

The Contradictions and Conundrums of Language and Identity in Dalit Literature

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Abstract - Since independence, modern Dalit writers have attempted to write short stories, novels, and plays, however, their greatest successes have been achieved in poetry, autobiographies, and biographies in regional languages and translated in English. It is possible to feel and see the development of Dalit literature today, both in regional and international languages. Dalit writers wrote against and about the cruelty and discrimination of the upper-class society. They began to write about their own personal suffering and humiliation as a result of upper-class treatment. It is a similar protest to that expressed by ex-slaves in their writing, but Dalits have taken their protest to a new level of success, to the point where their literature has been designated as Dalit Literature.

The combination of the world's largest population, poverty, and illiteracy has made a significant contribution to class struggle, with the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer. So many movements and constitutional amendments have resulted from this class struggle, but they have had little impact. As a result of this class struggle, Dalit Literature in India has emerged, which is reminiscent of Afro-American slave narratives in its style and content. Daring to challenge established literary theories and genres, Dalit literature attempts to challenge the upper classes on social, economic, and literary issues. Dalit literature has also revived the forgotten Dalit life and suffering through their literature. Dalit writings have aided Dalits in forming a new sense of identity, pride, prejudice, and the ability to stand up against linguisticism simply by using their own language. This term refers to the level of formality with which Dalits speak on different situations in different genres. It is a concept that has been discussed extensively recently, particularly by critics who objected to the idea of attitudinal writing in a formal tone, as well as Dalit writers themselves. Throughout this paper, I define and discuss some of the more difficult terms associated with language and identity in the Dalit society. As part of our research into the language and identity of people in the Dalit community, we have discovered contradictions that arise from both within and outside the community, as well as conundrums that have arisen as a result of these contradictions. By delving into these contradictions and conundrums, I am able to discuss Dalit identity and community through the lens of their language attitudes, including linguistic pride, linguistic prejudice, and linguisticism. I will conclude with some observations about Dalit language and identity in the context of the larger community.

Key Words: Dalit Identity, language attitudes, linguistic pride, linguistic prejudice, linguisticism, Language register

I. FACTORS INFLUENCING LINGUIICISM

Rise of Modern Dalit Literature was traced in 1950 to 1970 which an article of M.N. Wankhade "A Discussion: Literature of Dalit: Consciousness, Direction and Inspiration". With the publication of some well received and appreciated works of Sathe's *Fakira*, and Savala Mang and Shankarrao Karat's *Manuskichi Huk* and "Bara Balutedar" Dalit writings stated making their space in Literary world.

The controversy surrounding Dalit literature, including who is owed this literature, non-Dalit writers who write about Dalits, and Dalit writers who write their own literature, has been the subject of debate. M ulk Raj Anad's work had been criticised because it is believed that he belonged to an upper caste, however, people can also criticise Shakespeare for writing the lives of kings when he was hadn't ever related to any Kingship, or Milton for writing about Gods or Angels when he was never able to become a God or even know what it was like to be a God. Similarly, when Arvind Ghosh wrote about slaves, he could be accused of the same ongoing argument, despite the fact that he had never been a slave throughout his life. If literature is judged on the basis of these misunderstood concepts, then its creative value will be diminished. The critics and even some orthodox writers from the same group about whom the literature is written would never be able to appreciate the work. It is important to understand that the goal of non-Dalit writers is not to portray a dark or negative image of Dalit society, but rather to paint a vivid picture of time and society as they have realised it through personal experience or as it has been reported to

them by external sources; in doing so, they bring a real scenario, prospective, and criticism from a third person's point of view, which may not be shared by Dalit writers themselves, to the fore.

Dalit Literature can be thought of as either the literature of protest or the literature that goes beyond the protest movement. According to Bagul, who famously writes, "Dalit Sahitya is not vengeance literature," Dalits are the offspring of protest that Dalits have endured in India since before the time of the Mahabharata and even before the time of Ramayana." Whenever Dalit writers have raised and dealt with the question of Dalit identity through their poetry, short stories, novels, and autobiographies, they have done so in a positive way. Although Dalit writings are cherished by a large number of writers and readers, there are flaws that can be easily identified in them. The recurrent themes of sorrow, alienation, tragedy, torture, and disappointment are so prevalent in this literature that it has come to be regarded as a source of sympathy and pity by both readers and critics alike. However, the literature fails to fulfil both the aesthetic and literary aspects of being a single piece work of art, instead evoking feelings such as self-pity and sympathy, which is detrimental to any literature anywhere in the world.

