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## DALIT AESTHETIC THEORY

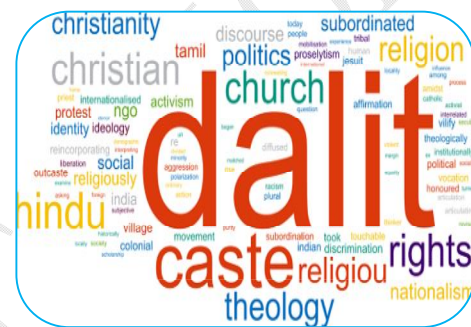
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### ABSTRACT:

*This paper discusses the different definitions of Dalit literature, the message that it gives to the people and several other aspects of Dalit literature like it's preference for purpose than just artistic appeal.*

**KEYWORDS:** Dalit literature , artistic appeal.



### INTRODUCTION

Dalit Literature is literature written by Dalit about their lives. Dalit literature forms an important and distinct part of Indian Literature. Dalit literature emerged in the 1960s in the Marathi language, and it soon appeared in the Hindi, Kannada and Telugu, Bangla and Tamil languages, through narratives such as poems, short stories, and autobiographies, which stood out due to their stark portrayal of reality and the Dalit political scene.

Dalit literature is the most powerful emerging trend in the contemporary Indian writing. It has similarities with the theories of Subaltern literature, African-American literature as well as with Problem Play and

Drama of ideas. Dalit aesthetic theory is indigenous and firmly rooted in the history, politics and culture of Dalits. In Indian literature the use of untouchability as a theme is not new. Caste consciousness is a motif in the writings of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Saint-poet Chokhamela, Kabir, Ravidas, Jyotiba Phule, Mahatma Gandhi, and Tagore. But it is the portrayal of agonizing reality and the expression of radical revolt against the age old, time-honored defective traditions, conventions and dogmas of Hindu religion used as a motif, which defines Dalit literature. Contemporary Dalit Literature portrays dreadful and humiliating events of Dalit world. It represents inequality, sorrow and misery of the

oppressed class, more than that it also tells us about the cultural conflict of the socially, economically and culturally deprived and disadvantaged group of the people and hence it requires being revolutionary.

As for the definition of Dalit Literature is concerned, we have at one hand those critics and scholars who believe that Dalit Literature is not the Literature of a particular caste, rather it deals with all those who are Dalit, who toils, and are exploited as well as oppressed. It is important here to note that Dalit literature is Integrationist. Arjun Dangle in his essay entitled, "Dalit Literature: Past, Present and Future" enumerates that Dalit Literature is not separatists and that is not only Dalit who can write it. He says that in Literature,"

experiences are not only stated but their meaning is also expressed. "Perhaps he wants to convey that literature is a representation of imaginative reality. It does not state the facts as history does. "What is Dalit literature? "Sharatchandra Muktibodh writes that it is the literature, "produced by Dalit Consciousness". He upholds that an outstanding work of Dalit Literature be born only when Dalit life would present itself from the Dalit point of view. Eleanor Zelliott differed and said that only Dalits can write Dalit Literature because it is they who have known the pangs of being born as Dalit. Ambedkar was integrationist and the above views expressed by Zelliott are incommensurate with his opinions. Ambedkar had staunch supporters among upper caste Hindus and he gladly welcomed them for the cause. Though Mahatma Gandhi and Baba Saheb both were champions for the cause of Dalits and Gandhi wrote more on untouchability than on anything, it was the Ambedkarite Literature which was known as Dalit Literature, because mere denouncing untouchability is not enough for what constitutes Dalit Literature, rather Dalit Literature is believed to be the criticism of irrational rationality of Varnsharmadharm which fosters segregation, exploitation and suppression of a community or group of people. Unlike Mahatma Gandhi, Babasaheb believed that Varnsharmadharm scheme is unnatural and it is based on inhuman ordering of society. He said, "Mr. Gandhi's attitude is that let Swaraj perish if the cost of it is political freedom of the Untouchables." A Dalit work of art may be one which pleads for annihilation of caste system and integration of Dalits in the mainstream with equal social, political, economic, cultural and religious rights and privileges as anyone in the society enjoys.

Dalit literature does not believe in art for art's sake. It observes that art should not be divorced from life; moreover it should be instrumental in social awareness and its purpose is to show the ways in which the society is moving and how to chasten the tradition. It is for this reason that many Dalit plays are Nukkar plays, which are meant to be staged on the streets, where people are available easily and in large numbers. Jyotiba Phule, the founder of Satya Shodhak Samaj, used ballads to disseminate the ideas of social reform. Phule's followers continued to use ballads and Tamasha (Folk theatre of Maharashtra) to reach to the masses. As late as 1930s and 1940s, these Tamasha troupes worked to bring before the people the unorthodox ideas of Ambedkar. Dalit theatre has similarities with the Problem Play. In a Problem play, the playwright deals with the contemporary sociological problems and the focus is on the defective systems of the society. In a Dalit play the problem lies in the defective and yet age-old, time-honored laws of Hindu religion and philosophy. The protagonists of Dalit literature reject the age old morality and develop or adopt a new realistic morality with a view to ameliorating the existing state of affairs in the society. Dalit literature is against the observance of artistic rules imposed from without. In a Dalit narrative all the elements of narrative writing-plot character, dialogue are subordinated to the central thought or idea. Instead of good stories it is the ideas which govern the characters and situations. It may be argued that any kind of ideological commitment may be inimical to the production of a good work of art. But the Dalit writers' emphatic contention is that art is justified by its sufficient service to life. For them an art which is only beautiful, but not useful, is worthless.

In Dalit literature there is a message that the Indian society has built a trap for the Dalit, which creates intolerable tensions and frustrations and, therefore, Dalit Literature wishes to transform the society by awakening the populace. Since it debunks and decries some of the norms of Hindu religion and philosophy, it smacks of blasphemy. The theory of Chaturvarna is repugnant to the Buddha and also to the Dalit writers. Dalit writers also reject the theory of sinful origin and that of karma i.e. because of the karmas or deeds of previous lives one is born a woman and the other a shudra and so on. Dalit writers cannot accept Rama as their ideal, because Rama killed Shambuka, a shudra, who was practicing penance and also because Ram deserted Sita. Dalit writers also despise the treatment meted out to Ekalavya and insults heaped on Karan. M.N. Wankhade says: Enable the new to merge easily with the stream of tradition. Dalit writers will have to find new heroes, their own Ram, Odysseus and Krishna."

## CONCLUSION

There are similarities between Dalit aesthetic theory and Marxist critical theory. Both the theories require literature to be revolutionary, didactic and doctrinaire. Dalit aesthetic theory diverges from Marxist critical theory by placing centrality on caste and not on economic class. A study of Dalit

literature and that of any other Subaltern Literature clearly demonstrate that literary theories have never predominated over the sociological analysis of Dalit texts or subaltern texts. Since the root cause of Dalit's oppression lies in the outmoded dogmas of Hindu religion, a study of Dalit literature is a very sensitive area. But we may expect to arise from this cultural conflict a harmoniously integrated society based on friendship and amity and more than that a larger travel towards a unification of the world.

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