



DALIT SHORT FICTION: THE THIRST FOR A NEW IDENTITY AND HUMAN DIGNITY

Nagaraju Potula¹ and Dr. K. Sumakiran²

¹Research Scholar (Regd. No. PP ENG 0102)
Dept. of English, Rayalaseema University,
Kurnool (A.P.) India.

²M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D., Professor,
Dept of English, Sri Venkateswara University,
Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India.



ABSTRACT :

Dalit short fiction is the emerging form of Dalit literature marked by a great quantity of writing. Moreover, Dalit short fiction is not simply short fiction but it is associated with a movement to bring the change in individual and social life. The main purpose of Dalit short fiction is to show the material and psychological situation of the Dalit living. Besides this, Dalit short fiction strongly conveys the 'differentness' of Dalit literature on the national platform. Thereafter, Dalit short fiction gives a glimpse of how Dalits wishing to live honorably and with respect in terms of quality. Most of the Dalit Short stories which were written by Dalit writers portray the position of Dalits in the society, their unquenchable thirst for a new identity and a constant fight for human dignity. Thus, it is necessary to bring out the unknown facts of Dalit short fiction into the light.

KEYWORDS : Dalit short fiction, differentness, human dignity, new identity, struggle.

OBJECTIVE OF THIS PAPER

The main objective of this paper is to analyze a few Dalit short stories written Dalit by writers and present the structure of the society where Dalits had thirst for a new identity and human dignity.

INTRODUCTION

Dalit short fiction is the emerging form of Dalit literature marked by a great quantity of writing; however, its quality is equal to its quantity. The quality of writing Dalit short story has been given the main criterion. Particularly, Dalit short fiction is a product of new consciousness. It is unique in the sense that builds its structural pattern out of Dalit sensibility. It is unusual, exceptional in terms of expression and experience. Then, Dalit short fiction transfers the themes of protest, revolt, freedom from all sorts of bandage and exploitation, a search for new identity, and a longing for human dignity. Thus, it is Dalit short fiction of protest, voicing its opposition to all that is an orthodox, traditional and conventional. After that, it is as much empathetic as evocative and addresses itself a new to its reader in terms of starting images and symbols. Dalit short fiction is not simply short fiction but it is associated with a movement to bring the change in individual and social life. It is not an exaggeration to say that no other form of short fiction is emerging as the form of Dalit short fiction. The need is, now to fulfill a long cherished and much-deserved liberation in the form of self-identity and self-dignity of the Dalits.

On the basis of these things, the present paper is going to discuss a few Dalit short stories in which Dalits had a thirst for a new identity and human dignity.

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of Dalit short fiction is to show the material and psychological situation of the Dalit living in urban slums, those living in rural areas, and those who have risen to the middle class through special facilities for their caste. It shows the marginalized life how they struggled for a new identity, human dignity, and social justice. And, most of the times they were deceived, discriminated, humiliated, forgotten as human beings, discouraged in all the areas of life. In the short story "Thunderstorm" Ratan Kumar Sambharia described Dalit life: "The inspector arranged the cash in a briefcase and eyed the two bundles kept aside on the bed. 'And what about those?' he asked. 'You might as well keep those too now,' Bakhtawar said loftily. 'We offered them to Daryav's old man as compensation money for his daughter-in-law, but the old fogley threw a fit.' 'Why would that woman need any support from others, anyway, now that she'll be living with you as your mistress?' the Inspector remarked" (Sambharia-125). The above lines depict how Dalits were mistreated, betrayed and suppressed by the Landlords. Though they were faithful servants and trustworthy men, still they became victims of their masters. Instead of wholehearted service that was offered to their masters, they were slaughtered in the hands of upper caste people. At the time of crisis of upper castes, Dalits had become victims in the hands of upper castes. Particularly, to escape from incidents in which they themselves committed a mistake, they are throwing Dalits into gaps. Therefore, Dalits stood to fight against injustice and to search for a new identity where they will be considered as human beings and for human dignity where there is no discrimination by man to man. Obviously, Dalits were obedient and faithful to their given responsibilities in society. Moreover, they had a hardworking nature. On the basis of these, they would continue their survival peacefully and lead contented life in difficult circumstances.

