and Racial attitudes of Hindu religion made BabytaiKamble lose all faith in Hindu religion and its protective power, from an early stage of her life. Sometimes, Mahar women pretended to be possessed by God, to set it fair and squire with their husbands for beating them relentlessly, but it was only a temporary refuge, and had no lasting effect on the stranger called a husband.

Unhygienic living norms, deprivation of cleanliness, not even allowed using soap as the essentiality of cleanliness, made many of the women of her community fall ill and dying prematurely. Once forsaken by the husband that happened at the

winkling of an eye, women like her had no alternative but to beg. Invisible chains of slavery perpetually jingled in the hands and feet of women like BabytaiKamble and other fellow Mahar women. Another available profession for women like her was to clean the domestic animals of the house of the upper Class. In return, they received no money, but left over of stale or rotten food, which they had to eat like animals. Indeed, their lives were worse than the animals they cleaned.

Women even had to abandon their children in the sun and without any care, so that she could go out to earn. In that way they became kind of bonded laborers, working not for money for leftovers from the house of the affluent. Breakfast was a luxury and a lunch a dream. The only meal was after sundown, when hunger had almost digested all the entrails inside the stomach, for women like her. When upper Caste people came from the opposite side of the road, like all Mahar untouchables, BabytaiKamble also had to get off the road and stand among bushes and thorns; sometimes they were not allowed to use the path frequented by the Upper Caste people,

The *Saris* that they wore were not one piece of a cloth but sewn out of rags. Vermilion mark on the forehead was mandatory for a married Mahar woman, though they themselves were their own breadwinners by selling of firewood at the cheapest rate offered by the Upper Class, not their husbands. Conceiving and subsequent child-delivery in most dismal situations often took the life of the mother or child or both. It was the words and teachings of Dr. Ambedkar, which gave BabytaiKamble and women like her new hope, and a direction to gradually attempt to come out from the cages of Gender, Caste and Race that enslaved them. Gradually, she followed the path of Dr. Ambedkar, changed her lifestyle, got herself informally educated, started living a cleaner and a better life and taught such principles to her children and husband too.

By founding an orphanage and becoming the President Mahatma Phule Dnyan Vikas, she found some of her differed dreams forge towards fulfillment. BabytaiKamble, led forward by the teachings of Dr. Ambedkar, Phule and Periyar, was finally able to break free from her prison, and inspired and instigate other women like her, all over the world, to do the same.

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