

Caste Issue in Literature and Regional Literature

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ABSTRACT

The key objective of this piece of writing is to examine the manner in which caste is portrayed as a subject for two popular schools of writing in India, that is, Indian Literature in English & Indian Literature in other languages. The collaboration of David Davidar & Omprakash Valmiki is chosen for the post. Among their plays, *The House of Blue Mangoes* (2002) & *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* (2003) are selected because they deal with caste problems. Both plays are critical portrayals of the lives of low-caste citizens & their efforts to come to grips with the truth of their shackled life. This is not a question of classifying the two schools of writing, but of examining their disparities in the way they explain the caste concept as portrayed in mainstream writing and regional writing. In order to understand the developments in writing & regional writing, it is important to have an overview of Indian literature in English & Indian literature in English translation.

Keywords- Writing, Regional Writing, Indian Literature in English, Indian Literature in English Translation.

I. INTRODUCTION

In a multilingual nation such as India, Indian literature in English can not be learned in isolation, as many Indian English authors are bilingual & nourished by both local and international literary traditions. There is also an immediate need to compare Indian National Literature with Indian English Literature in order to create a wider trend of thoughts and emotions for the Indian population as a whole. Indian authors writing in English often have a strong desire to learn the customs and lifestyle of a single area in relation with India as a whole.

Language should not be a barrier in the course of presenting a full interpretation of any literature in relation to its cultural specificities. The Indian writer, however, will wake up from his complacency and seek to view Indian English Literature together with Indian Local Literature in order to see a wider coherent picture of national literature.

G.N. Devy is the first to describe Indian literature in two traditions. In his book *After Amnesia: Practice and Transition in Indian Literary Past*, he explains how Indian Literature can be divided into two distinct classes. This involves Popular Literature and Marginal Literature or Ethnic Literature.

In earlier days, the British saw English as a path to 'enlighten the locals,' such that English in schooling served as a way of social climbing. Throughout the years, Indian authors were using the English language for artistic thinking. Right from Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Mulkray Anand, R.K. Narayan, Torru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujam, Anita Desai, Kushwant Singh, Shobha de, Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, and so on., are authors of distinct Indian nature.

When one takes a careful look at the history of Indian literature in English, one will note that it is split into three separate styles of writing. We are Native in Hindi, Diaspora, and Writings in other Asian languages. The first writer attempted to reflect India and its various societies in the West. They use English as an effective tool to assert universal significance. Authors like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Gosh, Vikram Seth, etc, are diasporian artists. These authors have been mixed up between two distinct societies – the West and their own local society. It has become difficult for them to associate with their country. This culminated in the creation of the word "Diaspora," a name granted to such authors. The

works created by these authors have received world acclaim and even literary awards. The third writer came along with the old problems of class, freedom, hierarchy, and caste. They started to take brave measures to deal with sensitive issues such as the caste of their country, which was once thought to be out of the question.

Language has, to a great degree, lost its suppressed words. For illustration, the works of David Davidar may be conveniently read with the knowledge of English. On the other side, reading a lively piece of work like Joothan A Dalit's Life written in Hindi would not have been feasible for non-Hindi-speaking readers if it had not been translated into English. While translation may never expect to cross the divide between two separate cultures, such as those of Hindi and English, it has still succeeded in providing a voice to the subaltern literary field of regional literature.

Anitha (2015), in her article "Aesthetics in Dalit Literature," explains Dalit literature as it passes beyond the normal discourses of literary modernity. Dalit literature is a strong means of speech that sustains Dalit's movement and gives untiring zeal. Dalit literature – short stories, novels, insightful essays, autobiographies, scripts, etc. – offers a vital insight into Dalit culture. Anitha (2015) further draws on Dalit literature as a literary source of political consciousness within Dalits. It primarily narrates the first-hand perspective of the community: seeking to raise the consciousness of various oppressions and also attempting to dissent against the dominance of the upper strata in Indian society. Writings by Dalit writers, including Namdev Dhasal, Daya Pawar, Prahlad Chandvarkar, Tryambak Sapke, Arjun Dangle, Prakash Jadhar & Shiva Ingole portrayed more authentically the challenges, suffering, and torment endured by and witnessed by the group. Their works are not only viewed as a piece of creative work but also as a symbol of the period & circumstances encountered by that culture.

