



# Dalit-Concept As A Theory Of Analysis: Social And Literary Context

Dr. Pabitra Roy\*

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## ARTICLE INFO    ABSTRACT

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To solve any research problem — be it science, society, literature etc. — the primary task is to collect appropriate data. To analyze the collected data, there need some proper theories. One such theory is Dalit Thought. At the heart of the Dalit thought, the people from the lower strata of society, who have been exploited, deprived or oppressed by the powerful upper classes since time immemorial. This idea of lower class and upper class was formed in our minds mainly from the aspect of caste and social position. From that point of view, there is a close relationship between Dalit thought and Subaltern thought. However, Dalit thought is currently being transformed into a theory of sociology and literary analysis, which is almost same with Subaltern theory. However, there are some differences between these two concepts, such as casteism at the root of Dalit thought on the contrary in the Subaltern thought, only the upper-class and lower-class distinction is seen.

**Key words:** race, caste, exploitation, exploited, deprived, exploiter, upper class, lower class, class conflict.

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## 1. Introduction

In this article, our attempt is to construct a theory rather analyse of a particular subject matter. When we think of a particular point of view and approach to analyse a Subject, then our mind searches for a theory or method. When we select a subject as a research problem or topic, then the first thought that comes to our mind is that, from which point of view we shall consider the matter. So, first we have to choose the right theory.

## 2. Theory or method of analysis

There are two main aspects of methodology in any research. First one is data collection and second is analysis of collected data. Our main aim is the second one, i.e. the method of analysis of the collected data.

### 2.1. Definition of Theory

There are various opinions about 'theory'. In ancient times the theory was considered unrealistic and imaginary. Many theories in ancient times were based on assumptions. For that reason, the opportunity to verify the truth of many theories may not have been met in all cases. So it was considered that, a theory is a collection of propositions, which can be examined on the base of reality. In the course of time, various research projects followed specific Well-thought-out frameworks and when those frameworks came to be followed in almost the same way in different subjects, then all those concepts continue to be identified as a reliable theory of analysis of a topic or problem. In this way, the theory became connected with the reality and became the direction to solve the practical problem.

Thus, a concept by which data can be analyse in criticism or research, which includes a deeper thought or impression of concept, is capable to provide a solution or a particular explanation of the same and different problems or issues in a similar manner, can be called theory.

### 2.2. The need of theory building

No theory can be applied mechanically. Always it has to be verified and applied through new to newer experiments. Otherwise, the mechanical pursuit of any theory is bound to turn into repetition of the same process. In order to avoid it, an established theory needs to be apply in a new way or some other new theory needs to be search or invent. Again, no theory is matured from the beginning, it becomes matured gradually by applying in various fields. So it takes some time for an idea or perspective to convert into a theory. Once it becomes well established, it becomes old, then we start looking for novelty in it, if not found, then attempt to

construct a new theory. Thus, many theories were established, by showing imperfection of another theories, such as romanticism/realism/surrealism, psychology/psycho-analysis theory/stream of consciousness theory, structuralism-post-structuralism etc. and so many other theories were invented in contradictory or complementary form.

Moreover, if we look at this topic under discussion, we will see that theories like Communism, Marxism etc. have been created for the oppressed society. The subaltern theory came from the same source. After all, why there is a need for Dalit concept or theory is a big question. If we think a little deeper, we shall understand that the three isms or theories seem to be almost the same, but their scope and propagation is not the same and the central problem and the applied method are not exactly the same. As the individual does not prevail in Marxism, there is only class concept; again, the subaltern concept is much more the same, but in this theory an individual is considered as a class.

### 3. Subaltern Theory and Dalit concept

While Marxism has been discussed widely, Subaltern concept is relatively new and under-discussed. In English, the term 'subaltern' is used in the military, where the officers work under the captain are called 'subalterns'.<sup>1</sup> It generally means 'subordinate' in English. Italian communist leader Gramsci used the term 'subaltern' to mean 'working (majdoor) class'. But not only that, he called the lower class as 'subaltern' as opposed to the upper class of the class-divided society. That is to say, in Marxist discourse, the 'subaltern' class is mentioned in the sense of 'proletariat' as opposed to the 'bourgeoisie' class. So it is clear that 'subaltern' is a lower class in relation to a higher class. From this thought subaltern studies was born in India. Gradually, it was established as a theory through various setbacks. So it can be said that 'subaltern' concept was born from Marxist concept.

However, in a class-divided society, those who are exploited, deprived and oppressed by the upper class are identified as the lower class. In this regard, it is noteworthy that this spirit cannot be said to be completely new in our country. In our country too, the communist spirit has existed since ancient times. We also find the communist spirit in the literature of Rabindranath Tagore or Nazrul Islam, which has roots in Indian Upanishadic (Vedanta) philosophy. Which is reflected in Rabindranath's 'Raja', 'Raktkaravi', 'Chandalika' etc. plays; Poems like 'Brahman', Pujarini; It is seen in Nazrul's poems like 'Samyavadi', 'Coolie-Mozur' etc.

