



AESTHETICS OF PROTEST AND THE RISE OF PHOENIX CALLED DALIT LITERATURE IN TELUGU

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Abstract: This article is an attempt to offer a historical outline of the Dalit Movement Literature in Telugu regions. The article argues that the Dalit Movement in India is an ideological Movement for establishing an egalitarian social order a struggle for their identity and a movement for their human dignity. It propositions explain the internal dynamics of the Movement. Dalit literature as a literature of challenge or revolt advocates human liberation, glorifies human, and challenges the predominance of lineage, race, and caste. Telugu Dalit writers made writing as a weapon and expressed their feelings. The present paper will deal with the emergence of the Telugu Dalit literature as the Dalit writers through various genres articulated their voice of dissent and protest against marginalization, discrimination, suppression and domination by the upper echelons of society.

Keywords: Discrimination, Domination, Egalitarian, Marginalization, Suppression.

Dalit Literature is distinctly different and emerged as an innovative species of writing in India as it articulates the unbearable agony and ruthless exploitation of many of the socially down trodden people in the society. The word “Dalit” etymologically implies “Crushed, or destroyed” which ultimately means “Depressed. The famous 19th-century social reformer and doyen of the socially exploited, ostracized category of the people, Jyothi Rao Phule in Maharashtra used the term “Dalit” in place of the traditional “Sudra” or “Outcaste” Hindus. In fact, it is not a caste implying term but indicates to such people who are suppressed and alienated from the society, Dalit is not a caste but a socio-economic category of the isolated, suppressed people belonging to various groups speaking many languages.

In due course of time, the word Dalit instead of depressed classes acquired recognition in official communication. Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar denounced the derogatory term “Harajan” and preferred ‘Scheduled Caste’ to accord anew dignified, empowering identity in lieu of humiliating epithets such as ‘Outcasts’ or “Untouchables.”

Dalit Literature has had its beginnings in Maharashtra and the land is the cradle of Dalit Literature. It has emerged as a unique innovative species of writing and articulating the perpetual poverty, endless humiliation. In Andhra where innumerable writers have sprung up to voice their dissent, discrimination, and inhuman segregation of section of people with heinous, humiliating terms as “Outcasts”.

Literature written by Dalit writers focusing on their typical social, historical, cultural problems with stress on ‘Man’s inhumanity to Man’ is exclusively termed as Dalit Literature. It promotes the idea of social equality, justice, and resistance to age-old suffering, inhuman discrimination, and economic exploitation. Even though Maharashtra became the cradle of Dalit literature, it extended to other regions like Bengal, Gujarat, Punjab, Kerala, and Andhra where innumerable writers have emerged to voice their dissent, protest, and bruised feelings for over centuries in various forms of literature like poetry, prose, novel, short stories including Autobiographies. Thus, Dalit Literature blossomed in various forms of Literature as their writers have gained a unique special stature along with writers of Black Literature. Both genres have provided an opportunity to make an in-depth study of problems for research.

Remarkable features of Dalit Literature

Dalit Literature is the vibrant voice of the educated youth of the Dalit community. It exhorts, inspires them to shed their attitude, stoical resignation, and mutely accept their fate. They aim to translate the magical mantra of their leader Dr. B.R Ambedkar “Educate, Organize and Agitate” into dynamic action to elevate them on par with the upper castes and foster a sense of egalitarianism among them. They breathe the epithets of “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity” It is this Literature aimed at challenging the status- quo and accord a sense of dignity and equality among them. As Baburao Bagul wrote: Dalit Sahitya is not a literature of vengeance. Dalit literature is not literature which spreads hatred, Dalit Sahitya first promotes greatness-----

Intellectuals among Dalits articulated their anguish through various forms of literature which metamorphosed into a distinct genre hailed as ‘Dalit Literature’. It is primarily meant to ventilate their righteous indignation and agony through a special form of writing.



Dalit Literature depicts the saga of suffering of the dumb. Millions of Indians have been stigmatized, suppressed, and humiliated for centuries. “Man’s inhumanity to Man” is the main theme and the very breath of Dalit writers. Dalit literature has a typical, unique, and exquisite Dalit idiom with a special dialect. According to Limbale, “Dalit Literature is the writing about Dalit with a Dalit consciousness” (Towards Aesthetics of Dalit Literature P19)

The greatest and most profound influence on Dalit literature was Jyothi Rao Phule, the earliest Dalit ideologue to radically question the validity of its caste system. Another supreme leader who stole the hearts and influenced the minds of Dalit writers is Dr. B.R.Ambedkar who proved a fountainhead of inspiration to Dalit Literature.

