

VOICES FROM THE MARGINS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ODIA NON-DALIT AND DALIT WRITERS.**Subhasmita Mahapatra^{1*}, Dr. Sthitaprajna²**^{1*}Research Scholar (Humanities and Social Science, Siksha 'O' Anusandhan, India)²Associate Professor (Humanities and Social Science, Siksha 'O' Anusandhan, India)**ABSTRACT**

This paper compares the conceptual framework of the works of Odia non-dalit and odia dalit writers. The comparison replicates a variety of factors that are associated with the daily existence of Dalits. It concentrates on the contemporary works of odia non-dalit writers that are about Dalits, as Dalit writing is a contemporary phenomenon. The contemporary writers of the upper caste have been examined in order to compare their perspectives on the Dalits with those of the upper caste. It also concentrates on the Odia Dalit writing, which is a recent category and has a recent history. The work of certain Dalit writers has been appropriated. The Manusmriti, which explained the caste laws and bestowed religious sanctity upon them, is the target of the Dalit writings. Their writings are not only a form of reaction against the ascribed identity that is explained in the Hindu scriptures, but also a pursuit of a new identity.

Keywords: Dalit, caste, upper caste, non-Dalit**INTRODUCTION**

The term 'Dalit' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'dal' which means burst, split, broken or torn asunder, downtrodden, scattered, crushed, destroyed (Vaman, 1989:493). In the Hindu scriptures, they have been negatively and dismissively referred to as Dasa, Dasyu, Rakshasas, Asura, Avarna, Nisada, Panchama, Mletcha, Svapaca, Chandala, and Achuta. During the British period, they were called the "Suffering Categories." Gandhi referred to them as Harijan. India's Constitution employed the term "Scheduled Caste" to refer to Dalits. Nevertheless, the politically active Dalits perceived these words as either insufficient to convey their frustration, revolt, conflict, and hatred of the higher castes, or as words of disdain, disapproval, and dominance. Therefore, they desired to be referred to as Dalits. This is a self-constructed personality. They have rejected the personality that has been assigned to them. The term "Dalit" does not denote poverty or inferior; rather, it denotes the condition to which a particular group of individuals has been reduced and is currently residing. Humans are not naturally untouchables, Dalit, or ignored. A human being is not inherently Dalit, neglected, or untouchable. He is subjected to this degradation by the system. Consequently, the former untouchables now refer to themselves as "Dalits" rather than as untouchables, Scheduled Castes, or Harijans. For centuries, the Dalits, have been denied the right to education, in addition to being exploited politically, socially and financially. Sanskrit was previously considered an untouchable language by the Dalits. The Dalits were prohibited from accessing the education system, as it was believed that they would contaminate it. The system of learning was Brahmanical and was kept separate from the Dalits until the beginning of the 20th century in order to prevent it from becoming polluted. The Dalits were granted access to learning through the efforts of

British priests. Ages of social disgrace and discrimination have paralysed the intellectual life of the Dalits. Their perspective and views have been diminished to the exposed desire for their survival, rather than anything more. Bhim Rao Ambedkar never thought that his people would undergo change due to unforeseen causes; rather, he was certain that the Dalits' circumstances would only be altered through learning, actions, and struggle. This was demonstrated when literate Dalits started speaking out for their own dignity, in addition to the rights of their people.

