



From *Panchanamas* to *Dalits*: A Literary Journey of Resilience

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Abstract: Dalit Literature in India focuses on the history and experiences of the Dalit Community, highlighting their struggles, exploitation, and manipulation by the upper caste, especially the Hindus. Writers from the Dalit community draw inspiration from the Black American Natives and their Negro Movements. This study explores the literary journey of the Dalit community from their initial label “Panchanamas” to their current identity as “Dalits”. The literature produced by Dalit writers has empowered them in various ways, particularly by allowing them to express their resistance openly. Their autobiographies provided a first-hand depiction of the suffering and torment they endured. It marked the liberation of Dalit people from long-standing chains, compelling the Dalit people to break free from their metaphorical imprisonment and transcend boundaries. While some resorted to violence, it was predominantly a reaction to their circumstances. It is important to note that the emergence of Dalits as a community and literary force was a response, rather than an initial action. The colonizers initially divided the country along religious lines, and the upper caste further divided it based on caste, prompting the lower caste¹ to retaliate.

Keywords: Dalit, caste, resistance, literature, suffering

Introduction

“We the People of India,... Justice, social, economic and political;... Equality of status and opportunity and to promote among them all;...” (Constitution of India, Preamble 1). The Preamble of India represents the constitution of our nation and emphasizes justice and equality. However, does our society truly reflect these principles? Are the divisions in Indian society justifiable? Does equality truly exist within the hearts of our society's members? One lingering question is whether we have effectively reduced the caste differences created by members of our society. We are talking about the lowest caste or “VARNA”ⁱ of the society i.e. Dalits.

The society was divided into *four varnas*, and the concept of four varnas was first introduced in the tenth book of *Rig Veda*ⁱⁱ in the Purusha Sukta. The Purusha Sukta describes how the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, the four groups that make up society, came from various sections of *Purusha's* body (the celestial man); the Dalits, however, did not even occupy the fourth position. Instead, they were excluded from the societal system and were called PANCHANAMASⁱⁱⁱ or “Untouchables. The Dalits were subjected to extreme suffering by the

¹ The author does not believe in upper-lower binary and would prefer to use Dalit and non-Dalit as nomenclature; the word "lower caste" is employed to make understanding easier.



upper caste. They faced multiple forms of marginalization within their own country, first by the colonisers and then by the upper caste Hindus. In fact, Dalit women experienced triple marginalisation. When we talk about triple marginalisation, it includes the suppression through casteism, classism and sexism. These struggles and hardships led to the emergence of Dalit Literature as a form of expression for the Dalits. Once considered outcasts, the community now known as Dalits were previously referred to as Panchanamas, before finally gaining a voice to speak for themselves.

Review of Literature

The paper focuses on the lives of Dalits and their literature, presenting a narrative structure that delves into various aspects. It covers their experiences, struggles, pain, exploitation, resistance, actions, and the injustices perpetrated against them. It also explores the historical trajectory of the untouchables, from being referred to as Panchanamas to being recognised as Dalits, a journey marked by immense hardship and sacrifice. This topic holds significant importance as it sheds light on the harsh realities of society and the often overlooked past. Written with the aim of thoroughly exploring Dalit literature within the context of Subaltern Studies, this paper offers a comprehensive textual analysis.

The major Dalit writings and quotes come from various works by Om Prakash Valmiki, Namdeo Dhasal, Bama, and Ambedkar, among others. While there are numerous papers that discuss the historical movements and literature related to Dalit stories, other writers have overlooked the inclusion of contemporary works in films. There are several other works written in history that talk about the resistance and Dalit Literature, Dalit Struggles, Dalit Aesthetics, Dalit Feminism and more, such as "Repression and Resistance in Dalit Feminist Literature" by P. Kamble Shuddhodhan from Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Vidyalaya and "Review of Dalit Literature and Criticism" by Raj Kumar. These works along with "Dalit Writings and English Translations: Its Global Reception And Circulation." is also referred.

