



THE **CONTOUR**

An International
Peer-reviewed Online Journal
of Studies in English

www.thecontour.org

Volume 2 | Issue 4

ESTD : 2014

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr. Linda Sherwood Wesley

American English Institute
The University of Oregon

Dr. Himadri Lahiri

Professor of English
The University Of Burdwan
West Bengal, India

Dr. Terry Nadasdi

Professor, Dept. Of Linguistics
University Of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Dr. Anand Mahanand

Department of Materials Development
English and Foreign Languages University
Hyderabad - 500 605, India

Dr. Ms. Bhagyashree S. Varma

Associate Professor in English
University of Mumbai
Mumbai - 98, India

Jai Singh

Department of Commonwealth Literary
Studies
The English and Foreign Languages
University, Hyderabad, India

Dr. Prashant Mishra

Professor and Head, Department of English
Government S.V.P.G. College, Neemuch
Madhya Pradesh - 458 411, India

Dr. Ramesh Dhage

School of Language and Literature
Swami Ramanand Teerth Marthawada
University, Nanded, Maharashtra - 431 606,
India

Nabil Salem

Assistant Professor,
Ibb University, Yemen

Dr. Atanu Bhattacharya

Chairperson, Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies
Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar

Hemendra Chandalia

Professor, Janardan Rai Nagar Rajasthan Vidyapeeth,
Udaipur Vice President of Rajasthan Association
for Studies in English

Dr. Binod Misra

Associate Professor of English, Dept. of HSS
IIT Roorkee, Editor-in-Chief,
Editor-in-Chief, *Indian Journal of English Studies*
Assistant Editor, *Creative Writing And Criticism*

Dr. Sudhir Karan

Asiatic Society, Kolkata

Dr. Arijit Ghosh

Department of English,
VIT, Madras, India

Dr. Vijay Kumar Roy

Department of English
Northern Border University, KSA

Dr. Ramprasad B.V

Department of Studies & Research in English,
Kuvempu University, Karnataka.

Apurba Saha

Department of English
Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University

Dr. Amit Chakrabarty

Principal, Turku Hansda Lapsa Hembram Mahavidyalay

Dr. Mala Sharma

Associate Professor & Head of Department of English
Ramkrishna Nagar College, Assam

Dr. Debashis Bandopadhyay
Professor of English
Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Commerce
Vidyasagar University, Midnapore

Editor-in-Chief
Dr. Susanta Kumar Bardhan
Associate Professor of English
Suri Vidyasagar College,
Suri, Birbhum
West Bengal - 731101, India

THE CONTOUR

© THE CONTOUR

Volume 2, Issue 4

ISSN: 2349-6398

Website: www.thecontour.org

E-mail: thecontour.contact@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/thecontour2014

Twitter: twitter.com/thecontour2014

April, 2016

Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Susanta Kumar Bardhan

Cover Designing & Formatting

Suman Saha

Samarpan Chatterjee

Publisher

Dr. Susanta Kumar Bardhan,

Suri, Birbhum, 731101, West Bengal,

India

Dalit Literature: Medium of Theoretical Resistance of the oppressed

Atanu Ghosh

Assistant Professor of English
Murshidabad Adarsha Mahavidyalaya
Chak-Islampur, Murshidabad

From time immemorial, Indian Hindu Society is divided across professional activities. In accordance with their profession, human beings here are divided into four categories: 1. Brahmin, 2. Kshatriya, 3. Vaishya and 4. Shudra. In those times, this separation is a necessity as it is done in accordance with the principle of division of labour. But later, taking advantage of this situation, some people, beneficiary of this age-old system, declared the custom as God-made and hence, sacrosanct. The Shudras were badly treated and pushed to the margins. They were known as Untouchables. So, instead of a professional system, a caste system emerged in Hindu society and people belonging to higher caste controls the society. As a result, the lower caste people remain helpless sufferers in the hands of caste system.

But against this inhuman treatment, an anti-caste movement was started in India under the inspiration of Jyotiba Phule, which was further developed by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar. Mahatma Gandhi, though not a Dalit himself, dedicated his life for the upliftment of Dalit Masses. Phule and Ambedkar, on the other hand, hailed from the oppressed people. They had the worst experiences of injustice and cruelty. They started a political and social movement for the freedom and equality of the Dalits. This movement played a vital role in shaping Dalit literature. After their enlightenment, Dalits need a theoretical platform by means of which they can spread the news of oppression, ignominy and betrayal in the hand of caste system. And this need is bridged by the emergence of Dalit literature.

