

## **Dalit Literature and the Review of Three Dalit Autobiographies**

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### ***Abstract:***

*Dalit in India or the untouchables have been facing so many problems. Their issues are considered as human rights violation. Human rights violation of Dalit is not a new phenomenon. Most importantly women in their communities are being suffered lots of crucial problems. The successive government has been taken lots of measures for the protection of these communities in the field of education, job etc. Dalit are considered as homogeneous community in the Indian society. Literatures are considered as one of the significant methods to recognise the violation and to protect the so-called Dalit communities. It also can help them to mobilize and to bring their resentment against the atrocities to the public. Discriminations against Dalit still exist in rural areas in the private sphere, in everyday matters such as access to eating places, schools, temples and water sources. Some Dalit have successfully integrated into urban Indian society. Were cast origins are less obvious and less important to public life. In rural India, however, caste origins are more readily apparent and Dalit often remain excluded for local religious life, through some quantitative evidence suggest that its severity is fast diminishing. The marginalization of the Dalit middle classes helps neither them nor the Ambedkar movement.*

### **Keywords**

**Dalit, Untouchables, Schedule Caste, Human Rights, Dalit Literature**

**Introduction:**

The Dalit in India are discriminated on the basis of caste. Today, the discourse of the discrimination of the Dalit or Scheduled Castes are become a great issue in human right talks has made rhetorical changes. However, Dalit moved from their long-standing focus on caste-based discrimination to a border framing with more internationally acceptable terminology of discrimination based on work and decent. In India, untouchability has been abolished, and discrimination on the grounds of caste stands prohibited. In addition, there is a “directive” to the states to promote social- economic development of Dalit and other weak sections guided by their principles. During the past five decades, India has introduced several developmental programs to help and privileged sections including an extensive scheme of “affirmative actions”, encompassing reservation in education, public sector employment as well as legislative orders. However, Dalit remains at the bottom of most human development indicators.

It was the new contest that the question of caste and politics began to be articulated in the language of Identity politics by Dalit groups in different parts of the country. A common identity of the Scheduled Castes or ex-untouchable’s communities constructed a modern identity which was mobilized by a new leadership that arose from within a Dalit groups, and use the language of equality and democratic representation. In this context, the rise of Dalit, autobiographies as a source of Dalit cultural identity, become significant in India as materialise traditional conceptions of the Dalit community as ‘Untouchables’ and attempts to restate Dalit identity in positive and self-assertive terms. Now a day’s many literatures are available intellectually for the mobilization of Dalit.

Many Dalit writers have claimed a unique status for Dalit literature. In response to the established literary critics who want to subsume it under wider categories of different literatures in different Indian languages. And judge it according to criteria that they claim to be timeless and universal. As a rule, these judgements have been negative and even hostile. Dalit literatures have emerged as a reaction to these critics. Dalit writers have responded that Dalit literature appears to be propagandistic because it has emerged as part of the movement for Dalit liberation and the commitment to this movement. Dalit writers turned the tables on mainstream

literacy values by charging that the literature of the dominant group is not good literature because it has ignored the suffering and exploitation of Dalit's.

One main point of Dalit literature analysis is that it is based on real life experience of Dalit writers. Why mainstream critics have seen this as evidence of a lack of imagination in Dalit writing, suggesting that Dalit literature is nothing but reportage, Dalit writers point to the authenticity of experience as the most important characteristics of Dalit writing. Dalit writings have been viewed mainly as a response to oppression; Dalit literature is viewed as marginal. A beginning could be made if Dalit studies can help to prepare the ground for understanding the history of suffering of marginalized groups and from this standpoint critic the dominant view point. Dalit studies can contribute to make education political significant when by equipping a learner with skills to be free of fear to enable to decide on his or her own and to live a life of dignity.

Traditionally, Indian literature have either ignored untouchable or portrayed them as victims in need of saviour, as objects without voice or agency. Dalit not only left out in society but in literature too. Their accounts find no narration and articulation. Dalit related books give new direction to authors. Dalit literature is an indispensable part of our lives. Dalit literature is not just literature but it is a genuine effort for social realism that is: equality, justice and fraternity.

