

## **Suffering of the Dalits in Maharashtra, INDIA through the Indian Dalit Literature: Especially focusing on the Writing of the Great Literary Man- Arjun Dangle**

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### **Introduction:**

Dalit literature forms an important and distinct part of Indian Literature. One of the first Dalit writers was Madura Chennaiah, the 11<sup>th</sup> century cobbler-saint who lived in the reign of Western Chalukyas and who is also regarded by some scholars as the father of Vachana poetry. Another poet who finds mention is Dohara Kakkaiah, a Dalit by birth, six of whose confessional poems survive.

Modern Dalit Literature: In the modern era, Dalit literature received its first impetus with the advent of leaders like Mahatma Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in Maharashtra, who brought forth the issues of Dalits through their works and writings. This started a new trend in Dalit writing and inspired many Dalits to come forth with writings in Marathi, Hindi and Punjabi.

Dalit Literature is distinct part of Indian Literature: Literature about the Dalits, the oppressed class under Indian Caste System forms an important and distinct part of Indian Literature. Though Dalit narratives have been a part of the Indian Social narratives since 11<sup>th</sup> century CE onwards, with works like Cekkilar's Periya Puranam documenting Dalit life. Dalit Literature emerged into prominence and as a collective voice after 1960, starting with Marathi and soon appeared in Hindi, Kannada, Telgu and Tamil Languages, through self narratives like poems, short stories and most importantly autobiographies known for their fierce and often stark realism, and for its contribution to the Dalit Politics.

**Encyclopedia:** Dalit is a self designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as low caste. Dalits are a mixed population of numerous caste groups all over South Asia, and speak various languages. While the caste system has been abolished under the Indian Constitution (4, there is still discrimination and prejudice against Dalits in South Asia. Since Indian independence significant steps have been taken to provide opportunities in jobs and education. Many social organizations have encouraged proactive provisions to better the conditions of Dalits through improved education, health and employment.

Influence of Dr. Ambedkar's thought: A common can be known as uncommon by the uncommon work and Dr. Ambedkar is the best example in front of many Dalits in India. Dr. Ambedkar's thought philosophy of life, and sacrifice and commitment for bringing a revolutionary change in life of the weaker section of the society. Somewhere improvement is there, for getting a little success a lot of struggle and pains they have to go through. The system is not allowing them to bypass. Caste is like a castle and day by day caste system is strengthening. Suffering is the heart and part of the Dalit Literature. All other writers can write about their joy, pleasure, comfort, happiness and luxury of their life but Dalit writers are not covering such areas because these areas are out of their coverage area.

The selected literary man is the founder member of 'Dalit Panthar' a militant organization. His writing focuses on past, narrates present and glides towards the future of Dalits. He has a clear cut vision for the ideal Indian Society in which caste will not be there. Many of the writers and scholars have compared Indian Dalit Studies with the studies of South Asia, Africa and Middle East.

### **About the Writer Arjun Dangle:**

Arjun Dangle born in Mumbai in 1945 holds an M.A. from University and is an important name in the politics and literature of Maharashtra. A founder member of the militant Dalit youth organization. The Dalit Panthers, he is at present the president of the State Unit of the Republican Party of India. Dangle's collection of poems- 'Chhavani Halte Ahe' won the Maharashtra State Award in 1978. He has also published a collection of short stories- 'Hi Bandhavarhi Manse and his Dalit Sahitya- Ek Abhyas, a critical work is a standard reference book in many universities of Maharashtra. He has recently published 'Dalit Vidroha' a collection of essays on politics and literature. Many of his poems and short-stories have been translated into various Indian and Foreign Languages.

Past and Present Sufferings of Dalits in India-through the Literature of Arjun Dangle:

True picture of Indian Dalits depicted by Arjun Dangle in his Marathi poem 'Kranti' and it has been translated in English as a 'Revolution' by Jayant Karve and Eleanor Zelliot. The poem 'Revolution will take us to the past four decades and this piece of literature will help others to understand the suffering and feelings of Dalits in India.

### **'Revolution'**

"We used to be their friends  
When, clay pots hung from our necks  
Brooms tied to our rumps  
We made our rounds through the Upper Lane  
Calling out 'Johar Maybap'  
We fought with crows  
Never even giving them the snot from our noses  
As we dressed out the Upper Lane's dead cattle  
Skinned it neatly  
And shared the meat among ourselves  
They used to love us then  
We warred with jackals, dogs, vultures- kites  
Because we ate their share  
Today we see a root to top change  
Crows-jackals-dogs-vultures-kites  
Are our closest friends  
The upper Lane doors are closed to us.  
Shout victory to the Revolution  
Shout victory  
Burn, Burn those who strike a blow at tradition".

a) **'Poisoned Bread'**-Silenced for centuries by caste prejudice and social oppression, the Dalits of Maharashtra have, in the last sixty years, found a powerful voice in Marathi Literature. The revolutionary social movement launched by their leader Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, was paralleled by a wave of writing that exploded in poetry, prose, fiction and autobiography of a raw vigour, maturity, depth and richness of content and shocking in its exposition of the bitterness of

their experiences. One is jolted too, by the quality of writing of a group denied access for long ages to any literary tradition. This important collection is the first anthology of Dalit Literature. When published in 1992, 'Poisoned Bread' was the first anthology of Dalit Literature. The writers more than eighty of them presented her in English translations are nearly all of the most prominent figures in Marathi Dalit Literature, who have contributed to this unique phenomenon.

