



Dalit Literature in India

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ABSTRACT

Indian Dalit literature, which can be traced back to a corpus of writings from Maharashtra in the 1960s, refers to literature of the oppressed, usually associated with a diverse group of people historically considered the lowest among the Indian population and known as "untouchables." While Dalit literature developed in response to concerns specific to Indian social and cultural history, over the last 20 years Dalit literature has got itself a spot in the World Republic of Letters through translations into English. In an era when issues relating to human rights have been under critical focus, literary depictions of the experiences of marginalized groups have acquired great significance. The recent spurt in Dalit literature in India is an attempt to bring to the forefront the experiences of discrimination, violence and poverty of the Dalit. Expression of these experiences have long been silenced, often with religious and social sanction and relegated to the margins as non-literary. More recent is the trend to deny their existence altogether.

They also have a number of political organizations supporting them. The most prominent of these is the Dalit panthers (begun in the 1970s), which has borrowed much of its ideology from America's Black panthers. The future of Dalit literature is embarked on the present status of Dalit and their sensibility. And certainly new reforming waves are blowing for the radical development in Dalit literature as literature of protest. Thus Dalit literature is a new dimension in the day today and used up literature. With great amaze, people fascinate towards this new charismatic dimension in literature i.e. Dalit literature.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION:

In an era when issues relating to human rights have been under critical focus, literary depictions of the experiences of marginalized groups have acquired great significance. The recent spurt in Dalit literature in India is an attempt to bring to the forefront the experiences of discrimination, violence and poverty of the Dalit. Expression of these experiences have long been silenced, often with religious and social sanction and relegated to the margins as non-literary. More recent is the trend to deny their existence altogether. The growing corpus of Dalit texts, poems, novels and autobiographies, however, seek to rectify this phenomenon by examining the nuances of Dalit culture. Dalit literature is one of the most important literary movements to emerge in post-independence India. The transformation of the stigmatized identity of these so called 'untouchables' to a self chosen identity as Dalit is a story of collective struggle waged over centuries. Mahatma Jyotirao phule and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, two towering figures in the pantheon of Dalit history, were the first to appropriate the word, Dalit as a noun and an adjective, in the early decades of the 20th century to describe the extreme oppression of untouchables.

The term 'Dalit literature' was first used in 1958, at the first ever Dalit conference held in Bombay. However as an identity marker, the term 'Dalit' came into prominence in 1972, when a group of young Marathi writers-activists founded an organization called Dalit panthers. The name expressed their feelings of kinship and solidarity with Black Panthers who were engaged in a militant struggle for African - American rights in the U.S.A. Arjun Dangle, a writer and leader of the Dalit panther movement, writes: "Dalit is not a caste but a realization and is related to the experiences, joys and sorrows and struggles of those in the lowest strata of society. It matures with a sociological point of view and is related to the principles of negativity, rebellion and loyalty to science, thus finally ending as revolutionary."

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

This research paper aims at fulfilling following aims and objectives-

1. To study the Dalit literature as a new dimension in literature as something newer than used up.
2. To study the rise, growth and development of Dalit literature with its consequences on society.
3. To evaluate the Dalit literature with other kinds of literature such as African - American literature, British literature.
4. To analyze the Social condition of Dalit in India and point out the present status.
5. To create awareness of the torments faced by Dalit to non-Dalit in India.
6. To study the heart rendering tortures faced by Dalit with his experiences.
7. To study the different genres of literature of Dalit literature with Marxist oriented approach.
8. To compare the status of Dalit women with African-American women by citing examples of their literary creations.

The present research study is based upon few hypotheses such as

1) Dalit is an important part of society. But right from ancient period, he has been subjugated under the pretext of subordinate, inferior cog of this prestigious Hindu society. Dalit literature is an outburst of the burning flame of exploited people from many centuries the Suppressed anger erupts through self narratives of Dalit literature.

2) Dalits are no more remained to be Dalit (helpless) they are equally stronger with other people of the society. Their creativity shapes themselves into the pinnacle of the so called rich society.3) 'Four varna' System was based on caste and it is restricted people to their occupation, without changing. But class structure - upper class - lower class emerged in this modern era where money decides the status of people.

4) 'Dalit movement' is a powerful action in the present literature which changes the face of the society and it eliminates the subjugation of so called depressed class of the society. The present research undertakes a close study of Dalit literature and Dalit literary works by taking a glimpsal review of Marathi Dalit poets, writers and dramatists. The present study also

takes a review of journals, articles, magazines about Dalit literature published by national and international editors.

CONCEPT OF DALIT:

The term 'dalit' literally means "oppressed" and is used to refer to the "untouchable" casteless sects of India. Dalit, also called outcaste, is a self designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchables. Dalits are a mixed population of numerous caste groups all over India, South Asia and all over the world. There are many different names proposed for defining this group of people like 'Ashprosh' (Untouchable), 'Harijans' (Children of God) 'Dalits, (Broken People) etc.

Etiymology of the word 'Dalit' The word 'Dalit' comes from the Sanskrit and it means "downtrodden", 'suppressed', 'crushed' or 'broken to pieces'. It was first used by Jyotirao phule in the nineteenth century in the context of the oppression faced by the erstwhile "Untouchable" castes of the twice-born Hindus. Mahatma Gandhi coined the word 'Harijan', translated roughly as "children of God" to identify the former untouchables.