Dalit literature is always marked by revolt and negativism, as it is intimately linked with hopes from freedom of a group of people who, as 'Untouchables', are unfortunate bunches of social, economic and cultural inequality. There is literary movement therefore is just not a little moment but is the logo of change and revolutions where the primary aim was the liberation of Dalit. Indian Dalit in the post-independence India has sought new avenues of liberation, which was to later turn into an integral part of the Dalit theology. One of the best representatives of this new wave of Dalit liberation and literary movement was the Dalit Panther movement in Maharashtra, which made the term Dalit a household name in nearly every region of India. Further, has been witnessed before, there was also seen a rise in the literature during the 1960s.

### **Omprakash Valmiki- *Joothan: A Dalit's Life (2003)***

In the first book 'Joothan', written by Omprakash Valmiki, he gives more emphasis to Untouchability. He is upbringing as an untouchable, or Dalit in Dalit continue to face discrimination, economic deprivation, violence and ridicule. In this book he tries to tell about the life of untouchables in the cast like Chuhra. Untouchability form as part of a complex of

discriminatory practices that impose social disabilities on person by reasons of their birth in certain caste. Untouchability is a distinct Indian social institution that legitimizes and enforces practices of discrimination against people born into particular castes, and legitimizes practices that are humiliating, exclusionary and exploitative. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the fact. The refusal to allow Dalit Indian into non-dalit name and their exclusion from food sharing is so ubiquitous that it is reported from every single state studies.

‘Joothan: A Dalit’s Life’ is an important Dalit autobiography written by Omprakash Valmiki. This autobiography is written in the language of Hindi. This book was translated from the Hindi by Arun Prabha Mukherjee. He says that Omprakash Valmiki’s ‘Joothan’ is among the few books that have had a profound effect on my consciousness. ‘Joothan’ had a visceral effect on Arun Prabha because in writing his life story of being born in the Chuhra caste and growing up in Barla in Northern India, Valmiki spoke of the realities and contradictions of the society. ‘Joothan’ is one among a body of Dalit writing that is unified by an ideology, an agenda, and a literary aesthetic. It provides an apt introduction to this newly emerging school of writing, which is not just school of writing but sees itself as part of a social movement for equality and justice.

In ‘Joothan’, Valmiki says “we need an on-going struggle and a consciousness of struggle a consciousness that brings revolutionary change both in the outside world and in our hearts, a consciousness that leads the process of social change”. Valmiki tells a riveting story of growing up in a village in the newly independent India. It is a story of survival of oppression as grievous as slavery or apartheid and of victory as the author get an education and learns to embrace his identity and become a spokesman for his community.

Omprakash Valmiki’s ‘Joothan’ an autobiographical account of his birth and upbringing as an untouchable, or Dalit in the newly independent India of the 1950’s, is one of the first portrayal of Dalit life in North India from an insider's perspective. Joothan literally means scraps of food left on a plate, destined for the garbage or for the family pet in middle class urban home. It is related to the word Joothan which means polluted and such scraps are characterized as Joothan only if someone else eats them. India's untouchables have been forced to accept and eat Joothan for their subsistence for centuries. The word encapsulates the pain humiliation and poverty of this community which has lived at the bottom of India’s social pyramid for millennia. Although untouchability was legally abolished in the constitution of the newly independent India in 1949, Dalit continue to face discrimination, economic deprivation, violence and ridicule.

The title encapsulates the pain humiliation and poverty of Valmiki's community which not only had to rely on Joothan but also relished it. Valmiki gives a detailed description of collecting, preserving and eating Joothan. His memories of being assigned to guard the drying Joothan from crows and chickens and of his relishing the dried and reprocessed joothan burn him with renewed pain and humiliation in the present. The word actually carries a lot of historical baggage. Both Ambedkar and Sandhi advised untouchables to stop accepting joothan. Ambedkar an indefatigable documenter of atrocities against Dalit (and an untouchable himself) shows how the high caste villagers could not tolerate the fact that Dalit did not want to accept their joothan anymore and threatened them with violence if they refused it.

Valmiki is one of the lowest castes in North India. He also feels exploitation within the same caste that he belongs. So he wrote the book 'Joothan' and to show people about the living conditions, status and the problems of the Dalit community and to mobilize them.

**Baby Kamble- *The Prisons We Broke (2008)***

In this book, Baby Kamble emphasises about the caste and also about the patriarchal society. One of the specialities of this book is, this was the first Dalit literature which is written by a Dalit woman. This book provides a graphic insight into the expressive, caste and patriarchal tenets of the Indian society. Dalit protest and struggle, and for the violence that Dalit encounter when they refuse to submit to the humiliation and exploitation that they get from upper castes. However, in actual historical practice economic and social status tended to coincide. There was thus a fairly close correlation between social status and economic status while the low-castes were almost always of low economic status. Strict separation and strict hierarchy these are the fundamental aspect of the caste system. Every caste is rigidly separated from every other caste. And intermarriage, interdining--- all are prohibited across all caste boundaries.

