



THEMES OF IDENTITY AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN DALIT WRITINGS IN INDIA

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Abstract

Dalit writings pinpoint that Dalits have been exploited due to their social positing in the peripheral stage in the caste system wherein their identity and political representation were long ignored apart from their socio-economic marginalization. The present paper critically analyzes how the theme of Dalits' Identity and their political participation become pivotal in regional Dalit writings that get described in their assertion in literary presentation. Therefore, Dalit writings not only put forth a social-economic critiquing that the religious organizations propagate against Dalits but they also describe Dalits' inching up against the oppressive system.

Keywords: *Pinpoint, Critiquing, Insensitivity, Narrative, Resistance.*



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1. BACKGROUND

The historical perspective of Dalits' circumstantial oppression get described in the 'selective moral' approach of the Brahmanic rulings framed on the basis of popular morality and levid against untouchables in Hindu society. The Hindu religious rules prioritize moral (and legal) obligations to untouchables even against the less that get becomes evident in the current socio-literary domains in Indian society. Caste atrocity against Dalits needs to be located in a historical perspective to stop Hindu caste laws that get asserted in Dalit writings. As the foreigners remain comparatively for limited times (as to the Hindu rulers) and have no moral obligation to correcting things in Indian society. The *rajdharm*- responsibilities as well as moral duty of the ruling class either suit to keep oppressed untouchables or fail to perform their duties to ensure a vibrant society under various religious grounds for Dalits sufferings. The political awakening actualized through social engineering that Kanshi Ram (after Ambedkar) gets conceptualized in the social

fabric of the Hindu society in the political ground at least for a short time. Hence, political activism of an ideology or a community becomes the paramount feature of (contemporary) literature as one of the most exponent mode of general expression of the public phenomenon of society. Hence, the select texts describe how political activism and socio-cultural and literary activism not only determinants of each other but also manifest their literary outcome of contemporary socio-cultural repercussion. Socio-literary as well as political assertion against Brahmanic hegemony is only gateway through which Bahujans' suffering can get literary representation, political stakeholderships in persuasive theory of political construction and commonality of sufferings in literary narrative through in inching up new social engineering in Indian society. Although practical issues (between *Shudras* and *Ati-shudras*) easily locate managerial contradictions yet a theoretical commonality of these Hindu sufferers make a substantial socio-literary discussion in the current scenario in India.

2. COMMONALITY OF DALIT–BAHUJAN SUFFERING

The attitudinal difference between Dalits and Backward castes to understand their underlying reasons of their caste oppressions not only stops them unite but also put them in confrontations despite getting benefits of reservation in their respective categories due to their commonality of caste sufferings in Hindu society. The tactics of dividing the society into caste disabilities has various repercussions as defined, 'Brahmanism was keen on preventing united actions by Non-Brahmins to overthrow Brahmanism and that is why Brahmanism brought segregation in the Indian society... In other words, Brahmanism in instituting the Caste system has put the greatest impediment against the growth of nationalism (Ambedkar, vol. 3,304)'. The socio-cultural narrative of Dalit sufferings has political background in Indian democracy. As Dalits are unable to seek majority for SC nominees so they have no develop socio-cultural and political understanding to present their issues at the state as well as national level politics. The interests of political leaders (Dalit and Backward Class) scarcely come together but their suffering history brings them together. The Bahujan leaderships badly fail to bring together the cultural sufferers e.g. Dalits and the Backwards in the Non-Brahmins formation. The selected texts pertinently describe the issue in the regional societies that how the Backward Castes 'selective approach over social sufferings in the caste system give an edge to the prejudiced Brahminism ideology. The untouchable characters challenge Brahmanic social structure against the ongoing traditions of the permanent designated roles long prevalent in the Indian society. A little variation but all societies got in the same fixture of a single structure treating the untouchables as inhuman. Therefore, actualizing the need for representation puts them in a counteractive approach against the upper caste narrative of the caste system. The authentic experience of caste discrimination meted out to the Dalits (even in the modern age of science and technology) put these people in a ghetto of inhuman treatment and curtailing 'their quite essential' traits of an individual. The two autobiographies of the Dalit writers from different regions and rituals put them in the single thread of nationhood e.g. *notion of Dalithood*. The Dalithood confronts against Hinduism that gives no respite to evolve a new identity for these people. The self-styled sanctions ideals and suppositions are designed to set scores over untouchables as stated under:

Ideals as norms are good and necessary. Neither society nor an individual can do without a norm. But a norm must change with changes in time and circumstances. No norm can be permanently fixed. There must always be room for revaluation of the values of our

norms. The possibility of revaluing values remains open only when the institution is not invested with sacredness. Sacredness prevents revaluation of its values. (Ambedkar, vol. 7, 31)

3. INTOLERANCE AGAINST VOICING OF DALITS

Upper castes' insensitivity, institutional indifference, unease of the government agencies becomes evident over Dalits' narrative of their social sufferings in 'an advisory on quoting the nomenclature of "Dalit" curtails' Dalits' media rights to go against the caste atrocities. The instance an upper caste sitting officer resentment on presenting Dalit sufferings gets a title by a daily paper (21 November, 2018) as 'Upper-caste backlash makes' Twitter cut sorry figure. Thenmozhi Soundarajan, a US-based Dalit rights activist and artist who designed a poster of a Dalit woman holding up a placard get embroiled over this. The placard reads 'Smash Brahminical Patriarchy' as a part of her work on caste, gender, and religious intolerance. It sets off a storm on social media that the Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey was being accused of 'Hinduphobia' and 'inciting violence and hate'. It compelled Twitter's Legal Head Vijay Gadde to apologize,

I am sorry for this. It is not reflective of our views. We took a private photo with a gift just given to us- we should have been more thoughtful. Twitter strives to be an impartial platform for all.' This leads to making comments by an in-serving IPS officer (Parliament) from his verified handle that the picture has "potential of causing communal riots"...and is a "fit case for attempt to destabilise the nation". The poster was out of two gifts given to the CEO on his visit to India and the other poster reads 'End Caste Apartheid'. (Nair, The Indian Express)

Upper castes' insensitivity towards Dalits sufferings is outcome of long religious sanctions to the Hindu caste system determines and present Dalits' situation in the Hindu social order. The recent insensitive remarks of the orthodox people made Ambedkar humiliated over his efforts on tabling the Hindu Code Bill in Parliament. The intolerance of the Hindu orthodox gets published in National Herald on Saturday, February 26, 1949 with caption "GET OUT" connects the long history of insensitivity towards Dalit sufferings and led them to confront against Brahminical structure. The crux of cause of Dalit sufferings and to get unsuccessful in confrontation against their oppressors is due to either Backward class fail to understand the commonality of caste discrimination or they do not support have their socio-cultural protest weakens Bahujan consolidation in Indian democratic despite having majority numbers.

The current fiasco of Bahujans' collective approach of protest against caste oppression find essence is due to their internal bickering and dismaying from philosophy of social justice conveyed by the sociologists like the Phule-Ambedkar and others. The 'social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man, that, except in some unusual circumstances...Society between equals can only exist on the understanding that the interests of all are to be regarded equally. (Ambedkar, vol. 344)'. Both (Dalits and OBCs) sufferers in caste oppression must continuously assert activism to ensure their representation in socio-literary domains. Hence, to implementation of government policies in a democratic set up is always subjected many social institutions and pressure groups of majority people and majority (in turn) comes in creating commonality of Bahujan identity of Dalits.

4. CASTE COMBINATIONS AGAINST DALITS

The causes and confrontation of Dalit sufferings get deep as upper castes' pretentious support either to promote bifurcations of SC reservations or create hostile narrative towards the SC reservation. Dalits' become victim of upper castes anguish even in implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations of reservation for Backward Castes' in the 1990s in India. Therefore, the Dalit writers express the hardcore caste oppression tactics in literature directly influencing the socio-cultural representation in these regions in their lingua franca. Dalit writings describe their suffering at the grass-root level assert to create a cultural space for Dalit identity by dissociating it from the orthodox upper castes representation in society and literature. The underlying reason of Dalit sufferings in popular morality and public disapproval get exemplified (in verdict passed by the Hon'ble Delhi High Court) on LGBT case filed by Naz foundation. The verdict by Hon'ble Justice Shah defines:

Thus popular morality or public disapproval of certain acts is not a valid justification for restriction of the fundamental rights under article 21. Popular morality as distinct from a constitutional morality derived from constitutional values is based on shifting subjecting notions of right and wrong. If there is any type of "morality" that can pass the test of compelling state interest, it must be "constitutional" morality and not public morality. The aspect of constitutional morality was strongly insisted upon by Dr. Ambedkar in the constitutional Assembly. (Shah, 2009)