Dalit short fiction strongly conveys the 'differentness' of Dalit literature on the national platform. Literature is something that tries to transcend history, birth, and death wedded to historical epochs. After all, Literature is a mirror that reflects the outer world as well as the inner universe of life. Dalit writers of the day surely know this. Their task is to honor the demands of history and at the same time also honor the demands of art and aesthetics. In this connection, the main causes and circumstances led to sprouting Dalit literature are the age-old existence of oppression and despair of the lives of Dalit. And, they were experienced self down-gradation, suppression, and abject poverty, unhealthy and unsanitary conditions. Even the minimum rights as a human being denied to them. All these things, made Dalit literature to be different from other literature. Because it is the literature that was produced by writers, whom themselves had experienced at first hand, the oppression and segregation, issued out of the cores of their hearts. In addition to this, Dalit writers attracted the attention of readers, both of the downtrodden and the well-placed section, by their profoundness and veracity. Thus, Dalit literature is typically Indian not only in its roots but also in its purpose and goal. It is addressed to the entire Indian literary tradition and its fulfillment lies in the total transformation of this tradition. That's way, it was called as a collective form in India and it is not one, but many. Like that, basing on the fundamental human values like individuality, self-identity, human dignity, social justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, it believes that man is the measure of all things including arts, literature, and culture. Particularly, the exploration of narrative techniques, selection and use of language, figurative language, structures, tone, pitch, pause, realism and portrayal of characters of Dalits which made Dalit literature as different from other literature in India.

Dalit short fiction gives a glimpse of how Dalits wishing to live honorably and with respect in terms of quality, and reveals the ambivalent crisis of new identity in the Dalit middle class. In the short story, "the storeyed house" Arjune Dangle describes an incident: "Look, children, ours is such a large family. Even at mealtime, we've to eat by turns or sit crowded, knocking our knees together. I wish to build a house out of my earnings, and it has to be a storeyed house; the three-portioned house won't be adequate for us. All were happy with this plan. The plan was finalized and the foundation of the storeyed house was laid on the auspicious new-year day" (Dangle-12). It was the desire of each and every Dalit to live honorably. Certainly, the fundamental need of human being was to have food, cloth, and Shelter in life. From long back, Dalits had been living without necessary things. Then, it was their

dream and wished to live in a well-constructed house with their family members. They wanted to live a quality life with respect as human beings. In addition to this, they intended to get a new identity and self-dignity. In the past, they weren't considered or treated as citizens of society. Everywhere, they were suppressed, oppressed, excluded, neglected and omitted from the mainstream of the society. By forgetting the past, Dalits wanted a new identity, self-dignity and social equality which lead them to take part in the mainstream.

Most of the Dalit Short stories which were written by Dalit writers portray the position of Dalits in the society and their fight against injustice. The heroes of Dalit short fictions are shown a craving for a new identity and human dignity at different levels. They are shown confronting limitations, abject poverty, misery, and brutality. In the story "Thunderstorm" (written by Ratan Kumar Sambharia) the main character of the story was Daryav Singh from a low caste. He stands up and fights for human dignity. The central theme of the story could be summarized thus: Parmesh Singh (a landlord) was sixty- five- years old. There was a clash between his son Bakhtawar (who killed his stepbrother) and Karanphool (stepbrother) in the land-related matters. So, Bakhtawar murdered his stepbrother and planned along with his father to send Daryav Singh to jail in this murder case. As his father died recently (three days back), Daryav Singh was in depression. For two generations, Daryav and his father were trustworthy servants to Parmesh family. Even though he was faithful servant, Parmesh Singh and his son Bakhtawar conspired against Daryav. In order to escape from the murder case of his stepbrother, Bakhtawar offered a huge amount of cash to Inspector. After that, when Inspector had forced Daryav to do accordingly for creating some proofs, Daryav rejected and rebelled against injustice. These stories are those who fight for living with a new identity and for human dignity. Each one of them wants to live honorably in the society without discrimination and injustice. Against offensive forces, they apply their full strength with a view to be victorious. Through all these stories Dalit's thirst and concern for self-identity and human dignity are evident. In the story of "Bandawala" (Rebel) written by Anna Bhau, there was a male character namely Tatya who stands against injustice and, fought for identity and dignity from Mang community. In a brief: there was one landlord/ an aristocrat. His name was Inamdar. In the times of need, Tatya's grandfather exchanged his eighty hectares of land to Inamdar for a very paltry amount. It had remained in the possession of Inamdar for the last two generations. After that, Tatya who belonged to Mang community had fought to get it from the hands of the landlord Inamdar. In his attempt he not only failed to gain it back but also he was sent to jail by Inamdar under the fake charges of attempting to beat and kill Inamdar. In all legal and humble ways, Tatya had tried to get it back from him but in vain. Finally, he became a rebel and started to fight against injustice. The man who opposes the injustices which exit from ages had passion or dream for self-identity, human dignity, social justice, and human values. Many of the Dalits from generations to generations, were suppressed, dominated and marginalized from human rights in the society. But now, all Dalits like heroes of Dalit short fiction want to live meaningful and qualitative life as human beings. It is the fundamental right of every human being to live the given life liberally, peacefully and comfortably.