Dalit Literature represents the Dalit identity and the emergence of a new human like the phoenix bird from the ashes of the dead, humiliating past.

A noted writer Thummapudi Bharathi traces the cause of the Dalit Literature in Telugu: “There is a long past in the creation of Dalit Consciousness in Telugu Literature, perhaps the exploitation of life reaction, pleading, protest, reform, progress and revolution are the causes in the creation of Telugu Dalit Literature”

The Karamchedu massacre provided the impetus to Dalit writers to register their resentment and protest through angry literature. In the words of Katti Padma Rao “Dalit Literature was born out of the oppression, the caste violence.”

During this period of humiliation and Massacre, two Telugu Dalit Journals were established in the 1980s as they are “Nalupu” and “Edureeta” which provided the plank for Dalit scholars to express their feelings of persecution, suppression, and humiliation.

The three pivotal places namely KaramChedu, Neerukonda, and Chunduru gave impetus to Dalit Literature in Telugu. What Bastille was to the French revolution, so did Karam Chedu become the focal point for the Dalit movement and Dalit Literature. Dalit leaders from Andhra came in touch with Ambedkar and formed the “Youth league of Ambedkarites” Kusuma Dharmanna started the weekly “Jaya Bheri” (1937) and he became popular with his anthology of poems “Nalla dorathanamu” as it was the first Dalit poem in Telugu.

In a terse remark, Katti Padma Rao describes Karam Chedu struggle: “KaramChedu Massacre is the benchmark in Telugu Dalit Literature”

The first anthology of Dalit poetry ChikkannavuttanaPata (TheSong Passionate,1955) edited by G.LakshmiNarasiah and Tripura Neni Srinivas was launched and “ PadunekkinaPata” (The Song Turned Sharp,1966) edited by G. Lakshmi Narasiah followed it. Later many works followed this anthology were VidiAakasam(The Alien Sky, 1999), NishaniDikkhara Kavitha (The poem of Protest,1995) Veli Wada (The Ostracized Wada ,1995), Hindu MahaSamudram (The Hindu Ocean,1996) “ChandaludiChathimpu” (The Announcement by Chandala,1996) Maa OoriMaisammma(Maisamma of our village,(1997) Meerevutlu (What is your Caste? 1998) MalleMoggalaGodugu(An Umbrella of Jasmine Buds,1999), are some significant anthologies in Telugu Dalit writing.

Another important contribution has been made by women Dalit writers like GoguSyamala, Joopaka Subhadra, MM Vinodhini, Jajula Gowri, Jally Indira in the 1980s. An excellent Anthology of GoguSyamala in 2004 named as Black Dawn which comprised 52 poems. These Dalit women received accolades from critics.

The women writers have not focused on family, motherhood, body, or sexuality. In fact, they focused on Hindu society. Feminist writers joined together to form a forum and christened it as “Manalo Manam” (Among ourselves). When they failed in their objectives, other forms emerged like Matti Poolu (The flowers of the Earth) and Malo Memu (we among ourselves). In fact, the writings of Dalit women are poignant, powerful, and effective. In the words of Challapalli Swaroopa Rani “The poetry by Dalit women from the Dalit women’s perspective and experiences as Dalit women is far more powerful and has far greater impact than the poetry of the Dalit men or dominant caste women”. (Dalit Women’s Writing in Telugu 21)

In Dalit writing, the short stories occupied a prominent place. They displayed/portrayed the dialect, the social act, orality, culture, and diction. They represented not only Malas and Madigas but also other people like the Chindus, Dakkalis ,Bygaris etc. Some of the illustrious short stories are Beware (1984) Tarum Khan (2009) Hunger (1992) Bathukammma (2006) Our Convent (1989) Gurudakshina (2001) Gundelakka (1997).



Drama as an attractive genre provided ample re-creation and social awareness. The first Dalit play written by BoyiBhemanna “Raga Vashistam” was enacted in 1959. Many of the Dalit plays depict the humiliation, persecution, and agony of the Dalits in society. Among other plays are “Muni Vahanudu” “Nirbaya” “RatnaGarbhamlo Nithya Daridru” “Hari janaddoranam” “Paleru and Coolie Raju”. Paleru was first enacted and it brought a great social awareness among Dalits.

