

THE BREAKTHROUGH: DALIT WOMEN WRITERS AND SOCIAL REFORMATION

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Abstract: The origins of Dalit literature are revealed to be a revolution and a struggle to bring about socio-economic change along with the ontology-based establishment of a Dalit identity in society. It elaborates on various facets of the true meaning of Dalit literature. Therefore, Dalit literature aims to dismantle the conventional, reactionary, and conservative attitude associated with the downtrodden sector -the Dalits of India. Many different and distinctive philosophies exist that emphasize women's dominance, their marginalisation, and their drive for freedom owing to the "dissimilarity" in their communal, political, and educational contexts. Though feminism has been recognised as an ideology with global significance, the vitality of various feminist groups is handled in multifarious social and enriching contexts in a variety of ways. This paper envisages an overview of Dalit literature and proposes to see how far the female Dalit authors' contribution to literature has created paths for modification of current trends.

Keywords: Dalit Identity, Marginalization, Conventionalism, Conservatism, Communalism, Feminist, Social Issues, Dalit Literature, Untouchable

Generally, the term "Dalit" has been adopted to refer to the untouchables in India. As with Adivasis, landless homestead workers, labourers, the enduring masses, migrant and criminal clans, and ladies, "Dalit" is an umbrella term used to refer to the defenceless section of Indian society who lives at the outskirts of the town. The term Dalit is applicable to everyone who has in some way fallen behind socially and financially in the nation's formative process and not just the untouchables. Different interpretations of the term "Dalit" have been given by different researchers (Kumar, 2019). There can be an ongoing discussion on potential Dalit authors as part of the fictional analysis process (Rao, 2009). Even the most progressive and ground breaking writers, including Prem Chand, Mulk Raj Anand, T. S. Pillai, V. S. Khandekar, and some other people who had been assumed to symbolise the Dalit energies, have been evidently underappreciated. According to Dalit authors, only a Dalit by genetics may possess the power and expertise necessary to be considered a true Dalit writer. Their writings are the literature that reflects their life. The struggle the Dalits have been through for social transformation has served as the inspiration for their writing. The postmodernist era of the 20th century has given birth to a democratic movement which aimed to create a fair society in which people would be treated equally without any differentiation of their caste, colour, or nation. The underprivileged, downtrodden, and indigenous segments of the society were motivated to join hands by their common desire for equality and human rights. India wasn't far behind and the humanist movement had created an impact there. In opposition to the traditional and stigmatised societal mindset and culture, social

reform movements have accelerated. The caste system, which has been primarily responsible for societal oppression and injustice to the Dalit people for decades, has been challenged by the revolution that aimed to bring about a social transformation promoting equality among all. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotiba Phule were among the pioneering leaders who stood up against all prejudice and repression. Dalit literature, thus, developed into a fruitful tool for expressing their opinions.

Dalit literature was originally written in the Marathi language. However, from the 1960s, various other languages, including Gujarati, gained popularity. Following the Gujarat anti-reservation agitation, it gained considerable prominence in the 1980s. Dalit literature in Gujarati language is currently a well-established genre. Dalit writing encompasses unique ideals, forms, styles and aesthetics owing to its prima facie target of narrating Dalit issues, failures, hardships and frustrations. The primary medium, regional or vernacular languages, captures the quintessential essence of the social environment at the grassroots level. However, despite being published in regional languages, it is the primary aim of Dalit literature to let everyone comprehend their plight, their aspirations and situations all over the world. Even, translation significantly contributes to this in many ways. A competent and accurate translation of the Dalit Literary works into English Language familiarizes the world with Dalit Literature and makes people around the globe aware of their problems. It is the English language bearing a universal and international status that makes it a key component in achieving this goal. An English translation of Dalit literature besides expanding its readership also adds to the canon of popular literature.

