

To Study The Impact of Untouchability on Dalits

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Abstract

Colonialism had racial undertones which implied a control that people of one race exerted over the 'other' in the name of superiority. The 'Non-whites' were considered inferior in every respect and were continuously othered and marginalized by the 'Whites'. Challenging both White superiority and Black inferiority imposed by unjust systems during the colonial era, Said opines that "whites must be made to realize that they are only human, not superior. Same with Blacks. They must be made to realize that they are also human, not inferior." (...) Hence colonialism exerted a detrimental impact on the physical as well as mental wellbeing of the 'Orientals' leaving them broken, shattered, and displaced with a fluid and hybrid identity. It is interesting to note that this oppression and its consequences did not end with the end of British rule in India, rather it continued in the form of economic and social policies framed and adopted by the dominant section of the society in an independent India, free from the British rule. "Many of the international principles and instruments guided the behavior and response of the so-called superior section of the society [In independent India] which aggravated the internal feuds within the country" (...) While the distinction based on the race and color of the skin was of no consequence in post-independence India, the equation between the superior and the inferior persisted and became an elemental part of the 'free' society.

Keyword: Colonialism, Economic, Social Policies, Oppression

1. Introduction

In their writings, the early Dalit authors mostly depicted caste-based prejudice, exploitation and oppression, poverty, destitution, and exclusion. Now, the situation has changed significantly because of numerous socio-political and cultural elements. Dalits feel bolder and more powerful. They have grown more assertive and are well aware of their rights and advantages. To get their writings published, early Dalit authors had to overcome numerous obstacles. The growth of Dalit writing was slowed back by the Savarna publishers' refusal to print it. But now things have altered significantly. Dalits have launched their own newspapers, periodicals, and journals and set up their own publishing businesses. Dalit literature is becoming widely read as a result of these developments. Dalit authors' writings now reflect their increased self-assurance and empowerment. Dalit literature now has a unique identity of its own. The writing, which began in Maharashtra and with more vigor, is now well-known around the world. Dalit Studies has been incorporated into the curricula of numerous national and international universities. Making Dalits aware of their subjugation and changing the

Sawarnas' hearts and minds were the goals of Dalit writing when it first began. It is making significant progress on these tasks.

Given the significance of autobiographies in fostering "Dalit Consciousness" and forging a robust political identity, a vast number of Dalit autobiographies were produced by Dalit authors in the years following independence. Some of the first important Dalit autobiographies were Daya Pawar's *Baluta* (1978), Lakshman Mane's *Upura* (1980), Shankarrao Kharat's *Taral-Antaral* (1981), Kumud Pawde's *Antasphot* (1981), and Shantabai Kamble's *The Kaleidoscopic Story of My Life* (1983). One of the first Dalit women's autobiographies, *The Kaleidoscopic Story of My Life*, tells the tale of Najabai Sakharam Babar, a Mahar woman from Maharashtra. Shantabai Kamble, a teacher by trade, talks about her oppressive struggle with gender, caste, and class. Shankarrao Kharat's 1981 book *Taral-Antaral* tells the tale of his life and his community. Shankarrao Kharat, who worked with Dr. Ambedkar and was also motivated to write by him, discusses the social, cultural, and psychological changes that Dr. Ambedkar's efforts have brought about in the Dalit community. When Daya Pawar's *Baluta* was initially published, it caused quite a stir in the Marathi literary community. Maruti Dagdi Pawar describes the brutal realities of caste customs in rural Maharashtra in the 1940s and 1950s. However, we also discover the pride and bravery Dalits frequently displayed in their resistance. The book was written by Daya Pawar during the period when the first Dalits were receiving an education. Untouchability was very common at the period, despite the constitution's protections against atrocities for Dalits. Pawar recounts an event during Diwali when he gave away Diwali candy to his neighbors that had not been eaten. According to prominent Dalit author and critic Arjun Dangle, it is an outstanding example of Dalit autobiography. (255). The story of the Kaikadis community's caste-based prejudice and oppression is told in Lakshman Mane's *Upura*, for which he received the coveted Sahitya Academy Award in 1981. The upper castes consistently treat this community poorly because they are a nomadic tribe. The author portrays his life under the oppressive Hindu caste system in a very moving way. As a Kaikadi, Mane describes how the ruling high castes frequently persecute and exclude his community, and occasionally even drive them out of their hamlet. Nomadism (moving from one area to another) and landlessness are the community's crippling characteristics. Kumar (2010), p. 180. They are occasionally unable to remain in locations such as cemeteries or restrooms due to this spatial exclusion and marginalization. As a result, one of the main topics in Dalit discourse is Dalit consciousness. Since the first Dalit autobiography in India, Hazari's *Untouchable: An Autobiography of an Indian Outcaste* (1971), to more recent works like Valmiki's *Joothan* (2003), Dalit autobiographies have played a vital role in fostering Dalit consciousness and forging a robust political identity. Now, let's attempt to distinguish clearly between the elite autobiographies written by Indians of the upper caste starting in the seventeenth century, the autobiographical tradition that developed in the West, and the autobiographical narratives of the Dalits of India, which only appeared after the country attained independence.

