



Exploring The Rise Of Dalit Writers Facing Different Forms Of Discrimination

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Abstract

This scholarly inquiry provides a thorough examination of Dalit literature in the context of post-colonial Indian culture, exploring its dual role as a reflection of systematic inequalities and a catalyst for revolutionary social change. The inquiry explores the interconnected fields of literary studies, social theory, and post-colonial critique. It involves a thorough examination of primary texts, critical essays, and socio-political contexts to uncover the deeply ingrained patterns of social exclusion and caste-based marginalisation that Dalit literature expresses.. This process reveals the inherent divisions within the seemingly cohesive story of Indian national identity. It achieves this by utilising distinctive thematic viewpoints and narrative strategies that diverge from the conventional standards of mainstream Indian literature, establishing it as an alternative narrative that challenges dominant narratives. Concurrently, the study argues that Dalit literature has a liberating power that goes beyond its descriptive purposes. The argument posits that Dalit literature serves as an ideological tool that mobilises collective consciousness and fosters grassroots mobilisation by giving a voice to the subaltern and challenging normative literary conventions. As a result, it functions not just as a passive storage of societal complaints but also as an active catalyst for significant social transformation. This academic project seeks to enhance the existing academic literature by connecting the epistemic divide between literary criticism and social theory. It specifically focuses on the intricate relationship between Dalit literature and its socio-political consequences in present-day India.

Keywords: Dalit literature, marginalization, exploitation, class struggle, injustice

Introduction

The analysis of Dalit literature in post-colonial India provides a valuable perspective to explore the intricate dynamics of marginalisation and expression. Dalit literature has emerged as a means of resistance and a counter-narrative to the prevailing ideologies that have historically marginalised the Dalit group, originating from the society periphery. The primary objective of this collection of work is to serve as a platform for marginalised individuals, utilising personal experiences as a means to question and contest prevailing dominant systems. The concept of 'voice' in this context goes beyond simple expression; it comprises a claim of identity, autonomy, and inclusion, offering a comprehensive portrayal of Dalit experiences that challenge and destabilise societal conventions.

After the conclusion of British rule in 1947, India had a post-colonial era characterised by endeavours to construct a nation, which entailed the creation of democratic institutions and constitutional requirements. Although these endeavours were purportedly aimed at promoting diversity, the actual outcome has fallen significantly short of the desired outcome. Discrimination rooted in caste has endured, resulting in the continued marginalisation of the Dalit population across various domains, including education, job, and social standing. Dalit literature arises as a crucial reaction to the systemic marginalisation experienced by marginalised communities, providing a subaltern viewpoint that questions prevailing literary and social conventions. The literary expression of the Dalit community challenges the reductionist inclinations that relegate them to the status of simple victims or statistical figures.

The objective of this research paper is to perform a comparative analysis of influential works in Dalit literature, intending to examine how these literary works address the themes of marginalisation and voice within the intricate socio-political context of post-colonial India. The study aims to reveal the intricate methods through which Dalit literature expresses resistance and identity by analysing a variety of works across diverse genres, styles, and thematic areas.

The study aims to achieve two primary objectives. Firstly, it is imperative to analyse how Dalit literature engages with the notion of marginalisation, encompassing social, economic, and psychological dimensions. This involves analysing how authors explore the complex systems that sustain marginalisation, ranging from biases based on caste to inequalities in the economy. Furthermore, this study aims to examine the narrative tactics utilised by Dalit authors in the construction of their voices and the expression of resistance.

Research Objectives

This analysis aims to explore:

1. The concept of marginalisation
2. Conduct a comparative examination of seminal literary works of Dalit literature
3. Determine narrative techniques
4. Provide a framework within the context of post-colonial Indian society.

Research Methodology

The research study "Exploring the Rise of Dalit Writers Facing Different Forms of Discrimination" employs a comprehensive comparative textual analysis as its methodological technique. The primary literary works chosen for examination in this study include Bama's *Karukku* and Dilip Chitre's *Namdeo Dhasal: A Poet of the Underworld* (translated). The selection of these writings is based on their critical acclaim, social relevance, and the wide range of experiences they encompass, making them exemplary examples of Dalit literature.

To analyse the problems of marginalisation and voice, every text will undergo meticulous examination and critical analysis. This study will thoroughly analyse both topic aspects and storytelling strategies. The analysis will focus on the themes that depict the marginalisation of Dalits in each work, namely examining caste prejudice, economic disparities, and social exclusion. Concurrently, the research will examine the narrative strategies utilised by the authors, including language utilisation, structural decisions, and literary devices, to determine their impact on the representation of Dalit perspectives within the work.

The research also utilises an interdisciplinary framework by including perspectives from sociology, history, and political science to enhance the qualitative examination of the literary work. By adopting this approach, it will guarantee that the texts are comprehended not just in their literary aspects, but also within the wider socio-political and cultural frameworks of post-colonial India. Furthermore, the study's comparative approach seeks to uncover similarities and differences across the selected texts, thereby providing a comprehensive perspective on the portrayal of Dalits in literature.

