



ORIGINAL ARTICLE



## DISCOURSE OF DALIT LITERATURE

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The word "Dalit" is an old Marathi word found in Molesworth's Marathi - English Dictionary of 1975 (reprint of 1813 edition) meaning "ground, broken or reduced to pieces generally." It derives from a Sanskrit word meaning "crushed" and is easily accessible to Indians. "Dalit" is now widely used in place of the word "untouchable".

Dalit Literature is the exposé of humiliation, hatred, exploitation and suppression related to the underdog, downtrodden, unprivileged etc. of the society who are deprived of their rights and duties for centuries though they are labouring hard in the various areas and activities for the evolution of the nation. Really the lower classes have not received fair treatment and they have been left to suffer silently till now. More or less few personalities - Balmiki, Kabir, Raidas, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Narayan Guru, Jagdeo Prasad, Karpuri Thakur and B.P. Mandal have raised the causes of dalits. But Mahatma Gandhi, Jyotiba Phule and Dr. Ambedkar are the original source of inspiration.

Dalit writers rejected traditional icons and symbols. Dr. Ambedkar burned 'Manusmriti' in public and provided Buddhism as alternative to Dalits, as a mark of revolt against the traditional thought and rigid caste system, It is the beginning of the new era of dalit writing. The Dalit writers begin to liberate themselves from the shackles of traditional concept of aesthetics and to find an alternative literary theory. They considered it "An urgent need to create a separate aesthetics for Dalit Literature based on the real experiences of life. The representation of Dalit and Marginal in recent Indian English fiction had presented a very vivid and realistic picture. Fiction by Indian women writers constitutes a major segment of the Contemporary Indian writing in English.

Women writers like Arundhati Roy, have taken upon themselves this great task of their crusade against the established traditions Roy has been involved in social activism since and has published only essays, Her novel "The God of Small things" (Awarded Booker Prize, 1997) highlights age old caste discrimination, gender bias and the police Politician nexus that are given realities in the country today after nearly six decades of independence.

The present paper intends to focus on fusing the inner psychological reality about Dalit in her novel The God of Small Things. In Roy's novel, all the characters are victimized in some way or the other. in a perpetual representation of what has been happening through time.

The issue of marginalization in all literary, socio-economic, political and intellectual debates/discourses is all engaging concern. The overt tendencies and resultant action of human societies whereby a large section of our population stands removed and excluded and

consequently relegated to the limbo of neglect has been articulated by many writers. These marginalized sections have found a pronounced voice in the postcolonial discourse, thus entailing the understanding of literature with fresh insight and triggering of issues which have posited fresh discourses. It is the politics of hegemony and marginalization conflated with the dynamics of transgression and resistance that inform the signifying transactions in the narratives of Mulk Raj Anand and Arundhati Roy. The marginalisation and the self - assertion of the subalterns generate narrative tension and shape the ideological coalition between the two writers.

Globalization appears to have taken over every form or art and culture everywhere, but the discourse on marginality or the excluded other has proliferated at an astonishing rate in its own right. At least it has not been appropriated by the metropolitan theories or the globally enabled theoretical and disciplinary enterprises. The word "subaltern" used by Gramsci has gained incredible currency and is now an omnibus term for the peripheral disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

The term "Subaltern", coined by Gramsci, includes all the people who are inferior, either by caste, class or gender, i.e. people who are on the margins of society and as such voice questions at the institutions and ideologies that are hegemonic. Women form an essential component of these subalterns because they have suffered a triple colonization over the ages because of their economic inferiority, gender and the religious canons. Even after the decolonization of India, we continue witnessing internal colonization. Women are suppressed by patriarchy, a lower caste by a high caste, a poor farmer by a rich farmer and so on. This hegemony is in no way better than of the Empire. As a result the subalterns have started writing back conforming to the Knowledge-Power nexus.

In the complex political economy of modern India, becoming a "Dalit" is the process through which the Subaltern entity enters the circuit of political initiation and the value regime of the human. Usually the mainstream literature has the legacy and primacy of traditional literary history and measuring standards. However, when we talk about Dalit Literature, the existing canonical paradigm needs to create its own philosophical base and templates. Subaltern literature, unlike Marxist literature, does not talk about class struggle; rather it engages with the struggle between castes.

The history of Dalit reform begins after 1870, when in Poona Mahatma Jyotiba Govind Phule founded his Satya Shodhak Sarnaj. He exhorted the dalits to shake off their servitude to the upper castes. At the Mahad Conference held on 25 December 1927, Ambedkar burnt the Manusmriti and in his presence the dalits took the pledge:

- i) I do not believe in the four-caste system based on birth.
- ii) I have no faith in the discrimination based on caste.

The question arises: who is a dalit? Literally, it signifies the suppressed and the downtrodden people who suffer exploitation. In Ambedkar's words, "The dalit factor is a form of the conditions of life that reflect exploitation, oppression and marginalisation of the dalits on account of social, economic, cultural and political dominance of the upper castes influenced by Brahmin ideology." It simply means that except some castes (such as the Brahmin, the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas) all are dalit in that they suffer exploitation and oppression at the hands of upper castes and are socially marginalised. However, a commonly agreed definition of

the term is not available. The Kalelkar Commission report of 1955 placed all women in the category of backward classes. The Mandal Commission accepted the list of backward castes and classes numbering 3743 as mentioned in the census report of 1931, even as- most of such castes or communities no longer exist and quite a few of them have moved up the social and economic ladder.

Ambedkar was known as the father of Dalit community in India because he was the first Dalit to get higher education and he also demanded a separate electorate "in parliament for Dalit's which made him all the more popular among Dalit's. While Garidhiji was not at all liked by this community of people because he strongly opposed the demand for separate electorate for Dalit in the parliament.

Ambedkar incorporated several Articles in the Indian Constitution for the upliftment of the Dalits and women. He introduced Article 14 for legal protection of equal civil rights. He envisioned the fundamental rights of Indian citizens. He made a provision in the Article 15 for fundamental rights to all Indian citizens against any form of discrimination either by State or by any citizen on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. Article 15 (4) allows the State to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the SCs. and STs, Article 16 (4) contains the constitutional ground for the reservation of appointment to public posts in favour of any backward class of citizens. Similarly Article 16 (4A) advocates reservation in matters of promotion with consequential seniority to any class in favour of SCs and STs. Article 16(4) contains the constitutional ground for the reservation of appointment to public posts in favour of any backward class of citizens. Similarly Article 16 (4A) "advocates reservation in matters of promotion with consequential seniority to any class in favour of SCs and STs. Article 330 and 332 of the Indian Constitution declares reservation of seats for SCs and STs in the legislature.

This hierarchical system has suppressed and humiliated a large section of society, and excluded the same from the mainstream resulting into the slavery and disintegration of the country. Most unfortunately, the government, ruling classes and policy makers are not at all honestly serious to attack the very root of such a heinous and vicious system that humanity has suffered from. E.M. Forster rightly remarks. "Really it takes the human mind to evolve anything so devilish No Animal could have hit upon it."

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