

Dalit Literature(s): Pedagogy and its Challenges

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(Excerpts from a Plenary Speech in a Two Day International Seminar on Impact on Languages, Literatures and Intellectual Property Rights)

It is fortunate or unfortunate that most of the Dalit literature is written in regional languages. These literatures like Indian Literatures, New Literatures in English, Post Colonial Literatures, are now available in the global language such as English so that wide audience can read and understand the problems of suppressed, oppressed and marginalized castes belonging to Scheduled castes as notified by the Indian Constitution. I would consider only the Scheduled Castes as Dalits by differing with the large, multiple communities, theories and people's definition of the term 'Dalit'. The people and organizations with whom I differ in defining Dalit as the above such as Dalit Panther movement, Kancha Ilaiah's concept of 'Dalit Bahujan' are the examples to mention only two.

Having defined who I consider as a Dalit, now I would like to pay attention to Literature with (s). There are many texts written on Dalits by the non-Dalits and Dalits themselves portraying the characters of Dalits and life writings in English and other Indian Languages such as Telugu, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Malayalam, Odiya, Bengali, Gujarathi, Kannada to mention only a few. There are other languages such as Punjabi, Bihari etc. As we all know most of them are translated texts from the languages above mentioned to English. There are a few texts which are originally written in English. At least by the writers who have written in their mother tongue and then they have translated them from the regional language into English. Those texts and writers are a few such as Narendra Jadav and his book entitled *Outcaste: A Memoir* (Autobiography),

Girish Karnad and his book entitled *Tale Dande* (Drama), P. Sivakami and her book entitled *A Grip of Change* (Fiction), Y.B. Satyanarayana and his book entitled *My Father Balaiah*(Autobiography) Kancha Ilaiah and his book entitled *Why I am not a Hindu* (Criticism) to mention only three.

One of the ways of introducing the New literatures/Dalit Literatures/Post Colonial Literatures is through optional courses. One cannot directly introduce such courses as core paper in the traditional departments. One needs to offer an optional course then lead it to the core course. The course instructor will also learn things about the course based on the feedback of the students. Ultimately it has to be made successful only with the help of students. If they do well in the course and feel happy then it will be an encouragement to the faculty who offers such courses and become successful.

I could implement what I said so far in my department at Department of English, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad thanks to my colleagues who made my dream come true. It was not an easy journey to come to this level of introducing and teaching the course on Dalit Literature. There were politics behind this was such as not to pass this in the Departmental Committee Meeting and there after it should get approval from the other boards such as Departmental Board of Studies and then to School Board and finally in the Academic Council. After the approvals from various bodies the course on Dalit Literature has been introduced as a core course for all students who take admission into M.A. English programme. It took at least ten years for me to do so. I was also the Head of the Department then (2012-2015). I must thank all those students who had opted for my courses on "Interrogating Dalits and Their Religion(s)", "Dalits and Their Religious Perspectives", and "Telugu Dalit Literature in Translation". These were optional courses that I offered to my students. After offering these three courses as optional courses to

M.A IV semester students then proposed core course on Dalit Literature and got defended and introduced in the department. In fact I had organized a two day National Seminar on this pedagogy of Dalit Writing as a defense mechanism namely "Can Dalit Literature be taught as core course in Literature Departments", which has been brought out as seminar proceedings entitled *Dalit Literature: A Pedagogical Discourse* (New Delhi: Serials, 2018) available on amazon.com and Flipkart, to prove that it has been approved in the seminar by the majority of the participants.

Coming to pedagogy aspect, I have been enjoying teaching the courses in the lecture method. We are aware that how difficult it is to make students read primary texts of British Literature texts and other literatures. This is a universal problem. The texts and themes are new to them so it is the same problem of not reading the text for the class. As a result I enjoy lecturing them of two hour class sessions twice a week. After lecturing them last ten minutes are allocated for discussion or question and answer session. After teaching the primary texts that are prescribed as core texts, I make them do a presentation on the text that is outside the syllabus from the suggested reading which is marked for internal assessment. The idea behind is this that each student will read and make a presentation and others may not have read but at least they will have heard about the texts as a result they are exposed to more texts in the same course.

