

THE CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF DALIT MOVEMENT IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT:

The paper discusses about Dalit movements and literature in modern Karnataka. It focuses on the beginning of Dalit literature, origin of Dalit literature in the 12th century Vachana literature, modern movements like Boosa incident, birth of DSS - its struggles and divisions, 'Dalit LekhakaramattuBarahagaraOkkoot' (Dalekha), Dalit-BandayaSahitya,Dalit SahityaSammelanaand the writings of Dalit writers and activists etc.It describes how the activism and writing went hand in hand to shape the movement and also highlights how these institutions helped in enhancing pride and dignity among Dalits.

Key Words: Vacana movement, Constitution, Boosa, DSS,Dalekha,Bandaya Sahitya etc.

BEGINNING OF DALIT LITERATURE :

In post independent India, thanks to the long agitation by Dr.Ambedkar certain significant constitutional safeguards facilitated the Dalits getting exposed to education. Henceforth, they have started writing their experience of injustice faced since ages in the form of literary texts like 'fictional autobiographies', short stories, poetry etc.Earlier these people were called as Untouchables, Ati Shudras, Panchamas, Harijans, Depressed classes etc. In 1958 Dalit SahityaSammelana was organised by Marathi Dalit writers where they accepted a Marathi word'Dalit' for the untouchables who are socially, politically and economically backward and forced to live outside the village since time immemorial and opposed the word Harijan, as it patronises them. The Dalit assertion for rights can be seen both in movement and in the literature vice-versa. Dalit literature gained more importance in 1970s, when Marathi Dalit writers and activists established Dalit Panthers of India (DPI) on the model of Black Panther movement of America.The writers associated with DPI were NamdevaDasal, BaburaoBagul, Baby kamble, Shantadevi, Urmila Pawar, DayaPawar, LaxmanGayakawad, Laxman Mane were actively participated in the movement and pen down their experience to assert rights and law. Marathi writers produced magnum corpus in the Dalit Literature and influence other states also.In Karnataka Basavalingapp's word 'boosa' for Kannada literature marked the emergence of many Dalit writers and activists and establishment of DSS,it aroused political consciousness among Dalits for their rights during mid 80's.In Andhra Pradesh the movement became more revolutionised by Gaddar with his revolutionary songs and in Tamil Nadu Imayam,Bama, Shivakami and MeenaKandasamy gave heights to it. But in Tamil Nadu and Kerala the Dalit writings and movement were crushed in Dravidian movement and Leftist movement respectively. Dalit Literature also flourished in the Hindi heartland and Punjab.

VACHANA MOVEMENT AND DALIT LITERATURE :

The origin of Dalit Literature has its roots in the Vachana Movement of Karnataka of the 12th century. Where Basava, theleader of the Vachanachaluvali wanted to build castles and classless society so, he gave 'lingadeeksha'to all the sections of the society including prostitutes and through his vachanas he criticised caste system and other evils of the society and he proclaimed one of his vachanas that he is the son MadaraChennaiah to get rid off caste system. The vachana is like this

“Chennayyanamaneyadasanamaganu,
Kakkayanamaneyadasiyamagalu,
Ebbaruholadalliberanighogi
Sangavamadidaru:
Evaribbarighuttidamagananu
Kudalasangamadevasakshiyagi” .

In his 'Anubhava Mantapa' many subaltern sharanas were there like-Madara Chennayya, Madara Dhoolayya, SamagaraHaralayya, Dohara Kakkayya, Uralinga Peddi, SuleSankavve, Madara Bhommalinga etc. Basava took revolutionary step by arranging the inter-caste marriage of Sheelvanta and Kalavathi, the son and daughter of SamagaraHaralayya and Brahmin Maduvarasa respectively. This caused huge unrest in the then caste society and eventually turned into bloodshed and killing of all sharanasa including Basava. But the reformations and revolutionary ideas brought by Basava are relevant till today.