Anitha (2015) ends in her essay with her view that Dalit's literature reflects the fundamental principles of liberty, freedom, tolerance, and fraternity. Suppose it presents a truthful image of the culture, its suffering, and its fight for social reform. In that case, Dalit literature is a path from the mainstream to marginal literature, from large narrative to little narrative, from person identity to collective identity, and from self-justification to self-assertion. While caste consciousness is the focus of Dalit literature, new paradigms for thinking about class and social inequalities arise from changes in urban life. Nearly all authors communicate their observations and thoughts, & all literary discourses convey a broad variety of emotions — pain, shame, frustration, rage, and resistance. These writings have also opened up a discursive forum to discuss questions of untouchability and injustice.

Dalit literature is the space where a community can prove themselves, assert themselves, express their identity, and expose the social truth. Most of the literatures produced by Dalit authors are part of their struggle against caste discrimination. Their writings are rooted in their cultural–material world and employ innovative strategies in both form and content, challenging while enriching existing literature. Any attempt to explore and analyze those literary outpourings, characterized by a kind of new Dalit aesthetic, will enable us to re-situate Dalit literature as literature. Dalit literature in Maharashtra emerged out of the literary movements which grew out of conversions of Dalits, especially „Mahars,“ to Buddhism. Hence this conversion, unlike other conversions, is remarkable in literature. Marathi Dalit writings of Dalit, as well as non-Dalit writers, have Buddhist influences in their works. A large number of Dalits who had to undergo opprobrium of public abuse and living without self-respect embraced Buddhism, which marked a new era in their lives since it gave them a new socio-religious and political identity. Though caste consciousness and social differences are subjects of Dalit writings, there are many similarities-issues of gender and the question of human dignity. The subjugation of Dalits by the privileged in the name of religion and tradition is delineated in such writings.

Chintha Syam Sunder (2015), in his article, "The Meaning of Dalit and its True Perceptions by Indian Society and Dalit Writers through Translations: An Analytical Study," states that Dalit literature has recently become a new genre. The writers of Dalit literature have started depicting the tormenting experiences of Dalits exposed to present the contemporary social, political, economic, educational, and mental conditions of Dalits before Dalit and non-Dalit readers. A Dalit in India can stand in comparison with a Dalit in Africa or America concerning their mutation. The writers of Dalit literature questioned religion and identity throughout their works. Pavan Mandavkar (2015), in his article „Indian Dalit literature quest for Identity to social equality“ states that as obvious from the meaning of Dalit literature is the writing about and of Dalits or oppressed.

Sajan Singh and Anjali Srivatsava (2016), in their article „Dalit Literature in India: An Agitation to a Genre“ trace that Dalit literature is based on experience. Most writers wrote their own life experiences, which is why we find a streak of autobiographical notes in their works.

K.Purushotham, Gita, and Gogu Shyamala (2016), in their book "The Oxford Indian Anthology of Telugu Dalit Writing," draw the opinion of Sivasagar about whether non-Dalit writing Dalit life can be considered to be Dalit literature or not. For which the answer is it is meaningless for a man to write on feminism and for a non-Dalit to write about Dalits... Instead of writing about Dalits, a Brahmin can serve the Dalit cause by writing about how Brahmins ill-treated the Dalits, about the narrow-mindedness of the Brahmin that they are so familiar with, how they subordinated the Dalits, etc. In their book's General introduction, they state that Dalit writing is the element of modernity in social constructs, self-representation in politics, and the postmodernist thrust on celebrating diversity. Dalit writings are, in fact, ahead of postmodernism in representing the question of subordination within diversity. Dalit writing transitions from humiliation to humanism, from an undesirable past to a cultural present, from agitation to transformation.

The introductory chapter is aimed at offering various definitions expressed by critics and scholars on Dalit literature. The chapter has also highlighted the origin and growth of Dalit literature and how, now, Dalit literature is being recognized as a unique and independent genre of literature, succinctly representing the voice of the voiceless in their own dialect. Chapter 2, entitled “Dalit Literature in English and Translation,” offers how Dalit literature in English translation paved the way for reaching the larger 15 worlds, rightly subscribing to the similar identities of native literature, especially Native Canadian, Native American, and Australian Aboriginal studies. The chapter deals with the theory of translation studies and how the method of historical translation finds its resonance and applicability in rewriting the untouched history of the Dalits in the form of a novel.