Telugu novels were written even before Independence and Jala Ranga Swamy published “RaituPilla” “Dunnevaniki Bhoomi in 1920’s, G. Kalyan Rao’s Untouchable Spring depicts seven generations of the Dalit life to the readers and Vemula Yelliah’s, Kakka deals with the Telengana dialect, Orality and Dalit diction is presented in the novels, as both the novels were published in 2000 which are prominent and significant in Dalit literature.

Another vital form of Literature is an autobiography that also occupies a significant place in Dalit Literature. It depicts the suppression, exploitation, oppression, and humiliation of Dalits in harsh realities. However, some among them were originally written in English and Our Father Balayya by Yelukati Satya Narayana, Ants among Elephants by, a US-based Dalit woman.

Dalit essay presents mystical, cultural, literary, and historical ideology in the writings. They are successful in creating debates about real-life incidents and present the happenings to the readers.

Many details of the writings of the Dalit writers are compiled with an exhaustive list along with necessary critical evaluation in books entitled The Oxford Indian Anthology of Telugu Dalit writing by Purushottam and Ramaswamy Gita (2015) and in History of Telugu Dalit Literature (2008) by Tummapudi Bharathi.

Telugu writers are effective in voicing protest by the marginalized community. The writings may be classified into two categories as – Dalit writers and Non-Dalit writers. In a way, Non- Dalit writers preceded the Dalit writers as the latter emerged in the wake of the massacres of Dalits which roused ire and the consciousness of the educated Dalits. Their seething rage paved the way for the Dalit writing in Telugu.

During the British period, a prominent writer Unnava Lakshmi Narayana described the plight of Dalits through his novel Mallapali (a colony of Malas) and it was published in 1922 even though banned twice or thrice. Ramadas, a Dalit leads a happy life with a small piece of agricultural land and a few animals. His son Venkata Das, being a revolutionary unceasingly works for the poor, kills the affluent, and distributes the wealth among them. Even though it is hailed as the first novel in Telugu as Dalit writing. Well-known writer and a Dalit, BojjaTarakam refused to recognize it as a part of Dalit writing as it did not depict the feelings and persecution of Dalits in a realistic manner.

GurajadaApparao a noted Telugu poet with his zeal for reformation and dream for a casteless society always felt that there would be progress only through reformation. He strongly advocated through his famous poem “MuthyalaSaramulu” (1910) for communal lunches and intercaste marriages.

Some more writers cropped up during Post- British period. Among them, JandhyalaPapaiah Sastry, a prominent Telugu poet, articulated his poignant, pent-up feelings regarding scavenger girl in his first volume of verse, Udaya Sri (1944). He is indignant at the society for its ruthless exploitation and cruel ill-treatment. He addresses her as a mother, and no one repays for her supreme service and sacrifice.

In his ArunaKiranalu he lambasts the society particularly the upper caste people who are going forward and leaving behind their younger brothers (Dalits) in their march for progress and prosperity.

In his significant work entitled Dalit Bharathi (1993) the poet dealt with the gifted but suppressed persons like Ekalavya, Karna etc in our great epics. In these poems, the poet- expressed his anguish and agony as the fate of millions of suppressed people in Indian society.

Another revolutionary writer, MuppallaRanganayakamma born in Bommidi village in Tadepalligudem of West Godavari used her pen with Marxist outlook. Her novel, Balipeetam, (The Altar of Sacrifice) deals with the problems arising out of an intercaste marriage, Bhaskar, a Dalit marries Aruna a Brahmin girl. When she is on the death bed, he marries her to fulfill her wish of dying as a Sumangali (married woman) surprisingly she recovers after her marriage but cannot live with him, as she finds it difficult to adjust herself with his relatives, soon she recognizes and realizes that his relatives are more humanistic than her people.



Another prominent writer of the British period is Mangipudi Venkata Sarma scored and scoffed at the upper caste people through his sarcastic writing, NirudhaBharatam (1915) and is considered to be the first work of Dalit Literature in Telugu. Though a Brahmin, he fiercely opposed the caste system and castigated the upper caste people for their inhuman, atrocious discrimination by labeling a section of people as Harijans or untouchables. He regarded them as the true sons of the soil. He felt that the exodus of Dalits into Islam and Christianity was mainly due to the aggressive, humiliating treatment of the upper caste towards them. He advised the Hindu society to cleanse itself to prevent the Dalits from leaving their ancient religion. He courageously and candidly remarked that more would be able to thwart the progress of Dalits because of their education and employment.