The author made a note to read and understand the autobiographical approach of the works and took out some snippets from the works. The "leftover food" episode is read and mentioned with respect to the works like *Joothan*, *The Prison We Broke*, and *The Outcaste*. The literature and criticism by the women as witnessed in the works of Anupama Rao highlights the victimized approach towards the Dalit Literature with her experience in the field of gender and sexuality studies. The author used "Violence and Humanity: Or, Vulnerability as Political Subjectivity" as an important source for this paper. This paper talks about the experiences of the Dalits and their trajectory of survival using literary works as their centre and highlights the need towards the upliftment of society with the help of literature and proof for the people who question the mode of resistance i.e. literature.



Methodology

The author has used textual analysis and qualitative research in this paper. The researcher has delved into major works of Dalit history such as *Annihilation of Caste*, *Joothan*, and *Untouchables*, as well as referenced additional texts. This research paper presents an extensive textual analysis while exploring how Dalit lives were transformed through literature. The papers include a thoughtful examination of the texts and an exploration of the literature's significance, themes, and stories. The paper includes in-depth discussions on resistance movements and the important role of literature in portraying resilience. Quotations and excerpts from various texts have been utilized to illustrate these points. Apart from that a comprehensive list of works is also given.

The Story and Life of Untouchables

In the early days, the lowest social caste was known as the Untouchables, meaning they were considered untouchable and the upper caste individuals had to cleanse themselves if they came in contact with them. The Untouchables were prohibited from entering the same temples and using the same wells as other. This situation bears resemblance to the systemic racism^{iv} in The United States of America and The United Kingdom. However, the key distinction was that the Black community had the ability to protest against the White community because they were not integrated into mainstream society and could establish their own community. Conversely, the Dalit community lacked the ability to protest violently due to their marginalized status in society, which could result in the upper castes completely erasing their community. In fact, in ancient times, the Dalits were kept in the outskirts of the society/village. It was not simply a caste-created difference but also a political move. This was done in such a manner that even if attacks were made by the enemy states, the Dalits would be killed first.

The term Dalit came into practice quite later, initially, they were called Untouchables or HARIJANS.^v The suffering extended beyond caste disparities, encompassing caste distinctions and economic factors. They lived in poverty and struggled to make ends meet. They received very little sympathy from others, their basic needs were ignored and were unaware of life's opportunities. Without Ambedkar, their situation would likely have remained unchanged. The condition of Dalits was even worse than that of animals, as they were subjected to dehumanization on multiple fronts. Their occupation included lowly tasks such as manual scavenging, maintaining drains and sewers, crafting footwear, and working as sweepers. They faced physical abuse, sexual exploitation, public humiliation, and even occasional homicide. Additionally, many members of the Dalit community succumbed to starvation, resorting to consuming leftovers from the meals of those belonging to the higher castes. As a result, they would contract various kinds of illness. The violation of Human Rights^{vi} was majorly done in the name of purification of society.

The miserable lives of the Dalits were finally given voice by Dr B.R. Ambedkar also known as Baba Saheb, a prominent social reformer and father of the Indian Constitution. He belonged to the Dalit community himself and he observed that the caste system's byproduct is outcaste. He knew the importance of taking a stand and acted as the flagbearer for justice of the Dalit



community. In the Purusha Sukta verse the *chaturvarnas* were mentioned for the first time but then the famous work MANUSMRITI ^{vii} ELABORATED THE VARNA SYSTEM. IT WAS A FOUNDATIONAL BOOK FOR DHARMASASTRA ^{viii} or literature for legal matters, a discourse given by Manu and Bhrigu between 2nd and 3rd century BC. It is also called "Laws of Bhrigu" and it was more stringent towards the *varna* system and especially towards the Dalits. *Manusmriti* made sure to subject the Dalits to extreme oppression and ostracism. Thus, it was burnt by Ambedkar in Mahad in Maharashtra in public bonfire on 25th December 1927 to register his opposition because of its objectionable explanation of the relationship of the upper and lower caste as a master and slave relation. Mahad Satyagraha^x was an agitation arranged in order to provide the Dalits the rights to drink the water from the Mahad water tank, Dr B.R. Ambedkar took the initiative to help the Dalits get the same benefits as drinking water from same public area as the non-Dalits. He gave his speech, burnt the *Manusmriti* on a pyre and help the Dalits in attaining their wishful rights. Along with his rejection of the caste system, the declaration of Dalit rights and rejection of patriarchy as a reason also stands tall when it comes to the justification of his actions. With this, the beginning of Dalit political consciousness took the front seat and assertion of equality became the need of the hour.

