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#### RETRIEVAL OF DALITS IN THE LITERARY INTERPRETATIONS OF MULTILINGUAL INDIA

#### ABSTRACT

Dalit Writings in India problematize displaced socio-historical space of marginalized, essentialized category of people belonging to caste-ridden Hindu society of India. Their multiple subjectivities reclaim semiotic literary interpretations as regards their contestations, violated and fragmented self. At the same time emerging Dalit writings have posed categorically their daily realities in context of dismemberment, disablement, deprivation, discrimination and disembodiment in the socio-cultural privileged hegemonic caste system. The writings of dalits such as *Joothen* by Om Prakash Valmiki, *Untouchables* by Mulk Raj Anand, *An Anthology of Dalit Literature* edited by Mulk Raj Anand and Eleanor Zelliot, *Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Literature* by Arjun Dangle, *The Exercise of Freedom: An Introduction to Dalit Writing* by K. Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu, *Dalit Hindu Narratives* by Manohar D. Murali, *The Oxford Anthology of Tamil Dalit Writing* by Ravikumar and R. Azhagarasan, *Black Lilies: Telugu Dalit Poetry* by K. Puroshattam, *Surviving in My World: Growing up Dalit in Bengal* by Jaideep Sarangi etc. have raised consciousness against dalits' alienation, excommunication and ideological distancing, inflicted upon them due to cultural hegemony and relativistic idea of polemic theology practised in Brahmanical Hinduism. In addition to violence done to dalits at language, socio-cultural, literary, aesthetic and political level, the marginalised discourse have addressed issues related to countering gender-caste nexus, colonialism and nationalism and last but the most important relating to identity and self-expression. Similarly dalit women's writings such as *Ants Among Elephants* by Sujtha Gidla, *Rudaali* by Mahasweta Devi, *Grip of Change* and *Taming of Women* by Sivakami, *Sangati* and *Vanmam* by Bama, Bay Kamble's *The Prison We Broke*, Urmila

Pawar's *The Weave of My Life*, Susheela Takbaure's *Revenge* articulate new found political awareness and self-respect as regards their exploitative embodiment within their marginalized community and in Hindu society. In my research paper the study aims to sensitise the autobiographical memory of a hateful past and their desire of resurging from the lost socio-historical-cultural space. The study will attempt to explore the emotional register, cathartic release of inequalities and flight from weak boundaries of marginality.

**KEYWORDS:** socio-historical-cultural space, multiple subjectivities, marginalized discourse

### *Introduction*

The question of representation by various classes and communities in India has become problematic because of the power politics amongst the number of men belonging to different communities and caste. Till date the blasphemy of caste is a superficial embodiment of Indians on sectarian and class/caste lines. As Ranjit Guha argues "politics of the people is left out in this un-historical historiography. The parallel autonomous domain of subaltern castes and groups misrepresented or erased under the overarching elite domains of historiography (Guha 4).

India is a nation of cultural diversity that identifies ethnicity with regard to religion and caste. The existence of plurality and linguistic diversity indeed reflects the melting pot in India; yet since historical times - political compulsions, cultural relativist psyche, cultural hegemony and imperialism - have been imposing rifts and disintegration in the school of thought with regard to the medium of instruction, education and opportunities and capacity building. The pedagogy of language instruction varies as regards to upper caste and Dalits. Dalits have always driven to clear discriminatory and disadvantaged division to avail English medium education in Indian society. They are detained at rural and government run schools to get educational instructions in the regional language, whereas upper caste elite get benefits of educational policies because of the privilege of policy-making in socio-historical and political context.

The colonialists during the British Raj in India attempted to regulate democratic polity in India. Subsequently, the British first tried to demarcate the functions of imperial and provincial states in this context. "To lay down the federal home rule British in 1851 through the Board of Revenue in Madras promulgated a standing order (No. 128, clause 2) by which the entry of Brahmins into the revenue department could be suitably regulated; secondly communal or proportional representation, as a norm of for recruitment of members to government services became an existing

aspect of English official policy” (Geeta & Rajadurai 133). But such process could not last long due to some discrepancies; eventually British government thought of recruiting process that seemed /proved pro-Brahmins, because non-Brahmins lacked education and experience. Thinking of home-rule, self-governance and self-development turned to be invalidated by the intellects and by the nationalists seeking freedom for India, because more than half of the total population lacked knowledge and were incapacitated to be part of national mainstream struggle due to ignorance and ignoble mindset of caste factor.