One has to note that a few more writers from the upper castes have sprung up to voice their resentment and protest against the ill-treatment and humiliation meted out to Dalits for over centuries. Noted among them in the first decades of the 20th century are Garimella Satya Narayana, Puri Panda Appala Swamy and Tripurnami Rama Swamy Chaudhuri. In the second half of the 20th century, Unnava Lakshmi Narayana, Ranga Nayakamma are famous for their writings on Dalit issues.

Dr. Raghupathi Venkata Ratnam Naidu's laudable efforts in creating an awareness regarding the ill-treatment for Dalits and his speech as well as writings exhorted his fellow men to develop love and a sense of Egalitarianism towards the down-trodden, oppressed community.

Similarly, two great movies in Telugu also created a revolution through the theme of intercaste marriage. They are "Mala pilla" (Mala girl) and "Jayabheri" which contained exhortation for inter-caste marriages between Dalits and upper- castes.

Besides the prominent Non-Dalit writers ahead elucidated under the same caption, a few other writers also deserve the attention of readers for their critical and inspiring articles as well as books. Among them are Mr. K.V. Narasimhan whose research work, Towards Emancipation aims at giving real political power to the oppressed natives. G.Vijaya Lakshmi, a noted women writer, made a great contribution to Dalit Literature. She believes in the struggle and fighting for the emancipation of women.

Beti Sri Ramulu, G.LakshmiNarasiah , Juluri Gowri Shankar, and K. Lakshmi Narayana also come under the category of Non-Dalit writers. They have contributed immensely to Dalit Literature. In all their writings, they expressed anguish and agony at the ill-treatment, persecution, humiliation accorded to them by the unjust, cruel, upper castes. All of them yearned for a free society without any discrimination and segregation. Apropos a select Telugu Dalit writers, the two eminent persons who profoundly influenced them are Dr.B.R .Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyothi Rao Phule. It may be observed that Kusuma Dharmanna Kavi is considered to be the first person who eulogized and popularized the name of Ambedkar in Andhra Pradesh. He is recognized as the first Dalit poet in Telugu Dalit literature by the critics of Dalit studies. His well-known writings are 1) NimnaJatiVimuktiTarangani 2) Nalla Dorathanamu 3) Are they Untouchables? 4) A Brief history of Harijans. He preferred the White rule to Indian rule since the exploitation and suffering would be perpetuated under the rule of the brown Sahib.

The most popular poet is Gurram Joshua (1895-1971) his famous works include Gabbilam, Firdausi, and short stories with the caption Swapna Kasha he bitterly criticized the obnoxious caste system and religious fanaticism. His superb poem, Gabbilam (The Bat) through which the poet (the protagonist) woefully articulates his sufferings as an untouchable and appeals to Lord Siva through the bat thus: "When you are hanging upside down in the temple quite close will you be to Siva's ear narrate the story of my suffering to God making sure that no priest is around" (9)

Through his writings, he described the plight and sufferings of Dalits. Another significant, famous Dalit writer is BoyiBheemanna, his well-known works are 1) GudiseluKalipotunnai(The Huts are Burning) 2) Paleru (The Farm Boy), highly popular drama 3) Coolie Raju, another play. His other works are Janmantharavairam(The Enmity Beyond Life), Balayogiyam, DharmamKosamPoratam(Struggle for Dharma), Paramatma(Divine Soul), PanchamaSwaram (The Voice of Dalit) 6) Sankharavam(The Sound of the Conch shell) his great prose poem GudiseluKalipotunnai (the Huts are Burning) is a great poem. The huts stand for the innocence as well as ignorance of the Dalits. He ardently desires such huts that stand for their ignorance should be burnt. He powerfully projected the dormant feelings of the Dalits through his writings.

Gaddala Joseph (1908-1970) was a noted poet and fiction writer, his two important works KannitiKaburu(A Tearful message) and Bharatiyudu (the Indian) deal with Dalit themes. His KannitiKaburu portrays the suffering of the Dalit family. When Rayudu was denied education, he moved away along with seven children to various places. All his sons died leaving behind only one daughter. In this story, the writer feels that birds and animals have cared whereas the Dalits are neglected and humiliated. Bharatiyudu highlights that Dalits are the original inhabitants of the country and others are mere invaders who occupied their places.