Ambedkar rejected the title *Harijan* given by Mahatma Gandhi because of several reasons like lack of empowerment, passive acceptance, patronizing connotation, diversion from real issues, political and religious issues as well as lack of inclusivity. He supported the term Dalit because it meant "oppressed" or "broken" which is the actual condition of the Dalit community rather than "Harijan" which pulls the community away from its identity.

The term "Dalit" is not primarily used in a disparaging manner; rather, it empowers the members of this group to reflect on and address their past experiences. The Marathi term "Dalit" was first used by Jyotiba Phule in the late 1880s which meant "broken" or "crushed" and later Ambedkar made it a point to deliver the term as national consciousness... The caste created a struggle not only on the basis of birth but also a difference in social order and the Hegelian principle^x can be used to analyse the situation.

Movement of Resistance

"Dalit is the name of total revolution; it is revolution incarnate"^{xi} (Dangle, p. 289)

Arjun Dangle, a renowned Dalit writer and nationalist talked about how the Dalit ideology is majorly about resistance and revolution. The movement of resistance when it comes to Dalits was not just one movement but many movements concealed within one movement. The evil practices of society forced Dalits to take a stand for themselves. Dalit movements represent Dalit realities. It did not happen overnight, people like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Jyotiba Rao Phule, Ghasidas, Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale and many more, joined forces to eradicate the tortures inflicted on Dalit people. The first step towards the eradication of this caste division was taken up by Jyotibha Rao Phule along with her wife Savitribai Phule. They set up a Satyasodhak Samaj^{xii} for the promotion of education and equality in the social mainstream for the Dalit communities in the year 1873. The Dalit movement started in Maharashtra but it went pan-India. One of the famous



movements of South India was the Temple Entry Movement started in the year 1927, led by Ambedkar.

With this movement, the dignity of the lower caste people was stopped from being jeopardized. The Dalits were allowed in the Hindu temples in the Princely States of Travancore and were allowed to fetch water from the same well, which was initially barred by the upper caste. It was Ambedkar's idea to let Dalits have the justice of their lives and he founded the All India Depressed Classes Federation^{xiii} in 1942 that can fight for the welfare of the Dalits. Other movements like Adi-Dharm Movement in Punjab founded by Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, wanted liberation from Brahminism in 1920s, the Namshudra Movement in Bengal by the father-son Thakur duos, the Adi-Dravida Movement in Tamil Nadu and Adi Dravida Mahajan Sabha were also established. The Self Respect Movement and the Justice Party and the Madiga Dandora Movement in Andhra Pradesh among others gained momentum inspired by the Maharashtrian movements. People like T.M. Nair, C.N. Mudalair, EV Ramaswami Naicker, Kaivartas, Harichand Thakur emerged as prominent faces in these Dalit Movements. The formation of Bahujan Samaj Party^{xiv} (BSP) and its contribution is unforgettable. It was founded by Kanshi Ram in 1984 and he ensured the political mobilization of the Dalits in Uttar Pradesh. In order to enhance its pan-India characterization, the Dalit movements also engaged and connected with several other movements like labour movements, tribal movements, and formed intersectional alliances with these social movements.

In the spectrum of Dalit history, it is important to speak of the Dalit Panther Movement^{xv} of 1972 that begun in Mumbai, Maharashtra but became famous worldwide. It is said that the fire was ignited by Dr. Ambedkar and the people who were leading the movement were highly inspired by the Black Panthers of the United States. The co-founders of this movement were Namdeo Dhasal, J.V. Pawar, Arun Kamble and Raja Dhale. It was these people who expanded the term "Dalit" to all downtrodden people, marginalized and minorities. It was a struggle movement led by the poets as a counterattack on the "socio-cultural hegemony" of the upper caste. Many movements like these in the various parts of the country grew to aid the Dalit community. There were several Dalit Caste organizations as well for providing support to the community. They were Dalit Mahasabha in Andhra Pradesh, Dalit Sangharsha Samiti in Karnataka, Arundhatiyar in Tamil Nadu along with the Panthers in Maharashtra.

