

DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR AND RISE OF MARATHI DALIT LITERATURE

Dr. Mukta Jagannath Mahajan

Professor and Head,
Department of English,
School of Language Studies and Research Centre,
North Maharashtra University, Jalgaon

Abstract

Literature is not always creative urge of an author. Sometimes the author feels to use the medium of writing for some purpose. It is not only verbal catharsis, but it also works as a medium to articulate oneself to all-in-one stretch. Art of writing sometimes voices the aesthetic of that reality which is very often neglected, suppressed, or fabricated. Dalit literature in Marathi is that literature which has worked as a means for achieving freedom from the deliberate cultural and religious muzzling of a considerably larger part of Indian society. Dalit literature is certainly not written for self-appeasement or self-satisfaction. It is a historical state because it manifests the effective step taken by Dalits towards suing their one of the fundamental rights i.e., right of writing. This venture would not have possible, had Dr. Ambedkar not motivated them to use their fundamental right of taking education. Dr. Babasaheb has been rooted in their writing as a thought. Dalit literature does reflect liability to Dr. Ambedkar's ideology and thoughts. The relationship between Dalit literature and Dr. Ambedkar's ideology leads to the need of exploring association between society, ideology, and literature.

Keywords: - catharsis, religious, fundamental rights, Dalit literature etc...

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Introduction-

Literature is not always creative urge of an author. Sometimes the author feels to use the medium of writing for some purpose. It is not only verbal catharsis, but it also works as a medium to articulate oneself to all-in-one stretch. Art of writing sometimes voices the aesthetic of that reality which is very often neglected, suppressed, or fabricated. Dalit literature in Marathi is that literature which has worked as a means for achieving freedom from the deliberate cultural and religious muzzling of a considerably larger part of Indian society. Dalit literature is certainly not written for self-appeasement or self-satisfaction. It is a historical state because it manifests the effective step taken by Dalits towards suing their one of the fundamental rights i.e., right of writing. This venture would not have possible, had Dr. Ambedkar not motivated them to use their fundamental right of taking education. Dr. Babasaheb has been rooted in their writing as a thought. Dalit literature does reflect liability to Dr. Ambedkar's ideology and thoughts. The relationship between Dalit literature and Dr. Ambedkar's ideology leads to the need of exploring association between society, ideology, and literature.

Ideology, Society and Literature-

The careful comparison between both, ideology and literature bring out an interesting common element between both i.e., idea. An ideologist frames his ideas in theoretical manner, and it becomes ideology, where as a writer frames his ideas in imaginative as well as realistic manner and it becomes literature. Thus, idea becomes a common ground which sets a co-relation between ideology and literature, although it is true that ideology is a matter of higher intellectual realm whereas literature is connected to common man through the element of entertainment. Another striking commonality between both is ideology rests on certain ideals and the ultimate aim of literature is to discuss human life consisting of values and ideals. In short, what is conveyed in serious and complex manner

in ideology, is illustrated simply through literature. Both an ideologist and a writer hold a position about society and the sub systems of society. At this juncture, literature can be instrumental in communicating the ideology to common people. Of course, this is not done deliberately. The stand of the writer and his connotation of the principles of the ideology automatically result into such kind of writing.

The superficial spread of ideology like spread of oil on water, delimits it to and for the intellectual classes and remains in the book in the form of words. The dripping of the essence of ideology through the rock bottom humanity of the society makes it an entity to become immortal.

Dr. Ambedkar and his efforts of conferring humanity and human rights on Dalits is the essence of his ideology. He himself was influenced by Mahatma Phule, the subaltern social reformer who emphasized the importance of education for downtrodden.

Social Scenario and DR. Ambedkar's Contribution-

The then Indian society was structured on the framework of Chaturvarniya i.e., four Varnas – Brahmin, Kshtriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Later on, the Shudras were declared as untouchables. Pradip K. Sharma points out that, 'The untouchables or the Dalits, as they are presently known, are one of the most vulnerable sections in the society of our country... But have been subjected to multiple of oppression and subjugation for centuries and lived miserable life.' (Sharma, 1) Further he adds that, 'The Dalit Panthers in 1972-73 widened the meaning of the term Dalit when they incorporated various religious minorities, women, tribal backward castes, and economically deprived sections in their definition.' (Sharma, 2)

Dalits were deprived of their natural rights in the name of religion and tradition. They were denied of the right to education and strategically made to stay at the periphery of the society. The birth of Dr. Ambedkar brought light in their life not only in Maharashtra but all over India.

