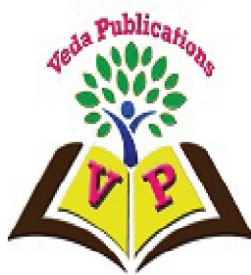




FRAMING THE SPACE (S): REMAPPING EXPERIENCES AND (CON)TEXTUALISING AMBEDKARISM IN DALIT LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Underpinning the representation of Ambedkarism as an ideology and strategy of framing space(s), this paper offers a critical analysis of the Dalit literature in India. Ambedkarism acts as the signpost of heralding the era of emancipation by crusading against the ideologies of suppression, segregation, subjugation and dispossession. My use of *framing* in this paper as a strategy of representation is based on David Snow's theory which describes *framing* as a »schemata of interpretation¼. Ambedkarism as a strategy of framing and space creation in Dalit literature hovers round Aranda's three forms of space: symbolic space, abstract space and relational space. All the social practices and creative potentialities are crystallized through reproduction of the narrative of futurity. The analysis will help to reveal the discourse of dalits, more particularly, the impacts of Ambedkarism on Dalit literature.

Key Words: Ambedkarism, Dalit Literature, Framing, Narrative Strategy

INTRODUCTION

*Who asked! me that Who is Doctor Ambedkar?
Pronounced proudly our "Hero", and who are you?...*

To wipe our tears powerful Bhim has born.

Krishna is backbone of Jadava, like Bhim is to us . . .

*We will worship him ever; he is solicitous about our
suffering.*

Our life is he, he is Shiva, and this body is also he,

*We will die on his words; he is solicitous about our
suffering.*

(1-4, 9-10, Achhutam's Dr. Ambedkar)

Dalit literature, "the literature of Adivasis, vagrant and nomadic tribes, backward class people, workers, labourers, all exploited and afflicted, stricken people is Dalit literature" (Nimbalkar 68), asserts a significant place in the current mainstream of Indian literature. Dr. Ambedkar's life is not just a history to be written but it is the sources of positivity and a portrayal of life from lifeless which conveys valuable meaning to the dalits of India. The portrayal of his life is 'a journey of discovery and rebirth.' It is Ambedkar's life story that emphasizes and teaches the value of patience, hope, perseverance, and the power of positive attitude against the pain and reticence. His writings are the guideline of life that inspires, motivates, instructs and regulates the backwards and destitute how to look at life in an optimistic and assertive way. He is a representative rather than an individual, an authority and a vox populi of the downtrodden and neglected 'other' in Indian social scenario. The panther of the dalits initiated the Dalit Movement with blood-boiling slogan: "Educate, Agitate and Organise." The historical Satyagraha for the human rights of Dalits at Mahad in Maharashtra on December 25, 1927 with the burning of the *Manusmriti*, the mouthpiece of Brahmanism weakened the very backbone of Brahmanical social order and put a foundation stone of the dalits emancipation. Ambedkar's preferred mode of resistance-legal-democratic means, non-violence, and the shaming of opponents with principled argument—did not rule out collaboration with progressive caste Hindus.

AMBEDKARISM: AT A GLANCE

Ambedkarism is a belief believing in the doctrines of "liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice". It endorses

"... an uncompromising dedication to the needs of his people, the total annihilation of the caste system and the Brahmanic superiority it embodied, the eradication of caste ... a fierce rationalism which burned through his attacks on Hindu superstitions. ... It is an outcry of the protracted suffering of the people infected by the venom of caste. It is a counter revolution to the irrational Brahmanism. Ambedkarism is a process that leads people from slavery to freedom, from suppression to assertion, from exploitation to achievement" (Adagale 541-544).

The very base of Ambedkarism is the 'philosophy of humanism' and is based on the principles of:

- Exploration of the causes for the degradation of dalits
- Renunciation of the orthodox Hindu religious practices
- To rebel against the exploitation
- Search for the dalit identity
- Vision of egalitarian i.e. classless and casteless society
- Assertion of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice
- Critique of caste system
- Belief in Buddhism (545)

Ambedkarism acts as the signpost of heralding the era of emancipation by crusading against the ideologies of suppression, segregation, subjugation and dispossession.

FRAMING THE SPACE(S): A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

My use of *framing* in this paper as a strategy of representation is based on David Snow's theory which describes *framing* as a "»schemata of interpretation¼ that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their life space and world at

large (...) by rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective" (255). Framing the space(s) is a part of the representation of particular collective identities. Any work of literature is in part, a product of sociological and political factors, to the extent that the writer's personality has been shaped by sociological and political environment of his time. Conversely, important works of literature or whole literary movements have had profound effects on society by setting up or destroying taboos, conventions, and social prejudices, thus contributing to changes in values which in turn have brought about social and political change (Lindberg 163).

