

Representative Politics And Dalit Literature: A Comparative Study On Bama And Chandramohan

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ABSTRACT

Literature is a prominent tool which perennially fosters social transformation. Literature and society in this way are intrinsically linked together and weaves a bond-literature affect society and society affects literature. For instance the preaching of Buddha and Jesus has weaved a cocoon of new identity in the age of orthodoxy and it has questioned the perennially accepted customs and traditions and still we have *Jatakkas* and *Bible* as forms of literature which designs the social structure. Sometimes literature is questioned by society and vice versa for which neither give answers. The literature of the marginalized creates such space which tries to embody an identity of encapsuled life in the myriad nuances of social structure. The present study is a comparative analysis of two Dalit writers—Bama and Chandramohan. This is an endeavor to show how they miniature the macrocosm of the Indian society in their works.

India is one such country which perennially has the social disparities and demarcations in the name of religion, caste, creed, race and so on. There is a division of haves and have-nots in the economic criteria that is measured by the poverty line; Hindu, Muslim, Christian and so on in the religious criteria measured by the people's beliefs and practice of life. All religions have disparities and discriminations in the name of race: Christianity is developed at the backdrop of Judaism giving birth to two races of people—Jews and Christians; the Muslim community is universally divided as Shiya and Sunni; Buddhism is divided into Mahayana and Heenayana; Jainism as Swetamparas and Thikamparas and so on. Hinduism, the official religion of India though not constitutionally acclaimed so is dived into many segments like vaishnavism and saivism; actually it is an undeniable fact that Hinduism itself is the unification of many faiths like nature worshipping, memorial worshipping, sprit worshipping, idol worshipping and so on. The worst disparity fostered by the Hinduism is the disparity and discrimination of caste and gender; even between the two castes is worse.

Caste is the operational unit of Indian society; Indian society is stratified by the operation of caste. It is assumed that people cannot be identified scraping the caste. Caste sometimes spreads its gruesome wings and treacherously claims many lives through brutal butchering. Some people may argue the heterodox faiths of India—Buddhism and Jainism, Chirstianity and Islam has no caste discrimination but they fail to understand that there is demarcation of people in Christianity as Dalit Christians which confirm the operation of caste system among the Christians of India and Dalit Muslims converts are not accepted by the mainstream Muslims, though there is a question on the identity on who the mainstream Muslims are in India. The heterodox faiths and the foreign imported religions have guzzled the caste hierarchy found in the orthodox faith of Indian—Hinduism and they also have grown into a caste hierarchized society giving birth to new structural hierarchy as Christian Nadar, Christian chettiyar, Dalit Christian and so on. Caste based religion has come into existence as a matter of de rigueur.

Many people have created literary writngs about the caste system insisting no difference based on caste and birth by which caste is determined. In Nalvazhi, Avvaiyar says:

There are only two castes

In the world where everything is predisposed on the basis of Justice

Those who facilitate charity are big shots and those who do not are prone to be abusive

(translation by the scholar)

The theme of which says that there are only two caste—Big shots and abusive which is decided or determined by their willingness to charity. Bharathi, the Tamil poet of twentieth century also enunciates:

Kakkai kuurvi engal jaathi

Neel kadalum malaiyum engal kootam.

[Even crow and sparrow are of our caste

The wide sea and mount are of our fraternity]

(translation by the scholar)

Bharathi, by saying so depicts the Advaita Philosophy proposed by Adhi Sankara which insists oneness. Even after reading and understanding these facts we witness honour killings which shows that people are not ready to accept the oneness and uniformity among people but in duality, they have faith which in Saussurean concept enunciated as binary—high and low or pure and impure, the two binary sects often associated with the segregation of people into myriad forms of caste.

Chandramohan of our century also writes about the political and social truths in his poems which has a backdrop of caste and gender. He is defined as a Dalit poet. He reflects the socio political struggles of the marginalized people, the working class and the nomadic outcastes of the world who are victimized who wage a relentless war to ascertain their identity and representation in the public sphere. Chandra Mohan is one of the budding Indian English poet who has brought out a volume of poetry entitled *Warscape: Verses*. The verses, written by him have a leftist tone representing the marginalized and the suppressed and their struggle for survival and identity. His work has been profiled in leading journals and magazines *New Asia Writing*, *Mascara Literary Review* and *about Place Journal*, *Thumb Print Magazine* and *The Sentinel*. Literature not only reflects the society and the life of people as such it also instructs by weaving a criticism of the life of people.