Studies of women in early Indian history have tended to focus on what is broadly term as the 'status of women' which in turn has led to a concentration of attention on a limited set of questions such as marriage law, property rights and rights relating to religious practices, normally viewed indices of status. Most of the patriarchal system was followed by the Brahminical community. Caste hierarchy and gender hierarchy are the organising principle of the Brahminical social order and despite their close interconnections neither scholars of the caste system nor feminist scholars have attempted to analyse the relationship between the two.

The relation between castes and gender, focusing what is possible the central factor for the subordination of the lower castes by the upper castes.

Jina Amucha, the Marathi original of 'The Prisons We Broke', is a milestone in the history of Dalit writing in Marathi. It is probably the first autobiography by a Dalit woman, not only in Marathi, but also in Indian language. Like most Dalit autobiographies, 'The Prison We Broke' is an expression of protest against the inhuman conditions of existence of which the Hindu caste system has subjected the Dalit for household of years. There exists a long Marathi tradition of protest writing against the caste system. This was translated from Marathi by Maya Pandit.

Another distinctive feature of this work is a long interview with Baby Kamble, where she discusses her personal life or work and raises many issues related to women and patriarchy, family and violence, problems encountered by Dalit women in the articulation of their experiences and in political struggles. A singular important aspect of Jina Amucha is Baby Kamble's Dalit feminist critique of patriarchy. She graphically describes the physical and psychological violence women have to undergo in both the public and private spheres. Baby Kamble demonstrates how caste and patriarchy coverage to perpetuate exploitative practices against women. It is here that the urge to define the self becomes most evident in women.

'The Prisons We Broke' provides a graphic insight into the oppressive caste and patriarchy tenets of the Indian society, but nowhere does the writing descend to self-pity. Poverty was an unresolved problem among the Mahars. They were facing to eat leftovers. The state bhakris and the rotten rotis were their common food. Upper caste considered them as the dirt in the garbage where others throw away their waste materials. The upper caste brahmins wiped away all the human qualities from the Mahars and converted them into beasts. They were enclosed in dark cells, and their hands and food were in the chains of slavery and they thought that it is their duty to work for their masters and they ever had complaints and they lead a very satisfactory life. They eat the leftovers and work content and they accepted their faith as part of their life. They considered themselves as untouchables. Generation after generation the Mahars served their masters very obediently. The upper caste community threw abuses at the Mahars, if they did not fall at the feet of their masters or if they did not give the way to their masters when the masters came across in their way.

In the last part of her book she talked about the responsibility of the present society. Even now discrimination is not completely wiped out from our society. There are a lot of villages which should be brought into the light of mainstream. The educated people should

work for them. In order to understand the Dalit women, need to talk differently. It is necessary to delineate both, the internal and the external factors that have beared on this phenomenon. But this claim of Dalit women activists do not mean a celebration of plural practices of feminism. But focusing on certain external factors do not provide access to the complex reality of Dalit women. It is not only in the political arena that, the Dalit women face exclusion. In cultural field, for instance, Dalit women have criticized their male counterparts from dominating the literally scenes. Dalit male writers do not take serious notes of the literary output of Dalit women and tend to dismissive of it.

**Balbir Madhopuri- *Changiya Rukh* (2010)**

The book 'Changiya Rukh' is a famous book which shows about the notion that caste is not no par with race appears to be untenable. In fact, caste-based discrimination is one of the worst forms of racism because it is practised against one's own countrymen. This book gives a powerful commentary about the Indians subaltern section of the population.

Another speciality of this book is it is concentrated the Dalit in Punjab. Untouchability in Punjab is unique, as the Brahminical tradition of social stratification has never taken deep root in the region. The word Brahman did not carry a sacerdotal connotation in Punjab. The diminution of brahmins status in Punjab by Jats may have also diminished the importance of the purity or pollution practice to the benefits of Dalit. 'Changiya Rukh' is an autobiography written by Balbir Madhopuri in the language of Punjabi and this book was translated by Tripti Jain. The autobiography translated to English and the name is 'Against the Night'. The essence of this work is to explain the dalit heritage and culture to contemporary India and to the future and to both depict the poverty amongst the Dalit and expose the cruel reality of the oppression they suffer at every step.

