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**A NEW PERSPECTIVE TO DALIT LITERATURE**

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# A New Perspective to Dalit Literature

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**Abstract – There is no denial in the fact that pen can bring revolutionary changes for anyone who knows how to use it, literature was very lately used by the dalit writers to raise their voice and to show their presence in the literary sphere. Literature, apart from many other things, has always been used by writers as arsenal against the established socio-political norms, long drawn out traditions, dull and dreary customs and hypocrisy. There has always been element of protest in the literature which is shaped on the basis of the assumption that there exists a close interaction and relationship between politics and creative expressions. Indeed this protest symbolizes the changing attitudes to sociopolitical situations, priorities and concerns of writers with changing times from the past to present. (Singh 187)**

**Key Words – Revolutionary, Literature, Assumption, Socio-Political**

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## INTRODUCTION

With the transitional society, it is obvious that the role of literature and expression must be changed accordingly. An inferiority complex attached with “being Dalit” is reduced considerably. It is time taking process and will go with time. So it is essential that our approach towards Dalit literature must be changed. In the words of SK Kaul, “Today, the Dalits in the country had reached a stage where they are no longer willing to fight for their cause with weapons. Now they are fighting through books.” (qtd. Singh 188)

There is a significant change in dalit consciousness in last few decades. The depressed consciousness of dalits is changing and replaced by strongly asserting themselves in every field. Dalits who were practically invisible, with any reason, from socio-political arena are making their presence everywhere. They are giving their contribution in society. So our literature must encompass the changing role of dalits. We would see a rise of New Dalitism as a changed way of expression in the current and emerging socio-political milieu. This is required to differentiate it with the previous approach. Dalit literature is the saga of resistance against the hegemony of Brahmanic literature which pretends to be omniscient and all-encompassing while presenting a narrow, one sided, twisted and biased view of reality. Dalit literature is the literary depiction of injustice, grief, pain, oppression and suffering with sympathetic perceptive. As defined by Saran Kumar Limbale: “precisely that literature which artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation and poverty endured by Dalits.” (qtd. Jyoti Yadav 179)

Dalbir Singh quotes the lines of SK Kaul, “Primarily the aim of Dalit literature is to highlight the disabilities and

difficulties together with atrocities and inhuman treatment meted out to Dalits. The main object is to produce social awakening among the down trodden.” (qtd. Singh 188)

Contrary to the Dalitism which meant to highlight the disabilities and difficulties and seek sympathy, Neo Dalitism is to question the very literature which justifies this caste hierarchy. It is to develop not only a healthy (not sympathy) image for dalit but an image of appreciation for the people who have been unjustly victimized over the centuries and endured it. It is not to artistically portray the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation and poverty endured by Dalits, but question them and rewrite them from dalit points of view. It is critically examining and pointing out the flaws and misconceptions based on which this caste system is based and trying to exist more dominantly.

Though, dalit writing existed from as early as 13th century or earlier, Chokhamela, a Maharashtrian saint, was born in second half of thirteenth century. Today very few of his works are available. There might be a number of other writers who might have produced the literature on dalit. Many of them were lost over the period of time. But many of them were ignored deliberately by critic and historians. In the words of Dilip Chitre about Tukaram: “One of the obvious reasons why Tukaram’s life is shrouded in mystery and why his work has not been preserved in its original form because he was born Shudra, at the bottom of the caste hierarchy”. (qtd. Sharma 52)

The same apprehensions are reflected by Ashok Verma and Kanupriya in their research “Dalit Literature: A Discourse”: “...It (Dalit consciousness) is perhaps went underground or alternatively it is also possible that predominantly Brahmin historians and

critics deliberately ignored it and took no cognizance of it..." (Verma & Kanupriya 65)

As mentioned above by Dilip Chitre, Ashok Verma and Kanupriya, the works have not preserved in its original form or deliberately ignored. There might be other writers who can be discovered and brought into light.

The impetus of Neo Dalit literature is to discover and recreate (though it is not possible to recreate it completely but to recreate as close as possible) the lost literature; secondly, to translate the literature in maximum possible languages. So not only scholars but a common man also could understand it. By discovering lost or ignored literature, we can boost self-respect and confidence in the Dalits which has been eroded over centuries. After self-respect and confidence a healthy image as well as an image of appreciation can be developed. That dalits are in no way less creative and productive than their counterparts. In spite of exploitation and atrocities for centuries they are still able to produce such worthy literature. Had they not been prohibited from reading and writing, had they been given an equal opportunity they would have also contributed their share to the society.

As said by Karl Marx, "Religion is the opium of the masses". As it is well known that in influence of opium or influence of any intoxicant one can't use his or her brain in judicious manner. Same is in the case of uprooting of casteism from society. Though Non Dalits understand very reason behind the Dalit literature but due to the influence of opium (religion) they don't admit and accept it.

The origin of caste is from the Chaturverna system. The four fold divisions of society. Chaturverna is not only supported but established by these religious scriptures. Some of these scriptures are Manusmriti, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Geeta, etc. and many of them like Manusmriti and Arthashastra inform us how to systematically exploit Shudras.

Though much of this literature is supported, neither by history nor by any scientific evidence. These are presented and accepted for the centuries and became a part of our tradition and culture. These are accepted without any question. More over these are considered infallible. Without any prejudice these must be discussed in detail in light of history and science. The flaws must be pointed out and critically discussed.

Neo Dalitism is to question, critically examine and discuss these well-established scriptures debunked from the position of infallibility. These flaws are to be deconstructed and brought into light. And these are to be reconstructed from the historical and scientific point of view. The basis of reconstruction should be a sound reason not mere blind faith. None of the literatures should be considered infallible. Till the time these are kept out of purview of discussion, nothing worthwhile could be produced. It is like curing the symptoms and

leaving the actual malady. We can't uproot the tree by cutting its branches. It is the roots which need to be dug out.

Dalitism is to bring into foreground the injustice and atrocities. Neo Dalitism is to break this hegemony itself. Dalitism is to show the injustice in the social structure while Neo Dalitism is to challenge the system itself. In the words of Saran Kumar Limbale a well-known dalit writer: "familiarizing Dalits with their past, to explain to them that they are enslaved, to show that they are human beings and it is their duty and right to fight for the rights of human beings." (qtd. Jyoti Yadav 186)

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