

A voice of protest against racial marginalized through Dalit literature

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Abstract

This paper deals with the issues of A Voice of marginalized through dalits literature. 'Dalit' means nominated name for a group of communities in India who were historically considered to be very unskilled in Indian society, such as shoe makers, butchers, sweeping, waste and animal carcass disposal, manual scavenging etc. Dalits are considered to be an oppressed Indian caste under the Indian caste system. Dalit literature appears in the 1960s, starting with the Marathi language, and soon appeared in Hindi; Telugu, Kannada and Tamil languages. This body of writing reflects Dalit experience of the community's sensibility and identity primarily from the point of view of Dalit who have been excommunicated, marginalized, exploited and humiliated for ages in the Indian caste ridden Hindu Society. It reflects not only the history of Dalit but also the challenging tradition in the present era. Dalit literature provides the deep structure of literary representations and serves to organize the particularities of circumstance and individual identity. The marginalized, the subaltern, the dalit, call him whatever you may, one thing remains steady and that is their daily struggle for survival as the reserved, oppressed and exploited part of society. Discriminated by various factors, the Dalits are the victims of various structures that make society like economic, social, gender based, cultural, etc. The individuals or the groups were marginalized either in the name of religion, race, region, community, cast, gender, nationality or even ideology. But this relationship between the centre and margin was temporary and short lived. The centre can subdue and suppress the marginalized voices, but can never silence them forever. Once they find their true voice, they come to an end to be marginalized.

Keywords: Dalit, castes, labour, marginal, economic, social, gender based, cultural, oppressed

Introduction

This paper deals with the issues of A Voice of marginalized through dalits literature. Dalit (Oppressed or broken) is not a new word. Apparently, it was used in the 1930s as a Hindi and Marathi translation of 'depressed classes', a term the British used for what are now called the Scheduled Castes. In 1970s the 'Dalit Panthers' revived the term and expanded its reference to include scheduled tribes, poor peasants, women and all those being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion etc. So Dalit is not a caste, it is a symbol of 'change and revolution'. Dalit literature is not a novel concept of this modern era but owes a long history. There are numerous theories about the origin of Dalit Literature. Buddha in 6th Century B. C; the 11th and 12th century writings of Vachana, Chennaiah or Kalavve in Kannada; Chokhamela in 14th AD, Mahatma Phule between (1828-90) and Prof. S.M. Mat (1886-1957), are called as its originators. These great men were deeply concerned about the difficulty of the untouchables and fought against all the unjust divisions in society. A huge collection of dalit literature is created in the light of their teachings and visions.

Inspiration of Dalit Literature

The words— pain, sorrow, battle, protest, classism, oppressed, suppressed, untouchable found in the literature of different countries. African-American writing or „Black writing“ is created by the writers of African fall in United States. The pioneers of this writing are Phillis Wheatney and Olaudah Equiano, who began their work in late 18th century. It has reached early high points with slave narratives of 19th century. African American Literature created advancing wave-front in the United States of America during the twentieth century as a voice of protest against racial discrimination. Similarly, Dalit

literature also documents the socio-cultural and political factors of the exploited mass in India.

Dalit Literature

The chief motive of Dalit literature is the liberation of dalits. Dalit struggle against castes tradition had a long history'. Dalit literature was also influenced by the works of Afro-American writers. They found a quality of their support for self statement in the leading visionary of the movement, Dr. Ambedkar, who inspired and motivated the creative instinct of the people to voice the emancipator spirit through Dalit literature. Dalit Literature found a voice. Dalit life is a continuous struggle and dominated, Dalits have undertaken one fight more; a fight to affirm and assert their identity. The term literally means the downtrodden socially and economically depressed and underprivileged in gaining secure settlement in the society. Gandhi called them 'Harijanas' the children of God, the high caste Hindu called them Untouchables. In many ways, it is a protest literature which faithfully mirrors the harsh realities of the Dalit situation and becomes an important weapon to strengthen throw Dalit political and social movement.

