Chapter-II

Discrimination Both Ways: 'Caste of Race' and 'Race of Caste'
A Christmas Poem

War? Not so, not war;
Dominion, Lord, and over black, not white,
Black, brown and fawn,
And not thy chosen brood, O God,
We murdered.
To build thy kingdom,
To drape our wives and little ones,
And set their souls a 'glitter-
For this we killed these lesser breeds
And civilized their dead,
Raping red rubber, diamonds, cocoa, gold.
For this, too, once, and in thy name
I lynched a nigger.28

In 1946, Ambedkar wrote a letter to W. E. B. Du Bois, noting that:

There is so much similarity between the position of the Untouchables in India and
of the position of the Blacks in America and that the study of the latter is not only
natural but necessary...I was very much interested to read that the Blacks of
America have filed a petition to the UNO. The Untouchables of India are thinking
of following suit.29

Both Dubois and Ambedkar provided intellectual leadership to their
respective communities, Blacks and Dalits, in their own countries. Since both
Blacks and Dalits represent minority groups struggling against dominant social
structures, it was always thought that the struggle for correcting historical wrongs
would have to start with building a broad class-based unity rather than through
individual or disparate acts of opposition.30

28 This poem was written by W. E. B. Du Bois in December1914, and has been cited here from
Manning Marable's Black Leadership: Four Great American Leaders and the Struggle for Civil
29 Sukhdeo Thorat and Umakant (ed.), Caste, Race and Discrimination: Discourses in International
30 In a discussion with Chintamani Mahapara on 24 August 2009.
Although this ‘resistance’ against discrimination based on race and caste had been (and still is) waged mostly by people belonging to Black/Dalit communities, there have also been attempts by Whites and non-Dalits to participate within the growing clamour for democratisation and social justice in both countries. Gail Omvedt, an American academic and activist who now an Indian citizen, has done extensive research on Non-Brahmin movements in India and has found that the rigidity of caste structures often disrupts class unity/categorisation. She wrote in 1978 that:

Coming from an American society shaken by growing Black, Chicano, Native American and Asian American movements, I have had the impression that ‘caste’ is as crucial a feature of social reality in India as ‘race’ in the United States. It appears to be as prevalent a topic of discussion and as such occurs (perhaps in simply a joking form) among Marxists as well as non-Marxists. It was not I who invented such terms as ‘Brahmin communists’; rather they are used by many radicalised members of low caste groups that is, those who are not simply ‘anticommitist’ who are genuinely troubled about the issue. The difference is that it has become both respectable and necessary for American Marxist intellectuals and Communist groups to deal openly with the issue of race and to admit its centrality, whereas this does not seem to have happened in the case of India.31

Gunnar Myrdal noted that all societies to which the term caste is applied without controversy—notably the ‘ante bellum’32 slavery society of the American South and the Hindu society of India—do not have the ‘stable equilibrium’ which American sociologists, perched at a distance, are often inclined to attribute to them.33 Myrdal in his famous work ‘American Dilemma’ stated that:

Within each caste people also feel social distance and restrict free competition, so that each caste has its own class system. The dividing line between two castes is by definition clear-cut, consciously felt by every member of each caste, and easily observable. No arbitrariness is involved in drawing it. The class lines, on the other hand, are blurred and flexible...lines dividing the classes are not defined in law or even in custom, as caste lines are. Therefore it is probably most correct to conceive of the class order as social continuum...there are no ‘natural’ class boundaries.34

32 Antebellum Age denotes the time period since American War of Independence till the beginning of the Civil War. This phase is also known as one of ‘Westward Expansion’ in American history.
34 Ibid, p. 675.
Front Page of July 2008 Issue of The New Yorker showing Barack and Michelle Obama with Religious and Racial Prejudices when Obama was yet to become the President of USA
This is a mistake that is often made by several scholars, most notable amongst whom in the context of caste in India is Louis Dumont’s work titled *Homo Hierarchicus*. This work, written within the structuralist mould, attempts to see the ever-changing universe of caste configurations in India as a ‘system’, the key to whose working was the notion of ‘purity-pollution’. However, as historically-situated works like Lucy Carroll’s have shown, the nature of caste changed even within relatively short periods, and they should therefore not be seen as reified, monolithic categories. A similar argument has been produced for the phenomenon of race: after all, ‘gentrified’ Blacks do constantly attempt, successfully or unsuccessfully, to cross the invisible race lines. Keeping this ever-changing notion of caste/race in mind, this chapter will attempt to delineate ‘race’ and ‘caste’ and will analyse Black/Dalit Literature not only with a view to locating sources of oppression, but also with the intention of outlining the contours ‘resistance’ and change.