It is necessary to bring out the unknown facts of Dalit short fiction into the light. This is a real fact of Dalits as N. M. Aston enumerated: "The self down-gradation of these people since ages, suppressing even the slightest protest against injustice that sought to find a voice. The conditions of abject poverty, unhealthy and unsanitary conditions in which these people had been sheltered, but they held a belief, that they were accused to live such lives. Even the minimum rights as a human being denied to them, rendering them incapable of seeing the light of freedom and comfortable living, thanks to the age-old ideology taught to them by the upper castes in India and ... that they were fated to be hewers of wood and drawers of water- mere slaves. The portals of education were never opened for them to taste the power of freedom." (Aston-09)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Dalit short fiction is a protest against all kinds of oppression and injustice in society. It presents the life of a Dalits how they struggled and experienced betrayal and inequality at different levels. In many cases, Dalit's quest for new identity and human dignity in society represents

the change or better living. Obviously, Dalits suffer to get fundamental rights as human beings. Because of poverty and caste everywhere, Dalits are more degraded and discriminated. This perception of Dalit short fiction is tremendously thrilling and has the potentials for building new monuments and mansions of literary creations. Thus, Dalit Short fiction in literature is destined to become a paradigm of world literature wherein Dalits breed a profound awareness of undying human spirit suffering from the inhuman condemnation of man by man.

REFERENCES

1. Ambedkar, Dr. *Writings and Speeches*, Mumbai: Govt. of Maharashtra, 1990. Print.
2. Anand, Mulk Raj. *Untouchable*, New Delhi: Penguin Publications, 1935. Print.
3. Anand, S. *Touchable Tales: Publishing and Reading Dalit Literature*, Chennai: Navayana, 2003. Print.
4. Aston, N. M. Ed. *Literature of Marginality: Dalit Literature and African- American Literature*, New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2001. Print.
5. Bagul, Baburao. "Dalit Sahitya: Man's Greatness, Man's Freedom". *Asmitadarsh - I*. 1973. Print.
6. Bajrang Korde, Anna Bhau Sathe- *Makers of Indian Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1999. Print.
7. Dangle, Arjun. Ed. *Homeless in My Land: Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature*. Bombay: Orient Longman, 1992. Print.
8. Dangle, Arjun. Ed. *Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature*. Bombay: Orient Longman, 1992. Print.
9. Freeman, James M. *Untouchable: An Indian Life History*. California: Stanford University Press, 1999. Print.
10. Limbale, Sharankumar. *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies, and Considerations*. Ed. and trans. Alok Mukherjee. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004. Print.
11. Purushotham, K, Gita Ramaswamy, and Gogu Shyamala. Ed. *The Oxford India Anthology of Telugu Dalit Writings*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016. Print.
12. Rangrao, B. *Desperate man and Women: Ten Dalit Short Stories from India* Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2013. Print.
13. Ravi Kumar and R. Azhagarasan. Ed. *The Oxford India Anthology of Tamil Dalit Writings*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012. Print.
14. Sambharia, Ratankumar. *Thunderstorm*, Gurgaon, India: Hachette Book Publishing, 2015. Print.
15. Trivedi, Darshana. "Literature of their Own: Dalit Literary Theory in Indian Context." *Dalit Literature- A Critical Exploration*. Ed. Amarnath Prasad and M. B. Gaijan. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2007. Print.