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## Understanding Socio-Cultural Ethos Of The Marginalized People In Selected Regional Dalit Writings

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**Abstract :** Dalits' supposition of the Hindu social system as a sacred and divine organization is the nucleus of their socio-cultural sufferings because it weakens their collective protest against the upper caste oppressors. Indian society is primarily a multi-cultural society wherein the people believe in different religious sects like Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism still Hindu followers comprise the majority. The paper intends to dissect how the literary depiction of Dalits' sufferings, which is a pan-Indian phenomenon, discretely falls between the socio-cultural and religious narrative of the mainstream writers and the socio-economic and political perspectives of the Dalit writers.

**Key-words:** Supposition, nucleus, majority, phenomenon, discretely.

### Introduction

An ideal social institution nurtures harmonious social relationships among the members and socializes their emotional sensibilities in the specific institutional values of present and past over a geographical stretch. A social institution is a group of like-minded people who have a common minimum program to live together with safety and security within and outside of the social group. The socialization process involves the wholeness of all social groups and plays a nucleus role to ascertain their respective identities in the larger framework of society. The smooth process of social transition not only shows its dynamic features but also keeps up the vibrancy of cardinal values of society. Moreover, a vibrant social institution always respects the dissent and individual liberty of its members in incorporating the socio-cultural changes under the existing circumstances. Social institution is "a complex of positions, roles, norms, and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organizing relatively stable patterns of human activity with respect to fundamental problems in producing life-sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals, and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment" (Peters, ix). Whenever social institutions try to impose cultural restrictions over personal liberty it gets opposed in different modes at the individual level. Furthermore, group-level opposition against rigidity brings rapture in any social organization to seek justification for their genuine reasons like fraternity, equality, and liberty. World history is replete with the instances of revolutions initiated at an individual level (due to personal relationships) and community (for community reasons like in the French revolution). The dissents or revolutions within the social group not only oppose the social restrictions but also bring new cultural denominators to society. The famous anthropologist Peter Murdock describes various denominators of culture in "Common Denominator of Culture" but responses of an individual within the social groups determine the cultural traits of a society. The cultural specifications are as under:

The actual components of culture are elements of behaviour –motor, verbal or implicit –which are habitual, in the appropriate context, either to all members of a social group or to those who occupy particular statuses within it. Each such component, whether called a folkway or a cultural trait or item, can be described with precision in terms of responses of the behaving individuals and of the stimulating situations in which the responses are evoked. (Murdock 90)

The paper intends to discuss how these Hindu outcastes come to be known as Dalits despite their different annotated titles and analyzes the anatomy of their exploitation in caste-mechanism in India. Although the social transition remains subjected either to the intensity level of the individual or community level oppositions against cultural stereotypes yet any vibrant society always follows less rigidity of outworn practices and more rationality in the continuation of social practices. However, Dalits always face the social rigidity in caste discrimination is literarily explored through the selected regional Dalit writings.

## Emergence of Dalit Writings

To begin with Marathi Regional Writings in Maharashtra, the term gets impetus from the other regional languages giving an upsurge to the Dalit movement in literature. The use of ‘Dalit’ in their writings assimilates them with the suffering and oppression meted to them in the Hindu social order. Untouchables suffer in caste discrimination not only in socio-cultural and geopolitics that keep them in the peripheral junkyard but it also involves financial, political, socio-cultural, and literary misrepresentation. Caste oppression is one of the most prevalent social practices yet theoretically, no substantial work is taken up to know the reasons for the existence of their miseries except assigning them different nomenclatures. The continuity of untouchability in India is described by Ambedkar, “the Varna system has a religious sanction. Because it has a religious sanction, the Varna system has the fullest social sanction from Hindu society. It is “with no legal prohibition, this religious sanction has more than enough to keep the *Varna* system in full bloom” (vol. 7, 13). Another social scientist Prabhati Mukherjee also describes:

The phenomenon of untouchability underwent a long and gradual process. Its’ emergence is an obscure area in the sense that not much work has been done on it to date. Compared to that, there are more studies on the contemporary situation of the untouchables, and measures adopted for their betterment are all based on these studies. But upliftment of the untouchables or the measures to induct them into the mainstream of Indian life will not be effective unless the reasons for the emergence of untouchability in society are ascertained definitely. (Introduction, 1)