MYTHOLOGY:

The religious scripture 'Manu smriti' described 'Varna system' of the society based upon the occupation. It is a four storey varna system comprising four kinds of people of the society borne out of the body of Lord Vishnu. According to this mythology, Brahmin was born out of head, Kshatriya was born out of arms, Vaishya was born out of abdomen and shudra was born out of feet. It emphasized on shudra as a slave, servant because he was born out of feet so that he was destined to serve the rest of the society. Thereby, shudra (Dalit) was recognized as an inferior part of the society, rather an outcaste of society.

SOCIAL STATUS OF DALIT:

Dalits have been destined for inferior activities such as leather work, butchering or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses and waste; by this so called civilized Hindu society. Dalits work as manual laborers cleaning street, latrines and sewers. Engaging in these activities was considered to be polluting to the individual and this pollution was considered contagious. As a result, Dalits were commonly segregated and banned from full participation in Hindu social life.

DALIT MOVEMENTS IN INDIA:

The earliest known Dalit reformer was Lord Gautam Budha, who preached the abolishing of untouchability. The earliest known reformation within Hinduism happened during the medieval period when the Bhakti movements actively engaged in the participation and inclusion of dalits. In the 19th century, the Brahmo samaj, Arya samaj and the Ramakrishna mission actively participated in the emancipation of Dalits. Saint kabir, mahanubhava sect, varkari sect in Maharashtra rejected the term untouchability and embraced Dalits as brothers. Maharashtra state was the key state in the reformation of Dalit or the transformation of untouchable to touchable.

Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Rajashri Shahu Maharaj, V. R. Shinde and the pinnacle towering figure Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar were the prominent social reformers in Maharashtra. In the 1950, Ambedkar turned his attention to Buddhism and converted thousands of untouchable people in Buddhism with himself. In west Bengal chaitanya prabhu initiated a movement called 'Namo shudras movement' (bow to Dalit) which changed an attitude towards untouchable community. Overall, Dalit reform movements had been in India since ancient period right from Gautama Buddha. Still it is in course of reforming state by creative efforts of social reformers.

REVIEW OF DALIT LITERATURE:

Dalit literature is a new phenomenon in the modern era of literature where the tormenting experiences of Dalit, Untouchable writers are exposed to present the contemporary social, mental

condition before Dalit and non-dalit readers. Mulk Raj Anand was the first to insulate Dalit literature through his novels like 'Untouchable', 'Coolie' in English and there are simultaneously translated in English and different languages. The style of Dalit literature covers a wide range of literary genres. This Dalit literature is made popular in Marathi by Maharashtra Dalit poets, writers. It solely aims at generating awareness of dalits about their social situation in the society, to all conscious readers.

A) Dalit poetry:

There is a plenty of Dalit poetry expressing the violent lashing experiences of poet's life effectively. Narayan survey was one of the prominent poets in the early Dalit literature. His famous poem was 'vidhyapith'. The other poets like Keshav Meshram - "Utkhanan" (Excavation), Daya pawar - 'Kondwada' (suffocating Enclosure), Nandedo Dhasal - 'Golpitha' (The Red Light zone), Triyambak sapkal - 'Surung' (dynamite) and so on. The new generation of Dalit poetry emerged in the contemporary period as a revolt or protest against the oppressive traditional shackles.

B) Dalit folk poetry:

Unlike the tremendous Dalit poetry as a powerful mean of dalit expressions, folk poetry too practiced for propagating Dalit sensibility. Vaman dada kardak, Bhimrao kardak, Vitthal Umap, and so on are the prominent Dalit folk poets. The folk poetry includes Ballads which enthralled the common people of Dalit community. It too creates awareness about Dalit reform movements.

c) Dalit short stories :

Short stories and novels are important genre of literature that exploited by dalit writers for expressing Dalit sensibility aptly. The short stories like 'Fakira'- Anna Bhau sathe, 'Davandi'- Shankarrao kharat, 'Jevah Mi Jaat Chorli Hoti (When I robbed a caste) - 1963 Maran Swast Hot Aahe-1969 (Death is becoming cheap)- Baburao Bagul, Red stone - N. G. Shende are the best examples of Dalit short stories by Dalit writers.

d) Dalit Auto narratives:

Dalit writers mostly interpreted their own experiences regarding social injustice in their own autobiographies. It is called Dalit Auto-narrative. This form of literature is best suited to Dalit writer.

CONCLUSION:

On the whole, Dalit literature gives a message about their community not individuality, about revolt not passivity, about progress not backwardness. This message is to the entire world about their status in society by portraying the exploitive, helpless, and engrossed with grief, suppressed and enslaved and a subaltern state. To some extent, Dalit in India can be compared with African American regarding the mutilation. The shared political position of these authors is against the hegemony of upper and middle class Hindu beliefs and for the power of the human beings against oppressive social rules. Dalit author questioned religion and Identity throughout their literature. It could be said that Dalit literature achieved a firm foundation in the mid-20th century; but its framework was established in the early 19th century. Today Dalit writers have their literary foundation with ideology and publish numerous journals.

They also have a number of political organizations supporting them. The most prominent of these is the Dalit panthers (begin in the 1970s), which has borrowed much of its ideology from America's Black panthers. The future of Dalit literature is embarked on the present status of Dalit and their sensibility. And certainly new reforming waves are blowing for the radical development in Dalit literature as literature of protest. Thus Dalit literature is a new dimension in the day today and used up literature. With great amaze, people fascinate towards this new charismatic dimension in literature i.e. Dalit literature.

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