

A LITERARY REPRESENTATION OF DALIT SENSIBILITY THROUGH SELECT TEXTS OF RAJENDER BADGUJAR, BALBIR MADHOPURI AND SHYAMLAL JAIDIA

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ABSTRACT

The present paper highlights that Dalits' sufferings largely remained undercarpeted in meta-narrative literary representation of Indian socio-literary traditions. The incessant exploiting process against Dalits either in socio-cultural aspects or in the political sphere in the country has a long history despite various provisions are made to stop the injudicious practice in the name of law. The writers like Rajender Badgular, Balbir Madhopuri, and Shyamlal Jaidia dissect underlying reasons of the continuation of Dalit sufferings in their respective societies. Therefore, the writers unfold the manifolds of their sufferings despite regional variations of caste practices that establish that Dalits still suffer in the caste practices in India.

Keywords: Representation, Incessant, under carpeted, Meta-Narrative.

1. INTRODUCTION

Socio-cultural Background

An ideal social institution nurtures harmonious social relationships among the members and socializes their emotional sensibilities in the specific institutional values of present and past over a geographical stretch. A social institution is a group of like-minded people who have a common minimum program to live together with safety and security within and outside of the social group. The socialization process involves the wholeness of all social groups and plays a nucleus role in ascertaining their respective identities in the larger framework of society. The smooth process of social transition not only shows its dynamic features but also keeps up the vibrancy of the cardinal values of society. Moreover, a vibrant social institution always respects the dissent and individual liberty of its members in incorporating the socio-cultural changes under the existing circumstances. Contrary to the basic principle of transition, the upper castes' sharpen subtle practices to inflict more miseries to Dalits. Dalits' sufferings get manifest through multifarious modes in routine interactions as well as on the specific socio-religious festivities with upper castes get description in Dalit Writings in Indian society. Dalit sufferings not only impinge on their individual/ familial lives but also their community get traumatic experiences. Suffering is 'pain of body or mind' and Dalits have suffered long into caste discrimination as they are deprived from human rights for centuries. Although with implementation of the constitutional provisions their rights get secured yet these get entangled in the interpretative politics played at different levels in the current circumstances in India. Dalits' corrective provisions either get diluted or delayed in implementation put them into confrontation against coercion of the corrective provisions.

Continuity of Dalits Sufferings in Indian Society

The incessant discriminatory practices against Dalits have made them move from the silent sufferers as they were forced to believe like the fatalists in the earlier times due to religious sanctions to the caste hierarchies in Hinduism. Due to the impact of socio-cultural and literary exposure by the Dalits ideals and role models, they show resilience against their oppressors. Although their assertion against orthodox religious representation in mainstream literature comprises the nucleus of causes and confrontation are described in Dalits' literary protest. Dalits' find corrective measures coerced in implementation due to 'new avatar' of caste practices against them as manifested by the 'elite intellectuals' in Indian society as well as in the mainstream literature. Moreover, religious hardliners maintain 'political gambit to keep Dalits in Hindu social status determine their socio-cultural sufferings even after implementation of the corrective measures for more than seventy years in India. Despite implementation of these constitutional provisions for Dalits' socio-economic mainstreaming, their socio-cultural oppression in caste biases seem no end even in the recent times is theorized in this study.

Dalit protests against oppressive caste practices—a brahmanic ideology get dissected in Dalit Writings through their literary discussion of their socio-cultural suffering in Hinduism. The unjustified and undemocratic practices have underlying narratives to diminish Dalits' socio-cultural representations in literary representation. The eminent writer Christopher Pines quotes the famous quotation of Engels (Marx's life-long friend and political associate) wrote to Franz Mehring in a letter (14 July 1898) defining Ideology as under, Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinkers consciously (Pines, 1)'.

Dalits' sufferings are at both ends but with different outcomes. If they continuity to suffer in their traditional caste status quo makes them dependent on upper castes' leniency whereas their protest against upper castes make them Independent in socio-cultural milieu in Indian society. In their social status quo, they have long suffered in tormenting experiences in the Brahmanic hegemony in Hindu caste system and keep them in continuity of exploitation. Contrastingly, their protest against oppressors invites upper castes' immediate wrath against Dalit assertion. The 'to be or to be' situation with Dalits going for confrontation against the dominant ideology constitutes causes and confrontations of their sufferings. Dalits' protesting movement get nucleus from Phule-Ambedkar perspectives in their socio-cultural and literary activism in the current circumstances in India. Dalits' protesting tone in various literary and cultural movements that evolves from the traditional option 'waiting for upper caste leniency' in Hindu religion. Religion plays a vital role as social force in maintaining social practices get manifest in Hindu religious sanctions (to caste system) are as under described, 'Religion has not only crossed the everywhere the wrap of Indian History it forms the wraps and woofs of the Hindu mind (Ambedkar, vol.3, 23). Dalits sufferings meet due to incessant violence inflicting inhuman miseries against them under different socio-cultural narratives specifically in name of religious sanctions to caste stratifications. The permanent nature of work (designated in caste specifications) multiplies Dalits sufferings that leave no other options except protest their oppressors in Indian society. Unfortunately, in Hindu religious stories, myths, or epics, depict the violent figures of gods and goddesses become evident bearing arms and weapons to protest against any justifications. Almost all images of Hindu religious gods or goddesses' (except the images of Lord Buddha and Guru Nanak- as they represent non-violence) bear weapons and justify retaliation against their opponents. The underlying religious preaching get endorse the most prevalent narrative for the followers of different religious sects is even for human being. Bearing weapons even in hands of divine figure (as gods and

