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**THE POWER OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TO ELEVATE
MARGINALIZED VOICES**

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Abstract

Language and literature are incredibly powerful tools for empowering marginalized voices, providing vital platforms for self-expression, resistance, and healing. For too long, dominant narratives have silenced or distorted the experiences of marginalized communities, thereby reinforcing systems of oppression. Literature offers a crucial pathway for these communities to reclaim their stories, challenge harmful stereotypes, and assert their identities on their own terms.

When individuals from under represented backgrounds write, speak, and publish, they inherently disrupt the status quo. Their words illuminate lived realities that are frequently ignored or misunderstood. In this context, language transforms into an act of defiance, turning silence into speech and invisibility into visibility. From the rich tradition of Indigenous storytelling to the impactful expressions of feminist poetry and postcolonial novels, literature has consistently served as both a record of struggle and a driving force for social change.

Educational spaces, publishers, and readers all play a crucial role in supporting these voices. This means creating more inclusive platforms, amplifying diverse narratives, and actively challenging linguistic elitism that often excludes non-standard dialects or multilingual expressions. Encouraging diverse linguistic expression not only affirms the richness of different cultures and identities but also allows individuals to connect deeply with their roots and histories.

Furthermore, literature uniquely cultivates empathy. When readers engage with stories from marginalized perspectives, they gain invaluable insight into other ways of life, often fostering greater understanding and leading to stronger allyship. In this way, language and literature not only empower those who speak and write but also profoundly transform those who listen and read. Ultimately, empowering marginalized voices through language and literature isn't just about inclusion; it's about pursuing justice, upholding dignity, and actively reshaping the world to reflect the full, vibrant spectrum of human experience.

Keywords: Empowerment, Marginalized Voices, Resistance, Social Change, Empathy, Identity

1. INTRODUCTION

Peter Leonard defines marginality as, “. . . being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social reproductive activity”. The Encyclopedia of Public Health defines marginalized groups as, ‘To be marginalized is to be placed in the margins, and thus excluded from the privilege and power found at the center’. Latin observes that “‘Marginality’ is so thoroughly demeaning, for economic well-being, for human dignity, as well as for physical security. Marginal groups can always be identified by members of dominant society, and will face irrevocable discrimination.”

In the Oxford English Dictionary, "marginalized" is a word that describes individuals or groups who are prevented from participating fully in social, economic, and political life due to a lack of access to rights, resources, and opportunities [7]. It signifies being placed in a position of relative powerlessness and being excluded from mainstream society. These definitions are mentioned in different contexts and expresses that marginalization is a little complicated and multilayered concept. Marginalization has aspects in sociological, economic, and political debates. Marginalization may manifest itself in forms varying from genocide/ethnic-cleansing and other xenophobic acts/activities at one end of the spectrum,

to more basic economic and social hardships at the individual/family level.

Of course, the forms of marginalization may vary—generally linked to the level of development of society; culturally, and as (if not more) importantly, with relation to economy of various countries. For instance, fully developed economies (First world countries), Developing Economies (second world countries), under developed Economies (Third World countries). Those in the Third World who live under impoverished conditions, through no choice of their own are often left to die due to hunger, disease, and war. One can also add to These minority group include women as well as the tribals and LGBT Community.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF MARGINALISED GROUPS

Marginalized groups in India are communities that have historically faced exclusion, discrimination, and unequal access to resources and opportunities. These groups include, Women, disabled personalities, Scheduled Castes (Dalits), Scheduled Tribes (Adivasis), religious minorities women, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and economically weaker sections. A common characteristic of these groups is limited access to quality education, healthcare, housing, and employment. Discrimination—both social and institutional—continues to hinder their growth and participation in mainstream society. For instance, tribal communities are displaced from their lands due to development projects without adequate compensation or rehabilitation. Women from these marginalized groups face multiple layers of oppression, including gender bias, which further restricts their mobility and opportunities. Religious minorities often encounter prejudice, underrepresentation in government jobs, and lack of political power. LGBTQ+ individuals are frequently denied basic rights and face widespread social stigma. Despite legal safeguards such as reservations, affirmative action, and constitutional protections, these groups continue to struggle against deep-rooted social hierarchies and systemic inequality. Overall, the characteristics of marginalized groups in India are defined by their limited access to resources, social discrimination, underrepresentation, and the continuous fight for dignity, inclusion, and equal rights. Some publication deals well about religious hypocrisy, and gender discrimination, while also exploring the themes of intersectionality and the role of education [2].

