



A Study of selected autobiographies in Dalit literature

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Abstract

Indian English Literature is an endeavor of showcasing the rare gems of Indian writing in English from being a curious native explosion. Indian English become a new form of Indian culture, and voice in India speaks Indian authors – poets, novelists, essayists, and dramatists have been making significant contributions of world literature since the pre-independence era. The past few years have seen a massive flourishing of Indian English Writing in the international market. And Indian Literature deserves a new evolution from Dalit Writings. Dalit Literature is a literature of pain and agony. Its beginning can be traced to be the undocumented oral folklore and tales of the past decades. Dalit Literature as a genre was established in the 1960s and 1970s when a spurt of Dalit writing was published in Marathi and Gujarati. The aim of Dalit literature is to highlight the disabilities and difficulties together with atrocities and inhuman treatment of Dalits. The main object is to produce social awakening among the downtrodden. Dalit literature signifies a new dimension of the concept of marginal literature as used in the general literary canon. Dalit literature is typically Indian not only in its root but also in its purpose and goal. It is addressed to the entire Indian literary traditions and its fulfillment lies in the total transformation of this tradition. Dalit literature is the post-colonial nativistic movement aided at the cultivation of creative urges of the mass of numerous castes, tribes, and communities condemned for centuries to voiceless existence. Dalit literature is a literature of politics and politics is an integrate part of it. Though politics can be defined in whatever terms one would, likes to define it. For, Dalitdom is the product of politicization a process that is going on continuously in every organized society.

Keywords: Dalit literature, poets, novelists, Marathi and Gujarati

Introduction

Dalit literature is a collective term in India. Dalit literature is not one, but many almost all the major languages and literatures in India have their past and present of Dalit literary culture have given peculiar forms to Dalit literature in India. Numerous bakti cultures in different parts of India during the medieval period enabled Dalits to give vent to their suffering and to protest against the tyranny of the unjust socio-religious orders. But it is the modern India Dalit consciousness discover that the last tradition of medieval Dalit literature battle cry during the past independence period. The past is being researched and linked to the aspirations of modern Dalit creativity.

Dalit literature is not only a literature of protest and rejection, but also a literature of reconstruction of the past. Dalit consciousness has inspired intellectuals to probe the entire Indian history and culture from below; this subaltern historical approach has set in motion a process for the true discovery of India. Western orientation is laid to rest and a new image of Bharat is being built up by the scholars inspired by Dalit word-view.

Dalit literature is based on the fundamental human values. It believes that man is measure of all things including arts, literature and culture. Dalit literature subscribes to secular values like individuality, liberty, equality, and fraternity etc, but at the same time does not rule out religion. Religion should provide ethical base to human behavior in social

system. Religion should be a principle and not a law. This approach underlined Dr. Ambedkar neatly strikes the balance between modern secular values and the individuality, religious faith.

Scorching life experience is the price of Dalit literature. Anguish and revolt is the distinctive feature of this literature. When anguish leads to revolt, then the will to totally negate is born. Dalit literature has nurtured this will shaped out of the philosophies of the three great humans - Buddha, Kabir and Phule but altogether new and self-sufficient, Ambedkar's philosophy is at the root of this literature. After centuries of silence, the Dalit writers felt the need to express themselves; they could only turn inward and talk about their own experiences. Autobiography thus becomes a fitting vehicle for their expression. The portrayal of the life of the Dalit individual was representative of the entire community. A public rather a private gesture "me-ism" gives way to "our-ism" and superficial concerns about "individual subject" usually give way to the collective subjection of the most significant features of the post-modernist movement in India. It deals with the social outcast, or Dalit (downtrodden). Marathi Dalit writers started the Dalit movement under the leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Marathi writers including the poets' named Namdev Dhasal and Narayan Surve and novelists Daya Pekar and Laxman Gaikwad reflect the anguish of a community.

