

Dalit Literature: Its origin and scope

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Abstract:

Indian literature reached to the corner of the world. Its origin and scope has historical significance. Indian multi-cultural and multi-social background stressed in literature. Dalit literature came into main stream of literature after post- Independence period. Dalit literature gained popularity because of its subjects which are concerned with past, present and future of oppressed class. The realistic and pathetic issues of the oppressed people are presented with firsthand experience in Dalit literature. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and his thoughts implanted seeds of hope in the life of marginalized people.

Key Words: Literature, Dalit literature, multi-culture, realistic issues

Introduction:

Literature reflects the scenario of society. Dalit literature is the realistic and pathetic presentation of the oppressed people of India. Dalit means who is oppressed from the ages. Dalit abandoned from the freedom, rights and equality. They are born in the last and lowest category of the vertical social system of inequality. They are treated and discriminated by the religious custom and books systematically. The word 'Dalit' first used to described for the oppressed class in the writings of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's *Bahiskrit Bharat in 1928* and the concept Dalit Literature came to be accepted by all. The writers produced the first hand experience of oppression and segregation mostly in Dalit literature. Dalit Literature originated in the writings of Marathi Sant Gora Kumbhar, Chokhamela, Sant Ravidas and Sant Kabir in the earlier phase of Literature. Mahatama Jotiba Phule's "Gulamgiri" exposed Indian society which is based on

discrimination and inhuman untouchability. Being a victim of caste system, he tried to eradicate caste system and establish equality in society. He exposed hypocrite nature of dominant class but set an example of humanity by providing drinking water to the oppressed. He opened the first school for the Dalits and girls in the orthodox city Poona in Indian history.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in his *Writings and Speeches* writes about the awfulness of the Dalit in the history. He states: “rights and disabilities were not based on general and uniform consideration. They were based on communal consideration. All rights for first three Vernas and all disabilities for the Shudras was the principle on which the Bramanic law was based.” (Dr. B R Ambedkar, *Writing and Speeches*. Vol.7)

Dalit literature is read and gain popularity but the word Dalit has still low status in society. Dalit writing specially written by Dalit author has firsthand experience of his agony. Much has been written about the caste and its curse in Indian English literature but pain of the individual is dreadful. The discrimination on the basis of caste is a religious and cultural manipulation.

In Maharashtra and other part of India, there are some other important Dalit writers in Pre-Ambedkar period. Pandit Kondiram and Kisan Phagoji Bansod from the central provision also attacked the Bramins through their writing. Gopalbaba Valangkar is the only writer of those days who wrote in English also to organize public opinion against the stoppage of untouchable youth's recruitment into British Army. Shivram Kamble from Pune has also made sincere intellectual efforts through his writings and social reform activities.(Aston N, *Literature of Marginality*,46).

Dalit writers themselves are either victims or witness to social inequalities and violence. Most of them directly or indirectly connected with social, political, cultural organization of Dalit. For a long time, Dalit communities were forced to follow the rules imposed upon them by dominated castes. These practices were followed generation after generation, and most of the people would pursue them, loading the Dalits with feeling of helplessness - and sometimes not even realizing that there was scope for change. Often, they were actually afraid of the upper castes as the latter would not hesitate to resort to force, curse and threats. Their high dependency on dominant castes for work, food and loan worked as a counter force to their emancipation. When Dalit, who nowadays assert their rights as human beings, look at their past conditions, they are tempted to compare

their forefathers to animals successfully silenced. (Joshil K, Abraham, Dalit Literature,221).

Dalit women autobiographies are realistic picture of social, political and cultural of marginalized women. The women are considered others in the world of human beings. They had forced to live life less than to animal life. Once she born with different gender, she lost her dignity and treated secondary, less important in the patriarchal social system.

The Prisons We Broke is famous and masterpiece of Dalit woman writer Babytai Kamble. The work denoted inhuman caste system and its awfulness in their life. Because of the discrimination on the basis of the gender, they are victim of an inequality. They were forced to perform duties within the framework constituted by the masculine mentality. The problems of women were different than the man of their daily life. Men were busy in serving the upper caste, disrespected them being honest and hard working.

The Prisons We Broke discloses inhuman status of woman in the social structure. Babytai Kamble wrote the significant of the work of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar after the social work of Mahatma Phule and Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj. Thoughts and work of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar can only change the condition of oppressed class.

