

'SINGING' THE SONGS OF DIGNITY AND HUMILIATION: BHAKTI'S CHALLENGE TO EXISTING JNANA PARAMPARA

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Abstract. The Indian knowledge tradition has been rich with various strands that point toward a very diverse direction. But more often than not, it is understood in limited sense that equates it with mainstream tradition. The hegemony of one strand over the other sometimes lead to more intense manifestation of that other, giving rise to an altogether different forces in history. The Bhakti tradition of mediaeval India is one such force. It separates God from the ritualistic knowledge and makes him accessible to the masses, through love. In this way, it challenges the humiliation bestowed on those whose access was forbidden and presents a quest for dignity. In this paper, through the analysis of secondary literature of the poet saints of the time, I would be analysing the thoughts that prevailed in this alternative public sphere and thus, make sense of the subversive resistance that the poet Saints lead to.

Keywords: Bhakti, Dignity, Humiliation, Utopia, Subaltern, Begumpura.

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1. Introduction

When we try to resist the hegemony of the Western ideas, concepts, and theories and look for the theories, concepts and ideas of 'our conditions', we should rather than parochialising our thoughts, accept both the 'gloom and glory' it offers. This political aspiration of resisting the marginalization of oriental must be pursued while resisting the assumed universality of the transatlantic discourses and by retrieving what is quintessentially Indian. We can see that to have an authentic understanding of Indian knowledge system, we just do not need merely indigenizing our thinking by searching some erstwhile mainstream Indian thought but more profoundly, by expanding the 'social base' (to use Gopal Guru's term) of the India's intellectual landscape, that will lead to democratization of our knowledge by incorporating the thinking that has been marginalized since ages. The aspiration of going native for the reconceptualization of the core ideas like sovereignty, equality, justice, dignity, etc. leads our way to Dalit historical thought in India. This offers us a way to historicize the Western discourse and conceptions and also understand that the Indian conceptions need not be the "derivative discourse" of the terms and theories of the West but can have (and do have) their own autonomy (Mahajan, 29). Gurpreet Mahajan, though feared cultural essentialism, asked to democratize our intellectual tradition by a more constructive reading of history (Rathore 15). Here, in this paper, I would be going for the historicity that Mahajan propounded and the depth that was sought by Rathore and this leads my way to attempt to understand the Bhakti traditions, how it constituted its own public and resisted the dominant paradigm of the day, *Jnana-parampara*. It typically refers to the vast corpus of intellectual and philosophical systems—*Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Nyaya*, *Mimamsa*, etc., which emphasised on structured debate, logic, scriptural authority, and ritualistic practices. These systems were often gate kept by scholars and priests, requiring years of study and adherence to the orthodoxy. Bhakti, however, posed a challenge to this by valuing direct experience and emotional connection over textual mastery or institutional mediation. Bhakti saints like Mirabai or Kabir, in medieval India, openly critiqued the exclusivity of priestly classes and the over-reliance on dry scholasticism, instead singing of a God who is reachable through surrender and love.

My attempt through this paper is to look at the idea of Dignity and Humiliation, how Bhakti saint approached it, responded to it, and gave an alternative vision of the society that upkeeps it for all. We will look into the utopian vision of the subaltern saints of India and how it offers the fore structure to the shaping of resistance to date. The modernity that has been imported from West is based on individuality, but Indian society has always been community-based and embedded rather than buffered self from its core, and that's

precisely why any ‘derived’ discourse cannot answer the questions that we have, and that is why, while going native today it is important that the roots of this native thoughts from the past should be tracked (Agrawal, 134).

1.1. Dignity and Humiliation: Putting in Perspective. In any society, whether it be Western or Non-western, we can see that recognition is the primary normative need of the being even if it is rarely counted when we talk about the person’s basic needs, like food, shelter, and clothing. It is a vital need to live a moral life that is based, as Taylor says, on social relations, and philosophers arguably even go to the extent of saying that in the absence of it, the person is socially dead (Geetha, 97). The absence of dignity, self-respect and recognition amounts to something akin to humiliation but at the same time, there is much more to humiliation than that, as we will see in a while. For a just and ordered society to exist, it is important to eliminate humiliation and promote conditions that foster self-respect, dignity and recognition. This is precisely what the thinkers like Kant, Hegel, Marx, and others aspired for, and what we could find in the visions of the Indian dalit intellectual saints of medieval times (Guru 25).

