
Humiliation and Caste Experience in Government Brahmana

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Abstract

Aravind Malagatti's *Government Brahmana* is a significant Dalit autobiography that offers a powerful portrayal of caste-based humiliation and lived Dalit experience in Indian society. The text reveals how caste operates as a pervasive social structure that shapes identity, dignity, and everyday existence. Through personal memories and lived experiences, Malagatti exposes multiple forms of humiliation manifested in educational institutions, social interactions, religious spaces, and economic conditions. The autobiography demonstrates that humiliation is not merely an emotional response but a systemic mechanism embedded within caste hierarchy and institutional practices. The study examines how caste discrimination affects selfhood, social mobility, and human dignity while simultaneously producing resistance and self-assertion. By narrating experiences of exclusion, stigma, and marginalization, *Government Brahmana* challenges dominant social narratives and foregrounds the realities of Dalit life. The work ultimately highlights the struggle for dignity, equality, and social justice within a caste-stratified society. Through the lens of humiliation and caste experience, the autobiography emerges as both a testimonial narrative and a critical social document reflecting the structural nature of caste oppression.

Keywords: Humiliation, Caste Experience, Dalit Literature, *Government Brahmana*, Aravind Malagatti, Dalit Autobiography, Caste Oppression, Social Exclusion, Identity, Dignity.

Introduction:

Humiliation is a deeply rooted social and psychological condition that undermines an individual's dignity, self-respect, and sense of belonging. Although humiliation can occur in a variety of social circumstances, it takes on a systematic and organized form in caste-based countries like India. Throughout history, oppressed communities-especially Dalits-have faced different types of discrimination, persecution, and dehumanization due to the caste system, which is based on hierarchy, purity, and social exclusion. According to this

theory, shame serves as a potent tool for social dominance and control in addition to being an emotional reaction.

In India, social, cultural, religious, political, and economic organizations all engage in acts of inequity that are inextricably linked to caste. Marginalized castes have been shut out of public places, schools, places of worship, and employment possibilities for millennia. These exclusions lead to lived experiences characterized by marginalization, stigma, and ongoing shame. Caste oppression is perpetuated through both visible and invisible institutions of power, as demonstrated by the everyday reality of untouchability, social segregation, verbal abuse, denial of rights, and symbolic violence.

Caste-related humiliation is not limited to isolated instances; rather, it influences social interactions, identity, and personal awareness. It has an impact on how individuals view themselves and how society views them. As a result, caste humiliation becomes a shared historical experience that is passed down through the generations. Simultaneously, these experiences have sparked movements for equality and human decency as well as resistance and identity expression.

In contemporary academic discourse, the study of humiliation and caste experience has gained increasing significance within sociology, cultural studies, history, and literary studies. The lived realities of caste oppression and the ways in which humiliation functions in daily life have been highlighted by Dalit literature, memoirs, and critical research. Therefore, analyzing humiliation from the perspective of caste experience provides important insights into issues of power, inequality, identity, and social justice in Indian culture.

The autobiographical book *Government Brahmana* by Aravind Malagatti has a prominent position in the history of Kannada Dalit literature. It is a landmark Dalit autobiography that vividly captures the caste-based humiliation, social marginalization, and systemic injustice that Dalit people endure. The book depicts the everyday reality of caste discrimination in both rural and semi-urban settings, making it more than just a personal story. Malagatti creates a thorough description of Dalit life, which is characterized by institutional injustice and accepted humiliation, through a sequence of episodic recollections.

Even the title *Government Brahmana* is highly sarcastic and significant. It alludes to a disparaging term used by members of higher castes to make fun of Dalits who profit from affirmative action and quota schemes. The expression implies that Dalits are "created" by the government through quota rules, but Brahmins are "born" by divine creation (according to mythical belief). In addition to serving as a means of humiliation, this caustic designation shows the discontent of dominating castes against social justice initiatives. It casts doubt on the validity of Dalit advancement and attributes their success to government benevolence

rather than personal merit. According to Malagatti, Dalit students were frequently insulted with this word in college settings, demonstrating how prejudice still exists even in educational institutions.

