



THEME OF LAND APPROPRIATION IN HARYANVI SOCIETY BY RAJENDER BADGUJAR IN HAMARI JAMEEN HUM BOANGE!

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The present paper intends to explore the theme of land appropriation in Haryanvi society that gets described in Hamari Jameen Hum Boange! Rajender Badgujar- an emerging Hindi writer from the north India. The paper minutely describes the current socio-cultural circumstances in north India particularly over the new agricultural laws that get repealed due to farmers protest against the proposed laws. Badgujar describes Dalits' subjugation who have no land despite there is a constitutional provision for the same for Dalits in India, especially in Haryana. Badgujar describes Dalits' underlying repercussions, usurping zamindars' tactics of Dalit scapegoats, official delaying and denying politics on implementation of constitutional provisions, and Dalits emerging protest get literary exploration in varying circumstances through various characters.

Keywords: *Subjugation, Repercussion, Delaying, Denying, Scapegoat.*



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1. SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF HARYANA

Haryanvi society is composed of the two specifications of *Khadar* and *Banger* on cultural characteristics. The state of Haryana comprises the cultural traits of the neighboring states of Uttar Pradesh in touching the regions from Palwal district to Panipat district. The region from Karnal to Ambala and Panchkula and the Sirsa districts are much influenced by the Punjabi culture. The districts of Mahendergarh, Rewari, Bhiwani, Charkhi Dadri (the latest district of the state), and a considerable part of Hisar predominantly have a touch of Rajasthani culture. The particular region of Mewat and the south end of Gurugram (Gurgaon) is a Meo-culture having a great impact on Muslim culture while Gurugram is the multinational hub adjacent to the Metro culture of

Delhi. The distinct sizable Haryanvi culture is the areas of Kaithal, Jind, Rohtak, and a part of the Hisar and Sonapat districts of the state. Haryana is the only state in India having a metro facility in three districts touching the national capital. Surprisingly nearly half of the 22 districts fall in the National Capital Region (NCR) showing the approximation with the national phenomena. The caste oppression of Dalits in Haryana gets a theoretical opposition from upper castes' rigidity of the politically and financially dominating caste of Jat and the others like this that keep continuing to oppress the Dalits.

Dalits' exploitation has many dimensions of socio-cultural and financial factors but the issue of land appropriation, particularly on the village common land has been crucial in the oppression of Dalits. In political

practices, the state is distinctively on lines of *Jat and non-jat* struggle for domination over the society. There is a huge gap between *the landlord Jats* and *landless Dalits* in this region. In Haryana, land-ownership by this dominating caste constitutes nearly 22 % of the state demography but Jat caste has ownership over more than 60% of the cultivable land. Occasionally, land acquisition by the government provides a lot of unexpected money that leads to crime and power biz show over the poor Dalits frequently multiplying miseries in the villages. The minimum gap between writers' sensibility and their earnest efforts to create conducive socio-cultural milieu restores readers' response to literary mainstream writings in Haryanvi society. This has been interrogated by Mohandas Namisray as under:

The new story writers [mainstream story writers in Hindi] assumed their personal experience as an established phenomenon and they forget that the personal experiences become meaningful only when these have social relevance in the larger sense of the society. Without having any social relevance, the realizations of a literary composer are just a kind of his personal experiences. When the motif of the writers making their personal experiences bases of sensibilities in their compositions narrowed, then they started making artistic experimentations in a vacuum of social concerns in their writings. This is the reason that the personal experiences of some petty instance of life, and episodic incidences become so important that the artistic experimenting storytellers started seeking justification of the social life. By this time, the issues of Dalits were still out of their context, too. (135)

Land owning is not a matter of personal respect and financial prosperity rather possession of land stands for dominance in politics, an assertion of caste arrogance for social dominance in many ways.