Currently I am teaching one optional course on "Telugu Dalit Literature in Translation" for fourth semester students and published a paper (Manohar 2019). Having designed and being taught the course, I developed an interest in teaching the following courses in future. I propose the following courses in various languages with the available texts. I will mention what I have gathered and I would like to request the audience to suggest me any text to any language course of Dalit Literature that you think fit and need to be added.

Let me briefly enumerate about texts in various Indian languages that may be considered to be part of course to start with an optional course. This list of texts from various languages may also be considered for core course on Dalit Literature(s) in general. I have elsewhere written an article on what consists of Dalit Literature (Manohar 2014) in general. One could select texts representing South India or North India or West India and offer course on Dalit Literature. Depending on one's own language in mother tongue one can choose the respective language texts and offer a course.

Marathi:

Arjun Dangle's *Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature*. Orient Blackswan, 2019. (Selections from Poetry, Prose, Essays, speeches, Excerpts from Autobiographies)

Daya Pawar's *Balutha*. Speaking Tiger, 2015. (Autobiography)

Baby Kamble's *The Prison We Broke*. (Autobiography)

Narendra Jadav's *Outcaste: A Memoir* (Autobiography)

Vasant Moon's *Growing Up Untouchable in India* (Autobiography)

Sharan Kumar Limbale's *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature* (Criticism)

Sharan Kumar Limbale's *Hindu: A Novel*. Trans. by Arun Prabha Mukherjee. (Fiction)

Sharan Kumar Limbale's *The Outcaste* (Autobiography)

Namdeo Dasal's *Poetry*

Dr.B.R. Ambedkar's "Annihilation of Caste" (Criticism)

Dr.B.R. Ambedkar's "Conversion as Emancipation" (Criticism)

Tamil:

Tharu, Susie and K. Satyanarayana's Eds and Compilers. *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India Dossier 1: Tamil and Malayalam*. Penguin, 2011. (Background cum Primary texts)

D. Ravi Kumar and R.Azhagarasan's *The Oxford Anthology of Indian Tamil Dalit Writing*. OUP, 2012. (Background cum primary texts)

Shanta Rameswar Rau's *Children of God*. Orient Blackswan, 1976. (Fiction)

Bama's *Karukku*. Macmillan, 2000. (Autobiography)

Bama's *Sangati* (Fiction)

Bama's *harum-scarum saar & other stories*. Trans. by N.Ravi Shanker. Kali for Women, 2006. (Short Story)

Bama's *Vanmam: Vendetta*. Trans. Malini Sesadri. OUP, 2008. (Fiction)

K.A. Gunasekharan's *The Scar*. Trans. by V.Kadambari. Orient Blackswan, 2009. (Fiction)
P. Sivakami's *A Grip of Change*. Orient Longman, 2006. (Autobiographical Fiction)
T. Sivashankara Pillai's *Scavenger's Son*. Trans. by R.E. Asher. OUP, 1993. (Fiction)
Perumal Murugan's *Trial by Silence* (Fiction)
Perumal Murugan's *The Goat Thief* (Fiction)
Perumal Murugan's *Songs of a Coward* (Fiction)
Perumal Murugan's *Seasons of the Palm*. Penguin, 2001. (Fiction)

Malayalam:

M.Dasan et al's *Malayalam Dalit Writing*. OUP, 2012. (Samples of poems, ShortStories, Essays, excerpts from Autobiography etc.)
Tharu, Susie and K. Satyanarayana's Eds and Compilers. *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India Dossier 1: Tamil and Malayalam*. Penguin, 2011. (Background cum primary texts)
Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. (Fiction)
Potheri Kanambhu's *Saraswathi Vijayam* (Fiction)
M.R. Renu Kumar et al *Don't Want Caste: Malayalam Stories by Dalit Writers*. (Short Fiction)