A collaboration with the movements like the US Black Panthers and the Indian Naxalite movement, Maharashtra emerged as the birthplace of Dalit writing. In addition, a pivotal role was also played by the anti-Vietnam War Movement and the Leftist upheavals. The Black Panthers movement also bore a good impact on the Dalit Panthers. In the present scenario, some little magazines held out their hands to act as a platform to open up previously untapped avenues (market) for aspiring Dalit authors. Baburao Bagul, Namdeo Dhasal, Sharan Kumar Limbale, Yashwant Manohar, Arjun Dangle, Daya Pawar, and Shankarrao Karat were a few notable individuals who were active during the time as Indian Dalit writers. To add to this list, there are some Dalit women writers who too were active participants in the Dalit movement that started writing and experimenting with various structures. The suppressed, pitiable, miserable plight of the people for centuries erupted as a dormant volcano does, in sonnets, short stories, and memoir collections. The writing presented by Dalit women in Maharashtra was known as "Sri Dalit Sahitya." Journalists including Baby Kamble, Kumud Pawde, Urmila Pawar, and Sumitra Bhave wrote about their so long pent up miseries, problems, unforgettable humiliations and experiences as members of the marginalized Dalit community. Bengali writers Manju Bala and Kalyani Thakur Charal too contributed

to Dalit literature with their empirical studies. During that period, some women have become prominent artists in various parts of India, particularly the southern region. These artists include activists Ruth Manorama and Swathy Margaret, as well as scholars Bama, Sivakami, Sukirtharani, and Meena Kandasamy (all four from Tamil Nadu), Gogu Syamala, Challapalli Swaroopa Rani (from Andhra Pradesh), and Du Saraswathi (from Karnataka). There has been a surge in the creation of abstract journals that support Dalit compositions like *Hans*. There has been an increase in Dalit composition interpretations during the last couple of years. These include analyses of specific works by Dalit scholars, as well as Treasuries with a variety of authors and types (Rao, S. 2001). More recent copies of one of the earlier interpretations from *Marathi Poisoned Bread* (1994) have been published. A few clear examples include the compilations *Writing Caste/Writing Gender* (2006), *No Alphabet in Sight* (2011), *An Anthology of Gujarati Dalit Literature* (2011), *Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012), and *Steel Nibs are Growing* (2013). Another emerging area in English-language literature is the treatment of Dalit characters' conditions. One of the major projects involves *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry (1995). Other works include *Serious Men* (2010) by Manu Joseph and *Hitchhiker* (2005) by Vinod George Joseph. It should be noted that, with the exception of a few essayists like Meena Kandasamy and writers like Sivakami (2006), who have deciphered their own original works, the majority of journalists have been trying to put forward the experiences of others. An uncharacteristically prolonged period of Dalit abstract, social, and political articulations has been in vogue over the past two decades. This has not only triggered greater accessibility to such literature but also promoted a fascination with the different tools. It is important to point out that the term "Dalit" is a conversation that is just now beginning to gain grounds. The specific pressures of the author, essayist, or legislator are conveyed in each story, work, and political discussion while also creating a shared social space for Dalits. The possibility of the Dalit is handled on the basis of mutual comprehension of forbiddance and suffering, as well as on the norms of populist change. It ought to be introspected and assimilated through the given nuances in vernacular, locale, sub-standings and class. Thus, every articulation conveys the Dalit voice, and doing so while keeping this in mind also makes it a strategy of the Dalit voice. To Ranciere, literature can disturb and redistribute the system of divisions and hierarchies that define what is visible and audible in the aesthetic-political regime (Ranciere, 2004). It represents the power that tears bodies away from their 'natural' destination, from ascribed places and functions. By giving names, inventing singularities and subjects, making visible and audible what was previously invisible, inaudible or unsayable', and challenging the exclusive system of repartition between what is 'same' and 'other', proper and improper, noble and vile, but also what 'counts' and what does not, this literature is intimately linked to the political. The body of 'Dalit literature' has grown to such a considerable

extent from the late 1960s onwards, and now concerns so many genres, languages, regions, communities and poetics, that it may be difficult to speak about such a vast body of literature in the singular.

