

Structures of Oppressive Exclusions under Patriarchy: Contextualizing Intersectional Feminism in Rajam Krishnan's Lamps in the Whirlpool and Baby Kamble's The Prison We Broke

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Untouchability, a vicious by-product of the caste system in India, places Brahmins as its perpetrators. Men and women belonging to the Brahmin caste are blamed for having introduced and practised exclusions in society under the pretext of hygiene and righteous epistemological superiority. However minimal attention has been paid by feminists and activists of the underprivileged towards the Brahmin woman in the position of a daughter-in-law in an orthodox Brahmin family in the hands of the mother-in-law who perpetrates violence as an act of revenge. The paper strives to argue that social structures of exclusion are equally oppressive towards her as to the Dalit women. The paper proposes to incorporate the theory of Intersectional feminism formulated by Kimberley Crenshaw to prove the fact that irrespective of the caste the inherent social structures of exclusion are constructed and meticulously maintained by patriarchy and other such hegemonic institutions, the evidence of which could be observed at various social and cultural intersections. A monistic approach to study domination in the two texts only under patriarchy would prove reductive as they may abbreviate the complex experiences of simultaneous oppression to simplistic unitary categories. Therefore, Crenshaw's approach to theorizing oppression and marginalization, although in the context of Black Feminism, embraces the situation and comparison proposed for study in this paper. Intersectional Feminism maintains that the discrimination meted out to women is multi-layered as the interplay between differences based on gender, race, age, class, socio-economic status, physical and mental abilities, gender and sexual identity, ethnicity and so on. This study argues the case of the women under study namely, Girija and her mother-in-law from Krishnan's novel and Baby Kamble from her autobiography who are trapped within various gendered norms of institutions created by the society.

Keywords: Dalit oppression, Brahminical hierarchy, caste-based violence, intersectional feminism