
**An Exploration of Resistance Shown by the Dalit Female Characters in
*The Grip of Change and A Life Less Ordinary***

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Abstract

In Indian society, women occupy a peripheral position. Being not allowed to take part in any formal decisions on their own, they become a passive follower of male member's decisions. In an androcentric society, a girl can never be independent self since her childhood. She depends on her father even for her basic needs, and then on her husband and, in her old age, on her son; hence, a woman can never be an emancipated being. Generally, women have become the victims of gender inequality. Especially Dalit women experience a threefold inequality of race, sex, and class. A *Life Less Ordinary* (2002) and *The Grip of Change* (2006) are autobiographical literary narratives that gracefully fuse the experiences of Baby Halder and P. Sivakami with the incidents of larger Dalit groups pertaining to their class and gender. These authors foreground multifaceted oppression against Dalit women and how that oppression becomes institutionalized by family, state, and upper-caste human beings. The paper will investigate how the concept of intersectionality theory describes different discriminations regarding race, gender, identity, color, etc., and how they meet at one point and affect the lives of Dalit women.

Keywords: Androcentric society, Dalit women, intersectionality, oppression, gender.

Introduction:

Literature reflects the aspects of life. It is the vehicle of ideas and views that takes the shape of immortality and is accepted universally. Great literature not only provides an overview of discrimination, class exploitation, gender inequality, and injustice but also reveals the intricacy of the journey that depicts society's reality. Dalit literature is a genre of life. Dalit literature is considered an outlet for experiences full of atrocities that Dalits have faced for ages. In the varna system, Dalits have tolerated a lot of humiliation on account of belonging to the so-called low communities. In Indian society, scheduled caste women, compared to men, face more traumatic experiences due to their gender (being a woman) and rigid caste system. Dalit women are considered as physically impure and untouchable. The feeling of aversion towards them sanctions exploitation and social exclusion at every level of life. They face exploitation by the upper caste women, the upper caste men, and their

own caste male members. Dalit literature digs deep into the socially underprivileged people and puts emphasis on the socio-political status of the downtrodden and the browbeaten beings. The autobiographies written by females depict the contemporaneous plight of the dependency of women in society.

The paper deals with the issues of marginalization of women, their lack of voice, and subjectivity as reflected in the Dalit literature. This oppressed group has historically been exploited in Indian society. The analysis of the selected texts, namely *A Life Less Ordinary (2006)* by Baby Halder and *The Grip of Change (2002)* by P. Sivakami, indicates that along with caste lines, gender too plays a havoc role in mankind. "One is not born a woman. Rather, one becomes a woman" (Beauvoir 295). The position of women is that they bear everything but do nothing and do everything but can utter nothing. They are considered as the periphery of the center not because of their number but due to the pre-existed notion of inferiority deeply rooted in the minds of people regarding Dalit women. The illiteracy rate among women is very high because they are devoid of exposure and hardly interested in getting out of their ghettos or shells and are likely to be subjugated socially, economically, physically, and psychologically.

The term subaltern (refers to woman) depicts the condition of servitude in social, religious, economic, racial, linguistic, political, and cultural dominance. It refers to the people who are socially, and geographically situated outside the hegemonic power structure that is framed by the high-class people. The feeble voice of the subaltern is lost in the cacophony of the world's disturbance. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak defined the concept of Subaltern Studies in a broader way.

Emphasizing that the Western Marxist model of social change that these historians employ does not do justice to the complex histories of subaltern insurgency and resistance which they seek to recover" (Morton 7)

This text can be analyzed with the help of intersectionality theory which is a scientific study of human society that interprets how individuals and groups are segregated into privileged and underprivileged sections. It presents multiple forms of discrimination related to caste, gender, ghettoism, poverty, ability, class, and ethnicity.

The present paper explores the quest for the identity of Dalit female writers who presume themselves to be caged birds whose wings have been trimmed but still desire to live meaningful lives. The Dalit writers P. Sivakami and Baby Halder believe that for the survival of women, it is necessary to abolish the existence of untouchability and patriarchy that prevail in society. It is important to empower women with knowledge and education and create a wide scope of platforms by giving them the identity and respect that they deserve.

The paper attempts to suggest ways to ameliorate the condition of scheduled caste females in India. A thorough study of the novels *The Grip of Change (2006)* and *A Life Less Ordinary (2002)* presents a realistic picture of the socio-economic

situation of the past, making today's generation acclimatize with the life and the times of the ancient generation and to enhance the sense of respect for the gendered subaltern in their areas and treat them with equality. These two texts are good examples of the struggle and vocalization of Dalit women's experiences.