Ambedkarism as a strategy of framing and space creation in Dalit literature hovers round Aranda's three forms of space: "symbolic space, abstract space and relational space" (4). All the social practices and creative potentialities are crystallized through reproduction of the "narrative of futurity" (Raven 2). The social space is intensified with the representation of the present and the possible future. Marching towards an era of independence and interdependence, the dalits would readily change their modes of existence and this pursuit and readiness to accept the change is itself a step towards self-/social empowerment. The age-old social marginalization which robs the vitals of individuality and devoid the assertion of a physical space - "Should I be born / Into this land" (49) - is changed with the progressive ideology to claim the rights of socio-humane survivability.

In today's spectrum, the Dalits, marginalized and the choked-throat subalterns have answered positively to Spivak's "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" through Dalit literature. The socio-culturally the 'liminal space' they hold and the distancing 'physical space' (the victim of Vedic caste demarcations) problematizes the core of the literature of the Dalits. This subalternity is not the reflection of British colonialization, but lied in the "caste-based social, cultural and economic structure of the Hindu Society" (Limbale 37). Commenting on the role of the Dalit literature Limbale opines:

It (Dalit literature) serves its radical function through its authentic representation of the Dalit reality. Through this representation, the Untouchable Other finds voice to speak across the caste-line and thereby destroy the vaunted purity of the savarna space. The Dalit no longer remains invisible. This representation populates and contaminates the previously unpolluted sites of the savarna Hindu, and forces their occupants to come face-to-face with and recognize a reality that they brought into existence. This is a deconstructive enterprise. In the process of creating their authentic representations, Dalit writers expose and deconstruct those manufactured versions and processes of history and society that have been involved through the centuries to legitimize the caste system. (15)

My analysis will help to reveal the discourse of Dalits, more particularly, the impacts of Ambedkarism on Dalit literature.

AMBEDKARISM AND DALIT LITERATURE : AT A CURSORY GLANCE

The clarion call of Ambedkarism for the dalit writers is "(to) deconstruct the manufactured versions and processes of history" (Limbale 18) and it inserts the subjective soliloquies and traumatic experiences for drawing intra-/inter-national attention. The Dalit aesthetics should hold such significations: author's experience be authentic; those experiences be generalized; those experiences should not be just region specific; text should instil inspiration for egalitarian social system; the representations of cardinal values of independence, justice, equality, and fraternity (32-69).

Ambedkarism is a gearing force and Dr. Ambedkar is a perennial source of inspiration for the dalit poets:

"You are that Sun, our only charioteer,
Who descends into us from a vision of
sovereign victory,
And accompanies us in fields, in crowds, in
processions, and in struggles;

And saves us from being exploited." (Dhasal:
Ode to Dr. Ambedkar);

And

"You became the human pivot for all dalits....

For your purpose was to liberate man.

The same heart in which you contained all
tolerance,

You let the volcano of revolt become
active." (Dhasal : Ode to Dr. Ambedkar :1978)
(Cited Dilip)

Ambedkar said, "To leave inequality between class and class, between sex and sex, which is the soul of society, untouched, and to go on passing legislation relating to economic problems, is to make a farce of our Constitution, and to build a palace on a dung heap" (<https://www.thebetterindia.com/84813/we-going-to-enter-life-contradictions-said-dr-ambedkar/>). His opinions act as "structuration of shadow framing" (28) and a "zone of motivation" (28) for the poets.

Ambedkarism is a blood-boiling doctrine, not the manifestation of passivity and helpless capitulation:

Take a Hammer to change the world

So saying went Bhimrao! ...

Sitting on the chariot of unity

Let us go forward

To break the chains of class and caste

Hold to the name of Bhim! (Anna Bhau Sathe)

Dr. Jyoti Lanjewar appears to be a rebel against the social inequalities of dominant society:

"Which never gave us even the life of cats and dogs?

I hold their unpardonable sins as witness

And turn here and now, a rebel." (Poisoned Bread 26)

Inspired by Dr. Ambedkar's '*Buddha and his Dhamma*', Aasha Thorat utters for a casteless, classless and humane religious standpoints:

"Take back your Goddesses

Take back your curses

Take back your caste

If you want, come to our white Bamboo forest" (Veruvan)

Namdeo Dhasal cries out:

This world's socialism,

This world's communism

And all those things of theirs,

We have put them to the test

And the implication is this—

Only our shadows can cover our own feet (*A Current of Blood*).

He uses his poetry as a way to show the power dalits have by being themselves and embracing their culture. He encourages celebrating their heritage through literature. Prof. Malti Ingale encourages the Ambedkarites: "Come my Bhim brothers and sisters/ Under this blue sky/ Under this Bhim roof....." (*Blue Sky Is Mine 28-29*) to face collectively the challenges of social orthodoxies. But dalit literature cannot be treated as an outpouring rebellion and an index of negativity. Baburao Bagal says: "Dalit literature is not a literature of vengeance. Dalit Sahitya is not a literature which spreads hatred. . . . Dalit Sahitya first promotes man's greatness and man's freedom and for that reason it is an historic necessity" (53-57). Dr. Ambedkar's writings *Who Were the Shudras?*, *Annihilation of Caste and the Mooknayaka* are remained as the "simulacra of signification" (351) and used as the "framing embroidery strategy" (361) for the dalit poets.