A female writer Palhagadda Seeshama being influenced by the idols of Brahmosamaj, wrote books dealing with social reformation, spirituality, and devotion. A few of them include Brahma Vanam Paschatapam (Repentance). She is considered to be the first Dalit writer in Brahmasamaj in her poem Brahmakanya, she asserts that the differences between the upper castes and lower castes the iron wall between the two should be broken.

Another great writer from the Pedagogical profession, former Vice-chancellor of S.V.University Dr. Kolakaluri Enoch wrote 180 poems, 180 stories, 8 novels, and 30 plays so far. He wrote a critical work which received SahitiPuraskaram in 1999 from Potti Sri Ramulu Telugu University. His poetry depicts the life and sufferings of Dalits. The following lines indicate his powerful imagination and profound agony for the down-trodden

“Worshipping footwear”.

I worship the footwear that stood beneath your feet that made you stand:
Protecting your walk and talk.
Made your life a dusky band

Bojja Tarakam, a native of East Godavari a lawyer by profession relentlessly fought for the rights of Dalits. His important poems are Naalage Godavari (Godavari is like Me) and Brazil PrajalaBhuporatam (the Brazilians' fight for Land). In his AyudhamKavali (Need of a weapon) he sarcastically depicts the sufferings of Dalits:

“One person works hard
Someone else receives the fruits
This is the order of the day for ages!”

His poem, ‘The doors of the Temple’ expresses his anguish and desire to touch God by breaking the doors of the temple. Another Dalit writer, Boya Jangiah (1947) won many literary awards, particularly for his novel “Jathara”. His play was KastaSukhalu (Sorrows and joys) in 1963. His poem, the ‘Anguish of a man for the morrow’ exquisitely portrayed the fate of Dalit writing for a better morrow:

The Blackstone I sculptured
Became a god in procession
The person I elected with my ballot
Became a minister and forgot me

Thus, the entire poem articulates his powerful bruised feelings over what the upper-caste people have done to the Dalits.

The most revolutionary writer and powerful speaker among present-day Dalits is Dr.KattiPadmarao soon after the massacre in Karamchedu, he turned into a fiery Dalit zeal of contributing articles and writing books regarding the plight and predicament of the Dalits. His notable works include Jail Gantalu” (The Prison Bells) VimuktiGeetham (the Song of Liberation). beside Neelikeka and “Mulla Kiritam (The Crown of Thorns) all his writings express his deep concern for the Dalits and the centuries of oppression and persecution.

Yendluri Sudhakar, a prominent Dalit prolific writer with sensitivity and profound feeling reminds us of John Keats where he describes an untouchable girl in his “Darky”. “O beauty of my black wine grape”

My black wine canopy! My star Arundhathi!
As my fingers feel the warm drum cheek
My throat sings sleepy songs”
In his other poem “low-caste script” “Can you touch the leper with love””
As gently as you touch a flower?”

His long poem ’KothaGabbilem and ‘Varthamanam’ including research articles besides short stories place him among reputed Dalit writers.

In his writings, one notices his interrogative attitude which provokes the high caste person to ponder over what has done to the Dalits for over centuries.



Unfortunately, many of the historians of Dalit Literature has paid little attention to R. Sundar Singh a lecturer in English and later an I.A.S officer whose poems breathe the pain and suffering of Dalits for over centuries. He is fond of P. B. Shelly's lines. "I fall upon thorns of life and bleed"

A powerful, inspiring speaker and a sensitive poet articulating his agony through music of words. One of his supreme collection of poems "Samathavaram" expresses his profound agony and pent-up feelings for the perpetual injustice, humiliation heaped on Dalits for thousands of years, in his encounter with an old woman, he notices her suppressed resentment and affliction with answers from a stifled voice. The entire book is a lyrical report of the agonized, bruised feelings of the Dalit community and we find in Sundar Singh the tone of the poets of "Angry Generation".

From the eighties onwards Dalit movement has emerged as an alternative autonomous movement with its own philosophical premises. The progressive literature, influenced by Marxism is critical about tradition, religion, and being realistic, aims at a classless society. Dalit literature has emerged as a new literary genre in Telugu. Dalit struggles in Telugu society had created a ground for Dalit literature. The first-generation Dalit writers such as BhoyiBhemanna, Kusuma Dharmanna, Bhagyareddy Varma, JalaRangaswamy, NakkaChinavenkaiah had attempted to bring to light the problems of Dalits and Brahminical exploitation in their work.