Bengal:

Sekhar Mukopadhyayaa's *Namasudra Movement*. (History and Background)
Byapari, Manoranjan's *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit*. Sage. 2018. (Autobiography)
Shanta Rameswar Rau's *Children of God*. Orient Blackswan, 1976. (Fiction)
Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora* (Fiction)
Bengali Dalit Writing
Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*. (Fiction)
Manohar Mowli Biswas's *Short Stories Collections* (Short Story)
Harichand Thakur
Sumit Sarkar's *Writing Social History*
Debayudh Chatterjee *Poetry*

Kannada:

Satyanarayana, K and Susie Tharu. Eds. *from those stubs, steel nibs are sprouting: New Dalit Writing from South India. Dossier II Kannada and Telugu*. Harper Collins, 2013. (Background and Primary Texts)
Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*. OUP, 1938. (Fiction)
Siddalingaiah's *Orukari*(Autobiography)
Siddalingaiah's *Autobiography of a Poet*
U.R. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* (Fiction)
U.R. Ananathmurthy's *Bharathipura*(Fiction)

Girish Karnard's *Tale Danda: A Play*. Ravi Dayal, 2013. (Drama)
Aravind Malagatti's *Government Brahmana*. Trans. by Dharani Devi Malagatti, Janet Vucinich and N. Subramanya. Orient Longman, 2007. (Autobiography)
Devanoora Mahadeva 's *Kusumbale*. Trans. by Susan Daniel. Oxford, 2015. (Fiction)
Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* HarperCollins 2008. (Fiction)

Odiya:

Basudev Sunani's *Casteout* (Poetry)
Akhila Naik 's *Beda*. Trans. Rajkumar. OUP, 2017.
Gopinath Mohanty's *Harijan*
Kalindi Chara Panigrahi's *Dhuli (Dust)* (Drama)
Anand Mahanad's *Outbursts: A Collection of Poems*. Authorpress, 2014. (Poetry)
Raj Kumar's *Dalit Literature and Criticism*. Orient Blackswan, 2019. (Criticism)

Hindi:

Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*. 1935. (Fiction)
Omprakash Valmiki's *Jhootan: An Untouchable's Life*. Trans. Arun Prabha Mukherjee, 2003
Omprakash Valmiki's *Amma and Other Stories*. Trans. Naresh K. Jain. Manohar, 2008.
Premchand's *Stories on Caste*. Penguin, 2018.
Shantaram
Swamya Achutanand's *Autobiography*

Rajasthan:

Bhanwar Megwanshi's *I Could not Be Hindu*, Navayana. 2019. (Autobiography)

Gujarati:

B. Kesaharshivam's *The Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth*. Tran. by Gita Chaudhuri. Samya, 2002. (Autobiography)

It is not enough if one identifies the texts and prepares the course outline to offer a course. The system has to allow you to design, offer, circulate, obtain an approval for the course is a herculean task. There may be questions on the designed course for which one has to give satisfactory answers. I work in an autonomous university where such things are easy to put into the system. Since your college is an autonomous in designing the courses, I thought I should propose such courses. Institutions are not a problem may the individuals are a problem.

In the light of above texts from the above mentioned languages of Dalit literature, it is possible to offer an optional course in languages such as Malayalam, Tamil and Kannada. The other languages such as Hindi, Marathi may be offered as the translated texts are available in English whereas Bengali, Gujarati, Odiya and Rajasthan need to be in the waitlist to offer a course as many texts have not been translated into English. I am told very soon the anthology on Odiya, Assamese and Gujarat may be out. After that these languages may also start an optional course. I am teaching Telugu Dalit Literature in Translation anyway, I request the other three South Indian languages may start immediately provided there are faculty who are willing to undertake this project to offer the course(a).

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