Subsequently assertive triumvirate nationalists like Bal Gangadhar Tilak from Maharashtra, Lala Lajpat Rai from Hisar and Bipin Chandra Pal from Bengal could not even defile the British attempts of divide and rule in India. Colonial rule had usurped the Brahminical order of Indian society with its imperialism. Indian subcontinent due to its illiteracy, casteism and degradation into categories, class, creed, sect, color, gender and sex became a victim to divide and rule policy of British. The zamindar of Telarpole, quoted in Varadarajulu Naidu’s book title, *The Justice Movement*, written in 1917, defended allegedly the implementation of Home Rule in India due to the below given reason. He said:

“England is responsible for the welfare and for the uplifting of the socially downtrodden silent masses who form the majority of the population of Indian. She cannot in the name of fairplay, make a present of them to the Home Rulers, like dakshina given to officiating Brahmins in a temple. If we are to Home Rule, then it will have to Home Rule in every sense, not from Home Rule enforced by British Bayonets but Brahmin Vakil rule by a posse of litigants with full liberty to the peoples of India to deal with and as may seem proper.....”(109)

Since Indian society claims communal machinations as its inherent characteristics so it has never been able to get rid of cultural tyranny of religious and eugenic order, prejudices have grappled Indian mindsets inherently; consequently a healthy public opinion and national consciousness can never prevail upon legislations.

As an economic organization caste is therefore a harmful institution in as much as it involves the subordination of man’s powers and inclinations to the exigencies of social rule (Ambedkar 264). Political ideologies and ideological influence disallow justices, law and social change. For example in Tamil Nadu, *Adi-Dravidas* (aboriginals) expressed their subversion with acts of willful

violence arming themselves with swords and knives, either to do self-flagellation or to draw attention. But politically they had instigated into violence, so that they might remain forever subjected to discrimination, violence or left ignored and deprived of their right to stand against their oppressed and depressed predicament (*New India Reader* 13.10.21). Ironically the categorization of a class as untouchables or *Adi-Dravidas* was chosen by non-Brahminical section of Indian community in Madras, in order to segregate their representation in inter-marriage, inter-dining and to “courting oppression from hands of higher castes” (Geetha & Radurai 172). Consequently historical block and political affiliations signify untouchability with reference to political consensus and colonial power; while cultural imperialists practiced it as tool to negotiate the reality of political power and to set nexus between elite upper castes, non- Brahmins and *Adi Dravidas/ pariahs*.

The politics of identity manifests contradictions in political will of the ruled and rulers; such political relationship predominately causes a fairly incendiary situation, vicious and disruptive instances of either oligarchy or communal representation. This has been the trend pre and post independent period of Indian history, because the brahminical order that comprise of government/ of all posts got flourished nepotism, favoritism consciously and their interiority manipulated alleged misfeasance (a wrong that arises from an action, wrongful use of legal authority) and malfeasance (an act of wrong doing by a public official i.e. a legal action is performed in an illegal fashion). In relation to this experienced truth and imaginative response to the historical truth many writers such as Vivekanand, Jyotiba Phule, Gandhi, Raja Rao, Mulkraj Anand, Vijay Tendulkar and Arundhati Roy have contested and debated the hegemonic presence of upper caste elites in the public sphere, who tried to appropriate caste-bound hierarchy and patriarchy and the culture of masculinity.

One of the key figures Jyotiba Phule (1827-1890) was a revolutionary reformer. The philosophy that he believed in was manifested in his activism as well as in his writing. His major works *Gulamgiri* (1873) gave a call to the lower castes to resist the exploitation and subjugation in the name of caste and overcome their hardships with the help of education.

E.V. Rama Swamy (1879-1973) popularly known as *Periyar* led the self-respect movement in Tamil Nadu. It was one of the greatest Indian anti-Brahmin movements in India, which targeted the Brahmin dominance criticizing the idol-worship. “Periyar educated the *Dravidians* and *Adi-*

*Dravidians* to bring about a cultural revolt with an aim to establish egalitarian society.” (Krishnaiah 61).

### *Social Radicalism*

The reformers and activists imagined a new civic society based on the mutuality, self respect and fraternity. They opined of *Swadharma* as a counter of *Manu dharma* that standardized hereditary difference, patriarchal identity and social hierarchy, even it propagated rules of social and sexual embodiment of bodies with regard to distance, touch, pollution, relationship and un-touchability. Therefore narratives on Dalits’ existence, entity, struggles and sovereignty, justice and equality are written with sensibility and empathy. They legitimize mutual advancement of the underprivileged sections of Hindu-caste society, instead of secular oligarchy of any class or caste.

