
Reading '*Protest*' and the Quest for '*Self-Dignity*' in the Poetry of Womanist Kalyani Thakur Charal

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ABSTRACT

The many voices of women writers today have given us the hope for an equitable representation of women from heterogeneous backgrounds. In the Indian context, the interplay of gender and caste consistently plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's self-perceptions and guiding their aspirations and life choices. Needless to iterate that caste and gender based stratifications have not only prevented women of marginalized communities historically from accessing education, medical care, careers, and seeking independent existence, but have also stripped them of their self-respect and self worth. The present paper aims to bring a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of gender and caste based inequalities and acts of violence endured by Dalit women in India on an everyday basis, culminating in their objectification and victimization, with reference to womanist poet, Kalyani Thakur Charal's poetic assertions.

Post independence, the social and economic welfare programmes implemented by the Government and non-government organizations made a significant difference to the lives of the marginalized people, raising critical awareness about their rights and entitlements. Despite all the developmental activities and gender planning, women from disadvantaged communities couldn't be integrated fully into policy making and decision-making processes, and they faced serious prejudices and exclusion in their daily lives. It is important to note here that their continuous subordination was exclusively brought about by the joint workings of social, administrative, religious structures and the conditioning imposed by them, consequently the path to equality for them remained beset with obstacles. Perceptive of the progress made by women's movements, feminist campaigns, and interventions by scholars and thinkers towards gender parity, creative writers too vented their discontent as well as dissent with larger social structures through different mediums, such as poetic expressions and writings about the self. There is currently an overwhelming concern as well as agreement among the women writers that the unresolved issues related to the identity and agency of Dalit and disabled women in India are impeding the much-needed march towards women empowerment, keeping it farther out of their reach. Even after more than seven decades of country's independence and constitution of a 'sovereign, democratic, socialist and secular republic', an important section of society still reels under the weight of poverty, indigence, illiteracy and social stigma lacking the benefits of a welfare state. Whereas the social reformers of the nineteenth century were fervently dedicated to the amelioration of the condition of women belonging to the upper castes, those from lower castes received less attention in terms of their physical, mental, and

intellectual growth. Their side of truth, their perspective and personal insights have consistently been denigrated and dismissed by the mainstream 'cultured' society. Women in India have for generations battled "numerous monolithic systems," but as Uma Chakravarty remarks, a fundamental obstacle to achieving gender equality has been their ritually determined subjection under Varna and Jati beliefs and Brahmanical patriarchy. Caste as defined by Susan Bayly, is a system of "elaborately stratified social hierarchy" that has been responsible for severe gaps and exclusions in socio-political-economic opportunities affecting a section of society, with women at the bottom of the pyramid. Uma Chakravarti reckons Brahmanical patriarchy to be the root cause of women's subordination, and further explains its adverse ramifications: "Brahmanical patriarchy is a set of rules and institutions in which caste and gender are linked, each shaping the other and where women are crucial in maintaining the boundaries between castes... The norms of brahmanical patriarchy are often drawn from the prescriptive texts and shape the ideologies of the upper caste in particular but the norms are also sometimes emulated by the lower castes especially when seeking upward mobility. Just as graded inequalities mark the caste system, graded patriarchies mark the nature of women's subordination in South Asia." (6)

Thus, ideology, law and custom with the alliance of state brahmanical patriarchy take control over women's bodies, sexuality, labour or productivity and even their thought process, leading to their economic, social, political, sexual and intellectual subordination to men. It is only through the wider literary representation of their predicament and critiquing of the hegemonical forces that Dalit and Disabled women are finally reclaiming their rightful space in the feminist discourse and where their epic struggle and honest voices are finally getting acknowledged. Practically, all social reformers addressed the Dalit question after independence, and Gandhi, Ambedkar, Jotibarao Phule, and several others remained specifically committed to the vision of a classless society and pushed for a more equitable and inclusive future for everyone, believing that, "A just society is that society in which ascending sense of reverence and descending sense of contempt is dissolved into the creation of a compassionate society". (B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste*). However, neither the feminist movement nor the booming Dalit literature confronted the issue of Dalit gendered identity with the required vision. The continued marginalization and suppression of Dalit women was comparable to, as Hira Bansode remarked, "like a drum [of Manu] that is beaten at both ends... and continues to be so." Amidst a climate of uncertainty, the powerful voices of Dalit women resonated through the medium of 'protest literature'- making it a means of their survival and self esteem, serving as an inspiration for individuals in the form of committed articulations of Babytai Kamble, Daya Pawar, Meena Kandasami, Aruna Gogulamanda, Sukirtharani, and Chuni Kotal. Lakshmi Mandi, Lily Halder, Manju Bala, Smritikana Howladar, Rajat Rani Meenu, Kumud Pawde, Urmila Pawar and numerous others. Needless to say, in the hands of these women authors, pen wielded more power and ferocity than the sword, and Bengali poet Kalyani Thakur Charal's writings are a shining example of this creative revolution.

