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## VEKUVA PITTA: AN UNRELENTING STRUGGLE

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### Abstract

Dalit literature in India has consistently voiced resistance against caste oppression and social injustice. This article examines the poetry anthology *Vekuva Pitta* (Telugu) by Dr. Challapalli Swarupa Rani, with special attention to the poem Paruvu (Honour), which satirises the barbaric practice of honour killings. Written from a humanistic perspective, the essay situates Dalit poetry as an unceasing struggle for equality—social, cultural, political, and economic—and highlights the transformative role of literature in dismantling oppressive traditions.

### Key Words

*Dalit Literature, Honour Killings, Vekuva Pitta, Dr. Challapalli Swarupa Rani*

### Introduction

In Indian proverbial wisdom, one finds many “nyayas” (principles/analogies). We often encounter them in proverbs and folk expressions:

- ☐ *Kakashi Nyayam* (Crow’s principle) – the crow sees with only one eye at a time.
- ☐ *Markata Kishora Nyayam* (Monkey-child principle) – the monkey child alone clings tightly to its mother for survival.
- ☐ *Marjala Kishora Nyayam* (Cat-child principle) – the mother cat alone carries its kittens with care, ensuring they are not bitten or harmed.

These expressions, though simple, reflect the **innate natural laws (dharma, swabhava)** that different beings embody.

In the same way, human beings too are expected to embody manaviyata (humaneness). Humanity as a natural disposition is universally desirable. Yet, when this humanity gives way to danavata (inhuman, demonic behaviour), it brings disaster. This is against the very essence of human nature. Where inhumanity erupts, an abnormal situation emerges. To restore normalcy, just as **law and society** play their roles, **art and literature too strive to re-establish human values**. Indeed, their influence is often far more profound.



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## Humanity vs. Inhumanity in Social Structures

*The Matsya Nyayam* (Law of the Fishes) illustrates how big fish survive by eating the small ones. Similarly, in nature, large animals live by preying on smaller ones—this is called *atavika nyayam* (law of the jungle). Yet, it is equally true that cooperation, mutual dependence, empathy, and compassion are natural not only among human beings but also among many other species.

When behaviour becomes **contrary to such cooperative tendencies**, when brutality surpasses even the jungle law, **inhuman conditions emerge**. These heart-wrenching realities are exactly what we encounter in the Telugu poem *Paruvu (Honour)* by Challapalli Swarupa Rani.

In animals, cruelty manifests only when hunger drives them. In contrast, in human beings, violence has little to do with physical needs—it becomes a matter of entertainment, power, or psychological domination. Hunting dumb animals, looting the wealth, dignity, and lives of fellow human beings—these are not necessities but the **psychological cravings of the powerful**. Such tendencies are nothing less than a **pathological disorder** that endangers the entire society. Violence breeds counter-violence, spreading through the social environment until the entire ecological balance is disrupted.

## From Group Living to Family Bondage

From ancient times, human beings lived in groups out of necessity. Over time, this group life transformed into **family life** and then into social systems. But ironically, what once served as a protective shield has gradually become a **noose of bondage (yamapasha)**.

The very laws created to safeguard individuals were turned into instruments of control. Social norms and customs, once protective, were reshaped into **predatory tools of domination**, working against the welfare of individuals.

Family and village life, while serving as the foundation of society, became steeped in **gender and caste discrimination**. These structures fell under the control of **male patriarchal dominance**. The rights and property of the weak were seized, and finally, even their dignity and lives lost value.

The only antidote to this degradation is **education**—an alternative system that ensures equal importance to the rights of all, regardless of caste or gender.

## Towards Alternative Systems

Among certain primitive tribes that live close to nature, there exists a natural form of justice rooted in equality and cooperation. For such balanced systems to re-emerge in modern society, rural rigidity must give way to **urban, interdependent cultural systems**.