As George Kateb highlighted in his work, the core idea of human dignity is that, on the earth, human beings are the species of the greatest type and as we are the only being who can pursue humanity as a virtue and the only being in the animal kingdom that knows that every member deserves to be treated in a way that is consonant with the highest moral worth (Kateb). Even if not seen that very radically, we know that no other species have this claim to equality that we humans, as individuals, have. And this forms the basic premise of Human Dignity. Kateb also asserted that despite being seen as the basis of human rights, much has not substantially been said about it except in the political and moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who happens to be the only major theorist of dignity, believed that dignity was the foundational idea and virtue (Kateb, 15). As a value, Kant considers dignity as absolute and unconditional that does not depend on anything else for their realization but carries an intrinsic worth (Sensen, 10). He considers that humans have certain capabilities that no other being possesses, like reason, and by virtue of these capabilities, s/he has this universal claim to dignity. For him, as a human one has got this dignified position and it is duty to hold this dignity by virtue of being humans. In Western thoughts, we mostly find the interlinking of the concept of Human Rights and Human Dignity, as has already been pointed out. It is argued that Human rights are essential for the implementation of core moral values in an egalitarian society.

Dignity, owing its importance as the anchor of human rights, was studied historically in the West by Habermas, who traced it as a term that had changing meanings in changing context. Earlier, he suggests, it had 'honorific value' and signified exclusive membership. It was based on the particularistic recognition in the society, traces of which are still very much there in the concept. For example, even today, the recognition of an individual in the constitutional state as a legal citizen grants him/her/them the necessary protection and identity by granting them equal rights and dignity (Habermas, 45). We find that the understanding that Habermas hold of the concept is both historical and institutional and the normative grounds on which it is based, since then, is that all humans hold equal moral worth and rights are instrumental to the realization of that worth, without which the concept may remain redundant. One point however, that he highlighted is that dignity needs to be a function of society that has one or the other type of hierarchical organization, and therefore, came the need to assert this basic equality of worth. So, it is the hinge of this particularistic positioning that made this universalisation a necessity for today, and need to back it upon by rights that could be imposed coercively. If we tend to understand this hierarchy in today's constitutional terms, dignity as a concept conveys the idea that all the human being belong to the same rank, and that rank is very high indeed(Habermas, 47). The idea of Human Dignity holds an existential value, as not only does it recognizes the identity of an individual in relation to every other member of the society but also challenges the 'divinity' of the so called natural order that exists to reinforce the existing hierarchies in the society like the estate system in France or the caste system in India (Kateb, 17).

The hierarchical system that the affirmation of dignity seeks to challenge, imposes the notion of superiority and inferiority in society, and in extreme cases of this inequality, one group is humiliated for the perpetuation of the system. The idea of humiliation, again a normative concept, has also been subjected to empirical studies by many Western scholars. One example is the study by Elshout, who tried to arrive at a 'prototypical' definition of the concept in their article, 'Conceptualising Humiliation' (Elshout and Nelissen). Based on her three group studies, she puts that, Humiliation could be defined by 'feeling powerless, small and inferior in a situation in which one is brought down in the presence of audience, and which may contribute to diminutive feelings, leading the person to appraise the situation as unfair and thus it results into mix of emotions, the most significantly disappointment, anger and shame (Elshout and Nelissen).

In Indian context too, the conception of Dignity and Humiliation has been studied by some scholars who work predominantly in the field of caste and oppression. My primary

