



## Dalit Literature in India : A Critical Study

*Dalit word was used in the 1930s as a Hindi and Marathi translation of 'depressed classes' a term the British used for what are now called the scheduled castes. In 1970s the 'Dalit panther' revived the term and expanded its reference to include scheduled tribes poor peasants, women and all those being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion. Dalit is a symbol of revolution. The motive of Dalit literature is the liberation of Dalits. Dalit struggle against casteist tradition has a long history. In modern times because of the legacy of Mahatma Phule and Dr. Ambedkar, Dalit literature got impetus in Maharashtra. But before the name came into being in the 1960s such people as Baburao Bagul, Bandhu Madhav, Shankarrao Kharat were already Creating Dalit literature. Dalit literature questioned the mainstream literary theories and upper caste ideologies and explored the neglected aspects of life. **Key Words** : Dalit, Dalit panther, Exploited, Liberation, Impetus & Legacy.*

**DR. NIRLAY. R. PETKAR**

### **I**ntrouction :

Dalit literature was the writings that are about Dalits. Dalit (oppressed or broken) is not a new word. Apparently, it was used in the 1930s as a Hindi and Marathi translation of 'depressed classes' a term the British used for what are now called the scheduled castes. In 1970s the 'Dalit panthers' revived the term and expanded its reference to include scheduled tribes poor peasants, women and all those being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion. So Dalit is not a caste. It is a symbol of change and revolution.

The primary motive of Dalit literature is the liberation of Dalits. Dalit struggle against casteist tradition has a long history. For example in kannada, it goes back to the first vachana poet of the 11th century, Chennaiah, the cobbler. The 12th century Dalit saint Kalavve Challenged the upper castes in the following words.

“Those who eat goats, fowl and tiny fish. Such, they call caste people. Those who eat the sacred cow. That showers frothing milk for Shiva: such, they call out- castes.”

In modern times, because of the legacy of Mahatma Phule Dalit literature got impetus in Maharashtra. But before the name came into being in the 1960s, such people as Baburao Bagul Bandhu Madhav, Shankarrao Kharat were already creating Dalit literature. In its formal form it sprouted out of a progressive movement called little Magazine which was a kind of rebellious manifestation of the educated youth of those days against the establishment. Those Dalit youths found inspiration in the movement of

blocks in the distant land of North America, their black literature and Black Panther become the role models of sorts for them. This protest gained its first expression in the form of a new literature called Dalit Literature.

Poems short stories, novels and autobiographies written by Dalit writers provided useful insights on the question of Dalit identity. Now the subaltern communities found a new name by coming together with the perspective 'Dalit is dignified' thereby rejecting the sub-human status imposed on them by the Hindu social order.

The important Dalit writers are : Namdeo Dhasal, Rautray, Rabi Singh Basudev Sunani, Bama, Mahashweta Devi, Abhimani Poomani Imayam, Marku, Mangal Rathod, Neerave Patel, Perumal, Murugan, Palamalai, Sudhakar D. Gopi and others.

While dealing with the trends of Dalit Literature, the writer will make an humble attempt to point out the core issues of its ideology. In this context it can be said that dalit literature questioned the mainstream literary theories and upper caste ideologies and explored the neglected aspects of life. Dalit literature is experience based. This anubhava (experience) takes precedence over 'anumana' (speculation). This to Dalit writers, history is not illusionary or 'unreal as Hindu metaphysical theory may make one to believe. That is why authen city and liveness have become hallmarks of Dalit literature. These writers make use of the language of the out- castes and under-privileged in Indian society. Shame, anger, sorrow and indomitable hope are the stuff of Dalit literature. Because of the anger against the

*Assistant Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru College, Wadi, Nagpur ( Maharashtra)*

age old oppression, the expression of the Dalit writers have become sharp.

In their search for alternatives Dalit writers have rediscovered the low caste saint poets of the Bhakti movement. Even they found relevance in Buddhism. Referring to folklore, they make an assertion that Dalits were members of an ancient primitive society and were uprooted by the alien Brahmanical civilization. These writers make a fervent plea As Arjun Dangle the Marathi Dalit writer put it "Even the sun needs to be changed."