Badgujar describes various repercussions of Dalits in the story collection titled *Hamari Jameen Hum Boange* (2012) poignantly focuses on Dalits' current socio-economic issues in Haryanvi society. Under this title there are other stories included that underline how crucial factor of land is for Dalits. Furthermore, the titled "Hamari Jameen Hum Boange!" minutely presents the intricacies and reasons why Dalits are still deprived of their legitimate rights over the village common land reserved for these communities. As the story is originally written in Hindi so the text is unique in style and presents the underlying reasons of through various modes and fields of Dalit sufferings. He has presented the realities of varied Dalit issues without

much literariness. The story collection includes "Tonic" (Tonic), "Hamari Jameen Hum Boange" (We'll Sow Our Land), "Rishala" (Rishala), "Dhodh ki Jali" (Victim of Own), "Gigivisha" (Hoping Life), "Vah" (The Man), and "Hatya" (Murdering Generations of Women Education) have been included in this collection describing the different issues. These stories capture the Dalit characters in varying situations at different levels varying scenes following the shifting paradigms of their priorities with time. The eminent Hindi writer Dr. Baburam quotes, 'Folk dances of Haryana do not belong to specific castes only rather the folk dances of the whole society (21) is the essence in Badgujar's text. The main themes are land appropriation, delaying and denying tactics over constitutional provisions, male domination, illiteracy, and other recent burnings and arsons of Dalits' inhabitation in Haryanvi society

2. LAND APPROPRIATION AND HARYANVI SOCIETY

Badgujar analyzes Dalits' socio-cultural exploitation and anguish in Indian context despite having equality and liberty enshrined in the constitution of the country. The land reforms and the policies of agricultural land never got scholarly and discussion apart from making it an emotional and elaborative issue rather presented by the opposing parties to ignite the flames of infighting as presented in the cinematic presentation countrywide. The story "Tonic" describes a Dalit boy (just six or seven years) when his village zamindar asks his father to bring his son to work instead of sending him to school. The zamindar says, 'Jagge, your child must have got to seven-eight years old... Now put him also on work. Bring him also.... put him on grazing of the livestock for some time. You should put him to early leanings, only then (he'll) learn Badgujar, 3)'. The poor father somehow avoids the situation and does not succumb to the zamindars' trap and continues his education. As a routine course, the child has pass the streets of the zamindars in the new uniform to reach the new school gives ample chances to make blunt remarks saying 'now even the pups of the *Dhedhs*' have started wearing pant-shirt (Badgujar, 6)'. This is a kind of beginning to cross over the gap of ages between the despotic legacy of the zamindars (and upper castes) and the tiny steps of Dalits towards the democratization of Indian society. The writer poignantly describes, 'On Raidas *Jayanti*, the whole community gets aback to see that hundreds of the zamindars' *laithat* armed with sticks, *Jellies*, tridents plundered their colony. In a sudden attack- none got a chance to revive... Chamars were ousted of the village. (Badgujar, 7-8).

Badgujar also describes in "Rishala" and shows how the aged protagonist Rishala is in the hands of zamindar for having no resources of his own but remaining dependent on the fields of the landlords. The anti-thesis of the struggle between the Dalit protagonist

and the zamindar lies in the unequal distribution of the agricultural land. In a particular instance in the story, the zamindar comes over the tubewell while making movement in his fields in the evening time and sit there to drink in the cottage. As the protagonist, a bonded labor (*siri*) was there, so the zamindar showing his style asks him to bring a glass for him. Over his *offer*, the *siri* says, 'Lord, I never drink liquor. And, there was no glass available on the tube-well cottage... Ah, you! Just have a taste of that today...Go and bring a glass for your sake (Badgujar, 36).' The protagonist tries his best to avoid the situation saying, 'Saheb! Ours is not a status to drink liquor. Today, you will make us drink. Who will offer (drink) tomorrow? (Badgujar, 36)'. The zamindar shows the benevolence of offering a glass of liquor intending to put him in his trap to make him addicted so that under this weakness he can keep continuing to get an easy bonded labour. Eventually, the protagonist becomes able to avoid the easy temptation of going against the general perception that is associated with the Dalits.

