

## Conclusion

The Dalit movements from 1970s onwards aimed at fighting for Dalit assertion. The exploitation and discrimination of the Dalits on one hand and their protest and revolt on the other hand raised questions of self-assertion and consciousness among the Dalits. Asserting themselves, Dalits have challenged the very foundation of Brahminical ideology on which the Indian society and polity were based through movements such as the Dalit Panthers movement and Bahujan Samajwadi Party movement.

This thesis presents the emergence of the Gujarati Dalit writing as an aspect of the Dalit movement in contemporary Gujarat. Although Jotiba Phule and his writings can be seen as marking the beginning of Dalit consciousness, the contemporary Dalit movement can be traced primarily to the political and intellectual intervention of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. During the colonial period, the caste structure had been affected by the two hundred years long British regime. Yet, in a significant way, most Dalits lived the life of a beast. Dalits were also not allowed into the learning process. However, for the first time in history, when a few Dalits got the benefit of education in the British regime, they started to gain knowledge. I have argued that it is the British regime and its modern education policy that played a key role in the Dalit challenge to existing caste structures and in their effort to restore their lost human identity. I also argue that it is through the weapon of education Dalits were able to launch the Dalit movement in order to demand political, social and economic rights and indeed, their right to their existence as human beings.

In my study of Dalit Writing in India and Gujarat, I have found that the questions of hegemony materialized through caste equations are very aptly presented in regional Dalit literature. One of the goals of the Dalit literature, I found, is to unveil the wretchedness and miseries that were a part of Dalit life and experience. It exemplifies Dalit search for identity. It brings out a new consciousness of modern India. Gujarati Dalit literature also manifests that consciousness. Dalit identity does not merely mean the identification of oneself with the Dalit self, but it refers also to an attempt to bring awareness to fellow Dalits. When a Dalit narrates the self, s/he does not narrate a personal history; what one narrates is the history of community.

After 1970s along with building the Dalit consciousness, the aspects of self-respect and self-assertion became central concerns of Gujarati Dalit writing. Though the authors of the Dalit writings suffer from unique problems born by caste inequalities, the philosophy of Ambedkar is considered as a powerful way forward for the liberation of Dalits. In other words, the life and philosophy of Ambedkar has been the basis of the formation and construction of the Dalit identity particularly in post 1970s India. Since Ambedkar's focus was importantly on education almost all the Dalit writers presented in the study used education as the true weapon for the emancipation of the Dalits.

My thesis argues that Gujarati Dalit narratives thematize identity and self-respect. These narratives are written in the respective Dalit idiom. The construction of these Dalit narratives is based on a sense of self-respect. These narratives emphasize on the need to be aware of exploitation based on caste. Through their narratives, they provide a critique of Brahminism and question the existing canon of Gujarati mainstream literature. To offer a contrast, I have briefly evaluated the literary historiography of Gujarati literature to examine the thematic importance of caste in the mainstream.

Sharankumar Limbale defined the upper caste writer's attitude as 'reformist-liberalism' which portrayed the 'untouchable' as abject, submissive and pitiful, resigned to the malice of caste and destiny. (Srivastava, 1) Many Dalit writers in Gujarat have attempted to counter such attitudes and presentations. The caste specific bias in the description of the Dalits has caused a gap in the Indian literary philosophy and culture. The Dalit writers have not only seen this gap and also countered it through their writings. In Priyanka Srivastava's opinion,

"The Dalit writers have challenged the hegemonic conventions and value systems that inscribe the former 'untouchables' within the circle of the upper caste discourse. Dalit literature has posed a major challenge to the dominant episteme by its insistence on not only a presentation but also a re-presentation of its own socio-cultural and political reality. By presenting Dalit culture through their presentation of Dalit lives, it also seeks to revise traditional Indian aesthetics." (1)

The integration of the Dalits with the mainstream society is the chief motive of the reservation policy which was won by mass agitation. The reservation policy also aimed at to

bring changes in the social, economic and political life of the Dalits not of certain individuals but of the community per se. Thus, the centrality of the reservation policy is meant for the empowerment of the Dalits as a community (Srivastava, 8). I have evaluated pre and post independence theorizations of the Dalit. I have referred accounts, narratives and analyses of Dalit consciousness in the context of anti-reservation agitations of 1981 and 1985 in Gujarat to analyze reservation as a national policy and its impact on the Dalits in India and especially in Gujarat. I have further attempted to theorize the self as it has shaped a Dalit imagination in the context of these two anti-reservation agitations.