Shantabai Kamble's an autobiographical work *Majya Janmachi Chitrkatha* published in 1986. It is presented in the form of series from 1980 to the reader and audience. She was the first Dalit woman to be appointed as a teacher in school. Her *Majya Janmachi Chitrkatha* originally written in Marathi language literary means picture story. She recalled the memories of her childhood and hardship which she had lived. She was the witness of the revolutionary movement of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. She realized the significant of social movements started by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar for the betterment of oppressed class. She was conscious about her caste identity, the caste which is made for the social structure.

Urmila Pawar, Marathi well-known writer and social activist. Being a dalit women writer, she has incorporated bitter experience of caste system. She has credited writing and reputation as leading dalit woman writer, her memoir 'Aaydan' which was translated into English literature by Dr. Maya Pandit.

The Weave of my life: A Dalit woman's Memoir Aaydan is a weaving of basket which was the main occupation of the Burud community in the region of Kokan. The

weaving was also the main work of Mahar community in those days. Urmila Pawar was the part of that system where woman is exploited for the service of man. Her Autobiography deals with the detail narrative of the oppressed community, their life, children, man and woman.

Prominent writer in the early period of Dalit literature is the struggle for identity, equality and education. The first conference Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha was held in Mumbai in 1958. The term 'Dalit' denoted to the oppressed class writers. Baburao Bangul one of the major Dalit writer wrote collection of stories 'Jevha mi Jat choral' 'When I concealed my Caste' exposed the cruel face of Indian caste system.

Other notable writer of early phase was Shankarrao kharat who received honour of presiding over all India Marathi Sahitya Sammelan. His autobiography *Taral Antaral* is description of Pathetic condition of Mahar Community in Maharashtra state. He felt proud to speak about Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in his childhood.

Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar is the source of encouragement for the Mahar community in specific. The Mahar community followed the message and thought of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar consequently community took education, eradicate superstition, follow scientific attitude and transformed their life from darkness to the conscious. As. M. N. Wankahde states: "The pens of the Dalit writers are ready as levers, to lift the people's democracy out of the mud of anarchy"(Arjun Dangle, Poisoned Bread, 319)

There are prominent Marathi Dalit writers who presented their life with pain, suffering, agony, casteism, marginal and exploitation. Laximan Gaikwad's *Uchalay* is the realistic picture of community. He describes the social mentality for his community, he found that discrimination on the basis of caste is difficult to eradicate from society. Laxaman Pawar, Daya Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Kishor Shantabai Kale, Avinas Dolas and P.E Sonkamble are notable voice of the Dalit struggle and achievement.

Dalit Poetry gained popularity after autobiography, novel and drama criticism. Dalit poetry emerged as a new platform to express pain and suffering due to casteist social system. Well-known Dalit poets are Namdeo Dhasal, Keshav Meshram, Arjun Dangle, Yashwant Manohar, Trymbak Sapkal, Arun Kamble, Mina Gajbhiya, Hira Bansod, Jyoti Lanjewar, Mallika Amar Sheikh, Pardnya Lokhande.

A Dalit poem is unique in the sense that it builds its structural pattern out of Dalit sensibility. It is unusual, exceptional in terms of experiences and expression- something alien to the so called Marathi middle -class sensibility. It transfers the themes of isolation, alienation, protest, revolt, struggle for survival, freedom from all sorts of bondage and exploitation, apathy, estrangement and uprootedness, a search for new identity and logging for human dignity. It is thus poetry of protest, voicing its opposition to all that is orthodox, traditional and conventional.(Aston N, Literature of Marginality,60)

Dalit Literature is the presentation of the people who were voiceless from the ages; they have incorporated realistic issues and life like problems due to inhuman caste system. The hierarchical system provides every facility to the upper class which is less in number and no facility to the large number in society. Dalit literature is the painful struggle of everyone who is the victim of discrimination.

To conclude, Dalit literature is the main branch of Indian literature. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and his work is the source for Dalit writings. Dalit writers establish their identity and ability to stand proudly in society. Dalit writers reach to the world and share political, religious, social and economical issues through drama, novel, poetry, autobiography, short stories. Dalit literature is the voice of oppressed against the social discrimination on the basis of caste.

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