

Peer reviewed Journal

Impact Factor: 7.265

ISSN-2230-9578

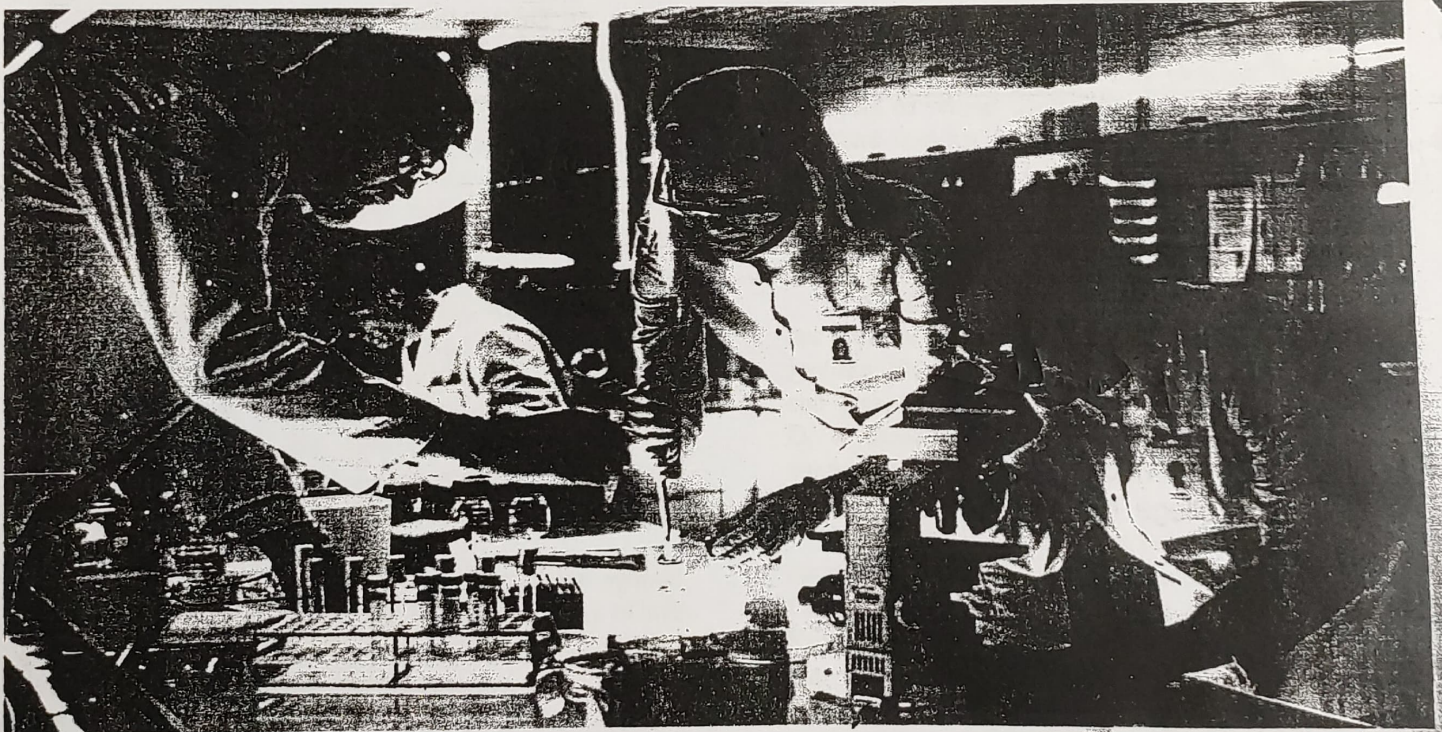
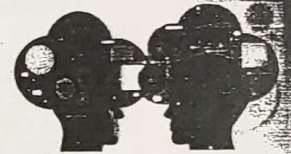
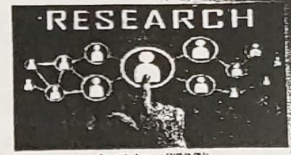
Journal of Research and Development

A Multidisciplinary International Level Referred Journal

May 2022 Volume 1 Issue-1

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Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Father and Doyen of Dalit Literature

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Abstract: The aim of Dalit literature has been right from its roots to communicate the message through literature with a view to initiating social awareness. Although Lord Buddha and Mahatma Phule are the inspiration of Dalit literature, in a real sense Dr. Ambedkar is the father of Dalit literature. The intellectual contribution of Dr. Ambedkar through important books on social, economic and political subjects can never be forgotten. Dr. Ambedkar is the father and doyen of Dalit literature, his message is the magnetic force for Dalit writers in India. The primary concern of the present paper is to show how Dr. Ambedkar is called the father and doyen of Dalit literature.