Baby Halder, being born a Dalit girl, struggles at every step of her life. Baby is not able to spend her childhood happily because her father left her mother and Baby at their native place. The miserable condition of Baby is illustrated in her following words.

Ma found it very difficult to make do: how could she not? Ma asked Baba's friends for help, but none of them was in a position to take on the burden of another family. Ma also thought of getting a job, but that would have meant going out of the house, which she had never done. And, after all, what work could she do? Another of her worries was what would people say. (Halder 1-2).

Baby Halder's mother was annoyed by her husband's ill behavior, and she left her house to get a job. Baby Halder writes Suddenly, it all became too much for her, and one day, with grief in her heart and my little brother in her arms, she just walked away from the house (Halder 3).

The struggle of a Dalit woman (Baby's mother) becomes a dominant theme in P. Thomas's article "Marriages in Indian Society: From Tradition to Modernity" which elucidates.

A woman who is illiterate and does not know what her rights are and who is not allowed to move about without her husband's permission is not likely to take the initiative (Thomas, 142).

Baby Halder demonstrates the emotional stress a mother feels in order to protect her children from her bad-tempered husband, while McGee feels that leaving is the only way for mothers to save their kids from the terrible effects of witnessing the cruelty of fathers. McGee, in his research article "Childhood Experiencing of Domestic Violence," writes.

Mothers are also concerned about the impact of domestic violence on their children, and for many of the mothers, this is the trigger that led to their leaving. (McGee, 69).

When Baby's mother (Ganga) left her home, she felt disconnected from her family members. She feels more comfortable in school rather than at home. When Baby's friend came to her home to pick her up for school and asked Baby to give her something to eat, Baby revealed to her that there was no food at home. The father of Baby heard those words and hit Baby mercilessly. Baby writes

That day, when I came home from school, he beat me so badly that it was three days before I could get up and many more before I felt able to go back to school again (Baby 5)

The attitude of Baby's stepmother is very rude. Baby's life becomes more pathetic after her father's remarriage. It is evidence of how women become enemies of the same gender. Baby expresses her emotions in the following words,

My stepmother never listened to anything Baba said. She never fed us on time, she often beat us without reason, and she'd cook up tales about us and tell Baba, and we'd get beaten by him as well. Baba was not willing to listen to anything we had to say, and there were times when he would refuse even to look at us. (Halder5).

Baby states that her father tried to impose restrictions on her when she became a grown-up girl. She presents how he suppressed her childhood desires. Baby writes,

Baba did not allow me to wear bangles; I wasn't allowed to talk to anyone, to play with anyone, and often not even allowed out of the house. I was so scared of being beaten that I would look for opportunities to go out and play only when I knew he was not around to stop me. (Halder 12).

The Baby was not aware of the term marriage. She thought that marriage was all about celebration, serving dishes to the guests, and having fun. She doesn't know that marriage is another game of slavery for a woman where she must become a marionette at the hands of another man (husband). Baby asserts

I heard him talking to my new Ma. They were talking about my marriage. I had no idea what marriage was. All I knew was that it was an occasion for song and dance, that often lots of people went to marriages and had lots of fun. (Halder 14).

The man was known to Baby's stepmother's brother. Baby's father fixed her marriage to that man. Baby is twelve years old, and her would-be husband is sixteen years older than her. Baby becomes the victim of marital rape because she is not aware of what happens after marriage. She vividly explains,

Suddenly, one night, he caught hold of me and pulled me roughly toward him. He put his hand on my breast and told me in a gentle voice that he did not like living like this, and he no longer wanted to do so. And so, saying, he began to press his body against mine. I started to cry out in fear. But then, I thought, what's the point? I'll just wake everyone by shouting like this, so I shut my eyes and mouth tightly and let him do what he wanted. I just endured everything. (Halder 39).

Gupta, in her research article "Feminine, Criminal or Manly: Imaging Dalit Masculinity in Colonial North India," writes. Dalit men were also seen as wife beaters and drunkards, repeatedly unleashing violence against their women. (Gupta 322).

When Baby gets to know about her sister's (Sushila) death that happened because her husband strangled her, she is heartbroken and argues that most Dalit women suffer either because of their in-laws or of their husbands. Pradeep, in the article "Violence Against Dalit Women," clears.