Thus the contribution of Dalit literature has been immense :

(i) First and foremost it effectively threatened the Brahmanic hegemony from literature.

(ii) Second is conscentized Dalit masses for assertion protest and mobilization.

(iii) Third is stirred up thinking in Dalit intellectuals and catalyzed creation of organic intellectuals of Dalits.

(iv) Fourth, given that the level of literacy been particularly low among Dalit.

The emergence of Dalit literature when both the writers and readers are mostly Dalit is itself an evidence of a profound change taking place in India society.

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( 1 ) शोध-पत्र 1500-1700 शब्दों से अधिक नहीं होना चाहिए।

( 2 ) हिन्दी एवं मराठी माध्यम के शोधपत्रों को कृतिदेव 10 (Kruti Dev 010) में टाईप करवाकर 'पेजमेकर 6.5' में भेजें।

( 3 ) पंजाबी माध्यम के शोधपत्रों को अनमोल लिपि (AnmolLipi) या अमृत बोली (Amritboli) या जॉय (Joy) में टाईप करवाकर 'पेजमेकर 6.5' में भेजें।

( 4 ) अंग्रेजी माध्यम के शोधपत्र टाईम्स न्यू रोमन (Times New Roman), एरियल फॉन्ट (Arial) में टाईप करवाकर 'पेजमेकर 6.5' या 'माइक्रोसाफ्ट वर्ड' में भेजे जा सकते हैं।

(4) शोधपत्र की विधि - ( 1 ) शीर्षक ( 2 ) एबस्ट्रेक्ट ( 3 ) की-वर्ड्स ( 5 ) प्रस्तावना/प्रवेश ( 5 ) उद्देश्य ( 6 ) शोध परिकल्पना ( 7 ) शोध प्रविधि एवं क्षेत्र ( 8 ) सांख्यिकीय तकनीक ( 9 ) विवेचन या विश्लेषण ( 10 ) सुझाव ( 11 ) निष्कर्ष एवं ( 12 ) संदर्भ ग्रंथ सूची।

( 6 ) संदर्भ ग्रंथ सूची इस प्रकार दें -

#### For Books :

(1) Name of Writer, "Name of Book", Publication, Place of Publication, Year of Publication, Page Number/numbers.

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#### Web references :

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( 7 ) गुजराती माध्यम के शोधपत्र हरेकृष्णा ( Harekrishna ), टेराफॉन्ट वरुण ( Terafont Varun ), टेराफॉन्ट आकाश ( Terafont Aaksah ) में टाईप करवाकर 'पेजमेकर 6.5' में भेजे जा सकते हैं।

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## Use of Folklores in Zora Neale Hurston's Novels : An Overview

*Zora Neale Hurston's major concern in her novels has been to give a true picture of the African American people and their community. Hurston uses her writings as a means to break the stereotypes that have been existing in white American society. Hurston uses African American folklores in her novels. Her works celebrate black life and black folk culture, which is manifested in perhaps all of her works. Hurston also uses folklores to protest against white oppression. By using folklore she debunks myths and the falsified images of African Americans. She successfully shows that African American have a rich and varied culture just like whites and in some cases even better than them. In this ways she repudiates the white portrayal of African Americans. She uses folklore traditions of the dozens, signifying, trickster tale, animal tales, storytelling, telling 'lies in her works All these play a great part in her plot and narrative structure of the novels.*

**DR. NIDHI MISHRA**

Zora Neale Hurston's major concern in her novels has been to give a true picture of the African American people and their community. Hurston uses her writings as a means to break the stereotypes that have been existing in white American society. She shows that African Americans have a life, to live other than whining about their oppression and cutting a sorry figure for themselves in front of the whole world. In her inimitable style she has tried to show experiences of the African American people. Hurston not merely probed these issues, but actually transcended them. This made her a versatile writer.

Hurston uses African American folklores in her novels. Her works celebrate black life and black folk culture, which is manifested in perhaps all of her works. Sharon L. Jones writes in this regard, "Chief among her many contributions to American arts and letters was her appreciation for and celebration of black oral tradition. By re telling black folk stories, which often focus on animals and common people, and by presenting the beauty and complexity of dialect of the black vernacular, or African American English, Hurston was implicitly validating a literary tradition that had long been considered secondary.

