

LITERARY WORKS BY AND ABOUT DALITS: CONTRIBUTION TO FOURTH WORLD LITERATURE

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The term *Fourth World* refers to states and populations which maintain a distinct culture but are internationally unrecognized .The term has also been used to designate the poorest ,oppressed or under privileged victims of a state like the natives of south Africa, the aborigines of north America or the Dalits ,an oppressed class by the caste system of india.The Fourth World comprises of groups working for their identity, in generally in a minority status ,whether ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religion .The term *Fourth World* first came into wide use in 1974 with the publication of George Manuel’s *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*. Manuel thought of the fourth World as the “indigenous peoples descended from a country’s aboriginal population and who today are completely or partly deprived of the right to their own territories and its riches.”²

In the 20 th century, the term “Dalit Literature” came into use in 1958, when the first conference of Maharashtra Dalit Literature Society was held at Mumbai, a movement driven by thinkers like Jyotiba Phule and Bhimrao Ambedkar .The source and the inspiration for Dalit writers were undoubtedly by the inimitable Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, the chief architect of Indian constitution and pioneer of Dalit movement in India .The volumes of works he has created stand to be the beacon light for Dalit and backward communities forever. There are barely few sociologists like Ambedkar who dissected the caste system critically and pointed out the evils of the Indian Society.

Dalit in the traditional Indian caste system is a member of the lowest caste. Dalita is a Hindi word taken from “Sanskrit theta” means oppressed .The Indian constitution categorized them as scheduled caste for the convenience of reservations. Dalits are sub-populations, socially excluded from high caste Indian society ,failing to distinguish between true ethnic and social minorities suffer from economic subjugation .Usually Dalits belong to peasant’s society in a village with an inferior political and social status ,and an under privileged economic position.

Literature by Early Dalits

When we explore the literary endeavors of our country ,one important aspect is Dalit literature. The foremost and the earliest Dalit scholar is Shri Valmaki, author of the famous epic, *The Ramayana* .Shri Valmaki is considered to be the oldest and the greatest Dalit poet in Indian history .The reference to Dalit can also be seen in 11 th century poet Sekkizhar’s *Periya puranam* portraying Dalits as out caste ,unclean ,unreliable ,dishonest and unfaithful persons.

One of the first Dalit writers was Medara Chennaiah, and 11th century cobbler-saint regarded by some as the “Father of *vachana* poetry”. Another poet who finds mention is Dohara Kakkaiyah.

Literature about Dalits

The earliest Telugu writer **Vunnava Lakshmi Narayana** attempted a great novel on Dalits with the title *Malapalli* in 1922 in colloquial language .Another important novel in kannada on Dalits is *Chomanadudi* published in 1931, Muluk Raj Anand’s famous English novel *Untouchable* appeared in 1935 .Dalit literature is often compared with the African –American literature especially in its depiction of issues of racial segregation and injustice, as we observe in Slave narratives.

Unnava Lakshmi Narayana was a socialist who led many nationalistic and anti caste movements during British times, supporting Gandhi in his non-cooperation movements. ‘**Mallapalli** (The Triumph of songs) was written when he was in prison .Principles and ideals of various kinds play an important role throughout the novel *Malapalli* that means village of Dalits. The ideal of the perfect human being – strong ,compassionate and intelligent is seen in Sangadas, a young leader ,who leads anti caste movements .The ideal society without caste distinctions and free of racial oppression is the university .On one hand ,the subtitle “The triumph of Sanga”. Clearly indicates strength of communal bonds in the village of Mallpalli where families are closely connected with each others’ lives in a strong sense of ‘belonging’ to the community of *Malapalli* .On the other hand, there is the reality of hunger and poverty ,conflict between labor and landlords and problems of agriculture laborers .*Malapalli* gives a clear picture of pre independent village life ,Dalits struggle for existence and class and caste wars.

Sivaramakaranth’s Kannada novel Chomanadudi is a documentary on life of a helpless Dalit .Choma is an untouchable bonded –laborer who works along with his family for a landlord, to repay his loan of twenty rupees borrowed from him years ago. He is not allowed to till his own land, something he desires the most .He comes in contact with Christian missionaries who try to convert him by alluring an offer of the land, but Choma does not want to leave his faith .One of his sons dies of cholera and the other one converts to Christianity by marrying a Christian girl. His daughter,Belli works in the plantation .The estate owner rapes her and then clears off choma’s debt .She returns to Choma’s home without telling him of the reality but Choma sends her out of his house .His youngest son drowns in a river ,as nobody saves him because of his caste . To confront his problems and frustration, he starts tilling a piece of land and then chases off his bullock into forest .Finally he shuts himself in his house and plays the drum till his ides.