In most cases where a Dalit husband is concerned, the violence takes on a strong patriarchal dimension: women are tortured within the home for not bringing enough dowry, for not bearing male children, or allegedly unfaithful, for talking back to her husband, etc. Alcoholism among Dalit husbands is also a strong contributing factor to this domestic violence. Domestic violence resulted in some women being deserted by their husbands or being forced to leave their marital homes. For the majority of women, however, the social norms and pressures of married life and the duties of wives to their husbands ensure that they continue to endure this violence. (Pradeep, 2).

The author reveals one more example where a Dalit woman was burnt alive with no fault of hers. This is an incident in which Panna's wife wants to watch television at her neighbor's house. In Baby Halder's novel, when Panna comes to the house, he is completely drunk and does not see his wife at home. He became furious and threw acid on her body. Just like Sushila when she was burned alive by her husband, no one came to rescue her from assault. Halder writes,

He took the matchbox, lit a match, and threw it on her. She burst into blame, her clothes burning off her skin, her skin becoming pale... she was naked ...she was still alive when Lata, a neighbor, saw her slumped against the wall in their house and heard her whimpering in pain. She shouted out, calling for help, and lots of people came rushing to their house. We also went there. I saw that she was half-standing against the wall, and her skin was blistered with burns...she was unlucky enough to still be alive. (Halder 96).

The same incident happened with Baby, too, when she went to her neighbor's house (Shakti) to watch television, which made Shankar furious. She writes, Suddenly, I felt a tug at my hair. I ignored it and continued to pray. But then suddenly someone caught hold of my hair and pulled it so hard that I fell to the ground...I turned and saw that it was my husband. He shouted at me. Come on, you bitch! Get yourself back home! (Halder 108).

After a lot of persecution, Baby decided to shift to Delhi in search of opportunities with her three children. There, too, she underwent different faces of people. Finally, she got her destination at Munshi Premchand's grandson Prabodh Kumar's house. Urvashi Butalia explains abusive childhood of Halder and writes,

Prepared to be more or less invisible, Baby was surprised when her employer actually spoke to her about her life and treated her like a human being. As the days passed, Prabodh Kumar noticed that Baby paid extra attention to his bookshelves, dusting and cleaning the books with care, looking at them with longing. And that

was his signal for encouraging her, first to read and then to write. The result was the book you have in front of you, *A Life Less Ordinary* (2002). (Butalia, VII).

Prabodh noticed her curiosity for reading and learning and encouraged her to write about her life in her native (Bengali) language. Baby Halder is an embodiment of women's empowerment who depicts courage and fortitude that helps women break shackles on their path to success.

As Manjeet Rathee states, "Baby Halder's *Aalo Aandhari* (Light and Darkness / *A Life Less Ordinary*) is a powerful reflection on the class and gender concerns from the subaltern point of view."

Pramod K. Nayar writes, "The first recognition of their [marginalized women's] own marginalized subjectivity comes from the physical pain that their bodies experience. The Baby suffered marital rape, beatings, and emotional abuse at the hands of her husband and became a mother at the tender age of thirteen. She quietly endured all this, though there was a latent storm of rebellion feeding inside her. She was shaken when she heard of her sister's murder by her brother-in-law, and this incident made her strongly feel that had her sister retaliated against her husband's ill-treatment of her, she would not have met this fate". (Nayar 30) Being a Dalit woman, Baby and her sister faced such humiliation. This reflects how being female, they are vulnerable to act against their (male's) actions. In the novel, Baby writes about when he (Shankar) picked up a sturdy piece of wood and began hitting me on my back. A short while later, I felt a piercing pain in my stomach (because she was pregnant) (84). This reflects the helplessness of a man.

Dalits face more problems in their life because, economically also, they are weak. Dalit women are more crushed in this financial crisis. Baby writes We ran from one person to another, and in the end, we learned that the examination for pregnancies was only on Fridays and Tuesdays. That day, we came back frustrated in pain with no money in our hands (39)

The hypocrisy of Brahmins was manifested in the autobiography of Baby, where she went out in public space to work in the houses of the upper caste as a domestic helper. "Brahmin and they had all the customary practices of purity and pollution. But they were quite prepared to let me do everything for them because, after all, they could not do without domestic help" (LLO 108). It reflects reality versus appearance like Hindus pretend to be very pure that they never allow even a shadow of the untouchables, but the reality is that they rely on Dalits only for domestic help. Concerning the context, Subdakra Mitra Channa claims, "This in itself shows that subjugation of the Dalits is not based on any criteria of religion or purity or pollution as the upper castes claim. It is a matter of exploitation and extraction of labor and services at the cheapest possible terms from the Dalits" (267). They represent a weaker class of society, so they are exploited more in terms of labor.