Swami Vivekanand (1899) inquires allegedly to the stakeholders and privileged, “Who would have carried today the culture, learning, acquirements and articles of food and luxury of one end of the world to the other? None has ever the least wish that the power should pass on from the kingly to the Shudra class”. He symbolically referred to Shudra-ness as to the beast of burdenness, which is metaphorically the metaphysical entity of Indians themselves, who have been enveloped with a cloud of impenetrable darkness of slavery (in pre-independent phase of India) and in self-gratification of ghastly obscenities. According to him unless there is diffusion of racism, casteism, relativism or imperialism, there will remain enslavement and inhuman brutality. Such social irrationalities valorized the Dalit’s selfhood and gave way to vociferous and violent resistance across India, which resulted in their being given recognition and status not only in socio-ideological commitments but also their polluted representation which retrieved from religious - cultural practices from the point of intellectual-moral consensus. The understanding for their distorted picture became the beliefs and practices; reinterpret and also reconstruct the entire past in the course of self-emergence and erect a new sacred canopy.

Iyother Thassa (1845-1914) prominent paraiyar and anti-caste activist, with his new insight gathered the puzzles of history, religious myths, beliefs, practices, the general folk and oral

traditions of the subcontinent in order to add meaningful coherence through Sanskritic-Shastric Brahmanism for a new angle in relocating the representation of suppressed groups (Aloysius 212).

Mahatma Gandhi expresses the condition of India, that had started to modernize herself with the advent of British Raj. Indians had not yet abandoned the nuances of religious and irreligious in their practical real life. Indian people who began to live in humbug of modern civilization, had mobilized their body to seek protection, but it has indulged them in greed of exploitation, ignorance and difference. He said “To conquer them is your and my work” (*Hind Swaraj*, 1938). In the book entitled *Gandhi and His Critics*, B.R. Nanda writes that Gandhi was always regretful and expressed his discontent against the evils of untouchability and he even observed fasting “to block an affirmative action” planned by Britain in favour of outcastes, the so called untouchables. He undermined the centuries old caste-system and to remove the blot of untouchability from Hinduism. He never wanted segregation of untouchables on political grounds, but Gandhi disliked the dangerous structure of caste society. He preferred *Varna Ashram* that caters to the eulogy of caste in context of hereditary principle of occupation along with work division on the basis of work and strength. But at the same time he recognizes different outlook of caste as a natural order of society and that corresponds to different modes of life. In this connection Ambedkar (1891-1956) pointed out that “the Mahatma’s view of *Varna*.....makes nonsense of *Vedic Varna*. Vedic Varna and caste are two different concepts. Varna is based on the principle of each according to his worth, while caste is based on the principle each according to his birth.....If the Mahatma believes as he does in everyone following his or ancestral calling, then most certainly he is advocating the caste system and in calling of the varna system he is causing confusion ( Ambedkar; 1946). Ambedkar wanted to erase the stigma of untouchability by annihilating caste system and by providing Dalits equal socio-economic rights. According to D.R. Nagaraj in his book entitled *The Flaming Fleet and Other Essays: The Dalit Movement in India* (March, 2011), “Dalits as the whole can never attain the status achieved by their visible community which is in minority, unless there is structural change or overhauling of the entire society of which they are part”. Basically he endorses B.R. Ambedkar’s campaign to free the untouchables from severity by accepting conversion of faith and religion to save themselves from “the misfortune of being born with stigma of an untouchable” (p. 41).

### *Emergence of Self Respecters*

Barriers of language have stood between village/regional community and Sanskritic tradition, between the indigenous one and the intrusive colonial ones, between the centres of pilgrimage and the proletariats, between the western education and Indian caste system. The institutional complex of Indian society disrupts not only harmonious commonalty of interests and also it mars cultural anthropology to acquire a sense of equal opportunities and a personal sense of importance. It was Gandhi, Tagore and Nehru as modern India reformers felt that the social ideal of a nation lies in equality cultural hegemony signifying hierarchy and social domain need to be reviewed with the spirit of the age that represent the social reality of contemporary India - the contradiction between the ideal of equality and practice of inequality still remains deeply and firmly lodge in Indian society (Beteille 128).

Division and hierarchy have always been stressed as the two basic principles of caste system. It depends upon the nature of their boundaries of caste division are fairly clear in the village community as for example Brahman, Vania, Rajput, Kanbi, Carpenter, Barber, Leather-worker and so on. In the village there is a strict probation of inner-division marriage. The rules of purity and pollution and other mechanisms maintain the boundaries of division.

Rupa Vishwanath in her book '*The Pariah Problem*' quotes from the Tamil Christian magazine *Cattiyatutan* (1861) (Messenger of Truth) to explain to its readers the distinction between caste system and class order. The word *jati* (caste) denotes several levels of society (*vakuppu*) distinguished by Hindus. Throughout the world people belong to different levels. Other nations call these "class" (*antastu*, also "status"). Between the Europeans, social divisions of "class" and that which the Hindus call "caste" there is a great difference. The difference of class is an ordinary (*potu*, also "natural") distinction; whereas according to Hindus, caste was founded and created by Divine. A man can move from low class to a high class but no one can enter one caste from another. (Viswanath 53) (*Cattiyatutan* 4,).