In story "Hatya" also underlines the big landholding by the zamindars due to which they never think twice to do anything that does not fall into their standards. The big land holding, zamindars find ample space to influence politics, local administration (at the Panchayat level), and the police. Missing Suman under mysterious circumstances and getting her dead body after a few days make her father anticipate the responsible for all this, (the Thakurs' sons). Contrastingly, despite having an apprehension and involvement of the Thakurs' sons, the victims' father (Shiv Kumar) has to think many times about going against the zamindar. The writer describes poignantly the thought process of the victim's father:

He was pondering over how to talk with Rameshar. His fields are much visited to fetch fodder are visited in routine by (day and night) all the times. Once or twice he has helped in need too. He is the landlord of hundred of *bhigas*, even his fields are adjacent to the village pond too. His (Sibbe's) animals grow on his fields. Livestock gets fostered due to his fields. Often, his wife also used to go for work over his fields in the seasonal harvesting that make bring them even for the whole year. (His)/behaviour is hard but he is the nearest. (Badgujar, 68-69)

The story unfolds that the zamindar not only influenced the panchayat's decision at the village level but also managed to get out without showing/having any involvement of his sons in the murder mystery of a Dalit girl.

The title story "Hamari Jameen Hum Boange" describes how zamindars in Haryana have not given up possession from the village common land reserved for the SCs in Haryana. The reserve land is provisioned for the reserved category people but despite efforts being made at the level of the SCs as well as by the

government, it has not come to the hand of these people. The protagonist of the story Prof. Raj Kamal decides to make aware the people from the reserved categories to claim their rights over the village common land allotted for SCs /BCs in many villages of Haryana but usurped by the zamindars. It is described with facts and figures. Raj Kamal says:

All the villages in Haryana have agricultural land in our names. If you see the land of the nearby villages around you, then you will come to know how much loss our society suffers annually. Eighty acres in village Balbehra, Fifty acres in Patty Afgan, Eighteen and a half acres in Khuran, Fifty-five acres in Deewal village, and in Khanoda twelve acres of land is reserved for the scheduled castes. The land in name of Backward Classes is still in the possession of the upper caste people even today (Badgujar, 21-22).

The village common land was provisioned for the solution of hunger spread amongst the people and also to counter against the oppressors. The protagonist appreciates the students for showing a good understanding of current social issues but they must focus on their studies. It is very important to have a good understanding of the current social issues but must focus on their study. Still, the Dalit students work on many fronts to make their community aware of its rights. Raj Kamal categorically specifies to the students over their social activism on the issue of land and specifies the students' priorities saying:

We are quite sure that you are committed to this matter but your commitment must be ensured towards your studies.... We are striving to get the land for the good sake of the poor and the illiterate people. But your happiness lies in getting good marks in your classes (Badgujar, 25).

The juncture in their social activism to have possession of the land get defused in the scapegoats like Surta Chamar and Mangu Bhangi who either succumb to the pressure of the zamindars or tempt over a bottle of liquor to hold an auction in their name that makes a fiasco of the poor's protest for their legal rights in Haryanvi society. The indifferent attitude of Dalits who got benefits of reservation has also an underlying reason that the illiterate people from these communities are still languishing in the zamindars' tactics even in getting their legitimate rights over the land reserved for them. Not paying back to society has become more common in society in general, but in the context of Dalits, the tendency has does not only demoralize the certain other scheduled castes but also gives space to the upper castes narrative of the SC reservation. Dalits' illiteracy and their inadequacy of resources have complicated their social status in the caste system in India. The dubious characters of Dalits

like Surta Chamar and Mangu Bhangi bring debacle in the development process of these deprived sections of society despite policy implementation in bits in Haryanvi society.

