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**EMERGING TRENDS IN
HUMANITIES, ARTS AND SCIENCE**

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LITERATURE AS AN INSTRUMENT TO RAISE CONSCIOUSNESS AND IDENTITY AMONG DALIT AND AFRICAN AMERICAN WRITINGS

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Abstract

A recent and unique genre of Indian literature is the literature of the Dalits. Both Dalit and non-Dalit authors have contributed to this literature. It depicts the caste-based exploitation of Dalits, as well as their suffering, servitude, degrading conditions, poverty, struggles, and uprising for freedom and equality. It has introduced new Dalit experiences, a new lexicon, a different protagonist, a different point of view, and a new chemistry of anguish and insurrection to Indian literature. African writers who have emigrated to the United States have developed works of literature known as African American literature. It discusses the history of slavery, racism, and the struggle of African Americans for freedom and equality. The present paper is a sincere attempt to represent that Dalit and African American writers used literature as a tool to create consciousness and identity.

Keywords: Dalit, African American, Identity, Caste, Colour, Quest.

Racism in the USA and casteism in India are a disgrace to human dignity and a hindrance to advancement. Both are the outcomes of disturbed minds that engage in all types of injustice and savagery in order to obtain and preserve power and fortune. The great visionary and compassionate individuals have challenged such prejudice, strengthened the defenceless, and illuminated a way forward for humanity. Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, two such anti-caste figures from India, were sympathetic to the battles waged by anti-racism activists in the United States. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and W.E.B. DuBois corresponded. Their ideas and work paralleled, built upon, and even crossed paths with one another over time and place, creating a rich history. There are distinctive threads that cut through the complexity of their environments. Their experiences give the current battle historical context at a time when racism is rearing its ugly head and casteism persists unabatedly, forcefully supported by resurgent religious and political prejudice.

Dalit literature has captured the realities of oppressed and marginalised populations in a variety of Indian languages, including Hindi, Kannada, Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu, Tamil, Oriya, Bengali, etc. It may be said the word "search for identity" has come to represent the oppressed and silent struggles

of people of colour in AfroAmerica, Maoris in New Zealand, and Australian Aborigines. They work generally focuses on the fundamental human principles of independence, fraternity, and equality for everyone, regardless of caste, religion, colour, or gender.

Dalit literature creatively captures the suffering, trials, servitude, degrading treatment, mockery, and poverty experienced by the Dalit population. It paints a soaring picture of sorrow. The same God who created all humans never stated anywhere that some people are superior to others. Therefore, every human being has a right to expect from society liberty, equality, dignity, respect, and freedom. Dalits were exploited, repressed, and degraded by Savarna society whereas African Americans were pillaged and treated unfairly by white culture. The Blacks were acquired and sold by the Whites. Blacks can free themselves from slavery by paying their owners. Dalits, however, were unable to become free from Savarnas because they are imposed on them from birth. Although Dalits were not technically slaves, they could not pay the rent for their homes. The responsibility for caring for the slaves fell to the White Masters because Dalits were not considered slaves and the Savarnas had no regard for them.

You could think of African American literature as a foundation for the development of the idea of African American identity. African American writers have shaped a rich and diverse corpus of literature throughout American history. Slavery's history is thought to have started around 1619, which is when it first appeared. It started with slave memoirs published by runaway slaves like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, who in their different writings denounced the sexual abuse of slaves and described his experience as an enslaved worker in Maryland through "*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*" and "*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*". Years of racial prejudice, shame, and low self-worth were related to their contributions to literature, including poetry, fiction, theatre, short stories, essays, and academic writing. These discourses included related existential conflicts as well as the quest for one's ancestry and identity. Achebe's *The Drum and Chike* and *The River* are written for children but narrated traditional African folklore and western-style luxuriant life respectively.

The higher caste community, social ills, and the Varna system have all repressed Dalits in India and distorted their identity. According to the caste hierarchy imposed by Rigveda was stature following Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. The inhuman treatment given to Dalits led to Dalit movements and expressions reflected in Dalit Literature. The first Dalit author in Dalit literature is thought to have been Cobbler Saint Madara Chennai. The author of *Gulamgiri* is Jyotiba Phule. He composed it to draw a parallel between enslaved Americans considered as lower castes in America and lower caste Indians. Shankar Rao Kharat described the deep anguish of Dalit life in stories like "*Ramabai*," "*Saangawa*," "*Dandi*," "*Aaba*," "*Ramoshi*," and "*Bhat*". The challenges that the pair Jyotiba Phule and Savitri Bai Phule experience when they rise up to fight for the condition of Dalits, particularly women, are explored in Daxa Damodara's novel *Savitri*. It focuses on a woman's identity difficulties and the efforts of Dalits, who are denied the right to an identity via education because of untouchability and social inequity in Indian society. Many Dalit writers like Namdeo Dhasal, Om Prakash Valmiki, Mridula Garg, Bama, Rajan Krishnan, Daya Pawar, Datta Bhagat, Premchand Gajvi, and many more explored the struggle for survival, anger, revolt, experiences of shame, fight for equality and quest for an identity with dignity to living in society.