‘Race’ in the United States

It has been a very old tendency within endogamous, closed communities to believe in their own inherent superiority. This belief has in recent years received a great impetus from the new-fangled theories of genetic science and DNA technology which have been employed by several groups to ‘prove’ their own greatness. More than two thousand years ago, Greeks felt that they were more civilised than the ‘barbarians’ and carried out this classification of varying degrees of barbarity based on trivial details of food, clothing and other cultural assortments. It was later established that it was not the inherent superiority or greatness of the ‘Roman-race’ as such that allowed it to rule much of the ‘civilised world’, but that it was its ideas of governance, law, discipline, military strategy/capability that helped them achieve their hallowed status. Dunn and Dobzhansky note that:

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...The misuse of 'race' for political and military purposes has brought the term race into such disrepute, that many people including some scientists propose to abandon the term altogether as applied to human groups. It is true that it is used in many ways. By the 'human-race' we certainly do not mean the same things 'the races of man'; if change of name could cure some ill which the race notion, or rather the misuses of the notion have brought about, then it might be better to convey the idea of race in other words. Some have 'ethnic group' in place of race. But unfortunately 'ethnic group prejudice' is easily exchangeable with 'race prejudice'... 

Like most other concepts, the concept of race in Europe/Americas has also been defined in constant interaction or opposition with some communities. In the Unites States it was the Black man, bearing the epithet of 'Negro', who was the pariah on whom all concepts and categories of race were applied. The term 'Negro' itself has been derived from Latin word 'Niger' which literally means 'Black'; the word also carries the same meaning in Spanish. The word, in practise, also referred to Afro-Americans, or to Americans of African origin and was used in popular parlance since 1890s, but was to be replaced by the term 'coloured' at the height of the 'Jim Crow' laws. It was during the Civil Rights movement in the United States, which started in the 1950s, that leaders of the Black community, perceiving the term 'Negro' as demeaning and disrespectful, proposed to replace it with the term 'Black'. The Black Power movement of the 1960s endorsed the use of this category and also coined the notions of 'Black is beautiful' and 'Black pride'. Blacks in the United States, however, historically belonged to 'mixed races' which had descended through intermarriage between diverse tribes and which had also been 'mixed' with several stocks of White people from Europe. The skin colour of American Negroes varies from black to a shade as pale as can be found among 'pure Whites'.

Recent historical works have shown conclusively that the African-American population has participated fully in the formation of the United States along with European-American population groups. In fact, it could be argued that they have participated to a much greater extent, literally making and creating the nation through their blood, sweat and tears. Not only this, African-Americans in numerical

\[37\text{Ibid, p.111.}\]
terms represent one of the largest groups in the country, for example the 'Black' Spanish-speaking population is the second largest population in North America, second only to the White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant (popularly known as WASP) population. Despite this, the level of discrimination against Blacks in the US has been unimaginable, and can perhaps be compared only with the most humiliating forms of caste oppression existing in India. Needless to say, this discrimination usually destroyed the human-ness (or what Black people themselves called the 'soul') of the people.38

Africans were, for instance, not allowed to speak their own languages, practise their religion, marry as they liked, build their families, or participate in the political/economic processes except as slaves. Even today, the economic discrimination against Blacks continues. A large proportion of African-Americans, especially males, are either de-employed or unemployed in today's America, leading to a disruption of family lives. It has been argued that in contemporary America, cultural colonisation of Black populations continues unabated, that the colonial ambitions of the United States actually begin at home and are honed and sharpened on the backs of its underprivileged and disenfranchised citizenry. African Americans are heavily discriminated against during the course of the smallest political activity, starting from the census. This discrimination is also a part of the politics of the major political parties. James Small has observed in this context that:

The politics of this country is heavily tied to the corporate economic structure. This corporate culture has gained heavily from the enslavement of the black culture and the exploitation of the blacks. If blacks were allowed to compete in a fair way, we would have been a very successful community, economically, politically and culturally. On all these three levels we are violently discriminated against, be it in media, university, etc. Our participation in every walk of American life is deliberately obscured.39

In terms of employment, Blacks are, more often than not, the last to be hired and the first to be fired, and are also not paid their due wages on many occasions.