Colonial period in India has been responsible for the damage of the life and mental slavery of Indian people but the only boon of colonial period that brought awareness to Indian people is the British education system. Introduction to British education system in India opened the doors of education to all, irrespective of their class, caste, and gender. Dr. Ambedkar's education brought him to the realization of the exploitation and oppression of the untouchables, and he took it as his moral responsibility to bring these people out of the hell of dehumanization. Though he himself suffered frustrating humiliations, regardless his higher education and name and fame in USA and UK, he continued to express the need of treating untouchables as human beings and conferring on them their due rights. His seminal

book Annihilation of Caste reflects his vituperative criticism on Indian society. His views on economy, polity, tradition and religion in India set his ideology. Just as he attacked the hypocrisy and double standard nature of upper-class Hindus, he also appealed to his people to take education and change their way of living life. He consistently made efforts to shuffle the existent systems in India that caused inequality and discrimination. He dreamed of that society that was based on liberty, equality, and fraternity. He exposed the intentional misdirection of upper classes to lower classes to keep them under their thumbs to continue their slavery in the name of religion. He researched the history of Shudras and how they were made fourth Varna. His seminal views on the systems that comprises the society explain his ideology. Through his writings and speeches, he awakened the untouchables of the vandalism done and urged them to shed out their double consciousness and look at themselves as human beings and demand their rights. He was always troubled by the question why there were no social revolutions in India? He himself answered that, as K. Raghvendra Rao quotes, '...the lower of classes of Hindus have been completely disable for direct action on account of this wretched system of Chaturvarnya.' (Rao, P.63) Ambedkar thought that education was one way out for downtrodden people to achieve their emancipation and empowerment. In this regard in the monograph on Dr. Ambedkar, K. Raghvendra Rao writes, 'Ambedkar regarded education as a crucial instrument for raising the overall level of the depressed and deprived classes. He believed that through the acquisition of education, especially higher education, socio economic equality could be promoted. Not only was he keen on the lower classes acquiring education, but he was equally keen on members of these classes participating in the teaching programme as well. His reasoning was that the content of education reflected the ideology, interests, and value of those in charge of teaching.' (Rao, 8-9)

Dr. Ambedkar's motivation and their own education brought a new dawn of self-respect in the life of Dalit people. Dr. Ambedkar's ideology has twofold function to perform. One was to bring to the notice of those who were actively involved in policy making and admiration that even after independence a larger part of India society was still experiencing the phase of local colonization, they were deprived of their natural as well constitutional rights and second was, to bring the exploited to the realization that need to realize their manipulation and dehumanization and to organize them for the same purpose. For that he did not merely present the theory but also created common stage by starting an educational movement. He appealed the downtrodden to be the part of that educational movement by establishing People's Education Society in 1945, Siddhartha College in 1946 and Milind College in 1950. In order to convey his thoughts to common people he started Mooknayak in 1921 and to allow the newly educated Dalits to share their experiences with people he started the Janata in 1930 which was renamed as Prabhdha Bharat in 1956. These attempts

by Dr. Ambedkar created an urge in Dalits to write which was one of their fundamental rights.

According to Dr. Manohar Surwade, 'The word Dalit was first used by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. In the issue of 19th Nov. 1928 of Bahishkrit Bharat, the word appears several times... Of course, along with the word Dalit, dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar used the word, 'Dalit Sahitya (Dalit literature)' for the first time.' (P. 116)

Dr. Bhalchandra Phadke has quoted Dr. Ambedkar's stand about literature in his book, Babasaheb says, '...whatever reasons may be there but when it is found that we are travelling on the path of degeneration, desecration then the writers must grow alert and cultivate values of culture and life...do not forget that we have a big world of deprived, Dalits try to understand their sorrow, their pangs and make efforts to uplift their life through our literature. That is true humanism' (P. 21) Dr. Phadake calls it 'in a way manifestation of Dalit literature' (P. 21)

Whole life of Dr. Ambedkar, his struggle, his theoretical stand about human existence, his various social, political policies are such foundation stone in the development of Dalit literature, on such foundation stone in the development of Dalit literature, on which the post-independence structure of Dalit existence has been standing erect. Dr. Bhachandra Phaddake proves it by saying, 'In Akhil Mumbai Ilakaha Mahar Parishad (1936) he presented his theoretical stand about changing religion. It influenced the budding generation, and we cannot forget about such thoughts inculcated the impressions on the sensitive young writers who created literature.