Discussion

A Dalit identity refers to the identity of an individual who has experienced multiple displacements within a single lifetime. The individual in question is a perpetually devalued individual, a feeble and arduous member of a subterranean community, the marginalised. Being a Dalit in our nation entails a significant burden that is not easily borne. To alleviate this burden and emerge as a prominent figure, one must possess a well-defined identity and a voice that resonates with others. This endeavour necessitates considerable fortitude and determination.

The life of Namdeo Laxman Dhasal serves as a prime example of his extraordinary strength and power. During his formative years, he resided as a Mahar in a little village known as Pur, located in the Khed taluk near Pune, India. To improve his standard of living, he relocated to Mumbai with his family.

Namdeo's humanity and inner battle were demonstrated as he was uprooted from the countryside and subsequently relocated to the urban hub of Mumbai "a city of the most extreme and dehumanizing forms of exploitation" (Chitre). He derived sustenance from this noxious waste and matured into the 'poet of the underworld, a humble messiah, and a voice of the impoverished'. As a Dalit in Mumbai, he had feelings of alienation, dejection, and inner conflict as he expresses,

This soil treated me as an outsider;

This air turned its back on me;

What took pity on me in the end was the sky

that has no limits. (Dhasal)

The poetry of Dhasal, which emerged in the late 1960s, chronicles the various challenges and transformations experienced by the Dalit community. He commenced his writing during a time characterised by numerous uprisings, demonstrations, and resentment towards the entire system, and he persisted in writing until its conclusion. All of his endeavours were directed towards challenging societal injustices and

disparities. Upon reading his poetry, one perceives that it transcends the confines of the 1970s and 1980s era and holds similar significance in contemporary times. As per the findings of Dilip Chitre, “The Dalit and the lumpen became Namdeo’s central preoccupation as a creative writer, a political thinker and an activist”.

Bama's *Karukku* portrays marginalisation as an all-encompassing phenomenon that affects Dalits in all aspects of life. The utilisation of first-person narrative techniques by the author serves to establish an autobiographical ambience that effectively encapsulates the unfiltered nature of being within the periphery of societal norms. The marginalisation in this context encompasses not only economic dimensions but also cultural and religious spheres. Bama highlights the limitations imposed on Dalits within the domain of religious observances, so exemplifying the process by which societal prejudice is elevated and institutionalised within the world of spirituality. In addition, Bama explores the issue of gender-based marginalisation, offering a perspective to analyse the distinct obstacles that Dalit women encounter, which further exacerbate their social and economic exclusion.

Upon analysing these literary works, it becomes evident that there exists a recurring thematic centrality: the intrinsic humanity of the Dalit protagonists is consistently undermined as a result of structural marginalisation. The narratives depict economic marginalisation through the portrayal of precarious living situations, low-paying jobs, and limited access to resources. The texts also expose the social exclusion that hinders the movement and autonomy of Dalits, thereby ensnaring them in a continuous cycle of marginalisation. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that these works do not solely provide a devoid portrayal of victims. Each narrative also encompasses several manifestations of resistance, including the claim of identity, the reclamation of speech, and the strategic manoeuvring of socio-economic limitations.

Hence, these literary pieces function as both a reflective surface and a lens: a reflective surface that portrays the harsh truths of Dalit marginalisation, and a lens that provides a look into the fortitude and empowerment that confront this marginalisation. This study offers a full knowledge of the portrayal of marginalisation in Dalit literature through a sophisticated comparative examination of major works. This analysis sheds light on the intricate dynamics between economic, social, and educational elements that shape the phenomenon of marginalisation, thereby making a valuable contribution to the wider scholarly conversation surrounding this topic.

Dhasal employed poetry as a tool to advance his class struggle. He believed that creating poetry had the potential to instigate a political and social transformation in society. He employed language as if it were tangible projectiles and asserted that these projectiles should not be squandered, akin to projectiles fired from a toy firearm. He possessed complete consciousness of his words when he composed these lines in his poetry *Cruelty*:

I am the venereal sore in the private part of language,

The living spirit looking out

Of hundreds of thousands of sad, pitiful eyes

Has shaken me.