Although caste is found in both villages and towns, but the factor of caste in town/ in urban population are based on economic and political aspects. In urban areas mostly trading class categorized as Vania, Lohana and Bhatia are found. Then the writers and educationists class

comprising of Brahmin, Kshatriyas and Kayasthas mostly are employed in bureaucracy, academia and in other elite civil jobs. Then in urban areas division of specialized artisans, craftsmen and servants such as goldsmith, blacksmith, weavers, dyers, printers, florists, carpenters, painters, vendors, tailors, laundrymen etc. reflect the special lifestyle of the town. But all these specialized works in population differ from the first order division of ruling class i.e. Kshatriyas which currently in India due to de-sanskritization have also mingled with endogamous units (membership is hereditary and permanent in stratified society) third or fourth division i.e. they have become weak and poor. Supriya Agarwal in her paper '*The Poetics of Societal Hypoxia*' defines the poor in Hegel Marxist sense i.e. individual minus money and social status. According to her "the poor must be defined as individuals under unsupported, marginalized, oppressed, depressed, underprivileged, deprived and helpless conditions" (IJSELL 92).

The caste strictures actively thwarts new democratic practice and protects tradition, even though half of the population of India is in category of poor, yet it considers the status of population; It is not religiously, hierarchically and patriarchally applied to the caste system. The social stratification, discretion and distraction is conditioned per se caste division/group/community based; hence Dalits are rendered "powerless, silenced and forced to be regulated with caste-governance, the interiority of Indian governance" (Thol. Thirumavalavan, Atanka Maru et al., *Refuse to Submit*, trans: Rupa Vishwanath, Chennai: Thaimann Parthipagam, 2004; p. 17-18). Consequently the policy of ghettoization is a kind of moral policing and a means to evade any sort of solution to the '*Phariah Problem*' in India. Confining Dalits to ghettos and formulating for them gentle servitude and facilitating their education in segregated schools, demarking them with religious disability or religious neutrality result with the rise of hegemonic view on one hand, while at the same time it disables enforcement of legal rights and encourages violators and perpetrators to either persecute Dalits or to exclude them from political power. So understand this phenomenon of treatment, the emergence of self-respect in multilingual India for the status of Dalits became the question representative expression to instill essential oneness of humanity and to debate issues of faith, ethics, politics, caste, Brahminism, untouchability, social justice and equality.

Gandhi's disengagement from the world of power and politics is not to harm away, but to turn towards a change of ordinary people of rural India. Aniamuthu in the book entitled *Thought of Periyar* writes while inflecting the Gandhian message in very specific terms:

“A sense of self-respect and fraternity must arise within human society. Notions of high and low amongst men should disappear. A sense of the unity of all humankind must dawn (in each one of us). Communal confrontations must cease to be. In the course of propagating these ideals we will not hesitate to take on friend or foe if they range themselves against us and criticize us through word and deed”. (Anaimuthu xxiv).

Rajgopalchari too endorsed Periyar’s contentious written manifestation in *Kudi Arasu* and advocated Non-Cooperation forum in Madras on Gandhi’s ideas of Khadi Prohibition and Untouchability Abolition to prevent various sections of the populace to fall victim to degeneracy and moral laxity.

On the other hand Dr. Ambedkar in his Presidential Address at Nagpur in 1930s while approving the attempt of the Somvanshiya Nirashit Fund to collect money for “the temple for the Mahar people where they could come and think about social work for the society”, and he said that “we are not ready yet to give an answer to question of whether the untouchables should have a temple of their own or whether they should attempt to enter the Hindu peoples’ temples according to their rights.” (Zelliot 92, 266).

Ambekar in 1930s or Eleanor Zelliot in 2013, both locally and globally have raised the question of retrieval as regards the status of Dalits who have been detained from doors of knowledge, legal rights, understanding political consciousness and writing religious books. They have alleged Brahmanical order and the paradox of religion that preach high thoughts and practice law behaviour. In this context Khairmode in the book entitled *Da Bhimrao Raoji Ambedkar*, Vol. 1 writes “If there is to be independence, the views of the backward classes must be represented, and these backward classes are now awakened to this knowledge” (261-64).

The cultural memory, cultural baggage of being self-designated as *Dalits* expresses emotions of bewilderment, rage, resentment. This is constructed due to the role of historical consciousness and existing power relations in the imagination of Dalit culture. The authors of post-independence phase have problematized the retrieval of Dalit selfhood. They have argued that historical circumstances and codes need to be subverted to relocate and radicalize social and individual consciousness in order to substantiate memory retrieval so that alternative way of imagining community and nation can be deconstructed to rebuild and to abide by faith in the powers of humanity to remake itself” (V. Geetha 289-290).