concern here is to understand how they look at humiliation and how it has led to the compromise of dignity. The edited volume of Gopal Guru is relevant here. He attempted to understand the idea of humiliation in modern context, as for him, it was the reorganization of society on the modern lines that has led to the debunking of the ideological myth that propagated centuries of injustice and oppression and had its root in the Dharmashastra and Manusmriti. Modernity, as he asserts, played an important role in giving the marginalized caste an opportunity to assert themselves and more than that, the opportunity to self-reflect on their condition and know their claims. I will come back to this argument later on. Suhash Palshiker perceived Humiliation as 'unwelcome assault' on the dignity of the person. For him Humiliation is a sort of claim that you make while critically questioning the present order along with creative response to it, where you put forward a new vision of social relationships. One of the most notable understanding of humiliation comes from Upendra Baxi, who says that we need to understand humiliation from the historical perspective, to counter the 'epistemic violence' (Baxi 79) as is propagated by the mainstream Hindu ideas, like dharma and karma, etc., this historical perspective is what I am interested in. While building upon the understanding of the ideas and essence of the poetries of the medieval saints, we find that they have an alternative epistemology that counters both, the colonial claim that modernity made us aware of the humiliation we were facing and that mainstream Hindu ideas are everything that we can look for in our past. Not only the Bhakti tradition, but also Sufism and before them Buddhism and Jainism challenged the existing organized paradigm and put forward the alternative understanding of the idea of dignity of humans. Their understanding of the humiliation and human dignity was phenomenological as V. Geetha understood it (Geetha, 88), but outside the canon of modernity. To reiterate it, the condition of assertion was indigenously there, albeit the route was different, and assertion and autonomy are not just modern phenomena, even if they differ in form and spirit. We can also assert that the group of marginalized communities felt humiliated even in those times, as is apparent from the poems of Raidas that we will see later. Thus, the condition of humiliation as is given by Bhikhu Parekh, 'as consisting of disrespect, demeaning others, damaging their self respect, bringing them down in their eyes and causing them hurt or pain', holds ground even in medieval times as well (Parekh, 21). In the upcoming section, we will see how Bhakti has its own Public, reaffirming what Habermas has asserted about the existence of multiple public spheres (Habermas, 56). It was not the one that promised equal status to all, like bourgeois public sphere but even there few exceptional beings asserted themselves countering the existing hierarchies, that has pushed away one community tagging them as untouchables, from the

public domain, something that can still be found today, even when the purity-pollution dichotomy is widely redundant (Rodrigues).

1.1.1. *Shaping of Utopias.* Thomas More, in his book *Utopia*, writes satirically about a world where there is complete religious toleration, no private property, free education irrespective of gender and complete pacifism and fulfilment, even when the population is competent of war. As the meaning of *Utopia* reveals, it is a good place that is 'no place' at the same time. The utopia does not aspire for a perfect society; rather, it attempts to reform the existing one. The utopian vision proves the basic fact that there is something lacking in the present society and something better could be envisioned. This imagination of utopia is thus a political project, that questions the nature of political life, the distribution of power in society and so on (Sargent 12). While differentiating it from Ideology, Karl Mannheim argues, while ideology advocates the maintaining of the existing structure, *Utopia* strives to shatter it, partially or even sometimes completely (Mannheim). Utopian impulse can be of two types, either conscious or unconscious one that arises from repressed status in the society, in the desire for emancipation. In both cases, there is an urge for freedom, self escape and an urge to evade, initiate, endeavour and overcome the indignities that exist (Wells). More even goes on to say that Western society should look for *Utopias* in non-Western societies as a respite to their fallen status. *Utopias* are the proof that we can, think rightly even while living wrongly' and that the 'wrong state of things' are being seen as well as the possibility of another world, even if we cannot figure out how (Marcuse).

Utopias are a sociological necessity for human beings and despite being unrealistic most of the time, they are important as they are proof of the will to change the existing society. The contradictions of the existing society lead the exploited category to envision a better society, marked by both reason and ecstasy owing to hope for equality and love. This envisioning remains a crucial aspect of any struggle and thus is an essential part of social movement discourses. The utopian imagination has existed for centuries but earlier the primary element was its ordained divinity but gradually the proportion of reason kept growing, not to say that earlier imagination was not rational. They were not simple fantasies as they had a foothold in the real social structure. *Utopias* are necessary as they encounter the daily denial of consciousness and hope that has been reinforced by instigating brutalities through an organized form of humiliation.

In India, the first Utopian vision did not come from the elite or mainstream thinking, but from a *sant* of a very humble background. The Bhakti Radical saint, Ravidas, was the first to put forward an Indian version of *Utopia*, 'Begumpura', in his song with the same

name, which means a city without sorrow or a queen city (Omvedt, 219). However, it was not the only one as many other anti-caste intellectuals from Dalit or other backward communities, during the Bhakti period, envisioned a future/alternate society in one form or the other. The imagined cities like *Pandharpur*, *Amarpura*, *Premnagar* and others put forward an aspiration for a secular, universalistic society that was accessible to all rather than being limited to a particular community. This vision was completely indigenous and had its own reasoning and assertion against existing ritualism and inequalities. This vision was the answer to the humiliation that was inflicted on the marginalized and ostracized communities, and a call for recognition of the 'self' in relation to the divine. This divine route was their way to claim dignity in a society where human-built structures and organizations deny them of their agency.

