

Dalit Literature and the Sufferings of Dalits

N.Lakshmi

M.A English, Dr.Umayal Ramanathan College for Women, Karaikudi

OPEN ACCESS

Volume : 6

Special Issue : 1

Month : September

Year: 2018

ISSN: 2320-2645

Impact Factor: 4.110

Citation:

Lakshmi, N. "Dalit Literature and the Sufferings of Dalits." *Shanlax International Journal of English*, vol. 6, no. S1, 2018, pp. 21–23.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1421115>

“Literature has become an important means of understanding and interpreting the human beings in this society such as politics, religion, economics, social conflicts, class struggles, and human conditions”. In other words, Literature is having two important things: one is language and the another one is human society that speaks a language. There are many languages all over the world. In each language, there is a poetry, short story, drama, fiction, prose etc., Of that, ‘Dalit literature is mainly focused literature nowadays. Dalit writing is a post-independence literary theory. The evolution and the emergence of Dalit literature has a great historical importance. Dalit literature tells about the oppression and despair of the lives of the marginalized class, which was vast in population in many other parts of the world. In India, it was under the name of ‘cast’, and in the western world, it was under the name of ‘race’.

Dalit literature is literature about Dalits (broken or oppressed) is not a new word, it was used in 1930’s as a Hindi and Marathi translation of ‘depressed classes’. So, Dalit is not just a caste, it is a symbol of reformation. The main aim of Dalit literature is the liberation of the Dalits.

There are four layered ‘varna’ systems comprising four kinds of the people in this society, who were born from the body of Lord Vishnu. According to the myth, 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. So, shudra considered as a slave or servant, their job is to serve the rest of the society, because they were born out of feet. Dalit considered as an inferior part of the society. They were doing inferior jobs like leather work, butchering, or cleaning the streets, removing the animal carcasses and waste. They clean the streets, latrines, sewer etc., Dalits who engaged in those activities are banished from the Hindu social life. They are strictly restricted not to enter into the temples, not allowed to fetch water from the outside tanks or wells. Shudras were considered as outcasts, downtrodden, polluted, marginals and are explained by the high class people. Mahatma Gandhi referred them as ‘Harijan’, and Dr. Ambedkar called them as ‘Dalit’.

The word ‘Dalit’ comes from the Sanskrit, which means ‘downtrodden’, ‘suppressed’, ‘crushed’, or ‘broken to pieces’. The

hindu religion order considered the touch, speech, shadow of the downtrodden people as impure. They regarded them as 'untouchables'. They should not wear gold ornaments or property ,they should live outside the village and own only dogs and donkeys. They should have their food only in clay utensils, use only the long clothes wrapped for the burial dead bodies, and take only crude names. For thousands of years, they never get any freedom to have property , power and positions. Because , the Brahmins says that it is god-made, and not man –made. There are several terms to describes the lower caste community such as 'anti-shudra', ' scheduled castes', ' exterior castes', 'outcastes', 'depressed classes', 'ex-touchables' and so on. Dalit literature is the literature which portrays the sorrows, slavery, poverty of dalits. This Dalit literature is a image of grief.

Some of the important writers are Maha Sweta Devi, Namdeo Dhasal, Daya Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Sachi Rautray, Rabi Singh, Basudev Susani, Poomani, Imayan, Marku, Mangal Rathod, Neerav Patel, Abhimani, Bama, Perumal Murugan, Palamalai, Sudhakar, D.Gopi, and others. In the year 1992, Indian literature started a new chapter with the publications of Arjun Dangle's 'poisoned bread', which was the first ever attempt to anthologize Dalit writings in English. But today, we have several collections of stories, poetries, prose, dramas of Dalit writings emerged in both Indian languages and also in English. Following are the some of the most widely famous writers of Dalit literature that are available in English translations are :Bama's 'Karukku', and 'Sangati', Dr. Narendra Jadhav's 'untouchables:My family's triumphant journey out of the caste system in Modern India', Sharankumar Limbale's 'The outside :akkarmashi, Joseph Macwan's 'The stepchild', Om Prakash Valmili's 'Joothan: A Dalit's life'. Some of the prominent Dalit writers are Daya Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Dutta Bhagat, Lakshman Mane, Neerav Patel, Palamalai , Baburao Bagul, Rabi Singh, Sudhakar. The leading Dalit writers like Annabhau Sathe and Namdeo Dhasal.