Further, Madara Chennayya, the first and foremost Dalit Vachana poet criticized Casteism in one of his vachanas as

“Nadenudisiddhantavadalli ,kula hole
Sootakavilla.
Nudilesu, nadeyadhamavadalli
Adubidugadeellada hole.
Kalavuparadwarangalalliholabanariyade,
Kettunadevutta,matte kulajarembaodalavarunte?
Aacharavekula ,anacharave hole.
Enteubhayavatilidirabeku .
Kaiyulikattiadigoontakkadiyagabeda,
Ari nijatmaramaramana.”

BOOSACHALUVALI AND KANNADA LITERARY WORLD:

On 19 November 1973, Dr Ambedkar School of Thought organised a seminar on 'New Wave' the then minister of town administration, B Basavalingappa while addressing he said that 'there is a great deal of 'boosa' in Kannada literature and further he said Kannada literature will flourish only when we adopt innovative ideas, independent thinking and patriotic feeling by reading English. Roots of Kannada literary world began to shake. This hurt the defenders of tradition and upper caste people hitherto were controlling the Kannada literature led into street fights, meetings, and processions across the state. On the other side, pro-Basavalingappa people were also took part in procession at Bengaluru and Mysuru burnt down the copies of then the Prajavani and Deccan Herald news papers and municipal sweepers in Gadaga threatened to go for mass leaving without cleaning the city. Then it ultimately ended in his resignation, this act, actually saw the rapid rise of Dalit conscience, creativity, and political presence after the mid-1970s. Those who were part of this agitation formed 'Dalit Lekhaka Kalavidhara Balaga (Daleka). Which later expanded its scope of work and became the legendary DSS (Dalit Sangharsha Samiti).

Even non-Dalit writers also opposed B Basavalingappa's resignation like Ananthmurthy said that "People should welcome criticism from the scheduled castes to liberate society consisting mostly of lower castes" and Kuvempu also strongly condemned it.

The majority of the agitators with Basavalingappa were first generation Dalit students who started their agitations in the Social Welfare Hostels and universities and they took Dalit conscience into 'keris' to form Dalit forums. The beginning of Dalit literature started with Siddalingayya's "Holemadigara Hadu" an anthology, which was having the rage and revolutionary in its form and later his autobiography *Uru Keri* became classic in Indian Literature. Further, Devanur Mahadev's short story 'Amasa' received an overwhelming support and appreciation and *Dyavanooru*, short story collection, became the first Dalit text in Kannada literature. Professor B Krishnappa's essay 'The Portrayal of Dalits in Kuvempu's novels', attacks even Kuvempu's ill treatment of Dalit women in his novels. These are the three leading literary figures, which have created 'keri' dialect as the language of their works and established a strong Dalit voice in the Kannada literature. Apart from these many activists, writers and singers emerged across the state are K B Siddayya, H Govindayya,

Shivanna Kandegalu, AshwatAntyaja, V Nagaraj, R Manasayya, DevayyaHaravve, C Danappa, Janni(H Janardhan), Pichalli Srinivas, Manglur Vijay etc. Prof. B Krishnappa made inspiring speeches to arouse Dalit consciousness. Janni and Srinivas set music to all these songs and 'tamate' became the instrument of Dalit movement. The singing songs and rhythm of 'tamate' gathered huge crowd in the meetings, processions etc. Thus, 'boosa' agitation became the cradle of Dalit movement in Karnataka.

Later these Dalit writers in collaboration with the 'Kannada Barahagararaokkoota' and Progressive Writers's Group organised a meet and inaugurated by Basavalingappa, it got huge success and all the intellectual discussions were published in the magazine called Panchali owned and edited by Lankesh. But, after seeing the non-Brahmin writers' and Progressive writers' reluctance to talk about the Dalit issues. All Dalit writers formed Dalit Lekhaka Kalavidhara Balaga (Dalekha), to talk about untouchability, sufferings etc. Dalekha had its first conference at Bhadravati, many Dalit students across the state participated and the idea of social movement and state wide organisation was realised to fight against caste injustice. So, one evening formed Dalit Sangarsha Samiti (DSS) and selected Prof. B Krishnappa as its convenor.