When we were talking about Dalit poetry, Through the use of symbolic images that are based on experience and endurance, Dalit poets have broken many old poetic agreements and traditions of poetry writing by refusing to follow eminent names or trends in poetry writing and instead drawing on historical references and myths, while keeping a Dalit point of view in mind, to express their social identity and protest. Dalit literature is primarily concerned with presenting the aristocracies while also advocating for the liberation of Dalits. Dalit struggle against caste system has a long history that includes some of the earliest Dalit poets, such as Vachana of the 11th century and Chennaiah, the cobbler, as well as another Dalit saint, Kalavve of the 12th century, who also protested against the upper caste in his writings. When Dalit writing is done by Dalit writers, it is always regarded as a tool against oppression. Its language is devoid of enthusiasm and determination, and it is less casual than it should be. It will be impossible to reach the masses or the lower classes if poetry is not written in English or another common language that everyone understands (Dalit literature from Maharashtra has spread widely to other regions and languages such as Tamil, Malayalam, Gujarati, and Punjabi). In the face of oppression, supremacy, and ideologies of the upper strata of their society, Dalit literature took a stand against them. They were frequently neglected and suppressed, which fueled the fire to write about Dalit experience, which was later labelled as protest literature. Dalit writers inked firsthand information from their own experiences and history, as opposed to Hindu mythology, which is more illusionary and unrealistic. Dalits literature has demonstrated liveliness and authenticity, but its scope is limited. As these writings do not share a structural pattern with that of contemporary English writing communities in India, they are always restricted to the regional Dalit communities in India and Maharashtra..

II. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND DALIT LITERATURE

Language attitudes are defined as the feelings and emotions that humans have about their own language variety, as well as about the languages or language varieties of the languages. People generally believe that women speak too much and that children are unable to read, write, or speak properly until they reach a certain age. Other common beliefs include that native speakers of English can speak good English, that American English is superior to British English or vice versa, that everyone except me speaks with an accent, and that everyone except me speaks with an accent. Standard Language Ideology is the belief that there is a correct way to speak English, and anything that deviates from this way of speaking is considered incorrect, unintelligent, or lazy. It is also referred to as Standard Language Ideology when there are no rules and regulations in place or no structure. The autobiographies and poems of Dalit writers are always indicating the caste discrimination from upper class people, and this attitude is quite visible in the works of many Dalit Writers . Joopaka Subhadra, a Dalit writer from the state of Telangana, is a Dalit woman poet who has used her poetry to express the plight of Dalits around the world. It was she who brought up the issue of Dalit women being treated differently from Dalit men. Her poems inform us about Dalit women from poor and rural backgrounds, and we can learn more about them here... She writes

“Mallanna may be a slave to the world

But he is reputed in our waada (colony).

For having tied the wedlock,

I have become a slave to Mallanna.

Ayyo Dammakka!

My stories and my pains

Evaporate at the hamlet's boundary stone

Ayyayyo Dammakka!....”

Ek Maitra Raangadya was written by Sheetal Sathe. Her poems are anti-caste and pays homage to Babasaheb Ambedkar, whom she admires the most. Her poems and songs are all an expression of her desire to challenge state repression and caste violence in some way. Her poems drew the attention of the authorities, and she was sentenced to prison in 2011 for her rebellious poetry. She writes

“Nausea served in the plate , the untouchable nausea

The disgust grows in the belly, the untouchable disgust

It's there in the flower buds, it's there in sweet songs

That a man should drink another man's blood,

This is the land where this happens

This is the land of hellish nausea”

Arjun Dangle is a well-known and prominent figure in Maharashtra's politics and literature, . Dangle's poetry, essays, and short stories are translated into number of Indian and foreign languages .He wrote in a poem 'Chhavni Hilti Ha',

“We fought with crows,

Never even giving them the snot from our noses.