There is a plenty of Dalit poetry expressing the harsh experience of poet's life effectively. Narayan Survey was one of the important poets in the early Dalit literature. His famous poem was 'Vidhyapith'. The other poets like Keshav Meshra-Utkhanam, Daya Pawar-Kondwada, Namdeo Dhasal- Golpitha, Triyambak Sapkal- Surung . The contemporary Dalit poetry protest against the oppressive traditional burden or restrictions. It creates awareness about Dalit reform movements.

Annabhau Sathe is a dominant literary figure in Dalit literature in Maharashtra. He is the founder of the powerful Dalit novels and short stories. Annabhau Sathe He was born on 1920 in vategaon, sangli in the state of Maharashtra, India. He was an Indian poet, writer, social reformer, and activist. He wrote 35 novels in the Marathi language . His nineteenth novel titled 'Fakira' was among his best work. For his work, he was rewarded with a stste award in the year 1961. Besides novels, he wrote short stories which have been translated in various Indian and Foreign languages as well . He also wrote a travelogues on Russia , ten ballads, twelve screenplays, and a play in the Marathi language. He then become an advocate of Dalits and started writing stories based on the life experiences of workers and Dalits. He died on 1969 in India, aged 48.

'Fakira' the award winning novel of Annabhau Sathe successfully depicts the social reality of the Dalit people . It is the most interesting ,encouraging, realistic story of Dalit life .He also shows the troubles, tortures, exploitation of the downtrodden people by the upper caste. The story 'Fakira' happens in vategaon and has a rural setting. The fakira novel is a finest example of Dalit literature. Fakira is his masterpiece. Annabhau Sathe' heroes are all dominant. They fight against the injustice against them or injustice against others. Fakira , sattu, vishnupant, ranba are all Annabhau Sathe's dominant characters. They stand as aepitome of morals and values. His novel Fakira became very famous and he tried to make it as a movie. His experience has been occurred from the lowest category people especially the people who are neglected and deserted from the society. His relation with those people is unbreakable. Annabhau Sathe dedicated this novel to Babasaheb Ambedkar.

The protagonist of this novel Fakira ,was a rebel , who protest against the oppression of the downtrodden people as well as the Brahminical structure. Fakira gathers all untouchable castes to fight against the british and brakmins. Annabhau sathe, in the form of fakira, support and work hard for the lower caste people. Anna created a symbol for the entire Dalit struggle. Fakira tells us that a Dalit man comes to a real life and now identifies his enemies, and companion in a rebel. It also exposes the oppressors-both locals and outsiders. Annabhau Sathe tell us that to attain such freedom, all Dalits should come together to fight against them. The novel Fakira also symbolized the life of the Shivaji Maharaj, who fought against muslim invaders,Brahmins and upper caste marathis. Annabhau Sathe was a man who created the history of people through his novels and short stories .

On the whole, Dalit literature gives the message about one community not individual story, it is about revolt not passivity;about progress not backwardness. To some extent ,Dalit in India compared with the African-American. Dalit authors questioned the society about the religion, freedom and identity of Dalit ,throughout the literature. It could be said that the dalit literature achieved a firm foundation in the mid 20th century. Dalit writers published numerous journals .They also have a number of political organizations supporting them .Dalit literature is a new dimension in the day today and used up literature.

References

- Karade S.D., Dalit Sahitya Aani Chikitsa. Swarup Publications,Aurangabad,2001
Representative stories – Annabhau Sathe/ Sampa/ Preamble Dr.S.s. Bhole
Fakira –Annabhau Sathe
Marathi novel, Maharashtra a Sahitya pratima – Pro.Bapat, Pro.Godpol, Vinas publication. Pune