Mulk Raj Anand’s ‘Untouchable’ is the story of 18 year old Bakha , a bhangi , a scavenger community assigned with the task of cleaning the toilets .He is a strong , healthy and very enthusiastic and dreamy boy .He wants to dress like an English man and desires to play hockey .His birth in a bhangi family doesn’t allow him to safe guard his self-respect , and he gets humiliated at each turn of the road .The ‘dirty’ nature of their work pulls down bhangis to the lowest of all castes .Bhangis are not permitted even to take water from well and have to wait for hours for the mercy of the upper caste .The food will be given to them by throwing and if they touch anybody by accident they will be punished .No school allows them to study .And they do not have right to protest or express their views .The whole day of Bhaka is spent in mixed feelings of hunger ,hope ,small pleasures and insults .

As usual Bakha has a tough day .To change his life there options before him .First ,adopting Christianity so that the untouchability based on caste can be removed .The second option before him is the idea of sacrifice preached by Mahatma Gandhi ,who came there to spread awareness against the evil practice of untouchability .The third option he considers as a solution to the entire problem is to upgraded the scavenging work to a flush system there by removing the dirtiness attached to the work .

Literature by Dalit writers

Dalit literature rose into significance in early 1960s, first in Marathi, and later in Hindi, Kannada, Telugu and Tamil languages. The early works about Dalits are called Dalit literature but eventually the literature produced by Dalit writers is called Dalit literature. After the independence, many changes occurred in literature and paved way for the weak and voiceless sections like Dalits, women till then buried in the grave of ignorance in the name of castes and gender.

In this regard Bhama's autobiographical novel *Karukka* is a unique attempt of its kind. The author recollects her childhood , filled with the stains of shame, ill treatments, humiliations, hurts and insults .It is a short story of her personal feelings and of her family .Being educated she dares to speak where others could not .She documents the reality of the whole people of her community who were not allowed to voice their own story .She does not dare to give actual names and gives fictional names of her village, the priests ,schools and colleges ,the nunnery ,the Dalit head man and so on .*Karukka* deals with the Dalit people in Tamil Nadu .Bama expresses her grief over the pathetic and helpless condition of Dalit .Dalit women are easy targets of the non Dalit men for sexual harassment and mental torture .Conversion to Christianity has not reduced the pathetic state of Dalits .In India, Christians also follow the same caste system of Hinduism ,resulting in caste hierarchy ,castes subordination and exploitation. The condition of a Paraiya under Catholic Church is not different from the ill treatment that he or she suffers within Hindu society. Irrespective of their religious affiliations or even financial position the lower caste people suffered humiliation from the dominant sections of the society. The Tamil Paraiyar nuns are considered lowest of the low .Critical in her perspective, Bama presents her life, which is deeply moving as an example of the everyday chauvinism and tolerance that our traditions and customs practice.

Daya Pawar a Dalit writer of Maharashtra ,was known for his contributions to Dalit literature that dealt with the atrocities experienced by the Dalits under the Indian caste system .His novel *Baluta* ⁷(The Share) ,depicts his story as a secret that must not be revealed to anyone because of the painful history he narrates .The novels tells the experiences of a Dalit struggling for an undisturbed existence , emotionally besieged but incapable of retribution in word and deed .*Baluta* explains the act of begging for food as a symbol of Dalit's humiliation and suffering .The writer admit Dalit as a secret share of Indian society .There was a strong anti –Dalit reaction when *Baluta* was published in 1978 in Maharashtra .*Baluta* created sensation in the literary circles and earned him many awards and was translated into several languages .

Though we find great works in Dalit literatures in Telugu even before independence by writers like **Vunnava Laxmi Narayana** author of the great novel “ *Malapalli* ,” it was with Joshua a Dalit poet that Dalit literature rose to its heights . His contributions is the best example of its kind. Acharya Ranganayakula's *Harijana Nayakudu* (1933) Venkata Parvatheesara kavula's *Mathrumandiram* ,Alwar Swami's *Prajalamanashi* 1971,(1955) Dr.Keshava Reddy's

Banialu, *Incredible Goddess* 1979, Akkineni Kutumba Rao's *Sorajjam* 1981. G. Mohan Rao's *Khaki brathukulu* 1982. Dava Putra's *Addamlo chandamama* 1988, Volga's *Akasamlo sagam* 1990, *Verlu* by Kethu Viswanatha Reddy, *Antarani vasantham* or *Untouchable Spring* by Kalyan Rao, *Balipeetam* by Ranganayakamma are some of the works by and about Dalits .

Conclusions

To conclude, Dalit literature has been a beacon of light for the emancipation of Dalits as a mode of self expression of the many atrocities faced by them for hundreds of years .The multi –faceted subaltern culture of India has been exposed in Dalit literature by appraising, evaluating and elevating .The voices of the suppressed for ages are now authentic and revolting and will hopefully raise and build a casteless society, which is essential to modern India.

References

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