38 James Small in a personal interview conducted on 16 July 2008 at Manhattan, New York City. Small is a retired Professor of Black Studies at City College, New York City.
39 Ibid.
In terms of housing, they were always relegated to the poorer sections of various towns, to the 'ghettos' as they are called. Conditions of severe food crisis have always existed amongst Blacks, and the community has always been the target of police brutality. These realities can be seen as direct outcomes of slavery and its institutions, and police oppression and brutality especially can be seen as being directly related to the days of unmitigated servitude.\textsuperscript{40} Michael Harrington, in talking about the poverty amongst Blacks, notes that:

\begin{quote}
The Negro is poor because he is black; that is obvious enough. But, perhaps more importantly, the Negro is black because he is poor. The laws against colour can be removed but that will leave the poverty that is the historic and institutionalized consequence of colour. As long as this is the case, being born a Negro will continue to be the most profound disability that the United States imposes upon a citizen.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

This poverty, however, is sometimes seen as a symptom of inferiority and of a lack of merit. The logic of inherent biological superiority, which we have referred to above, began to work here as well, and there had been attempts throughout history to keep the dominant Whites segregated or separated from the Black population. Deliberate efforts have also been made to raise social barriers against the intermarriage of groups of people, and these barriers have been created along religions, economic, educational and linguistic identities. However, in the United States of today, successful individual and group attempts are being made to surmount these boundaries and to promote a fusion of races.\textsuperscript{42}

These boundaries have also been created in the past through the workings of the legal machinery, a major illustration of which could be the Jim Crow law. A Court decision in 1896 in a case known as \textit{Plessey vs. Ferguson} legalised Jim Crow in America, resulting literally in two separate and unequal societies. This scheme of things persisted for a long time, at least as far as the judiciary was concerned. And

\textsuperscript{40} Curtis J. Austin in a personal interview conducted at Harlem, New York City on 19 July 2008. Curtis is Director of Black History and Associate Professor at University of Southern Mississippi. He has written \textit{Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party} (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2008).
it was not until the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision that the Plessey decision was overturned and began to be seen as illegal. Once this new perception was in place, the NAACP, under the leadership of Charles Houston (with Thurgood Marshall as one of the attorneys) pushed different southern cities to make institutions ‘separate-equal’. And it became so expensive to make the separate halves equal that this plan had to be eventually abandoned in favour of integration, at least at the official level.

Though these legal battles were eventually won, they took a long time coming; and even after they had been nominally granted, equality did not appear suddenly out of thin air. For the majority of Blacks, in order to be able to live with these oppressive structures, it was necessary to devise new ways of achieving a measure of freedom. Resistance, both group and individual, was the order of the day as the Black community in America experimented with ideas and strategies. These ranged from the methods and goals adopted by W.E.B. Dubois to those advocated by Marcus Garvey or Elijah Muhammad, to those that were adopted by Martin Luther King under the banner of the Civil Rights Movement. All of these strategies were partly or wholly non-violent in nature, and it was only after they failed to fully achieve what Blacks wanted that violence was resorted to, leading to the militant ideology of self-defence that emerged under the banner of Black Power. Stokely Carmichael, who propounded the theory of Black Power, reflected upon the state of affairs that led to this violent phase, and noted that:

Racism as they understood was not merely exclusion on the basis of race but exclusion for the purpose of subjugating or maintaining subjugation. The goal of the racists was to keep black people on the bottom, arbitrarily and dictatorially, as they had done years.

With circumstances like poor living conditions, police brutalities, murders, lack of voting rights, compulsory military conscriptions for the wars in distant places like Vietnam, Korea and no freedom, it was no wonder that there was a growing realisation amongst Blacks about the need to resist and fight for their

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43 Ula Y. Taylor in a personal interview conducted at UC, Berkeley on 29th July 2008.
rights in a violent or non-violent way. The spate of organisations that emerged was a result of this process and BPP was one of the parties that succeeded in highlighting various concerns. Despite these campaigns and movements that brought the question of equal rights into focus, Michael Harrington in the 1980s noted rather emphatically in his powerful work *The Other America* that:

> If all the discriminatory laws in the United States were immediately repealed, race would still remain as one of the most pressing moral and political problems in the nation. Negroes and other minorities are not simply the victims of a series of iniquitous statutes. The American economies, the American society, the American unconscious are all racist. If all the laws were framed to provide equal opportunity, a majority of the Negroes would not be able to take full advantage of the change. There would still be a vast, silent and automatic system directed against men and women of colour.

