

## AMBEDKARITE LITERATURE: LIBERATION FOR HUMANITY

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### **Abstract:**

*Dalit literature owes its origin to the revolutionary struggle led by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar for Dalit liberation, equality, fraternity, social justice and dignity of life; and for a change in the social, cultural and economic hegemony of the caste Hindus. Ambedkarite literature, as it is now known for its delineation of Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy of creation of casteless, classless and raceless society, is a movement to bring about a revolutionary social change. What Dalit writers want is the complete liberation for all those victimized and suffered for ages. Poems, short stories, novels and autobiographical narratives written by Dalit writers provided useful insights on the question of Dalit identity. Now, the marginalized and subaltern communities found a new name with the perspective 'Dalit is dignified' thereby rejecting the sub-human status imposed on them by the high caste social order. Dalit writers used protest, revolt, negativism as positive creative energy and a weapon for bringing about a change. Ambedkarite literature holds human being as the centre point, opposes the superiority of race, religion, varna, caste and class. Therefore, it can be considered as the literature of liberation and literature of humanity.*

### **Introduction**

Emerged in the 1960s in Maharashtra, Dalit literature is essentially a socio-cultural movement. It aims at seeking modernization and change in Indian society in the light of the ideology of Dr. Ambedkar. The thoughts and works of Babasaheb have an immense impact on the emergence, growth and development of Dalit literature. Therefore, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is called as the father of Dalit literature. He is “the mythic giant of Dalit literature”, “the ideal” and “the embodiment of Dalit self-esteem.” (Bagul 287) “All the Dalit authors seek inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar.” (Arora 222) “Ambedkarite ideology is the true inspiration for Dalit literature.” (Limbale 46) Then there is no wonder, if Dalit literature is known as Ambedkarite literature. The paper is an attempt to discuss Ambedkarite literature as a powerful movement of liberation for humanity.

### **Ambedkarism and Dalit literature**

What Arjune Dangle says is true, “It is no coincidence that the Dalit literary movement began in Maharashtra, the birthplace of Dr. Ambedkar's movement. His revolutionary ideas stirred into action all the Dalits in Maharashtra and gave them a new self-respect. Dalit literature is nothing but the literary expression of this awareness.” (vii) Dalit writings are governed by the principles like liberty, equality and fraternity; and self-respect, self-reliance and self-development propounded by Dr. Ambedkar. Babasaheb's ideas about Dalit liberation, equality and social justice evident in his defense of the untouchables before the Southborough Commission, the Simon Commission, and the Round Table conferences; his publications such as *Mook Nayak*, *Bahishtrit Bharat*, *Janata* and *Samata*; his efforts with the Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha, Majoor Paksha, Scheduled Caste Federation and the Republican Party of India; his leadership role in the Chavdar Lake agitation, his entry into the Kala Ram temple and the burning of *Manusmriti*; his addresses in the meetings, conferences and gatherings; his founding of Siddhartha College and Milind College, his work in formulating the Indian Constitution; and his acceptance of Buddhism function as a creative force behind Dalit writings.

Ambedkarite literature stands out both from the contemporary Marathi literature and another

development of the time named Marxism. It saw a fresh crop of new writers, they wrote with an agenda of human liberation found in Ambedkarism. To name a few of them are Annabhau Sathe, Baburao Bagul, Shankarrao Kharat, Bandhumadhav, Daya Pawar, P.I. Sonkamble, Namdeo Dhasal, Narayan Surve, J.V. Pawar, Raja Dhale, Keshav Meshram, Sharankumar Limbale, Trayambak Sapkale, Arjune Dangle, Waman Nimbalkar, Gangadhar Pantavane, Yashwant Manohar, Bhimsen Dethé, Ram Dudonde, Arun Kamble, Laxman Mane, Laxman Gaikwad, Dadasaheb More, Loknath Yashwant, Kishor Shantabai Kale, Dattaa Bhagat, Premanand Gajvi and others; among the Dalit women writers are Baby Kamble, Shantabai Kamble, Kumud Pawade, Jyoti Lanjewar, Heera Bansode, Mallika Amar Shaikh all from Maharashtra; while Sivakami, Edayavendan, Unjai Rajan Abimani, Bama, Anbadavan, Gunasekaram, Imaiyam, Marku Palamalai and others from Southern part of India; Jayant Parmar, Neerav Patel, Sahil Parmar, Raman Vaghela, Mohan Parmar, Dalpat Chauhan Harish Mangalam etc from Gujarat and Mahasweta Devi and others from northern India.

