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Dalit English Literature of the 21st Century

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Literature is the expression of the society. It is projection of thoughts and reflection of life in various periods and situations. When it is a unique word and when it has worldwide arena, how did dalit literature emerge? Dalit literature is now a defined branch in literature. Dalit literature in fact was first oral. The songs sung and the stories told were mostly oral as the dalits of ancient ages were not literates so that they can write their stories and poetry of experiences.

It has always been a challenging task for new voices to create a space for themselves in the mainstream literary canon. Dalit literature is often dismissed by mainstream critics as they find it non-literary and devoid of literary aesthetics, because it deals only with caste exploitation and humiliation. Shrawan K Sharma argues, "Dalit writer fails to be impersonal", and N.S. Phadhe, proclaims that, "the kind of contexts and events that are needed to add color to a novel are not found in Dalit lives". Such contentions against Dalit literature bring urgency for a legitimate analysis of the question of what literary aesthetics really means, i.e. whether is it fixed structure of universal literary codes invariably applicable for the aesthetic assessment of every genre, or the aesthetic assessment of every literary piece varies in relation to its genre and the context in which it is being analysed.

The present paper will attempt to trace the journey of Dalits from ancient India to present time. It will emphasize upon the differences of life of Dalits in villages and metropolitan cities in

India. The Dalit movement is a struggle against anti-caste movement to build a modern democratic and secular Indian identity.

Dalit literature is literature written by the Dalits, those who are oppressed by the Indian caste system. Dalit literature forms an important and distinct part of Indian literature¹. Dalit literature emerged in the 1960s, starting with the Marathi language, and soon appeared in Hindi, Kannada, Telugu, Bangla and Tamil languages, through narratives such as poems, shorts stories, and most autobiographies, which stood out due to their stark portrayal of reality and the Dalit political scene.² Dalit literature denounced as petty and false then prevailing portrayal of life be the Sadashiv Pethe literature which lacked mention of the object time, from the higher castes. It is often compared with African-American literature especially in its depiction of issues of racial segregation and injustice, as seen in slave narratives.³

Dr. Bheem Roa Ambedkar, a great visionary modern renaissance leader, the architect of the Constitution of India and an ardent critic of the caste system, which tooled the myth of the divine origin of the caste hierarchy. He inspired and initiated the creative minds of India to enforce the socio-cultural boom for the total emancipation of Dalits.

Dalitism is the ideological habitat where various socio-cultural sensitivities and political-economic groups coexist. Opposition to Hindu traditions in general intellectual and oppressive caste hierarchy, in particular, is the central concern of the movement.

Dalit literary movement began in Maharashtra, the home state of Dr. Ambedkar. A collective effort of neo-Buddhist elites creates a new culture of social equality. It is based on broad socio-culture, political ideas that transcend the narrow space of the old concepts of cultural and social hierarchy to new open spaces. Uttam Bhoite, and Anuradha have described as an

organised protest movement against traditional Hindu social theories of life and liberation. A sense of collective identity and solidarity are seminal to a protest movement. Dalit literature was evolving into a dialogical structure in this direction as a communication system for various segments of the dalit movement, dalit writers and intellectuals. Written Dalit is leading the oppressed, the untouchables, victims and oppressors. It is our hope that what you write must be read by the untouchables. Our writers wish fervently to be read by palpable too?

Dalit poetry became popular primarily through poetry readings and alternative media such as small magazines and posters and billboards and creative collective. Birds of a feather from other states of India were inspired by the liberating spirit, style straight, strong, poetic and moving images. Great poets like Narayan Survey, Namdeo Dhasal, Daya Pawar, Arun Kamble, Saran Kumar, Arun Dangle, and many other poets wrote poetry for Indian incredibly in the sixties and seventies about the life and struggles of the lower strata, the lower caste. The importance of Dalit poetry in modern poetry in India is undoubtedly great and worthy. Movements could consolidate numerous socio-cultural and ecological in postcolonial India. It's great and powerful even though some of its leaders were abducted at the power games of the ruling parties of the political class in India.