Baby Halder is a Dalit female author who faced multiple oppression from society. She expressed in her speech in Journey from a Domestic Worker to International Writer (TEDx Dikshan School) she claims that for a female and Dalit, it is next to impossible to achieve success in life. After the publication of her autobiography, people felt amazed at how this poor Dalit lady got so much fame that journalists came to her house for an interview. She asserts that the hard incidents of her husband and father created a spark in her to transform the future of her three children, and she decided to move out to Delhi. It is very tough for her to get a good social position because she is illiterate, so she starts working as a domestic helper, where her masters molest her physically and mentally, too. Finally, Baby wins by gaining international fame from her hard work. In this way, her story reflects how gender, caste, and class intersect at one point, creating oppression at a high level.

Palanimuthu Sivakami was the first to write the Dalit Tamil novel *Pazhainya Kazhithalum*, which was later translated into English as *The Grip of Change (2006)*. Sivakami translated her Tamil novel into English herself. The main theme of the novel moves around the two types of women (Thangam and Gowri): one who maintains silence and never raises her voice, another who condemns the inhuman treatment of patriarchy in the society and raises her voice against her own father, too.

This novel is the story of Thangam, a low-caste Pariyar woman who faced multiple jeopardy, gender subordination, and economic crisis. After the death of Thangam's husband, she works in the Paramjothi Udayar field to meet her basic needs. Thangam's body symbolizes a toy that serves pleasure to his master. Her body is considered an infertile land that fails to reproduce any child. Her infertility is linked to her struggle to inherit her husband's share of land because if a woman does not have a child, she has no right to receive the husband's property. Thangam is not only sexually assaulted by Udayar, but her brothers-in-law demand sex from her, and when she refuses to fulfill their desires, they spread rumors that Thangam has become Udayar's concubine. When Udayar's wife hears this, she and her brothers beat Thangam mercilessly. With her impaired body, Thangam reaches Kathamuthu (a respected Dalit ex-panchayat member). He also gets aroused by her body and is ready to keep Thangam in his home as his third wife. Finally, Thangam becomes helpless and accepts whatever comes to her life, even without her wish.

On the other hand, Gowri shouts when Kathamuthu tries to rape helpless Thangam. Gowri says, "Dogs! Dogs! In the house! Shameless as dogs! (93). Gowri symbolizes change that stirs Dalit consciousness and stands for equality, awareness, and growth among Dalits. She avoids early marriage and works hard to get admission to the city college. When Gowri steps out of her home, she feels like she can now mingle in the outside world, which is full of opportunities. She beautifully conveys the following words: "During floods, waters from overflowing wells mingle with the waters of huge water bodies, transgressing their boundaries. (95) Gowri's ideologies really help to remove discrimination from the social fabric. Gowri provokes her mother, Kangawali, and her stepmother, Nagamani, to fight for liberation. Gowri

feels bad for such atrocities done to women. She feels uncertain about her own destiny after her marriage because, in her house, she has seen torture done on three ladies (Thangam et al.) by her own father, Kathamuthu. In her soliloquy, she expresses,

I belong to the same caste as that woman (Thangam). How can I be sure that I won't be beaten black and blue like her? I have seen things like this happening in the cinema. This is real, terror is sleeping on a mat in my house. She felt revulsion for the society where such things could happen. (Sivakami 14).

Moreover, Bama, in her work *Sangati (1994)* and *Karruku (1992)*, witnessed the physical violence like flogging, canning, and slaying of women where even along with their husbands, their fathers and brothers behaved brutally to them. For example, in *Sangati's (1994) Events*, Bama writes.