If we look at 'Ramayana' or 'Mahabharata' there are also many examples of 'communist' philosophy. Wherever there is an outcry against the oppression of the lower class of society, we shall find the communist spirit. So whether indigenous or imported, the 'lower class' consciousness is rooted in communist consciousness. Just as the word 'sexism' has become quite popular in the field of feminist consciousness, in the same way the underclass consciousness has been born out of class discrimination.

On the other hand, the 'Dalit' consciousness was born even after that, it can be said that it was at the hands of the lower class consciousness. On the surface it would seem that there is no difference between these two theories, both ideologies stand for the proletariat. But what is the goal of both consciousness? A subtle difference between the two theories will come to light when looking for the answer to this question.

#### 3.1. Main goals of subaltern concept

We have already said that according to the Subaltern theory there are two classes of human society — the upper class and the lower class. But in our social system, economically there are many strata of society. Such as upper class, upper middle class, middle class, lower middle class, lower class or proletariat. In such social system selecting the 'Subaltern class' is a difficult task. Those who are agitating on behalf of the Subaltern class, they only consider the lower class and proletariat as Subaltern. But naturally the question may arise that the Subaltern class can only exist in the proletariat, are they only exploited or oppressed by the upper class? The answer is that Subaltern concept is depending on situation. Comparatively, if a lower class person is oppressed or exploited by a higher class person, this can be judged by Subaltern theory. For example, if a wife is abused by her husband, the husband is superior and the wife is Subaltern, but if the reverse happens, i.e. if the husband is abused by his wife, then the wife is superior and the husband is Subaltern class. If a subordinate employee is tortured by a boss or a superior employee in an office, then the boss or superior employee is superior and the subordinate employee is 'subaltern'. But if the opposite happens, a bully subordinate is able to exploit or oppress the superior by exploiting any weakness, then the subordinate may become the superior. In this way, wherever there is a situation of oppression or exploitation, be it at any level of society, high, middle or low, we can identify these two classes - the upper class and the lower class.

#### 3.2. Main aim of Dalit Concept:

The extent of Dalit concept is not situational like Subaltern concept. Mrinmoy Pramanik, editor of the book 'Dalit Sahitya Charcha', said "Dalitēra jībana, dalitēra lāñchanā, dalana ō drōha, brāhmaṇyatantra ō sē'i tantrēra ādarśa paricālita rāṣṭriya nītra sbarūpa udaghātana, aspr̥ṣyatā ō asāmyēra birud'dhē laṛā'i, maryādā pratiṣṭhāra laṛā'i ityādi biṣaya prāntika janagōṣṭhīra kōna'ō lēkhaka dbārā racita yē sāhityē thākabē sē'i sāhityakē'i sādharmaṇabhābē dalita sāhitya balā yāya"<sup>2</sup> [The life of Dalits, the insults of Dalits, oppression and betrayal, revelation of the form of state policy guided by Brahmanism, struggle against untouchability and inequality, struggle for status, etc., is written by a writer from a marginalized community, the literature can be generally called Dalit literature.]

From Mrinmoy Pramanik's statement, it is understood that the literature of any author belonging to the Dalit community can be termed Dalit literature if there are themes centered on Dalit life. But time will tell how acceptable this comment is. We can only raise some informative arguments that Dalit life is also reflected in the literature of many famous non-Dalit writers, such as Rabindranath's 'Chandalika', 'Pujarini', Saratchandra's 'Abhagir Sarga', 'Pandit Mashai', 'Pallisamaj' etc. , poems, stories or novels. Also some stories of Manik Bandyopadhyay, the novel 'Padma Nadiman Majhi', several novels and stories of Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay have the context of Dalit society. Now whether these can be considered as Dalit literature or not, the answer to that question is difficult to say in simple words.

#### 4. Dalit concept as a theory

But when looking at Dalit concept as a theory, one should look at the core of that theory, not its creator. That is, the consideration is the analysis of Dalit life in literature, whether its author belongs to Dalit society or not, should not be taken as the main issue. Because, the main goal of Dalit concept is to criticize or oppose oppressive forces on behalf of Dalit society. Of course, it is needless to say that as much as a real Dalit can accurately portrays his own pain, there remains a big question mark as to how much a non-Dalit person can feel and understand that pain from outside. However, the aim of Dalit theory is to find information about the miseries of Dalit social life in literature and analyze it through Dalit concept. Again, if we apply Dalit concept in the social field, then we need to find out the social position of Dalits, the exploitation, rule, oppression, etc. of the people and how to build a bold Movement against all these injustices. However, movement through analytical theory does not mean going out on the streets by organizing a party, it is essentially a critical movement, which can support social and physical movements, It can determine the dynamics of social movements, record the history of social movements; above all, it can judge the benefits and disadvantage of physical social movements.

#### 5. Conclusion

In the above discussion, we have briefly tried to present the nature of Dalit theory. I have tried to briefly highlight how literary or social issues can be analyzed through this theory. I have also tried to briefly highlight whether Dalit consciousness can be analyzed through subaltern theory. There are several other aspects of this theory that can be highlighted in the farther studies. For example, if feminist concept can be analyzed through Dalit concept, then there is ample scope to think about what its methodology would be. In this case, if a woman is considered as Dalit in a male-dominated society, then the analysis may be of one type, while if the position of women in Dalit society is judged, the method may be of a different type.

#### Source:

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