As we dragged out the Upper Lane's dead cattle,

Skinned it neatly

And shared the meat among ourselves”

Using Om Parash Valmiki's autobiographical novel "Joothan" as an example, Valmiki said “My speech patterns changed. My manners also changed. I made friends who were deeply interested in contemporary issues and constantly argued about them. I took part in seminars and cultural functions. I became involved in Jabalpur's literary life. I also began to develop my own views on literature. I was more attracted to social realism than to aestheticist and formalist types of writings.”

These quotations are a direct hit to the reality of Dalit writings' attitudes towards language usage. In these types of writings, the writers have clearly demonstrated their Linguistic prejudice against the target audience. Non-first-person reliability is a major concern because the genuine & true information provided to the audience, which is based on past memories and partially experiences, can be easily called into question. While autobiography is still not taken into consideration a literary genre, what happens when the same thing is written in poetry? Almost every theorist and researcher has attempted to define and characterize the concept of "attitude." The studies and reports on language attitudes that are currently available in the sociolinguistic literature are divided into three major categories:

1. Recognizing and analyzing language-directed attitudes.
2. Recognizing and understanding stereotyped perceptions of language varieties held by members of the community.
3. Recognizing and understanding stereotyped perceptions of language varieties held by members of the community. dealing with the implementation of various types of unknown language attitudes in different situations

Dalit literature has not yet formed itself as a distinct field of study due to a lack of profound comprehension in a variety of areas such as knowledge, life experience, learning of new trends of globalised brotherhood and unity and unlearning of some extreme orthodox notions about superiority and supremacy. Dalit studies, while attempting to bridge an important gap between scholastic activism and a theoretical foundation, falls short. Critics are always harsh in their assessments of the difference between narrative writing and fiction is that the writer attempts to write himself or herself through history, which can be easily marred by assumptions and variations in the truth and will be heavily influenced by attitudes towards language. When it comes to writing autobiographies, can they accurately portray all of the facts and demonstrate the attitude of the downtrodden who, through his writing, responds to the cruelties and injustices of the upper-class.

III. DALIT LANGUAGE REGISTER (IN AUTOBIOGRAPHIES, MEMOIRS AND POETRY)

The level of formality with which people speak is referred to as their language register. Different situations and people require need different registers. In this case, it is about disliking the concept of writing in a formal tone. People always criticise the idea of writing something in a casual tone because it implies that the writers of that particular group (Dalit Writers) are unable to keep up with the latest writing fashions and trends. According to Om Parkash Valmiki, Dalits writing is distinguished by a distinct kind of language register. When he speaks about hunger and food scarcity, his words have successfully registered the fundamentals of "suffering and oppression" through the language used by Dalits

“My mother often gave them dinner leftovers, and sometimes tea. But unlike other domestic helpers, they were not served in our utensils, nor did the latrine cleaners expect to be. They brought their own utensils and placed them on the floor; my mother served them while they stood apart. When my mother turned away, they quietly picked up the food and left”

Meena Kandasamy, a Dalit English Poet, depicted the same feeling of oppression to write her poems about the exploitation of a Dalit girl. This theme of oppression has stayed the heart and soul of Dalit writings throughout history.:

“And you blamed skin as a sinner;
how, when your kundalini was rising,
shaken, you felt the cold concrete floor
skin rubbing against skin, your saffron robes,
how, even in a far-off different realm
your skin anchored you to this earth.
Amidst all that pervading emptiness,
touch retained its sensuality”.

Dalits have successfully able to set up their own language register which is marked by the theme of exploitation by upper classes.

IV. TRANSLATION PROBLEMS

When it comes to Dalit Poetry, which is epically written in Marathi or any other native Indian language other than English, it becomes extremely difficult for a Translator to maintain the true essence and charm of the poetry being translated. There are numerous language differences that have been identified by various linguists and can be broadly classified into four major categories, which are Phonological, Morphological, Syntactic and Lexical factors.

When it required to write poetry, the way pronominal expressions are used varies greatly across all languages and cultures around the world. In order to make frequent use of pronouns, different languages have different and distinct systems in place, and some languages make little or no direct use of pronominal systems at all. Even though the idea of Dalit is clearly communicated by the translator, all of the poetic devices and techniques lose their artistic value when they are in other regional languages, they are often translated by another person.