I am broken by the revolt exploding inside me

Through a careful analysis of the initial two chapters of *Karukku*, one can discern the author's intentional incorporation of thematic elements and narrative techniques. The person's use of language extends beyond their actions in Tamil and provides a valuable perspective for those who use Tamil as their main form of communication. Bama's *Karukku* explores a fascinating element in its language, specifically the influence of the Catholic Church. As per Lakshmi Holmstrom, Bama utilises the language commonly used in mainstream Catholicism instead of the specialised vocabulary employed by theologians. A significant portion of Dalit literature that is translated often carries a testimonial quality. The writers' firsthand experiences seem to add credibility and literary value in the eyes of translators and publishers. Indeed, individuals who face oppression often use writing to highlight their quest for "equality, freedom, and solidarity." However, it is worth mentioning that autobiography is not the only way they express themselves. A well-known creative strategy used by Dalit writers in a variety of languages is purposeful attention to the language itself, questioning both accepted linguistic and literary standards. Bama's work falls under the category of Dalit literature. The aim of this is to bring attention to the realities and challenges faced by women, especially Dalit women, in present-day India. *Karukku* provides a comprehensive account of the challenges and indignities faced by Bama, a woman from the Christian Dalit community. Dalit literature vividly portrays the lived realities of marginalised communities and is fueled by a strong sense of purpose. Bama's main goal in her writing, as she expresses, is to share her personal experiences with others. The writer utilises writing as a strategic tool to champion the rights of marginalised individuals. Consequently, she showcases her resilience and introspection through her writing. She employs the language of the marginalised community. She incorporates elements of their oral tradition, such as phrases, proverbs, folk songs, and ritual songs, to give voice to the people she portrays.

This autobiographical narrative, with its firsthand account of a person's life, should be acknowledged as a unique literary genre that serves as a testament to truth, a critique of society, and a masterfully crafted piece of literature. It deserves to be appreciated just as much as any important work of fiction. *Karukku* explores the journey of a woman who discovers the profound impact of her Dalit identity on her Christian beliefs. She understands the importance of addressing discriminatory practices within the Church and society, which is made even more difficult by her gender. *Karukku* embodies a unique style of literature, comparable to the evolution of a novel literary form. The narrator contemplates the diverse occurrences of her life repeatedly, examining them from numerous viewpoints. Lakshmi Holmstrom's introduction suggests that Bama categorises the events in her life into many themes, such as Work, Games and Recreation, Education, Belief, and so on (p. vii). Observing the ripples that occur when multiple stones are thrown into a pond is

akin to observation. Whenever Bama contemplates her life, she experiences the emergence of fresh waves that swiftly traverse the fabric of her existence, prompting her to evaluate a significant portion of her life rather than solely focusing on the consequences of a solitary event.

Bama's *Karukku* delves into a comprehensive exploration of the Dalit community, offering insights into the Church and shedding light on the various challenges experienced by her people. Her gender and religion play a significant role in her experience of feeling marginalised as a Dalit individual. The author delves into the lived experiences of Dalit women within her community, urging them to assert their identity and strive for freedom. The interplay between her gender and Dalit identity brings a layer of intricacy, as her distinct Dalit traits complicate her position as both a woman and a feminist. *Karukku* explores the complex issues of exploitation faced by the Dalits, particularly the Paraiyars in Tamil Nadu, within the context of the Church. A significant aspect of Dalit conversions to other religions is the collective nature of their conversion process. In this process, the entire community, based on their caste, chooses to relocate to a specific region. Unfortunately, their caste identity is carried over to the new religion. Unfortunately, individuals who have transitioned from higher castes seem to hold onto their biases based on caste even after adopting a new religious identity.

Dhasal's poetry possesses a distinct 'Dalit-ness', symbolising a self that consistently struggles and advocates for similar marginalised identities. The concept of 'Dalit-ness' encompasses not just the marginalised Dalit community, but also individuals who have been deprived of their fundamental freedom to live following their preferences and choices. It is intriguing to observe how Dhasal personifies the elements of nature and holds them responsible for their involvement in the oppression of the vulnerable. He successfully challenges the casteist society by attributing blame to elements like as Sun, Moon, Water, and Air, which are mentioned in the sacred texts of Hindu culture.

Conclusion

To sum up, Dalit literature serves as a complex medium for expressing the contours of marginalisation and promoting socio-political transformation. This work provides significant and necessary perspectives on the intricate nature of identity, societal conventions, and deeply ingrained structures of subjugation that define the real-life encounters of the Dalit community in post-colonial India. These literary pieces not only depict the harsh truths of marginalisation and societal exclusion, but also shed light on the various methods of empowerment and opposition that these communities utilise. Understanding the transformative potential of Dalit literature necessitates a careful examination of its dual purpose. On one hand, it serves as a reflection tool, diligently recording the harsh facts of Dalit existence, encompassing economic hardship, social marginalisation, and educational marginalisation. These narratives possess a deep understanding of historical details and cultural genuineness, which enables them to effectively convey the intricate realities of marginalisation. Conversely, Dalit literature arises as a disruptive influence that aims to question and contest ideologies and social hierarchies well rooted. These literary works serve as sites of resistance, arguing for both individual and societal emancipation by giving voice to the voiceless and making the invisible visible.

These dual purposes are exemplified by the works analysed in this paper, namely Bama's *Karukku* and Dilip Chitre's *Namdeo Dhasal: A Poet of the Underworld*(translated). These works provide as evidence of the profound impact of literature, which can both mirror and modify societal conditions. When examining them, one may understand the complex aspects of marginalisation and the various ways in which Dalits express their opinions. Dalit literature is both as a valuable academic investigation and a powerful social evaluation, enhancing our awareness of social exclusion and opposition in present-day India.

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