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## Dalit Literature and Its Movements

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**Abstract:** *this paper is purely dedicated to Dalit movements and its literature. In this paper Dalit writers' contribution to the society has been given. It is very much concerned to the Dalit movements and their leaders and writers. In today's society Dalit communities condition their situation has been evaluated. I extremely tried to focus on the movement of Dalitism and their influence in the society.*

**Keywords:** Dalit. Movement, Brahmanical, society and writer.

### Introduction:

History testifies the presence of social cleavages in Indian society, in terms of caste, class, gender and the like. Such cleavages has changed the entire social fabric of Indian society, whereby the exploited section, be it the Dalits, adivasis or women, have been

systematically pushed to the periphery by the traditional Brahmanical structure of oppression. Dalits are the people who are economically, socially, politically exploited from centuries. Unable to live in the society of human beings, they have been living outside the village depending on lower level of occupation, and lived as —untouchable|| .This exploitation is due to the discrimination followed by age old caste hierarchical tradition in the Hindu society. This hierarchy has been the cause for oppression of Dalits in each and every sphere of society since centuries. It has subjected them to a life of poverty and humiliation. The Dalits (ex-untouchables), who have been brutally exploited by the so-called upper castes, lag outside the Varnasrama theory and were referred to as outcasts in pre-independent India. India attained independence, but the Dalits were not allowed to live a life with dignity and equality. It is this idea of equality, which sparked the beginning of the Dalit Movement in India, as a protest to the age-old atrocities

committed against them. Dalit movement is a struggle that tries to counter attack the socio – cultural hegemony of the upper castes. It is a movement of the masses that craves for justice through the speeches, literary works, dramas, songs, cultural organizations and all the other possible measurers. So it can be called as a movement which has been led by Dalits to seek equality with all other castes of the Hindu society. The main objective of the Dalit Movement was to establish a society in India based on social equality. The constitutional identity, however, fails to capture the true picture. The real picture is something different which will be reflected in this paper, in the light of the four books including Debrahmanising History, Poisoned Bread, The Prisons We Broke and Dalit Visions.(1)

### **History of Dalit Literature:**

Though there have been several Dalit writers and poets during the medieval times (11th century Kannad poet Madara Chennaih, Dalit saint Kalavee, Sant Kabir and others), the modern movement for Dalit literature in India began from Maharashtra and in Marathi language in the 1960s when the Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangh was established as an

alternative platform to the mainstream Marathi literature. It was inspired by the ideology of Jyotiba Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar. The movement of the African Americans led by Martin Luther King and activities of black panthers as also the “Little Magazine” movement as the voice of the marginalized proved to be a background trigger for resistance literature of Dalits in India.i Even prior to the 1960s, writers like Baburao Bagul, Bandhu Madhav, Shankarao Kharat, Narayan Surve, Anna Bhau Sathe were expressing Dalit concerns and issues in their literature. Baburao Bagul (1930–2008) is considered as a pioneer of Marathi Dalit writings in Marathi. His collection of short stories titled Jevha MiJat Choral (When I Concealed My Caste) published in 1963 shook the traditional foundations of Marathi literature with its radical depiction of social exploitation. Subsequently, Namdeo Dhasal (who founded an organization called Dalit Panther) further consolidated and expanded the Dalit literature movement in India. Litterateurs like Laxman Gaekwad, Laxman Pawar, Daya Pawar, Waman Nimbalkar, Tryambak Sapkale, Arun Dangle, Umakant Randhir, J. V. Pawar, Tarachandra Khandekar, Yogiraj Waghmare, Avinash Dolas, Kishore Shantabai Kale, Narendra Jadhav, Yogendra Meshram, Bhimrao Shirvale etc.

became prominent voices of Dalit writing in Marathi. Many of the Dalit writings have also been translated into English and published as part of the anthologies of Dalit writings. (2)