A tome of Dalit poetry expertly captures the hard, beating experiences of the poet's life. Narayan Survey was a well-known poet who wrote in the early Dalit literature. He wrote a poem entitled *vidhyapath*. The other poets include Keshav Meshram, who wrote *Utkhanat* (Excavation). Daya Pawar, who wrote *Kandhala*, Namdeo Dhasal, who wrote *Golpitha*, Tivambak Sapkal, who wrote *Surang*. The new generation of Dalit poets emerged throughout the contemporary era as a revolt or protest against the onerous conventional limitations.

The literary genres of novel and short stories are important ones that Dalit authors have used to successfully convey Dalit sensibility. The short stories *Jevah Mi Jani Chorli Hote* (When I robbed a caste), *Marat Swast Hot Aabe* (Death is becoming cheap) by Baburao Bagul, *Fakira* by Anna Bhau Sathu, and *Davandi* by Shankar Rao Khairat. Sharankumar Limbale States about the Dalit Consciousness:

The Dalit consciousness in Dalit literature is the revolutionary mentality connected with struggle. It is a belief in rebellion against the caste system, recognizing the human being as its focus. Ambedkarite thought is the inspiration for this consciousness. Dalit consciousness makes slaves conscious of their slavery. Dalit consciousness is an important seed for Dalit literature; it is separate and distinct from the consciousness of other writers. Dalit literature is demarcated as unique because of this consciousness (Limbale 32).

African American and Dalit literature are both initially composed in a spiritual manner. The spiritual innovations of African Americans were birthed through their bloody prayers. Similar cries for forgiveness can be seen in the abhangs of Dalit saints. Both literary works portray suffering and agony, which elicits empathy in the reader. African Americans created the first folk literature. A wide range of biblical subjects were explored. They wrote their works of literature in their own tongues. The widely read folk poems are humorous, entertaining, and light hearted. Dalit literature frequently features poetry, folk theatre, and folk art. Dalit folk theatre aims to amuse the common populace.

A comprehensive list of August Wilson's plays reveals that every conscious character in African American literature exhibits this innate quest for identification. He talks on the peculiar experiences of man and lists the various characteristics and coping mechanisms he uses to survive. The ideology of African Americans must be understood. He comments through *Fences*:

Don't you think I ever wanted other things? Don't you think I had dreams and hopes? What about my life? What about me. Don't you think it ever crossed my mind to want to know other men? That I wanted to lay up somewhere and forget about my responsibilities? That I wanted someone to make me laugh so I could feel good? You not the only one who's got wants and needs. But I held on to you, Troy. I took all my feelings, my wants, and needs, my dreams, and I buried them inside you. I planted myself inside you and wanted to bloom. And it didn't take me no eighteen years to find out the soil was hard and rocky and it wasn't never going to bloom. (Wilson, *Fences* 70-71)

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, the first 17 years of Maya Angelou's life are detailed in her autobiography. The book's episodic structure perfectly captures her struggles and triumphs and demonstrates how the mix of her numerous challenging circumstances and good moments served to shape her into the independent, assured person she is today. In the 1960s, amid the Black Arts movement, Tom Morrison penned *The Bluest Eye* one of the movement's catchphrases, "Black Is Beautiful," became a rallying cry for its adherents as they championed the reclamation and celebration of African American beauty. Morrison exposes the crushed hopes and self-hatred of the whole African American community by presenting the tale of one young girl's quest for love. The book criticises both racism and misogyny as Morrison addresses incest, racial segregation, class inequities, and identity issues. The novel interweaves important topics related to race, gender, and young innocence.

In *A Lesson Before Dying*, the issues of race, injustice, and manhood are powerfully handled. Ernest J. Gaines exposes the racism that permeates all aspects of society, from the criminal justice system to the educational system, and dispels the racial illusions that dominated southern society.

after World War II. The book explores what it means to be a hero as well as racial and generational links. Two crucial issues are the formation of a black male identity and community impact.

Gloria Naylor focuses on the African American community's tenacity and women's unwavering devotion. The protagonists are disappointed and have their hopes crushed, yet they don't quit up. Despite the fact that the women live in a dilapidated apartment building on a dead end street, their friendship and support enable them to establish a haven of hope and escape the depressing surroundings.

Thus, the analysis above supports the claim that Dalits and African Americans have used diverse types of literature to express their feeling of belonging, struggle for survival, and rebellion against higher castes and white hegemony in order to forge their own identities.