goddesses are supposed in different forms and avatars get justifications for peace and war binaries in universe. The socio-religious contradiction become evident that the gods and goddesses have a *mala* in one hand and a *bhala* in the other gets justification but Dalits' protest against their oppressors raise serious questions over Hindu religious sanction to caste system. The selective approach- approving (*Hari(s)*-Gods' self-defence but disapproving protest of God's sons- (*Harijans*) against their caste oppressors raises serious questions over Hindu religious narrative. Why does Dalits' protest get a hostile response from different religious stakeholders comprise nucleus of their caste suffering in Indian society? Hence, causes and confrontations of Dalit sufferings in socio-religious narrative in Indian society get literary and theoretical discourse in Dalits writings.

Caste Practices against Dalits and Underlying Repercussions

The selected texts from the regional societies describe different caste combinations of Dalits as well as upper castes' composition in eventual caste clashes against them determines their socio-cultural sufferings. The regional variations with typical caste clashes against Dalits in Harynavi, Punjabi and Rajasthani societies not only determine their confrontations but also are the underlying reason of their failure to put up a collective protest against their upper caste oppressors. Rajender Badgujar' select texts (*Kasak-Ek Dalit Tees* and *Hamari Jameen Hum Boange*) describe regional caste calibration and collaboration of different untouchable castes (within themselves) against upper caste specially Jat- who own big land holding in current socio-cultural circumstances in Haryanvi society. Punjabi writer Balbir Madhopuri describes in *Against the Night* how different underlying caste repercussions against Majhabi Sikhs still continue to exist in the contemporary times. Jaidia describes Bhangi sufferings in erstwhile feudalistic society and their issues with scheduled castes (over reservation provisions) in the current socio-cultural circumstances in Rajasthani society.

The varied myths as well as religious Brahmanic interpretation give their respective sanctions of self-defence even to Gods and Goddesses against their opponents. But Harijans' (*Sons of God*) retaliation against their caste oppressors gets a coercive interpretation in the Brahmanic interpreters in society that gives basis to mainstream literary narratives towards Dalit protest. The dichotomy of religious sanctions over the right of self-defence to Dalits against their caste oppression has been theorized in cultural translation of sacred literature in Indian society. The Brahmanism interpretations of justification for the selective approach towards Dalits' assertion manifests inequality in Hinduism as described, 'Inequality is the soul of Hinduism. The morality of Hinduism is only social (Ambedkar, vol.3,87) The 'classical human values' of Hindu religion give no place to Dalits to assert against their sufferings. Secondly, the religious sanction to the unjust social practices against Dalits gets nourished in principled caste practices in Hindu society. The permanent nature of privileges and prohibitions levied against untouchables are disguised in the ideological interpretation in language and literature in Hindu scriptures. Because the linguistic representation of Dalits in caste composition 'arises from the dogmas and falsehoods generated by philosophies and school of thoughts (Pines, 19)' becomes evident in Indian society. Brahmanic formulation of caste and its idealization make Dalits believe in Hindu foregrounding notionally keep them in social status quo forever. Hence, Dalit sufferings in Indian society (in Hindu society as well as in Sikh society) are further explored with reference to the specific caste calibrations at the level of upper castes and how they try to put Dalits in different narratives of backwardness as well in getting benefits of the corrective measures in the government policies.

Dalit Sufferings in Haryanvi Society

In the socio-political and metanarrative established by the dominant caste in Haryanvi society, Dalits –as a community gets exploited due to having no their own land. Another aspect that keep Dalits divided on the premise is which sub-caste had taken more advantage of the reservations benefits. The story writer Haryanvi background Rajender Badgujar describes Dalits’ oppression in Haryanvi society in select story collections *Kasak-Ek Dalit Tees* and *Hamari Jameen Hum Boange*. He belongs to Haryanvi society and describes Dalits sufferings in regional caste calibration in addition to the countrywide caste discrimination against them at various stages.