Premchand was one of the first major mainstream novelists to have written on caste and caste relations especially in rural areas. From the novel *Kanthapura*, written by Raja Rao we derive that the depressed classes were deprived of reading and writing and the upper class divest them of their right to live with dignity and equality and also with right to educate, develop themselves. One finds that Mahatma Gandhi, the principal proponent of Swaraj, had to face rejection from the traditionalist who oppose Gandhi's doctrine of equal treatment for untouchables, because the profits of the Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical community business are larger as a result of the cheap labour that pariahs provide to them. Bhatta, the first Brahmin, chief priest at ceremonial priests and primary landlord of *Kanthapura* tried to sabotage humanitarian concerns of Gandhi's supporters like Moorthy, but later Bhatta had to face retribution from the hands of resisters, his house was burnt by untouchables. The novel demonstrated that internal dissensions and contestations within caste community had first to be tackled and resolved with fret and fury before the goals of national struggle for Freedom of India. Social harmony could only prevent nation from cultural nationalism and casteism. The writer Raja Rao portrays Moorthy as the representative of Gandhi in the small village who strives to unify all people, men, women, children to join in -and the pariahs and the weavers and potters all seemed to feel they were one caste, one breath (p. 178) and have to participate in the Don't-Touch-the Government Campaign in 1930 when Mahatma Gandhi induced passive resistance against the British Raj in India (Rao; 1974).

Arundhati's novel *The God of Small Things* is an attempt to situate agitations and subversive rage against an unjust social order and sets precedents of irreverence and impiety of Untouchables towards household conventions and religious observations. Roy shows how Kelan, Vethitha's grandfather along with a number of untouchables in Kerala embraced Christianity to get out of the clutches of the problem of untouchability. The irony of conversion became poignant for pariahs and Dalits in post-independence period when constitutions and legal implications denied them quota or reservation on grounds of converted Christian Untouchables. They faced internalized oppressions of caste at one level, at the other level they had been condemned to a life of segregation and disparity. Arundhati Roy also brings forth an ideological and historical understanding of the Pariah's condition and their antagonistic relationship to Brahmanical Hinduism. Velutha in the novel becomes a victim of social ostracism both by the owners of the Paradise Pickle factory and by the Syrian Christian Community because of their high caste profile. In Kerala Untouchable Paravanas like Pariahs of Tamil Nadu, are socially disarmed just like a non-human in the

hierarchical set up and those who transgress the rigid social order meet with tragic death. Arundhati Roy in the novel reflects her concern vis-à-vis antagonism that prevails against low caste people in Brahminism in this way:

“It is apparent that Velutha, the untouchable doesn’t sweep off his footprints like his forefathers. His footprints were wiped off by the caretakers of society, the police, the state and tradition. The patriarchal society and customs punish the woman who has ‘defiled generation of breeding’ (GST 258) and the Paravana who has challenged the age long tradition of social morality. Both these lesser mortals, the mombattis ‘of the society get punished for- “Civilization’s fear of nature, men’s fear of women, power’s fear powerlessness” (p. 308). Hence Velutha, Roy writes about him- was the God of loss, God of Small Things, of goose bumps and sudden smiles who had to go about furtively denying his own presence” (*The God of Small Things*; 330)

One finds that novel *The God of Small Things* restores the history of Brahmin domination. It renders debate on the nature of humanity, divinity, faith, belief, as it fosters instances of insolence, defiance, neglect, disregard, torment, hate and murder of innocent mind. The novel attempts to measure self-worth of an outcaste who are either exiled or domesticated. Their language and culture resonate with caste and civilization.

The writings of Roy and Raja Rao internalize the fact that India’s cultural diversity lies in its sociology, but not in biology of species; secondly reinvent the notion of touchable and untouchable in context of ecology, psyche, freedom, humanity and fundamentalism. The writings investigate emptiness in existence and entity of both classified groups of caste. Both novelists strike with a spur (Sharma 19).

To argue further the question of repressed memory and representation in case of Dalits consciousness and culture is relevant in order to understand the negotiation of Dalit identity amongst society’s stakeholders to examine identity claims of Dalits, to investigate the real historical relations of discrimination, to evaluate their imagination for cultural selfhood and to find possibilities for the construction of culture that encourages equality and justice. With reference to social distinctions and man-made barriers against underdogs, Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchables* deals with the problem of untouchability and injustice. Bakha, the main figure in *Untouchable* believes, “They think we are dirt because we clean their dirt’ (Varshney 22). The novel strikes us

as picture of a decadent and perverted orthodoxy. Mulk Raj Anand wrote this novel to support Gandhiji's campaign against untouchability and caste system/practice. It is the product of his stay with Mahatma at the Sabarmati Ashram in 1932-33. The novel becomes interesting when Gandhiji enters it as a character. (Ibid 155). In contemporary age this novel essentialise Dalit's selfhood complexity, because of their self-reflective representations and experiences. The author as a reliable witness of the humiliating incidents with untouchables on sports grounds, in educational institutes, in matters of job seeking fields shows how untouchables invite infernal wrath and acrimony of upper caste if the Dalits come across within purview of high caste Hindus in public or private space of privileged ones. Mulkraj Anand captures culture experience in our Indian Modern literature, but ironically the characters like Bakha, Gulabo, Sohini, Chota , the millions of Indians due to rigid inhuman casteism.