3. VARIOUS MARGINALIZED GROUPS AND THEIR PROBLEMS

1. Women

Women are always the Under estimated class due to different economic conditions, and under the influence of specific historical, cultural, legal and religious factors. Gender inequality is persistent in all global spheres. Even in 2025, women are excluded from certain jobs and occupations, incorporated into certain others, and marginalized in others, they are always marginalized relative to men, in every country and culture. Women belonging to lower classes, lower castes, illiterate, and residing in the poorest region have different levels of marginalization than their counterparts.

2. People with disabilities

People with disabilities have always to battle against abled ones as there are lot of biased assumptions, stereotype thinking, and irrational fears. The stigmatization of disability results in the social and economic marginalization of generations with disabilities, and, like many other oppressed minorities, this has left people with disabilities in a severe state of impoverishment for centuries. The proportion of the disabled population in India is about 21.9 million. The disabled face various types of barriers while seeking access to even health and health services.

3. Schedule Castes (Dalits)

Caste hierarchy still prevails in many parts of the world. A major proportion of the lower castes and Dalits are still dependent on others for their livelihood. Dalits do not refer to caste but suggest a group who are in a state of oppression, social disability and who are helpless and poor. Literacy rates among Dalits are very low. They have meager purchasing power and have poor housing conditions as well as have low access to resources and entitlements. Due to this malnutrition and deaths are common

4. Scheduled Tribes

The Scheduled Tribes like the Scheduled Castes face structural discrimination within Indian society. In India, the Scheduled Tribes population is around 84.3 million and is considered to be socially and economically disadvantaged. Their percentages in the population and numbers, however, vary from State to State. They are mainly landless with little control over resources such as land, forest, and water. They constitute a large proportion of agricultural laborers, casual laborers, plantation laborers, industrial laborers etc. This has resulted in poverty among them, low levels of education, poor health and reduced access to healthcare services.

5. Elderly or Aged People

Aging is an inevitable and inexorable process in life which is marginalized. According to data on the age of India's population, in Census 2001, there are a little over 76.6 million people above 60 years, constituting 7.2 percent of the population. The number of people over 60 years have increased incidence of illness and disability. They are economically dependent upon their spouses, children, and other younger family members. Lack of economic dependence has an impact on their access to food, clothing, and healthcare.

6. Children

Children again if orphan or single parent child are marginalized. They also face problems like no good nutrition intake, no access to healthcare, environment, and education. Poverty has a direct impact on the mortality and morbidity among children. In India, a girl child faces discrimination and differential access to nutritious food and gender-based violence is evident from the falling sex ratio and the use of technologies to eliminate the girl child.

7. Sexual Minorities

Another group that faces stigma and discrimination are sexual minorities. Those identified as gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, kothi and hijra; experience various forms of discrimination within the society and the health system. Due to the dominance of other sex, they are ridiculed and ostracized by their own family and are left with very limited support structures and networks of community that provide the conditions of care and support. Their needs and concerns are excluded from various health policies and programs.

4. LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AS TOOLS FOR EMPOWERMENT

Language and literature serve as powerful instruments for empowering marginalized voices, offering essential platforms for self-expression, resistance, and healing. Historically, dominant narratives have often silenced or misrepresented the experiences of marginalized communities, perpetuating systems of oppression. However, literature provides a crucial pathway for these communities to reclaim their stories, challenge harmful stereotypes, and assert their identities on their own terms. The act of writing, speaking, and publishing by individuals from underrepresented backgrounds inherently disrupts the status quo. Their words illuminate lived realities that are frequently ignored or misunderstood by mainstream society. In this context, language transforms into an act of defiance, turning silence into speech and invisibility into visibility. This transformation is evident in various forms of literature, from the rich tradition of Indigenous storytelling to the impactful expressions of feminist poetry and postcolonial novels. These literary works not only serve as a record of struggle but also act as a driving force for social change. Some publication likely explores how contemporary literary trends engage with and reflect the voices and experiences of marginalized communities [1].