Malagatti uses a series of personal experiences to organize his memoirs, which together illustrate the commonplace and widespread nature of caste humiliation. He emphasizes the "commonness" of Dalit suffering rather than highlighting exceptional occurrences, highlighting the fact that humiliation is a regular occurrence. The experience of Dalitness is consistent in a variety of contexts, including social gatherings, workplaces, schools, and villages. This continuity shows how caste functions as a system of totalization that affects all facets of existence.

Government Brahmana's depiction of systematic humiliation in educational settings is among its most striking features. Malagatti recounts how Dalit students were given cleaning responsibilities in schools in defiance of constitutional guarantees of equality in the chapter "Tomorrow's Turn for Sweeping: Mala Katti." Instead of being a place of emancipation, the school itself becomes a place of caste perpetuation. Dalit kids face harsh penalties if they don't show up early to wash the school grounds and classrooms.

The consequences described in the book are demeaning mentally as well as physically. Pupils were required to keep a chair-like posture, half-sitting with their knees bowed. Wooden pieces were positioned behind their knees to enforce cooperation, causing agony and blood if they tried to unwind. These disciplinary procedures show how violence was acceptable as a means of controlling Dalit bodies and ingrained in educational institutions. Students who were repeatedly subjected to such punishment eventually developed psychological conditioning and physical numbing, whereby they would instinctively adopt the punishment stance even in the absence of a command.

In addition to physical assault, verbal abuse was a major contributor to humiliation. Teachers often used disparaging language, and Dalit children were made fun of even when they followed directions. They were beaten if they reacted slowly, and criticized for being too eager if they reacted quickly. Regardless of conduct, this inconsistent approach made humiliation inevitable. As a result, the Dalit body is subjected to ongoing disciplinary control and symbolic denigration.

Malagatti recounts a particularly noteworthy instance in which his last name was spelled incorrectly on the school whiteboard as "Mala Katti" rather than "Malagatti." He was reprimanded and sacked when he tried to fix it. The inflexible caste mentality ingrained in common language is reflected in the teacher's reaction. His name was changed to a disparaging one, illustrating how language usage may lead to humiliation. The concept that

Dalits have no right to contest portrayals that are forced upon them is reinforced by the perception that even attempts at rectification are rebellion.

Government Brahmana draws attention to the geographical segregation of Dalit people outside of educational settings. Similar to earlier Dalit autobiographies like Joothan and Akkarmashi, Malagatti's story demonstrates the existence of distinct Dalit communities that are geographically separated from areas inhabited by the ruling caste. Deprivation, a lack of infrastructure, and societal neglect are characteristics of Dalit lanes. Caste connections are structured by ideas of purity and contamination, which are reinforced by this isolation, which is not just geographical but symbolic.

Another example of caste-based exclusion is access to water. Caste hierarchy determines the division of the village water system, with distinct areas designated for drinking and washing. Dalits are forced to utilize unclean or downstream water sources, whilst upper castes use upstream water. Dalits are often compelled to use contaminated or sluggish pools of water that are socially reserved for them. The terrible conditions of destitution and humiliation are highlighted by Malagatti's account of washing garments in sewage-filled water. The breakdown of fundamental human dignity in Dalit life is shown by the appearance of floating garbage in water used for drinking and cleansing.

In spite of these circumstances, Dalits create survival tactics based on necessity. Children engage with animals, play in trash-filled areas, and adjust to difficult living circumstances. Instead than being idealized, these behaviors are shown as the results of systemic deprivation. Dalit communities are forced to perform marginal and dehumanizing work in order to survive due to poverty and hunger.

Another major aspect of humiliation in Government Brahmana is economic exploitation. Menial jobs including street sweeping, carcass disposal, cemetery digging, and sanitation labor are allocated to Dalits. These duties are assigned based on caste rather than ability or preference. Economic reliance is reinforced by compensation that is either insufficient or symbolic. Dalits are kept in cycles of poverty and humiliation by such labor systems.

The symbolic aspect of caste degradation is further exposed by funeral and ceremonial customs. In certain areas, Dalits are asked to attend upper-caste funerals as actors of particular roles rather than as equal participants. In order to symbolically uphold their subservient status, they are required to gather coins strewn on graves. Because of the way the coins are dispersed, Dalits have to wait until everyone else has passed them before they may get them. This rite turns grieving into a caste hierarchy spectacle where humiliation is ingrained in social and religious traditions.