2. Review Of Literature

In his study paper *Modes of Resistance in Dalit Feminism: An Insight into Bama's Sangati* (2012), V P Prasara explores the harsh reality of Dalit life and their admirable efforts to

improve their social standing. Although the Dalit women are shown to be depressed and despondent at the start of the book, the latter section highlights the women's strength, bravery, and fortitude despite all of their suffering. They deal with the issues by standing together. They celebrate their newly discovered identity and inner power while chatting and laughing to help them forget their problems. At last, the narrator escapes the grip of her restrictions. She lives alone and works alone. In his article "The Dalit and Non-Dalit Women Biographies (1995)," Radhakisan Yeshwant Madhav emphasizes how perceptions in both Dalit and non-Dalit communities have changed. "The Dalit woman's community is her family, while the upper caste woman's family is her entire universe." Siva Bolleddu Nagaiah One of the most well-known Dalit writers in India, Sharankumar Limbale, was interviewed by Siva in the publication "An Interview with Sharan Kumar Limbale (1995)." In an interview format, this piece explores some of his opinions and viewpoints regarding Dalit literature in India. In his study paper Exploring Converging Dimensions: Dalit and Australian Aboriginal Autobiographies (2012), Dr. Rajesh Kumar claims that Dalit and Aboriginal writings are "narratives of pain" and "resistance" literature. Both works began their literary careers by recounting their life stories, thereby establishing autobiography as a platform for their initial foray into the literary public domain. In his research work, The Dalit Vision and Voice: A Study of Sharan Kumar Limbale's Akkarmashi (2012), Mini Babu notes that Dalit intellectuals use Dalit literature, particularly Dalit autobiographies, as a creative means of resistance. From the canonical to the marginal, from mega-narratives to micro-narratives, from the virtual to the real, and from self-emulation to self-affirmation, Dalit literature is a laborious undertaking.

In his research paper Contextualizing Dalit Aesthetics in Dalit Autobiographies (2012), Dr. Sanjiv Kumar discusses how Dalit writers discuss resistance and assertion through Dalit aesthetics. For them, "writing" itself has evolved into a freeing activity that allows them to express their repressed voices. In his 2013 paper, Dalit Subalternity in Omprakash Valmiki's Autobiography Joothan, Dr. A.P. Pandey tries to demonstrate how Dalit literature examines issues from the perspective of the Dalits. It seeks to raise awareness among Dalits and so-called untouchables about the need to rebel against the injustice and persecution they are subjected to. In his 2013 research paper Identity Crisis in Dalit Short Stories from Maharashtra, Ali Ahmed Khan aims to examine the literary works of the Dalits in India to uncover the voices of resistance and the identity struggle of this oppressed community within caste-ridden India. Preeti Oza compares Dalit and African-American literature in her research paper, Literature of Bias: Intercultural and Cross-Border Comparisons between Dalit Literature and Black American Writings (2013). In his study A Dalit's Voice of Oppression, Resistance and Empowerment: A Critique of K.A. Gunasekaran's The Scar, Ram Naresh explores the hardships and hardships faced by the Dalits in order to survive as well as the place they have made for themselves in Hindu society. In her paper Identity Crisis and Search for 'Self' in Aravind Malagatti's The Government Brahmana, R. Janani explores the idea of searching for oneself and the pursuit of a Dalit's identity after achieving a particular social level. The study also sheds light on the Dalit people's quest for social identity.

3. Objective Of The Thesis

1. Impact of untouchability on dalits
2. Dissenting dalit voices

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Selected texts have been chosen for analysis as part of the current study, which is analytical in character. Additionally, a combination of comparative and theoretical methods would be used. I have selected theories such as post-colonialism, feminism, marginality, Foucault's concept of power dynamics, and subaltern studies under the theoretical approaches heading. Black studies, Holocaust studies, and feminist studies are some of the marginal discourses that I have introduced into comparative studies. By using secondary materials from libraries, organizations, websites, and archives, I have also attempted to further my studies. Additionally, I have included some of the ideas I gained from speaking with the chosen writers over the phone into my research project.