The power of language in empowering marginalized voices is multifaceted. Firstly, it allows individuals to articulate their experiences in their own words, free from the distortions and misrepresentations often imposed by dominant narratives. This authentic self-expression is crucial for personal healing and collective empowerment. Secondly, it challenges the linguistic hegemony that often privileges certain forms of expression over others. By embracing diverse linguistic expressions, including non-standard dialects and multilingual forms, literature becomes more inclusive and representative of the true diversity of human experience.

Educational institutions play a vital role in supporting and amplifying marginalized voices. Schools and universities can create more inclusive curricula that incorporate diverse literary works, exposing students to a wide range of perspectives and experiences. This not only enriches the educational experience but also helps to cultivate empathy and understanding among students from different backgrounds. Furthermore, educational spaces can provide platforms for marginalized students to share their own stories and develop their literary voices. Publishers also have a significant responsibility in empowering marginalized voices.

By actively seeking out and promoting diverse authors, publishers can help to correct the historical imbalance in literary representation. This involves not only publishing more works by authors from marginalized communities but also ensuring that these works receive adequate marketing and distribution support. Additionally, publishers can work to diversify their own staff, ensuring that editorial decisions are informed by a range of perspectives and experiences. Readers, too, play a crucial role in this process of empowerment. By actively seeking out and engaging with diverse literature, readers can broaden their understanding of the world and challenge their own preconceptions. This engagement goes beyond mere passive consumption; it involves active listening, reflection, and a willingness to be transformed by the stories and perspectives encountered. When readers from dominant groups engage with literature from marginalized perspectives, they gain invaluable insight into other ways of life, often fostering greater understanding and leading to stronger allyship. As the oppressed reasserted themselves publicly, their voices became more audible, and they began to vigorously develop their strategies for effective communication. When the oppressed find the existing genre is not appropriate to express their feelings [5].

The empathy cultivated through literature is a powerful force for social change. As readers immerse themselves in stories that present unfamiliar experiences and perspectives, they develop a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by marginalized communities. This understanding can lead to increased empathy, which in turn can motivate action towards creating a more just and equitable society. In this way, literature serves not only as a mirror reflecting diverse experiences but also as a window into other worlds, fostering connection and solidarity across different communities. The impact of empowering marginalized voices through language and literature extends far beyond the realm of arts and culture. It has profound implications for social justice, human rights, and the very fabric of society. When marginalized communities are able to assert their identities and share their stories on their own terms, it challenges the power structures that have historically silenced or misrepresented them. This can lead to shifts in public perception, policy changes, and broader social transformations.

Moreover, the empowerment of marginalized voices through literature contributes to the preservation and revitalization of diverse cultures and languages. By encouraging and valuing diverse forms of literary expression, we can help to safeguard this cultural heritage for future generations. In summary, empowering marginalized voices such as Dalits through language and literature is a multifaceted and transformative process [6]. It involves not only creating platforms for diverse expressions but also actively challenging the systems and attitudes that have historically silenced these voices. Through the power of words, marginalized communities can reclaim their narratives, assert their identities, and contribute to broader social change. As we continue to strive for a more just and equitable world, the role of language and literature in empowering marginalized voices remains crucial. It is not merely about inclusion; it is about pursuing justice, upholding dignity, and actively reshaping the world to reflect the full, vibrant spectrum of human experience. By supporting and amplifying these voices, we contribute to a richer, more diverse, and more empathetic global discourse.

5. CONCLUSION

The pertinent question therefore is where do the marginalized groups stand today? Though there has been some improvement in certain spheres and despite some positive changes, the standard of living for the marginalized communities has not improved. Therefore, The Education dept. shall take a second look at the Education Policy and develop major programmes for strengthening the public education system in villages and cities on a much larger scale than today. There is a necessity to reallocate government resources for education and vocational training. It is also necessary to recognize that for the vast majority of the discriminated groups, State intervention is crucial and necessary. Similarly, the use of economic and social planning as an instrument of planned development is equally necessary.

6. STATEMENTS & DECLARATIONS

AI Statement: The authors declare that they have not used generative artificial intelligence, specifically ChatGPT, in the writing of this manuscript and/or in the creation of images, graphics, tables, or their corresponding captions.

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