The picture he painted was very bleak indeed, and there were both elements of despair and truth in it. What Harrington drew attention to was the silent oppression that worked at various levels and that would continue to exert its force even after the formal abolition of all discriminatory structures. Race was, in this sense, not just a violent force given to murders and lynchings, it also acted silently and subverted the struggles of the oppressed to win any measure of substantive freedom. In this sense, the operation of race in the United States holds many similarities with the manner in which caste structures and hierarchies worked in the Indian subcontinent, which will be subject of discussion in the next section.

**Caste in India**

Caste is often seen as one of the defining characteristics of the Indian social structure. It is also one of the most stubborn and long-lasting institutions that continues to exist both in rural and urban India. Conventionally, castes are defined as distinct, separate communities whose members were bound to each other through ties of 'endogamy' and by a common hereditary profession or 'duty' which has been historically assigned to them. This definition however misses one crucial point, i.e. the question of hierarchy of rank of castes in relation to one another. Louis Dumont's *Homo-Hierarchicus*, though it suffers from several problems,

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addresses this loophole and reinstates this hierarchical principle at the core or heart of the caste-system. As mentioned earlier, he also talks of the notions of 'purity' and 'pollution' which enable this hierarchy to work.46

According to Dumont, caste arose out of an ideology of 'purity' and has no connection to economic structures. In fact, Dumont negates the relevance of the category of 'economics' and even 'history' while studying traditional Indian societies. For instance, he interprets the rise of 'Buddhism' completely in cultural terms, arguing that it successfully used the idioms of 'purity' and 'renunciation' to subvert caste structures.47 This interpretation totally discounted factors like the rise of towns, growth of commerce, or shifts from pastoralism to settled agricultural society which prominent Marxist scholars like D. D. Kosambi and R. S. Sharma have referred to in explaining the success of early Buddhism.48

Dumont also saw caste as an unchanging, static framework and he seems to be unaware of the fact that in last century or so, the hereditary division of labour has been severely shaken. Others like Kosambi or Irfan Habib view caste from the Marxist framework and assess its role in various ways, prominent amongst which is its function as a system of division of labour which was based on extra-economic coercion and appropriation of surplus.49 Within this paradigm, origins of caste system have been linked to the early Vedic society which consisted of tribes, predominantly 'Aryans' made up of numerous 'clans' consisting of lineage groups. This Rig Vedic society, it has been demonstrated, was predominantly pastoral in nature and agriculture was only of secondary importance. Land was communally held by the clan and cultivated by households who exercised no private ownership over them. This setting gave rise to the 'varna-system' which implied a division of society into groups such as 'Brahmans' (priests), 'Kshatriyas' (aristocracy), 'Vaishyas' (peasants) and 'Shudras' (service communities). During early Vedic

times, there was also no hint of a hereditary division of labour or of endogamy. Various factors led to the transition of the ‘varna’ to ‘jati’ system, while religion and political authority rose in embryonic forms inside these clans.  

Brahmans and Kshatriyas were not therefore originally closed endogamous or hereditary occupations, and this might have been the result of the desire to exercise monopoly over positions of pre-eminence. This urge was sharpened by the transition from a pastoral society to a settled agricultural society—a process which began around the middle of the first millennium B.C. Once settled agriculture became the order of the day, the notion of surplus and surplus extraction came into play, and the desire of relatively powerful or dominant groups to maintain their superior status became stronger, leading to the establishment of a hereditary, rigid, endogamous caste system.