The story short story “Parampara” describes how caste-conscious people do not give way to social acceptance of the new roles of Dalits. The writer poignantly describes how a fourth standard Sarpanch distributes the prizes to meritorious students ‘when there is such a qualified professor with us on stage (Badgujar, 7)’¹ is due to the low caste identity of the latter. The Sarpanch not only feels comfortable to share dice with him (due to his low caste) but also becomes furious over the proposal on distributing prizes to the village students. Whenever Dalit youths come out to play new roles, they get opposed not only at personal level but also on public platforms. The illiterate Sarpanch finds difficult to digest to see the change in outworn traditions that nourishes false the discriminatory traditions against Dalits. The writer describes the reaction of the village Sarpanch, ‘Vinod, ‘A Chamar lad will distribute the prize? Either *all* are dead in the village or your wit has gone to eat grass?’ At least think a little bit of tradition. Give respect to the occasion (Badgujar, 7)’². “Tonic” also describes insensitivity of the village zamindar towards Dalit child in the private school uniform (pent-shirt) passing from the ways of his big Darwaja in mid of the village. The zamindar not only humiliates the school-going child making fun and cracking jokes to see him in unexpected uniform of a private school is not one-time affair but the zamindar occasionally cracks jokes. He jokes, ‘Now the pups of the *Dheds* started to dress up in pent-shirt too!’³ (Badgujar, 6)’. The writer describes how Dalit youths face unexpected social barriers in getting an education that demoralise them towards higher and technical education. An illiterate Sarpanch does not feel comfortable to share dice with a college professor manifests reality of caste discrimination against Dalits in Haryanvi society. Thus, Dalits get deprived of many opportunities in of their righteous claims that diminish any possibility of change in their socio-economic circumstances in Haryanvi society is the reality of democracy in India.

Dalit Suffering in *Against the Night*

Madhopuri put a greater level of sensitivity towards their social issues which either become difficult to felt to that extent of intensity or remain unexpressed in making use of language by the non-Dalit writers in Punjabi Writings. Balbir Madhopuri’ *Chhangia Rukh* (2003) is the first translated Punjabi Dalit autobiography in English (translated by Tripti Jain) and published by Oxford University Press (2010). The text is a translated work in English that describe Dalit writers’ originality of the themes coming out of their authentic sufferings while English translation of these texts maintains mainstream Indian translators/ writers’ literary aesthetics. He describes in the autobiography that Punjabi society has largely dismayed from cardinal values of a casteless society. Madhopuri describes social practices against Dalits that demonstrate their underlying repercussions in Punjabi society. Although social mobility among Sikh followers manifests at

Self-Translation¹

Self-Translation²

Self-Translation³

global level yet caste practices against Dalits continue to haunt their personal and public spheres. The intimate otherness between Jatt Sikhs and Majhabi Sikhs mark a diving line in socio philosophical frame works of Punjabi society. The writer describes social reality of Dalits despite being a Sikh in Punjabi society through his real life experiences in Punjab as well as in the national capital. In one instance in the autobiography, when the writer is in house-hunting for a rented accommodation he comes through shocking experience with the house owners. During his stay in New Delhi, he comes to encounter with bitter experience of caste discrimination with the house owners. The writer describe how a house owner asks him, 'Bhai, don't be annoyed, but which caste do you belong to?'(Madhopuri, 202).

Madhopuri tries to avoid a direct reply to the targeted question and adjusting his turban responses, 'We are Sikhs (Madhopuri, 202)', yet the house owner tells him an instance of his journey to know his caste. The owner tells about the co-passenger who seems to be well educated and in fine attire and also introduces himself as Sikh but the house owner further enquires him saying, 'Sikhs also have castes which caste do you belong to?' He hesitates at first, and then he said that he was a Ramdasia.' When the house owner comes to his caste then he comments, 'what more I could talk to him. I turned my face on the other side. (Madhopuri, 202-3)'. Hence, Punjabi society manifests how caste discrimination against Dalits continues despite in-principle premise of a casteless society in Sikhism. Consequently, Dalits put different narrative in establishing religious organizations like the Ballan Wallan Gurudwara for the Dalit Sikhs (Majhabi) to give appropriate reverence to the teachings of saints. The study focuses on practical aspect of management committees in the selected texts that depict the caste practices overtly in Sikhism. The caste practices are, 'Perhaps the most surprising and interesting thing that the reality of caste presents in contemporary India is the fact that precisely at a time when all sociological evidence points to its decline but the caste question also presents itself in newer and more complicated forms (Grewal, 217-18)'.