Arvind (2015) further adds that Dalit literature is full of metaphors and imagery of darkness, dirt, filth, and violence. Society is caught in the grip of age-old superstition and traditional beliefs that prevent them from undergoing fundamental changes. So Dalit literature has emerged as a revolt against the century’s long exploitation and heinous treatment towards the lowest strata of the Indian society, and it gives expression of the sufferings, frustration, and torture imposed on them and their revolt against this inhuman treatment. Dalit literature can be called the voice of those who were condemned to silence for thousands of years. It expresses the dilemma, pangs, predicament, and injustice meted out to Dalits. It portrays the life and struggles of the low Caste for dignity, justice, and equality. It is also a protest against the established unjust social order. Arvind concludes the article as Dalit literature proved its importance in portraying Dalits' stigmatized and unfortunate conditions, upstaging the subjugation of caste-oriented society. As literature has always served as a medium for bringing change in socio-political scenarios, Dalit literature provides a platform for oppressed people to stand against social problems like poverty, religious fanaticism, and untouchability.

Raj Kumar (2015) further states that Dalit texts travel a much greater distance in terms of sharing the author’s lived experience and, in the process mobilizing opinion against caste exploitation and oppression. Since the main aim of Dalit literature is to bring a social order based on equality, justice, and self-respect, the act of translation plays an essential role in furthering these causes.

According to Bhosale (2014), Dalit literature in India, especially Dalit literature in Maharashtra, emerged in the 1960’s and 1970’s. It was in the writings of Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale, and others who were the founders of the Dalit Panthers movement in Maharashtra in the 1970’s saw the beginning of writings in Dalit literature. Two categories of writers wrote on and about Dalits, one from amongst the Dalits and another non Dalits, upper caste, writers writing on the issue of caste. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, writers like Rabindranath Tagore in Bangla, Prem Chand in Hindi, and Mulk Raj Anand in English were writing on the issue of Untouchability. Later, writers from the Dalits emerged on horizons, took up the cause, and started elaborative writing about the sufferings of caste, discrimination, humiliation, exploitation, oppression, and how Dalits have experienced the worst of inhumanity.

Bhosale (2014) further adds that Dalit literature reflects the individual, community, enlightenment, and consciousness of self and reality. Bhosale (2014) states that Between 1972 and 1978, writers emerged from the Dalit community in Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, and Tamil Nadu who started writing about caste exploitations. In his book “Sociology of Dalit Literature” (2014), Bhosale traces the origin of Dalit literature in Different states in Gujarat. He states that Dalit literature is influenced by Marathi Dalit literature. “Panthers” was started by Ramesh Chandra Parmar in 1975. Parmar’s famous book, *Hath Ma Jhadu Mathe Mailu* (1996), gives a heart-rendering account of bhangis... In 1980’s Poetry and Prose emerged in Gujarati, which Dalits wrote. Some writers like Joseph Macwan, Mohan Parmar, Harish Mangalam, Mangal Rathod, and Kisan Sosa are very well acknowledged in the literature circle of Gujarat”. Bhosale adds about other states also in his book as in Karnataka the Dalit writing emerged in the early 1970’s. D.R. Nagaraj, a famous critic, distinguished between two schools of Kannada Literature. Siddalingaiah and Devanoor Mahadeva were the first generation of Dalit writers in Kannada Dalit literature. According to Bhosale in Tamil Nadu, the Dalit writings started in 80’s and 90’s. Writers like Iyamam, Bama, and Sivakami are acclaimed writers in Tamil Nadu. In Andhra, writers like Joshua Garran, Mohan Rao, Boya Jangaiah, and Akkieni Kutumba Rao have produced notable works in Telugu. In Hindi, autobiographies emerged as the main form of Hindi Dalit literature and produced eminent writers like 9 Omprakash Valmiki, Jai Prakash Kardarm, Mohandas Namishra, Suresh Chandra, and Sheoraj. In Punjab, the Dalit writings originated in 80’s and 90’s. Dalit Sahitya Sabha was formed, and the first Dalit Sahitya Samelan was held in 1994; writers like Prem Gorkhi, Kripal Kazak, Attarjee, Bhura Singh, Kaler, and many other eminent writers emerged in Punjab. Bhosale says that Dalit literature is the reflection of individual and community enlightenment and consciousness of self and reality around. He further states that Dalit literature has been reflecting on specific aspects of life, society, and economy. Sociology has to enrich its content by learning from literature appearing from various subaltern groups at the level of caste, gender, and region. Dalit literature is a source of knowledge and, therefore, a source of primary data, which can sharpen our sociological understanding. Dalit literature has touched on the essence of caste and gender.

II. JOOTHAN: A PORTRAIT OF DALIT-SOCIETY

In the style of Bildungsroman story, Joothan tracks Valmiki's development from an untouchable infant to an affluent Dalit activist. The non-linear narrative of the text is based on his memory of a childhood that is 'excruciatingly

unpleasant, charmed by encounters.' The article, true to its Protestant approach toward prevailing social principles, takes the shape of a questionnaire. Twenty-five issues posed in the text have seasonal socio-political significance with significant subversive potential.