Indian society is structured in an order that is comprised of different socioeconomic groups and organizations, each of which has its own set of opposing and frequently conflicting goals and beliefs. The dominant ideologies are those that have the power to project particular meanings and practices as universal ('hegemony' in Gramsci's term). According to Gramsci (1996), hegemony is the process whereby the dominant class indoctrinates the masses and manufactures a consensus in civil society through largely peaceful means. They establish and regulate organisations and instruments, including parties in power, educational institutions, the press, creative work, and literary writings. All of these devices appear to be simple and interesting, and they produce "expressions of respect for the established order that serve to create around the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and of inhibition which lightens the task of policing" (Fanon, 1963: 38). This theory also provides a comprehensive explanation for the enduring negative consequences of the social hierarchy in India. The term "religion" was employed to establish an order of imposed ranking. All religions thrive in the framework of norms, belief, and the wants of the governing class. Michael Foucault (1984) similarly asserts that authority and knowledge are interconnected. The decisions and knowledge of the intelligent and strong few appear to be more beneficial to the needs of the unaware and helpless a certain age, known as "the other," as those who possess knowledge possess power. The upper-caste Hindus possess a disproportionate amount of power and knowledge. The Dalits' being a slave and labour have been systematically justified through the writing of the sacred scriptures. Rama's murder of Shudra Shambhuka, Dronacharya's mutilation of Eklavya's thumb, and the justification of removing the tongue of an ex-untouchable if he allowed to read the sacred books are just a few of the thousands of problems in both literature and history that demonstrate the violence of Hinduism and its leaders. The helpless are still not regarded as trustworthy sources of understanding and clarification. However, it is imperative that we recognise that when those who lack power are reduced to mere objects of another individual's thought process without being involved in the entire process, this type of thought is unintentionally establishing a dominating viewpoint through deceptive witness.

Dalit literature has lately emerged in Odisha. It was not the result of any systematic political and socioeconomic uprisings, as was the case in the majority of the southern states of India. The Dalit Panther Movement of Maharashtra in the 1960s did not have a major effect on the Dalits of Odisha. As a result, their opposition or revolt against the ruling class has never been vocalised. It is possible that this is the reason why the Dalits of Odisha have not made a significant contribution to the development of Dalit literature in comparison to other states. The Dalits of Odisha did not begin asserting one another at the personal basis until the 1980s and 1990s. The authors of this new literature are extremely rare.

METHODOLOGY

This paper would primarily be a qualitative research study. The approach would be a comparative text analysis. This is a theoretical research where literary texts from different authors have been taken both from Non-dalit and dalit writers for a comprehensive understanding.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES BETWEEN THE ODIA NON-DALIT AND DALIT WRITERS

ODIA NON-DALIT WRITERS

Fakir Mohan Senapati

In the first phase the writings and humanism of Fakir Mohan Senapati's unwavering mindset are worth discussing here to understand the development of progressive movement and development of Dalit literature. Fakir Mohan Senapati's "*Chhamana Athaguntha*" (1902) is a social novel which is completely based on the Dalits. This piece of literature highlights different aspects such as suppression, race, gender inequality, superiority, discrimination occurring to the Dalits at that point of time. It is a true portrait of the social exploitation and torture committed by the rich men on the poor, as well as a symbolic account of the extent to which evil and negative designs dominate men's habits and functioning. The main narrative is a tale of a local Zamindar's desire to acquire a piece of fertile land from an underprivileged villager, and the strategies he implemented to achieve the aim, as well as the resulting consequences.

Senapati, an innovative author, undoubtedly reveals the corrupt police department and greedy Zamindari systems. He subjects individuals such as Mangaraj, the Zamindar, to justice by employing contemporary legal principles. He is convicted by the law and arrested. Nevertheless, his portrayal of the Dalit characters demonstrates his views toward the Dalits. He explains, "There were eight earthen platforms in every cell; eight inmates spread their blankets on these to sleep. It so happened that the six Doms of Ratanpur, Gobara Jena, and

Mangaraj were put into the same cell together" (Senapati, 2005: 211). Fakirmohan Senapati asserts that this is not done to demonstrate equal rights, but rather to demonstrate the degradation Mangaraj endured as a result of being obligated to spend time with the the underprivileged. Additionally, the prison is overcrowded with Domb criminals. They were either the typical thieves and criminals, as Fakir mohan shows, or they were a simple target for the police.

The Indian struggle for freedom movement and the rise of modernity also had a significant impact on Odisha. To engage in the nationalist movement, a variety of organizations and societies were established. Newspapers and magazines were published. These newspapers conveyed messages of nationalism, unity, and togetherness. Numerous organizations were established to speak against the immorality of the caste system and untouchables. The thought process of Odisha was significantly impacted by the literary magazines published by the Satabdi Movement, known as Sabuja Andolono, in the 1920s. They issued an appeal to the youth of the nation "to revolt against all that was lifeless, senseless, joyless and ugly in our society, and to bring a new zest into our intellectual and spiritual life, a new appreciation of the physical beauty of the earth" (Baliarsingh, 1985:245). Their primary source of motivation and article of faith was humanism. For them, literature was not merely a recreational activity; it was an indispensable component of an artistic individual's dedication to humanity. The new

humanism that served as their inspiration also underscored the value of the person who exists.

