



## **G. Kalyana Rao's Untouchable Spring: A Tale of Humiliation and Violence of Dalit Women**

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### **Abstract**

**Aim:** *After 70 years of Indian independence, the Indian nation stands at a crucial crossroads with its complex negotiations among prehistoric social formations, colonial doctrines, and a rapid surge of cultural identities which claim their autonomous space. G Kalyana Rao, an activist, playwright, and one of the most active members of the Revolutionary Writers' Movement, writes not only to express his Dalit experiences and feelings from a literary point of view but also to make aware of their lived struggle, clashes, painful life experiences, etc. to the readers at the political, social and cultural level. the novel adopts the oral style of an epic, but this is not an epic about grand royal sieges but rather an epic about struggle, humiliation, violence, survival, revolt, and the permanence and irreversibility of caste and gender. During an era of advancement in science, innovation, and culture, ethos, no noteworthy change has been initiated in the*

*existence of outcasts in India. Social, monetary, and cultural existence of Dalits has not changed since the pre-historic. While scripting the story of the exploitation and oppression that these female characters suffer, he never forgets to underscore their attempts at resistance-sometimes violent, sometimes quiet, and sometimes even crafty in their witty efforts to outwit their powerful enemies. To describe their relentless struggle between the oppressed and the oppressors, the powerful and the powerless at the various levels of our society.*

**Methodology and Approach:** *The study is based on the novel G. Kalyana Rao's Untouchable Spring as a primary text. It speaks of the stories of exploitation and oppression that the female characters undergo.*

**Outcome:** *Through the novel, the writer discusses the literary movement and development, which had begun in the early part of the twentieth century, and has been a branch of the abuse of Dalits by the upper caste positions. Through literary works, they have been attempting to protect the sense of pride, identity, personality, and heritage/ legacy of their locale. Untouchable Spring by Kalyan Rao is a novel that also can be called a verifiable archive that represents the situation of Dalits in a post-independence time. Untouchable Spring has a cosmic scale as it begins with myths of origin and creation; showing how mythology is tainted with caste and female cry prejudice.*

**Conclusion and Suggestion:** *The paper concludes with the idea that the innocent feminine characters could not satisfy the hunger of their ill fate and become its victims; the writer focuses on an echo of their silent scream of torment and desperation in their unending sufferings. However, finding her a rebel in the making, the vested interests do not allow her to visit the settlements of the underdog. here are the levels of exploitation of Dalit women. She is not only marginalized but also sub-humanized within her community at the upper caste-dominated social and political level as well as the patriarchal level within her community being a Dalit woman.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Identities, Social, Monetary, Existence, Exploitation, and Oppression, etc.

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### **Introduction**

Kalyana Rao has developed a unique style that combines stinging wit with a note of pathos. It is worth noting that the novelist has not focused only on the condition of women in the novel even, the novel can be taken as a saga of the challenges and issues faced by the downtrodden. Beyond gender, age, politics, and religion. The novelist has depicted the poignant plight of the downtrodden people through various incidents and comments made by the narrator. Undoubtedly, the novel covers the issues and challenges of helpless Dalit women but the question is to what extent it covers. Due to many important issues and challenges in the world of Dalits, the issues of women remain invisible. His writing is activist, and her stance in *Untouchable Spring* is unequivocal and aims to present a powerful tale of the harsh reality of a woman's life in rural India, a tale of struggle and survival. *Untouchable Spring* traces the untold story of seven generations of a family that lives in Mala-Madigas of Enneladinni in Andhra Pradesh. They have likewise been experiencing social, socio-religious, just as instructive, affordable, and political hardships for ages. Its multifaceted approach to understanding the predicament of marginalized and crushed people in Indian society has been an alluring area for scholars of various branches of knowledge from different

perspectives. In this regard, issues, and challenges could not be overlooked by intellectuals and researchers. In the present paper, an attempt of reviewing the marginalization and sub-humanization of Indian Dalit women is made to explore contemporary issues and perspectives especially related to women in 21st-century Indian literature. The fact is that the Dalit woman cannot stand against the exploitation of the upper caste community, especially against the patriarchal society. Subhadra's bravery is presented as an exceptional case. It seems a sort of intrigue designed by the male-dominated civilization by not accepting a courageous woman as a human being.