The writings by Dalit women unambiguously chronicle their personal and collective anguishes working through the experiences of acute poverty, despair, deprivation and stigma. Within these writings are embedded a deep yearning to be heard, recognized as individuals and acknowledged for their diverse and selfless contribution to socio-economic spheres as well as their subjection and denial of opportunities by mythology, history and democracy. Presently, Dalit Women Writings have gained legitimacy and acceptance as a genre that merits serious

consideration from social scientists, Feminists, and Dalit Women themselves, due to the bold and unequivocal treatment of themes of censoring and 'othering' of Dalit consciousness. The need and exigency for Dalit women's writings stem from their marginalized status and homogenization within the feminist movement and the patriarchal practices within Dalit politics. Probing the issue of Dalit women's unequal representation, Gopal Guru reflects in his article titled "Dalit Women Talk Differently": "However, the issue of representing Dalit women both at the level of theory and politics, has erupted time and again in the discourse on Dalit women. Dalit women justify the case for talking differently on the basis of external factors (non Dalit forces homogenizing the issue of Dalit women) and internal factors (the patriarchal domination within the Dalits). (Guru 1995:2548). While Dalit women have been particularly active at grass root levels, asserting their rights, their success in articulating their sensibilities in aesthetic medium and in the historicization of the struggle of their community has been even more accurate and impactful in recent times. The life writings of Babytai Kamble, Bama Faustina Soosairaj, Kumud Pawde and Kalyani Charal among others have given the hope that literature can help build consciousness as well as lives. The expression of a 'private truth' or 'personal trauma' by these writers raises numerous ethical and moral inquiries against the oppressive systems that attempt to crush the voices of disadvantaged people. With the advancement of education and a rising consciousness and awareness of their human rights, these women have begun to question the presence and the power of the patriarchy through their everyday dealings. Further, their literature and artistic creations uphold and strengthen their radical beliefs and awakenings to their identities and agency.

Reading the poems of poet-activist Kalyani Thakur Charal, rendered into English by Zinia Mitra and Jaydeep Sarangi, has been a transformative and immersive experience as it entailed going through the first hand account of gender and caste-based discrimination and humiliation experienced by members of a community in post Independence India. In the "Preface" of *Chandalinir Kabita*, Charal proudly declares herself as a true successor of 'Dombinipad' and 'Shabaripad'. Her deliberate choice of a particular surname signifies her consciousness of her marginalized identity that also becomes a position of empowerment for her because of her positive outlook. In addition, the suffix 'Charal' appended to her name is indicative of her strong connection with her ancestors, whose contributions and sacrifices she chronicles to seek gender justice in the progressing nation. Embracing the caste identity also represents a spirit of revolt against caste tyranny, exposing the higher castes' language politics. Whereas the upper caste people frequently use the phrase pejoratively to verbally attack or slur minority communities, showing a total contempt for their identity, Charal's owning of the term signifies her deep solidarity with her people, their struggles and their history.

Charal has significantly enriched the discourse of Dalit women's writings by authoring five volumes of poetry, a volume of critical essays, a novella, a collection of short stories, memoirs and an autobiography. Her love for the written word and her extensive commitment to the cause of Dalit community drives her to narrativize the struggle of its people to further motivate the marginalized individuals to rise from their dire circumstances and respond assertively. Poem no. 53 is an unambiguous wake up call to all her brothers and sisters to work towards the goal of equality as she states :

I, the early bird
Call-
Wake Up black men and women !
Thousand -years- asleep- men and women
Wake up!(63)

Charal, like Audre Lorde, an American poet and intersectional feminist, turned her silence into words and action, inspiring other women to do the same, overcoming their fear of self-disclosure and exposure. Here, one can easily discern the paths of Black and Dalit feminism to be converging as both assert their voices of defiance to the dominant discourses of patriarchy, and the androcentric and eurocentric powers that have been dominating mainstream feminism movements for long. Charal's personal struggle for subjectivity and identity seems to be the central event of her life narrative. Instead of sitting in denial or seeking sympathy from her tormentors, she channelized her own anguish into the service of her community, thus, depersonalizing it for a bigger purpose. In the "Introduction" to *Poems of Chandalini*, Jaydeep Sarangi and Zinia Mitra provide an extensive overview of the themes, she addresses in her poetry:

"*Chandalini's Poems* are poems woven around intensely felt private love and loss, if the poems depict nature they inevitably lead to private memories of ruefulness. The poems depict society at large as a machinery of caste oppression articulated from a personal perspective which is unmistakably the Dalit existence of Kalyani Thakur Charal. The volume is replete with images of blacksmiths, farmers, weavers, poverty, misfortune, sickness, injuries—there lingers an overpowering aroma of boiled Paddy around a cow dung smeared courtyard. Kalyani Thakur's poetry is a genuinely bitter and scabby critique of cultural intolerance opportunism and oppressive conditions of Dalit women. There is always a tone of high justice in her armoury. (7)

The marginalized Dalit women are positioned at the centre of Charal's worldview in her poems, and through the portrayal of their life experiences, including their sufferings, agonies, disappointments, shame, and powerlessness, she attempts to empower them and redeem them from the immediate condition of ignominy and oblivion.

Kalyani Thakur Charal, identifying herself as a 'womanist' rather than a feminist, through her conscious poetic self-affirmations, enables us to identify and locate historically victimized Dalit woman in quest of an identity beyond the confines of gender, caste and class. Historically, womanism preceded feminism in being closer to the natural self of women. Modern day womanism, "believes in the Freedom and independence of women like feminism : unlike feminism it wants meaningful union between women and men and will wait patiently for men to change from their sexist stance." (Ogunyemi) Alice Walker, too explicated the term in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*: "Womanism is not separatism... Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender." (Walker, 1983, p.xi) Taking a cue from Nigerian critic Rotimi Johnson's take on 'womanism' in its contemporary form, as "Orientation, mobilization and action are three important features of womanism" (Rotimi, 30). Through the above analysis, one can infer that Charal, while located in her native land, takes a broader view of 'womanist' philosophy, celebrates sisterhood with other women, is appreciative of their native cultural traditions, has deep admiration for other women writers and activists, and even reveals her ideological standpoint through her writings. Known for the razor edged sharpness and intensity of thought in her poetic asseverations, Charal opens up a new world before us, unravelling the 'real struggle' and 'the lived reality' of the marginalized Dalit women. Her focus on shared agonies, shared brutalities and shared erasure brings out her commitment to her community's needs. Her narratives work out a "partial catharsis" of sort for her as well as her people. During an Interview with eminent writer and translator Jaydeep Sarangi and Bidisha Pal, Charal discussed her main intent for writing poetry: "I write so that I can protest. My pen is my weapon. I protest through my pen. Writing gives me purgation of my pent up angst against social

oppression, age-old stereotypes and discrimination. I'm a soldier armed with words. There is chemistry within a creative writer. I always find a movement of thoughts within me. My writing is my inside out in words. Dalit women write differently.”

Hailing from the Matua community in the West Bengal region, the importance of education, as well as love and pride for one's community and indigenous traditions, were instilled in her by her social reformer father. During her formative years, she drew a great deal of inspiration from the writings and ideas of Jotiba Phule, as well as the life and writings of Baba Bheem Rao Ambedkar. The caste based discrimination that she was subjected to during her childhood and subsequently at the workplace resulted in her existential angst, disenchantment with the so called genteel society 'bhadra lok' and eventually gave her the determination to fight the social injustice. Charal, by breaking the mould of 'classical poetry' or 'high art' and by articulating 'the hurt', 'the shame', 'the exclusion' and the humiliations experienced by women of diverse Dalit communities as appropriate protagonists of Dalit literature expounds a new aesthetic that leads to the affirmation of Dalit subjectivities. Founder and Editor of the journal *Nir*, Charal has been instrumental in giving voice as well as wider representation to writings of Dalit women across regions and from different languages. The journal serves as an inclusive forum for marginalized and underprivileged individuals to share their feelings and stories of subjugation and oppression. Today, her writings have motivated members of the Dalit community to come out of the victim mode to find their own sense of 'self' through self-expression, while also strengthening their bond with the community through candid and unrestrained sentiments. As a representative woman of letters from Bengal, she provides a nuanced understanding of the complex history of Bengal with the subalterns of Bengal perpetually seeking legitimacy and inclusion in the mainstream. She even chooses to bring to light the corruption, arrogance and divisive politics of leaders in the context of contemporary realities. Her refusal to submit to politically correct beliefs in favour of courageously stating the unpalatable truth is what distinguishes her from the entire generation of writers who write to please and placate.