1.1.2. *Subaltern Saints and Assertive Resistance.* Gurpreet Mahajan argues that religion has emerged in the public domain in three different but mutually related ways. First, it has been a site and resource for change in society. Second, it has played a prominent role in the construction of identities; and third, as a mode of arriving at the true purpose of one's existence (Mahajan 31). Thus, from her understanding, we can see that religion cannot really be divorced from the socio-political contexts and purposes. Religion has, time and again, played a vital role in resisting the institutionalized injustices and the structures of domination/oppression, by forging an alternative interpretation of divine and its relationship to the self, and putting it forward in public discourse. It is the religion that has kept 'communities' relevant as a category in the Indian public domain. Bhakti tradition emerged as a challenge to the dominant paradigm of caste in the same way. Being associated with Hinduism from such a long time, Caste as well, has attained a sacred and divine structure that was not supposed to be done away with. It was linked with *Karma* and was said to be derived from the authority of the *Vedas* and *Shastras* (the religious books). To destroy caste or question it, was equated with questioning the Dharma and the Divine. In such society, humiliation was made integral part of the society and institutionalized within these structures by the practice of untouchability. To upkeep the system despite practicing gross oppression, Hindu society followed few inter-related measures, like, ensuring the exploited group that the current system is right, by all means possible; keeping the humiliated group in perpetual state of poverty, isolation, marginalization and uneducated; possessing and deploying an informal and widely prevalent system of coercion routinely and also, if needed use physical force to sustain it(Guru 16). A life of dignity and respect was not possible in such a system and to destroy such a widely imbibed and embedded

exploitative system that excludes and segregates a particular community, an alternative vision of divinity is necessary. This assertion and resistance to humiliation by chalking out a different route to God and highlighting reasonably the problems of the existing system, is what saints from Medieval India, attempted to do so.

Nirguna Sampradaya and Sant Parampara are the alternative names given to the religious movement of the medieval times in Northern part of India, that was represented by Ravidas, Kabir, and other bhaktas/sants(saints) might have their roots in the 'quietest' as they mediate or the 'one who searches for the truth'(Pillai). Even other saints of Bhakti tradition, apart from Kabir and Ravidas too protested against the caste system through his poems, pointing towards the humiliation they face. For example, Surdas in one poem credited to him says:

"Wherever it goes, it's in constant fear of stones and sticks and shoes
 How many insults has it suffered, you poor dumb fool?
 How many slurs for a mouthful here and there?
 Hari, most merciful, you guard the whole world;
 You yourself take charge of every heart.
 Only a grand fool, says Sur, a fool like me,
 would leave that home to scavenge
 With the lost." (Hawley)

Two prominent Bhakti saints we would be considering here are Sant Ravidas and Sant Kabir, who most prominently and vehemently attacked the existing system of exploitation and humiliation and posed an alternative. Ravidas was born in sixteenth century Uttar Pradesh, and is by far the most revered among SCs, especially Chamars as he unleashed a frontal attack on historical oppression and untouchability in society. The caste he was born in was known for carrying dead cattle, working with leather, and tanning. Their touch and sight were considered polluting by the upper caste. He did not hide his caste or gave away his profession, but at the same time imitated the dress-up of brahmins to challenge their monopoly. He used to wear *dhoti* (a piece of cloth worn on lower part of body), *janeu* (sacred thread), and *tilak* (religious symbol on forehead) that was forbidden for the untouchables and he showed that even while adopting the attire of the upper caste, he can keep his identity intact. He did not passively accept the inferior status bestowed upon him but revolted against what he perceived as wrong (Zelliot). Although his poetries were rich in praise of God, it also aspired at the same time for "better world and a fight against exploiters, power-holders and oppression in the name of religion" (Omvedt

