



Dalit Literature : A Perspective



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Abstract :

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar struggled for the freedom and equality of Dalits. He rejects the idea that caste system is God-made. Dalits have suffered a lot to mark their own identity. That's why; they were unsatisfied with the political and economic equality bestowed upon them by the government. The movement then asked for religious and creative equality. The movement finally created a literature of their own.

Keywords : Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, equality, freedom, caste system, Dalits, religion

Research Paper :

Hunger
Which came first, seed or tree?
Hunger you make things too difficult
Hunger just tell us what breed this monkey is
And if you can't
Then we will screw
Seventeen generations of you
Hunger, you and your mother...¹

Starvation of innocent human beings by the people of high class, devoid of basic necessities of food, clothes and shelter mould the spirit of movement, revolution begins to take roots as a protest against suppression of the poor by the brutal mankind for their own identity. Dalit Poetry outcries the feelings of the untouchables. Namdev Dhasal's poem (translated by Shanta Gokhale) talks about the realistic portrayal of the people who have been suffering since long.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar struggled for the freedom and equality of Dalits. He rejects the idea that caste system is God-made. Dalits have suffered a lot to mark their own identity. That's why; they were unsatisfied with the political and economic equality bestowed upon them by the government. The movement then asked for religious and creative equality. The movement finally created a literature of their own.

Baburao Bagal says :

Dalit literature is not a Literature of Vengeance. Dalit Sahitya is not a literature which spreads hatred. Dalit Sahitya first promotes man's greatness and man's freedom and for that reason it is an historic necessity.²

The originators of Dalit literature are Buddha, Chokhamela, Mahatma Phule...etc. They talk about the plight and predicament of the untouchable. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is the pioneer of Dalit literature. Basically the Maharashtra is the place from where the Dalit literary movement has taken its roots. This is the movement for the self respect, equality, freedom and rights. Anna Bhau Sathe, Shankarrao Kharat and the short fiction of Baburao Bagul ('Jhevha Mee Jaat Chorli Hoti'). The works of the poets is noteworthy in this context such as Daya Pawar, Waman Nimbalkar, Tryambak Sarkar, Arjun Dangle, Namdev Dhasal, Umakant Randhir and J.V.Pawar.

The term Dalit goes back to the Purusukta of Rig Veda where the roots of casteism were formed as Brahmana, Kshatriyas, Vaisayas and Sudras. The hierarchy is formed on the basis of the work people do. In this context the caste system which based on birth is repeatedly interrogated. It makes the wall rigid embedded in religious beliefs. Due to this, Sudras become outcaste, marginal and downtrodden in a cultural framework. The exploitation of Dalit by the higher class is much more and therefore, a group of people revolts against injustice, brutality and subordination felt by them.

Arjun Dangle writes :

Dalit Literature is not simply literature, it is associated with a movement to bring about change. It represents the hopes and ambitions of a new society and new people.³

Man is born free and has his human rights for survival. He always struggles for his own existence whenever domination, exploitation and suppression surmount upon them and when might becomes right.

Gangadhar Pantwane defines the term Dalit as:

To me, Dalit is not a caste
He is a man exploited by
the social and economic
traditions of this country.
He does not believe in God,
Rebirth, soul, Holy books teaching
separatism, Fate and Heaven
because they have made him
a slave. He does believe in
humanism. Dalit is a symbol
of change and revolution⁴

Dalit literature challenges main stream literature and asks for equality, freedom and right. It strongly rejects such literary tradition wherein common man's suffering is excluded. It also presents what life was and what it would have been if the problems of untouchability and casteism found no existence right from the beginning. Its main theme is untouchability, the exploitation of Dalit women by higher caste men. It aims at the exposition of the evil caste system deeply rooted in the society and injustice done by higher caste. It is a genuine portrayal

of the suffered in a stereotypical social setup designed by the higher caste. It always uproots the evil of the minds of the people who really make such discriminations and demands for injustice in return. It is of course, a literally product of what is observed, experienced, felt and thought in a specific social environment. It does challenge the evil prevalent in the society and advocates the equality, freedom and well being of the suffered.

Arjun Dangle writes :

The creation of Dalit Literature is inevitable until the structure of society changes and as long as exploitation exists.⁵

It is not merely a depiction of imaginative, symbolic and philosophical writings but a challenge to the culture which generates the feeling of inferiority and superiority. It sensitizes the people who have done the injustice to them. In fact it is a realistic portrayal of the life they led in the imposed social environment. Their language of expression is the native language which becomes a medium of expression based on their own realistic experiences. It is an outcome of their pitiable, pathetic and depressed perspective of life. It is devoid of allusions and myths. It is based on reality but not a relative reality in a downtrodden group of people. It rejects Western theories like Freud's Psychoanalysis, Barthes' Structuralism and Derrida's Deconstructive theory. It also rejects Indian theories of rasa Dhawani. It talks about the sufferings of Dalit which ultimately becomes common voice of group identity endlessly demanding for equality, freedom and human rights. It is protest against the main stream literature which discarded by the people whose existence is no more. It is an outburst cry of the mute sufferers who concealed their pricking existence to be exploited by the higher class since long. Revolt and negativism mark Dalit literature a group of people live in a society with the hopes for freedom as they feel themselves out caste, downtrodden as untouchables. They are the victims of social, economic and cultural inequality in the nation.

Dr. C. B. Bharati writes:

The aim of Dalit Literature is to protest against the established system which is based on injustice and to expose the evil and hypocrisy of the higher castes. There is an urgent need to create a separate aesthetics for Dalit literature, an aesthetics based on the real experiences of life.⁶

The movement gradually brings radical changes in the society struggling for their own existence and constant struggle for survival. It is a struggle for their own identity in the cultural framework designed by the brutal elite people sometimes ago in the history of human existence of survival.

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