The Dalit Literary movement however, was not one that had begun with a bang and also had faded into the curtain call without anybody taking heed to the cry of sensitive response. This very movement is still very much on and moving with great momentum; however with one that possesses its roots in the then Indian society of 1970s. For instance, during 1970, the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra began to egress forth, only to champion the cause of dalit in creative interests and hobbies, established by writers like Namdeo Dhasal and Raja Dhale. The Panther Movement had borrowed its moral support from the writings of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who was firm to lay his accentuation that "the root cause of untouchability lies in a pronounced cultural or racial difference of contempt and hatred coupled with a close dependence of the inferior society on the superior one." The term 'Dalit literature' bears its first trace to the first Dalit Literary conference in 1958, which had passed a motion defining the exact term. However, this conference had passed off almost unnoticed, thus establishing that the Dalit class was indeed facing cases of neglect and desertion. The

sixties for dalit literary movement was a decisive and crucial time, with several things happening in Marathi literature (the Dalit community is an integral part of the state Maharashtra and hence, a group of Marathis). For the first time a poet, Narayan Surve, had penned about the quandary of workers. The Little Magazine Movement, yet another inherent pressure group activity for Dalit movement, had made its acquaintance with the concept of 'Angry Young Man' in the then recovering Indian populace from the shadow of Indian Independence and its ensuing Partition. In Dalit literature, Anna Bhau Sathe and Shankarrao Kharat were already established, but the dalit literary movement had gained colossal momentum from the short stories of Baburao Bagul. His collection of stories, Jehva Mee Jaat Chorli Hoti (When in had Concealed My Caste) had created such undulating rhythm in the Marathi literary world, that a group of critics hailed it as the epic of the Dalits, while others compared it to the 'jazz music of the Blacks'. Baburao Bagul's stories had taught Dalit writers to give creative rendition to their experiences and feelings. (3)



## Mahatma Phule and Dr Ambedkar's ideology:

Dalit literature has its origins in the exploitation of Dalits and symbolizes a quest for equality and a rational attitude towards the problems of society. The exploitation and persecution of Dalits was sanctified by irrational religious dogma propagated by the Hindu orthodoxy. Thus, challenging this persecution necessitated taking a rational attitude towards society's problems. In this sense one can say that the teachings of Bhagwan Buddha can be counted among the first pieces of Dalit literature. The thought that taught rebellion against exploitation was started by Bhagwan Buddha and later continued by Nanak and Kabir in North India and Sant Tukaram and Sangam literature in the South. However, this medieval period literature was reformatory and not revolutionary. In modern times, the writings of Mahatma Phule and Savitribai were instrumental in again bringing major shift in the domain of Dalit literature. Mahatma Phule critically analysed the history of India and with irrefutable evidence established that Shudras and Ati Shudras are original inhabitants of this land and thus rightful owners of resources. He glorified *shrama* (labour) which is a basic

requirement of economic growth. He devised very effective ways of spreading his literary work through the oral traditions. Powada (ballads) and Kalapathak (stage performance) were immensely popular among the weaker section, particularly Dalits in rural Maharashtra. He revolutionized the life of Shudras and Ati Shudras and his writings formed the roots of modern Dalit literature.(4)

In 2004, the French Institute of Pondicherry provided a platform for about a dozen Dalit writers in Tamil to reflect on their experiences in the Dalit literary movement. What they said on the occasion, along with extracts from their writings, were published later. And the book under review is an English translation of that publication. David C. Buck, an American academic who has translated some medieval Tamil texts, has joined the editor of the Tamil volume, Kannan M., in this venture. The Dalit movement had a late start in Tamil Nadu, when compared to Maharashtra and Karnataka, largely because of the dynamics of the non-Brahmin Dravidian movement. It was only in the early 1990s — in the wake of the Mandal–Masjid developments, and in the context of Ambedkar centenary and the break-up of the Soviet Union and its impact on the Left movement — that the Dalit movement first



manifested itself as a literary phenomenon in Tamil Nadu.(5)

**Conclusion:** finally in this paper writer has taken the overview of Dalit literature and their movements. Dalit writers' contribution to the society and their society oriented work has been given or explained. In earlier period Dalit organization going to be strong because of the writers' writings and their burning issues related to the oppressed and backward society.

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