5. Result And Discussion

In recent decades, writers, social activists, and intellectuals have turned their attention to Dalit politics, Dalit awareness, and the Dalit struggle. The elite discourses and literature were impacted by the Dalits' concerns. As the Dalit struggle gained prominence, Dalit literature emerged. Dalit literature is now a widely recognized and established literary genre. The great struggle of Dalits has led to the current state of Dalit literature. Another outcome of the Dalit writers' tremendous dedication is Dalit literature (Kumar 38). The Dalit perspective and experience were scarce prior to India's independence since so few Dalits had received an education. The Dalit population began to receive education following India's independence and the adoption of the Constitution, and the educated Dalits began using their writings to express their suffering and exploitation.

Concept Of Dalit Literature

"Dalit Literature" refers to a certain genre of literature that has to do with the Dalits. Cultural disparities, identity crises, and assertions are all included in Dalit literature. Dalit literature has gained attention and discussion in the modern day. This literature's substance is still up for debate and discussion. According to Roopa Singh, a Dalit critic, there are three categories of content that fall under the umbrella of Dalit literature (as I have interpreted it): o Literature about the Dalits; o Literature by the Dalits; and o Literature by the Dalits about the Dalits (Singh 22).

The current societal structure prevented the Dalits from receiving an education. Their troubles and issues were portrayed in literature by writers from other communities due to their lack of knowledge. "Being illiterate, the Dalits were unable to write their own literature; therefore, the majority of the literature that is available is written by the non-Dalit writers," Dr. Manejar Pandey states (as I interpreted it) in an essay that was published in the Dalit Chetana Sahitya journal (Pandey 4). There is a group of non-Dalit authors that support the idea that works that discuss Dalit issues should be categorized as Dalit literature regardless of the author's ethnicity. Nonetheless, the majority of Dalit critics and philosophers believe that non-Dalit writing is not Dalit literature. "The literature written by the non-Dalits is just like making the sound of a lion

by an actor, but the Dalit writer is himself a lion with an original voice," claims Dr. Tulsiram (translated by me) (Tulsiram 61). According to Sharankumar Limbale:

By Dalit literature, I mean writing about Dalits by Dalit writers with a Dalit consciousness. The form of Dalit literature is inherent in its Dalitness, and its purpose is obvious: to inform Dalit society of its slavery, and narrate its pain and suffering to upper caste Hindus (Limbale 19).

In his piece "What is Dalit literature?" Sharatchandra Muktibodh shares his thoughts on the subject. Since Dalit literature should have a spirit of rebellion against the oppression and humiliation that the Dalits endure, he believes that it must be written by Dalits themselves. He writes:

Dalit literature is the literature produced by the Dalit consciousness. Human freedom is the inspiration behind it. This is its implied value. The nature of this literature consists in a rebellion against the suppression and humiliation suffered by the Dalits- in the past and even at present- in the framework of the varna system (Muktibodh 270).

The aforementioned claims regarding Dalit literature attest to the fact that it solely consists of works authored by Dalit authors. Since non-Dalit authors did not experience the Dalits' issues, they are unable to truly feel their suffering, hence their works cannot be classified as Dalit literature. Roopa Singh cited a statement by Dr. Vivek Kumar from the magazine "Vasudha" to demonstrate that only a Dalit can write about the Dalits. "Only a Dalit can write the Dalit literature with its objectivity, which means that non-Dalit cannot write the Dalit literature," it states (in my translation) (Singh 23).

Since they are the only ones who can connect to the suffering they have endured, the majority of Dalit writers and critics agreed that the Dalits are socially, economically, and religiously exploited people who have experienced and dealt with issues relating to the shameful caste system. Because non-Dalit writers cannot empathize with the actual suffering that Dalits have endured and continue to endure, they are resistant to having their works included in Dalit literature. As a result, non-Dalit literature is not appropriate for the Dalit literary genre.

According to certain critics, Dalit literature addresses the Dalits' suffering, exploitation, shameful situation, and religious and cultural distinctions. Dalit literature should only contain the uprising against oppression. Dalit critic Niranjan Kumar clarified it by quoting Premalata Chutel's statement (translated):

In the Dalit literature, a community portrays its assertion about social condition and pains they have suffered. Thus, the literature related to personal feelings about love and own expressions is not acceptable as the Dalit literature. It accepts only the revolt writings (Kumar 26).

Sharankumar Limbale acknowledges that only Dalit writers have described the hardships of the Dalits; even non-Dalit writers from rural areas who are well-known for bringing up social issues (such as Premchand) appear to be unable to do so. "Only Dalit writers have narrated the pain of Dalits—in the same way that rural writers have not depicted the life of Dalits," he adds (Limbale 29). According to Limbale, even writers from rural areas struggle to convey the suffering of Dalits, despite the fact that their situation in rural areas remains appalling.