According to Mukherjee, one of the distinctive facets of Joothan, which characterizes him as a Dalit text, is his challenging discourse. The text is full of questions that ask for a response.' It reveals how the author's caste, i.e., Chuhra used to act as a gigantic hindrance at any stage in his evolutionary journey. The detailed summary of his miserable life in the Chuhra group in Barla, a suburb of Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh, illustrates the degree to which the caste system conducts its oppressive policies in this democratic state. Valmiki chronicles the insalubrious and barbaric environment of the tribal population of Chuhra on the outskirts of the Tyagi-dominated village of Barla. Joothan is also a recorded Dalit past that veraciously destabilizes the racist Gandhian philosophy that has underpinned the caste structure to maintain the social order intact since the dawn of civilization. Valmiki connotes the axiomatic Gandhi-Ambedkar controversy about 'caste' when he says: 'Pigs roaming in narrow lanes, nude girls, dogs, every day battling this was the world of my childhood. If the people who consider the caste structure a perfect social organization had to stay in this world for a day or two, they would change their minds.' (P-01)

The subhuman life of the untouchable in the 'Chuhra basti,' the insurmountable misery of the citizens, the affliction of the downtrodden, the poverty, the agony, and the groan of the outcasts are all connotably encapsulated in the word. For countless menial work that involved hard manual labor, such as scavenging, farming, drying, disposing of dead livestock, and skinning dead animals, the outcasts were paying no salaries or utterly poor wages. This forced them to rely on the 'joothas'-the leftovers, the scraps; Valmiki recalls with guilt and remorse that even 'the joothan was eaten with a lot of relishes.' This is the gorgon dimension of slavery that knows no limits at the hands of the wealthy upper-class/caste rulers in the present neo-colonial system. Furthermore, the outcasts were regarded as untouchable among all the upper religious castes, and the author states that 'The conduct of (this) Muslim Tagas was much like that of the Hindu Tagas.' (P-03) The hypocrisy of these high-caste Tagas, who were steeped in a quagmire of turpitude, corruption, and usurpation, was beworried by Valmiki with empirical proof. He states, 'In those moments, I will think about all the Tyagis who came to the Bhangi Basti to consume pork in the darkness about the night. ...

Those who had come to consume meat quietly at night in the light of day had experienced untouchability in front of all ... One of these was Teja Taga ... his interest levels were so large that one might spend a lifetime charging interest, and the principal will stay untouched.'(P-18) Only Vaidy Satyanaryana Sharma, a village priest, was a depraved money lender. The local police had been an accomplice of the upper class/caste men in all such criminal abuse and usurpation practices. Valmiki reports, 'Police constables will physically extract poultry from the basti. There was no space for a complaint; some Tagas will collaborate with the police in this robbery.'(P-38) The text nullifies Gandhiji's argument that the untouchables are part of the 'Hindu fold' as it points out that the deities worshiped by the Dalits are 'alien from the Hindu deities, and their names would not be included in any Purana, even if one searches hard.' (P-26) Dalits worship Jaharpir. (P-40) Valmiki describes Gandhi's actions by calling the Dalits as Harijan for his reading of Ambedkar, convinces him that '...by calling the untouchable Harijans Gandhi did not allow them to enter the national mainstream, but rescued the Hindus from being a minority.'(P72)

Joothan-education for the Dalits Valmiki's academic experience is symptomatic of a Dalit's struggle to fit into the hostile upper-caste educational system of this country. He deems himself unfortunate enough to have come into contact with some casteist brutes as his teachers like Kaliram, the Headmaster who had once compelled young Omprakash to sweep the entire school premises, Brajpal Singh Tyagi and Fauz Singh Tyagi who were 'cruel casteists,' Phool Singh Tyagi, a 'ruffian' all of whom had contributed to inflicting a nightmarish jolt upon the author's young psyche. The promiscuity of Master Vedpal Tyagi, erstwhile a teacher and later a clerk, betrayed the sanctimoniousness of the Tyagi people. These Tyagi teachers used to batter the untouchable pupils almost like 'goondas.' Valmiki recollects a great number of Tyagi teachers who used to swear in filthy words about mothers and sisters, used to abuse young pupils sexually, and were, like Omdatta Tyagi, nothing but an 'illiterate feudal lord'(P-63) in attitude. However, Valmiki reckons with reverence his father, who ardently desired his son to surpass his caste by being educated, some of his teachers who, despite belonging to upper-caste, were good at heart like Yogendra Tyagi and Chamanlal Tyagi, and some humane classmates but for whose patronage, he concedes, he would not have been able to acquire formal education.