Vijay Tendulkar's play Kanyadan situates Dalits resistance and discourse of selfhood "in complex description of human reality and the evolution of preconceived notions" (Shyamala; 2012). The play opens with an optimism and with a note on democracy the character Nath Devalkar with his wife Seva, son Jayaprakash and daughter Jyoti involves in improving the condition of downtrodden and socially neglected depressed people. As an authors spokesperson he dissuades ethical ground between the fallacy of appropriation and denial of history, a ground where other will not disappear either in our empathetic embrace or in our nonchalant anxiety, a ground where historical knowledge is possible even if in a very limited way, and where knowledge is replaced by acknowledgement and cognition by recognition". (Huang 227). Therefore at the opening of the play, Nath in his middle class family backdrops is shown discussing intercaste marriage proposal of his daughter Jyoti to the Dalit poet and writer Arun. Nath ecstatically agrees to the proposal and although his wife and son expressed their dissension and apprehension for such transformation in their culture of tradition and casteism. Jyoti introduces Arun to the family, after a discussion with Arun, Nath condescendingly valorized his involvement and integration with other's identity in these words to his wife Seva, he utters-

"Seva, until today, 'Break the caste system' was merely a slogan for us. I have attended many inter caste marriages and made speeches. But today I have broken the barrier in the real sense. My home has become Indian in the real sense of term. I am happy today, very

happy. I have no need to change my clothes today. Today I have changed. I have become new. (Act I, Scene ii, 23)”

Nath believes that Dalit youths like Arun who have borne cultural memory of hate and humiliation, need to be given environment, opportunity and self-expression, as they have been silenced, subservient to face shame and stigma of being Dalit. Psychologically they require space to recover from their repressed memory of difference and it is extremely difficult to understand “the unspeakable nature of horrors experienced by the victims” (Yuante, 229).

The playwright Vijay Tendulkar attempts to give readers and audience his insight to resolve the cultural difference gap, to acknowledge their integration, to acknowledge their integration, to recognize Dalit’s assimilation with an equal opportunity and status. This realization and social transformation can only achieve successfully achieve social harmony. So it is apt to say that Tendulkar recognizes the modernist fallacy of appropriation and the post modernist denial of authenticity. He condemns as an activist the notion of biological differences and human distinctions, segregates historical experiences and fictionalization, rather he raises questions of epistemology that theorize an imaginative making of ‘other’ or gaze others and opens the possibility of collective responsibility and self assurance of objectivity and relies on the veracity and subjectivity of the other in order to the poetics of resentment, authenticity and planetary imagination (Barbara 232).

#### *Narratives of Caste Dissidents*

In 1945 Ambedkar in his major work ‘What Congress and Gandhi have done to Untouchables’, lamented the Poona Pact’s facilitation of separate electoral system that further supports segregation to control untouchable candidate’s elected in reserved seats from the Hindu caste society. Secondly in his book ‘Who were the Shudra’ that he dedicated to Jyotibha Rao Phule, rejects 19<sup>th</sup> century radical racial theory of caste that happened due to Aryan invasion and even he disapproved *Purushasukta* Theory of divine origin. He argued that Shudras were a subset of Kshatriyas denied by Brahmins sacred initiation (*upanayana*) and thus doomed them to social degradation, ignorance and poverty (Ambedkar; 2013).

When it comes to caste debates, the book ‘Homo Hierarchichus’ (1966) by Louis Dumont is the central treatise on anthropological caste discourse comments on antithetical notions of the ‘West’

and 'India' - the former based on individualism and equality and the latter on caste hierarchy (Dirks 52-60). This book indeed in 1940s issued a rage among dissidents of casteism such as Ambedkar, R.S. Khare, heralded anti-caste struggle that grade inequality, social injustice and formed the coalition of underprivileged, which foregrounded the Manusmriti's emphasis on the bastard origin of certain castes. Consequently Dalit Panthers were rooted in Bombay and the youth-Dalit activist like Baburao Bagul, Namdeo Dhansal, Raja Dhale, Arjun Dangle, J.V. Pawar, Namdeo Golpitha an equal to T.S. Eliot.