Literature produced by Dalits on Dalit 'experience' remains, by and large, the one common denominator of Dalit. Therefore, the Dalit style must structure itself within this dynamism. Its conception is capable of verbalising experience, understanding moral position, and expressing future. The ideal way to address the genuine traumas of Dalits is the main focus of Dalit literature. Another key characteristic of Dalit literature is that it is not fundamentally an exercise in abstraction. Since Dalit scholars don't use writing in the same way as a constructive tool (making the emancipatory conversation about the Dalit more effective), subjectivity in these personal histories is hindered by the crucial relationship between the individual self and the open self. There is dynamism in the writings of the Dalits. In addition to conveying the heinous brutalities of the past and the deceptive brutality of the present, Dalit short stories stand as the embodiment of the current experience of a type of untouchability. They explain the moral principles, such as greatness, reliability, honesty, and value, and they explore and unearth the process by which Dalits are transformed into fully developed creative humans. The primary goal and message of Dalit literature, which aims to liberate people from oppression, demonstrates that it is not only capable of addressing a small number of real ambiguities and uncertainties but also make a more pressing need to impart the most modern libertarian faction, solidarity, and character to a larger and more comprehensive society. This need has been exposed by Dalit writers over the course of their necessary self-improvement. Over the course of their self-recovery, the Dalit creator similarly discovered a unified and incredibly ordinary stream of thought, code of morals, and consecrated image structure with which significant ideological linkage could be made without obfuscating their recorded truth. This brings their entire effort's epistemological foundation and strong predominance to light. Maharashtra was the birthplace of Dalit writing, which later expanded to other states like Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and others. The term "Dalit" comes from a Sanskrit word that means "pounded" and is cognate to all Sanskrit-derived Indian languages. It is more frequently used than "untouchable." There are a few phrases that have been used for a while to describe the general populace of a distant society, such as "Ati-Shudra," "Outside Castes," "Outcasts," "Depressed Classes," "Scheduled Castes," "Ex Untouchables," etc. Untouchables saw that such phrases, which are damaging and akin to stigmatisation, dominance, and paternalism, were created by upper class Hindus, specialists, and social reformers. Due to this, the general public who identify with this class must identify as "Dalits" despite the distinctive rejection of sullyng, Karma, and supported caste order noted by Eleanor Zelliot. An ancient Marathi word called "Dalit" that means "ground, broken, or crushed to bits" may be found in Molesworth's Marathi English Dictionary from

1975. Dalit workers do similar things and toss out common literature. Traditional feeling which primarily considers the Satya (fact), Shivam (goodness), and Sundaram (superiority) qualities of literature, which need to be reversed. Despite what would be expected, Dalit work entails dependence on the real world and movement within it. Humans are more equipped to do this than God or a country. Dalit works reject contemporary ideas like Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction theory, Roland Barthe's structuralism, and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, and it even rejects Indian conjectures like rasa and Dhawni. C. B. Bharti discusses Dalit style in his work, "The Feel of Dalit Literature." The main aim of Dalit labour, according to him, is to criticise the established system that depends on unfairness and to expose the wickedness and insincerity of the upper classes. There is a pressing need to create a distinctive aesthetic for Dalit poetry, one that is based on real-world experience. The issues affecting upper-caste and upper-middle class women worried the feminist movement in India almost from the outset. They were regarded as "female's evidence" since they occurred. Gopal Guru asked Brahminical Feminism's hegemonic urge to speak for "Indian Female" in his piece "Dalit female Talk in a differently" (Guru, 1995). In conventional feminist discourse, the problems of Dalit women were either not addressed or just given a symbolic voice. This little representation has always made me think of Dalit women. According to Guru's contention during the argument, "communal setting that demonstrates the insight of reality is a major feature that makes the portrayal of Dalit female difficulties by non-Dalit female less acceptable and less genuine." While anti-feminists in India have examined where class and gender intersect, the relationship between caste and gender has not yet been resolved. According to Uma Chakravarti (2018), "class, caste, and gender are intricately interwoven, they interrelate with and form each other, and the caste system is based on the organisation of marriage, sexuality, and procreation." Caste and gender socio-cultural categories are so intertwined in the fabric of Indian society that it is impossible to evaluate them separately. The traditional approaches that eliminate caste and gender concerns have already been researched. Anupama Rao notes that a study of the shared histories and educational experiences of Dalit Bahujan feminists and theorists is necessary to understand their recent advances. Understanding how building is planned and who controls it on the basis of class is important, but it is also crucial to understand how procreation is determined and who controls it on the basis of caste. Through the laws governing sexual relations and marriage, the caste concept legalises and permits the domination of women. It is necessary to restrict women's sexual freedom in order to preserve the distinctiveness of their caste. A ban on inter-caste marriages is intended to protect the purity of caste, which makes the caste system rigid and unfair. So, women's movements stay away from caste-related issues. Feminists advocate that class and caste are irrelevant, and that all women are equally victimised by the patriarchy. It's done in an attempt to foster an unreal sense of female oneness. It is therefore falsely believed that if patriarchy is eliminated, all types of women's

