

alone.... It voices my joys, my longings, my / Hopes ..." (*An Introduction*)

Celebration of life:

Women are blessed with a spirit of resilience that helps them endure the worst of circumstances and survive against all odds. Life personified, a woman not only survives but emerges triumphant in an assertion of the self and a joy; a celebration of love, life and nature. Monika Verma comes across as a woman poet totally in control of her life and destiny; confident and assertive. Her poetry is a celebration of life, nature and her identity as a woman with which she is in complete harmony.

The essence of living is beauty.
Grapes and wine may have a more subtle flavor
(*'The Essence of Living'*)

She rejoices life and asks, "why should I grieve –/There is laughter in a silver thread breeze." (*In this Loud World*). The silent and patient strength of a woman is a quality to be proud of and celebrated for its endurance to survive. Imtiaz Dharkar celebrates this resilience innate to a woman, "It is women who know/ You can take in/ the invader time after time/ and still be whole." Women have utilized literature as a medium to raise consciousness and reform society towards adopting a more equalitarian structure. Women's poetry in English is not only an outpouring of a poet's personal emotions and anguish but an articulation of their spirit of endurance; their heroism, strength and their weakness and vulnerability. Indian women poets have carved out a niche for themselves. They have drawn a distinct image of woman burdened down by the load of traditions and decorum set by the patriarchal society. In its early stages poets represented women in the mould of the ideal and traditional image of Indian women as depicted in the ancient myth and legends.

Women's Poetry however transformed dramatically with the arrival of rebellious and outspoken modern poets who changed the entire gamut of Indian English Women's Poetry. Their sensitive and sentimental approach fused with an indomitable spirit and boldness created a profound effect on the genre. The path shown by such impressive predecessors was eagerly taken up and followed by the later poets. A portrayal of women's issues, their exploitation, pain and anguish, rebellion, breaking of conventions and rules, personal reminiscences, quest for self and emancipation characterizes Indian English poetry today. Apart from the poets mentioned there are several talented poets who have equally contributed to the enrichment of the genre like, Jane Bhandari, Marilyn Noronha, Mukta Sambrani, etc. Modern women's poetry is no longer a mere form of self expression but a means to give expression to a woman's perception of social, political and cultural issues. Commenting on the development and transformation of the genre to its present stature Pashupati Jha comments:

Although Indian English poetry written by women marked its presence in the nineteenth century with the arrival of Toru Dutt, further reinforced by Sarojini Naidu in the next century; this poetry, despite its strength and importance, lacked a sense of immediacy and intimacy of personal experience. These poets were more concerned with establishing their credential as an Indian poet writing in English than with the exploration of their inner urge...but after the mixed sixties of the twentieth century, a perceptive change was noticed with the emergence of 'I'- an assertive self in the poetry of Kamla Das and this trend went on gathering strength with Mamta Kalia, Eunice De Souza ... (Jha)

The woman has shed her subdued image and emerged free and vibrant as Kamla Das had said in her poem '*I Shall Some Day*':

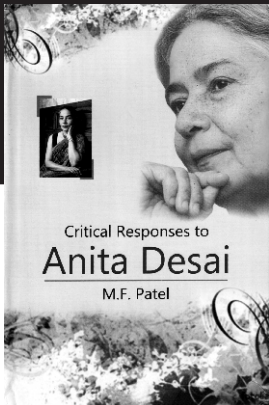
I shall some day leave, leave the cocoon
you built around me ..."

Women's voice is no longer a voice suppressed and subdued. It has broken the shackles of patriarchy and flown free towards the horizon of freedom and equality. Femininity is a quality of being a woman but it's not a prerogative of her weakness or marginality. Like the contemporary woman, aware and proud of her identity as a woman, Indian English Women's Poetry is sensitive and sentimental yet profound and bold in assertion of its distinctive self-identity.

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Critical Responses to Anita Desai
- M.F. Patel (Ed.)

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A compilation of 24 research articles analyzing the psychological pragmatism, feminist concerns and the interior turmoil and sensibility of Women in the novels of Anita Desai. The different themes in her fiction like rootlessness, alienation, anxiety, marital disharmony and interpersonal relationships are extensively explored in this anthology.

Dalitism: Sufferings of Past as “Pains of Death”

- Priyanka Sharma

Abstract

Literature always anticipates life. Dalit Literature, born out of pain and poverty, reflects the nuances of various diachronic paroxysms molded through diverse range of hapless segment of India. Dalit Literature in India is an attempt to bring the forefront the experience of discrimination, humiliation, suppression, anguish and mirror forth the depiction of the ill starred marginalized section of Indian Society. The growing corpus of Dalit Texts, Poems, Short Stories, Novels, and Autobiographies however seeks to ratify the traumas of being an “*untouchable*”. The reality of their life is too hideously shocking rather beyond the capacity of fantasy or imagination and their tragedy is universal, trampling down and disfiguring their humanity. This paper is an attempt to explore the different ways where Dalits “*the untouchables*” have faced an enormous burden of oppression and exploitation as a result of the stigma of defilement.