Rao chronicles the lives of ethnographic minorities in Andhra Pradesh to whom the privileged entitlements of constitutional equality and citizenship are not extended in the postcolonial nation-state. In the historical formation of the newly independent decolonized nation state these various ethnographic minorities such as the Malas, Madigas, Mahars, Bhangisand, chamars are excluded from the operations of colonial and postcolonial modernity. *Untouchable Spring*, the story of six generations of a Dalit family is told by a female character Ruth. Here, it is significant to reread and analyze Dalit fiction from a feminist perspective. In the whole novel, Ruth talks about her husband Reuben and his memories related to his forefathers. In the text presented by the characters of Budevi and Subhadra, Dalit women represent the revolutionary potential of their community; Excited by Budevi's response to male and upper-class mastery among the common people, Pittodu promotes Dalit development. Subhadra similarly supports and builds Dalit men through his cruel nature.

Boodevi, Subhadra, Sasirekha, Ruth, Mary Suvarta, and Ruby, all these Dalit women resisted the gender and caste norms of their society by using various strategies, whether it is in the manner of questioning the nature of Dalit masculinity, or arm rebellion, or enduring in silence the hardship of Dalit motherhood, or critiquing the canon, all these pointing to their power and

subjectivity, not their victimization. However, G Kalyana Rao prefers autobiographical novels, i.e. fiction which is full of autobiographical elements to a great extent in Dalit writing, undoubtedly, the novel also covers the issues and challenges of Dalit women. But the question is to what extent it covers. Because of several significant issues and challenges in the world of Dalits, women's issues remain invisible. It is confessed According to Sharmila Rege:

Dalit life narratives are in fact testimonies, which forget a right to speak both for and beyond the individual and provide the context explicit or implicit for the official forgetting of histories of caste oppression, caste struggle, and resistance (13).

Through the stories of successive generations, we are taken on a journey to their heart from those who were exploited to those who discover their humanity through defiance. The reminiscences of Ruth take us to her husband Reuben's family in Yennela Dinni, to the boy Yellanna, his being chased away by his caste superiors. This faithful translation from Telugu, arousing pity for all that is pitiable and rage at what man has done to man, points to the growing awareness of people's rights and how they are driven to armed struggle. Ruth relates the events that she has been told by her husband Ruben, along with her own experiences. The book depicts the struggle by the Malas and Madigas against caste Hindus for life and dignity, self-respect, and survival.

Most of the significant incidents of the novel revolve around this village and the most interesting aspect is that the narrator of the novel is a woman named Ruth, who reminds us of the unforgettable bygone days when casteism dictated and imposed ruthlessness on their lives. Ruth very forcefully says, "My memory is not past but an untouchable spring". About this kind of social structure, the narrator comments on their reflections on Ruth:

Heaped them. Separated the chaff from the grain. They did everything. Half hungry, under the stars in the sky, on sand

mounds, folding their knees into their bellies, they slept. They did not get hold of the fields. They did not get hold of the field beds. The grains did not belong to them. Without anything belonging to them, they rained sweat on earth. (42)

Boodevi is the first-generation Dalit women to question and revolt against the inhuman practice of Untouchability in Yennela Dinni, she is not an outsider, but the paternal aunt of Yellanna. Her representation is worth rereading because her affiliation was more toward other daughters-in-law of the family than toward her family members. It expresses how discrimination exists in the village. Consequently, women's conditions of malas and madigas is painful and most horrible. There is an incident through that we read how a Dalit woman is not only socially, politically, and economically deprived but also facing domestic violence due to a patriarchal society. Boodevi is the aunty of a child Yellanna who is missing because of the harassment done by the upper caste community and clearly shows the conflicts between the ruling class and the subject class. The writer behind writing aims to reconnect the simple but universal practice of enslavement of the famished and poor by the privileged in society for ages. The plain raw reality of this practice has made bondage a habit of the mind. The poignancy of the situation, although felt by the suffering humanity, has made them desire freedom, for 'freedom' as a feeling or idea has never struck them. Later, Boodevi comes to know that child Yellanna was harassed by the upper caste people and Boodevi is not ready to tolerate it and tries to make efforts to protest against the upper caste people.