Keywords: Dalit Literature, Father, Doyen, Dr. Ambedkar, Inspiration

Introduction:

The word 'Dalit' comes from Marathi language and Hindi synonym of it is 'damit', literally it means crushed, oppressed, tormented and ignored. Literature is not a static collection of written expression authored by a writer nor is a documentation of literature because a christened reflection of the feelings of the masses along with social relation combining it with the literary imagination of a writer. Munshi Premchand defines literature as "the critique of life." (Premchand 75) Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is the apostle of the Dalits. His influence was immensely great on Dalit movements which started in the Indian sub-continent. The main principles of Dr. Ambedkar's theory are elimination of caste, eradication of exploitation and equal status for the Dalits. The literary movement was started in the homeland of Dr. Ambedkar, the crusader of the downtrodden. The Dalit literature came into prominence in early seventies, which subsequently spread to the neighbouring states of Gujrat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and many more. The primary aim of Dalit literature is the liberation of Dalits. The resentment of Dalits against the social inequality comes out in the garb of Dalit literature. The primary concern of the present paper is to show how Dr. Ambedkar is called the father and doyen of Dalit literature.

Dalit literature is a protest and reaction against the caste system and the brahminical way of life and its principles. It is a reaction against an age-old tradition of discrimination, exploitation, ruthlessness and deprivation. Dalit literature questioned the mainstream literature which they call as 'Hindu literature' which challenges its hegemony. In the words of Baburao Bagul, The established literature of India is Hindu Literature. But it is Dalit Literature which has the revolutionary power to accept new science

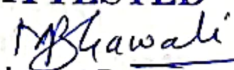
and technology, and bring out a total transformation. 'Dalit' is the name of a total revolution; it is a revolution incarnate. (Bagul, 289)

In the sixties, the flow of Dalit literary writing in Maharashtra increased significantly. Dalit Sahitya achieved the status of genuine school of literature with the Marathwada issue of 1969. In the 1960s texts like *Pimplam* (leaf of the pimple tree) Namdev Dhasal's *Golpitha* (A slum area of Mumbai) Daya Pawar's *Kondwada* (Cattle pen) got instant popularity for their portrayal of Dalit issues in an authentic manner. Dalit literature is a new significant identity of modern Indian literature. It is the symbol of distinctive Indian creativity and thus has an easy passage to the corridors of world literature. It is because Dalit literature implies the greatest conflict of human values. The aim of Dalit literature has been right from its roots to communicate the message through literature with a view to initiating social awareness.

In the philosophical context, Dalit literature has been inspired by Lord Buddha and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule. However, considering the past and present situation, Dalit literature considers Dr. Ambedkar as the basic idea of Dalit life. It would be appropriate to briefly introduce Dr. Ambedkar's work.

Dr. Ambedkar returned to India in 1923 after completing his education in the United States. On his return to India, he first joined Baroda King Sayajirao Gaikwad as a lieutenant colonel. He later became a professor at Sydenham College, Mumbai. From the social experiences he had to face during this period, he realized that in Indian society, a person is born with caste. And this caste cannot be changed on the basis of education, knowledge etc. And it sticks to death. In order to uplift the oppressed and downtrodden Dalit class in the established society, awareness

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must be created in this class. For this, the class must be motivated, organized and prepared for the struggle and the self rights. In this regard, Dr. Ambedkar was the first to set up an organization called 'Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha' to create awareness among the untouchables and started a newspaper called 'Untouchable India' to promote the cause. He spread his thoughts through meetings, conventions, conferences etc. He also took the path of Satyagraha at Mahad, Nasik, Pune to give access to untouchables in public places. In his speech at the Mahad Satyagraha, he says, "We are not going to Chavdar Lake merely to drink its water. We are going to the lake to assert that we too are human beings like others." (Dangle 225) This gave a new impetus to the untouchability movement. From the public burning of Manusmriti, he threw away the yoke of Dharmashstra and rewarded intellectual ideas. Dr. Ambedkar's role during this period was mainly that of a social reformer under Hinduism.