To Mathew Arnold, Literature is “criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such criticism . . .” (67). The post-colonial era has witnessed the revolutionary writings of lesser-heard people and new writers emerge from the oppressed and suppressed class of Indian society, as the Indian society is stratified by many external factors like caste, religion and creed. People are graded based on their caste and religion. The poets from the disadvantaged group powerfully argue for their equal rights on par with the so-called upper-castes. These poets “began aggressively and systematically challenging the canons of middle class and upper-caste literary establishments . . .” (Dharwadekar 204). Chandramohan proves to be not an exception, while reflecting the angst and pangs of the marginalised people. His poems are an attack on the bourgeois society and its hypocrisy. He deals with many thematic concerns ranging from Dalit identity to female infanticide. This paper analyses the variegated nature of themes dealt with by the poet.

Caste is the impediment that is deep rooted in the Indian soil with the advent of the nomadic clan “Aryans.” In the process of aryanization they have tried to uphold their power over the aboriginals, whom they have suppressed and called them by the name of “Dasyus.” Nehru in this connotation writes:

Previously, in the ages since the Aryans had come down to what they called Aryavarta or Bharatvarsha, the problem that faced India was to produce a synthesis between this new race and culture and the old race and civilization of the land. To that the mind of India devoted itself and it produced an enduring solution built on the strong foundations of a joint Indo-Aryan culture. Other foreign elements came and were absorbed . . . That mixture of religion and philosophy, history and tradition, custom and social structure, which in its wide fold included almost every aspect of India and which might be called Brahmanism or (to use a later word) Hinduism, became the symbol of nationalism. (138)

These disturbing elements in common produces the first stratification based on caste in the name of “Varnashrama dharma.” Though some scholars opine that this system is not connected with the present day casteism, one can undeniably conclude that this system is the forerunner of the caste system that unveils patriarchy in the Indian society present day.

Society unleashes violence against Dalits, they are looked worse than the status of cattle. Especially Dalit women are raped; they are raped not because they are women but because they are Dalits and their angst is not catered within the Indian society by any social welfare organization and the government is not in the position to attend their case. The poet Chandramohan reflects his pangs of the tribal women in his thought provoking poem, “The Rape and Murder of a Tribal Girl”

No newspaper carried a headline or a photo feature,

No youth were roused to protest,

No city's life came to a standstill,

No furore in the parliament,

No nation's conscience was haunted,

No prime Minister addressed the nation,

No TV Channel discussions
 No Police officials were transferred or suspended,
 No candlelight marches,
 No billion women rising,
 A tribal girl was raped and murdered (1-11)

Usually the nation is affected the political parties stage protest for humanity, when it is shattered even in ht nearby land. When there is an attack on the school children in Pakistan recently we have held a candle light march and when Srilanka wages war against the Tamils our political leaders have observed fast and demonstrated protest in the nation's streets. Whereas a tribal girl is raped and murdered there is no protest over that in terms of humanity. The people are not given due respect. They treated as slaves to attend the needs of the upper caste people. On talking about the reception of Dalit wrtiting Bama explains in the "preface" of her work *Karukku*, with which the new genre, Dalit literature flourished, "Literary critics read it and analysed it, asking each other how to categorize it. They decided finally, that it was a new genre in Tamil literature. Many praised it, many scorned it. After all the noise had died down . . ." (ix). But now this writing is overwhelmingly welcomed and the critics have began to read it and many researches are being carried out in terms of anthropological study and the poet writes:

I bury deep my agonies thrusts on the keyboard bombard thousands of Ids of my brethren hiding in a camouflage of borrowed surname and virtual anonymity that stench my fermented vomit is scanned words scrubbed clean off the guilt that might sting the inner recesses of reader's heart printed in neo liberal fonts displayed in air-conditioned bookstores marketed via amazon.com and flipkart.com plots and subplots tirelessly bantered in classrooms and conferences as status froths on hourglasses.

This shows that the tendencies of the readers are beginning to change towards the readind; they consider the angst and suffering of Dalits as material for their study and significantly there is no social change, as literature is considered as the best tool for effecting social change. Manual scavenging is the problem which ostracize a group of people from society. Even in these times of modernization there is a custom that people indulge themselves in manual scavenging. In 1935 Mulk Raj Anand published a novel, *Untouchable* by name in which he has discussed the cruel nature of unntouchability and the status of untouchables. Those people are ostracized from the commons in the society since they clean the dirt; the very touch of these people is enough to pollute the caste-Hindus and consequently they are forced to wear a bell around their waist to inform others that they are Dalits to avoid such encounter. The peot also discusses the problem of manual scavenging in his poem in which he brings out the agony of scavengers and their status in society.