We realized that these blameless womanlike characters failed to gratify the starvation of their hostile fortune and become its victims. They are not only marginalized but also sub-humanized within their community at the upper caste-dominated social and political level as well as the patriarchal level. within. At this juncture, the remarkable point is that the patriarchal attitude of Boodevi's

Husband Yenkatanarsu is defended by the novelist through the narrator's comment to intensify the understanding of the challenging issues of the Dalit community as a whole.

As we know, the whole story of the Dalit predicament is narrated by a female character Ruth in the novel. However, we notice that because of being a male the novelist, G. Kalyana Rao made efforts to explain the agony and torment of these feminine characters but could not able to analyze minutely Dalit woman's exploitation within her community. Through the title *Untouchable Spring* the writer tried to portray the most realistic, painful, and true-to-life pictures of these miserable classes of Indian society This kind of pain is again described when, Immanuel, grandson of Subhadra, and Jessie, Immanuel's son have left women of their home for the armed revolution against the state to fight for Dalit issues, especially untouchability. Immanuel has left his wife Mary Suvarta and his old parents, and Jessie and his beloved Ruby. The pain of separation can be read in these lines:

She is there amidst the tears. She takes the spade, which is aside. Everybody is looking. She tightens her sari and twists it into her waist. Everybody is staring.... She looks like green gold coil in the sunshine. Her eyes look like burning oven (115).

Another ironic incident related to Subhadra is also noteworthy. As we have read earlier, Boodevi was not allowed to resist upper caste people's harassment by her Dalit people. They obligated full liberty to exploit the many poor and to grind them mercilessly under the wheels of their economic monopolies. The unfortunate sufferers had to accept the most degrading terms and agreed to work under the most unfavorable and unpleasant conditions imposed on them by their masters. His stories specialize in painting the miseries, disabilities, humiliations, and various types of exploitation, which have been a lot of poor, suppressed and exploited sections of Indian society. Here, in some way, Subhadra

becomes able to take bold and revolutionary steps against exploitation at the time of water crisis in the fields.

The irony is that a Dalit woman's revolutionary activity is converted into a miracle of some goddess. And this is not only believed by upper caste characters, but also by Subhadra's Dalit community. It is well established that Subhadra has transformed into a goddess. The novelist narrates: "A spirit has possessed the girl! That girl was possessed by the mother goddess. Only mother goddess could do that." It means that a common Dalit woman cannot stand against the exploitation of the upper caste community, especially against the patriarchal society. Subhadra's bravery is presented as an exceptional case. It seems a sort of intrigue designed by the male-dominated civilization by not accepting a courageous woman as a human being.

Inhuman treatment of the state against Dalit children and women can also be analyzed to understand the threefold oppressed condition of Dalit women in various chapters. To arrest some Dalit activists, police raid the village. They brutally beat male Dalit activists as well as women and children of their village. This inhumane act clearly shows how Dalit women are triply oppressed. They are marginalized and sub-humanized by these types of oppressions, i. e. prevailing Indian caste system, patriarchal society, and the state. The epic has acquainted a few faces having a place with the castaway rank, as artists, vocalists, lyricists, artists, and learned individuals in Puranas, saints, and courageous women, all things considered, over every single person in an evident sense with adoration, friendship, feelings, and sentiments as against the dishonest life and culture of the upper positions:

If you want to live, come along. Whoever comes in the way will be the target of this axe... those who want to live, come along... we'll die anyway... Yellamma too has been submerged. Come, come, you coward bastards come on, you (32).



In this way, it is quite clear that the women portrayed here are not merely tortured due to their lower class but due to their sex also. They present satire on male-dominated society through the portrayal of their characters. The 20 century is known for inquiring through historical-political-economic causes responsible for inequality between men and women. When we looked at the Indian context, we find that the struggle against Patriarchal slavery found a new voice through the religious reform movement during the period of the national renaissance and freedom struggle. The Saga of discrimination has been witnessed in every age, continent, country, culture, race, religion, community, and society whether ancient, medieval, or modern. Before discussing gender discrimination in the workplace an endeavor has been made to discuss the historical background and status of women concerning India. At times she has been suppressed and oppressed and at times she is regarded as the deity of the home. From the Vedic age till today, her status and position have been changing with time. There is less chance to exaggerate or heighten the problems of women particularly. Therefore, an analysis of such works from Dalit women's perspective can provide some more fruitful insights than a Dalit novel entirely focused on Dalit women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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