More than that, she presented a sense of voice and perspective in her writing that made it nuanced and memorable. Many of her literary and anthropological texts reveal her interest in promoting the oral tradition among African Americans" (x).

Folklore is a major element in Hurston's novels. Explaining folklores Robert Hemenway writes:

Folklore consists of unwritten traditions which cause people to perform in familiar ways, the performance of each generation and each individual contributing to the tradition from within the security of its familiarity. It is behavior replicated through history, and it reflects the common life of the mind existing at a level other than that of high or formal culture. Formal culture grows primarily from the presumption of the written heritage, traditional culture arises primarily out of the communicative expectations of given group. (86)

Hurston's novels are imbued with African American folklore. Her keen interest in folklores is due to her being a successful and brilliant anthropologist. Hurston expresses her interest in folklores and how they are important in an African Americans' life.

Hurston knew well that African Americans have been dehumanized and their culture dismissed as primitive and often caricatured by whites. Hurston, through her works tries to affirm the importance and validity of African American folklore as a basic framework on which she bases her plots. *Jonah's Gourd Vine* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* are based on folklore traditions are integral to the plot. Even in *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, Hurston dares to induce African American folklores in a Judeo Christian Old Testament story giving it altogether different connotations.

Hurston also uses folklores to protest against white oppression. By using folklore she debunks myths and the falsified images of African Americans. She successfully shows that African American have a rich and varied culture just like whites and in some cases even better than them. In this ways she repudiates the white portrayal of African Americans. She uses folklore traditions of the dozens, signifying, trickster tale, animal tales, storytelling, telling lies in her works All these play a great part in her plot and narrative structure of the novels.

Hurston also uses African American dialect as narrative mode in her novels. The characters in her novels, except that of Seraph on the Suwanee speak in rich African American dialect. The characters speak in black idioms, proverbs, invectives which express African American oral traditions. The characters and the settings of the novels are steeped in African American folk culture. It is in Jonah's Gourd Vine that we can see Hurston's love of folklores and black oral traditions at its pinnacle. In Jonah's Gourd Vine, throughout the novel Hurston has used traditional African American idioms and expression. The characters use idioms and phrases which straightaway come from, rural black people, "talkin' at de big gate" (15) meaning boasting behind the back of a powerful person; smell his self" (41). Signifying is another folkloric device that Hurston has used abundantly in Jonah's Gourd Vine. Signifying is an important part in African American culture. Signifying may be a verbal duel or encoded message which contains an element of indirection. John signifies on his step father, and Lucy signifies on John for his lechery. In Their Eyes, Janie revolting against Joe's abuse, finally signifies on him and he dies. Hurston also uses folk epithets like "strumpet", "buzzard", "wench." In her novels.

Trickster traditions are an integral part of African American folklore. Hurston was well aware of trickster tradition and has induced it in her works. "Hurston was also well aware of the trickster's position in world in world folklore from her studies at Columbia and used all versions of these stories in her work" (Lowe 5). In Jonah's Gourd Vine, Hurston shows resemblance between John Pearson and heroic human trickster Jack or High John de Conqueror who can trick and surpass anyone, even God. In Their Eyes, Janie herself plays the role of trickster and fools her two abusive husbands Logan Killicks and Joe Starks. In Moses, Moses tricks the Egyptian Pharaoh to his doom. Hurston has also used other type of folkloric traditions in her novels, such as Dozens in Jonah's and Their Eyes. African Americans games and Joking Relationships are evident in Jonah's Gourd vine between John and his best friend Hambo.

Many critics enumerate the flaws in Hurston's novels. They allege that Hurston could not sustain the themes of her works till the end and that there is an abundance of folklore which overshadows the plot. There is a confusion in the novels and Hurston's themes are so intertwined that they seem to be chaotic at times. However, these flaws do

not hamper is the assessment and joy her works give. Hurston's achievement is in the peculiarity and originality of her concepts her works are a testimony to her wide range of interests and her complex personality. Reading and rereading Hurston's novels each times gives new insights about her and her works. It is impossible to categorize her work in any water-tight compartment, nor can her works be fit into a pigeon-hole. Her works are a vast array of both personal and communal experiences.

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