

## **Dalit Life in *Baluta* by Daya Pawar**

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### **Introduction:**

Dalit autobiography is a source of understanding dalit life because it has depicted life as it is/was and it focuses on how dalits were treated in the society by the so called upper caste landlord people with their superiority complex. It depicts a cruel face of the society that considered dalits as the underdogs by denying and discriminating from everything. Dalits have to live with poverty and on the conditions created by the upper castes by depriving of a single right to live with dignity and it is depicted in autobiographies by the dalits who lived negated, neglected and oppressed life. Dalit autobiography speaks about unheard and unspoken life which is beyond understanding of non-dalits. Dalit literature and dalit autobiography depicted a life which was absent in mainstream literature or literature of non-dalits. So the present paper attempts to explore dalit life in *Baluta* by Daya Pawar.

### **Daya Pawar and *Baluta*:**

Daya Pawar or Dagdu Maruti Pawar, was born in Dattapur Dhamangaon, District Ahmednagar on 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1935 and died on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1996, is a Marathi dalit writer, poet and autobiographer who depicted atrocities experienced by him and his family. He worked as a clerk and lab assistant in Veterinary College in Mumbai in 1956. He published his first poem in 1967 in a magazine '*Asmitadarsh*' and he devoted his writings to dalit movement and literature. He was a member of '*Balbharati*' from 1988 to 1994. He worked as a member from 1987 to 1994 in the committee of Writing and Speeches of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar constituted by Government of Maharashtra. He received '*Padmashree*' award in 1990 by the Government of India. He also contributed to writing for the cinema on Dr. B. R. Ambedkar with Jabbar Patel. He published his autobiography '*Baluta*' (daily wage labourer) in 1978 in Marathi and it became a milestone in dalit literature. It brought a life in front of the readers that could not be even imagined. It got appreciated by the readers and critics and it has been translated into many Indian and Foreign languages like Hindi, German,

French and Italian from 1981 to 1992. It was translated in English by Jerry Pinto in 2015. It depicts a dalit life which has to face many challenges and cruelties in the society due to poverty, illiteracy and ignorance.

### **Dalit Life in *Baluta* by Daya Pawar:**

Daya Pawar has depicted his tormenting experiences in the autobiography that explore dalit life with different intensity of bringing it in to limelight. It brought life through his writing that others could not imagine that the people from other lower castes have to live under cruelty and injustices. Pawar has narrated dalit life with different shades and perspectives.

### **Dalit Rural Life:**

While narrating dalit life in rural areas, he tells dark reality of the villages. The village life is depended on agriculture and it is the reality that only upper castes have the land to till. Dalits have to work in their lands or farms as daily labourers or labourere on contact. They in return get '*Baluta*'. Dagdu knows harsh reality from his grandmother when he asks how did she migrate to Mumbai from her village? She tells that she was doing menial works in the village but on the mischievousness of Kondiba, a villager, she was beaten up harshly and this was the reason that she migrated from village. It was her experience as a dalit woman that she was beaten up just because of her being a dalit woman. She came to Mumbai and stayed with her sister that she could give shelter to her. Along with this incidence, Pawar narrates another incidence of an old dalit lady who used to collect tax from villagers and deposit it in Taluka place. She forgets to take receipt of deposited tax and it becomes the reason that she gets accused of misappropriation of money. It was not her fault but it was a tendency of the villagers to teach a lesson to dalits that they have no permission to make mistakes.

Dalits in villages had to carry dead animals out of village. The upper castes used to rear up animals, get benefitted from them but once they are died, the villagers were not responsible for their disposal and it was the duty of dalits to dispose animals. Even in villages, it was the tradition or practice of eating body parts of dead animals. Dalits used to carry the body parts of dead animals at their homes. They used to keep some parts by drying for their bad days or starvation due to lack of work. The villagers had segregating mentality against dalits because they used to eat parts of dead animals though they used to be of theirs. Along with this, dalits worked in villages in the farms of upper castes on daily wages or

scanty wages. Sometimes they used to get very less wages though they worked many hours of days. It means that they were exploited in farms and houses of the upper castes.