As a result, whenever a new translated work is published, some translators have attempted to invent and write passive constructions in other languages, including English, that lack most of the poetic devices and charm of poetry, and the results have been more than discouraging. When it comes to languages other than English, there is a wide range of syntactic differences that present numerous difficult problems for the translator. With the exception of English, Indian languages have a variety of sentence constructions that can convey meaning in a single line or span up to ten lines, as in Tamil. One of the most difficult problems associated with the unique structure of Indian Native Languages is that long sentences containing several clauses that are more often than not combined to each other in a detail, pose additional challenges to a translator when they are written in another language. Writers who prefer to write in their native language may do so because they do not understand English or because they lack certain essential grammatical and semantic patterns in English; however, this is a major factor that has kept these writers away from mainstream English Literature on the international stage. Because it provides a platform for Dalits to be heard and appreciated by the general public and readers. Translational difficulties for the original Dalit writers will continue to cause them difficulties in the foreseeable future.

V. A TOOL TO FIGHT AGAINST CASTE ATROCITIES OR FOR AESTHETIC PLEASURE

Dalit literature is frequently regarded as a literature of protest, comparable to Afro-American slave narratives in that it provides vivid and detailed information on autocracies of ruling civilizations. The term "poetry" refers to a literary art form in which human language was being used for its aesthetic qualities in addition to, or in lieu of, the notional and semantic content that is conveyed to a reader. When literature is being used to communicate a message, it has taken on the role of a tool. In the past, literature has aided Indians in their struggle for independence, literature has inspired Russians to fight in World War II, and literature has assisted Carl Marks in his battle against the establishment of his theories. What's wrong with using literature as a weapon in battle and to communicate one's message to the public.

The goal of their effort is to establish self-identification on the universal level. The use of literature as a weapon in the fight against atrocities perpetrated by upper castes became increasingly popular. Om Prakash Valmiki defined it as

“Literature is that discourse which stands on the side human being who is oppressed, who is in great peril, who wants to live. Literature should infuse him with the urge to live. Literature should shake him up, teach him to do battle, not weaken him, not make him submit to hegemony, not enslave him. We need to free ourselves from the social order surrounding us. For me, good literature that which wakens us towards that freedom”.

Namdeo Dhassal, a Dalit poet, told photographer Henning Stegmuller that "poetry is politics," and that he “I enjoyed discovering myself. I am happy when I am writing a poem, and I am happy when I am leading a protest of prostitutes fighting for their rights”. Writing literature about one's own self is thus the first step towards self-realization and identifying alienation and marginalized identity. Although Dalit poetry is an attempt to protect the overlooked and neglected self to a living one through poetical images, but restricted literary devices, Dalit poets have done their best in affirming identity and self in different ways, but it still gives the impression of a shackled and downtrodden Dalit self. Only when translated into English does the Dalit Language Register have its own distinct identity in contemporary Indian literature, as most of the time it is limited to own local language that go unheard and unsung.

VI. CONCLUSION

Linguicism can affect anyone, regardless of social, cultural, or ethnic status, marginalized or oppressed, minorities can be consistent targets where they are less in number, the main fact is that being less in number, and their speech varieties could be easily stigmatized. Language discrimination occurs when people are treated less favorably than others because, as Dalits frequently protest, some of their works are not appreciated as autobiographies, as

autobiographies are not considered a literary genre, or their works lack English proficiency as well as poetic excellence. Every marginalized dialect in the world has its own set of values and traditions, as well as its own set of discourses and narratives. Dialects such as Australian, African American, and Dalit English differ only in their usage and linguistic verities. These dialects are standardized and stigmatized solely as a result of the social and historical circumstances of the society in which they emerge and are used. The dialects become the “standard” way of those in power, whether written or spoken. Only the writers of that dialect become the spokespersons for the various linguistic attitudes. This argument is not limited to Dalit writers. The preceding argument has clearly depicted Dalit Writers' Language attitudes, where they are prone to use the language as a tool to fight against caste discrimination rather than for the sake of art. When setting up the main intent of any writing or any artwork as a tool to revolt, it becomes obvious that the work of art has lost its essential purpose of fulfilling the requirement of Aesthetic sense. It is difficult to distinguish artwork to determine it as a piece of protest on the basis of Linguicism, language register or Language attitudes which leads to contractions and conundrums to understand it. I argue that an artwork must be read on the basis of its originality, aesthetic quality, concept, selection and application of materials, and its complexity.

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