These emerging peasant communities came into conflict with the primitive-hunting, forest-living, food-gathering tribes and subjugated them. These subjugated tribes, according to historians like Kosambi and Habib, were probably reduced to the lowest jatis and some of these groups were even pushed outside the system of four ‘varnas’ altogether. Some of these groups, like Nagas (forest-folks), Kaivartas (boatman), Andhras, Sairs, Medas and Ugras etc. (all of whom hunted or slaughtered animals) Karavas, Dhangvanas (engaged in leather related works), Pandu Sopakas (dealt with cane) find mention in the ‘Manusmriti’. Chandalas and Nishads also appear as hunters in the Buddhist texts. All these were probably ‘untouchable-castes’ and were barred from agriculture. Their traditional occupation now almost became redundant or at least secondary, and they became ‘a large

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53 Manu was a Brahmin lawgiver who wrote Manusmriti during the first millennium. As per Manusmriti, those shudras daring to read ‘vedas’ (most important source of knowledge) would be punished by having their tongues was to be chopped off and those who even heard it would have molten iron put in their ears. Even in modern times, it is witnessed that the laws of Manu are subscribed to keep the Brahmanical status quo.
reservoir of unfree, servile, landless labourers available for the work at the lowest cost'. This led to conflicts and bitter hostility, a hostility which was probably rationalised by concepts of 'purity' and 'pollution'.54

Further advancements of productive skills led to the rise of urban centres, to division of labour, and to differentiated craft-groups who perhaps formed specific jatis (for instance carpenters, physicians, charioteers). Similarly, the growth of commerce led to mercantile castes which made an exclusive Varna called 'vaishyas'. The self-sufficient village became the unit of communal mode of production. Land was not anybody's private property. Land nominally owned by the state was privately possessed for maintaining the relations of production: rent in kind and labour service required extra-economic coercion. Caste system by now had become a modified and specialised form of 'slavery'.55 The hereditary menial servants and labourers sustained the natural economy and the self-sufficiency of the village.

Even when surplus was taken out of the village, and commodity production and exchange took place, caste persisted. The artisan could sell his crafts in the market, but his caste remained attached to him. In any case, this process was weak and poorly developed. This absence of large-scale commodity production and therefore of full-fledged commodity relation allowed caste relations to remain the backbone of economy and society. Even Indo-Muslim regimes protected the caste structure since it generated larger revenues from the villages as well as lowered the wage cost in the cities.56

Of course, caste was not as static, frozen or immobile as some believe. For one thing, as Dipankar Gupta has pointed out, Brahmanical hierarchy was not the only expression of caste ideology. Other depressed castes too developed legends

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and ideologies which projected other simultaneous hierarchies. Dumont has even mentioned a depressed caste which held Brahmins as polluting. Questioning caste ideology took various forms, for instance, the Bhakti and Sufi movements gave rise to leaders/teachers who were largely from low jatis like artisans and peasants. Later on, other forms of religious expression were also witnessed in the form of Sikhism and Lingayats. In fact, limited caste mobility was also realised to a certain extent in some areas.

This mobility has been seen within a process of ‘Sanskritisation’ which took place over a period of time; Jats have proved to be a prominent illustration of this process of sanskritisation and caste mobility. They started from the status of pastoral chandala-like ‘tribes’ in Sindh during 8th century and attained the ‘shudra’ status in the 11th century, finally achieving the status of ‘vaishyas’ in the 17th century. Further, Jat peasantry aspired to be zamindars (landlords imitating Rajputs), and the ‘Jat-Rebellion’ was a partial outcome of this aspiration. Despite these occasional upsurges and silent mobility, though, ‘caste’ continued to exist as a pillar of the system of class-exploitation: rebellions or ideological challenges failed to break its strong grip on society.

It was only with the advent of British colonialism that a major break happened. Land settlement, colonial trade, commercialisation of agriculture, modern industries, widespread commodity relations, large urban centres, and modern education began the process of breaking up the village community system. This nascent capitalism de-linked caste with occupations or profession even as it created new ones. However, though the rigid caste bonds of earlier days were loosened, they were not completely broken. The new land settlements in fact allowed the feudal upper castes to gain new power. A new hierarchy was created where ‘lower-castes’ mostly got low-paid unskilled and menial works, ‘intermediate-castes’ got the industrial jobs and the ‘higher-castes’ got the coveted