### **Writing with a Purpose**

Babasaheb's assertion to writers is very clear. He says,

Through your literary creations cleanse the stated values of life and culture. Don't have a limited objective. Transform the light of your pen so that the darkness of villages is removed. Do not forget that in our country the world of the Dalits and the ignored classes is extremely large. Get to know intimately their pain and sorrow, and try through your literature to bring progress in their lives. True humanity resides there. (8)

Dalit writings therefore, developed as a movement with a purpose for the social cause, the socio-cultural revolution in arts and ideas. Dalit writers stretched social realities in their writings to the startling effects craving for subverting the social order and bringing a democratic change, a revolution for human liberation of the Dalit, oppressed and exploited. They have an agenda for the creation of a new society based on liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice. They use their writings as a weapon for revolutionary change, consciousness-raising, struggle and social commitment.

### **Writing about the Oppressed**

Dalit writing is realistic from start to end. It gives the stunning reality in the life of the oppressed. Arjune Dangle gives a harrowing picture of their wretchedness in a poem:

We fought with crows,  
 Never even giving them the snot from our noses  
 As we dragged out the Upper Lane's dead cattle,  
 Skinned it neatly  
 And shared the meat among ourselves,  
 They used to love us then.  
 We warred with jackals dogs vultures kites  
 Because we ate their share. (The Cantonment Has Begun to Shake)

### **Literature of Protest**

The ideology of Dr. Ambedkar breathed a new dimension in the Dalit educated class and they poised for attack on anything that contradicted liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice. The literature that saw light of the day became the literature of protest. Even before 1960, there had been Dalit writing but it had rarely any protest in true sense. The writers wrote within the framework of their conditioning which became just an expression of the life they lived, submitting themselves to existential pressures and situations. For the first time after 1960, there came a total termination of the old way of life and accepting new order that signaled life as real and not the life that had been led before. In the words of Zakir Abedi, "Dalit is a protest literature against all forms of exploitation based on class, race, caste or occupation." (7) It was the protest against the established order of the society that discriminated man from man on the basis

of caste and religion; that oppressed and exploited the so-called lower caste people. Such protest is seen in almost all genres of Dalit literature. It gave a tremendous shock to the high caste Hindus. *Golpitha* (1972), the first collection of poetry by Namdeo Dhasal is one of the fiercest and massive jolts. For Dhasal revolt against established social system and an irrepressible craving for subverting the social order were of main concern in this book. In his poem *Atta* (Now), Dhasal gives a call to Dalits to protest.

Now, now we must explode that  
 building which kisses the sky!  
 After a thousand years, we are  
 blessed with the sunflowers-giving fakir.  
 Now, now we must like sunflowers,  
 Turn our faces to the sun. (*Golpitha*)

Ambedkarite poetry voices rebellion against social injustice with hopes for a life of dignity for the oppressed. Dhasal raises his voice against sacred books and the culture that have divided mankind on the basis of caste and religion. The protest and anger of a rebel reflects thus, when he writes:

I curse you, your book  
 Curse your culture, your hypocrisy

...

one should tear off all the pages of all the sacred books in the world  
 And give them to people for wiping shit off their arses.” (*Golpitha*)

The poet himself is a victim who has been agonized, punished, made to suffer for no reason. Therefore, the protest of the Dalit writers is not just “a protest of brandishing a threatening pen, it is the mixture of both fire and water. His aim is to seek his identity as man, and equal position in the society.” (Jilthe 26)