DEFINITION OF DALIT LITERATURE

Dalit critics incorporated a variety of materials in their attempts to explain Dalit literature. Dalit literature is described as follows by author and Dalit Panther movement leader Arjun Dangle in his edited book *Poisoned Bread*:

“Dalit literature is one which acquaints people with the caste system and untouchability in India... It matures with a sociological point of view and is related to the principles of negativity, rebellion, and loyalty to science, thus finally ending as revolutionary (Dangle lii).

This definition of Dalit literature makes it evident that the sociological perspective that is associated with the concepts of negativity, revolt, and scientific loyalty is used to address the issue of untouchability.

Dangle's definition of Dalit literature is very thorough and fits the description of Dalit literature quite well. In his interpretation of Dalit literature, he expresses desire for freedom from the long-standing custom of the caste system based on birth. Dalit literature can also be used to evaluate the Dalits' current and historical circumstances. Once more, Dangle defines Dalit literature as:

This literature is closely associated with the hopes for freedom of a group of people who as untouchables are victims of social, economic and cultural inequality. Their literature is thus characterized by a feeling of rebellion against the establishment, of negativism and scientificity. Studying Dalit literature or the role of this literature from only a literary or an academic point of view fails to present a complete perspective in assessing it. Dalit literature must be assessed in the sociological framework. This overall perspective has been conspicuously absent in the review of Dalit literature so far (Dangle xxii-xxiii).

Because of the Dalits' deterioration, Limbale associates Dalit literature with poverty and pain. According to Sharankumar Limbale, Dalit literature is specifically that kind of writing that creatively depicts the suffering, hardships, servitude, dehumanization, mockery, and poverty that Dalits face. This literature is merely an idealized portrayal of sorrow (Limbale 30).

One Marathi Dalit author, Baburao Bagul, analyzes Dalit literature by linking it to the consequences of the Varna system. He claims that Dalit literature is "writing against the Varna system and its consequent opposite values" (which I translated). For Dalits, the Varna system fostered hatred, jealousy, resentment, and contempt against virtues like equality, love, prosperity, fraternity, and moral principles (Bagul 76).

Dalit literature is regarded as "Realist Literature" by Joshil K. Abraham and Judith Misrahi Barak. They contend that Dalit literature depicts the actual and abhorrent state of Dalits. The following is written in the introduction of the edited book *Dalit Literature in India*:

Such literatures have often been put in the category of realist literature, whose main purpose is to illustrate and denounce the abominable situation in which Dalits live in contemporary India despite the fact that Untouchability was made illegal in the Constitution of the new Republic of India (Barak and Abraham 3).

According to every description of Dalit literature, it is writing about the suffering of the Dalits as a result of the Hindu caste system, which was established by the Laws of Manu. Dalits are in a terrible situation because of the lengthy era of discriminatory social order. Because of the Dalit movement's effective beginning and growth, people were more conscious of their social,

religious, economic, and cultural exploitation, which sparked their desire for justice and led them to begin making their voices heard through their works.

6. Conclusion

Dalits had been denied all human rights and subjected to centuries of oppression. They were forced to accept social slavery as a form of upper caste dominance since they were forced to live an ignorant life. They had no history because they were prohibited from receiving an education. The Dalit movement headed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the social reform movements of the 19th century led by Raja Rammohan Roy, and the Right to Education movement later gave them the chance to receive an education that allowed them to write about their experiences of pain and suffering. These works later gave rise to a brand-new literary genre that is now referred to as Dalit literature.

An inclusive facet of Indian culture, Dalit literature aims to give voice to the marginalized and defines the past and present from a Dalit perspective. The marginalized now have more opportunities for sociological, political, and edifying advancement thanks to these publications. Additionally, Dalit literature gives Dalits the freedom to challenge and question the society's hierarchical structure. Self-assertion, self-confidence, liberation, and Dalit empowerment are all meticulously covered in Dalit memoirs. After the 1980s, Dalit autobiographies emerged as the primary resources for reconstructing Dalit individuality, confirming the veracity of Dalit experiences from the past pertaining to economic, psychological, and cultural exploitation as well as humiliations brought on by untouchability. In order to rouse the Dalits, Dalit autobiographies are subjective and take the form of "confessions" about their struggles. Dalits' representation in all of the chosen memoirs and books attests to the way that social order has changed to advance equality, morality, and opportunity—all of which can only be achieved by discouraging untouchability and the cultural, psychological, and financial exploitation of Dalits.

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