57 Ibid, p.177.
58 Ibid, p.175.
jobs within the colonial administration. These feudal remnants have continued till today because of the slow and painful path of capitalist development in India. Extra-economic coercion continues even now in the countryside where landless labourers comprise mostly of Dalits and other extremely backward castes. Caste ideology therefore continues to exist, despite the fact that its economic foundations have been shaken. Endogamy, even today, continues to reinforce caste structure. Even 'Sanskritisation' converts former victims of caste into its votaries. It does not therefore erase or eradicate caste, but actually makes its structures more rigid and crystallised. 59

In India, where capitalism is still weak and underdeveloped, class formation is not fully developed, and caste and class, it is widely accepted, are closely intertwined. The dogmatic Marxist approach of pitting 'class' against 'caste' or of deeming caste-based struggles as retrograde, is therefore patently unfit for the Indian context: the quest for pure class struggle in the Indian context is likely to fail. Even today, though mainstream Left parties have begun to develop models which take up caste-based issues of social dignity and justice for the rural landless Dalits as their starting point, these models ultimately conclude by moving towards economic issues. In such a situation, it is no wonder that caste-based violence continues to grow all over South Asia. It could in fact be argued that it is the mainstream political parties who are mainly responsible for sideling the entire issue of caste, though this situation has been slowly redressed in recent times. However, even the new caste-based parties that have sprung up all over north India tend to hijack the entire question of caste, manipulating the issue quite cynically in a bid to win electoral majority. Within such a scenario, no fundamental break from the reality of caste can be achieved. What is needed today is a radical voice that makes use of the angst and frustration of those who are relegated to the bottom of the caste hierarchy. In other words, a cultural critique that truly harnesses the emotions of the oppressed is needed. Perhaps a clue towards developing this lies

within literature and the large body of writings by oppressed people speaking against discriminatory structures. Black literature is perhaps the paramount example of this, and its powerful emotional appeal is unparalleled within other kinds of literature/movements.

**Black Literature**

The history of Black Literature can be traced back at least to 1773 when Phillis Wheatley published her *Poems on Various Subjects*. Wheatley was a slave girl who was kidnapped from Nigeria and brought to the United States on board a slave ship. Her collection received appreciation from such eminent people like George Washington, the first President of United States. Olaudah Equinano was yet another slave who participated in the movement that sought an abolition of slave trade. He produced a fantastic autobiography of his life and experiences which reproduced the visual imageries of horrendous slavery.\(^6\) His autobiography had an enormous influence on the British colonisers in their efforts to abolish slave trade from 1807 onwards.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, herself a White woman, was an anti-slavery activist and writer. Her well-acclaimed book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* first appeared in instalments in a noted anti-slavery journal called ‘National Era’ during 1851–52, and finally appeared as a novel in 1852. Stowe could not have possibly foreseen the immediate and controversial impact of the book which succeeded in galvanising anti-slavery opinion in the North and angered Black readers in the South. The book generated such an anti-slavery sentiment in America that President Abraham Lincoln upon meeting Stowe, said that she was the person behind the ‘Civil-War’.

Another notable author was William Wells Brown, who was a slave who escaped as a fugitive. He soon became an advocate of abolition of slavery. In 1853 he wrote *Clotel (The President’s Daughter)* which was published in Britain. This is

considered to be the first Afro-American novel in the literary circle. *Clotel* for the first time touched upon the immoral and inhuman relation of the master towards his slave. Brown portrayed the tragic story of a mulatto\(^{61}\) woman who led a comfortable life since she was Thomas Jefferson’s mistress, but faced the tragedy of separation from her two daughters once her master passed away. The novel has depicted the injustices brought about by slavery.

Moving to the early 20th century, some of the prominent Black poets and novelists included Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Charles Chestnut, and James Weldon Johnson made noteworthy contributions in the field of Black poetry and novels. American Black literature, however, made real progress only after the First World War. In the second and third decade of the 20th century, various facets of the artistic achievement of Blacks were manifested. It was this period when Harlem saw the Renaissance. In 1917, Hubert Harrison founded the Liberty League, one of the earliest organisations of the New Negro Movement and started the journal *The Voice*.

There was a new wave of art and social education in Black life. Langston Hughes wrote *The Crisis* in 1921 and his famous poem ‘The Negro Speaks of the Rivers’ appeared in his collection *The Weary Blues* in 1926. His poems were frequently published in the CPUSA newspapers and he was involved in initiatives supported by Communist organisations. Hughes became central literary figure of the Harlem Renaissance by presenting the manifesto of Black literature, which noted that:

> We younger Negro artists, who create, now intend to express our dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If White people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it does not matter. Now we are beautiful. And ugly, too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If coloured people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure does not matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain free within ourselves.\(^{62}\)

\(^{61}\) Mulatto refers to an offspring born out of one Black and one White parent. They are usually light skinned.

