



INDIAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE TODAY

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S.S. Kanade
Editor-in-Chief

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. J. J.', enclosed in a circular flourish.

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CONTENTS

Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*: A Saga of Suffering
Pushkal Giri

7 - 11

Literary World of Manju Kapur: A Thematic Study
Kameshwar Kumar Yadav

12 - 17

The Emergence of Neocolonialism and Critique of the Raj in the
Postcolonial Period: A Study of Paul Scott's *Staying On*

Harnoor Singh

18 - 31

गोपाल सिंह 'नेपाली' का काव्य योगदान

मनोरमा कुमारी

32 - 35

Dystopian Fiction as a Sub-Genre of Science Fiction

S. I. Noorani

36 - 41

Indian National Movement (1917-1947): Significant Events

Shashi Bhushan Kumar

42 - 48

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Order:
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- Dalit Feminism
Z.Z. Khan
49 - 53
- The Disintegration of Familial and Social Values in Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk About Kevin*
A.M. More & J.A. Mhetre
54 - 61
- The Narrative Canvas of Kamala Markandaya and R. P. Jhabvala: A Comparative Study
Rakesh Kumar
62 - 70
- Man-woman Relationship in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande
S.S. Kanade
71 - 74
- मनुष्यबल व्यवस्थापन- नविन प्रवाह
प्रा. डॉ. विरेंद्र कैलासचंद ठोलीया
75 - 79
- ہنس کر
انہی کے
80 - 84
- अभिप्रेरणा क्या है ? अभिप्रेरणा के सिद्धान्त, प्रकार, महत्व और शिक्षको का दायित्व
कुमारी समृद्धि सिंह
85 - 94
- Indian Novel in English: Some Random Observations
Richa Kumari
95 - 99
- Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Time*: A Feminist Study
Ragini
100 - 103
- Jhumpa Lahiri's Literary World: A Diasporic Discourse
Kumari Jyoti
104 - 107
- भारतीय स्वातंत्र्य संग्राम में पंडित नेहरु का योगदान
अल्का सहाय
108 - 112
- Domestic Space in the Novels of Rohinton Mistry: A Critical Study
Ajay Kumar
113 - 118
- Novels of Ruth Praver Jhabvala: A Critical Study
Puja Kumari Giri
119 - 123
- Contribution of Bama in Dalit Literature: An Analysis
V.W. Wahule & V.M. Rasure
124 - 129


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Contribution of Bama in Dalit Literature: An Analysis

V.W. Wahule & V.M. Rasure

Dalit Literature observed a rather late start in Tamil when measured up to its counterparts in Marathi, Kannada or Hindi. Though, Tamil Dalit creative writings are at their embryonic stage, it is vibrant, multi-faceted, articulate and fundamentally pioneering. The Dalit voice in literature could not come across its distinct place in Tamil literary domain until the late 1980s. The seventies and the eighties witnessed a generation of writers, whose writings were influenced by Marxist ideology and were marked by experimental narrative structures and positing of debates concerning ethical, social issues that influenced 'Tamil Cultures'. The Dalit identity was subsumed by these writers within a class identity.

Dalit was represented as a worker and his oppression in an unequal social structure was defined within the model of capitalist oppression of the working class. During this period, Tamil Literature was all the time more invading the middle-class culture with its anxieties centered on honour, social prestige, women's

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charity and erosion of moral fabric in the face of women toward the inside the workplace.

Dalit Literature is and will always be an essential part of Indian Literature. It is the literature in English of self-articulation of India, echoing and reflecting upon Dalit sense and sensibilities for the sake of the indigenous literature. Of course, it presents the Dalit soul and psyche. Therefore, Dalit Literature is to be considered as an independent literature, as a significant part of world literature against the backdrop of globalization, privatization and marketization. Well-known writer, Nayantara Sahgal asserts,

To be relevant to his culture, a writer's imagination has to be able to create the men and women and the situations of the Indian environment and the Indian reality. If a writer can do this, make people feel with him, stimulate thinking, and inspire action because of what he writes, and then he is fulfilling his function (4).