How Dalit Literature Acts as Resistance

"Caste remains a key determinant of a person's future."^{xvi} (UNDP Report 2014)

One may say that Dalit literature is a problem of the fourth world. The lack of inclusivity caused the Dalit writers to question if they truly wanted to be a part of mainstream society in general, which is why it differs from mainstream literature. Many writers have different definitions for Dalit literature, like, for Babu Rao Bagul, Dalit Literature is not simply about the stories of sorrow but that of resistance as well. It can be seen in his works like JEVHA MI JAAT CHORLI HOTI! (When I Hid my Caste), and MARAN SWASTA HOT AHE (Death is Getting Cheaper).



For him depicting the Dalit stories is humane and democratic, whereas for Sharan Kumar Limbale, Dalit Literature is writing the Dalit stories and histories by the people born out of Dalit consciousness.

Dalit literature is a genre of Indian writing that focuses on the lives, experiences, and struggles of the Dalit community. The phrase "Dalit literature" was first used during the Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangh's inaugural meeting in 1958. Although there were several writers like Munshi Premchand and Mulk Raj Anand who were known as the spokesperson for the Dalit Community from their works like *KAFAN*^{xvii} (*The Shroud*) and *Untouchables* respectively, the Dalit community did not accept their works in the Dalit literature genre because of lack of first-hand experience and lack of sensitivity towards the community. Dalit writers presented their ideas about how Dalit representation should be done, but as of right now, we can see that Dalit literature is represented in subaltern studies and is still regarded as a marginalised genre in Indian society when compared to Black American or native Australian literature.

The major question is "Who can actually write Dalit Literature?" and this question has quite a mixed reaction. When Kashiram Singh^{xviii} said that one doesn't have to be a horse to write about a horse. What he meant was that anyone with Dalit sensitivity could write, to which he received a reply from Omprakash Valmiki, the writer of the Dalit work *JOOHAN*. Valmiki replied that one can write about the horse's outward features, canter, and neighs, but what one can't write is about his inner suffering or feelings towards his master when, at the end of the day, the same horse, having done his share of work, is starving and exhausted and is tied to a post in the stable.

With this, the query remains unresolved as to whether a non-Dalit can take part in Dalit writings or not.

Dalit literature is about change, has a purpose, and is a movement. The literature of this genre is majorly autobiographical in nature and maybe that is why major writers think that non-Dalits cannot delve into this. Dalit writers used themes of violence, brutality, struggle and fight against the suffering of the oppressor upper caste. Dalit autobiographies talk about community rather than focusing on individuals; it is fragmented, quite subjective and emotional and talks about otherness. The Dalit writers were a victim of the evil practices of society and were literally journaling their experiences in the form of literary pieces by adding fiction from their end and thus were said by the mainstream writers to lack aesthetic appeal. Several writers protested and said that the mainstream literature talks about the beauty and pleasure of the world and it is their form of aesthetics, whereas that of Dalit literature is based on the ideas of justice, liberty, equality. We see several writers coming forward in order to support this, such as *TOWARDS AN AESTHETIC OF DALIT LITERATURE: HISTORY, CONTROVERSIES AND CONSIDERATIONS* by Sharan Kumar Limbale emphasizing authenticity and social realism, *DALIT LITERATURES IN INDIA* edited by Joshil K. Abraham and Judith Misrahi-Barak which is a collection of essays which distinguishes the Dalit Literature from any other form of literature and *WRITING CASTE/WRITING GENDER: NARRATING DALIT WOMEN'S TESTIMONIES* edited by Sharmila Rege talks about intersectionality of caste and gender. Dalits are not devoid of aesthetics; they just do not employ them in the same ways as mainstream writers.