Keywords- Discrimination, Humiliation, Suppression, Anguish, defilement.

*“Those who eat goats, foul and tiny fish:
Such, they call caste people.
Those who eat the sacred Cow
That showers frothing milk for Shiva:
Such, they call out-castes”.
(Dalit Saint Kalavve)*

The Nineteenth century is the environment where the ideas of Nationalism, Independence, Radicalism, and Liberalism first began to grow on Indian soil. It is said that in the process of Indian social change, Religion became a primary step to build a virtually united nation. The human societies had to change voluntarily and involuntarily. The “*caste*” as a definition is not a native term but a description that was used first by the Portuguese who appeared on the sub-continent from the end of the fifteenth century. The word “Dalit” is the *gift* of the caste system of Indian civilization. This word “Dalit” has been derived from the root “*Dal*” which signifies crack, open, split, etc. Dalit has come to mean, things, or persons burst, spilt, broken or torn asunder, downtrodden, scattered, crushed and destroyed. The Dalits were “*outcaste*” because they were not fit to be included in the four folds graded caste structure of the Indian society and were in the state of being a “*No People*”. The Dalit Literature,

though written in different languages, in different geographical backgrounds, shares the common themes, the common sufferings, discrimination, exploitation and injustice. Shame, anger, sorrow and indomitable hope identify Dalit literature, because the motive and the focus of this literature is the liberation of Dalits, their struggle against casteist tradition. It emerges out of the attempt in seeking a new identity, name, and place for themselves.

Marathi Dalit Literature is the forerunner that made use of writing as a method of propaganda for the Dalit movement. Namdeo Dhasal was one of the founder leaders of the Dalit Panthers movement, which flowered into a renaissance of Marathi Literature. Dhasal's writings represent the anger and reflect the untouchable's protest voice against oppression. His first collection of poems *Golpitha* (1972) took Marathi literary circles by storm and broke all the rules of traditional Marathi literature. Here he is found saying that Man should explode. *Golpitha* (name of a red light district in Mumbai) depicts the tough life of a Dalit and is marked with 'raw energy exuded by each of its words entirely unfamiliar to the established literary circle of its time'. His works include *Moorkh Mhataryane*, *Itihasatil Apaphavya*, *Khel*, *Priya Darshin*, *Ambedkari Chalawal*, *Tuhi Iyatta Khanchi* and two novels *Negative Space* and *Hadki Hadawala*. These untouchables of India have contributed to remain neglected and ostracized in his works. Physical contact with these untouchables was said to be a "polluting" and worse still, even their shadows were considered "defiling".

Sharankumar Limbale's titled "*Akkarmashi*" (Bastard) mirror forth caste stigma which follows everywhere in the city. The excruciating poverty of his childhood is described in simple and in evocative language. The most pathetic being is shown when his grandmother eats *bhakis* made out of millets taken from cow dung, establishing economics inequality as a handmaiden of caste hierarchies. It is undoubtedly a wishful thinking that caste, also being a geo- demographic system, could simply fade out and not carry any relevance if only the people displaced. At the village level, caste may no longer be a system of production, but it remains a set of coded practices. He mentioned the heart-rending methods of fighting hunger in his autobiography "*Akkarmashi*". He writes when somebody's wheat flour fell on dusty road and the upper portion of the flour was collected by the man then he reached there to collect the remaining flour (mixed in dust) which he gives to his mother, who praised him a lot for this raw food. The word *Akkarmashi*, used in the specific context also means the illegitimate. Limbale was branded as illegitimate by his community, as he was born of a sexual relationship outside marriage, between an upper caste man and a Dalit woman. These autobiographies and biographies not only deal with the institution of caste as a means of oppression, but also show how economic deprivation and poverty go hand in hand. The "*sense of injustice*" created through prevailing social exclusion and victimization made the Dalit to demand for a new status of

a “*recognized victim*”. By this statement I mean, primarily the powerless, the oppressed, the marginalized, the exploited are now struggling to win back to maintain their dignity and reflecting their struggles for liberations from the structures which marginalize them.

Arjum Dangle portrays a harrowing picture of these victims's wretchedness in one of his poems entitled “*Chhavni Hilti Ha*” (The Cantonment Has Began to Shake) where he affirms these poor as “*crucified peoples*”. He mirrors forth their sufferings and sheds light on the evils and an injustice prevalent in the society. His poem focuses on Dalits who are still marginalized and despite many movements and ongoing struggles; the ruling upper caste does not consider these poor as people. His major work “*Poisoned Bread*” focuses over the long Silence, prejudice and social oppression of these Maharashtra dalits. His writing is an exposition of the bitterness of his personal experiences and observations. It is perceived that a Dalit believes in humanism, rejects the existence of God, rebirth the soul, 'scared' books that teaches discrimination, fate and heaven because these have made him a slave, an exploited man in his own country.