Dalit literature, as the very name signifies, is literature about the Dalits. It is a significant genre of Indian literature which reflects the plight of an oppressed section of society under India Caste system. It came to the forefront as a prominent voice of the marginalised section of society after 1960. After the independence of India, the Dalits were not satisfied with the political and economic equality given to them by the government. They also demanded religious and creative

freedom. Hence, through the medium of Dalit literature, they decided to create a space of their own and establish their own identity. In this context, Baburao Bagul, a famous Dalit writer, says: "Dalit literature is not a literature of vengeance. Dalit Sahitya is not a literature which spreads hatred. Dalit Sahitya first promotes man's greatness and man's freedom and for that reason it is a historic necessity."¹ Arjun Dangle, another critic and editor of *Poisoned Bread*, a collection of Dalit writings, defines Dalit literature in following manner:

Dalit Literature is not simply a literature. It is associated with a movement to bring about change. It represents the hopes and ambitions of a new society and new people.²

To the Creators of Dalit literature Dr B. R. Ambedkar suggests: "You should not forget that there is another world of the neglected, Dalits and helpless human beings within our nation. Try to understand their misery and anxiety and dedicate your creative power to make their life respectable to other beings. Genuine humanity lies there." All these observations about Dalit literature clearly points out that it has a separate identity of its own.

Dalit literature is often compared with Afro-American Black Literature for its depiction of racial segregation and injustice. Like other marginalized literatures, especially Black literature and Woman's writing, Dalit literature started off as 'literature of protest and resistance'. It questioned the mainstream literary theories and upper caste ideologies and explored the neglected portion of society. Here 'anubhava' (experience) takes precedence over 'anumana' (imagination). That is why authenticity and liveliness become the hallmarks of Dalit literature. Shame, anger, sorrow and indomitable hope are the ingredients of Dalit literature. For the Dalit writers, writing is a form of rebellion. They wrote because they want to share their pain, sorrows, humiliation with others so that people are aware of their problem and recognize them as human beings.

The frustration, humiliation, anguish and revolt felt by the oppressed people constitute the dialogics of Dalit literature. Dalit literature rejects Hindu Puranas, and Vedic literature because they want to perpetuate the dehumanized caste-system. The other victim of Dalit criticism is Sanskrit language as all the Puranas and Vedas are written in that language. Besides, the reject Indian and Western aesthetic theories. As a result, it rejects Indian theories of Rasa and Dhvani. It also rejects Western theories like Freud's Psychoanalysis, Barthe's Structuralism and Derrida's Deconstruction. Dalit literature creates a new aesthetics which is based on the real experiences of life. Another significant aspect of dalit literature is the de-construction of myths, whose very basis is questioned

by the Dalit writers. They treat Ekalavya as their great grandfather. Shambuk, is another idol of Dalits who was killed mercilessly by Rama for reading Vedas. Dr Mahesh Pandya's Gujarati poem "Uttar Gujarat ni Jivali." is one of the best illustrations of de-construction of old myths:

Let us go to the village

O Jamni

I want to buy a gun

gun? Why Jivali?

are you mad?

Why do you need a gun?

Ali Jamni, you do not know

Poor Shambuk

was meditating and practicing

And then?

Rama killed him mercilessly

Now

I want to shoot Rama

and also

I want to kill Drona

who demanded

Ekalavya's thumb as

Gurudakshina.³

Although Dalit literature comes in all genres, the autobiographies are the most popular. Narandra Jadhav, author of *Outcaste*, traced this tendency by revealing the fact that when a group of people who have been silenced for centuries begin to talk; the natural tendency is to tell their own stories.

Indeed, a large number of the stories bear testimony to the atrocities, discrimination that was done to lower caste people. Sharan Kumar Limbale's *The outcaste*, originally in Marathi entitled 'Akkarmashi' shows how much the caste system and its attendant poverty and social stigma follow a Dalit everywhere - even into the city. Not acknowledged by his upper caste Patil father, Sharan is marginalised because his mother, with whom he lives, is a low-caste Mahar. The excruciating poverty of his childhood is described in simple yet evocative language - the most vivid being when his grandmother eats bhakris made out of millets taken from cow-dung. Even more distressing are the stories of Dalit woman. They are doubly marginalised.

Dalit literature represents a powerful emerging trend in the Indian literary scene. With the growing translation of works by Dalit writers from various regional languages into English, Dalit literature is poised to acquire a national and international presence. The phenomenal growth in Dalit writing is a part of growing need of the Dalits themselves to articulate their experience. Let us sum up the contribution of Dalit literature:

- (1) It effectively threatened the Brahmanic hegemony from literature.
- (2) It mobilized Dalit masses for assertion, protest and resistance.
- (3) It gave a platform for Dalit intellectuals to assemble themselves together.
- (4) As the level of literacy is low among Dalits, the emergence of Dalit literature, where the writers and readers and mostly Dalits, is itself an evidence of a profound change taking place in Indian caste-ridden society.

References:

1. Baburao Bagul, "Dalit Sahitya: man's greatness, man's freedom", Asmitadarsh, Vol-I, 1973, pp. 56-57.
2. Arjun Dangle, ed. Poisoned Bread, Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature (Mumbai: Orient Longman, 1992) p.266.
3. Mahesh Pandya, Utter Gujaratni Jiwali Hayati (Ahamedabad: Gujrat Dalit Sahitya Academy), July 1999, 6 (Translated into English by Darshana Trivedi)