

A Voice to the Voiceless: Reflection of Ambedkarite Ideologies in Dalit Literature

Mrs. Kirti Suhas Kurane, Asst. Professor (CHB), (Research Student) The New College, Kolhapur.

Abstract:

Since time being, it was believed that the untouchables were born to serve the people from superior castes in society and for carrying out the ritually defiled materials. The untouchables were regarded as unclean, thus impure and inhuman in religious sense. They were deliberately and forcefully kept away from education or any kind of enlightenment that would make them aware of their being humans. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, one of these socio-politically as well as economically exploited mass, emerged as a messiah who made them aware of their long-run degradation and destruction by the higher class evils. Dr. Ambedkar's endless effort for the betterment of these outcastes is one of greatest contributions in the history of mankind. His legacy to enlighten and empower each and every human being in society has been carried forward by many through activism as well as through their literary works. We find an intense call for the downtrodden to rise and fight together against all odds in society. The present research paper studies those poetic works from Dalit literature that advocate Ambedkarite ideology to depth.

Key Words: Dr. Ambedkar, untouchability, ideology, Dalit, literary work etc.

Untouchability exists in both rural and urban areas of the states in India since the time being. But its severity is felt more in rural localities than the urban ones. Though the episode of exploitation and violence against these discriminated communities were not recorded or looked into as much seriously as they should have been. During the British reign, these marginalised castes were grouped together in 1935 in view of providing them some facilities to improve their disadvantaged life. These downtrodden castes were altogether regarded as Scheduled castes. There exist more than a thousand major untouchable castes and even more than their sub-castes in India that come under this category. Previously, and even today so to speak, untouchability has preserved and practiced under a religious sanction. In spite of the consecutive efforts, made by great social reformers to uproot the inhuman segregation and exploitation of this class of people, untouchability has been destroying the social well-being of the nation.

The exploitation of the untouchables at the hands of the so called upper castes representatives was multifaceted. The social segregation of them included avoiding any kind of physical contact with them. The untouchables were not permitted to use public road or public places. Even education was being kept out of the reach of these people. They were compelled to live far away from the residential area of the upper castes. Drawing water from the same sources, bathing in same water source, and entering temples or public worship places were highly forbidden for these lower castes and any violation to these prohibitions was prone to severe punishments. The punishments included humiliating, beatings, or violence through other means. Burning and killing were among the common punishments set by the so called superiors for the weak and deprived ones. They were even used as a sacrifice performed at religious places in order to remove any kind of evils from the others' lives. The females from the lower castes were the double victims of the exploitation as they were brutally treated as well as raped by the higher caste people.

The term Dalit implies a class of people marginalised and exploited since time being. It is now being used as a pan India concept to refer to the socio-economically deprived people and communities. Dalit literature emerged on a large scale in 1950s but flourished during 1960s and 1970s as a revival of Dalit movement initiated as well as led by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The autonomous anti-caste tradition propagated by Dr. Ambedkar was followed by these writers. Dalit literature in a way was a potent advocate of and response to the general awareness in the suffered people. Their poems are expressive of the long suppressed cries of the tortured people. It does not only mourn the suffering of the poor victims, it even condemns and protests against the religious hegemony existing in Hindu society:

"I have been silent all these days
Listening to the voice of right and wrong
But now I will fan the flames
for human rights ...
[...]
I hold their unpardonable sins as witness
And turn, here and now,
a rebel. (Trans. p. 22, in Dangale, 1992)"

These lines from the poem *Caves*, by Jyoti Lanjewar, declare to cast away the numbness towards wounds and pain she and her people have been receiving for centuries. Unlike other Dalit poems, blaming the self for bearing the unjust for years, this poem announces a rebellion against the exploitation and dehumanisation of the lower-caste and lower call peoples. Emotions as a response to the violence produce no instrumental change and hence, the poet wants to rise and act as a rebel. She declares the "unpardonable sins" of the evil society to be replenished with their very own fruits.

It was Dr. Ambedkar's heed to all those downtrodden communities to stop being the victims as ever. Through his speeches and works, he spread an awareness of being one of the other humans, of being the same as them, of being equal to them, and of achieving that equality, in every sense and field, as their birth right. The poem like *Its Reddening on the Horizon* by J. V. Pawar proposes a revolutionary appeal to put all the injustice at rest by defending in the rightful ways, as he says: "We've endured enough; no enduring now." (p. 79, Trans. Nerurkar, 1992)

The untouchables were not allowed to participate in any kind of political activities. They were not the part of the electorate. They were not even aware of their role in the administrative setups as they were uneducated. Such kind of a social as well as political marginalisation of the untouchable castes naturally bred their economic dependence on their masters. Having no independent source of income at hand, they were forced to live their lives by others' choices and rules. These people were not supposed and allowed to own any kind of wealth; so all they had was the limited sources and belongings to live with. All through is work, Dr. Ambedkar criticised the caste system of Hindu religion. He believed that the religious hegemony in a society creates different classes with different status. The lowermost layer of the society remains economically dependent as they do not have rights on any public resource or property. Dr Ambedkar is a permanent inspiration for the enlightening verbals that is salient feature of Dalit literature. The poetry of a revolutionary poet activist Namdev Dhasal is charged with disdain for the ostracism of Dalits. Dhasal's poetry attacks the class struggle in society founded on the grounds of unequal distribution of resources as well as opportunities. Thus his poems reflect Dr. Ambedkar's viewpoints on the caste and class discrimination in a single society. His poem *Hunger* reflects his condemn for the artificially imposed deprivation by the uppermost caste representatives:

"Hunger, your style is your own
No other calamity comes own way
but you." (*Hunger*, p. 217, Trans. Shanta Gokhale)

In addition to the social alienation, their political exclusion was imposed upon the lower castes in order to keep them ignorant of their rights. Being thrown away from education and knowledge, their existence was made meaningless as well as useless. The intense call and insistence for the oppressed section of the society to unite and alter the socio-economic make-over was the prime objective of the Dalit poetry.

Conclusion:

The untouchables were in a way slaves serving to the higher castes in society. They were not even included in the social order formed on the basis of Hindu Scriptures, rather they served all the other classes that were attributed a certain place and honour in society. Even after independence, the

untouchables continued to be exploited by the social evils from upper castes. Initially, the caste hierarchy in Hindu religion was generally responsible for the deprivation and exploitation of the untouchables. In the later scenario, the exploitative economic and political systems are considered responsible for the inequality existing in society. Dalit literature has worked as a mouthpiece to the long-going unjust. It is the representative of what the community was going through for ages. It is also an ignition to the long suppressed spark of pain. It even encourages the sufferers to strengthen their being and step forward to alter all that they disdain as inhuman. We find all these motivational and uplifting appeals oriented deeply in the humanist ideologies of Bharat Ratna Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar. We find an outcry of the ever silent sorrows to liberate humans from caste system, uplift the deprived ones by providing all the basics required to love life peacefully.

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