This paper is an attempt to explore the different ways where “Dalits”, the ‘untouchables’ have faced an enormous burden of oppression and exploitation as a result of stigma of defilement. The dirt of the caste constructions continues to stigmatize the schedule caste undermining all efforts to demystify the prejudice and also stigmatize the conception of dirt. The rudiments of Dalit consciousness in Contemporary India may be found in Toru Dutt's poem “*Buttoo*” which eco the pitiable plight of a Dalit. “*Buttoo*” refers the great Indian epic Mahabharata and records the story of Eklavya who was refused training in archery for not having been born in the right caste. She rightly calls the hunter-class youth, famous as Ekalavya. 'VATU' as he is possessed of Brahma-knowledge, though unsophisticated. He was completely outside the pale; he was not even allowed to approach the school for primary education. Not knowing the lowness of his caste he aspires to learn archery of the Brahmin guru Dronacharya. His unlettered mind does not deem it necessary that the guru should be worshipped only in flesh and blood It is to be considered when he acquired the art (despite no guidance) he was mutilated and incapacitated. This poem is truly an Aristotelian tragedy, which, while purging us of bad emotions, ennobles our souls.

The first poem on Dalits in print was “*Achut Kee Shikayat*” (The Complaint of the Untouchable) composed by Heera Dom in the year 1914 focuses on the injustice, exploitation and deplorable plights of these poor Dalits. Even the presences of these “untouchables” were considered to be the bad omen in the view to upper caste and especially to the Brahmins. Munshi Harihar Prasad Tamta's “*Samta*”(1934), Sohan Lal Sastry's “*Uttan*”(1949) and Mevaram Mahashay's “*Jameen Ka Tata*” prominently shows the suffered class-antagonism, tyranny and injustice without any rhyme or reason; the insult and the trails and tribulations, the

'fret and fever'. Dr. Ambedkar's stress was not only on equality in religion, society and power in political but also an education and cultural creativity. He desired to create a new space for Dalits. He out rightly rejected all role models, traditional literature, eastern and western critical theories and decided to create an identity of their own. Hindu society remains caste divided community and untouchables were the section of the lowest caste in Indian society. Mulk Raj Anand, a Reformist, is against caste system in India. His novel "*Untouchable*" is about a life of an outcaste Bakha, a young sweeper living in the outcaste's colony in north India. In this novel Anand presented a powerful critique of the Indian caste system and British colonial domination which was increasing the suffering of outcaste such as Bakha. The novel narrates a day in the life of Bakha and his hardships that he faced in the course of the day. "*Coolie*", his political conscious novel tells the experiences of Munoo an orphan, from the time he leaves his village in the Punjab till he dies of consumption in Shimla. His famous trilogy after *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *The Village*, *Across the Black Water* and *The Sword and the Sickle* was faithful depiction of the theme of exploitation and also a strong protest against social injustice. Though the philosophy of Indian scriptures is paralleled, it is unfortunate that Brahmanical interpretations of the scriptures made perverted attempts to create abominable hierarchies among human beings. Thus the Dalits were segregated and ostracized from mainstream.

Dalits living in the most crowded parts of free India are physically segregated and socially completely isolated from fellow Indians. They have become one of the most exploited peripheral groups in the Indian society. Predominantly rural, they have been mainly landless rural agricultural laborers, marginal share-croppers and farmers commonly indebted beyond redemption. Humanity I agree should be categorized into three groups. In the first group are those who follow the life of worldly mindedness (*pravritimarga*). In the second group are those who follow the path of renunciation (*nivritimarga*) and the third one, who is the real need of the hour, are those who serve humanity, leading them on the spiritual path (*bhaktimarga*). In spite of these caste, class and prevailing groups in the Indian society caste system with the history of more than 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 rather whitish, impurity is poor and dark. Hidden powers of wealth can be easily traced in every feudal Brahmanical concept of the ideal.

Omprakash Valmiki's "*Joothan*" is a Metaphor of Poverty, Pollution and Humiliation. The word 'Joothan' refers to the leavings of the plate of a person, after he/she has finished eating. The word has connotations of 'pollution' attached to it. "*Joothan*", ethnography of justice, narrates the every day life, customs and beliefs of the communities and of those social practices which is constantly shifting its focus between the individual and the community. Like an ethnographer, the author's document instances of deprivation, sufferings, violation experienced and also resistance