

www.langlit.org

IIA-14

ISSN 2349-5189



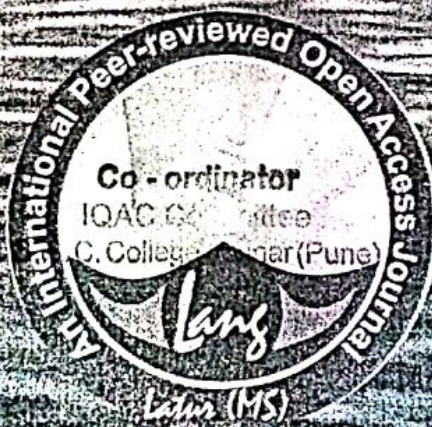
LangLit

*An International Peer-Reviewed
Open Access Journal*

Vol 2

4

2016



Chief Editor
Dr. Prashant Mothe



PROLIFERATION OF DALIT MOVEMENTS AND DALIT LITERATURE

DR. CHANDRAKANT R. MANDLIK
Shri Shiv Chhatrapati College
Junnar.

ABSTRACT

Because of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar The Dalit struggle got recognition, representation and power. The movements like 'Bhakti movement, Neo-Vedantic movement and Sanskritization movement significantly took lead to focus on the problem of untouchability. The conversion movement gave new identity to the Dalit and the Secular movement attempted to create socio-cultural Structure. The depressed classes in India had no freedom, right and liberty. They were prevented from the recognition, mobilization and sharing their views on culture. The Dalit literature began to fight for Dalit's equality, freedom, dignity and solidarity.

Introduction

The movements like 'Bhakti' Movement, Neo-Vedantic Movement and Sanskritization Movement have made great contribution in creating class-consciousness in Dalit sections who were exploited in the caste govern society. They also helped in generating consciousness about economic condition and cultural reality. Dalits got Buddhism as a new alternative religion through Proselytization Movement. In the Secular movement one may underline efforts of giving socio-cultural identity to the exploited classes. The social workers like Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule and Shahu Maharaj were the staunch revolutionaries to establish equality and eradicate differentiation which was rested on the basis of caste. The work which was done by the Dalit movements in the task of establishing new socio-cultural structural is highly memorable. During 'Secular' movement Dalit literature thrive and people began to give voice to their thoughts through poems, stories and play. Dalit literature has been putting the valuable steps since the three decades on the literary port and it makes the people conscious about their freedom from the prisons controlled by the upper classes. No sufficient attempts are made by the political authorities to uplift them and lead them from darkness to the light.

Nature and Scope

The Dalit movement initially had an intention of reformation. It struggled against the caste system and took efforts to destroy Hindu evils. The work of Chokhamela, Eknath, Kabir and Ravidas was treated very significant in the creation of Dalit consciousness. The alternative movements also worked for establishing socio-culture structure and they tried to achieve self-dignity to every person. Dalit movement began in all regions of society to reform the caste



and fight against the evil like untouchability. Drinking and customs were the marks of low caste. Giving up drinking and neglecting customs and traditions were the internal reforms in the society, which were carried out by the Dalit movement. The movement demanded right of education, opportunities of employment and participation in politics. The exploited workers peasants and labourers were participated in economic and class issues. Dalit movement was very weak in organization. The financial sources of the organization were not sufficient enough to satisfy their essential needs. By rejecting Hinduism and welcoming Buddhism Dalit movement established new absolute identity. The down trodden people in India accepted new identity of Dalit. The word Dalit is used to those people who are not given socio-economic and cultural right and to the untouchables. According to Nandu Ram there are three types of contemporary Dalit movements. The first movement struggles against socio-economic exploitation. The second movement is in search of opportunities and tries to achieve equality, liberty, fraternity and justice. The third movement aims to get self-respect and social identity. Rajani Kothari views to fight against caste domination. She wants unity within diversity and justice.

The Dalit struggle after the arrival of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar started getting importance in which main issues have got recognition, representation and power in the changing political scenario. Ghanshyam Shaha (1990:13-27) has classified Dalit movement as Reformatory Movement and Alternative Movement. The reformatory movements like '*Bhakti Movement*', '*Neo-Vedantic Movement* and '*Sanskritisation Movement* have taken efforts to reform caste system and focus on the severe problem of untouchability. The Alternative movements like '*Proselytization movement* and '*Secular Movement* attempted to create an alternative socio cultural structure.

Dalit Movements

'*Bhakti Movement*' which began in 12th century and ended in the 18th century has produced the great saints like Chokhamela and Eknath. The role of their poetry in the task of Dalit awakening is remarkable. Both the saints worked for change in untouchability. Chokhamela was from the untouchable community i.e. Mahar. The saint, Eknath, a son of Brahman community from Paithan ate with Maharas and permitted them to participate in his 'Bhajans'. He wrote poems on 'Mahar'. We find voice against the Untouchability in Chokhamela's 'Bhakti' songs. He raises a question on purity and impurity in his song by saying:

Who is pure and who is impure?