In a similar vein, Dalits are given menial and cleaning duties at wedding rituals and are only permitted to eat after all upper-caste guests have been fed. Strict guidelines are enforced even during meals: they must keep a physical distance, cannot bring leftovers home, and cannot request more food. To avoid "contamination," they are often obliged to dip their hands in colored water after eating, a ritual that clearly indicates their impurity. These customs show how caste functions through commonplace behaviors that are passed off as customs.

Humiliation is exacerbated by religious marginalization. Dalits are prohibited from entering temples and are thought to contaminate hallowed areas. They are only permitted to observe or pray from outside, and their involvement in religious life is limited to the periphery. Malagatti challenges the validity of a theological system that restricts spiritual access on the basis of birth, criticizing this exclusion. Instead of acting as a uniting factor, religion turns into an ideological tool used to uphold caste order.

Additionally, the autobiography highlights the hypocrisy inherent in caste relations. While Dalits are viewed as dirty and untouchable in public, upper-caste people frequently cross these lines in private when it benefits them. In particular, Dalit women are denied safety and dignity while being sexually exploited by males from the ruling caste. Because Dalit women are burdened by both caste and patriarchy, this double standard exposes the gendered aspects of caste violence.

The internalization of caste identity is one of Government Brahmana's most significant theme issues. Dalits internalize inferiority as a natural state as a result of being humiliated repeatedly. This psychological indoctrination guarantees the perpetuation of caste hierarchy via both internal acceptance and exterior violence. Malagatti's story does, however, also highlight instances of resistance, when awareness starts to question enforced identities. The conflict between caste identity and education is another topic covered in the autobiography. Malagatti illustrates that caste still functions within educational institutions, despite the expectation that education will free people from caste tyranny. Caste identity still affects people today, influencing their interactions and opportunities. Despite constitutional promises of equality, caste still exists in modern society, as this conflict demonstrates.

The subtle types of humiliation ingrained in contemporary social relationships are further exposed through interactions with friends and coworkers who are not Dalit. Stereotypes about Dalit behavior, consumerism, and identity are reinforced by subtle caste allusions in even seemingly pleasant encounters. The enduring prejudices that define Dalit identity in upper-caste imagination are revealed by statements like asking whether a Dalit "really knows how to eat meat or drink alcohol."

The autobiography also criticizes the hypocrisy of ideologies like Marxism when they are used without taking into account the reality of caste. Malagatti comes across people

who maintain caste-based behaviors in their personal life despite claiming to be caste-blind. This conflict highlights the shortcomings of theoretical equality in the absence of real change.

Government Brahmana is a powerful story about identity construction, humiliation, and resistance. It reveals how caste maintains inequality via a variety of means, including economic, psychological, symbolic, and physical. Malagatti's autobiography offers a critical perspective on caste society in addition to being a personal account. He demonstrates how ubiquitous humiliation is in daily life through in-depth ethnographic memory and narrative reflection.

In the end, the writing shows that humiliation is the structural basis of Dalit existence rather than an accidental aspect of it. Malagatti simultaneously turns anguish into criticism and stillness into voice by recounting these events. Government Brahmana therefore becomes a vital addition to Dalit literature and social thinking, serving as both a document of tyranny and an affirmation of dignity.

Conclusion

The Government Brahmana by Aravind Malagatti is an engaging examination of caste-based humiliation as a reality that is institutionally and socially rooted. The autobiography demonstrates how caste inequality perpetuates humiliation via both physical punishment and metaphorical violence in schools, communities, religious organizations, and economic structures. Malagatti's story shows how caste inequality is perpetuated by institutional processes and everyday social encounters that involve humiliation. Government Brahmana shows how Dalit identity is formed under a system that restricts access to opportunity, space, and dignity by chronicling instances of marginalization, ridicule, and unfair treatment.

The book exposes the continued existence of caste hierarchies in spite of constitutional ideals of equality, going beyond personal experience to depict the broader reality of Dalit communities. In the end, Government Brahmana transforms actual experiences of humiliation into a powerful declaration of dignity, resistance, and social consciousness, serving as both a testament to pain and a critical examination of caste system.

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