

Reading Rajat Rani Meenu's Early Short Fiction: Laying the Foundations of Hindi Dalit Women's Writings

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Abstract

In the now established Hindi Dalit literary sphere, several women writers have emerged to contest social and literary erasure, forced silencing and subordination in the last three decades. The emerging writings of Hindi Dalit women authors illustrate their negotiations with the intersectional realities of caste, class, gender and space as well as their inaccessibility to the print culture. This paper examines the early short fiction of Rajat Rani Meenu to understand the epistemic foundations of Hindi Dalit women's writings and their emergence as a politicized and radical entity. While registering the Ambedkarite influences, Meenu has provided a literary architecture to the emergence of contemporary Dalit political icons like Mayawati in her story *Sunita*. Her other story *Ve Din* (Those Days) becomes a rallying cry to foreground the relevance of gender critique in an already activated Dalit literary sphere.

Keywords: Hindi Dalit literature, Hindi Dalit women's writings, Dalit feminism, Dalit consciousness, education

Introduction

Rajat Rani Meenu's story *Sunita* (1995) is a narrative around an eponymous character where a model of testimonial narrative is put to use which almost reminds the reader about the autobiographical mould of literary representation of the early Hindi Dalit writings in the late 1980s and 1990s. It fictionalizes a young Dalit woman's aspirations to get education and having realized the hostility and brutality of the prevalent caste-ridden