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MARGINALIZATION OF DALITS IN DATTA BHAGAT'S WHIRLPOOL (AVART)

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ABSTRACT :

Dalit literature presents the life of marginalized Dalits and their exploitation. Dalit literature emerges from the humanitarian outlook and ideals of Dr B.R. Ambedkar. Dalit literary work has been produced in all the genres of literature including short stories, poetry, autobiography, novels, essays and dramas etc. Dalit literature has enriched the Indian drama with its valuable contribution and rich and humanitarian ideals. The salient feature of Dalit theatre is its unconventional subjects and unique presentation. The Dalit theatre is a socio-cultural movement which has got its own importance in Indian literature. The humanitarian outlook, revolt and revolution and reformation are the hall mark of Dalit literature. The major contribution of Dalit drama is that it became an instrument of the percolation of democratic ideals to the masses. Dalit theatre doesn't give importance to commercialism on the other hand upheld the human values. It inspires self-confidence of marginalized Dalit of the society, it allows the oppressed class to introspect their position and raises their

issues and problems and spreads the message of importance of unity and struggle in the lives of downtrodden. The Dalit drama advocates individualistic attitude of its protagonist who bears hardship, struggles for the humanitarian cause and strive hard for justice and equality which most of the time he is unable to achieve because of the dominant forces of upper class. Dalit theatre carries forward Dr B.R. Ambedkar's mission of liberty and equal rights to all. The Dalit literary writer composes his literature with purpose and responsibility of bringing social

change and reform in the existing social set up of the society. Dalit literature is not just a writing but a movement to carve out its own space in the larger perspective of Indian literary scenario. Dalit literature presents its own drama with its own theme and presentation, problems of Dalits, their unique language, their own art, culture and music. Dalit drama came into existence with specific purpose and objectives. It wishes to present what the marginalized people of the society want, what are their rights, how they can prosper, how they can bring reform and revolution in their lives. Dalit drama presents realistic portrayal of Dalit characters with all their bitter social problems and issues. Dalit drama focuses on the different problems of social outcaste and marginalized people, what is meant by being a dalit, the various kinds of injustice and exploitation done to



dalit community, how they were physically and socially exploited, how they were deprived from their rights of living normal life, their pathetic situation, inhuman treatment and annihilation because of the caste system. The protagonists of Dalit literature are fully energized with the Ambedkarite revolutionary ideals and through their struggle and sacrifice hope to bring social reform and create an ideal world. They firmly believe in the democratic ideals and responsibilities and strive for carving out an idealistic and revolutionary society. Basically Dalit drama is a drama of revolt and it presents revolt against all kinds of tradition, system and conventions of society which directly or indirectly contribute in the human exploitation and marginalization.

KEYWORDS : physically and socially exploited , Dalit drama.

INTRODUCTION

Prof. Datta Bhagat is one of the leading Marathi writers of Dalit literature. He is the leader of Dalit theatre movement in Marathi. His plays are problem plays and each play raises issues related with Dalits and their lives. His plays deal with social, religious and political agitation. He started his career as short story writer but devoted himself to the theatre writing. His first play *Avart* (Whirlpool) brought fame, recognition and laurel. He has carved his own place in literature with his plays like *Ashmak*, *Khelia*, *Wata-Palwata*, *Avart* etc. He was made president of prestigious All India Marathi Natya Sammelan in 2006. His plays offer a very deep understanding of the realities of caste system in our society. His plays depicted the sorrow and sufferings of down trodden. They present variety of Dalit problems. His plays took the Marathi theatre to the common masses with their themes related with marginalized section of the society. He was not only a writer but also a social activist.

The play *Whirlpool* (Avart) published in 1978 is a one act with continuous scene without divisions. The dramatist uses the tamasha form to present this play with Stage Manager and the Jester. There are two groups of characters in the play, the one group who support the caste system which includes Josi, Mahadu, Kisan and Piraji. The other group which strive for equality and justice are Tukaram and his son Manohar. The drama is set in contemporary period. The protagonist character Manohar, a Dalit young man has spent his time in Bombay and Pune and is fascinated by Ambedkarite thoughts. He demands the entry of Dalits in the temple of Vithoba. The Brahmin Josi's restricted and delayed the entry of the Dalits into the temple for two days by citing the astrological reason of lunar mansion. Manohar and his family have been exploited and oppressed from three generations. Manohar is a rebel by nature and reads Ambedkar's revolutionary thoughts. Manohar's father and grandfather were exploited under the false tradition of the Hindu religion. Manohar represents the modern educated man of Independent India. He firmly believes that Dalits can never be exploited, oppressed and maltreated any more now. Manohar demands the liberal ideals of equality and reject the caste division system. He argues logically against the caste system, he revolted and upholds the idea of struggle. He says :

'It's better to live one day the life of a lion than to live a thousand days as a meek sheep, that's the message that was given to us.'(p.667)

Later in the play Manohar was tried on false charge of Ascetic Penance, a reason for the death of the Brahmin's son by village authority. The authority of the village is comprised of people belong to the upper caste of the society and has dominating influence on the matter. Manohar and his father were given verdict of digging the well to satisfy the egos of the upper caste people. When Tukaram and Manohar were working in the well an explosion was created and both the father and son gets injured and nobody supported them to come out. The well was dug for the entire village but poor dalits were deprived from its water. Once again the dalits and poors were cheated and deceived by the upper caste people. The jester very ironically says,

Jester: To whom does the water belong? To whom does the water belong?

Stage-Manager: it's the villager's water, not the Mahar's.

Jester : The poor were deceived. The Mahars were deceived.

(p.678)

The Stage-Manager and Jester move in the circles to represent that Dalits are once again made fool and deceived by the dominant Brahmins and they were deprived from their rights of access to water. The most

shocking thing of keeping Dalits away from the basic right of water still exists and are prevalent in the Independent India.

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