The stinking bondage of unfreedom,
 The unillumination of night soil
 the dark invisible larger self of the sickle crescent of a shining nation
 A once-in-a life time illumination of starlight
 and the high tide of hope
 of justice and freedom rhymes with shining full moon of a nation
 (Unfreedom of Nightsoil)

The problem of untouchability is universal that it never lasts from Indian society and it is deep rooted in its structure. Though there are many acts and ordinances that abolishes the prevalence of untouchablity, still in our country people witness ostracization and exploitation in the name caste.

Female infanticide is the deliberate killing of newborn female children or the termination of a female foetus through selective abortion The practice has been the cause of death for millions and is a major cause of concern in several nations such as China andIndia being cited by genocide scholar Adam Jones as notable examples. Jones argues that the low status in which women are viewed in patriarchal societies creates a bias against females.

In 1990, Amartya Sen, writing in the *New York Review of Books* estimated that there were 100 million fewer women in Asia than would be expected, and that this amount of "missing" women tell us, quietly, a terrible story of inequality and neglect leading to the excess mortality of women. It is widely accepted that the numerical worldwide deficit in women is due to gender specific abortions, infanticide and neglect. The dowry system in India is one given reason for female infanticide; over a time period spanning centuries it has become embedded within Indian culture. Although the state has taken steps to abolish the dowry system, the practice persists, and for poorer families in rural regions female infanticide and gender selective abortion is attributed to the fear of being unable to raise a suitable dowry and then being socially ostracized.

In 1857, John Cave-Brown documented for the first time the practice of female infanticide among the Jats in the Punjab region. Data from the census during the colonial period and from 2001 propose that the Jat have practiced female infanticide for 150 years. In the Gujarat region, the first cited examples of discrepancies in the sex ratio among Lewa Patidars and Kanbis dates from 1847.

In 1789 during British colonial rule in India the British discovered that female infanticide in Uttar Pradesh was openly acknowledged. A letter from a magistrate who was stationed in the North West of India during this period spoke of the fact that for several hundred years no daughter had ever been raised in the strongholds of the Rajahs of Mynpoorie. In 1845 however the ruler at that time did keep a daughter alive after a district collector named Unwin intervened. A review of scholarship has shown that the majority of female infanticides in India during the colonial period occurred for the most part in the North West, and that although not all groups carried out this practice it was widespread. In 1870, after an investigation by the colonial authorities the practice was made illegal.

In India, since 1974 amniocentesis has been used to determine the gender of a child before birth, and should the child be female then an abortion can be carried out. According to women's rights activist Donna Fernandes, some practices are so deeply embedded within Indian culture it is almost impossible to do away with them, and she has said that India is undergoing a type of female genocide. The United Nations has declared that India is the most deadly country for female children, and that in 2012 female children aged between 1 and 5 were 75 percent more likely to die as opposed to boys. In the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, during British rule, the practice of female infanticide in Tamil Nadu among the Kallars and the Todas was reported. More recently in June 1986 it was reported by *India Today* in a cover story *Born to Die* that female infanticide was still in use in Usilampatti in southern Tamil Nadu. The practice was mostly prevalent among the dominant caste of the region, Kallars.

The poet also brings out the evil of female infanticide in just two lines; those lines evoke pity and pathos among the reader, very powerfully packed with specially coined words. It is the atrocity that a mother wreaks to her child. "The umbilical cord of her mother/ Twisted around her neck" (Female Infanticide). The umbilical cord feeds the child. In placental mammals, the umbilical cord is a conduit between the developing foetus and the placenta. During prenatal development, the umbilical cord is physiologically and genetically part of the foetus. The umbilical vein supplies the foetus with oxygenated, nutrient-rich blood from the placenta. Conversely, the foetal heart pumps deoxygenated, nutrient-depleted blood through the umbilical arteries back to the placenta. Thus the umbilical cord takes an active role in the development of foetus in to a child. The poet ironically uses the word that it twists around the neck of the child and thereby causing death to the child.

There are many concerns that the poet concerns about in the society. As Satchidanandan observes: Chandramohan's poems are political statements about the state of our nation, its agonies and its struggles. He shuns the ivory tower and the solitary road and does not mince words when it comes to laughing at the hegemonic classes and groups. The ignorant poet identifies himself with the poor and the marginalized and the unfortunate. He is a seeker of justice and the singer of an egalitarian and humane order we need to create in our society. (Blurb)

In this collection of the poem the poet expresses his anger on the prevalent social issues. Hailing from the depressed class of people he emphasises re-historicising the elements related to the suppresses people. He affirm that his poems are historical documents in his poem "History(4)":

My poems are solutions to cryptic little knots in the string of the kite flying untethered in the labyrinth of history.

Chandramohan loudly declares, at times with pride, at others with disgust, his location in lower rungs of multiple stratification system of Indian society; he dismantles the structure of mainstream values and searches the alternate values.

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