All of these authors were committed to the rebirth of humanity through a revolution in society that was founded on the principles of the struggle between classes. They confessed their opposition to art for its own sake and their intention to transform literature into an instrument for social transformation and revolution. They urged for the development of a literature that was independent, pro-human, and devoid of archetypes such as religion and God.

For centuries, the Dalits in Odisha were not only marginalised but also unrecognised. They were exclusively contemplated in terms of contamination and clean. However, high-caste writers started to write about their struggles and misfortunes at the beginning of the 20th century. This was also significantly influenced by a variety of socio-religious reform campaigns. Gandhi had a significant impact on these writers. It is possible that for the first time, they perceived the Dalits' situation as unjust and unwarranted. Higher caste writers began to write about the Dalits as a result of this perspective. They observed the Dalits with sympathy and began to express their apprehensions in order to accommodate and adapt them to the system.

Gopinath Mohanty

Gopinath Mohanty (1914-1991) was a prominent zamindar family member with a broad network and a legendary background. They came from a royal family that lived in Bhubaneswar in the beginning of 18th century. He also was born into a writing family. During his service, he primarily served in the tribal and Dalit-dominated areas of Koraput. Gopinath Mohanty represented the cause of the underprivileged, disadvantaged, and tribals, opposing money lenders and landlords. He came into direct contact with the tribals and the untouchables, particularly when he moved to Koraput as a civil servant, since 1939. He initiated his writing on the marginalised populations of Odisha, including the ex-untouchables and the tribal groups. In all of his writings, the individuals at the bottom were the primary focus. Consequently, they had a significant influence on him and motivated him to pursue a career in literature. He was inspired to write about them by a particular type of pathos that they evoked in him. In fact, it would not be inaccurate to assert that marginalised groups have produced a promising author in Mohanty. His fiction can be classified into three distinct categories. *Dadibudha* (1944), *Paraja* (1946), *Amrutara Santana* (1949), *Siba Bhai* (1955), and *Apahanch* are the novels of his early phase. They interact with the Tribal peoples. The second group pertains to urban residents. They are both individual and group studies, ranging from high to low class, and from educated to illiterate. However, these novels typically operate within the confines of the city. *Harijana* (1948), *Sarata Babunka Gali*, *Rahura Chhaya*, *Sapan Mati*, *Danapani*, *Laya Bilaya*, and others are among them. *Matimatala* is the sole novel in the final cohort. It is regarded as an epic of the life of the Odia village.

The earliest fiction that depicts the existence of tribal groups in the Koraput district of Odisha is Gopinath's *Dadibudha* (The Ancestor). His *Paraja* represents the existence of the Paraja, an indigenous group in the Koraput district of Odisha. His *Amrutara Santana* (The Nectar Children) is also inspired by the existence of Kondh, another tribal group in the similar region. Gopinath Mohanty has been likened to "a prophet to the lost (tribal people) rootless modern generation".

Gopinath Mohanty's *Harijan* (1947) is another renowned and award-winning novel. The theme and individuals who are the subject of discussion are explicitly stated by the term "Harijan. The term

‘Harijan’ was first used by Gujarati saint-poet Narasimha Mehta in the 13th century. He adopted the phrase to refer to Devadasi's offspring. Devadasi infants were deemed illegitimate due to their birth through unlawful unions. Gandhi popularised this word later. He called Dalits ‘Harijan’ to express his compassion and sympathy. Today, the term ‘Harijan’ is prohibited.

The narrative focuses on the suffering of Dalits, particularly scavengers. The scavenger's community is illegally encroaching, while Abhinash Babu's massive buildings is opposite. Abhinash Babu negotiates with the authorities to relocate the community to a neighbourhood for greater use. He reported frequent fear of robbery, conflict, and violence. Abhinash's son, Aghor, tries to convince them that the current location is crowded and the government's rehabilitation site is superior. He says,

“Hei! Don’t be surprised! It’s all for your good. How do you live in such a congested place? Do human beings live this way?” Then

Jema replies, “Babu! Are we human beings” (Mohanty, 1947: 90). Gopinath Mohanty's performance is criticised for failing to disclose to the Dalit characters that they were not originally Dalits; rather, they have been "dalitized." The Dalit characters are consistently made to feel as though they are not human. They are classified as subhuman. They have been depicted as sub-humans and have been treated as such.