Dr. Ambedkar must be credited for the development of thoughts in the first generation of the Dalit writers.' (P.1) Dalit literature is the rare and beautiful exemplification of how to use one's fundamental rights to get justice peacefully and this is also the victory flag of the struggle conducted by Phule Shahu Maharaj and Ambedkar. Putting on record the first attempts of Dalit writers without having any genes of writing or literary tradition or training, the literary writing of the Dalit writers, Dr. M.V. Dhond says in his presidential speech of Dalit Sahitya Sammelan at Nagpur as quoted by Bhalchandra Phadake, '... Milind College became the centre of Dalit movement. This centre helped in shaping a literature movement. Young, educated Dalit students were attempting to express their life, their pangs through the medium of words. But no one was publishing it because these writers, their content were from outside the border... We thought that, that was injustice not to their writing but also to the writers and their community and therefore we established Milind Sahitya Sabha in 1967 and also decided to provide them the stage of Asmita.' (P. 18)

Letter on the same movement conferred on the Dalit writers the confidence of making space for Dalit literature in the established mainstream Marathi literature. Supporting the statement of Dr. Wankhede, Bhalchandra Phadake writes, 'with the agitations by Dr. Ambedkar, a new life and the sense of self-respect was created in Dalits... but their blossoming minds drawn in the sea of sorrow with the news of Dr. Ambedkar's death... When we publish the special annual issue of Milind College, then some of them wrote poems, some of them delineated the magnificent personality of Babasaheb. But these were the stumbling steps of Dalit writers... this writing was the verbal form of the burning agony of the Dalits.' (P. 17)

Some other activities by social reformers also contributed to the upliftment, reformation of the Dalits such as establishment of Satyashodhak Samaj, establishment of an institution named 'Anaryadosh Parihar' by Gopalbuva Walangekar, magazine named Somvanshy Mitra published by Shivram Janba Kambale and establishment of All India Depressed Class Mission and some laws made by Shahu Maharaj for the eradication of Untouchability-along with the Lion's share of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Marathi Dalit literature: Victory of Dr. Babasaheb's struggle-

Due to the efforts, as mentioned above, done by 1920 and due to influence of English education, a generation of Marathi writers felt that Dalits are also human beings, and they too essentially deserve human rights. Therefore, these upper-class writers projected the predicaments of dalits through their writing. S. K. Kolhatkar, V. M. Joshi, Bhausahab Khandekar, Bhausahab Madkholkar, V. D. Chindarkar, Saneguraji, Shankar Ramchandra Bhise tried to throw light on the condition of dalits through their writings. Even dramatists writing Sangeet Natak like D. V. Newalkar, Y. N. Tipnis discussed the questions faced by dalits. In post-independence period many middle-class writers delineated the painful life of the deprived, tribal, and nomadic people in their work. B. B. Borkar painted the picture of a Devdasi's life through Bhavini. V. B. Karnik, Durga Bhagwat, Vyankatesh Madgulkar, G. N. Dandekar, Udhav Shelke, Shripad Joshi, Indira Sant also conversed the life of the downtrodden in their literature.

All these efforts culminated into the beginning of writing of the newly educated Dalit writers. The writers of initial phase depicted their pangs in their writing and the later period was also the depiction of their pain and agony. It was essential because the pangs were of generations and needed the kind of verbal catharsis.

Dalit writers practised their hands on various forms of literature. Out of them the important their drama, poetry, short story and above all autobiography.