They dragged her out of the cart, and without even caring that she was a full-term pregnant woman with one sweep of a sword, they separated her head from the body. They sliced open her stomach, took out the Baby, twisted its neck, and killed it. (59)

Esakki's brothers butcher her brutally. This insecurity and psychological trauma mute her and disempower her. Thus, violence and trauma have a long-lasting effect on the psychology of women. Bama presents one more issue in the life of Dalit women. After the hard work done in the field and at home (in taking care of children and husband), they cannot get a sound sleep even in their beds until dawn. For general people, night symbolizes rest and peace, but for Dalit women, nightstands torture them. Bama says (*Sangati*)

From the moment they wake up, they set to work both in their homes and in the fields. At home, they are pestered by their husbands and their children; in the fields, there is back-breaking work besides the harassment of the landlord. When they come home in the evening, there is no time even to draw breath. Once they have collected water and firewood, cooked a kanji, and fed their hungry husbands and children, even then, they can't go to bed in peace and sleep until dawn. (59)

In Bama's life, education plays a significant role in making teachers friendly with her and forming her own peer group, which transforms her life positively. With the enlightenment in her life, she competes with whatever comes into her life with a high head. Her confidence to speak up for herself becomes stronger with her exposure to the outside world. She describes in her novel (*Karukku (1992)*)

On that day, I wasn't embarrassed to be singled out as Harijan, as the Harijan child who had gained the best marks. I felt a certain pride then, a desire to prove that we could study just as well as others and to make progress. (21).

According to Cathy Caruth, Bama's *Karukku* (1992) is not about the ill effects of the destruction of a single human being, but it is "an enigma of survival" (58)

Jaggar, in his work *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (1983), defines motherhood as an alienating experience for a Dalit woman. (74) In a capitalist society, work becomes a dehumanizing activity; when a mother delivers her child, she is dependent on other women around her, and after that, even the father's name goes with the child. It is like a worker who is alienated from what he produces. Dalit women are stronger than other women in society because they can give birth to fifteen children from their bodies and bear their labor pain at the time of delivery. She writes, "In the hospital, I am child, not even fourteen years old, I Baby lay there alone crying and screaming" (55)

In this autobiography, Thangam faced discrimination based on her caste, class, and sex, all of which intersect at one point. Being a Dalit widow, her intensity of pain is much more than that of other Dalit women. She faced a multitude of obstacles in her own caste, like Kathamathu, who decided her fate. The upper caste, Paranjothi Udayar, used Thangam as toilet paper to satisfy his needs and then trashed her. The story of the Dalit woman and her master shows how a powerful person controls the life of a weaker person. Thangam was raped by her master repeatedly, he even prepared her every day that she was his servant and that she deserved that trauma. Thangam sobbed like a child while sitting alone in the field. Finally, when Udayar was caught by his brother-in-law, the matter turned into a serious action where four men abused her and kicked her out of the hut at midnight. Sivakami minutely describes how Thangam's low class affects her entire life. She writes Before she could even guess what Udayar was up to, he grabbed her from behind and held her buttocks tight against his body, murmuring harshly, 'Don't shout .His breath was hot on the skin of her neck and cheeks.

Despite her protests, he overpowered her and pushed her down. She resisted him stubbornly. Her resistance only excited him further. Forcefully he subdued her" (33).

Being a woman, Thangam is helpless in reverting the advances of Paranjothi Udayar and Kathamuthu. After the physical persecution, Thangam took her case to Kathamuthu, a Parayar leader. He, too, approached her for the satisfaction of his sexual needs and kept her in his house as his third mistress. This reveals her limitations of being a female. Thangam's money (ten thousand rupees) and body are used as tools to give her space to live in Kathamuthu's house.

The case of Thangam brings a political stand when it comes to the hand of Kathamuthu. He was a president and an honorable leader at Arthur. Kathamuthu himself changed the episode that happened between Udayar and Thangam, and when she tried to correct him, she was rebuked by the evil hands of the patriarchy

"You are such a bitch. I have changed the whole story. Don't you understand?"
(12)

After the police filed the complaint against Thangam, the issue got more serious as it involved issues related to casteism, workers, revenge, and prejudice. The flames of fire covered the huts of the lower caste people and warned them to take back their complaints. Somehow, Kathamathu managed the situation. The low-caste people demanded four rupees instead of three, and they smartly increased it to fifty rupees by asking them to do extra work. "Don't worry. We'll make them work an extra hour. When we pay more, we have the right to demand more work from them." (75) Next day, workers happily planned seedlings in the field and get ready to leave the fields by five, their masters did not allow them to leave the workplace even in the evening. The writer writes In continuance with the tradition of the society they lived in, the lower caste had learned to tolerate the intolerable....(75)

After things are settled, Ramalinga Reddiar burns huts in the Cheri village arrogantly, announcing how many times the low-caste people get saved by others. This is evidence of a violent attitude towards the Dalit community.