The cause of pollution is the creation of body.

In the beginning, at the end, there is nothing but pollution.

No one knows anyone who was born pure.

Chokha says, in wonder, who is pure? (Chokhamela, 1950:5-6)

Eknath belongs to the Brahman family. His contribution of 'Bhakti' tradition is for the untouchables. Three hundred bharudas, drama and poems are produced by him. Near about Forty-Seven 'Bharudas' are from the lips of Mahar men and women. One of the Bharudas is written in the title of Mang, the untouchable. Mahar is the speaker in Johar poems. The Mahar preaches about morality and asks for necessity of a Guru. Eknath's composition



suggests that there is no class distinction in the eyes of God. All are equal before the God as he says in the song;

*God baked pots with Gora,
drove cattle with Chokha,
Cut grass with Savata Mali,
wore garments with Kabir
Coloured hide with Ravidas,
sold meat with butcher Sajana'
Melt gold with Narahari,
carried cow-during with Janabai,
And even become the Mahar messenger of Damaji (Eknath)*

Bhakti movement underlines the Ambedker's spirit of nationalism. It also suggests upliftment of the depressed classes, which was expected by Dr. Ambedkar. He claimed that progress of the society is not possible if people are divided on the basis of the caste.

The Bhakti Movement preaches re-interpretation of philosophy of Hinduism. It focuses on foundation of purity. This movement works for eradication of evils of that exist in the society. The role of Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda is very significant in the period of the Bhakti Movement. Their main function is to wipe out the evil like untouchability. They viewed untouchability is not given place in Hinduism. According to Dayananda the rulers of the country are the responsible for casteism in the society. He states, any Brahman who is disqualified for his work becomes at once a 'Sudra de jure' and a Sudra who qualifies for it become at once a Brahman de jure' (Jordend Saraswati: 1978:72)

The book entitled '*Social Movement and Social Change*' by Satish Kumar Sharma clearly explains Arya Samaj and the untouchables and their relationships. Sharma, the author prominently focuses the fact that the Arya Samaj was not with the political movements of the untouchables. It did not like the untouchable's fight for firm unity and their upliftment for the state of being together. Consequently, the role of '*Neo-Vedantic*' movement in developing Dalit movement was very important. The movement like 'The Satyashodhak Samaj and the Self Respect Movement, Adi-Dharma and Adi-Andhra movements came in to existence in the late nineteenth century. They were anti-untouchability movements Adi-Dharma.

A group of untouchables tried to improve their financial position through '*Sanskritization*' movement. They also began their fight for higher status in the caste organization. M.N. Srinivas illustrates '*Sanskritization*'. According to him caste system is not rigid. Low caste is able to rise to the higher condition. It is possible through '*Sanskritization*'. The low caste people follow 'Brahmanic' way of life continuously even though they are prohibited. Sanskritic norms and rituals are adopted by the people belonging to the lower caste. They also discover mythologies to claim for a higher social status. The Sharars and Nadars in the state, Tamilnadu and the Travas in the Kerala have gone beyond the circle of Untouchability. They have moved in the direction of a higher social status from their life of a lower position. People of Ezhavas community came together and formed the organization. The Association for the maintenance of Dharma started various activities for sanskritizing norms, codes, and



customs of the Iravas. They used weapon of 'Satyagraha' for sociopolitical, economic opportunities and permission in the temple.

Dalits used *Conversion Movement* as a tool to propagate Buddhism against Hinduism. Announcing personal conversion Ambedkar declared 'Religion is for man; man is not for religion. If you want to gain self respect change your religion. (Zelliot, 1992:192) He also stressed on change of religion for co-operative society, power, equality, and happiness. Ambedkar took Diksha in Nagpur before the huge public. Thus the Conversion Movement gave new identity. In this connection the eminent poet in Marathi, Namdev Dhasal stated 'Conversion to Buddhism freed the scheduled Caste from mental and psychological enslavement'. (Dhasal, 192) The impact of conversion movement was astonishing. It contributed financial progress of the Dalits and made them free from various types of exploitation done by the upper classes in the public life of the untouchables.

The efforts were taken to bring socio-cultural identity to the Dalits through the '*Secular Movement*'. During this movement Dalit literature became popular among the people and they began to speak their ideas, thoughts and emotions through various kind of literature like poems, stories and plays. They were used to raise an objection against Hindu tradition, religions, and ethics. Dalit literature is a strong medium of expression which props up Dalit Movement and gives it earnest ardour. Dalit literature is symbolic for identity and power which rejects caste system. Any literature is self explained and literary expressions underline political reality. Intimacy between literature and politics is ever visible which cannot be denied on any ground. Literature which was written during Vedic time is named as religious literature. It clearly tells about political system of that time.

