

The Similarities in the Life Experiences of Dalit and Black Community: A Review

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ABSTRACT

This paper elaborates on the history of suppression, their condition, and the origin of Dalit and Black literature. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar mainly influenced Dalit literature. Dalit literature portrays the sorrows, slavery, degradation, and poverty of Dalits and Blacks. It has great historical importance. On the other hand, African American literature focuses on the issues of slavery, pain, exploitation, and sorrow of Negroes (blacks).The paper also explores how the Dalits and Black community struggled for equality and liberty. Despite differences in countries, society, language, region, and economy, the similarities in the life experiences of the two communities derive from the fact that both were targets of excess, injustice, and slavery.

Keywords: Dalit, black literature, enslaved person, untouchables, exploitation....

Introduction:

Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano, social scientists, insist that in this world, there has always been an elite section that is to be differentiated from the rank and file. According to Patero (1950), each society can be divided into two stratum – lower and higher. The people belonging to the higher stratum are at the top, and they govern and exploit the people belonging to the lower stratum.

In India, Dalits are the protagonist of boycotted society. The African Americans are also the protagonist of Black America. One is robbed and degraded by the White community and the other by Savarna society. One was brought and sold from their homeland, and the other was called Untouchable by birth. As observed by D.Gnaniah, "There are ample grounds to compare and contrast the brief history of the Blacks in the USA and the age-long ancient history of the misery of Dalits in India. There are numerous similarities of both these black people, especially in their sufferings and miseries, legal and illegal violence, segregations and ghettos, whippings and punishments, poverty and hunger, brainwashing and punishments, livelihood, employment, education and culture, denial of entry into Churches and Temples, Untouchability and apartheid, housing and civic facilities, suppression, and oppression, above all

total exclusion from the social order." It is well-known that Dalits and Africans, both societies, are engaged in similar kinds of liberation movements. These two societies are different in terms of place and time, so their literature should have certain limitations and differences.

On the other hand, the Dalits of India have been compared with the enslaved Africans. Africans were captured, brought to America, and sold in August 1619. From this, the slavery of African Americans began. On the other hand, Dalits of India have experienced slavery since ancient times. So we find these writers' search for identity in their literature. In America, racism was the critical factor, and in India, the caste system was the deep-rooted factor that affected India's socio-economic and socio-cultural system.

Untouchables were the most exploited and unwanted category. They were suppressed economically, culturally, and politically too. Some experts feel that the Aryans, who were fair-skinned people who invaded India and controlled this dark-skinned people and stamped them lower and became untouchables after that. The Rigveda, the sacred text of Hindus, divided people into four 'Varnas,' namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Shudras. Here also, Shudras were highly exploited people. Some specific professions like butchers, leather workers, launderers, and latrine cleaners were also labeled untouchables. The economic situation of both the people, i.e., Black and Dalits, were the same in their countries. These people were at the bottom of their social hierarchy. In America, these Black people were like cattle who were tortured a lot. Black writers focus on these issues related to their harassment. Writers like Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Paul Lawrence Dunbar find racism a significant theme in their novels. Women writers like Nella Larsen, Ann Petry, Tony Morrison, and Alice Walker also discuss their essential reality. American society was divided into two categories, i.e., 'master' and 'slave.'

Black Literature:

It is also called African American literature. It is the work created by Americans of African descent or literary work written about African experiences. Black literature reflects the development and history of the United States through the eyes of the exploited group of the society. The term black literature covers a wide range of works, from slave narratives of the 19th century to contemporary black literature. Black literature is found in the late 18th century. In America, Blacks were disadvantaged in all the opportunities and fundamental rights. They fought for their human dignity. These Black people were denied education; they were not allowed to participate in politics. In the 1940s and 1950s, three Black writers made an invaluable contribution to what at that time was called "Literature of the Blacks in America ." "Native Son by Richard Wright, 'Invisible man by Ralph Ellison, and 'Tell It on the Mountain' by James Baldwin are novels about the Blacks in America. As R. Bhonslenoticed and said, "The three novels are the record of a common experience. They reveal attitudes of the whites towards the blacks and its devastating effects on the psychology of the blacks."

Dalit Literature:

In India caste system was the root of discrimination. The Indian scenario was also not significantly different. As Shivaji Sagar observes it, "In India, Dalits were not legally enslaved

like the Africans in America, but their plight was worse than that of the enslaved Black people. Until recently, they were denied the right to education; they were forced to live outside the villages, and the public places and temples were closed to them. Shudras were from the lower class, and they were treated as if they did not belong to the human race. The evil thing practiced was untouchability. It was believed that the mere touch or even the shadow of a Shudra spoils the sanctity of the Savarna." These untouchables remained outcasts. The Hindu varna system-imposed slavery on them. They were tortured for a long time in India. They don't have a home or village. Their trouble is found in Dalit literature. The Hindu caste system denied these low caste people any right to education. In the late 1960s and 1970s when the militant Black Panthers and their claims of Black power motivated a group of young Dalit poets. Then they proudly called themselves Dalit Panthers. At that time, they were the first who used the word 'Dalit,' which became an accepted term for the untouchables. Dalits have no literary history of their own, and they had produced no literature till the last quarter of the 19th century. It is familiar that Dalit literature is one of the most important literary movements to emerge in post-independent India. The term 'Dalit Literature' was first applied in 1958 at the first Dalit conference held in Bombay.

Sharan Kumar Limbale (2004) observes differences in the treatment given to both: "The plight of African Americans and Dalits can be compared in several ways. Although the African Americans were enslaved, they could buy their freedom with money. At the time, Dalits were technically not slaves; they could not even pay their house rent. The white masters were responsible for looking after the enslaved Black person. Since untouchables were not slaves, the savarnas had no concern for them. Untouchables are societal enslaved people. The cause of African slavery was economic. The root of the Dalit's untouchability is social. African Americans can do any work, but their work is not considered undignified, while Dalits can perform the lowest type of job, but their labor is always termed 'undignified.' While African Americans cannot hide the color of his skin, Dalit cannot hide his caste." We have many prominent Dalit writers today, like Lakshman Mane, Lakshman Gaikwad, and Kishore Kale, who have significantly impacted their communities.

In both the cases of Dalit and Blacks, God did not ordain slavery. Human beings created it. They had imposed slavery on Blacks and Dalits. In 1946, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar wrote to W.E.B. DuBois, the prominent African –American scholar: "There is so much similarity between the position of the untouchables in India and of the position of negroes in America that the study of the latter is not only natural but necessary. I was very interested to read that the Negroes of America has filed a petition to the UNO (United Nations Organisations)."

There are similarities in their histories also. The African-American literature is known as "Literature of Slaves." The enslaved people brought from Africa to work on the plantations of the white men sang to themselves the songs of their miseries and spiritual yearnings. These songs came down from generation to generation in the oral form known as 'blues'. These blues were the source of inspiration to many poets.

Conclusion:

Both Dalits and Afro-Americans have protested against religions that perpetuated their enslavement. Even after the abolition of slavery White American has continued to hold the black man in 'enslavement' by keeping alive an image of 'Blackness'. In their fiction, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison have shown these sensitive portrayals of self-hatred and experiences. Both the literature was written for social change. Today, Dalits have created their own culture in India.

On the other hand, Blacks in America have developed their own culture. It can be seen that there are strong similarities between the outcome of racial discrimination in the U.S. and caste discrimination in India. The root cause of their endless pain and suffering was not their fault. There are some similarities in their rebellion, hopes, and desires. However, their languages are different, and the state of mind and the emotions expressed through these pieces of literature are similar. Both kinds of literature search for self-identity through their literature.

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