3. LAND APPROPRIATION LEAD TO DALITS' MULTIFARIOUS MARGINALIZATION IN SOCIETY

Dalits' landlessness not only undermines their public space in socio-cultural milieu but their personal spheres also get crushed due to having no resource. Therefore, the issue of land appropriation as well as disowning Dalits from the village common land worsens their miseries. One of the issues is segregation of Dalit localities from the central place in villages in Haryanvi society is also an outcome of upper castes' strategies to Dalits out of the social interactions. The segregation Dalit bustees not only imposes upper castes attitudinal superiority over Dalits but also helps them to put them away in the peripheral areas of the village boundaries to face the burnings of the foreign invaders (in any sense) in the past. Furthermore, it has become a strategic domain to impose any kind of social boycott against Dalits (in any unconventional development from their perspectives and that usually happens due to Dalit activism). Furthermore, most of the government institutions and service centers are generally located in the upper caste localities giving them maximum reach to the facilities. On the other hand, Dalits remain on the receiving ends. The story "Hatya" describes how the Dalit girl named Suman goes missing on her way to a school distant from the Dalit habitation. The writer describes the long distance between Ratiram's (Suman's father) house and the school village as under:

The school was in the village but situated away from home. Ratiram's house was on the other corner of the village pond and the school on the far end in the zamindars' neighborhood. In all way, it was to cross the whole village to reach the school. First, the Goldsmith's area, then the Brahmans, and lastly, the areas of the Rajputs were to be crossed to reach the school. The village school was up to the Eight standards only. The village was quite big. (Badgujar, 67).

To get higher education brings higher challenges monetarily as well as social for Dalit students. Without higher education, Dalits would not be benefitted despite the supporting provisions of reservation. Nisha, the protagonist of the story "Gijivisha" never got to higher education despite her talent due to the non-availability of the senior secondary school in her village. After passing her matriculation, her father Karamchand becomes full of worries over to get her daughter to the next standard or not. The writer describes the issue, "To get admission in the Eleventh standard, to go to the neighbouring village. The geographical conditions of

the village were such that to reach the school, she has to cross the whole of her village and the other village too (Badgujar, 52-53)'. Moreover, her parents could never dare to send her to the neighboring village. Karamchand, the father of the protagonist, goes to rebuke his wife. Deciding whether to send their daughter to the neighboring village for the next level of education describes his social compulsion of Dalit parents. The eve-teasing and flaunting caste remarks against the Dalit students happen due to the specification location of the academic institutions in the upper castes locality as discussed in "Hatya". Dalits localities and the upper castes' big streets inwardly have indications of geo-politics and displacement strategies in the villages in Haryana. Unfortunately, the half-hearted attempts either at the NGOs or at the level of government agencies succumbs to local politics illustrate that "in India, the metaphors of human affection and disaffection are surrounded by caste debate (Yangde, 43)".

The theme of the non-acceptance of Dalit characters in Badgujar's writings gets delineated in varied forms and fields including getting an education as students and imparting education along with their colleagues. The characters like Suman and Bohti in "Hatya" are some of the most sufferer Dalit girls who become the embodiments to show the upper castes create mountainous problems in their initiatives. The upper castes' apprehension in sensing how the Dalit girls can surpass *their* unquestioned supremacy and long prevailed system of their dominance in society and education makes them go to the extent of murdering the school-going girl. The social status quo of Dalits' in the caste system in the Haryanvi society finds social deliberation and literary penetration. The stories delineate the implementation of constitutional provisions either get stuck in implementation or succumbs to the interpretative politics. The corrective provisions ensure justice (to Dalits) at the earliest possible stage by the institution of local government as well as the local administrative units like police investigation at the village level. Badgujar describes how the biased practices not only deny justice to them in caste oppression but also put a negative picture of the local Panchayat and in the police proceedings under the socio-political and financial involvement in imparting justice to Dalits. Badgujar poignantly describes in "Hatya" how the Sarpanch and the Panchayat- an integral part of judicature at the village level- not only let fails to impart justice at the earliest level but also create humiliation circumstances to the oppressed. When Shiv Kumar- a Chamar's teenager daughter (Suman) goes missing on her way to school and the parents are unable to get an idea of her whereabouts by evening, it was reported to the police to investigate the matter. Badgujar describes the

practical issues in lodging police complaints by Dalits, particularly against the local dominants. He describes:

Lodging a police report was not an easy task. After all, the job was to be formalized. A group of eight-nine people reached the police post, so the police personnel noted down the specification of the missing one. While keeping both his feet on the nearby stool he asks, "yes...Do you suspect any in the matter? Then tell, I'll make that fellow appear in the police station (Badgujar, 70)

One of the Dalits' deny despite Shiv Kumar has apprehensions' of the Thakurs' sons but getting incapable to say due to his dependence on his fields and his social status in the village. The judicial system of the village has not come out of caste biases, particularly in Dalit oppression and it becomes specific in circumstances when the oppressors/ susceptible belonging to upper castes' who has an influence local administration of Panchayat. Moreover, the police personnel's indifferent attitude not only make Dalits victim of the police system but also discourage them to approach the police station.