When we talk about the depiction of a Dalit individual or as a community in any art form, be it books or films, we see that it has been portrayed always in a negative light. This case is very similar to the depiction of Black Natives of America in movies. A film titled “Maharaj” on Netflix has a scene in which a Dalit is walking on the road with a pail of water hung to his neck with the help of a rope and he says “Raaste se hatt jao acchut aa raha hai” (get off the way an untouchable is approaching). (Saminathan and Murali). He is saying this and throwing water on the ground as he walks to purify it. One can only think and wonder about the condition of Dalits back in the day. There is a very similar reference like this in the work *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand. The story revolves around an 18-year-old Dalit boy named Bakha, who is a sweeper by profession and cleans toilets and floors i.e. manual scavenging and that’s why he is shamed for his profession and treated as an outcaste by the upper-caste. In one of the scenes, a priest shouts “polluted” because Bakha peeps through the glass. The priest has to take a bath because he is touched by Bakha. Truly the Dalit, life is so cheap^{xix} for non-Dalits. There are other movies and series as well which are coming forward to support the Dalit culture and community. There is a series *Made In Heaven* in which we see the challenges faced by Dalits and despite all of that the character who was from a Dalit community, played by Radhika Apte, became very successful as a writer and didn’t feel the need to conceal her identity. Her parents were ashamed of their caste but she was not. Another movie “Bandit Queen” was made in the year 1994 and it deals with the life of a dacoit Phoolan Devi.^{xx} Because she was Dalit, she experienced discrimination and sexual abuse. She became a dacoit after rebelling after a few years of misery. This is the result of discrimination, exploitation, torture, and repression of individuals within a society. To oppress the oppressor, one is compelled to pursue a criminal career.

Autobiographical works by Om Prakash Valmiki, titled *Joothan* and *The Prisons We Broke* by Baby Kamble, share similar incidents where the Dalits were forced to consume the leftover food given to them by the upper caste people. The dehumanization of Dalits by all means has been a recurring image in the works of Dalit Literature. This incident of eating left over food is written by multiple Dalit writers including Sharan Kumar Limbale, in *Akkarmashi*, he also talks of the experience of hunger and poverty where the upper caste people’s leftover food from a feast is licked and eaten by the Dalits. . Limbale uses a parallel to a pile of Jowar grains collected at a corpse's resting place to illustrate this lack of sustenance and its accessibility.

When we talk of the autobiographical works, we not only witness the sufferings and trauma of being poor, or from lower strata of the society. The suffering through identity crisis is also evident in the works of Dalit writers. For example, in *The Outcaste: Akkarmashi*, the protagonist is born of a poor Dalit mother and an upper caste father. He is the illegitimate child and is not accepted by either of the community fully. This hybrid identity is creating a void in his life and a lack of acceptance in the society is witnessed and a gap which cannot be filled. This questioning of identity is also seen in *Karruku* by Bama. The oppression and humiliation are experienced by Bama herself not only on the Dalit grounds but also inside the Catholic Church. This signifies how deeply rooted this caste system is that even Dalit Christian as a community cannot co-exist with Christians of upper caste despite Christianity to follow a modernist approach to life. These are the few works and there are many more like *Mother* by Baburao Bagul, *Murdahiya* by Tulsi Ram. There are various



works which talks about the various communities of Dalits like Chamars, Mahars, Bhangis, Cherumans about their different ghastly experiences of suppression and dehumanization.

Life of Women in the Dalit Community

Sylvia Plath in her *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962* makes a statement that being born as a woman is a tragedy and it resonates well about the conditions of the women of the Dalit community. In a patriarchal society, being a woman is itself a different form of pain. But the extended marginalisation is witnessed when one is a Dalit woman. They are said to be triply marginalized, first by the colonisers or one can say the poverty common to the lower class, second by the caste Dalit and third by the patriarch of their houses. The reason Dalit women resonate with Black women is because they have shared trauma. We are reminded of *Beloved* by Toni Morrison when it comes to sufferings of the Blacks, especially the sufferings of the women. We are also teleported to the story of the Younger's family in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, from the lens of racism and women.

It is such a shame that oppression of women was already present in the society but the distinction made between people based on caste added a layer of suffering on Indian Dalit women and removed a layer of skin of sensitivity within them. Just like Dalit men, many Dalit women writers also took their first step to writing about their autobiographical accounts. It is known that Babytai Kamble wrote *THE PRISONS WE BROKE* and it was the first autobiography written by a Dalit woman. The book offers a vivid look at the patriarchal and caste-based oppressive systems of Indian society, but the writing never descends into self-pity. She penned it based on the Mahars of Maharashtra's lives. Many other women writers like Urmila Pawar, Bama, Meenakshi Moon, Shantabai Kamble, Sujatha Gidla, and many more, made their active participation in making pen their strongest tools of resistance.