### **Literature of liberation**

The primary motive of Ambedkarite literature is the liberation of Dalits, rather the liberation of humanity. It played an important role as method of propaganda for the liberation movement in India. The mushrooming little magazine transformed it into a movement. This movement contributed in instilling in the youth Dalit writers' bold and pertinent expression which attempted to overthrow the conventional norms of writing. The movement did help the Dalit writers in alleviating the high-handedness of the elitist writers. It has contributed much to the awakening among the Dalits a new level of pride, dignity, militancy, self-respect, self-reliance and generating militant fight against all social ills and evils. Through their writings, Dalit writers promoted the liberation of the common man one who is at the lowest rung of the society. They made a string attack on the exploiters' art, literature, society, culture, economy and politics.

### **Revolt and Negation**

Ambedkarite 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. It is about life and experience, sorrow and poverty, problems and struggles, pain and rebellion. So, it is marked by revolt and negation as a positive ideology against slavery and victimization or institutionalization. A noted writer-critic, Yashawant Manohar rightly asserts, “Revolt is the most valuable truth in life and literature.” (21) Revolt has creating energy. It destroys distortion and fosters culture. Dhasal puts his open and outright revolt against the tyranny of the Caste Hindus when he says,

I do not feel respect for you,  
 I do not sing of your honour  
 I feel like spiting on you the beetle-leaf juice as I hold it in my mouth now  
 I want to drown you into potful of semen. (*Golpitha*)

Rebellious spirit in Dhasal combines the Dalits' determination that they will not be exploited anymore. He says,

We refuse to be puppets on a string

pulled by a governor of our destiny  
 who has no pedigree. (*I Slew the Seven Horses of the Chariot of the Sun*)

Similarly, the revolt, rebellion and negativism continue to pour from one Dalit poet to the other. In the same line J. V. Pawar expresses Dalit determination in this poem:

I'm the see; I soar; I surge.  
 I move out to build your tombs.  
 The winds, storms, sky, earth.  
 Now all are mine.  
 In every inch of the rising struggle  
 I stand erect. (I Have Become the Tide)

The negation of the old outdated, unscientific values and acceptance of new positive values went on simultaneously. In the very act of negation there was creation. Dalit literature became a mirror of this. Dalit writer believes that unless every other shade is obliterated a new print cannot be affected.

### Literature of Humanity

Ambedkarism itself is the similar name of humanism. Babasaheb accorded an extremely important place to humanity in his thought system. Therefore, Ambedkarite thought inspired creative literature about fighting against the devaluation of human beings. He expected writer's commitment to common humanity and humanistic ideas in literature. The eminent writer-activist-critic, Sharankumar Limbale rightly asserts,

Inspired by him [Dr. Ambedkar], Dalit literature holds the human being to be its focal point. This literature is a declaration of human freedom. It encourages human liberation, believes in the greatness of human beings, and firmly opposes notions of race, religion and caste. Humanity is the religion of Dalit literature. Therefore, in this world, no imaginary or worldly object is greater than the human being. It rebels against any culture, society of literature that degrades the human being.  
 (51)

Ambedkarite literature centers around common man, regards the "greatness of the human being. (259) The exploited and oppressed human being who had been unknown until then has become the protagonist of this literature. In his poem 'Karl Marx' Narayan Surve announces:

... now we alone are the heroes of history,  
 Of all the biographies too henceforth... (*On the Pavement of life*)

### Conclusion

To sum up, Ambedkarite literature provides ways and means to annihilate the unequal social system by concertizing Dalits for assertion, protest and mobilization; and catalyzing creation of organic intellectuals of Dalits. It voices the problems and sufferings of all those oppressed and exploited in their own societies as well as in other societies. That is why authenticity and liveliness have become hallmarks of this literature. It stands firmly against all type of ills and evils, oppression and exploitation, victimization and institutionalization. It led a movement for human liberation and greatness of humanity. In that sense, Ambedkarite literature can be considered as one of the world's major literary trends of the time. It poised to acquire a national and international presence. However, it is also found that Dalit writings, to some extent are falling into a stereotype; and could not extend satisfactorily its scope for depiction of the changes taking place in the society.

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