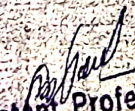


English Language and literature is one of the most significant areas in the research. Language and literature interacts with every aspects of human life in society and both can be understood only when they are considered and applied in relation to the society. Language is a mode of communication through which we can transmit ideas, information, emotions and messages one to another whereas the literature is representation of contemporary human life in to the society which imitates quotidian way of life, ethics and moral values of humans. Now a days, the impact of new technology and digital social media in language and literature each corresponds between an author and reader, simplify the lucid way of accession and understanding of language and literature by students, researchers and readers. The new technological innovations arise in language and literature so we can easily teach and learn language and literature in online mode. The present edited book offers an insightful emerging issues of scholarly research chapters of researchers in English language and literatures in English.

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Price Rs 310.00  
ISBN 978-1-64805-087-9

# INSIGHTS

Trends in English Language  
Literatures in English

Editor  
Rajesh S Gore

## NOTION PRESS

India. Singapore. Malaysia.

First published by Notion Press, January 2020


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ISBN 978-1-64805-087-9

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### 3. The Rise of Dalit Studies and Its Impact on the Study of India

Manisha Gawali

We who are sleep must open our  
Eyes and look about us we must  
not accept the injustice of our  
enslavement by telling ourselves it  
is our fate, as if we have no true  
feelings, we must dare to stand up  
for change. We must crush all these  
institutions that use caste to bully  
us in to submission, and  
demonstrate that among human  
beings there are none who are high  
or low. Those who have found their  
happiness by exploiting us are not  
going to go easily. It is we who have  
to place them where they belong  
and bring about a changed and just  
society where all are equal.

Bama in Karukku (2012)

The present chapter focuses on the rise of Dalit studies and its impact on the study of India.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has proved to the world that English literature is no longer the sole province of the imperial England. Although English literature started and flourished in England, it has gone on to sow the seeds of creativity in English in other parts of the world. The English people themselves paved the way for the unexpected developments that we witness today. When the English colonizers went to America, they began to write their own literature of the Americas. Similarly, those English men and women who went to Australia began the process of a new literature called Australian literature. And so is the case with



English, postcolonial literature and so on. Not to be left out, even those countries, which were not colonized by the English like Bhutan, China, Iran, Japan, Thailand and Nepal started their own literatures in English. Gradually all these literatures in English have come to announce that here is a different kind of literature but in English. The pinnacle of such a literature is Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* winning the status of the double Booker Prize novel. These trends were expected and started growing in a similar fashion.

A few distinct trends are dominant in the late twentieth century and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. A major trend is the original creative writing in English. After the trio of Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand in the middle of the twentieth century, we have a multitude of writers both men and women from different walks of the life on various themes. Of the Pre-Independent authors dealt with nationalism and patriotism, the post-independent writers faced the challenge of handling the new found political freedom. Notable among them in the in the post-Independent India are Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Amitar Ghosh, Shashi Naroor, Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur, Arvind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat. But the post modern writers like Rushdie and Ghosh had to delve deep into the impact of freedom on the Indians.

Another trend is the translation of regional literature in to English. For example, almost the entire works of Premchand or Rabindranath Tagore, Subramnia Bharathi or Vijay Tendulkar or Vasudevan Nair are available in English not only for the English people but also for the people of the world who have some knowledge of English as a second or foreign language. Among the translated texts, we have a unique trend of men writers emerging on the national scene. A case in point is Usha Dasgupta, who has championed the cause of the marginalized tribal people in West Bengal through such works as "Draupati" An interesting aspect of this creative translation is the work of Girish Karnad, for he wrote most of his plays in Kannada but translated them into English himself. His Plays from Tughlaq

Diasporic writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Chinua Achebe, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai have different windows on the world of their lives in India and abroad, they too share the common concerns of Indian writers in terms of cultural bondings and bindings that help and also hinder us from evolving in to a higher level of life, especially a higher standard of peaceful life for all Indians all over the world. A dominant trend is the motivational and autobiographical work of prominent personalities like Dr. Abdul Kalam *Wings of Fire* and *Turning Points* are both scientific and political in their overtones, but do not lose sight out on guiding the Indian Youth for a better India. Associated with this trend is the biographical writings of well-known political, industrial, social, spiritual and media leaders. Industrialists like J.R.D Tata, Dhirubhai Ambani and Aditya Birla also have found a place among biographers. Yet another trend is the emergence of Dalit writers from the Dalit and other marginalized sections of the society. A remarkable work of international standing is Bama's *Karukku*, Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan*. These writings erase the distinction between fact and fiction.