As the women of the Dalit community were not provided opportunities and their rights, it was important for Dalit Feminism to handle the steering. Famous writer Dr Sharmila Rege is said to be responsible for introducing the term "Dalit Feminism" in the year 1990s. Dalit Feminism is different from the mainstream feminism in various ways. The global feminists saw all the women and women-centric issues as a common ground and worked towards helping or fixing them whereas Dalit feminists made it a point to talk of gender and caste as an intersectionality. Another key difference is the argument they produce i.e. the feminism in West talks about voting rights, reproductive rights, equal job opportunities and pay scale rights whereas Dalit Feminism tries to fulfil their bare minimum needs like caste-based oppression and violence, education, economic deprivation and untouchability in society.

There is a difference between Dalit Feminism and mainstream feminism and there was a need for it as well. Anupama Rao in her work *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India*, talks about the fact that the mainstream feminism never talked about the 'caste issue' and Dalit movements never talked about the 'gender issue'. There was a need to combine them both and thus originated Dalit Feminism. The caste-based and gender-based oppression has a different



experience and was vividly witnessed by the Dalit women only. Caste and gender have a unique intersectionality and upper caste feminists did not tap it. Rao also witnessed that the voices of the Dalit women were missing when the patriarchal Dalit movements were in play. The most influential Dalit activist is Ruth Manorama of the current lot and she has ensured that the voices of Dalit women reach globally. She too talks about the need of having Dalit feminism. This double marginalization is also witnessed in the literary works of Shantabai Kamble's *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* which depicts the suppression of women in rural Maharashtra and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of my Life* which critiques the caste-based and gender-based oppression through literature as a medium.

Famous works like *Ants Among Elephants* by Sujatha Gidla and *Father May Be an Elephant and Mother Only a Small Basket, But...* by Gogu Shyamla talk about how caste and gender work parallelly at marginalizing the lives of the Dalit women. They do share the autobiographical accounts of the suffering caused within the family itself but also shows literature as a mode of resilience. With strong and opinionated women characters the fight against the oppression creates an atmosphere of fighting for the survival. When it comes to giving voice to Dalit women, we also have Gopal Guru who knows exactly that *Dalit Women Talk Differently* as they have different stories to tell and their concerns are different from Dalit men and upper caste women.

Major Writers and their Works

As mentioned earlier, the works of Dalit Literature focus on Dalit struggles, agony, exploitation, unjust, violence, frustration, and aestheticism of the fight for liberty and equality. K. Suneetha Rani in one of her articles 'Does Translation Empower a Dalit Text' mentioned that "the empowerment of Dalit literature has been achieved already when a Dalit writer has articulated his/her experiences and feelings which come from the deep sense of pain and shame..." It is important to go through several works of Dalit literature and here is the list of some of the major fiction and autobiographical works.

List of famous Dalit autobiographical works²:

Numerous noteworthy autobiographical works that provide deep insights into the living experiences of marginalised populations are part of the Dalit literary landscape. Of these, Daya Pawar's *Baluta* (1978) is notable for being the first comprehensive Dalit autobiography. Additional noteworthy works include Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's *Waiting for a Visa*, Kishore Shantabai Kale's *Against All Odds*, Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke*, Om Prakash Valmiki's *Joothan*, Narendra Jadhav's *Outcaste: A Memoir*, Baburao Babul's *Jevha Mi Jaat Chorli Hoti* (translated as *When I Hid My Caste*), Urmila Pawar's *Aidan* (translated as *The Weave of My Life*), and Yashica Dutt's *Coming Out as Dalit: A Memoir*.

² The author has previously provided some details on a few of the works. Listing works encourages readers to explore these sources independently. Readers who are interested in particular works can refer to them directly for a more detailed study, thus extending their engagement with the topic.



Autobiographies are not the only important works that address Dalit issues. *Annihilation of Caste*, written by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, is still regarded as a foundational work supporting societal change. *Poisoned Bread* by Arjun Dangle is notable for being the first Dalit anthology. Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You*, Joseph Macwan's *The Stepchild*, and Baburao Bagul's *Maran Swasta Hot Ahe* (which translates to "Death is Getting Cheaper") all add gripping stories to this collection.

Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchables*, Gail Omvedt's *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution*, Eleanor Zelliott's *From Untouchables to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*, and Meena Alexander's poetry collection *Illiterate Heart* are examples of non-Dalit authors' works that deal with Dalit issues. The larger conversation on caste and its effects on society is reflected in these contributions.