The nomenclatures like the SCs and Dalits describe their cultural assertion from the Hindu Shudras to Dalits in a present socio-cultural and literary scenario, particularly after Phule-Ambedkar activism. Mukherjee defines untouchability, “Ambedkar concluded it was based purely on political and religious grounds” is beyond the classification of *Varnas* system. Hindu socio-religiosity of caste rules (against untouchables) shows not only Dalits’ non-acceptance but also illustrates their socio-cultural stagnation in different time frameworks (Introduction, 5). Dalit Writings explore the socio-religiosity and caste rigidity towards untouchables – why Dalits neither get social acceptance nor become an integral part of Hindu fraternity. As constitution bestows equality for every citizen and makes special provision to stop violation of their rights, it leaves no reason for their exploitation in any aspect. The grey area between legal provisions and social sanctions to these provisions gets subtle manifestation of their sufferings. In Ambedkar and post-Ambedkar era, how Dalits create their socio-literary space finds expression through their religio-political, economic, and ideological consolidation against oppression in Indian society. Dalit literary endeavour poignantly oppose the caste hierarchies and their socio-historical subjugation in present perspectives.

## Dalit Writings in Haryanvi Society

The nucleus of Haryanvi Dalit writings gets inspiration from the Dalit Sahitya Sabha Kaithal by the initiatives of the young writers mainly Rajender Badgujar, Anil Sauda and many other socio-cultural activists who established the literary cell in 2004. Haryanvi story writings get enriched by Sudhir Sagar, Ajmer Kajal, Anil Sauda, Kaushal Panwar and many other writers who not only describe Dalit sufferings but also show Dalit resistance in the contemporary circumstances. Later on, the poetry writings by the Dalit

poets like Prof. Ajmer Kajal, Mahasya Dyachand Myna and Chhajjural Silana and many other poets give vent to their literary exposure on Dalit sufferings in Haryanvi society. The Haryanvi Dalit story writings start the arrival of the story collection by Rajender Badgujar titled *Kasak: Ek Dalit Tees* (2003). Thereafter, many young story writers contribute in the literary genre to express Dalit sensibility in the Haryanvi society. Sudhir Sagar's story "Bhangi Dakatarni" (2003) - (Bhangi Lady Doctor) describes how the Dalit professionals get discriminated despite their doing best for the community. The writer the caste discrimination towards the protagonist who serves the society by proving medical assistance but neither get recognition nor any sympathy for her genuine works. Ajmer Kajal's "Gantantar Ke Nayak" (2012) - (The Heros of the Republic) describes how the Dalit ideologue who not only contributed in the national interest to strengthen the republic nature of India but also make sacrifice their personal interests (whenever required) despite living in the adverse conditions in the countries. Anil Sauda's "Teen Padiyon Ka Saffer" (2013) - (Sufferings of Three Generation) meticulously describes the socio-cultural sufferings of the Dalits throughout the generations. The story writer describes that caste discrimination against Dalits has long history that has not ceased to be even after the independence of the country that encompasses many generations of suffering. In autobiography writing, Santlal Arya's *Mera Atit* (2011) - My Life History describes the long history of caste subjugation of Dalits in the Hindu society. Arya's is the first Dalit autobiography that describes marginalization of Dalits not only limited to the description of his sufferings at the personal level but also represent suffering of Dalit communities. The autobiography is very inspirational to the ignite Dalit sensibility that influences the upcoming generation of Dalit writers. Kaushal Panwar's *Bhawandaron Ke Beech* (2021) - Hounded by the Suffering Saga delineates that Dalit life is all fraught with socio-cultural oppression in the Haryanvi society. Panwar meticulously put forth his sufferings in a very way how Dalits gets either push into in brawl or keep them busy in the unexpected social eventually. Prof. S.K. Chahal's *Jakham Abhi Taja Hai* (2022) have described the suffering saga of Dalits not only in social life but also in professional world that do not get heal their wounds. The writer dissects how Dalit face not only social discrimination but intellectual hatred at every step of life that keep on multiplying socio-cultural and financial problems in their ways. Nafe Singh Kadiyan in "Vyavastha" also describes how a Dalit youth Jeetram not only keeps running around for months but does *bejaar* to the Sarpanch for every time he meets him.