Kusuma Dharmanna, NakkaChinna Venkaiah, JalaRangaswamy are considered 'big trio'(thrimurthulu) in Telugu literature. They have evolved a distinct ideology for the annihilation of caste and social equality in contrast to Gandhian nationalist ideology.

Vemula Yellaiah's novel Kakka projects madigaization (dalitisation) as an alternative to the predominant upper caste ideology. The whole story runs in Telangana Dalit dialect.

It not only discusses the Dalit struggle against the upper caste hegemony but also problems within the Dalit community. In Telugu literary world, the Dalit novel is the culmination point for all the alternative struggles.

The novel Panchamam shows the limitation of liberal modernity adopted by the constitution of the nation and felt that it failed to protect the aspirations of educated Dalits in practice. The author in Panchamam argues for the real political power for the emancipation of the exploited lives of the Dalits as in the lives of Ambedkar. The inability is easily exploited by the upper caste in their favor. The novel conveys that there is no other world (maroprapancham, maroprasantam, these phrases are popular with the progressive writer, Sri Sri or Ramarajyam (dream of Gandhi).

In Kakka the central character Sivayya symbolizes the Dalit self as he is educated, conscious, committed, and fights for justice though he appears to be coward and inferior in particular situations due to the caste system. The modern secular democracy becomes a farce in a caste-ridden society. It is believed that the whole social system has to be changed for real democracy.

Dalits need to be armed culturally to win the political struggles. AntaraniVasantam (Untouchable Spring 2000) Kalyana Rao's novel is a landmark in Dalit literary and cultural history. It has celebrated the rich and vibrant cultural traditions of the Dalit community trying to trace their origins.

A good number of Dalit writers have come to the forefront in the 1990s. They have touched all the spheres of life from the perspective of caste. The early writers of Telugu dealt with the pathetic living conditions of rickshaw pullers and prostitutes from Dalit outlook. Some of the newspapers have encouraged Dalit literature. Dalit writers kept the Dalit issues where the Dalit movement was at low ebb. They infused Telugu literature with a new spirit by making use of new idiom and expression bringing respect to the native Dalit dialect. The Dalit writers shattered the constructed myths in literature in both form and content.

Muslim writers also made a conscious attempt to assert their own identity. They came with Jaljala, a collection of poetry. Dalit women also started questioning the caste oppression and gender oppression in this patriarchal society in their work. Nallapoddu (The black Dawn) is an exclusive collection of Dalit women's writings. The Dalit women's intelligentsia in the last decade contributed to the emergence of Dalit feminism offering a sharp critique of the exclusivist, elite feminism. Jupaka Subhadra, GoguShymala, Jajula Gowri, M.M Vinodini, ChallapalliSwarupa Rani, Sujatha Gidla produced a considerable body of writings.

The poetry by Dalit women writing from the Dalit women perspective and based on their experiences as Dalit women is far more powerful and has a far greater impact than the poetry of Dalit male poets or upper-caste women poets. Dalit women's issues have less in common with Dalit men's issues than with those of the upper caste women (Swaroopaa Rani21)



Kusuma Dharmanna, an Ambedkarite thinker was a prolific writer and founder editor of the magazine called Jayabheri which focused on contemporary political and literary trends and aimed at the development of the depressed sections of the society. His Harijanasatakam is of great importance for it gives a clear picture of the socio-economic conditions of the contemporary Dalits. His other works are NimmaJathulu-Utpathi, MadhyapanaNishedhamu, Asurapuram, Antaranivallu, NimmajatiMuktitarangini.

JalaRangaswamy published Malasuddi (purification of Malas) ,Antaranivarevaru?(Who are the untouchables) Madhupisachi, Bhakta Nandanar,(A devotee of Lord Shiva),RytuPilla(Peasant Girl) the first Telugu Dalit Novel and Ahimsa(non-violence). Through his writings, he made Dalits aware of their rights for equality, eradication of social evils such as untouchability, poverty, addiction to alcohol, animal sacrifice, and eating meat. He has written a play called Dunnevaride Bhoomi (land Belongs to the Tiller)

BoyiBhimanna's works describe the inhuman conditions of village life highlighting the need for the establishment of a 'Socialistic pattern of society. Paaleru (A Farm Boy,1940) depicts the struggles and sufferings of Dalits in a village at the hands of landlords. It suggests town-based education and service in the bureaucracy as a way out.