The 'Wasteland' is full of repulsive pathos and springs from an untouchable source in every sense of the term. Rakesh Nambia writes that Dhasal goes one step further by subverting even the mainstream Dalit literature and poetical oeuvre in Golpitha. In Dhasal's 'Man You Should Explode' (*Golpitha*), the elitist notion of civilization, religion and philosophy is bizarrely shredded for the creation of a new world. For Dhasal language and societal conception becomes tool for subversion that also concurrently transforms into a motif for Dalit Consciousness and expression. (Dhasal; 2016)

Just as language and societal conception undergoes a constant negotiation between the elite upper caste and lower caste in Indian society, so does the sharing and consumption of 'water', when Dhasal says "Upstream, the water is all for you to take/Downstream the water for us to get" (p. 43) which evidently shows the hegemonic imposition of the upper caste in the villages. The socialization of human beings is key to nationalistic concerns and anxieties; if language and education is not mediated through the core concerns, the backwardness of depressed classes or in national character. Dhasal's critique on oppression in the Indian society voices the most reprehensible lessons of repressive mentality followed by upper caste against margins and underclass to keep them away from education and independent identity (Dhasal; 2007).

Arjun Dangle's book *The Translations from Modern Marathi Literature entitled 'Poisoned Bread'* is an assertive minority expression to support Dalit Panther's rebellion (1972) against caste-feudal bondage and slavery. Baburao Bagul in his collections of short stories *Jevha Mi Jaat Chorli Hoti* (When I had Concealed my Caste) characterized the writer as Young Angry Man who articulates Dalits' revolt of consciousness against the social system. Poets like Satish Kasekar, Tulsi Parah, Raja Dhale, Bhalchandra Nemade's *Kosala* related their literature to the Dalit and toiling masses. Om Prakash Valmiki's *Joothan* ((1997) (Trans. Arun Prabha Mukherjee) describes from his

personal experiences the torments of Dalits in Uttar Pradesh who even have no right to fight for education or food. Few other writers like him have him have crafter an authenticity of experience and breached an opening for our understanding and knowledge about a people so marginalized that they disappeared from the world's awareness , their cultures, lifestyles, folk knowledge and aspirations represented nowhere in mainstream or scholarly sources. *Joothan* relates to scraps of garbage or leftovers of food which meant for untouchables or polluted beings of society i.e. the underclass is deprived of the best and have to content with what is decided for them, or made destines to accept just as stray animals are to do. The sufferings and anguish of outcastes and their state of beastlike oppression are represented by the author as an anatomy of oppression and humiliation.

#### *Political Mobilisation of Caste through Writings*

M.N. Srinivasan, well known for his concepts of *Sanskritization* and dominant castes, has written extensively on the changes that are creeping into the caste system. He writes how the lower castes are slowly emulating the language and lifestyle of the upper castes , who are defined by their member resources and monetary strength. The dominant caste differs not only from state to state but also from village to village. In some villages the other Backward Castes may be the dominant castes and not the Brahmin and Kshatriya. To illustrate this from Irathima Karkalan's *Orakali* (2002) which tells the story of the relationship between and Kshatriyas have left the village for a better life in the cities, leaving behind the Dalits and Vanniars. The latter are just above the Dalits in the hierarchy, yet the Dalits do not have control over the land, instead the *Vanniars* became the landlords and the dominant caste and exploit the Dalits.

Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* is a winner of the 'Man Booker Prize' (2008). The following is an excerpt from the book that showcases the attitude towards caste in India today:

“..... ‘Halwai’.....he turned to the small dark man. ‘What caste is that, top or bottom?’ And I know that my future depended on the answer to that question.....I should explain a thing or two about caste. Even Indians get confused about this word, especially educated Indians in the cities.....See: Halwai, my name, means “sweetmakeer”. That’s my caste...my destiny....These days there are two castes:men with bug bellies and men with small bellies”

(Adiga 62-65)

Manu Joseph's debut novel *Serious Men* was the winner of the Hindu inaugural best fiction award in 2010. It is essentially a commentary on the perceived intellectual superiority of Brahmins and the attempt by a Dalit to break this hegemony of a certain caste over knowledge. Similarly Rohinton Mistry's novel *A Fine Balance* (1995) revolves around two leather workers (caste name *chamars*) who flee to the city due to the atrocities meted out to them in the cities and take up jobs as tailors/

The contentious issue of reservation has been depicted in the short story called *Poisoned Bread* (Dangle 2010) The following is a telling excerpt from *Promotion* :

“Awale Saheb: Does Godbole respect you?

Wagah: He doesn't and I suppose its quite natural that the fact that I have been promoted to the post of Assistant Purchase Manager even though I was junior to him.