At the end of the book, they were moved to a place away from people and faith, close to a cemetery. They will keep picking up after the upper rank people who live in the town and sweeping the roads and yards. When the town grows, they will have to move to a new place.

Ashutosh Parida

Ashutosh Parida is a renowned creative writer in the field of contemporary Odia literature. The Dalits' anger and anguish are the main issues of his poetry. One of his most exceptional works is *Chandala*, a set of poems that was published in 1991. The Dalit people's character is filled with rage towards the higher caste plan. The majority of his poetry are rooted in historical events, specifically the origins of the hierarchy of castes as it is explained in the Hindu scriptures.

"Chandala" is a lengthy poem of narrative by Ashutosh Parida. This poem recounts the diverse facets of a Dalit's daily life, including the ekeing out of a livelihood, feeling of disgrace and disappointment, frustration, and fear. He is of the opinion that the sole purpose of writing is to alter the course of the past. Consequently, the history of the Chandalas serves as the source of his poetic inspiration. He goes back to Manusmriti's caste laws:

The day I learnt to walk
An earthen pot was tied around my neck
A place to preserve my spittle
A broom was tied to my waist
To sweep it clean my own footprints.
(Chandala, 1991: 2)

But the poet doesn't end there with recounting events. Both the so-called Hindu scripture and the

codification of such a law are subjects of his scepticism. He states:

I asked...

The annoyed lords

The trustworthy wise men

The burning forest

The burning sun in the eyes

What's my crime?

They had no answer.

(Chandala, 1991: 10)

Sadananda Tripathy

Sadanand Tripathy is a renowned short story artist of the higher castes. His short narrative, "Dalita" (Dalit), addresses the issue of caste discrimination within the group of Dalit people. In this narrative, a particular community asserts that it is more desirable to other Dalit groups. The highest-caste individuals appear to be closer to the impoverished members of the Dalit minority than the Dalits individuals, who are related to various groups of people. It narrates the tale of Birupakhsya, a Dalit from the washerman society who has been recently appointed as the bank manager in a semi-urban village in the Balangir district. Mishra, a Brahmin, has been employed at the same bank as the Assistant Manager. Mishra anticipated that Birupakhsya would be pleasant, as he was already acquainted with him. But he was taken away by Biru's attitude and pride. Robin, a member of the Ghasi (sweeper's) society was employed as a sweeper at the same bank. The wedding reception was extended to all bank employees on the day of Robin's marriage ceremony. However, Biru is depicted as an individual who is excessively angry and is unable to attend the reception. In contrast, Mishra is depicted as an individual who is not only looking into attending the marriage ceremony but is also convincing an unwilling Biru to do so. The ending provides a more vivid portrayal of Biru. Mishra turns and affectionately pats Robin while Biru is pressing his nostrils due to the scent of Robin's colony.

In contrast to the Dalit writers' passionate disagreement to caste discrimination in all aspects of society, Sadanand Tripathy here draws readers' attention to an additional humiliating issue. Even within the Dalit communities, there is a social system. The washerman's group considers itself preferable to the sweeper's community. In addition, Mishra, at the highest level of the social order, is willing to compromise with Robin, who is even lower in caste hierarchy than Biru, but Biru remains unchanging in maintaining his dominance. The author implies that there is no caste in the city and that all residents are progressive. Caste inequality exists even within Dalit communities. The Dalit protest movement against Brahmanism faces a significant obstacle. In the novel, Sadanand Tripathy aims to divert attention from the larger evil of Brahmanism. Both Mishra's approach to Robin and Biru's refusal to demonstrate support with Robin are distinct events. Sadanand portrays Robin as a compassionate character who earns Mishra's friendship by sweeping the bank, residence, and toilet for him. However, the writer harshly portrays Biru's character. The article notes that Biru admitted he would not have been hired without the reservation. The author contrasts his view, highlighting his vanity and arrogance. Biru's hesitation to send Robin for water seems overdone. Mishra may show pity to Robin, a Dalit, if he remains a servant, as per religious teachings. He cannot accept Biru, a Dalit, as his boss, which goes

against religious norms.