### Dalit Writings in Punjabi Society

Dalits' sufferings push them to explore new options of religious following to hope and they hope in Sikhism. Sikhism is a natural choice for Dalits as the religious fold is established on premise of a casteless society. The Sikh holy book- *Guru Granth Sahib* includes Dalit saints, poets, and philosophers who were contemporary to Baba Nanak and supported the humanist approach of religion in the sixteenth century. As large number of untouchables join Sikhism by disowning Hinduism so their preferences for Sikhism becomes evident for a casteless society. Over a period of time, the notional drifting in Sikhism from conceptual teachings of Nanak put Dalits to experience otherness in Sikhism as well. In unexpected transformation for showing familiarity with the Hindu caste system in social practice, even Sikhism turns oppressive towards Dalits in social practices and religious preaching. The philosophical dismaying in stooping to Hindu caste system in Sikhism (in last two centuries) has many underlying reasons for incessant erosion. But the in recent times, the in-principled casteless society also succumbs to religio-political alignment that makes Dalits suffer in intimate otherness in Sikhism.

Dalit writers in Punjabi delineate the socio-cultural dimensions in other literary genres. Some of the major titles in Punjabi Dalit story writings include Attarjit's "Bathloo Chamiar" (1974), Bhagwant Rashulpuri's life writing "Life Story of Rehmat Mashih Matto" (2009), and Sarup Sialwi's "Pind Ajai Jionde Hai" (2001) describes the subtle caste practices against Dalits in Punjabi society. Des Raj Kali and Bhagwant Rasulpuri also have written a maiden joint short-story collection under title *Chanan di Leak* (1992). Mohanlal Philoriya's stories under titles "Sarkari Vardi" (2000), "Laagi" (2001), and "Mitti da Bojh" (2002) minutely describe the caste discrimination against Dalits in current scenario in Punjabi society. The story "Laagi" describes the intimate otherness against the Dalit protagonist who accompanies his upper caste friend just because of his friendship with him. But when the relative of this upper caste friend come to know of their relative's friend, they just offer a kind of 'help' to the Dalit hero due to his lower in Punjabi society. In novel writings, Desh Raj Kali's *Praneswari* (2008) also describe the caste intricacies of Dalit life in the upcoming issues of Dalits in Sikh society. The writer has not only short stories but also important critical texts that describe the philosophical trajectory in Sikhism especially over the caste issues. Karamjeet Singh Aujala's *Oonch-Neech* (2001) delineates how the caste system in Punjabi

society have not eroded the humanitarian values of the Sikh saints but dismayed from the premise of casteless society. The writer portrays the intimate otherness against Dalits that determine their socio-cultural status even in the present times in Sikh society. Ninder Gill's *Dastaan Dalit Di* (nd- published by Samrat Publications, Moga) and many other Dalit writers have delineated Dalits sufferings and their resistance in Punjabi society.