Depiction of Dalits in Rajasthani Society

Shyamlal Jaidia describes Bhangis' Bhangis' underlying caste repercussions in the historical perspective as well as within SCs in autobiography *Untold Story of a Bhangi Vice-Chancellor* (2001) describes Bhangis' marginalization that gets multiplied in one or the other reason in Indian society. He describes the underlying reasons of socio-cultural practices against Dalits especially Bhangis in Rajasthani society. He describes his encounters of caste discrimination as a student, scholar, Professor, and as Vice-Chancellor of the university in different modes in these capacities. He poignantly overturns those socio-cultural practices which have kept continued the procedural tortures of Dalits in the Indian society. The pitfalls to stop untouchables' oppression in the hands of upper castes in the royal background gets multiply their sufferings in the Rajasthani society. All the characters in these writings put forth the struggle that has been described 'the characters in my stories that fight for their dream of justice and to the tradition that teaches us to struggle for dignity, equality, and freedom (Navaria, 252)'.

Jaidia describes how bluntly upper caste students, colleagues even his subordinates cause him emotional shock in making caste remarks against him and his community despite his official positions. In an instance in the autobiography, he describes:

The opposition to avarnas had sprung from the educated savarnas and it had become a permanent affair. How the University teachers, employees, and union leaders in the University had opposed the avarnas with determination has already been narrated. It is

important to mention here that educated sarvanas could accept either a Muslim or Christian or an OBC candidate as Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar but not that from the avarnas. To them, the very presence of the avarnas and those toa Bhangi, a Raigar, and a Gurda (Chamar) was unpalatable on the higher posts of the University. (Jaidia, 183).

The traditional approach of understanding the past glories of *the Rajputana dynasty* of the rajarajwade lineages give an overt glorification of feudal system but a critical and analytic study as the autobiography presents shows upper castes' causes sufferings to Dalits at various level even the present circumstances in Rajasthani society.

2. CONCLUSION

Dalits' sufferings get described in their respective regional societies wherein various caste calibrations of upper caste groupings against Dalits are nucleus in their recent socio-cultural repercussions. Dalit writers (in their select texts) attempt to bring forth a reality check of ground realities of Haryanvi society, Punjabi society, and Rajasthani society that illustrate caste discrimination against Dalits is pan-Indian phenomenon. Hence, socio-cultural milieu of these societies get described through various characters and instances in varied situations that cause Dalits' sufferings and their confrontation against upper castes in current circumstances despite local variations of modes and manners. Dalit writings present new modes of their representation in socio-cultural as well as literary endeavours in present democratic setup through dynamic characterization of Dalit characters. They protest against the established caste narrative of their socio-cultural sufferings. Through Dalit activism gives premise to their socio-literary activism that theorizes literature can make many things happen like socio-religious and political movements in the democratic set up of country. Dalit writers dissect present repercussions of Dalits and the Backwards who are common sufferers in Hindu caste oppression (as theorized by Phule-Abmbedkar) in Bahujan perspective of (*Shudra* and *Ati-shudras*) in historical perspective of Hindu society. The momentum of their social activism to take possession over the land reserved for SC communities gets defused due to the scapegoats like Surta Chamar and Mangu Bhangi. They either succumb to the pressure enforced by the zamindars or are tempted over a bottle of liquor. How such Dalit scapegoats make a fiasco of the poor's protest for their legal rights has been discussed in the story. The social trajectory of Dalit activism exemplifies the worries of the aged people who get impressed with the protagonists' ideas over the auction of reserved land. The dubious and irresponsible Dalit characters like Surta Chamar and Mangu Bhangi bring debacle in the social activism of the deprived sections of society. Hence, many welfare policies for these people either remain on the papers only or are not properly implemented to serve the purpose. He describes:

...Baba Saheb was all alone in his time. Today like him, a sizable number of people attained good prospects of the financial positions and other reserved posts but the state of our society is still as it is even today... Having read the teachings of Ambedkar, those people who even desired to bring the society out of the filth like superstition, fatalism, idol-worshipping of Gods and Goddesses, and the fallacy of Hell and Heaven themselves have fallen in a quagmire. (21)

Unfortunately, those Dalits who have got the benefits of reservation develop indifferent attitudes towards the other illiterate Dalits who are still languishing over the zamindars' unfair schemes to get their legitimate rights over the land reserved for them. At the same time, the people who neither worked hard nor came out of the fatalist mindset keep on cursing the other sub-castes. These

practices make them succumb to their erstwhile oppressors' (and the present too) tactics to divide Dalit consolidation as together they can pose a big to the traditional privileges. Unawareness of Dalits to understand the upper castes' pro-active roles in advocating "for the most backward Dalit communities" to ensure exclusive provisions in the corrective measures on one side and "their hasty conclusion" pinpoints the dent on consolidation of Dalits. Their present state of mind makes them stop penetrating the iceberg theory of caste and untouchability long practiced against Dalits-as a community.

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