This study explores the political impact of caste and reservations. Caste is such a monster which never leaves the Dalit even after s/he converts herself/himself to other religion. Dalits who have renounced Hinduism and embraced other religions continue to face caste violence even today; this is represented by B. Kesharshivam in his novel *Shool* [Thorn]. Praveen Gadhvi's famous poem *Padchhayo* [Shadow] is a critique of caste oppression and the efforts made by a Dalit to overthrow it.

The upper caste hegemonic groups have always prevented the entry of the oppressed and marginalized into the political arena. In 1975 when Congress (I) decided to work for the oppressed i.e. for the KHAM groups which were the historically marginalized it was visualized as an immediate threat to their hegemony by the upper castes. The upper caste trio of Brahmin, Bania and Patel worked continuously to break the KHAM. In order to achieve its desired goal of subordinating the marginalized members of KHAM, they developed the weapon of Sanskritisation. Through Sanskritisation the upper castes are able to keep apart the Dalits and other marginalized groups and also placed them against each other. This trio has politically

usurped Sanskritisation, caste and reservation so effectively that KHAM was dismantled finally in the 1990s in Gujarat and the upper caste political hegemony was established once again.

I believe that if the Dalits want to break Brahminism than the Dalit, Adivasis, and the Shudras have to unite and to renounce the process of Sanskritisation. Sanskritisation never allows oppressed groups to visualize the real oppressor i.e. Brahminism. Though Shudras feel that they are able to capture power and thus they are getting what they require to shake off oppression but actually after getting power also they are not able to work for their oppressed brethrens as the policy of the party to which they belong and the socio-political and economic factors do not allow it. If anyone wants to improve the position of their oppressed community, s/he will be immediately replaced by such a person who follows the norms of the party and the society. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 represent this phenomenon.

All Gujarati Dalit writers discussed in this study have presented their struggle for literacy through all the literary genres. The Dalit magazines and journals have also played a crucial role to challenge the hegemony of the 'upper' castes in literature and publishing, and establishing the independence of the Dalit literature from the mainstream.

Through their writings, Gujarati Dalit writers also challenge the mainstream assumption that caste is no longer a valid force in the modern Indian society, as it has been rendered insignificant due to the various social and legal measures adopted by the successive governments since independence. All the Gujarati Dalit writers presented in this study have also stated that caste remains a powerful force of exclusion. For example, Neerav Patel, B. Kesharshivam, Dalpat Chauhan and many others highlighted the problems faced by them in renting and owning property. Although a few percentages of the Dalits have become a part of the economic middle

class of the country, yet their integration with the mainstream remains uneasy and problematic. They are still excluded from the discursive and practical fields of the society as they are Dalits, and therefore always on the margins of privilege. The selected Gujarati Dalit writings in the present study reiterate the writers' claim that they have tried to present as the overwhelming experience of their personal as well as their community's life. In Gujarati Dalit writing, it is interesting to note that the genres of poetry, short story and fiction have an advantage over the genre of autobiography that reign other regional Dalit writings. Though Gujarati Dalit writers have used fictional narratives to present a Dalit life, they have never separated them from a commitment to a structural transformation of the society.

Numerically also Gujarati Dalit writing does not lag behind. More than 100 poetry collections, 30 short story collections, 30 fictional narratives, 30 books on criticism, 10 autobiographies, and some collections of drama and essay have been published. The number of Gujarati Dalit writing in translation is also growing up. Till today 13 translations of various Gujarati Dalit writings have been published. Yet Gujarati Dalit literature, like the Dalits themselves, is a part, and yet apart from the establishment. In order to preserve its radicalism, it must resist the temptation of endorsing totalizing practices like essentialism and normative identities. It must also guard against the tendency of being insistent on the exclusive authority of a subaltern voice, as there are no innate and enduring categories of liminality. Only thus will Dalit literature succeed in its vision of revolutionizing society and establishing an egalitarian social and cultural system.

The oppressed Dalit who has gained education has not stopped after gaining the knowledge but has started to convert his knowledge into power through penning down his/her agony and thus the seeds of identity which were sown by Ambedkar years ago are blooming now.

The Dalit writing presented in the study has been interpreted as an attempt of relocating, reforming, and reconstructing the Dalit identity as a challenge to the Brahminical oppressive social order. From my study of Gujarati Dalit Writing, I have found that Gujarati Dalit Writing is able to question the upper caste structures and address the millennia long literary gap. I conclude

that while Gujarati Dalit Writing has attained its primary goal of constructing Dalit consciousness, it is yet to attain its larger goal of reshaping the upper caste as well as Bahujan psyche to bring equality in society.