Sangati

Bama's sangati deals with the Dalits community's collective identity and not about a single self. It shows how Dalit women are always the most vulnerable and Bama's attempt, as a feminist, to raise their consciousness so that they would be strong enough to believe in their own ability to lead their lives all by themselves and be independent of the irresponsible Dalit male species. Bama wants her community people not to be terrified by the upper caste oppressive tactics, and boldly face the injustice wherever they encounter. By bringing in an analogy, she says, if a man sees a terrified dog, he will naturally be tempted to chase it with a stick or a stone. But if the dog stares back, those who chase him creep away with their tails between their legs. In the same way, Bama says, "If we continue to be frightened, everyone will take advantages of us". (66)

Dalit feminism helps Dalit women wriggle out from their men folk who try to rule over them and their pleasure. Once a Dalit girl attains puberty, she has no more freedom. The Dalit men, (mostly the father before, the girl's marriage), husband (after her marriage) and sometimes even the brother take away her freedom, and control her movements'. Dalit feminism will remind the patriarchy how sad it is to treat one's wife as his own possession with a bloated egoistic notion; "she's my wife, I can beat her or kill her if I wish". (43)

Vanmam

Bama's Vanmam raises an important aspect of Dalit life that has been recognized and acknowledged in Dalit writings in Tamil and Dalit studies at large. The fixing of Dalit as a homogenous, univocal category has largely governed the critical perspective on vilification of Dalits and their writing whenever about. Even as Dalits were able to bargain better in the political domain, they were constrained to erase their cultural, community or vocation specific distinctiveness aspect that lent them individuality and self-esteem. In the late 1990's, Tamil Dalit writers began to display a sharper and more candid self-appraisal of Dalit subjectivity in the contest of plurality and cultural/religious diversity amongst Dalits.

Vanmam has a comprehensive introduction that covers the evolution of the Dalit identity and its associated literary movements, placing in the larger perspective of Indian Writing. It thus foregrounds the narrativisation from the margins, bringing it up close so that, the periphery becomes the center. Raising a valid point about interpretation, the translator suggests that it was the prerogative of the readers to, as it were, make sandwiches of any sort from the bread offered by the writer.

Conclusion

This dissertation as an attempt had made to present the devastating effect of the caste system on the educational, social and economical status of Dalit women in modern India. The aim of this study is to highlight the harsh reality of the suppression, struggle and torture faced by Dalit women every day of their miserable lives. The hardships of Dalit women are not simply due to their poverty, economical, status or lack of education but are a direct result of the severe exploitation and oppression by the upper classes. In this dissertation, there are many examples of brave Dalit women

like Gowri and Selvarani who being quite aware of the horrifying truth and despite the heavy odds still strive to put an end to their sufferings. In doing so they most certainly ensure a bright future for the generations to come. Ruth Manorama, an active member of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights and National Alliance of Women, once stated that in a male dominated society. "Dalit women face a triple burden of caste, class and genders in which she sums up the plight of Dalit women, highlight the fact that Dalit women are a distinct social group and cannot be marked under the general categories of 'women' or 'Dalits' (News Archives).

From an inter contextual critical reading, the lives of Dalit women in India are featured by official degradation, fixed low status, permanent social stigma, inferiority, physical repression, a sense of shame, and legitimate untouchability. In interpreting the context, Dalit feminist hermeneutics asserts the importance of Dalit women's experience as crucial. Dalit Feminism argues for crossing the boundaries to acquire self-transformation. Women have a long way from their subjugated and oppressive condition lately and women writers reveal that the literary tradition involves the relationship between them and the society in which they live. Women's literary world includes and reflects their life and experience from their perspective which is totally different from that of the male. A central tenet of modern feminist thought has been the assertion that all women share a common lot, and that factors like class, race, caste, religion and even sexual preferences do not create a diversity of experience that determine the extent to which sexism will be an oppressive force in the lives of individual women. Other than this important aspect of gender issues, each woman is different with diverse experiences which create a unique space for each one of them.

The minority discourses of women are surfacing with unprecedented urgency in the post-colonial and post-modern context. Writers from the marginalized section of society like Sivakami and Bama have put forward a subversive ethnic, which knocks the consciousness of the hegemonic cultures concomitantly, thereby generating confidence and pride in them. This enables them to deconstruct a traditional mindset

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