Writers are consistently cited as sensitive onlookers of the existing human state of affairs. Celebrated writers are willing to communicate the world through their pen. As in words of J.M. Waghmare, "pen is like a sharp axe with which he (she) is cutting the weeds thickly grown over the centuries in this ancient land" (17). Some of the greatest writers have used the mighty axe and attempting to root out the torture, suffering, and misery of the exploited. For those who suppose in the power of the pen, writing should endow with to serve a social purpose. The great writers are not only spectators of events in life, but also prominent intellectuals to bring remedy about the exploited people's sufferings. The novelists have great concern for the suppressed people, and they efficiently demonstrated socially committed writing. Some writers' effort not only accomplished something but also brought magnificence and honour to them.

Dalit Literature, the creation of Dalit soul and ~~to the world~~ highly regarded name that evinces creative writings in English, language by the Dalits. These days, it has joyfully evolved into an important and well-thought-of part of World Literature written ~~in English~~ at Jawahar Arts, Science & Commerce College, Anadur, Tal. Tuljapur, Dist. Osmanabad

in English. It was not given a unique position by scholars and critics as well as readers by thinking as a mere subsidiary and subaltern of Indian English Literature.

Of course, the unrestricted credit goes to Dalit writers, who have fragranced the power of pen by the variety. Anand Patil, Baburao Bagul, Jatin Bala, Kanwal Bharti, Manohar Mouli Biswas, Manoranjan Byapari, C.S. Chandrika, Suraj Pal Chauhan, Madara Chennaiah, Raja Dhale, Namdeo Dhasal, Yashica Dutt, Raj Gauthaman, Vilas Ghogre, H. Govindaiah, Imayam (writer), Janabai, Pampady John Joseph, Arun Krushnaji Kamble, Shantabai Kamble, Meena Kandasamy, Shankar Ramchandra Kharat, B. Krishnappa, Aravind Malagatti, Kaviyoor Murali, Mohan Dass Naimishray, K. Nath, Dagdu Maruti Pawar, Pradnya Daya Pawar, Azhagiya Periyavan, Chandra Bhan Prasad, Kalekuri Prasad, Rekha Raj, V. T. Rajshekar, Kotiganahalli Ramaiah, Katti Padma Rao, John Rathinam, Ravikumar (writer), Sant Nirmala, *Sheetal Sathe*, Gopi Shankar Madurai, Shanti Swaroop Baudh, Gogu Shyamala, Siddalingaiah (poet), Rajendra Prasad Singh, P. Sivakami, Sant Soyarabai, Joopaka Subhadra, Nawab Satpal Tanwar, Rajni Tilak, Surendar Valasai, Om Prakash Valmiki, Vijila Chirappad, Poykayil Yohannan and a host of other writers tiled the way for Dalit Literature.

Apart from its artistic value, Dalit Literature has entertainment significance as well as sociological and political implications. Protest against colonialism and the eagerness for social reforms have been mirrored in regional languages as well as in English in the works of Dalit writers.

Dalit Literature is a protest against such practices. It gives voice to those whose voices were suppressed for an extended period. There are many qualified wordsmiths and prominent Dalit writers like Sivakami and Imayam who have started expressing their anxieties for their society through the medium of writing. Dalit Literature is literature written to convey ~~about~~ ~~our~~ ~~voice~~ ~~and~~ ~~struggle~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~social~~ ~~principal~~ through their works, these ~~writers~~ ~~but~~ ~~express~~ ~~their~~ ~~aspiration~~ ~~that~~ ~~they~~ ~~too~~ ~~should~~ ~~live~~ ~~with~~ ~~equality~~. These ~~aspirations~~ ~~are~~ ~~not~~ ~~only~~ ~~expressed~~ ~~in~~ ~~literature~~ ~~but~~ ~~also~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~field~~ ~~of~~ ~~Arts~~ ~~, Science & Commerce College - Vijapur, Dist. Osmanabad.~~

Dalit writers mark about their own experiences and sufferings in the caste-ridden society. Some writers are non-Dalits, however, write about the issues of Dalits and for this reason their contribution to Dalit Literature.