Bhima Prusty

Bhima Prusty's "Cycle" is a poignant narrative that recounts the ordeal of Dolly, a Dalit girl, in obtaining an education that had been exclusively reserved for the Brahmins and the upper castes. She is the first Dalit girl to complete the tenth standard and successfully complete the second division. She has aspirations of attending college, wearing fashionable attire, and, most importantly, travelling to college by bicycle. Despite their apprehension regarding the rules of the upper stratum, her parents accommodate her desires. The author refers to the upper caste individuals as "sharp-nosed people" and they object to her riding a bicycle on the village street. Dolly is required to attend numerous classes at the outset, as she is expected to carry the bicycle on the village street rather than ride it. However, she eventually musters the fortitude to defy the rule, which incites unrest in the village. In Dolly's street, higher-caste individuals engage in a conflict with the flat-nosed individuals and put economic and social problems sanctions on lower caste individuals. However, as the conflict gathered widespread attention, Dolly was granted police protection in order to attend college on a cycle, thanks to the efforts of friends, media, and politicians. Although the cycle is quite common in contemporary households, it is employed in this context as a symbol of empowerment. The author endeavours to provide a tentative model of assertion and a solution to the endemic issue of caste discrimination through this straightforward story. (Prusti 2009:23-33)

ODIA DALIT WRITERS

Akhila naik

Akhil Nayak is a Dalit writer and poet. As a Dalit thinker, the poet is familiar with the upper-caste Brahmins' changes. Dalits or individuals of other backward castes have perished in each instance of caste violence, while Brahmins have never killed. Baba Sahab Ambedkar correctly recognized the cleverness of the higher castes. He promoted communal dining among all sub-castes. There are numerous sub-castes within the Dalits. Certain individuals believe that they are more beneficial to other people. Consequently, the Dalits were unable to unite in order to oppose the oppression of the caste system.

Akhil Nayak's Bheda is the first and only Odia Dalit novel that has been published until now. Caste violence is the main theme of Bheda. The story takes place in a remote rural village in the Kalahandi district, which is located in the western region of Odisha. Dinamastre, his family, and his rebellious son, Lalatendu, comprise the novel's central theme. Both Lalatendu and his father are of distinct generations. Their perspective on caste discrimination and humiliation is wholly unlike one another. Lalatendu not only opposes but also organizes the youth to fight against such disgrace and oppression, while Dinamastre suffers all upper caste humiliation by cursing his destiny. He and his youth group are fighting against the violence that is perpetrated by corrupt government officials, police, landlords, and other upper strata. What is most startling is that, in the end, he is apprehended by the corrupt police, and the incident is published in the newspaper for which he was a local correspondent. The novel may conclude with Lalatendu's arrest; however, there is undoubtedly a sense of triumph, as the Dalits have begun to assert their rights and aspire to live with dignity and self-respect.

Moreover, the novelist challenges the right to freedom from the oppression of the superior caste. Akhil Nayak represents the caste violence that exists between the Shudras and the Dalits. According to the evidence, the caste conflict was between the untouchable Dalit communities and the touchable Shudra castes, including Teli, Rana, Gauda, Gond, and Bhatara. In a very clever manner, the Brahmins achieve this. Nevertheless, Brahmins are the only gainers. For the purpose of dividing and ruling, the Brahmins employ individuals or communities from these castes. The supremacy of the Brahmins in society has been further entrenched by the division between the Shudras and the ex-untouchables. In an indirect manner, the novelist argues for the merging of the Shudra communities and the Dalits in the struggle against Brahmanism.