Change is a permanent feature of nature in its manifestation either in the natural blessings or calamities like present pandemic (Novel Corona Virus in different stages) or the Spanish plague in beginning of the twentieth century. The unexpected crises shook

humanity to cause death to millions brings different change in social interaction in forms of social distancing. The social distancing approach 'to adopt and to drop' certain practices affected social values in personal interactions and make must to respect time values especially as the existing pandemic circumstances compel everyone to adopt the Corona behaviour protocol in social interaction. The reciprocal inversion or conversion between the *values* has a pattern of change and time values (as associated with the corona pandemic protocol) must get stop with time in socio-cultural manifestations. If the time values becomes social values and get religious sanctions to these (time values) turning in social values of a religious sect, then religious sanction to these practices be reviewed sincerely for betterment of human beings. As religion nourishes society so incorporation of social values in religion must be appreciated like Christianity (in the New Testament) and Sikhism (in teachings of Dalit saints to some extent) represent social audit of religious values. But uncharacteristically other religions have not incorporated the changes. As the study is concerned with Dalits' status in Hinduism and Sikhism so incorporation of their socio-cultural perspective in social practices in religious update are crucial in Dalit discourse in Indian society.

5. DALIT WRITINGS AND PHULE-AMBEDKAR SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

In the Brahmanic rules, the upper caste Hindus dehumanize untouchables for centuries that choked their spirit to feel their suffering and think to get out from the saga of socio-cultural sufferings. The upper castes' justifications and interpretations notionally restrict untouchables to think to resist either in society-cultural milieu or in the literary world. Dalit sufferings in Hinduism continue up to Indian Independence and even after in the Hindu caste rules. After Independence, India become a secular country and fundamental rights (including religious freedom for every citizen) entrust equality wherein Dalits get respite from the Hindu caste rules and other prohibitions. Dalits who get inspired to avail the corrective measures (and as proposed by the social thinkers like Mahatma Phule, Periyars and others) for their equality are opposed by orthodox upper caste Hindus. Phule unearths how tactics and practices of Brahmanic interpretations in Hinduism keep Dalits uneducated and submissive either in the name of religious order of gods and goddesses or keep them in maze of *Mukti/moksh* in the next birth narratives. Therefore, untouchables are long kept in continuity of the social status quo in the name of religious sanctions to the unjustified social practices to make them see life after death at the cost of this life. Phule describes in *Slavery* as under:

Anyone who will consider well the whole history of Brahmins domination in India, and the thralldom under which it has retained the people even up to the present day, will agree with us in thinking that no language could be too harsh by which to characterize the selfish heartlessness and consummates cunning of the Brahmin tyranny by which India has been so long governed. (**'Vimalkriti',128**).

Phule' dissects how and why *shudras* and *ati-shudras* suffer in Hinduism and finds the socio-religious narrative as basis of Hindu caste politics against them. Although many philosophers and thinkers express their ideas on the social evil of untouchability and caste system (with focus to bring reforms in Hinduism) yet their focus on eradicating untouchability and caste discrimination against untouchables remain secondary in social reforms. Dalit Writings evolve around assertion of peripheral people who brings out undercurrents of their causes and confrontation against the Brahmanic ideology (long kept these in socio-cultural sufferings) that continues to haunt their socio-emotional world. Dalit writers not only present rigidity of caste practices against Dalits but also describe social transformation through instances and characters. The writers also present various shifts social positioning of Dalits and Backward Castes in Indian society. The new Bahujan socio-political counteraction against upper castes' discriminatory practices is one of nucleus themes of Dalit texts. The writings of Phule and Ambedkar inspire the contemporary Dalit thinkers, writers, and academicians who protest against their suffering in religion dissect Brahmanic hegemony over untouchables. The signs and symbols of cultural manifestations in any text comprise one of the most important aspects of literary theory in the post-colonial literary discourse is as described:

New scholarship in the last two decades has done much to indicate the cultural, psychic, and discursive operations and effects of post-colonialism...It becomes very easy to generalize when we work from the particular, dominant, and highly visible analytical paradigm, and forget that the visibility and dominance of particular paradigms may have more to do with the state of either the archive or of conditions of research. (**Loomba and Kaul, vol.16**)

The socio-cultural oppression of Dalits results in misinterpretation of the constitutional provisions (meant for their upliftment) as well as opposed by the social institutions controlled by the upper caste organizations causing caste confrontations in Independent India.

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