The history of Dalit literary movement goes back to the 11th century, to the first Vachana poet, Madara Chennaiah although most of the pioneering works have been produced in Maharashtra and the neighboring Gujarat; Dalit literature has today taken an important form from a variety of Indian languages such as Kannada, Tamil, Hindi and Malayalam etc. A large number of these texts are also available in English translations for a wider range of audience. Dalit literary movement has a long history which ideally clarifies the secret struggle against casteist tradition the origin of dalit literature in the contemporary usage of the term, which is largely written

and published in regional Indian languages, are in the late 19th century. In modern India, Dalit literature got impetus in Maharashtra due to the legacy of Jyotiba Phule (1828-90), Prof. S.M. Mate (1886-1957) and Dr. Bheemrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956). With the arrival of leaders like Mahatma Phule and Ambedkar in Maharashtra, who brought forward the issues of Dalits through their works and writings the Dalit movement got a forceful representation. They started a new trend in Dalit writing and inspired many Dalits to come forward with writings in Marathi. Dalits have been raising their voices through personal narratives with the inspiration of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Ambedkarist thought is still the life blood of much dalit literature). Dalit autobiographies became evidence of how dalit writers understand their situation of marginality. Dalit autobiographies stressed on several issues like autobiographical expression as a source of truth, reading personality development, historical investigation, study of psychological development, reading genders and reading of subaltern experiences. The appearance of dalit autobiography gives a new aspect to the study of autobiographies. Apart from being marginal, Dalits have been without education for quite a long time in the Indian caste society. Now, that they are getting educated, and some of them have been using writings as weapons for their social claim, sense of identity and mobilise struggle against different forms of oppression. This phenomenon has been largely understood. Such autobiographical writers such as Hazari's *Untouchable: an autobiography of an Indian outcaste* (1951), Laxman Mane's *Upara* (Marathi, 1984), Sharan Kumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* (Marathi, 1984), D. P. Das' *The Untouchable story* (1985), Narendra Jadhav's *Amcha Baap AANI ambi* (Marathi, 1993), Balwanth Singh's *an untouchable in the IAS* (English, 1997), Omprakesh Valimiki *Jothan* (Hindi 1997). Dalit men are the victims of the caste oppression. Dalit women are the victims of caste and class oppression. Dalit women find themselves as the victims of double oppression by the upper caste men as well as by the men as well as by the men of their own community and biggest handicap of dalit women in their lack of education. 'Dalits writing comes from these margins of the caste code read out for many centuries. Dalits use their voice to expose the violence faced by the dalits, Marginal representation of the lower-caste writers and their life-experiences result in the psychological separation and the anger that boils within them as a reaction to these discriminations. Dalit literature is basically based on Dalit consciousness and it represents the harsh lived experiences of marginalized dalit people. Dalit literature emerged as the radical literature and challenged the norms, standards and principles of the so-called mainstream brahminical literature, aesthetics and literary theory.

The 17th century and 18th century witnessed a generation of writers whose writings were influenced by Marxist ideology and were marked by experimental narrative structure and posing of debates concerning ethical, social- culture issues that influenced "Tamil culture."

The influence of Ambedkar's thought is considerable and significant in Tamil dalit discourse. The dalit writers put forward Ambedkar's call to dalits to "Educate unite and organize" as a central statement in their works. The romanticized, sentimentalized Dalits of Poomani and daniel find a real voice and assenting presence in the writings of Sivakami, Edayavendan, Unjai Rajan Abimani, Bama,