Shankar Mahanandia:

In Odia Dalit literature, there are not many Dalit Dramas; however, Shankar Mahanandia's contribution is unique. He is a playwright and Dalit artist who is widely recognised. Shankar was born into an impoverished Dalit family in Sirthol village, located in the Nuapada district of Odisha. Despite his lack of formal education, his social and political activism and creativity motivated him to pursue a career in directing, acting, and playwriting. Bagdhara, Hatira chal, and Abolkara are among his most popular dramas. One of Shankar's most popular performances is Bagdhara (Tiger Hunting). In western Odisha, the term "Bagdhara" is a form of slang that translates to "let the tiger eat you." However, in the play, the meaning of "Bagdhara" is slightly different. He employs the term to denote the process of capturing the tiger. The term "Tiger" serves as a representation of capitalism and Brahmanism in this context. On December 16, 2002, in Kashipur, it was played for the first time in tribute of Martyr's Day. He recreates the Mahabharata scene of Shambhuka and Eklavya in his drama. In this specific episode, the tiger is synonymous with Brahmanism. It illustrates how Brahmanism resulted in the deaths of Shambhuka, who desired to recite mantras, and Eklavya, who was superior to the Pandavas in archery. The writer of the play examines these episodes and illustrates the emotions that the residents of Shambhuka and Eklavya may have experienced during these occurrences. He writes:

Three disciples:

Hei! Shambhuka, Shudra Shambhuka,
rebellious Shambhuka, we need your
head. (They chop off his head)

The preceding lines highlight the reinterpretation of Shambhuka's identity. He served as a source of calamity for the Brahmins in the Ramarajya, however he was a source of hope for his own community. Nevertheless, he was murdered. Consequently, his fellow citizens remained with little option and were compelled to continue living in a state of continuous confusion and obscurity.

His views of the situation where Eklavya's thumb was cut off is similar. His hopes and dreams were cut down in order that he would always be a slave to other people.

The tiger of Brahmanism is succeeded by the tiger of power, capitalism at a later stage. We are confronted with the sad facts about vote politics. These methods are also very dangerous and are based on the Brahmanical way of thinking. The play is full of life and energy because of the music, dance, and drum beat. The Dalits have a rich culture, which can be seen in their music and dance. By writing the play, the author not only criticises the Brahmanical systems, but also puts them up against the Dalit

culture, which the Dalits see as having no culture at all. Along with this, he shows that all of these dangerous systems have only one goal: to become the best. The basic idea of this drama is revolutionary. This raises awareness among the Dalits regarding the dangerous consequences of Brahmanism, capitalism for their lives.

Pratibha Bhoi

Another young Dalit lady poet is Pratibha Bhoi. She has had numerous compositions published in a variety of magazines and journals. Pratibha's two most significant compositions are "Nian" (Fire) and "Dharma O Jaati" (Religion and Caste). The main subject of these works is the attempt by the higher castes to prevent the Dalits from growing and becoming powerful. The higher caste individuals' response to the Dalits' slightest advancement is directly conveyed in her poem "Fire." The only objective of the race division, which is well-defined in the religious texts, was to maintain the Shudras and the Dalits in a state of endless slavery, impoverishment, and complete darkness. However, the Dalits are now trying to acquire knowledge, fight for their freedoms, live with respect and dignity, and even advance economically, as a result of the advent of modernity and constitutional provisions. However, the Brahmanical social system is incapable of assimilating it. The title of the poem, "Fire," symbolises the envy that higher castes presents as they observe the Dalits' prosperity.

She writes:

When I started walking on the village road
Keeping my head straight
Somewhere a heap of gunpowder
Began to gather. (Hayati, 2012: 69)

The Dalits' capacity to affirm and speak about what was concealed for centuries is evident in the aforementioned lines, as it was forcibly suppressed. However, the Dalits have recently begun to assert themselves and respond. They will no longer be subject to the oppressive Brahmanical system. The Dalits are also afflicted by rage when there is a fire of jealousy in the higher castes.

Pitambar Tarai

Pitambar Tarai (1959-) is an Odia Dalit poet from Kujang, Jagatsinghpur, Odisha. He is a member of the fishing community known as Keuta or Kaibarta. Tarai exemplifies the enthusiasm and anxiety of progressive social ideas in her roles as a poet, journalist, and social worker. Many of his compositions have been translated into other languages, including English, Bengali, and Hindi. He is the author of numerous Odia poetry collections, including Abhajana (2010) and Itara (2006).