Dalit Literature

Division of literature can be possible on the basis of ideology and ism. We witness Hindu literature, Christen literature, and Gandhian literature. Therefore the term 'Dalit literature' is apt one. Who can write Dalit literature? According to Kanwal Bharati 'Only Dalit can write Dalit literature as they are the sufferers. (Sharma, 2006:78) The upper class people are unable to produce Dalit literature because they have not undergone the sufferings of the Dalits. Ambedkar's philosophy regarding 'Buddhism' and 'Bhaktism' is taken as the guiding force for Dalit literature. Instead of following 'ism' the Dalit writers attempt at various levels to bring Ambedkar's vision into actual action.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had written speeches and articles to criticize caste dominated Indian society and Hindu social structure. Writing constitution of India he gave some valuable directions for modernization and development of the country, India. Throughout the life Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar continued to fight for the rights and freedom of the back-ward classes. He used weapons like speeches and writings and public speeches. Ambedkar used to spread his ideology regarding freedom and rights by making arguments at the national and international conferences. He viewed that the socio-economic values should be equally shared by the members of all sections of the society. Ambedkar's debates in the house of the parliament and in the public were mostly depended on the secular values. He told the people



that without these secular values the individual and social progress of all the mankind would be impossible.

The speech given by Dr. Ambedkar on the topic entitled 'On the Independence of India and the Political Rights of the Depressed Classes' in Round Table Conference (1930-31) is very remarkable from the point of rights of depressed classes. He said "the slaves were permitted to have physical contact, from which the depressed classes are debarred. On the basis of untouchability they were not allowed an interaction with the people of upper classes and were denied enjoying equality and opportunities. The landlords were exploiting the downtrodden and the capitalist were not giving wages to the labourers. The Government of India did not dare to touch any of the issue because they afraid that there would be resistance. Ambedkar said 'we must have government in which men in power will give their undivided allegiance to the best interest of the country. The men in power know where obedience will end and resistance will begin, will not be afraid to amend the social and economic code of life' (Bakshi, 1992:143) According to Dr. Ambedkar it is only a government which is of the people, for the people and by the people that will make this possible.

The Dalit people had no freedom of thought and expression. The Dalit literature has been struggling for the Dalit's recognition, mobilization, co-operation, power sharing to culture and literary assertions. It also fights for Dalit's equality, freedom, human dignity and solidarity. Dalit literature in regional languages in India is not a 'leisure' literature but literature of the people who are oppressed and marginalized. The role of Dalit literature is considered as the lighthouse and torch bearer in the empowerment of the Dalit community.

The help of Dalit literature in the progress and enhancement of Indian culture, art and literature is unforgettable. The work like preservation of Indian culture by the Dalit literature is pivotal and unique. There are uncountable cultural traditions which are known and famous by the titles of the Dalit writers. The instances one can rightly quote are movements by Ravidas and Keshv narain in U.P.; Satnami Movement in Chhattisgarh; and movement by Mahatma Phule in Maharashtra. Dalit literature advocates a new social system based on equality, liberty and fraternity. (Ram, Nandu, 13-21) The basic aim of Dalit literature is welfare of all people despite caste.

Conclusion

The Dalit movement in India before Independence gained popularity. The movements such as *Bhakti* movement, the *Neo-Vedantic* movement and *Sanskritization* movements had the purpose of reformation. The Dalits have been given alternative religion i.e Buddhism through *proselytization* movement. The secular movement has offered socio-cultural identity to the exploited people. Their help for the propagation of social and political consciousness among the Dalit community is considered as valuable because they formulated definite base for Dalit liberation movement. The important place was given to human existence, social mortality, involvement in the political activities. The purpose of the Dalit movement was to bring social change and create social equality in the society. The role of Dalit literature in the development of Indian culture, art and literature is unforgettable. The work like preservation



of Indian culture by the Dalit literature is pivotal and unique. The saints like Chokhamela and Eknath through their sermons fought against untouchability.

REFERENCES

1. Bakshi. S.R. (1992) B.R. Ambedkar, Statesman and Constitutionalist, New Delhi: Anmol Publications.
2. Chokhamela, (1950), *Abhang 11 in Abhang Gatha* Quoted in Eleanor Zelliott.
3. Dhasal, Namdeo. *In Economic and Political Weekly*, (Volume,III,31-3,p1398) quoted in Eleanor Zelliott , *ibid.p.219*.
4. Eknath, Quoted in Eleanor Zelliott.
5. Ram, Nandu. 'Bhartiya Samaj Aur Dalit' In Shyoraj Singh "Baichan' and Devender Chobe, *Ibid. p. 13-21* dor detail.
6. Shah, Ghanshyam. (1990) *Social Movements in India: A Review of the Literature*. Delhi: Sage Publications.
7. Sharma, Pradeep (2006) *Dalit Politics and Literature*. Delhi: Shipra Publication.
8. Jordan, J.T.F. (1978). *Daymand Saraswati: His life and Ideas*. Delhi: Oxford University
9. Zilliot, E. (1992). *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on Ambedkar Movement*. Delhi: Manohar Publication.