Anbadavan, Gunasekaram, Imaiyan and others. The first Dalit novel in Tamil written by a woman Dalit writer, Sivakami, was published in 1989. The novel, *Pazhiyana Kazhidalum* (1989) discussed the issue of Dalit leadership and point out pitfall inborn in an unoriginal model where in Dalit leaders duplicate corruption and controlling politics prevalent among empowered, upper caste politicians. The novel advocates the need for an organized, educated, Dalit youth that stands united by ideological commitment and sincerity of action towards empowerment of Dalits. Such a leadership, consisting of young men and women are expected as the novelist's vision to dalit conflict and ensuring of social justice. This novel's significant contribution to dalit literary discourse lay in its foregrounding of dalit men's violent treatment of dalit women at home. Dalit patriarchy is an important subject of concern in Tamil dalit literature. Sivakami's novel prepared the situation for a continued critique of domestic violence and abuse of dalit women at home by dalit men--fathers, brothers, sons, fathers-in-law, brothers-in-law, apart from sexual and occupational harassment faced by dalit women outside their homes at the hands of upper caste men and the police. In her second novel, *Aanandayee* (1992), Sivakami focuses on violent exploitation of woman's body and points out how the family as an institution is embedded in patriarchal, cruel system that is deliberately unfair to women. In 1992, another significant dalit work in Tamil was published. The first dalit autobiography in Tamil, written by a dalit woman, *Bama*, was published and was warmly received by readers and critics. *Karukku* (1992) discusses oppression tolerate by dalits at the hands of state (police) panchayat and the upper castes and at the church. Bama also highlights how dalit women are oppressed further by dalit men at home. The involvement of patriarchy with cast domination is a harsher and more unjust suppression of dalit women as shown in the works of Sivakami and Bama. Bama's *Karukku* discusses various forms of violent oppression unleashed on dalits, specifically on the Paraiyar caste. A significant aspect of this work pertains to the oppression of dalit Christian's at the hands of the church. *Karukku* depicts how dalit Christians are not allowed to sing in the church choir, are forced to sit separately, away from the uppercaste Christians, are not allowed to bury their dead in the cemetery within the village, behind the church, but are made to use a different graveyard beyond the border. The Paraiyars who converted to Christianity in order to escape casteist oppression at the hands of orthodox hinduism are shown to be greatly disappointed as they are not able to escape cabinet oppression within the church fold. In Bama's *Sangati* (1994), Dalit women's dual oppression on account of gender and caste Bama's writing celebrates dalit women's revolutionary strategies to overcome their oppression. Bama's writing as that of Sivakami is an activist intervention. All dalit writing is to be perceived as political writing as a strategy of resistance to social domination. Bama through her writing hopes to influence dalit women readers to shape their lives positively. Her works lay a lot of emphasis on empowerment of Dalits through education. Bama's third novel, *Vanmam* (2002) argues for forging of better unity among dalit groups and to avoid intra-dalit trouble etc.

India is Marginalized Labour System on Caste Basis

A huge number of Dalits in India are engaged in uncertain marginal work which offers them less than six months

employment in a year. That means for the most marginalized groups are unemployed which reflects the nature of uncertainty and shyness of their life. As per the census data on SCs and STs, total 12% of SCs and 17% STs are works as a marginal labour. While only 9.9% non-Dalits are marginal worker.

As per government data, work participation rate for Dalit was 40.9%. But contrary only 28% of Dalit workers were in a main work. Himachal Pradesh has the highest percentage of Dalit marginal employed with 23 % and second highest is Bihar (16.5%). Meanwhile, the regions with higher literacy rate shows the smallest marginal employed like Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Only 6% in Kerala and 7 % in Tamil Nadu of workers are engaged in marginal work.

“The main reason for Dalits in Tamil Nadu and Kerala getting employment through the year is the higher literacy rate. With proper education, many dalits in these states are employed in IT companies or in government jobs. They may be working at a lower level, but they get employment for the entire year,” said P Sampath, chief of the Tamil Nadu Untouchability Eradication Front. In Kerala, due to the implementation of land reforms, many dalits are landowners and the figures are better. In all other states, this is lacking, said Sampath only a few dalits are in marginal work in Kerala because of the migration to Gulf countries, said social scientist M S S Pandian. "Many job seekers from Kerala have migrated to other states or to Gulf countries. In Tamil Nadu, reservation is the reason for more dalits being in main work," said Pandian. With a higher rate of economic growth, there are more job opportunities for dalits in Tamil Nadu.

Conclusion

Thus I conclude that literature has always been used by writing as a weapon to fight against the traditional social order norms, way of life, hypocrisy outmood customs, as well as political system. Protest in literature has always existed. Though Dalit literature is written in different Languages, different geographical background, but there is a common suffing, denominator, the roots, exploitation and justice and by writing their personal narratives. Hence dalit is mobilizing resistance which to fight against all form of oppressions which they have been experiencing for ages. These Dalit youths found inspiration in the movement of blacks in the distant land of North America; their black literature and Black Panther became the role models of varieties for them. This protest expanded its first expression in the form of a new literature called Dalit Literature.

The highest purpose of Dalit writing is not beauty of craft, but realism of experience. Most significant attribute is that the Dalit literature displays Dalit consciousness.

It is a belief in rebellion against the caste system, recognizing the human being as its focus. Ambedkarite thought is the inspiration for this consciousness. Sometimes Dalit literature has been criticized as being propagandist. Today dalit Literature includes not only the writings about Indian suppressed people but also other groups throughout the world that are relegated to a secondary position by the honored classes.

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