Achhaba (Untouchables) is a poem from the collection Itara The poem's narrator is the father.

He explains the way to which the trials of life have weighed heavily on him. He is no longer willing to bear the burden that has been imposed upon him by religion and the gods. He sarcastically refers to it as "my fate." He has been granted the "privilege" of serving the superior caste by God. Presently, he is excessively occupied. He has not lifted it. The father narrator states, "I have laid down the burden that has been carried thus far." He is resolute in his refusal to transport it any longer. The patriarch is protesting. It is evident that the poet, through the character of the father, is protesting the law of Manu

and other religious scriptures that dictate the lifestyle of Dalits.

The father, as an example of his era, explains how he acquired the responsibilities of daily life from his forebears. In reality, this is the narrative of the Dalits throughout the ages. The poet also discusses the impotence of his people in not being able to speak out against such exploitation in the poem.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the progressive stance of higher-caste writers, despite their opposition to the more overtly negative aspects of the caste system such as untouchability, remains fundamentally constrained by their inability to fully incorporate Dalit sensibility into their writings. This results in their status as detached observers rather than individuals who have personally experienced the systemic oppression faced by Dalits. Higher-caste writers, while advocating for compassion and humane treatment towards Dalits, do not challenge the caste system's foundational structures. They stop short of opposing the caste system in its entirety, thereby inadvertently perpetuating its existence. Their critique often revolves around behavioral reforms rather than a systemic overhaul, focusing on urging the upper castes to treat Dalits with more humanity rather than dismantling the hierarchical system that perpetuates such behaviors. Prominent Dalit writers and critics, aptly highlights this issue, urging writers to break free from the influence of Brahmanical feudal literature. The call for a departure from traditional narratives underscores the need for a literary reformation that can authentically represent Dalit experiences and challenges. The works of Sarala Dasa, Panchasakha poets, and Bhima Bhoi in the nineteenth century, re-interpreted through the lens of educated Dalit intellectuals, form the bedrock of contemporary Dalit literature. These writings are deeply rooted in the philosophies of Jotirao Phule and B.R. Ambedkar, whose thoughts on social justice and equality continue to resonate powerfully within Dalit narratives. A recurring theme in Dalit literature is the outright rejection of the caste system, seen as the root cause of untouchability and broader social injustices. Dalit writers challenge the religious sanctification of caste by Hindu scriptures, going so far as to deny the existence of a God that endorses such a discriminatory system. This radical humanism shifts the focus of their writings from divine narratives to the lived realities and inherent worth of human beings. Consequently, the fundamental focus of Dalit writings is on human dignity and social equality, rather than religious doctrines.

Literature becomes a tool of resistance and empowerment for Dalit writers, who use it to combat the deeply entrenched Brahmanical social, cultural, and political order in Odisha. Their primary goal extends beyond addressing individual acts of discrimination to advocating for a comprehensive reformation towards an egalitarian society. The potential for real social transformation lies in the powerful narratives crafted by Dalit writers, whose personal experiences of oppression fuel their passionate calls for justice and equality. Moreover, the necessity for a robust collaboration between Dalits and Shudras is underscored as a strategic alliance for dismantling the caste system. Together, these groups can form a formidable force against the perpetuation of caste hierarchies, working towards the establishment of a fair and equitable society. The unity between these communities is crucial for amplifying their collective voices and achieving significant social reform. Therefore, it is imperative to recognize and elevate the voices of Dalit writers. Their lived experiences provide an authentic and critical perspective that is essential for understanding and addressing the complexities of caste-based

discrimination. By acknowledging the limitations of higher-caste writers and prioritizing the narratives of those directly affected by caste oppression, society can move towards a more genuine and effective confrontation of caste injustices. In summation, Dalit literature stands as a vital and transformative force in the fight against social injustice and caste discrimination. It offers a profound critique of the caste system and advocates for the radical restructuring of society based on principles of equality and human dignity. The writings of Dalit authors are not just literary expressions but powerful tools for social change, challenging the status quo and envisioning a future free from the shackles of caste. As such, the voices of Dalit writers must be amplified and integrated into the broader discourse on social justice, paving the way for a truly egalitarian society.

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