Awale Saheb: Listen it is only now that we are being promoted to the Sahib positions in 33% category. The other people have enjoyed being in the 100% reserved category for centuries.”(Dangle 169).

Girish Karnad's play *Tale-Danda* (1993) tells the tale of Basavanna, a 12<sup>th</sup> century reformer from Karnataka and the founder of lingayat faith. One such disciple of Basavanna defies tradition and tries to transcend the barrier of caste by marrying his daughter to an untouchable. He had to face violent aftermaths. The king Bijjala of Kalyana was dethroned and the disciple is killed, while even Basavanna dies a mysterious death. The story of 21<sup>st</sup> century India doesn't seem to have changed much, still caste based violence routinely is read in newspapers.

Urmila Pawar's autobiographical work *Aidan* (2006) shows resistance to girls studying. Urmila's father would often face taunts from his community people asking whether the education would turn his daughter into a Brahmin woman. Bama in her work *Sangati* (2009) exposes the exploitation of Dalit woman by upper caste men and also by Dalit men. “Everywhere you look, you see blows and beatings; shame and humiliation. If we had a little schooling at leas, we could live with more awareness. When they humiliate us we do get furious and frustrated....because we haven't been to school or learnt anything, we go about slaves all our lives, from the day we are born till the day we die. As we are blind, even though we have eyes” (Bama 118).

Bama's *Karakku* (2000) is an autobiographical work is an attempt to share with the world ill-treatment meted out in the name of class , caste and religion. She shares the experiences of being the child of a Dalit and the abuse that they have to undergo. It seeks to expose the plight of thousands of Dalit children. The author also finds that several of her own people have internalized the feelings of inferiority that are imposed on them by the upper classes.

Meena Kandaswamy's book *Ms. Militancy* draws on Tamil mythologies to throw open the debate on caste discrimination. Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke* (2008) reveals the insider account of the socio-cultural conditions and the historical and the political scenario in which the Mahar community lived in the pre-independence time. She claims that suffering of her community has always been more important than her individual suffering. A distinctive aspect of her life narrative is *Jina Amucha* (2008). She tries to instill a sense of pride and the spirit of resistance among the present and future generations of her people.

Urmila Pawar's author of *The Weave of My Life* (2008) is a Marathi Dalit activist of feminist struggles in Maharashtra. In the Konkan region of Maharashtra, it was the Mahar caste to which Pawar herself belongs, that performed the traditional job of weaving aaydans. Pawar has claimed that there is a link between the weaving of bamboo by her mother and the weaving of words in her own writing that "it is the weave of pain, suffering and agony that links us" (Pawar 10).

P. Sivakami's novel *The Grip of Change* (1999) discusses the politics of writing that not only targets the 'others' from outside, but also the 'others' within one's community or the group one is associated with. The urgency of having to decide one's loyalties pushes a writer , especially a Dalit woman writer into the urgency of having to decide her location and position amidst Dalit lives and in context of caste and gender. J. Bheemaiah, while critically interpreting the story of Kolakaluri Enoch's *Vigna Vinayakudu* writes how in a village *Papili* situated on the highway of Bangalore in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh embeds the notion of Hindu fanaticism that colonize Dalit's space. The mythical nature of God *Vinayaka* in Hindu belief is responsible for tension between castes, which unleashes violence and reflect social reality of myth of caste. The concept of equality before God becomes abused on caste lines and Dalit victimization (58).

Conclusion

These critical formulations in the writings of Dalits, non-Brahmanical and Brahmanical theorize indeed the question of representation the idea of recovering repressed memory and the historical discovery of the invisible, silenced, subordinated subalterns. The writings also questions the Dalit's consciousness that became visible and aware, have articulated their encounter, experiences, emotions through counter literature expressing both their self and being other in their writings, these allegories of nation have now been analytical source of discourse. Non-Indian readers feel anxiety while going through the pathetic picture of homogenous Indian society, whose inherent weakness lies in caste prejudices. We can notice caste in itself constitutes a 'nation' in India and people's attachment to their particular caste and their prejudice against other castes becomes their 'nationality'. This caste nationalism assumes 'jingoistic' quality and demands the distancing and despising of other castes, thus it is apt to stand by Savitri Bai Phule's (1831-1897) insightful stand on English education which is a source of liberation especially for the underprivileged sections. She started a school for untouchable girls in 1852. She gave a clear call in her poetry to move towards English to subvert the patters of hegemony.

“Learn English  
Make self-reliance your occupation  
Exert yourself to gather the wealth of knowledge  
Without knowledge animals remained dumb  
Don't rest! Strive to educate yourself  
The opportunity is here,  
For the Shudras and Ati Shudras,  
To learn English  
To dispel all woes  
Throw away authority of the Brahmin and his teachings  
Break the shackles of caste  
By learning English” (Sundararaman 4).

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