issues will vanish. Capitalism supports both caste and patriarchy, and they are adamant that if patriarchy is addressed, caste would follow suit. The foundation of this argument is the analogy between oppressive women and oppressive members of lower castes. Women's movements in India did not put much effort into addressing the problems faced by Dalit women. Class issues and the subjugation of Dalit women cannot be grouped together (Rao,2009). To understand it, though, a unique framework is required. Every woman who has experienced oppression has a unique tale to share, and it is not simply restricted to caste and class systems. The type of situation they are in, is what determines it the most. Although it can be argued that violence against women occurs frequently throughout the world, societal and economic factors also play a significant impact. For instance, dowry has been linked to numerous incidences of murder, torture, and other forms of abuse, particularly against middle- and upper-class women, in India. Violence against upper-class and middle-class women is a rare occurrence. The patriarchal problems are more prevalent in upper class women than Dalit women. The Hindu mythology of Sita, Savitri, Draupadi, and other figures who exemplified ultimate sacrifice for a husband and children served as the foundation for patriarchy. Dalit women do not "worship" their husbands for patriarchy is not as prevalent among them as it is among the higher caste women. In the Dalit community, women have their own identity and operate independently, free from gender bias to some extent. They are not referred to by their husbands' names'.

The Dalit activist Kancha Ilaiah (Ilaiah,2005) claims that women have greater social and economic independence in her culture. In comparison to other communities, Dalit Feminism is at the top of the list. The ladies are discriminated against twice: as women and as Dalits. Bama was the first Dalit woman to emerge from the shadows. In *Sangati* (Bama, 2005), she presented the autobiography of the Dalit community in Tamil. In the beginning of the book, women are shown as wretched and despairing, but by the end, they are shown to be courageous and fearless despite all the hardships and tribulations they have faced. Talking and laughing with others is the strategy for preventing these issues. They take pleasure in their increased power and fame. In the book, the narrator breaks away from the exclusive ties (shackles) to the neighbourhood and works and lives by herself. She does become independent, which is a noteworthy feat, but she has had to give up her caste name in order to do so. Dalit women have higher levels of education and independence, yet the violence never stops. Raising their voice—protesting against bias and discrimination by leaving behind their frail selves and continuing on while carrying a pen and paper is the answer to this injustice. After the Ambedkar era, the Dalit literary branch has advanced to become a significant literary area. In a Dalit community that is open to numerous social and economic reforms, which, in turn, has led to many revolutionary issues.

The aim of rousing the consciousness that has been impaired owing to the

identity breach has been achieved. If the journey commenced in the 1960s with Marathi, it has now spread its roots to other languages and geographical terrains. The Indian literature, which is rich in literary, social, religious, political, historical, and economic factors, is where this has currently established its branch. In the margins of the Marathi literary canon, the Dalit literature has gone unnoticed and unrecognised. India has treated this poorly, particularly in Maharashtra, where members of the higher caste have demonstrated a great deal of bigotry and neglect towards the lower class. A person's social life has been adversely impacted by the intensity of the texts. Dalit literature is exclusively concerned with the life of Dalits. In other words, it is impossible to judge on aesthetic grounds; instead, one should take into account true, genuine expressions based on experiences. Hence, this paper clearly exposes the power of Dalit writings that too by women as it has changed the society and led to significant changes in people's hearts and thoughts.

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