

## THE REPRESENTATION OF DALIT VOICE IN DEVANOR MAHADEVA'S THE ONES WHO SOLD THEMSELVES

*Shivanand Hiremath*

*Lecturer, Department of P.G. Studies in English, Basaveshwar Arts College, Bagalkot, Karnataka, India*

---

**Received: 27 Sep 2018**

**Accepted: 06 Oct 2018**

**Published: 12 Oct 2018**

---

### ABSTRACT

*Devanor Mahadeva is an Indian writer and a public intellectual who writes in the Kannada language. He is known for Kannada Dalit Bandaya literary movement. He has written a number of novels and short stories which are written in simple colloquial Kannada and plots have a remarkable with present touch. His Kusuma Baale, written in Kannada, won the Central Sahitya Akademy Award in 1990. The Ones who sold themselves is a short story translated into English by P.P. Giridhar and originally written in Kannada by Devanor Mahadeva. In the story, Mahadeva deals with the Dalit perspectives. The present analysis is based on the representation of Dalit's voice in the story and that is represented as subordinates, drunkard, sexual object, inferior, and a coward, controlled and oppressed. In the story, the inability of the Dalits to resist the canon is a special feature or element.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Dalit, Oppression, Resistance, Subordinates, Victimized*

### INTRODUCTION

Devanor Mahadeva, being a Dalit writer, represented the Dalit's voice in the story as inferior, subjugated and subordinates that is to show how the Dalits are being victimized in the society in one or other way. Bira and Lakshmi, the two genuine characters in the story, represent the Dalit voice. They are being controlled by the upper-class society symbolically by Gowda, the village master and his son, Kittappa in the story. Throughout the story, the Dalits are shown as oppressed and controlled by the upper class.

Bira and Lakshmi when both were destitute and desolate, they accidentally met Gowda and escaped by the ticket collector. Bira tells Gowda "We have left our village in search of work. We are *haal* *matasthas*"<sup>65</sup>. It indicates that the Dalits are the subordinate. Gowda thought for a while before saying "I need two sturdy persons to work in my grove. There's a homestead there. If you agree....."<sup>65</sup>. When Bira and Lakshmi came to know this, they agreed to work because they have no money, home, and property. It means that Dalits are objectified and reserved to work under the master, which is again an inhuman treatment.

Alcohol consumption is a common element that is found in the story. Bira has a habit of consuming alcohol. It is understood that Kittappa made Bira a habit of drinking alcohol and through this the upper class misused them and their family. When Bira heard a message that Kittappa had gone to Mysore, he felt of drinking. As Bira exaggerated, "Don't be greedy and drink much, damn it!"<sup>66</sup>. Lakshmi scolded Bira. But he was unable to respond her. Due to oppression and restraint over him he started a habit of consuming alcohol. While consuming alcohol he utters,

"Today I've thought of drinking and eating my fill and then peeling you!"<sup>66</sup>. Bira's habit of alcohol consumption made him suffer from inferiority.

Lakshmi has an affair with Kittappa against her will. She wanted to lead a prosperous and happy life with Bira. As Gowda and Kittappa provided shelter and food, Lakshmi was not been able to resist their advances. The circumstances didn't allow her to do so. As it is well said by JJ Rousseau, 'man is born free but everywhere he is in chains' is true in this context. Bira and Lakshmi there born free but they have not free from the boundaries because they are born as poor human beings. A woman is treated as a sexual object by the upper class. Though Bira knew about the affair of Lakshmi and Kittappa, he is helpless to resist the master who fed him. "Won't you talk to me? He sure will come to see his lover..."<sup>67</sup>. Dalits are shown in the story as subservient and cowards. Blanket and shelter can be seen as the means of the favour done by Kittappa and Gowda that hold Bira back from protesting.

When a boy in shorts teased Lakshmi, Bira exalted by holding his scruff, "You may be a moneyed man. But that is in your house. Don't show it before me!"<sup>69</sup>. The mode of resistance is shown in the story in the character of Bira. Bira's intoxication is an indirect form of his protest against society. Though the element of resistance is seen, it is not highlighted directly. Although Lakshmi wanted to resist the atrocities of Kittappa, she was not been able to do so. As Lakshmi constantly asks Bira to stop alcohol consumption he didn't stop and in fact, he scolds her back. "You don't listen no matter how many times I ask you not to drink. A heavyweight of Mallipura died of a heart attack due to heavy drinking. It seems drinking eats into your intestines."<sup>70</sup> There are constant love and care represented through their voice in the story. The story seems like an introspection in which Lakshmi often recalls her memories.

## CONCLUSIONS

Bira's ideals are being subjugated by the upper-class society, are symbolically inferred to all Dalits who have been victimized since ages. So Devanoor Mahadev has attempted to bring out their voice through this piece of fiction. Such writings provide a solid ground to question the canon. Devanoor Mahadev has questioned the upper-class oppression, as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar did and led him to resist all the aspects. In some societies, Dalits are still victimized in one or other reasons which reflected in the present work of Mahadev. Thus victimization, subordination, inferiority, and oppression are expressed through the Dalit voice in the story. Resistance has been put up as a dominant element in disguise. Dalit Bandaya Literary Movement helped significantly for Dalits to express their views and bring their voice to the mainstream.

## REFERENCES

1. D. Mahadeva and P.P. Giridhara, "The Ones Who Sold Themselves," *Indian Literature*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, Vol. 38, No. 4 (168), *Kannada Short Story Today* (July - Aug. 1995), pp. 64-70