The theory of intersectionality signifies how an individual faces multiple threats of unfairness where their identities overlap several characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, race issues, etc. This theory was given by Kimberle Crenshaw in her essay "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" (1989). This theory presents that one's social position is affected by the interplay of various factors like gender, race, sexuality, and class. Intersectional is a term used to describe how different discriminations based on height, weight, gender, race, caste, class, sex, color, and identity meet at one point and affect the lives of people. It creates multiple identities that intersect to initiate oppression. The theory of intersectionality provides a framework for how an individual's multiple identities amalgamate and build two groups of suppressed and privileged. It examines the experience of prejudice that human beings face during their interaction within society. The theory outlines how human beings need to face discrimination depending on their age, ethnicity, gender, race, class, and physical ability, creating different lines that intersect at one meeting point and form a focal point, which is known as social oppression. An example of intersectional theory is a black man who has to face racial prejudice, whereas a black woman faces gender and racial discrimination. Likewise, Dalit women face discrimination based on gender, low caste, and class, whereas Dalit men face oppression because of their low class and gender only. This leads to the conclusion that Dalit women face triple jeopardy for their being female(sex), race, and low class.

Urmila Pawar, in *The Weave of My Life* (2008), writes, "What do women have to do with education? Ultimately, she would be blowing on the stove." (20).

The generalized notion of gender roles that women are meant for household work, and men are designed for work outside the home is entrenched in the minds of all people, whether they are males, mothers, mothers-in-law, brothers, brothers-in-law, fathers, fathers-in-law, elder sisters, or sisters-in-law. If one talks about the destiny of Dalit women and upper-class women, there is a huge difference because the upper-class people's perception of things is broader and more positive (due to their high standard of living and good wealth) than the lower-class people, which indirectly makes hell the life of Dalit females more than the Dalit males. This notion in Dalit women that they are good for none makes them leave their education, which results in no scope of exposure from outside the world. Due to lack of exposure, Dalit women never question the domination that Dalit men impose on them. They consider suppression as a part of their fate. Pawar, in *The Weave of My Life (2008)*, writes, "The creator of the world established the practice of making women dependent on men. Men have, therefore, dominated ever since." (102.)

Finally, in the novel *The Grip of Change* by P. Sivakami, Dalit women face constant struggles for empowerment and change. In *A Life Less Ordinary* by Baby Halder, there is a depiction of rejection of the old stereotypes, prejudice, patriarchal dominance, and gender roles. All the hardships of Baby's life made her a stronger and independent female. In the novel, she questions the prevalent norms of society, which always favor men and the upper caste. If you are a woman, the fault is linked to you. This has been experienced by all the females of the novel, be it with her mother, abandoned by her husband, her real sister, who was brutally killed by her husband, Shakti, and her cousins abused by society because they left their husbands who treated them savagely. Baby, after every abuse from her husband, asks her the same question: "What I have done to be beaten like this?" (Halder 88), to which he has no answer.

Baby proves herself to be a feminist who takes responsibility for her children alone. Her narrative shows how a domestic woman servant faces physical and mental torture from the upper caste people. Baby was not allowed to meet her children during their illness during her working hours. She exposes questions related to the financial crisis, torture in the working environment, and the struggle that a single mother has to go through.

In the novel *The Grip of Change*, Thangam, as a third-world woman, faces persecution everywhere. She faced emotional, physical, and psychological problems. Thangam is triply jeopardized. The novel begins with Thangam and ends with Gowri, who symbolizes the need to change society. In both the novels, Thangam and Baby Halder faced patriarchal domination. Being a childless widow, Thangam faced sexual persecution outside the home from her masters, whereas for Baby Halder, her husband Shankar symbolized a silent attacker. He becomes more violent when Baby needs her in her labor pain. Both novels end on a positive note when Gowri takes a stand and goes against her early marriage, motivates her mother to retaliate against her father's over-dominance, and abuse openly when Kathamathu rapes Thangam. At

the same time, Baby Halder herself makes the decision to move out to Delhi and give shape to her new identity. The paper reveals the Dalit women charters who succumbed to physical and mental violence and those who fought against all odds. The novel written by a Dalit man is about oppression by the upper caste, but novels that are written by Dalit writers are about physical and mental abuse from the Dalit men as well as from the upper caste men and women.

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