19). His poetry mirrored his vision of the social and spiritual exigencies of the exploited and highlighted the grave need of the acknowledgement of their right to dignified living. Bhakti, for him, was the mode of expression of his discontentment and was a befitting reply to the subtle mechanism deployed by the dominant castes to keep the “untouchables” out of mainstream, as erstwhile, devotion was considered by them as their prerogative and latter being regarded as “polluted”, denied access to the divine. By opting the Bhakti method, he with utmost humility, without any rudeness denied the self imposed superiority of the Brahmins and raised the dignity of his caste (Lal). Thus he claimed spirituality without adhering to the institutionalized norms, exposing the shallowness of the Varnashrama system and upholding the dignity and self respect of his caste. This path for him was not easy as he was laughed at, that he even mentioned in his poetry, conversing with the divine:

“The word of devotee Ravidasa.
 One universal creator God, by the grace of the true Guru.
 Seeing my poverty, everyone laughed; such was my condition.
 Now I hold the eighteen miraculous spiritual powers in the palm of my hand;
 Everything is by your grace.
 O patron of the poor, Lord of the world,
 You have placed a canopy of grace over my head.
 Only you can grant mercy to that person whose touch pollutes the world.” (Singh)

His previous life and this birth to was appropriated by myths to ‘humiliate’ his present caste identity that was perceived as a ‘curse’ yet we can see his identity shine till date when people of all walks of life adhere to him and revere his teachings. Thus, as is apparent, his way to answer the humiliating treatment he was bestowed upon, which he obviously could feel, was his way to divine. He chose Bhakti as a way to resist it, as a way of subversion. In his vision of the Utopian world, he talked about an egalitarian society:

“The regal realm with the sorrowless name:
 they call it Queen City, a place with no pain,
 No taxes or cares, none owns property there, no wrongdoing, worry, terror, or torture,
 Oh my brother, I’ve come to take it as my own, my distant home, where everything is
 right.

that the imperial kingdom is rich and secure, where none are third or second-all are one.

Its food and drink are famous, and those who live there dwell in satisfaction and in wealth. They do this or that; they walk where they wish; they stroll through fabled palaces unchallenged.

Oh. says Ravidas, a tanner now set free, Those who walk beside me are my friends.”
(Singh).

In this society, no one would be discriminated on the basis of caste, religion, richness etc. everyone will be having the freedom to roam around as bane of untouchability would not be there. The idea of Begumpura was based in the contemporary socio-economic and political conditions, and thus gave prime importance to freedom from oppression for all(Omvedt). This envisioning directly answers that the pain that hurt of dignity makes one feel, would not be there, in the city without sorrows where Ravidas hope for basic dignity, reformed society and happiness.

Coming to the other saint whom Charlotte Vaudeville described as being of “extraordinary independence of character,” Kabir (Hawley). His character is often seen in contrast with Ravidas who seem more gentle whereas Kabir is seen as arrogant. But Vaudeville argues that despite being undoubtedly rude, vulgar and crude, Kabir was eloquent, dazzling and exciting at the same time(Hess and Singh). His birth is often disputed and it is said that he was an illicit child who was later adopted by muslim parents who were weavers and thus, he carried forward the same occupation. There were multiple times when he was humiliated by the brahmins who perceived him as a threat to their order and that's why he was even given death punishment by the sultanate that could not be executed owing to divine blessings on Kabir. He kept on questioning the institutionalized religion, whether it be Hinduism or Islam. And the spiritual and political in Kabir could not be separated as Hess maintained in her extensive study of Kabir as though he wanted to reform the society, it was just the outermost of the reforms he wanted (Hess, 121). In his poems, when directly addressing the masses, whom he perceived as agency in themselves, he asked to work on their core. He also, like Ravidas, chose divinity as the way in which an individual connects with God, but at the same time, he could feel the divinity in every being. Thus, it was love for divine in Kabir, that made him respect each being, even things for their intrinsic worth, as is apparent in the poem:

“It's all one skin and bone,
one piss and shit,
one blood, one meat.