### **Dalit Writings in Rajasthani Society:**

Rajasthani Dalit Writings gets shaped by the writers who are committed to the social purpose of literary endeavours. The literary endeavour shows the reality of Dalits' sensibility and literary explore their issues not only in the perspective of past but also in the present perspectives. Although the Rajasthani Dalit Writings have produced very creative writers like Ratanlal Sambhariya, Ksum Meghwal, and B.L.Bhagirath yet the Dalit writings have not been successful to establish a counter perspective of social reality that still remains under-carpeted in the royalk glorification. However, the young and promising Dalit writers like present Dr. Gopal Sahar, Charan Singh Pathik have shown their intensity to describe Dalits' issues in the Rajasthani society. Ratan Kumar Sambhariya's writings have defined the different contours of Dalit in the erstwhile feudal society. His story collections describe the social transformation through substantial male and female characters who assert to seek new identity of Dalits in India. His story collections under *Dalit Samaj ki Kahaniyan* (2011) include "Phulwa", "Samaaj Ki Naak", "Hukam Ki Duggi", and "Mukti" shows the undercurrent of changing paradigms of the erstwhile feudal society of Rajasthan. The female protagonist Phulwa in "Phulwa" becomes an embodiment of Dalit resistance in the erstwhile feudal society. In "Mukti" how Dalit protagonist Nanak assigns his son the difficult task to drive the dangerous bison away from the temple road and to clear the way to reach the deity there. His son works hard to take away the bison and makes all efforts paving way leading to the temples at the risk of his son's life. Despite doing his best to make the statue reach the temple, he is stopped by the priest to join the men to unload the statue. Kusum Meghwal is another Dalit writer who has been very particular in portraying the under carpeted realities of Dalits in the modern age where feudalistic order has not paved the way for these people to get their rights. BL Meghwal 'Bhagirath' painstakingly writes on the caste oppression of Dalits in Hindu society in Rajasthan. His works include "Ujjale Ki Agwani" (1991), "Shramikon Ke Muktidaata" (1992), "Peeda Ke Setuband" (1996), Chandi Ri Aadhi Roti (1996), *Bharat ka Itihas: Shraman, Brahmin Sanskritiyon ka Sangharsh* (2005) which substantially describe the new Dalits' issues (education, government jobs, and their representations) in contrast to the old issues (of seeking human rights and basic amenities in inhabitations) in the Rajasthani society. Charan Singh Pathik describes the stubbornness of feudal and upper caste people who go to contrive against Dalits to defeat him at any cost. The story describes how the people from feudal backgrounds not only harass Dalits but also demoralize them just because of their low castes. His story collection *Baat Ye Nahi Hai* (2005) includes various stories like *Dangal*, the finest example of upper caste unease toward Dalits to make them stop attaining public acclaim and acceptability for their merits. Dr. Gopal Sahar's "Saabun ki Batti" appears in the story collection *Bhor Uge Sanjh Dhale* (2003) describes the underlying repercussions of Dalits in Rajasthani culture. In *Saabun ki Batti* writer portrays the inhuman side of the feudalistic mindset of the Rajputs who never think twice before exploiting Dalit females as Dalludi- the protagonist faces various apprehensions of exploitation by the Thakur youths. The story "Kal Koi Mar Jaye" portrays the wretchedness of these poor people who to strive hard to make both ends meet and to save themselves adding to his adversities in climatic calamities. The story depicts the harsh social realities and poverty in which these people are forced to live in. The story describe the expectations of the poor whose concerns concludes to keep alive instead of maintaining of life standards and other desirable requirement in a civil society. Jai Prakash Pandya 'Jyotipunj' in *Kasak Bhookhe Bhil Ki* (1990) shows hollowness of caste arrogance and hypocrisy in high-sounding glorification of the feudal culture of Rajasthani society.

### **Conclusion**

The study puts the new interpretations in the understanding of Indian society through regional life and literature because the local issues constitute the nationality of 'these' Indian nationals too. The rigidity of religious sanction to the Hindu caste system creates a biased narrative to understand Ambedkar's perspective that critically put forth the caste issues in Indian society. Ambedkar' critical thinking of social values is described by the eminent writer, "Ambedkar's social and moral consciousness of society ... Gramsci's intellectual and moral reform' brings closer the two contemporaries over social morality as social

values” (Zene 23). Theorization needs concepts, propositions, language and better understanding of the local socio-cultural nuances. The theory that whatever happens in a society must get reflected in literature finds no takers on Dalits issues in either in English, Sanskrit or Hindi in the mainstream literary description in India. Like Sanskrit, English language and literature long remains an affair of elite and upper castes scarcely bother sufferings of derived sections of society in India. Representation of Dalit sensibilities in regional languages gives an edge to the writers to express the ground reality of their societies but also authenticity of their own experience pin points the repercussion of Dalits’ miseries therein. Dalit experiences never become the basis of social construction in the mainstream literary discourse. The mainstream writers have not found enough literary space to describe Dalits’ concerns over the agricultural land in the Haryanvi society. But Dalit Writings present a critical analysis of incessant caste rigidity and maturity of Indian democracy and present optimism for socio-cultural transformation in future perspectives. The Dalit literary endeavour describe how Dalits' constitutional rights either get diluted or distorted due to upper castes’ rigidity (against the implementation of the SCs corrective provisions). Dalits are given the right to equality in constitutional provisions but these rights get opposed due to lack of social support. The select writers discuss different dimensions of local issues in regional societies where Dalits’ representation are either ignored or marginalised. Moreover, the realities of Dalits’ do not get literary sphere even in regional writings due to mainstream writers’ indifferent attitude towards social sufferings.

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