### **Superstitious Dalit Life:**

Like other caste people dalits also have superstitious practices in their homes. Pawar also narrates the superstitious dalit life in *Baluta*. They used to follow the traditions different from upper castes. They also had their faiths and beliefs in sins and virtues and they used to give life lessons to their children. Pawar describes superstitions through the examples of Ranu Ajya's relative and Sudam Buva. It was the general belief that Sudam Buva used to do uneven things and because of that woman could be conceived. Sudam was very famous in the neighbouring villages that he used to help many other people through his supernatural powers. Pawar also tells that the *Mahar* community worships *Bhaadva*, a dalit deity. It is a deity of the community that they believe that it had saved community from upper castes villagers. Dalits also are the worshippers of the *Khandoba* and *Ambabai* and they believe in some superstitions. Sharankumar Limbale in his autobiography also has narrated that "Once I spoke disbelievingly about the Goddess *Ambabai*, Santamai grew wild with anger. She cursed me, 'If you speak all about *Ambabai*, she will make you miserable. You die of the insects and worms in your body'" (Limbale 93). The references of *Khandoba*, *Bhaadva*, and *Ambabai* are mostly found in dalit autobiographies that dalits worship these deities.

### **Dalit Urban Life:**

Dalits being landless people, they have to migrate from villages to cities. Their life in cities is only related to slum areas and they have to live in the tiny or squalid houses and unhygienic locations in city areas. They are migrated to cities in search of work or jobs when they are workless in the villages. Sometime they leave villages due to atrocities by the upper caste people. They work in the companies or under suppression of the contractors who hire them on scanty wages. When dalits leave villages, they come to cities with their poverty and ignorance. They expect that they will get job easily but they have to do hard work as labourers because of lack of skills in various fields required in companies or industries. In *Baluta*, there is a description of *Mahar* community living in urban areas. The people of this community live in hut like houses with poor conditions along with tenants. In 10 by 10 huts, many family members live. In huts, there are wooden partitions also. Men work as porters. Women collect iron, broken glasses, bottles, rags, papers and clothes in a day and sort out

them in whole night to sell them in the next day. Pawar also narrates the incident of meeting his aunt who works as a prostitute. It indicates that the dalit women also have to adopt this profession unfortunately.

### **Dalit Life in Relation with Non-dalits:**

*Mahar* community mostly has been impressed and motivated by the reformatory philosophy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. It has developed by adopting education as the only weapon to get root out from poverty and ignorance. Being the follower of Ambedkarite philosophy, the community discarded to follow the traditions or customs of the mainstream society or upper castes. This is the reason that non-dalit communities are disappointed on *Mahar* community because they feel that dalits are discarding or insulting their traditions or customs. Pawar says that 'the villagers consider that *Mahars* should live as animals and have no right to live dignified life. On the contrary, they also feel that if the children of *Mahars* eat at the hands of villagers they feel that it is their virtue. Even the villagers do not consider the absence of *Mahars* from village. So they consider that *Mahars* should be in village'. There is discriminative culture in the village also. Other villagers consider dalits as meaningless or untouchables. They make the distance from dalits in their day to day behaviour.

### **Dalit Life in Relation with Dalits:**

In *Baluta*, the livings and relations of dalits with other dalit communities in villages were amicable. They help each other in any situation. Even they nurture the friendliness after their quarrels or fights. In Dhamangaon, there are two families i.e. Pawar and Rupawate. They have fights over their domination in *Maharwada*. There is always stressful condition between them. Pawar says that 'if there is a sad demise of anybody in Pawar's family the Rupawates used to be happy and take procession with bands in their areas and the Pawars also do the same as the Rupawates. This malevolent and hostile relation and atmosphere is nurtured among dalit families in villages and it is just to create a sense of domination.

### **Conclusion:**

*Baluta* has the descriptions of dalit life through various perspectives. Pawar has depicted dalit life through the experiences in rural and urban life. He also depicts that dalits are also superstitious and they follow their cultures and customs. They believe in the concepts of sin and virtues. The deprivation, subjugation, suppression and untouchability are prevalent

in both rural and urban areas in different forms. Dalits have to live with poverty and ignorance in both areas but they always strive hard to get rid of it. The autobiography also explores the relations of dalits with non-dalit people along with the relations of dalits with dalits.

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