As educated Dalit, he realised that Dalit should start telling their own stories. Any recollection of the past by a Dalit who had progressed in life and moved out of his village was bound to be a painful exercise. But the social exclusion and insult of being treated as unclean and polluted on grounds of birth was a kind of emotional violence reserved for Dalit's. This autobiography therefore is also a strong critic of caste and untouchability. In the traditional caste hierarchy the ritual status of those at the bottom of the pyramid was that of physical impurity as against the purity of the upper caste. In theory, untouchability was abolished at India's independence, and it practice in any form become a criminal offence. The term Dalit has come to replace the term Harijan, as an ideological alternative to the legal term, Schedule

Caste. The Dalit have been the target of obnoxious human right violations, caste atrocities, social boycotts and police abuse. Amazingly, even the judiciary was not immune to caste prejudice.

There is a huge gap between the moral values inscribed in laws and institutions of governance and social practices. Under the impact of liberalisation whom there has been a retreat of the state from its constitutional moral commitments, and when civil society, yielding, to consumerism and self-gratification, appears to make a mockery of public good, Dalit continue to feel deprived and apprehensive about the future.

In 'Changiya Rukh', the author documents the inner turmoil to which dalits are reduced whenever they have to conceal their caste identity. We observe instances of how, sometimes the Dalit people themselves internalize the view of caste- Hindu society and develop a feeling of inferiority. Simultaneously, Balbir reveals how he was upset with his Hindu- sounding surname that he dropped it and instead took up the name of his birth place Mandhopur. By expunging one identity, and taking on another, he succeeds in rejecting an entire history of oppression.

Madhopuri uses the metaphor of 'Changiya Rukh' to describe the Dalit lives, robbed from traditions and slashed and dwarfed by the society. This book is a reflection of Indian society, customs and social order. The author has used his literary skill very nicely words are interwoven gently, prose reads like poetry. The events are described in a well manner and catch the imagination of reader. The humiliation of Dalit is a bolt on any civilized society but this humiliation does not look like that sort of thing due to the response of Indian society. Madhopuri's narrative of his struggle is not merely a record of the subjective perception of a Dalit. It opens a window to the objective conditions that existed in the past, as well as to the social relations that have been changing after India's independence. The new generation of Dalit have learnt to confront injustice with reason and with a sense of confidence. Madhopuri wants Dalit to raise their status by the individual effort but at the same time suspects that an individualistic mobility syndrome negatively impacts their desire collective struggle for justice and dignity. Madhopuri is dilemma is that while he sees his identity in his dalithood, his Ad Dharma caste, he yet looks forward to a kind of social change whereby an individual would not be identified by his caste.

## **Conclusion:**



There are three main approaches to study the problems of Dalit--- the Neo Classical Approach, the Marxist Approach and the Ambedkar Approach. The Neo Classical Approach focused on the caste system and economic backwardness of the Dalit. They argue that the hereditary is the basis of caste system. It prohibits the progress in the division of labour and mobility in the society. Therefore, the lowest rank in the caste hierarchy affects the social mobility and progress of Dalit. Hence the Scheduled Castes are continuing as economic backward.

The Marxist approach attributed in the alienation, ownership of production is the reason for the economic backwardness. In Ambedkar's views economic backwardness of Scheduled Castes is associated with the caste system and untouchability. He says that the backwardness is prevailed because of the continuation of caste system in society. He says that the formal mechanism help abolished caste system for example, constitutional provisions and various laws passed by the government, but it is continuing in the minds of men. In short, Ambedkar argument is that the state failed to wipe out the root of caste from the minds of society.

By analysing these three famous both, it can be communicated that Dalit are facing various political, religious and cultural problems from their own caste and also from the other upper caste. The three books are written in different ways. Literatures are not only from the English languages but also from the other languages like Punjabi, Marathi etc. 'Joothan' and 'Changiya' Rukh are the two books written by male, but the same time The Prisons We Broken by a female. So, that book has more important than the other two. Another speciality we can see that is, these three writers are Dalit's and they write about their experience in the life. The problems they faced from their own caste. The main problems are based on caste, class and gender. The main problem of female is the system of patriarchy. But these Dalit writers got the courage to express their ideas. The main aim of these writers is to mobilize the Dalit and try to make equality in all fields. Through these writings society got an idea about their community and their problems. So, through that they get many help from the society and government for their upliftment.

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