4. CONCLUSION

The story collection *Hamari Jameen Hum Boange* presents a new protest to get possession of the reserved land in the villages in Haryana. The story describes that despite the constitutional provisions of village common land for the SCs/the BCs, the agricultural land remains under the possession of the usurping zamindars. Dalits' negligence becomes the main reason for the land appropriation of common land. The underlying issues get described either certain scapegoats (Dalits) get the auction of the reserve land in their names and give possession to the zamindars for (the sake of liquor bottle) or the pressing circumstances created by the zamindars under get Dalits no benefits. To make aware the illiterate Dalits, the protagonist holds separate meetings with Dalit communities like Chamar, Sansi, and Valmikis) come out of internal bickering to get possession over the village common land in the auction. In India, too, the reality of traditions rests in villages, and societies like the Haryanvi are still grass-rooted in the typical orthodox customs traditional despite having adjacent borders to the national capital (representative of advancement and multi-cultural society). The villages are still blunt in caste practices as described:

'Caste as power' is no new formulation. Sociologists, social anthropologists, and other social scientists have exclusively have explored the power dimensions of caste...The social anthropologists who studied the village social life used categories like 'dominant caste' as useful descriptive tools. Some of these empirical studies also drew conceptual inferences and theorized the

ritual universe of caste in terms of power relationships. (Jodhaka, in *Caste*, 35-36).

Badgujar's writings dissect the coercive politics (as expressed in mainstream literature that either sets a narrative to undermine the need and necessity of the legitimate rights of Dalits) by presenting the underlying reality of caste discrimination against them. The delaying and denying of justice at local levels lead to the compilation of Dalit cases of atrocities (that are termed 'fake matters under the SC/ST atrocity act) making higher judiciary rethink the validity of the SC/ST Atrocity Act. Unfortunately, the underlying repercussions lead to witnesses getting hostile or due to Dalits' inability in continuing with the unnecessary procedural delay at the local as well as a higher level of jurisdiction in implementation and reviewing of acts.

Rajender Badgujar scrutinizes the social system to show the different land settlements by the British Government left the work half undone that has not been taken up by any elected Government even after Independence. In north India (Haryanvi society), the zamindari (landholding settlement) is deep-rooted, and the hierarchy of peasants society has an established power structure that has affected the effective implementation of the corrective measures for Dalits in the Indian society. With a focus to present the realistic things of power structure through land ownership, the present texts describe various nuances in the Haryanvi society. The issue of agricultural sectors, Dalits' internal bickering, non-acceptance of Dalits in new roles, upper castes' demoralizing tactics to dissuade or threaten Dalit parents to get education for their children. The issue of politics played over in the implementation of the constitutional provisions, the double burden of Dalit females, and certain other issues of human relationship other than caste issues also get discussed by the writer in recent Haryanvi society. The local narrative of the upper castes in justifying their traditional dominance over Dalits has varied modes in upper-caste tactics and practices as described in the title story "Hamari Jameen Hum Boange". The corrective provisions of reservation for Dalits as their safeguard for their social security become fiasco despite these constitutional provisions. The delaying and denying politics over at official as well as institutional level become nucleus motif in Badgujar's *Hamari Jameen Hum Boange*. Still, the writer asserts as social freedom fighter earnestly keep on asserting for proper implementation of the corrective provisions at an institutional level. Upper castes' attitudinal shifting towards Dalits and their constitutional provisions will decide the course of Dalit protest in (Haryanvi) Indian society.

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