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Subaltern and Marginalised in the poetry of Namdeo Dhasal

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Abstract

According to the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, Subaltern and marginalized communities are those sub-sects of the society which are discriminated on the basis of religion, caste, gender, sexuality, culture, tradition, economic status etc. Literature plays a major role in raising the question of sufferings of against the social supremacy. Anguish of the oppressed communities expressed its strongest protest with piercing words and attacking them. In the Dalit Literature, Namdeo Dhasal is a universally acknowledged Dalit poet, who attacks social hierarchy with his realistic poems. Namdeo Dhasal's poetry not only unveils the multiple social oppressions but discusses the social problems also.

Keywords- Marginalization, Exploration, Subversion, Oppression, Hierarchy

This paper is an attempt to explore the poetic career of Dhasal and it focuses on the social reality and his haunting style in the poems of Dhasal where he used poetry as the mean of raising voice of the oppressed and marginalized. A number of communities are marginalized in Indian society on the basis of social, political, cultural, religious and even geographical aspects. These margins are deprived of such means by which they can raise their voice in the society. This binary approach fabricates a number of 'other' in our society and makes their lives horrible. This oppression is on the peak of tolerance which has begun a sense of protest in marginalized world. Due to the continuous protest of the black literature, feminist theories and literature, Dalit Movement and Minority Literature, voice of margins and oppressed have achieved some acceptance in Indian society.

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In 1972, Dalit Panther Movement was run by dalits along with J V. Pawar, Arun Kumble, Umakant Randeer and Waman Nimbalkar. The revolutionary Marathy poets Namdeo Dhasal founded this Dalit Panther Movement.

Brimmed with the excitement to agitate, Dhasal uses the language of surrealism, imagism and so on. He depicts the world of darkness, urban, squalor, explicit sexuality and despair. He is honored to be ranked among the radical voice of protest in spite of his bleak theme.

Namdeo Dhasal is very particular in deviating from the expected ways of literature. His topics are not melodious so as the selection of words too. He chooses the vulgar and indecent words to suit the harsh and hard realities of society. He focuses on unveiling and addressing the realities of Indian society. Sachin Kelkar in his essay, 'The Organized Herem of the octopus': Poetics and Politics of Namdeo Dhasal, says "Dalit literature in general and Dhasal's poems in particular embody the asymmetry of the core and periphery-the 'us' and 'them' the 'our' and 'their'-and question the nature of Marathy world picture and periphery to which dalit are relegated" (90).

By turning the theme and language (upside down) of the Savarna representation in literature Dhasal uses his poetry as weapon. Dhasal's blistering revision and interrogation of mainstream not only represents dalit exclusively but almost all the oppressed communities who stay in the dark gutters.

'Golpitha' broke all the rules of the prevailing literature in 1972. Dlip Chitre, a well known critic and translator took 40 years to translate Dhasal's poems and published book 'Namdeo Dhasal' A Poet of the Underworld. 'Golpitha' is a red light district of Mumbai which is notorious for all dark side.

The most popular and criticized poem of Dhasal is 'Kamatipura' which is known for prostitution. He was grown as a child near to this Kamatipura and had experience poverty and deprivation. He said "this is hell. This is an ugly agony" (74). He explains Kamatipura as "pain wearing dancer's anklet". "hell", "ugly agony" and as "swilling vortex"(74). He depicts the anguish of the prostitutes of Kamatipura where distinctive stench, leaky drainage, the smell of human urine, stale food and garbage, sweat, smoke and many subtler aromas pervade.

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Kamatipura is depicted as the Syphilis to the cultured society. The women in prostitution are victim of serious sexual diseases like Syphilis, the word which highlight the intensity of their sufferings,” where death gathers” is a dangerous condition. The lives of prostitutes are full of gloom and sadness which is depicted as the grey colour of porcupine. The condition of the prostitutes is painful which is “squatting in the mud”. The bodies of prostitutes are similar to the body of porcupine which is not attractive, represented metaphorically. Dhasal reminds the cultural society of its exact colour with the depiction of the Kamatipura.

Caste hierarchy of society restricts Dhasal from being human which is beautifully depicted in the poem “Their Orthodox Pity” with the help of comparison between ‘them’ and ‘us’. This social identity provokes Dhasal to make a fun of this caste hierarchy which sympathies the plight of dalit. He in the beginning of the poem says “Their orthodox pity is taller than a fuckland road pimp” (98). This pity has no sincerity for prostitutes. Thus, he compares this pity with pimp’s sympathy. It is disgusting for being such human, he says “This life ... so beggary. It is nausea to be human” (98). The guaranty of food and shelter do not make one human but mutual respect and feeling of equality should also be the part of their lives. The intense criticism on the upper caste society is beautifully executed in this poem as a slap on the face of the contemporary social system which boasts that they do every possible thing to up bring subaltern whose plight is immensely torturous .The law of nature does not discriminates among humans .

In the view of poet Marathy culture is ‘GanduBagicha’. The poem became a great challenge for the existing literary modal because of the use of surrealism, abusive language and comparison in the poem. In Sudhanva Deshpande’s word “the more his (Dhasal) critics are exasperated, the more he enjoys being outrageous” (72).

The emphasis is given on the free and responsible agency which is inevitable in human life, show existential elements. Though the institutionalized binaries include only man/woman and heterosexuality but the representation of homoerotic elements has high relevance. Kamatipura in Mumbai is paradoxical which compares the world of wollywood with Kamatipura, a slum and glaring reality of subaltern.

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To sum up the matter we can say that Dhasal was a political activist and his poems are only literary weapons which speak for the dalits and marginalized. Thus, they are more realistic in nature. Whatever he wrote it came out from his experience and not from any assumption. He believed that the self is to be depicted in the literature if we have to attain desired identity and Namdeo Dhasal has done this nicely.

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