Dalit means broken, oppressed, untouchable, oppressed and exploited. They come from poor communities that under the caste system of India used to be known as untouchables. Constitute almost 16% of India's population. The caste system, with a history of over 3000 years in India, is a shameful system of social segregation, which works on the principle of purity and impurity. Purity is rich and white or whitish, impurity is poor and dark. Occult powers of wealth can be easily traced in each feudal Brahmanical concept of the ideal. Middle material purity

and beauty and importance, control and comfort is also wealth. Economic divide is reflected in social classifications. But it should be recorded that caste is racial or economic. Dr. Ambedkar said that the caste system arose long after the different races of India had mixed in blood and culture. To hold that distinctions of caste are really distinctions of race and to treat different castes as though they were so many different races is a serious perversion of historical facts. Ambedkar asks: What affinity between the Untouchable of Bengal and the untouchable of Madras? The Brahmin of Punjab is racially the same stock as the Chamar of the Punjab and Madras Brahman is the same race as the Pariah of Madras. The caste system does not demarcate racial division. (Annihilation of caste) in the writings and speeches vol.1. Dr. BR Ambedkar P.49)

Historically, the caste system is a socio-cultural threat of Hinduism. But it is followed by Muslims, Sikhs and Christians in the country. Traditional Indian society is divided into four hierarchical caste groups: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Beyond this fourfold caste structure, there is a category of ati-Shudras or Dalits (as they are called now), who is forced to occupy the lowest position in the social order aberrant. An evil and shameful waste of feudalism is long history in India. The practice of untouchability was officially banned by the Constitution of India (for the mastermind of Dr. BR Ambedkar) in 1950. But in practice, the Dalits are still subjected to extreme forms of social and economic exclusion and discrimination, physical and mental torture. His attempts to enforce their rights often encounter strong resistance from the upper castes, leading to inhumane torture, rape, massacres and other atrocities.

Reality Dalits in India today is not a mark of national pride. According to official statistics, it is estimated that millions of Dalits are manual scavengers who clean public latrines and dispose of dead animals 80% of Dalits live in rural areas and 86% of Dalits are landless. 60% of Dalits are dependent on informal

work. Only 37% of Dalits are illiterate. Dalit women are raped every day. At least a crime is committed against a Dalit every day. According to the 2011 population census Dalit current is 16.2% of the total population of India. Independent India has witnessed many violent crimes motivated by hatred and caste, even though the country's legislation does not allow it.

The Dalit middle class, in particular, sees economic reforms more as a "challenge" than an opportunity. Notwithstanding the fact that the reform-led new economy is introducing a host of "caste-neutral" occupations, Dalits see the new political consensus on reforms as undermining the grand consensus India had arrived at six decades ago. With the launch of the Republic in 1950, India's political class had agreed to integrate Dalits with the mainstream society and its economy. Now, Dalits worry that due to reform-led privatisation and job cuts in the public sector, the Dalit middle class is getting a short shrift. Since 1991, Congress and the BJP both have taken turns in power. Even regional parties with committed Left support have had their share of ruling India. But none of them truly appreciated that a Dalit concern existed.

Recently, The Indian Government is giving a push to government's financial inclusion programme; The Indian Government also launched the Stand-up India scheme under which 1.25 lakh bank branches will provide loans up to Rs. 1 crore to SC/ST and women entrepreneurs. It also flagged off 5100 e-rickshaws.

This scheme will help in creating 2.5 lakh entrepreneurs throughout the country as every bank branch will be required to provide two such loans ranging from Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 1 crore without collateral for setting up a new enterprise. Stressing that it is not possible for the government to provide jobs to everyone, this scheme will convert "job-seekers into job-creators...This scheme is going to transform the lives of people from dalit and tribal communities." We ought to remember that unless linkages

between occupation and caste disappear, caste will never be eliminated from India's public sphere.⁵

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