**b) 'Homeless in my Land'**-Translation from Modern Marathi Dalit short-stories. The short-stories in this first English anthology forcefully convey the "differentness" of dalit literature. The protagonists of these stories are shown struggling for survived at their different levels-confronting limitations, abject poverty, misery and brutality and fighting a brave battle. The following conversation and the description from the story will bring the real picture of dalit's sufferings in India.

'What can I say, Saab? We're from Bangla Desh.'

Bangla Desh?

'Yes'.

'But there's quite a massacre going on there'.

Instantly the headlines in the newspapers floated before his eyes.

'Of course, there's a massacre; we're also fighting back.'

'Your name?'

'Surji'.

'And what other news from there?'

'We're fighting with all our might'.

'Then what brings you to Bombay today?'

'Saab, we have our relations in Bombay'.

Bangla Desh- massacre- refugees. A whole series of scenes passed before his eyes. A man leaves Bangla Desh to see his relations in Bombay. The government of India gives shelter to thousands and millions of the homeless. And here I am, a citizen of this country! A woman in a village drew water from the well of the high-caste, so they beat her up. They ordered all Mahars to empty the well. A young man like me trying to break out of this casteism couldn't stand all that I resisted. The village was furious. They beat up the Mahars as they do their beasts. They stopped giving them work, they wouldn't allow them water, food- just because they were untouchables. They told me to beg forgiveness, to grovel and prostrate myself before them, confessing my wrong doing. Or else, they threatened to burn the entire Mahar settlement. Just because we are untouchables! I argued, I protested- for my rights. But my own mother- she took my younger brother in her lap, and touched my feet, her own son's feet. And said, 'Don't do this, and finally told me, 'My son, go away from Here!' A mother tells her own son to leave the village- she is reduced to such wretchedness, only on account of caste and custom. And the Boy has to leave the village. The whole scene came alive again before his eyes. On one side there was Bangla Desh in turmoil and on the other, the community of the Mahars, in agony. One homeless Bangla Deshi was going back to his relations after twenty years. And one Mahar, even after twenty years, was homeless in his own country.

**c) 'No Entry for the New Sun'**- Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Poetry. The poet presented here in English translation is nearly all of the most prominent figures in Marathi dalit poetry. Their impassioned cry against subjugation intoxicated singing of the dawn of a new life, are what this first English anthology of dalit poetry is about.

**d) 'Corpse in the Well'**- A translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Autobiographies. The dalit autobiography is a literary form marked by a great quantity of writing depicts varying facets of

dalit life: the struggle for survival, the man-woman relationship on existence crushed under the wheels of village life; the experiencing of humiliation and atrocities- at times, abject submission, at other times, rebellion.

The title given itself tells many of the aspects and the depth of dalits sufferings, humiliation, and the purposefully so called upper class people creates hurdles in their way to progress. Mr. Dangle has reached to the world through his literature. His literature made him great literary man. He became uncommon from the common and known from the unknown. He is one of the greatest literary-men's in the history of Indian Literature. Open reality is, his literature is not brought in light and not been kept for the study of degree level students in many Indian Universities.

### **Conclusion:**

After 60 years of independence, India shines, for whom? The Indian economy of our country is very strong but each one of us needs to ask a question to self- Has India succeeded in making weaker section strong? Of course not, it is because to make very decorative policies for the uplifting of dalits, is the policy of many governments. The provision in budget made for dalits and advashies are for name sake. The crores of rupees of dalits are diverted for some other purposes.

After six decades of independence, we are not seeing the actually change in life of these weaker sections of the society. On one hand, non-dalits are against the dalit reservation, saying it's given for a longer period of time and on the other hand upper castes are demanding reservation for their more comfort and luxury. For example- Maratha caste in Maharashtra, of this category ample numbers of representatives are there in all fields of life. Their numbers are more than the requirement and an ideology behind giving reservation is the representation of that particular community or the groups of people those who are far away from the main-stream of life. Now, government has started giving reservation to Jain, Muslim and Sheikh considering them as a minority group of people. Everywhere in the world reservation is provided on the basis of caste or race and not on the basis of religion.

Dalit Literature is showing the true face of Indian Society. Equality is there on paper for the name sake and even today in many corners of India dalits are living the life of slave. Dalit Literature is full of suffering, trouble, torture and humiliation. The literature created by Arjun Dangle focuses on the social, political and economical status of dalits- yesterday and today. His writing is based on their experience and the observation of the society. The little of his any literary creation enables the listener/reader to understand the book very soon. A kind of experience Dalit gets; and their experiences are the source of their writing. He has gone through unexpected and unwanted experiences and he feels upcoming generation should not be the victim of the system. All his efforts of writing are bringing a positive change in Indian Society. Mr. Dangle has a great hope that a day will come and caste will be vanished from the Indian Society.

Every day, Dalits are harassed, humiliated and so many atrocity cases are registered in various police stations of Maharashtra. If, this is the truth, in context of a very forward State of India then the situations of dalits in Bihar, U.P., Gujrat, Punjab and other states of South India is beyond our imagination. Maharashtra could be a secular state but not the safe state for dalits and the latest and the best example of it is the 'KHAIRLANJI SCANDAL' (HATYA KAND). The Dalits in India are expected a treat of human-being from non-dalits. The great literary-man is expressing his inner feelings in the form of literature and his criticism on Indian Society is for reconstructing India in a well-manner.

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