These poems of resistance by Kalyani Thakur Charal inevitably broaden the contours of Dalit literature with her unique aesthetics rooted in the principles of humanism, womansm, equality and justice for all. The poems of the collection, *Poems of Chandalini* are marked by a distinct disruptive and subversive tone, closely aligning with the tradition of protest literature and signalling the need for social change. They vigorously scrutinize minority positions and bring to question the status quo, thus propelling the Dalit writing movement forward. Charal seems to have a predilection for hard hitting and forceful diction in her poems and doesn't refrain from calling a spade a spade. Fortright and full of self-respect, she refuses to bow down to the diktats of the Brahmanical authority when it comes to matters of her community's rights and freedom. Her poetry is remarkable for the expression of anguish in the most unsentimental and undramatic manner. The translations too communicate the expressed emotions in the most truthful way. The economy of words, and the preservation of organic and natural forms, culture specific words widens the relevance of these translations in the post modern scenario. The poetry of Charal, ingeniously and creatively translated by Jaydeep Sarangi and Zinia Mitra deftly captures the poet's 'angst' as well as the 'zest' for life embedded in the verses. These translations are significant for they help the wider readership connect and respond to the deplorable conditions in which a section of our society is forced to live and have their being. Translations are bridges and they help individuals communicate cultural and socio-economic realities beyond the boundaries of caste, class, region and ability. These translations engage

with the politics as well as aesthetics of Charal's poetry and Charal's language is true to her struggle and accurately records her isolation as well as her dreams and aspirations. While her stories and memoirs have been translated into other Indian languages as well as English it's the first time that a selection of her poems are being made available to readers in English.

Charal's poems are clearly built on the two fold objectives of 'demolition' and 'reconstruction' a common pattern to be found in many of the writings by Dalits, as suggested by S.P. Punalekar and elucidated by Prof. Raj Kumar in his work *Dalit Personal Narratives*: "Generally Dalit literature is engaged in carrying out two main functions: 'demolition' and 'reconstruction'. On the one hand it is keen in destroying what is considered as 'deadwood', the decaying components of existing social and cultural order. On the other it is anxious to transform the social reality in the direction of total freedom quality and human dignity." (Rajkumar 2010:149) Charal too attacks the repressive socio economic forces that are responsible for the dehumanization and exploitation of Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular. However, she is also committed to working towards a more reformed and just and equitable world. A world where her children's hope for basic needs like white rice for meals and education in the holy premises of educational institutions can get fulfilled, without experiencing any blatant discrimination. Her heart is filled with respect for those women who toil day and night in hopes of giving their children a safer and more stable future. Its admirable that Charal, being as an educated independent woman prioritizes the needs of her tribal sisters over her own ambitions or comforts. These women travel miles to fetch water, work in fields for hours as field labourers and chop wood in the forests, performing all the manual work with utmost devotion and selflessness. She expresses gratitude to all her sisters and companions who are together in this fight to make the world liveable. She can perceive beauty in the hard labour done by her sisters of her community and records their simple joys and pleasures thus:

I sat next to the mountains
and adorned my bun with red palash.
I chopped wood and
walked through the villages for miles and miles
as a sleepless farmer's wife
I boiled a granary of paddy
before dawn
and filled the cow- dung smeared courtyard
with delectable aroma of rice
only because I would feed my children
white rice
I transported coal from Andal to a factory.
I woke up early to travel to Champahati.
I crowd everywhere in Canning, Bongaon, and Lakshmi
Inspired by the countenance of my children.(47)

The poems of the anthology are honest outpourings of a contemplative mind and a compassionate soul. Her portrayal and depiction of the shared existence with people of her community is devoid of any artifice. Her connection with her people, environment, the flora and fauna, and her milieu is pure and uncontestable. She rejects the poetic style and aesthetics proposed by her privileged literary predecessors and instead forges her own creative medium for the unconventional subjects of her poetry. Her raw sentiments evoke the pain, the shame, and the insult faced by many of her sisters. Poem 37 recounts the hunger, the hardships, resilience as well as the lack of direction caused by illiteracy which is the fate of many of her

fellow individuals:

I have slept beside the furnace
 lulled by the hammer
 and burning iron prattle
 I ran from one end to another
 like a shuttle in a weaver's room
 I was the plow of the plough
 I have touched the distant horizon.
 I have reaped the entire harvest
 I have ploughed a field that stretched all the way and
 touched the horizon
 In order to end our dearth of food (46)

Speaking about the characteristic features that set 'protest poetry' or 'poetry of resistance' apart from other forms of poetry, noted critic and poet Jaydeep Sarangi observes:

Dalit poetry in India is structurally alternative to the models prescribed by traditional Hindu aesthetics precisely because they are literatures of sociological oppression and economical exploitation. It is subversive, or assault to anthropomorphic practice of casteism in India. Dalit poetry is that militant in texture and aggressively blunt in meaning. It challenges codified language (because it has so far been used and manipulated only by the dominant, discriminating powers), it challenges assumptions, it challenges age-old world-views. Its temporal and political designation does not give justice to the artist whose intentions may subsequently be ignored. It is an aesthetics of pain, and a prolong longing; a powerful aesthetics of resistance. (2018:82)

These poems give us a nuanced understanding of caste and gender based exploitation discernible in the Indian surroundings. The 90s in India witnessed considerable opposition to the "brahmanism of the feminist movement and the patriarchal practices of Dalit politics" (Shrmita Rege) suggesting a need for a re-visioning of feminist politics and embracing of ideological position of multiple/plural standpoints. Despite the numerous milestones achieved by women studies departments, NGOs, and autonomous women's movements towards women's education, health, labour, sexuality, consent, control, marriage, and career, there was a growing scepticism in the 90s towards their theoretical standpoint - feminism. This scepticism stemmed from the perception that feminism was first of all a western import, elitist and urbanized and secondly failed to consider the unique conditions of diverse women and homogenized their needs and goals irrespective of the local context. Additionally, the patriarchal interventions within Dalit politics prompted Dalit women to seek alternative ways to address their specific challenges and express their perspectives in "different voices," leading them to assert that "Dalit Women Talk Differently."

Charal, too critically examines and reevaluates several commonly held beliefs regarding the subjective experiences of Dalit women from a feminist perspective, ultimately identifying as a womanist. She exercises the 'different voice' of Dalit woman by voicing the challenges and disgrace felt by them in their everyday lives. She makes her standpoint clear during an interview given to Jaydeep Sarangi and Bidisha Pal:

I would like to call myself a Dalit womanist. It is more inclusive a term to justify my identity in the context of race, color, gender and caste. My relation with the others is that is what I am. All Dalit women writers are eco feminists. Like them, I too find close bond with the land, forest, trees, etc. Some of my works are earth narrative. Feminism is a top heavy term. (5)

She raises questions and critiques the methods employed by the dominant forces in perpetuating the oppression of the Dalits. With a deep understanding of the political motivations behind the creation of the idealized image of the “new” woman in society and the media, she remains committed to supporting women who are in tune with their environs, community, and culture, while rejecting any forms of misogyny or anti-women and caste ideologies. She closely studies the interaction of members of her community with the new technology and mass media and its impact on their innocent impressionable minds.

The poet is aware of the dichotomy between idealism and reality and how it affects the fate of those who are still trying to the social ladder to social recognition and worldly success. She is perpetually haunted by the night of oppressive suffering and despair, and visits “ the galaxy through dark nights and countless stars”(11). Constantly re-living in her mind, the past ostracism and rejection, she questions the pathways built by the earlier activists while striving “to find new roads, new ways./ struggling to find new directions”(12). She knows that for every great change generations of humans will have to burn in penance. Significant transformations can only be possible through sacrifices and patience. She urges: “...go back, future redeemer!/ time has not arrived for rebirth/ you are yet to cross a few more miles of the road/ the end of the night will direct a new path (12). Talking about the confusions and the divide created by political and ideological structures, she writes: “towards the left or right/ society is floating/ like a slanted fatha /unable to stand upright when can it be straight/ this bended society”(14).

Charal questions the conventional power dynamics that have fragmented humanity into distinct groups and fostered divisions among them. She also expresses strong dislike of the narrow-mindedness and hypocritical behaviour of the middle class.