Kisan Fagoji Bansode's name is credited as the Founder of Dalit drama in Marathi. Kerubuwa Gayakwad also performed thousands of programmes of Jalsa. But the efforts were meant for bringing awareness in Dalits. The important contribution to drama was by Dalit dramatists like Prabhakar Ganveer, Gangadhar Pantawane, Suresh Vanjari, Datta Bhagat, Khushal Kambale, Kamalakar Dahar, Baburao Gayakwad, Namdev Vhatkar, Premanand Gajhavi during post-independence period.

The beginning of Dalit poetry is traced back to the abhangas of Saint Chokhamela from medieval period. First generation Dalit poets have described their sufferings using the technique of irony, protest, prudence. The poets of the first generation like Kisan Fagu, Shahir Gekhade, Waman Kardak, N.R. Shende set the path of dalit poetry. But their poetry was the poetry of sorrow. In post-independence period their poetry was sharpened by the edge given by the poets of second generation. They were also influenced by the political, social independence achieved by the freedom struggle of India. The revolutionary poets like Narayan Surve, Namdev Dhasal, Waman Nimbalkar, Arvind Ingale, Sukhram Hivrle, Indrajeet Alte, Baburao Bagul, Pralhad Chendwankar, Tryambak Sapkale, Arun Kambale, Sharankumar Limbale, Keshav Meshram, Jyoti Lanjewar raised the weapon of words. They did not want violence but pointed at only one question- Why were dalits denied of their existence as human being? And when would they get the identity as human being and their fundamental rights?

Dalit short story is the most meaningful and effective projection of Dalit life. The trinity, Annabhau Sathe, Shankarrao Kharat and Baburao Bagul have enriched the core of Dalit short story. Annabhau Sathe has depicted a realistic picture of nomadic tribe Shankarrao Kharat has presented the Dalit very objectively. Baburao Bagul maintains the sense of social binding while describing the insolence done to Dalits. Daya Pawar, Waman Howal, Yogiraj Waghmare, Dada Gore, Arjun Dangale, Keshav Meshram have recorded the helpless life to their Dalit characters. Their personal experiences definitely enhance the depth of their writing.

Dalit novel puts forth the essence of their personal life. Writers like Baburao Bagul, Keshav Meshram, Annabhau Sathe, Haribhau Pagare, H.G. Bansode, Shankarrao Kharat, Urmila Pawar, Sharankumar Limbale continuously ask question- When this independent nation will give dalits the chance of living as a human being?

Thoughts of Babasaheb get the form of words in the writing of Dalit writers because majority of Dalit writers have worked as activists in Dalit movement. Mr. Punalekar regards Dalit autobiographies as the powerful and enriched genre. (P. 10) Daya Pawar, Laxman Gayakwad, Urmila Pawar Baby Kambale, Shantabai Kambale, Kumad Pawade, Mukta Sarvagaud,

Shantabai Dani, Yashodhara Gayakwad have depicted the essence of their life in their autobiography.

Dalit literature predominantly shows the influence of Bhagwan Buddha, Babasaheb Ambedkar and Karl Marx but the influence is of their thoughts. Babasaheb presented the theory of 'Broken man' in his writing. This theory explains the Dalit because his condition was really like a broken man.

First generation of dalit writers records the sorrow suffered by them for generations together. Their writing appears like peace before storm. Their second generation speaks the language of revolt and challenges the society. Their third generation presents the thought of humanitarianism propagated by Lord Buddha and appeals for peaceful survival.

Babasaheb Ambedkar's influence on Dalit writers is felt predominantly because he earnestly wanted dalits to wake up and struggle for their rights and dalit writers very effectively convey this thought of his to common people. Similarly, their writing and the agitations by the people have jointly compelled the government to pass bill against the atrocities done to Dalits. Basically, Babasaheb wanted Dalit people to defy the mental slavery accepted by Dalits since generations. Dalit community also suffered from 'Double consciousness'. Dalit literature symbolizes the defiance of mental slavery. A character from Sharankumar Limbale's novel rights speaks out the influence of Babasaheb Dalit community when he says that for Dalit people power Babasaheb is not only a person, but a thought inculcated in them.

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@ some part of this paper is taken from my paper in the book, 'A Unique Thinker: Babasaheb Ambedkar' edited By Uttam Ambhore and others.