Trends in Dalit studies/Writing

Though the volume of Dalit writing is slender during the British period, it has made significant strides in the post - Independence period with a few great writers belonging to the Dalit class. However, it has made a different approach and became aggressive, militant in its tone and attitude towards the exploiting class in the society.

Dalit Literature has made its progress from its slender output to prolific corpus embodying its values and developing its own idiom with a special emphasis on man's -humanity.

In due course of time, the Dalit literature has evolved a unique, splendid tradition of its own. Right from the British period till now, Dalit literature has successfully depicted man's inhumanity to man and portrayed the exploiting class as walking sculptures with frozen feelings and moribund customs.

In Andhra Pradesh, Dalit writing has gained prominence due to the Dalit Movement which inspired many writers to emphasize the ruthless exploitation of Dalits. The Brahmo Samaj has had its impact and profoundly influenced many Telugu writers to describe the plight and misery of Dalits. The origin of the Dalit Movement in Andhra Pradesh has emerged due to the Jagan Mitra Mandali which was founded in 1920. The Mandali strove hard to enlighten the illiterate and ignorant untouchables through a famous art form known as Harikadha.

Mr. Bagya Reddy with his experience in Jagan Mitra Mandali founded Manya Sangam in 1911 with the sole intention of working for untouchables. The Sangham provides a reading room and also Bhajan Mandals. Similarly, various organizations have sprung up for creating social awareness and a sense of egalitarianism. The causes in the creation of Telugu literature are mainly the exploitation of the Dalits, social injustice, untouchability, and ill-treatment of them.

However, a significant change occurred due to two inhuman massacres which took place in Kanchikicherla, Padarikuppam, Karamchedu, Neerukonda, and Chunduru.

These ruthless massacres awakened and raised the Dalits from their sense of stoical resignation and centuries of social slumber. In a way 1978 brought a sea-change in the outlook and made them militant writers like Black Panthers in Maharashtra. These massacres have enabled the emergence and rebirth of the Dalit Movement in Andhra Pradesh during the 1980s. The word Harijan was abandoned and Dalit became their sacred word and it gained popularity and acceptability. KattiPadmaRao a staunch advocate of Dalits thundered in his eloquent message on July 17, 1994 "As the naxalbari is for Marxist and Leninists revolutions, the Karamchedu incident is for the Dalit social revolution". Antimandal agitation (1990) also strengthened the unity of Dalits as well as the OBC's.

Dalits faced humiliation and violence unleashed by the upper caste people in Chunduru. These brutal massacres united and brought all Dalits together and they chanted the slogan "Not welfare but self-respect". It was coined in the first Dalit Mahasabha in 1985 after Karamchedu massacre proved to be the turning point in Dalit Literature. The Dalit literature contains themes pertaining to protests against the pyramid like structures of caste, social indignation, self-respect, and ruthless exploitation. These ideas are amplified and elucidated by Dr. B.R Ambedkar in his Annihilation of Caste. He sarcastically remarked in resentment "The Indian society was formed with an ascending scale of reverence and descending scale of contempt". Jadav aptly observed "From the socio-cultural aesthetics points, this post 80s phenomenon needs to be studied seriously and deeply". (Jadav39)



For Telugu Dalit writers the massacres of Dalits in certain parts of Andhra brought an awakening and roused their social ire and consciousness to write indignant flaming verse against the cantankerous attitude of the upper castes.

Telugu Dalit writers have spread Dr B.R Ambedkar's philosophy to the villages. Dr. M.N. Wankhede asserts that "The pens of Dalit writers are ready as levers to lift the people's democracy out of the mud of anarchy. "The Telugu Dalit writing is aimed at removing social injustice by reflecting the harsh realities of Dalit life.

Telugu Dalit writers captured the whole of India to imprint the letters of their agonies in the past and dreams of the future. All Dalit writers in all parts of India including Anna Bhau Sathe say in one voice, "Strike with might to change the world." Finally, it can be said that Dalits will feel reconciled only when caste discrimination and untouchability are eradicated in total. This alone ensures a sustainable, vibrant democracy that includes all its citizens of the country.

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Last Saved On: 3/30/2021 10:11:00 PM
Last Saved By: Murali Korada
Total Editing Time: 100 Minutes
Last Printed On: 4/8/2021 10:05:00 PM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 8
Number of Words: 5,250 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 29,931 (approx.)