Poem no. 33 from *Chandalinir Kobita*, serves as a thought-provoking introduction to a life of subjugation and discrimination experienced by majority of Dalit women in India, resulting in the dispossession of their sense of self and worth.:

My grandfather was prohibited
From stepping into the tol premises.
My father became literate
Using palm leaf and ink of charcoal
After a long struggle.
My mother visited Durga bari
With cow dung on her left hand
To paste the place where she was standing (41)

Originally written in Bangla these poems in their translated versions closely and sensitively capture the social, economic, political and cultural complexities of the lives of the Dalit gendered identities. Additionally their engagement with the issues of caste, gender, class and identity is quite faithful. Jaydeep Sarangi and Zinia Mitra have tried their best to maintain the colloquial, dialogic quality of the original poems without taking away the feel and ethos of the indigenous life and reality as explicated by the poet in the original poems. Translation of poetry in many ways act as cultural communication as pointed out by Jhumpa Lahiri, “Translation is not only a finite linguistic act, but an ongoing cultural one”(Lahiri 120) and *Poems of Chandalini* effortlessly communicate the harsh and unavoidable realities of our country.

There are poems about personal losses, pains, failed relationships, unfulfilled dreams:
I was never complex/ you've made me so/ such is my fate, complex life/ failed love gives pains/

generates personal aches/ there was promise within calamities/ I shall reach a new country”(21). Many of the poems are painful recollections of experiences of shame due to the 'othering' and encapsulate descriptions of mental psychological violence inflicted on her by her co-workers or lovers or general acquaintances.

She also voices the predicament of the women of her community and their sufferings due to the notions of purity-pollution leading to the menace of untouchability. The poet is much skeptical of individuals who are constantly guided by their vested interests and take a rather narrow view of success :

Those who never think of their country
Those who never think of their society
Only consider their success success of their progeny
success is narrow in their lives.
Don't ask me to be like them
Maa...
Mite grows in the ladder of success. (24)

She mentions how practical sense and utilitarian thoughts have taken over people's conscience and the slogan of “Be mechanical” seems to be the guiding idea for all the people these days.(28)

The poet is much affected by the personal losses deceptions and breakups in relationships by lovers, companions, fellow travelers still she is hopeful of the young warriors who might carry the battle from the front: “If the whole rose tree with thorns uprooted,/young leaves are born because not the thorns/Flower is its identity.”(Poem No.20)

Her poetry is marked by candidness and plain speak as she does not mince her words and prefers to call a spade a spade. Be it her personal life or her activism, she states facts about her life events unhindered by the false considerations of propriety, social acceptability or femininity. It is, therefore, quite impossible to ignore the tone of 'protest' and 'inquiry' in her poetry which ultimately establishes her as a strong voice of her times who can see through the game of patriarchal hegemony that seeks to oppress the common folks, particularly, the Dalit community, and deprive them of their rights. With an uncanny ability and surety she can discern the hollow claims and empty rhetoric of politicians who deceitfully contend to have eradicated caste discrimination from society. She vehemently opposes the denial of subjectivity and erasure of a Dalit's identity in the following lines:

Dalits are everywhere in the world
Not here!
Caste discrimination exists everywhere
Not here!
They throttle our throat,
Train us to say--
We are all equal, no caste stratification here (42)

Charal is essentially a fighter and a humanist too. Despite all betrayals and denial of personhood, subjectivity, and the right to a dignified life, she continues to celebrate and honour the lives of her hard-working brethren through her verses. In spite of all the challenges and obstacles on her path to self-discovery and self-awareness, she continues her fight. The path that she has chosen for herself is long and lonely, yet she does not regret her decision to tread on

it and continues undeterred by the hurdles she would encounter:

I'm running
 Sailing against the hardest obstacle of my life
 Running in the opposite,
 Running, running
 No, none of you will be able to stop me from running so fast
 You once thought I would break
 But here I am running
 Carrying the wounds caused by the
 Stones and bricks you threw at me.(34)

The overall vision of Charal's poetry is optimism for her community, her Dalit sisters, and her nation. She is inextricably linked to her country's past, present, and future and seeks no escape from them. However, she certainly wants the nation to be purged of the sin of casteism and humanism to take over. It is quite evident that engaging with Charal's hard-hitting poems evokes a sense of unease. The poems of Charal in English translations bring the dissident protesting postcolonial Dalit gendered self to the fore, broadening the spectrum of the discourse of Dalit writings. Her intriguing poems shake us out of our complacency and make us 'rethink' our choices and assumptions with respect to the lives of the disadvantaged women. Charal openly speaks her mind, giving vent to her innermost thoughts, and anxieties without fear of criticism, conveying everything that needs to be conveyed allowing us to understand the validity of Audre Lorde's following remarks, which remind us of the importance of thinking independently and acting when necessary for survival: "I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood" (Lorde, 1980).

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