The Round Table Conference was held in London in 1930. Dr. Ambedkar attended the conference as a representative of the untouchables. From this conference Dr. Ambedkar set the direction of his work to acquire independent political rights for the untouchables. However, in 1932, Mahatma Gandhi went on a hunger strike in Yerwada Jail to protest against the provision of separate constituencies for the untouchables. Through the 'Poona Pact' Dr. Ambedkar gave up the demand for a separate constituency for the Dalits and Mahatma Gandhi agreed to reserve seats for the Dalits. Dr. Ambedkar is considered to be the foremost Architect of the Indian Constitution. According to the Indian Constitution, untouchability was abolished from India. Also, a law of criminalizing untouchability in public places was passed in the parliament in 1955. While Dr. Ambedkar was in the cabinet, Pandit Nehru entrusted him with the responsibility of drafting the 'Hindu Code Bill'. Dr. Ambedkar also drafted it but this time he had to face opposition from the right wing in the congress. Dr. Ambedkar left the cabinet in 1951. If we take a brief look at Dr. Ambedkar's work, it is easy to see that freedom, fundamental rights and personal development were important in Dr. Ambedkar's Dalit liberation movement. Through his work, he created self-confidence and ambition in the Dalit community.

An important point to note here is that one finds the root of Dalit literary movement in the writings of Dr. Ambedkar. The intellectual contribution of Dr. Ambedkar through important

books on social, economic and political subjects can never be forgotten. His famous books, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, *Who were the Shudras*, *Annihilation of Caste*, *The Problem of Rupee in British India*, *Thoughts on Pakistan* and others which have been published by the Government of Maharashtra in seventeen volumes, stand as the cut-off line in the past and beginning of new epoch in the cosmopolitan living and writings of Independent India. It is precisely in the letters written to Lieutenant Dada Saheb Gaikwad that the seeds of Dalit literature were sown. During that time, short stories and novels in a new literary form were published in "Prabuddha Bharat" and 'Dharmayana'. Revolutionary ideas were woven in Dalit literature, of which V.S. Kardak, Raja Dhale and Bandhu Madhav were leading writers.

Although Lord Buddha and Mahatma Phule are the inspiration of Dalit literature, in a real sense Dr. Ambedkar is the father of Dalit literature. One of the results of Dr. Ambedkar's movement was the Dalit literary movement. Dalit literature begins with Dr. Ambedkar's struggle for 'Samyak Kranti' (equal rights). So that, the root of this literature, is the main inspiration of Dr. Ambedkar's ideology. Also, it can be said that Mahatma Phule, Shahu Maharaj, Marxist Movement etc. had some influence on this literature. According to Marathi literary persons, Dr. Bhalchandra Phadke, Prof. Avinash Sahastrabuddhe, Prof. Datta Bhagat etc. Dalit community which was fortunate enough to live a life of deprivation at all levels got its identity from the writers of this community because of Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy and the human liberation struggle he started. Inspired by this movement, some Dalit thinkers and writers acme forward and started performing their role for the society. Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts are inspired by the self-identity that Dalits want to take. And out of this Dalit literature was born. In the context of literature as a whole, Dr. Ambedkar's views expressed in a speech are as follows-

"Today, literature wasn't produced to promote social life and natural life. Our independent country is in dire need of unity and brotherhood. Unity and brotherhood have become the care of our nation. Without it, a strong team will not be formed. Therefore, it is essential that humanistic sciences be formed from literary art as well. For this, a wave of nationalist revolution should rise in the field of literature. Recently, the edges of the literature have turned black. The crop is plentiful but it is insatiable, today we are hungry for knowledge. Therefore, writers should be cautious and

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cultivate the values of life and culture. So I want to tell the writers, search your noble life value, cultural value through your literary genre. Don't be narrowed and limit your attention. Make it huge. Don't keep your voice to the four walls. Do the struggle to uplift the life of neglected, miserable communities in the village through literature. That is the true humanity." (Translated by Kishor Ingole 42)

Dr. Ambedkar is the father and doyen of Dalit literature, his message is the magnetic force for Dalit writers in India. Anna Bhau Sathe, the Marathi Dalit writer's poetry is also coloured by the Ambedkarite movement. His poem "Take a hammer to change the world" here is none other than Dr. Ambedkar.