Dalit Literature in Tamil has received critical attention since 1990. Tamil Dalit writing came into existence nearly two decades after Marathi Dalit Literature came into being. When compared to Marathi and Kannada Dalit Literature, Tamil Dalit Literature on track late but has attained a lot in a short period. Novels, poetry, autobiographical narratives, short stories, critical essays, and plays in Tamil written by Dalits are frequently published by Dalit publishing houses or in little magazines edited and published by Dalits. The emergence of Dalit literary writing in Tamil is often traced to the publication of Sivakami's novel *Parbhijana Karhidalam* in 1989. It discusses "the issue of Dalit leadership and points out the pitfalls inherent in an imitative model wherein Dalit leaders duplicate corruption and the manipulative politics prevalent among empowered, upper-caste politicians" (Abedi 108).

Tamil Dalit Literature remains close to its oral roots which is filled with proverbs, chants and work songs. As Raj Gauthaman writes:

Dalit Literature has no models that it can emulate. All the literary models are those of oppression. Dalit Literature makes alternate forms, taking whatever shape anger takes. In its attempt to destabilize hegemonic literary discourse, Dalit Literature ruptures it in terms of both content and craft. It negates literary traditions, standardized grammar and practices, an aesthetic of violence - linguistic, generic, narrative (62).

Dalit Literature is for all time noticeable by rebellion and negativism, as it is intimately linked with hopes for freedom of a group of people who, as 'untouchables', are unfortunate victimized bunches of social, economic and cultural inequality.

Dalit Literary Movement is consequently presently not a literary movement but the brand of change and revolution, where the

essential aim is the liberation of Dalits. Dalit literary tradition has a long history, which preferably unfolds the secret struggles against casteist tradition. The history of Dalit literary movement could be traced from the eleventh century to the first vachana poet, Chennaia.

Bama, a Dalit writer, has dragged into the international limelight by her creative and critical work. Her reputation rests on her literary works. As a writer, Bama is an enigma. Her novels have brought her recognition and won for their outstanding quality. She has held a prestigious position as a member of several institutes and organisations.

Bama's fictional world is the harmonious equilibrium of personal and social life. Besides, the personal life is an infrastructure on the voice of Dalit and social life is emanated from and influenced by social events. She considers herself as a Dalit writer. All her books are about downtrodden. In her writing, she has focused very much on the things that matter to me about India, in both fiction and non-fiction.

Bama is an internationally known writer on diverse issues about Dalits. Her expertise in transformation, prospects, globalisation, freedom of the press, human rights, literacy, Dalit culture, and influence in world politics. Bama has four novels to her credit, including three short stories, namely, *Kumbukkaran* (1996), *Oru Thalavum Erumayam* (2004) and *Kondattam* (2006). Her autobiographical work *Karukku* was published in 1992 and while her two novels *Sangati* and *Vannam* were published in 1994 and 2002 respectively. They were originally written in Tamil. All her works have been translated into English and other regional languages. *Karukku* and *Sangati* have been translated into English, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. The French translations of *Sangati* have won her international readership. *Vannam* and *Kumbukkaran* are translated into English. Her latest novel *Manushi*, the second part of *Karukku*, was published in 2013.

Bama has been acknowledged in both national and international levels through her writings. She has received the Kural Amaippu Award (1992), Cross Word Book Award (2000), Dalit Murasu

Kalai Illakkiya Award (2001), Amuthan Adigal Illakkiya Parisu (2003) and many more awards. She is invited by the universities in India and abroad and has delivered several speeches at various conferences. She has dedicated her life for the upliftment of the downtrodden in general and Dalits in particular. Her mission is to build a casteless society.

Bama considers that she cannot put on righteousness and freedom without effort. For her, whose literary creations are themselves a form of social activism, while being associated indissolubly by her social activism, and her achievement as a writer stresses a concerned, thoughtful and recognition with the source of distressed people.

Bama puts forth the deep voice of Dalit in her fictional world. In her hands, Dalit Literature becomes a socio-political instrument for human values. She takes the readers into supreme confidence and shares her new vision towards society. She brings out a deep insight into the human soul and reassesses the age-old customs and tradition. Accordingly, she sets the world on fire to put the light on an honourable frankness, utmost boldness and unquestionable honesty to their problems.

Bama has never lied in her life, and above all not to people who matter to her, even when the truth may be inedible. However, there are instances when she feels that no useful purpose can be served by telling somebody precisely what she thinks or precisely what others have said about them. Besides, she uncovers the truth.

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