DALIT SANGARSHASAMITI(DSS) :

Dalit Sangarsha Samiti was formed along the lines of Dalit Panthers of India in the 70s. It asked all the men from Districts to start its units. It became a forum for sociological and political development of Dalits. DSS was built on the ideas of Ambedkar, Marx and Lohia socialism, but which was having more Ambedkarite consciousness. Students began to hold meetings in colleges. In DSS everyone was a writer or an artist. DSS took widespread struggles across the state to against atrocities, humiliations meted against Dalits. The slogan "Dalitaru Baruvuru Daribidi, Dalitarakaige Rajyakodi" became mantra in Dalit procession. DSS started a magazine called Panchama, and selected Devanur as its chief and many writers' and activists' works got published. It made huge impact on Kannada literature and gave blow to the Navya literature which was hitherto held by the Brahmins, middle class and English lecturers (Banjagere Jayaprakash).

DSS started social movement across the state like asking government lands to Dalits. It has coined a slogan that 'Government land, is our land' and also protested for absentee landlordism, questioned atrocities by the upper castes and supported inter-caste marriages (many Dalit activists and writers married women from the upper caste) against the abolishment of bonded labour etc. 'Bettale Seve' offered by the Dalit women, at Chandragutti (Sagarataluq, Shivamoggadist) was banned after 3 years prolonged protest by the strong leadership of Prof. B. Krishnappa. He wrote about the 'bettale seve' as, 'the opium of faith is so cruel. The priests in the temple are Brahmins. While people of all castes have a faith in this deity but the one who participates in naked procession are all low castes with garland around their necks, and one around their waists and neem leaves in their mouths, they walk the three kilometres from the Warada river to the temple. These underfed naked bodies look like ghosts passing through the forest. Ninety per cent of them are women, who are forced by the upper caste and their fathers, husbands and sons to this'. Prof B K while addressing first Dalit writers' convention organised by DSS said that 'what matters to us is not the aesthetics of poetry, but people'. He further says that 'When 60 per cent of the country's population is below the poverty line, we cannot help but call them as hopeless persons'.

DSS was a non-violent organisation with democratic framework. It clearly defined its aim as 'our fight is against casteists, capitalists, and landowners. Advocates of caste, capitalists and landowners are our enemies and those oppressed by caste - agricultural labourers, the landless, poor farmers with small holdings are our friends'. This shows how it fought for not only Dalits but for all the sections of the society.

Further, DSS organised major struggles in Siddalipura (near Bhadravati) which lasted for 16 months, Dummihal (Dharawada), Bidre (Hasan), Devalapura (chikkamagaluru)

Nagasandra(Gowribidanur) and Medakinahal(Raichur) from 197 to 1986. It also fought for reservation for Dalit Christians, temple entry,access to drinking water and free hostels for Dalits.

DALIT-BANDAYACHALUVALI :

In the year 1979, many Dalit writers along with socialists, those from the left, people from the anti-Congress group committed to equitable society formed BandayaSahityaChaluvali with the slogans 'khadgavagalikavya, janaranudiyuvapranamitra', and 'bayielladavarabayibandayasahitya'. They have opposed the Kannada SahityaParishat's casteist attitude of not arranging a separate 'ghosti' for Dalit literature in Kannada SahityaSammelana , so this was opposed by the writers mentioned above and hence, they organised Dalit BandayaSammelana and got huge success. The writers of this group are Baraguru Ramachandrappa, Kalegouda Nagavara,D R Nagaraj, Siddalingayya, IndudharHonnapura,ChennannaWalikar etc.These Bandaya writers are not all Dalits,but all Dalits are Bandaya writers(G S Amur).

During 80s, DSS got into confusion whether to contest elections or not.Prof B K wanted to join politics to get 'rajyadhikara' along the lines of Ambedkar's thoughts but was opposed by DevanurMahadeva and Siddalingayya,the result was the defeat of Prof. B. K twice from the Kolara constituency and drift in Holeya-Madiga community, which led to simmering hatred between communities and divisions in DSS into many organisations, which are till today getting into multiple divisions. In the words of AravindaMalagatti DSS flowed into many rivers which never unite.

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