Take a hammer to change the world
So saying went Bhimrao
Why the elephant is tuck sitting
In the mud of slavery?
Shake your body and come out,
Take a leap to the forefront!
The rich have exploited us without end
The priests have tortured us
As if had eaten jewels
And thieves had become great
Sitting on the chariot of unity
Let us go forward
To break the chains of class and caste
Hold to the name of Bhim.

Anna Bhau Sathe, portraying Dr. Ambedkar as Hammer to change this world with ups and downs and to liberate ourselves, let revolt from our under privileged stage, saying the name of Bhim, means Dr. Ambedkar, Anna Bhau Sathe's famous novel *Fakira*, won Maharashtra State award, and he dedicated this award to Dr. Ambedkar's warring pen, because he got inspired by Dr. Ambedkar's ideology as like any other Dalit writer. (Patchala 04)

One of the renowned Hindi Dalit writers Om Prakash Valmiki quotes the inspiration of Dr. Ambedkar on him and his writings- "Dr. Ambedkar's life-long struggle had shaken me up. I spent many days and nights in great turmoil. The restlessness inside me had increased. My stone-like silence had suddenly begun to melt. I proceeded to read all of Dr. Ambedkar's books that I found in the library." (Valmiki 72) Another Dalit woman writer, Baby Kamble is influential woman writer in Dalit scenario, her work "*The Prisons We Broke*" (2008), is considered the manifesto of Dalit woman. Baby Kamble is strongly inspired by Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts and philosophy on education and rights for women, from her childhood days her brother and father were parts

of Dr. Ambedkar's socio-political activities. Dr. Ambedkar once said that I measure the progress of community by the degree of progress which woman have achieved, remembering Dr. Ambedkar she admits that her family members are just educated only through the efforts of the liberator of marginalized sections Dr. Ambedkar and recollecting the cunning nature of upper castes: to confine the woman to the superstitious and rituals. She says, "Today many of our daughters and daughters-in-law are graduates. They are a hundred times more superior to ignorant women like us. Even if their husband's forgot the father in the glory of so called greatness, it is their duty to reprimand their husbands: they should tell them; remember what you are today is solely because of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar." (Kamble 123)

In fact, Dr. Ambedkar's place in Indian literature is unique and uncompromising as a doyen. Arjun Dangle rightly puts out that, "All literary movements of Dalits, as well as all Dalit writers proudly hold him in high esteem as the father of Dalit literature." (Dangle 237)

While inspiring by the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar many Dalit writers were greatly encouraged by journals like 'Sinhagarjana', 'Jayabhim' and 'Prajasataak'. Many elegiac poems were written on Dr. Ambedkar's death in 1956, though the term Dalit was still not in use. Dalit literature was yet to be defined. Dr. M. N. Wankhede, Prof. Gangadhar Pantawane, Keshav Meshram, Raja Dhale, Prof. M. B. Chitnis were joined by Daya Pawar, Baburao Bagul and Raosaheb Kasabe in their efforts to define Dalit literature. The harvest of their tilling is so plentiful that today no literary program held in Maharashtra can be concluded without the mention of Dalit literature.

Dr. Ambedkar showed the way to the Dalit class which was trapped in the dreadful, unjust cycle of tradition. He valued the dignity of man. 'Humanity' is considered superior. He awakened the self-identity in the minds of Dalits as a 'man'. He cherished the goal of 'Emancipation' in his life and made sincere efforts for it. The rise and life-time of Dr. Ambedkar is the real foundation period of the all-round rise and growth of Dalits in India. That's why Dr. Ambedkar and his personality became the inspiration of the Dalit class. He became the identity and dignity of the Dalit community. In short, it can be said that the whole 'Ambedkarism' or the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar is the only inspiration of Dalit literature. So, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is called as the father and doyen of Dalit literature.

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