Valmiki also unmasks the so-called educated urban middle-class people's attitude toward the untouchables. His love affair with Savita Kulkarni, who hailed from a Maharashtrian Brahmin family, got throttled just for his caste. He mentions many urban educated people who were in some way or the other 'unhappy' with his surname. He reminds the callousness of Mr. Gupta, training in charge at Jabalpur. He cites how his 'caste' soiled the normalcy in relationships with so many people like Deshpande in Ambernath, Dr. Naidu, Head of the Hindi Department at Nagpur University, Dr. Sukhviri Singh, Reader in Delhi University's Shivaji College, Harikishan Santoshi and Sardar Gyan Singh. Many of them advised him to change his surname to suppress his caste. Valmiki recognizes this as 'a terrible crisis of identity among educated Dalits.

III. JOOTHAN-EDUCATION FOR THE DALITS

Valmiki's academic experience is symptomatic of a Dalit's struggle to fit into this country's hostile upper-caste educational system. He deems himself unfortunate enough to have come into contact with some casteist brutes as his teachers like Kaliram, the Headmaster who had once compelled young Omprakash to sweep the entire school premises, Brajpal Singh Tyagi and Fauz Singh Tyagi who were 'cruel casteists', Phool Singh Tyagi, a 'ruffian' all of whom had contributed to inflicting a nightmarish jolt upon the author's young psyche. The promiscuity of Master Vedpal Tyagi, erstwhile a teacher and later a clerk, betrayed the sanctimoniousness of the Tyagi people. These Tyagi teachers used to batter the untouchable pupils almost like 'goondas.' Valmiki recollects a significant number of Tyagi teachers who used to swear in filthy words about mothers and sisters, used to abuse young pupils sexually, and were, like Omdatta Tyagi, nothing but an 'illiterate feudal lord'(P-63) in attitude. However, Valmiki reckons with reverence his father, who ardently desired his son to surpass his caste by being educated, some of his teachers who, despite belonging to upper-caste, were good at heart like Yogendra Tyagi and Chamanlal Tyagi, and some humane class-mates but for whose patronage, he concedes, he would not have been able to acquire formal education.

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Davidar's writing is a delight for writers, a brightly colored tale in the best context & without twists and turns of plot structures, and his skillful usage of dialogs. He's learned the right way to say a decent lie. He's finished with images, and the effect of this is that the novel's protagonists are already embedded in the writers' minds, even after one has turned the last page. The reader will keep reminding himself that Chevathar is a figment of the poet's creative imagination. The House of Blue Mangoes is expected to make Indian prose more literary in English. Yet it has little to do with the reality of actual life experience as far as the portrayal of caste is involved. Consequently, the topic he seeks to express through the battle between the two parties remains intangible relative to specific novel considerations. While the novel is praised for a number of purposes, it can not be treated as a positive illustration of the novels concerned with caste problems because it represents the mindset of the conventional authors.

As a regional novel, Omprakash Valmiki's autobiographical account proves to be the focus of regional fiction. Valmiki's writing provides expression to his culture, battling against the blatant inequality that has been their legacy for decades. The analysis of the two writings comes to the conclusion that the regional writing is direct and true in telling the fact of real life. It represents the issue of caste more elaborately than the writing. Valmiki wants to find a solution through his writing which is based on his real life. His writing proves to be a better medium to create awareness in society.

IV. SUGGESTIONS

This article suggests that language is not a barrier to having an understandable and complete view of any literature. Therefore one should always be aware of Indian English literature (mainstream literature) and Indian regional literature (regional literature) to interpret. Sensitive issues like caste, gender, and other social issues should be dealt with more authentically by the writers. Though the writers use flowery language to portray the susceptible issues, they should reveal the approximate concern.

V. FURTHER RESEARCH

This article deals only with the caste issue covenant in two authors writing by two diverse school writers. Further research can be expanded in dealing with gender, race, feminism, and other social issues or how the Diaspora writers, Regional writers, and marginal writers examine these problems in their writing.

VI. CONCLUSION

Whatever the conflict between the two schools of writers, one interesting thing to note is that they can produce good works of literature that stand the test of time. It is hypothesized that the theme of caste is represented more authentically in marginal writing than in the mainstream. It is established that though writing shares the ideology of marginalized issues, it is only in regional writing it shares the specific issues which are silenced for a long time.

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