Dalits' drama portrays Ambedkarite ideology of humanism, socio-educational upliftment. Boyi Bheemanna's *Paleru (A Farm Boy)* dramatizes the importance of education for the Dalits.

KUBERIAIAH (landlord): O, son of a he buffalo!

Did anybody go to school in your family?

PULLAIAH (Dalit): Yes sir, Ah Ah is it? No sir no.

K[UBERIAIAH]: Is not it is a sin for you to read (and write)?

P[ULLAIAH]: Big sin lord. Very big sin indeed.
Neither during the

time of my grandfather, nor my father, myself,
nor even my son Yenkadu...

K[UBERIAIAH]: Stop. It is alright until your
time. With your son Yenkadu the tradition of
your family is destroyed.

P[ULLAIAH]: No my lord. I swear, I pledge my
life. My son is not like that.

K[UBERIAIAH]: You son of a donkey. Why does
a son of a slave need education? (Bheemanna
91-92).

BOTH THE DALIT AND NON-DALIT NOVELISTS seek to depict historically, psychologically, and radically with the lived experience of a dalit existence. Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, Bonomli Goswami, S K Pillai, Arundhati Roy and Uthannan Thoppil have dealt the dalit subjects and experiences with a tinge of realism. The representation of the dalits in the novels, as Namit Arora says, "is clearly not overpowered by the emotions of pity and sympathy but it also stands true that as texts of social critique of caste they at one level fail to provide viable revolutionary or radical intermediations that could structurally annihilate the caste. But this failure should not dispense with the fact that they bring new insight in to the nature of Dalit aesthetics and politics and work towards sensitizing the readership towards the atrocities that this system has generated and therefore must be shunned vehemently" (4).

Autobiographies by dalit writers governed by "subversive historiographic path of personalizing history" become a political gesture in the in the context of Indian literary historiography to focus upon a sort of "epistemic mutations" (Mohanty, 1998: 120) not only in "cultural criticism but in social and historiography as well" (*ibid*, 120) and point to the need to create cultural paradigms, which will challenge the notion of essentialism prevailing in Indian nationalist historiography. This will bring to the centre stage the issue of marginality resulting from caste fractured Hindu identity. The representation of marginality emerges as a "tremendous transformative

potential for oppressed people" (Pandit in her introduction to Kamble, 2008: IX). The autobiography of a dalit can be read as a "sociobiography" as the autobiographer represents both holds individual and collective identities, as stated by Udaya kumar, "he (autobiographer) simultaneously the author of an individual act of truth-telling and the subject of a shared historical memory" (421). Dalit autobiographies must be treated as *testimonio*, atrocity narratives that document trauma and strategies of survival (Nayar 1). Bama's *Karukku* (2000) is a testimonio of a dalit woman who is a victim of socio-linguistic marginalization. She is the "speaking subaltern" who generalizes the very personal experiences and subjective responses through a narration of trauma. Articulated along the multiple axis of gender, class, caste and identity and not a given demographic or sociological condition (Pandey, 2010), the Dalit women's self-narratives can be historically located within the Ambedkarite movement and point to alternative modes of conducting politics and part of alternative archive since conventional archive have refused to record their activities (Pawar and Moon, 2008). Sharan Kumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi*, Kishore Gaikwad's *Uchalaya* and Om Prakash Valmiki's *Joothan* are the sociobiographies questioning the identity issues and the problems of marginalization. Dr. Narendra Jadhav in his personalized saga of social metamorphosis of Dalits named *Outcaste: A Memoir* shows the experience of his illiterate parents Damur and Somu who came from Mahur community in Maharashtra to the city of Mumbai and shows that Dalit consciousness is such a condition that comes from the social condition.

The recent volume on Dalit writings No Alphabet in Sight edited by Susie Tharu and K Satyanarayana, opened a new debate on the long history of Dalit literature and its current prominence in the contemporary scene of literature and politics. It also shows how Dalit literature moves beyond the usual discourses of literary modernity. In present scenario Hardtmann (2009) describes several Dalit discourses that are from different geographical spaces in India: the Dalit Christian discourse from South India, Dalit Buddhist discourse from Maharashtra and Dalit political discourse from Uttar Pradesh with BSP as main political body (88). Ambedkarism appears to the dalit

literature as the “zone of reference” and uses as the “Narrative of futurity”, “a psychological prototype” and “an object of signification” (5-17).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the legacy of the Ambedkarism has opened doors for today's dalit writers. Ambedkarism is the internal and external spring for dalits bringing about the realization of “we can make possible the impossible, and do it with dignity, grace, and talent” (9). Ambedkar's time period in history was not just a national movement, but an impact creating a revolution of sorts for all times. Ambedkarism produces novelists, poets, and artists who are today considered some of the finest that Indian literature ever produced, regardless of caste, creed and race.

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