Conclusion

Ambedkar knew that Dalits should be empowered and must be given a respectable position in society. The aspects of equity, equality and liberty all should be considered when it comes to fighting for the Dalit rights. The discrimination and violence against the Dalits pushed them to begin voicing their thoughts. Dalit Literature provided the platform for the downtrodden to speak up for themselves. The foundation was built by Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Om Prakash Valmiki and many more and with this support, the other writers picked up their pen. The literature is quite multifaceted and it comes with several ideas and themes to deal with. Dalit literature is quite complex in terms of its understanding yet its motto remains simple that is to educate, to unite and to agitate.

End Notes

ⁱ In reference to Hinduism, India was divided into four "Varnas" i.e the caste based division in the society like Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudras

ⁱⁱ The earliest known Vedic Sanskrit text is the Rigveda. Among all the Indo-European languages still in existence are some of its earliest levels. Oral transmission of the Rigveda's sounds and texts dates back to the second millennium BCE.

ⁱⁱⁱ Panchanamas was the title given to the lower caste people especially the Dalits who were out of the Varna system

^{iv} Prejudice and discrimination against individuals on the basis of their race or ethnicity constitute racism. Social acts, customs, or governmental structures (like apartheid) that encourage the expression of bias or aversion in discriminatory activities can all be considered forms of racism.

^v The word "Harijan," which means "children of God," was originally used in 1933 to refer to Dalits by Mahatma Gandhi, who was a fan of Narsinh Mehta's writings.

^{vi} All people have the intrinsic right to human rights, regardless of their gender, colour, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other characteristic.



vii One of the several legal writings and constitutions among the numerous Dharmasāstras of Hinduism is the Manusmṛti, sometimes referred to as the Mānava-Dharmasāstra or the Laws of Manu. The caste system is institutionalised by Manusmṛiti. It provides justification for a small segment of society to oppress and take advantage of the great mass of people.

viii Sanskrit Puranic Smṛiti books on law and behaviour, known as Dharmasāstra, make reference to Dharma-related treatises. Dharmashastra itself developed from Dharmshutra, and these books are intricate legal commentaries based on the Vedas.

ix Chavdar Tale or Mahad Satyagraha on March 20, 1927, B. R. Ambedkar spearheaded a satyagraha at Mahad, Maharashtra, India, to permit untouchables access to a public tank for water.

x Hegelian master-slave relations occur when two people behave in unison during a relationship. The slave complies with the grasp's rules although, to disclose, the grasp's present principles that the slave has agreed to

xi This is a quote used by Arjun Dangle and talks about how the middle name for Dalits must be resistance against oppression

xii Jyotiba Phule founded the Satyashodhak Samaj (Truth Seekers' Society) in 1873, and the Samaj's leadership was composed of people from lower social groups. He established a powerful campaign against Brahminical and upper caste supremacy.

xiii The All India Depressed Classes Association was founded by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to ensure that the Scheduled Castes were fairly represented in India's decision-making organisations.

xiv In India, the Bahujan Samaj Party was established to represent religious minorities and Bahujans, which include Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes.

xv The Dalit Panther Movement was a social and political movement in India that surfaced in the early 1970s. It was started by Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale, and Arun Kamble, among others, influenced by the Black Panther Party in the United States, aiming at eradicating the systemic oppression and discrimination towards Dalits in the Indian society.

xvi It was quoted in the [The UNDP Nepal Human Development Report 2014](#) and it means an individual's caste remains a significant determinant in determining their life opportunities and outcomes in India.

xvii Many people mostly believe that "Kafan" or "The Shroud" represent the darkness and the most incredible work of the author. The story speaks about agony as well as the way the Dalits lead their lives.

xviii Kanshi Ram, also known as Bahujan Nayak or Manyavar, Sahab Kanshiram, was an Indian politician and social reformer who worked for the political mobilisation and upliftment of the Bahujans, the lower caste and backward people, including untouchable groups at the bottom of the caste system in India.

xix That's the translated reference of Baburao Bagul's work MARAN SWASTA HOT AHE

xx Phoolan Devi was an Indian bandit, or dacoit, who turned to politics and was a member of parliament until her murder. She belonged to the Mallaah subcaste and was raised in poverty in an Uttar Pradesh village where her family was losing a property dispute that caused them a lot of issues.



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