In societies where **laws are given more weight than mere customs**, social justice finds at least some space. Even though differences and hierarchies still exist, **legal**





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**frameworks based on mutual dependence** help maintain balance better than caste-based oppression.

This is why Dr. B. R. Ambedkar emphatically declared: “What is there in the village except ignorance, darkness, and domination? Rural systems must undergo urbanisation.”

Urbanisation, while interdependent, interferes less with individual freedom compared to oppressive village structures. Thus, in contrast to both jungle law and rural bondage, urbanisation offers a pathway to **liberation and human dignity**. However, this possibility rests entirely on **education** and the socio-economic-political needs it creates.

### Honour, Family, and Violence

Though societies continue to urbanise, **rural prejudices and regressive customs** frequently resurface. They resist change and persistently obstruct the full transformation of culture.

Family systems, originally meant for protection and welfare, gradually began to function for the **interests of family elders**. These interests—rooted in economic, cultural, and social authority—denied space for the desires and choices of individual members. Any such deviation was treated as punishable. Over time, family and village elders created their own **codes of punishment (shikhasmrutis)**, first targeting economic disobedience, but eventually acquiring the force of **cultural absolutes**.

Thus, commitments once meant for life’s protection turned into tools of domination in the name of “culture.” They imposed a false value system in which culture was placed *above life itself*—so high that people were expected to sacrifice their lives in its name.

It is in this very context that **young lovers, defying the wishes of elders, are branded as destroyers of family “honour.”** In the name of preserving honour, they become victims of **brutal collective assaults**. This is not a relic of the industrial age, but a continuing reality even in the **technological era**, particularly in rural society.

Youth are attacked with the false and unscientific allegation that their personal, emotional, and physical needs are harmful to family and society. Such accusations not only suppress individuality but also **threaten life and dignity itself**. These inhuman practices are a bitter truth that **democrats, progressives, and human rights activists** cannot accept.

### Poetic Testimony – The Voice of “Paruvu”

In her poem *Paruvu (Honour)*, Dr. Challapalli Swarupa Rani lays bare this hypocrisy through piercing satire:

Marriage—she thought, perhaps,  
 meant heart and body,  
 walking hand in hand together...  
 She stepped towards the playground,  
 But the ‘respectables’ hurled stones at her,  
 They broke her bones and tied her to the village pillar...



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Is so much “honour” hidden in her body parts?  
 (Vekuva Pitta, p. 43)

This poetic question is a **direct confrontation**—an unmasking of the cruelty behind so-called “honour.” It ridicules the notion that the reputation of an entire family or community is somehow hidden in the physical body of a woman.

### The Role of Literature and Social Reform

It is indeed tragic that even today, in an era of education and progress, society still requires **literature and art as powerful weapons** to fight such barbarity. Intellectuals, artists, and reform movements are compelled to intervene in cultural and social spheres to cleanse society of this primitive mindset.

The journey of humankind from primitive stages to modernity has been long and complex. Yet, violations of **basic human rights** continue to occur—barbarically and under the direction of **family and rural systems**. This makes every humanist place their hand upon their nose in shame.

Therefore, along with condemning such atrocities, there arises a **parallel necessity**—to guide family and social systems towards reform. Legal amendments alone are not sufficient. Intellectuals must also initiate **large-scale changes in economic, cultural, and social spheres**.

In this unrelenting struggle for human rights, writings that **dust off outdated notions** are a welcome sign.

### Conclusion: Vekuva Pitta and Dalit Literature

It is in this context that the poetry anthology Vekuva Pitta by **Dr. Challapalli Swarupa Rani** should be read. Violations of human rights, when analysed carefully, are nothing but the violation of the rights of the oppressed. In India, Dalits are among the most oppressed. Thus, **Dalit literature has continually engaged in relentless struggle for the protection of these rights**.

This struggle extends not only to **social equality**, but also to **economic, cultural, and political equality**. With this vision, **contemporary Dalit literature** continues its unceasing, uncompromising struggle.

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