From one drop, a universe. Who's Brahmin ? Who's Shudra?” (Hess and Singh)

In another poem, he very rationally questions the grounds on which the proponents of institutionalized religion humiliates the people they have outcasted:

“Qazi, what book are you lecturing on?
 Yak yakyak, day and night...
 If God wanted circumcision, why did not you come out cut?
 If circumcision makes you a Muslim,
 What do you call your women?...
 If putting on the thread makes you Brahmin,
 What does the wife put on ?
 That Shudras touching your food, pandit!
 How can you eat it?
 Hindu, Muslim—where did they come from? Who started this road?
 Look in your heart, send out scouts:
 where is heaven?” (Hess and Singh)

Kabir, very logically asked them, if touch is what can pollute a person, then who is untouched here, except the one who's above all the delusion of the world, in a way reversed the whole logic of purity and pollution (Hess and Singh). Kabir believed in a very personalized God, one who resided in him and thus he imagines him as a weaver, to identify more closely with himself. The essence of self confidence and individuality could be best found in him, to the extent of being considered as arrogant, as he searched for the answers to the questions he encountered, rather than receiving the wisdoms from the corrupt priests thus doing away with the whole concept of an intermediary between God and humans (Agrawal). This self-reliance is what he preached to the people when he addressed them directly in his poems, and this was precisely how he responded to the institutionalized humiliation from the society, despite all odds that he had to face. In other words, he wanted his people to work on their inner growth, to retreat time and again, into a creative solitude that would enable them to come back to the world stronger, to claim the dignity and humanity denied them and too many others in a orthodox hierarchical society and his idea was not revengeful but full of humility and love, communitarian at its core, as he asked them to be sensitive to the suffering of others. Kabir's envisioned society was not geographically definable but rather a place that is non-place, a time is beyond time. It was one full of love, where one can dance in ecstasy and one where everyone speaks truth. In his joyous city of *Amarpura*:

“The strains of love fill the days and the nights with music,

And the world is listening to its melodies:
 Mad with joy, life and death dance to the rhythm of this music.
 The hills, sea, and earth dance.
 The world of man dances in laughter and in tears.
 Why put on robe of monk and live?
 Aloof from the world in lonely pride.
 Behold! My heart dances in the delight of a hundred arts,
 And the creator is well pleased."(Omvedt, 61)

We can thus find that, the saints of medieval India have their unique response to the prevailing system of humiliation and injustice and this response was nevertheless more creative as it asserted the core of being to be worthy of all the respect and recognition along with which, they with utmost clarity of thought, debunked the logic of hierarchy propagated by Brahmins. For example, when one says:

"In whatever family a good Vaishnava is found
 Whether they be high caste or out caste lord or pauper
 The world will know one by his faultless fragrance
 Whether one's heart is Brahmin or Vaishya,
 Sundra or kshatriya, Don, Chandala or Mleccha
 Through the worship of the Lord one becomes pure
 And liberates the self and both family lives." (Pillai)

We can see the emphasis put on the self and its liberation, where spiritual rejuvenation and resistance both coexisted, unlike the modernist response, where the former is compromised for the sake of the latter (Agrawal) Also, reflecting to what has been discussed above, we can also come to the safe conclusion that the saints of medieval India, envisioned some worldly utopias to fulfil three needs of giving them distinction of identities, abundance of resources and redemption through devotion and while aspiring the fulfilment of these three needs, this imagination provided the tool to fight against the gross injustices and humiliation that this society accrued upon them and more than them, on the population that was looking at them for respite (Poitevin and Raikar).

2. Final Remarks

The feminist scholar bell hooks remarked in her book, that white feminist act as if black women have no idea of the existence of sexist oppression, and they are the one who provide them with the 'analysis' of the same. They do rarely acknowledge that black women have

their own strategies of resistance, and even if they are not theorizing or organizing themselves for resistance, even then they know the oppression they are facing(hooks). This is precisely the case one misses, when one talk about the lack of awareness in pre-modern period, of the humiliation that a particular community was forced to face. In modern times, we get various conceptualisation of humiliation and dignity, but rarely there is a historical theorisation of this ontological challenge. I cannot say that this study attempts that, but what it aspires is to draw attention in this direction and emphasize the point that even though ‘going back to past’ is not what one should aspire for, one should seek the learning from the past and indigenous traditions, at the same time. This is what one ought to keep in mind when talking about Indian Knowledge traditions. The envisioned society by the Dalit saint intellectuals have been the role model in future for Phule and Ambedkar, when they challenged Brahmanical oppression, even in modern times (Omvedt). This envisioning becomes important as the wound that hurting one’s dignity or humiliating oneself causes, is not just physical, it is much more mental and psychological and that’s precisely why battle needs to be won there first, when you resist to be demeaned and can imagine the alternative possibility of a dignified life. Only when a person could feel this pain, could s/he put forward such a vision of a society where nobody has to bear that pain.

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