

Contextualising Dalit Literature as the Discourse of Resistance

MD Aslam Parwez*

Today Dalit discourse is a widely accepted discipline in India and its popularity is being concretized through the discussion, debate, its inclusiveness in the University syllabus and publications at national and international level. In fact Dalit discourse is the literature produced by the Dalit consciousness and human freedom is the main inspiration behind it. The nature of this literature consists in rebellion against suppression and humiliation suffered by the Dalits in the past and even at the present in the frame Varna system. It carries a long history of pain and burden of being a Dalit right from the Vedic time in India. Their lives full of sufferings, oppression, massacre and burning of villages and severe punishment without any valid reasons by Brahminical forces have not been written properly in the history of this nation and they have been legalised Untouchable by Manusmiriti that has not been yet declared unjust by the masses or the accepted notions of the people. Arjun Dangle states that "Dalit is not a caste, but a realisation and is related to the experience of Joys and sorrows and struggles of those in the lowest stratum of the society."(Dangle 23) Now there has been paradigm shift in the history and Dalits are able to narrate their painful lives to the world. They can tell all those horrible lives what they have experienced from generation to generation. Dalit discourse tells about the history of excruciatingly painful lives of Dalit smashed, broken, marginalised and deprived on religious economic, social and moral level.

Recently Indian scholars use the term Subaltern instead of Dalit in their academic discourse in order to enlarge the genre of Dalit writings and to structure the history of oppressive communities in India. They make the binaries of superiors and inferiors, touchable and Untouchables or upper castes and lower castes. "The subordination and subjection that marks the life of Dalits in India bring them into the contours of a particularly contextual assembly of subalternity."(Guha 7) The term

subaltern plays a wide significance in India as India was a part of subaltern to the British colony. It has been treated as the subaltern is treated in our society. In the similar fashion, British colony also ruled over people and caste. Subalterns had been dispossessed by the people of their land and further they had been marginalised by the British colony. It can be said that they were doubly marginalised in their own society. In the post colonial theory, the term 'subaltern' describes the lower classes and the social groups who are at the margins of a society- a subaltern is a person rendered without human agency, his or her social status."(Young 32)

Now the wretchedness of their lives have left a tragic message that needs to be studied and attracted the larger population of the world to present their sympathetic and empathetic approaches towards Dalit society. It got natural support for its emergence when the nation got freedom from the colonial and the autocratic system of the world and the declaration of democracy not only introduced freedom political freedom but gave all rights to the citizens of the nation to live with liberty and justice. It created a great momentum of social change in our social system. To this concerned we are now bound by the constitution of India to abide its rule and enjoy with the strong words of the constitution such as liberty, equality and fraternity. Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar, the modern engineer of the nation India has fought unto his death for the political rights and out and out justice of Dalits. He is no messiah for Dalits and has introduced constitutional safeguards and has enlightened them for the education and political rights and also to assert their identities. His writings and speeches are great source for the representation of Dalits and research for the social changes in our society in terms of caste system of India. In this context it is noted that we all are equal before the laws according to article 14 in the constitution of India and the laws of the constitution of India are equal to all denying all kind of discriminations on the name of caste, religion and region.

To tender the great change in the society we come across different kind of school of thoughts that talk about shaping the structure of the society, fighting and struggling against the old aged oddities of the society at particular time and space. These schools of thoughts were revolutionary in nature and had political motives for the interest of people and the state and had influenced the academia to generate a new trend of discussion, debate and perspective and also to the society to the

*Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, JJ College, Ara, Veer Kunwar Singh University, Bihar

extent of its change. The academic community of the world comes across different sort of revolutionary school of thoughts that emerged as political, social and cultural discourse among us and shaped the structure of the society by the passage of the time. These school of thoughts as known as Hegelian, French, Nationalist, Marxist and subaltern nurtured the main motive to articulate its explicit corrective political agenda and preoccupation with the binaries of the nation and fragments, men and women and elites and peasants, urban and rural and majority and minority and to have its purpose in bringing people and subaltern and ahistorical narratives from the margins to the mainstream or the centre as articulating voices from the margins and pushing the dominant elitist ideology back. But these thoughts did not turn the stone in India because there were some structural differences with Dalit issues; their issues were caste, Untouchability and slavery rather colour bar and slavery. Now Dalit discourse is well accepted by academicians and social and political thinkers at the present as they are rewriting the history of the oppression, suppression and humiliation suffered by Dalits through different genres of literature as cultural productions, poetry, stories and autobiographies. Dalit writers are not merely writing against the oppressors or Brahminic values but they are also making their own agency of representation and over all development of their community. Dalit writers: Daya Pawar, Sharan Kumar Limbale, Baby Kamble, Shantabai Kamble, Urmila Pawar, Omprakash Valmiki, Faustina Bama and Sivakami define Dalit discourse as writings and speeches about Dalits by Dalit Writers with Dalit consciousness and its form has visceral impact on them and that is the natural responsibility to inform Dalit society about the burden of being Dalits from 2000 years and narrate their pain and suffering to upper caste Hindus. Since Dalit autobiographies are amalgamation of resistance discourse and their first hand experience, their representations gain acute poignancy. These depictions are not emotional rendering of their sufferings; rather they are “sociologically illumination, politically subversive and aesthetically interesting.” (Rege 12) Moreover Savarna critics blame that Dalit writings are false and totally based on the imaginations and exaggerations of the Dalit lives of the past but such criticism does not affect them and they are silently documenting oral literature, culture, histories and myth.

Academicians must introduce this discipline with substantial content of methodology and pedagogy and its introduction in almost all

syllabi of the University of the World. They must give tremendous importance in understanding their lives and other issues as education, activism and unemployment, society as prison house for them, they are unrewarded heroes, wages denial, starvation and death of shortage of food and malnourished food, homogenisation of identity and victim of sanskritisation. It need a great effort from the academicians to give a systematic understanding on the different aspects of the Dalit lives through interdisciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches in order to explore a new paradigm, forms and purpose and approaches and concepts and establish the proper relation between theory and praxis. Dalit Discourse carries a baggage of information from the past and present to the future prospects as the production of the culture and the production of the literary narratives and social activism as well. It is the time to rewrite the history of Dalit Literature and Dalit Lives with meaning, concept and identity. Apart from all odds of criticism, there are a lot of possibilities to open new front to find out new ways to see their lives with human dignity.

To tender this approach Dalit discourse itself is a literature of resistance and assertion of their identities against the superiority of elitism. It is running to establish an alternative paradigm and also reconfigure the contours of everyday materiality. It draws the attention of academics and social spheres and the people of the world to reflect the meaning on the ground realities of Dalits. Here the research paper is an attempt to have dissemination of knowledge and vision of Dalit studies and what academia can play a major role for representation and academic and institutional and educational uplifting. To add further it would be an attempt to focus the demand of egalitarian notion and just society. Let it be hoped our discussion may bring Dalit consciousness among the people and add some new history to Dalit movement to the past, present and future.

References:

- Dangle, Arjun. Ed. 1992. *Poisoned Bread: Translation from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature*. Bombay: Orient Long.
- Guha, Ranjit. Ed. 1982. *Subaltern Studies: Writing on South Asian History and Society*. New Delhi: OUP.
- Rege, Sharmila. 2006. *Writing Caste/ writing Gender: Reading Dalit Women's Testimonies*. New Delhi: Zuban An imprint of Kali for Women.
- Young, Robert JC. 2003. *Post Colonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: OUP.