#### Introduction to Dalit Studies:

'Dalit' is a Sanskrit word which means "oppressed" and "downtrodden." It was appropriated in the 1970's by "untouchable" writers and activists to describe their community, both in the present and in historical contexts. Starting with the Dalit Panther Movement, led by Dalit writers in the 1970's the term "Dalit" acquired a radical new meaning of self-identification that signified a new oppositional consciousness. Today it is a widely used term in the Indian public sphere, especially in academic and literary fields. Dalits constitute nearly 17 percent of India's population -210 million people as per the 2011 census. They are considered untouchable by Orthodox Hindus and Hindu theologians because of their association in rural areas with impure occupations such as leather work, sanitary work, removing dead animals and midwifery. In addition, because Dalit communities have been historically segregated, the practice of untouchability has a distinctive spatial dimension. This practice has moral and religious sanction in Hindu theology.

#### The Major Goals:

The major objective of Dalit studies is to offer new perspectives for the study of India. First to foreground dignity and humiliation as key ethical categories that have shaped political struggles and ideological agenda in India. Second, Dalit studies historicizes the persistence of caste inequality and discrimination that have acquired new forms in a modern and democratic India. A key aim of Dalit studies is to recover histories of struggles for human dignity and caste discrimination by highlighting Dalit intellectual and political activism.

The rise of Dalit studies as a discipline can be located in the transformational political events of the 1990's in India. The greater visibility of Dalit political movements especially the Bahujan Samaj Party's rise of political power in the 1990's and 2000s in the northern Indian State of Uttar Pradesh, the rise of new and visible Dalit movements in Southern Indian States such as Tamilnadu ; renewed discussions around caste inequalities and discrimination following the Indian government's decision to implement recommendations from the Mandal Commission report to extend affirmative action to lower caste groups ; and the emergence of a new group of Dalit activist / intellectuals in Universities across India.

### Broad Objectives of Dalit Studies:

To undertake research to develop an understanding of the consequences of social exclusion and discrimination on economic growth and poverty, education health, political participation and on the well-being of the marginalized social groups.

To undertake research on policies to overcome discrimination particularly exclusion and discrimination induced deprivation and its consequences.

To provide knowledge support to policy-making bodies to develop inclusive policies.

To provide knowledge support to international development and funding agencies to enable them to shape their approach and funding policies towards problems of excluded groups.

To provide knowledge support to civil society organizations at the grassroots, state and national levels.

Challenges:

The challenge is to make Dalit agendas and actors visible. This requires innovative approaches and combining anthropological, historical and literary fields.

### South Asian Scholar's Attention to Dalit History:

Dalit history illustrates and enables connections with global histories of racism and social exclusion. Scholars and students will find remarkable parallels on policies and practices that sustain exclusion of Dalits (similar to black people and Burakumins in Japan) and their struggles to seek access to public spaces. For these reasons, courses on race and Ethnic Studies, Africana Studies, Black Studies, History, Anthropology, English / Postcolonial Studies, Literary Studies and Area Studies can benefit from Dalit histories courses that emphasize innovative methodological and theoretical approaches will find Dalit histories useful especially for graduate students.

### Future of Dalit Studies:

Dalit Studies' has the potential to fundamentally alter the historiographical map of India / South Asia Studies. The recent recognition by Indian academia of Ambedkar as a philosopher and social scientist who made important contributions to the study of Indian Society and history, the surge in the Dalit histories in the last decade all around the academia, especially in the United States, all seem to suggest that a new set of questions are informing research and the study of India. A key trend in the field is to recover histories of leading Dalit activists of leaders in different regions of India and to explore the nature of activism that emerged there.

A second prominent trend which I have not mentioned so far, is to recognize the distinctive agendas of Dalit feminism. A third emerging trend has been to engage with Dalit literature, in both prose and verse forms, as well as political and autobiographical writings to understand the cultural and social motivations that have shaped their political activities. A fourth prominent theme is to study Dalit group's religious and cultural formations. These four trends draw from and build on, the work done by scholars prior to the 1990s and foreground the role of Dalit activism.

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