In 1940, Richard Wright depicted the vicious cycle of poverty, impoverishment and crime in the ghettos of America in his novel *Native Son*. The plot of his novel beautifully portrays the ‘identity’ of Black youth and the manner in which his lust for a White woman and his delinquency led him towards rape and murder. This novel is a description of ghettos in southern Chicago in 1930s and brought about a revolutionary break in the Black Literature. This work apparently turned Richard Wright into America’s Dostoevsky.

In 1952 came Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. This novel threw light on the darkness of Black life over centuries. From an artistic viewpoint, this novel is highly powerful, but at the same time it also addressed several social and intellectual aspects of life as a Black American. Ellison highlighted the issue of Black identity, Black Nationalism and its engagement with Marxist ideology. He was highly critical of the tone of reformist politics advocated by Black leaders like Booker T. Washington, who had noted that:

...No greater injury can be done to any youth than to let him feel that because he belongs to this or that race, he will be advanced in life regardless of his own merits and efforts...no man who continues to add something to the material, intellectual and moral well being of the place in which he lives, is left long without proper reward...no race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem...63

In 1953, James Baldwin wrote his autobiography *Go Tell the Mountain*. Two years later, he published his collection of essays, *Notes of a Native Son*. In both these writings, Baldwin explored the question of his identity and the discrimination that he experienced due to his skin colour. But his second novel *Giovanni’s Room* generated a controversy in the literary circle as he did not restrict his definition of ‘liberation’ to a freedom from slavery and racism but instead advocated a highly dubious ‘sexual-liberation’.64 His subsequent novels titled *Another Country* and *Tell Me How Long the Train’s Been Gone* dealt with the question of freedom of sexual choice which later inspired the ‘Gay-Movement’ in

the United States. Baldwin, in this work, has also tried to establish the fact that Whites had an affinity for the White race as a whole, going beyond national frontiers and boundaries. The protagonist of the novel came to know that the Second World War had ended, but the bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki remained ingrained in his mind as Germany was the real enemy of Allies. Baldwin wrote: 'They did not drop it on the Germans. The Germans are white. They dropped it on the Japanese. They dropped it on the yellow bellied Japs.'65

For long, Black literature had been white-skinned. A White mind in a Black body was being expressed in it. But gradually, Black writers began to portray their life in their characteristic language. Lorraine Hansberry earned massive popularity with her play *A Raisin in the Sun.* This was the first drama written by any woman of Afro-American origin. Gwendolyn Brooks won the Pulitzer Prize for her collection of poems titled *Annie Allen.* Another notable event happened when, at the Conference of Black African writers and artists held in Paris in 1956, Leopold Senghor, the world-renowned Black poet, while speaking on writers and artists in West Africa, presided over a fundamental discussion on the interrelationship between art and life.

The Black writer after 1960 turned revolutionary both in the images s/he produced and also in content. Tony Morrison emerged as one of the most influential Black women writers since the late 1960s. Her metaphors beckoned to a brighter moment in the past, which was not a result of nostalgia, but represented a process of coming to grips with historical transition. The most notable feature of Morrison's writing, however, is her tendency to equate the White world with the bourgeois class, its ideology and lifestyle.66 But there are many who criticise her and argue that her own success as a writer and editor is linked to her acceptance within this White bourgeois society.

Dalit Literature

A similar emotional angst can also be seen within modern Dalit Literature in the Marathi language. No writer or literary body had, before the onset of this literary trend, taken due cognisance of Dalit life, be it at the time of Phule's struggle or during the period of Shahu Maharaj or even during the lifetime of Ambedkar. Although it is believed that the term 'Dalit Literature' was used for the first time within the literary sphere in the 1969 Diwali-issue of Marathi journal Marathwada, the need for a literary conference for discussion and deliberation of literature relating to the life of Dalits had been noted by Jotiba Phule, which is reflected in a letter which he had written to the Marathi Granthkar Sabha where he mentioned that:

The feelings expressed in our meetings and books do not appear in books written by them or in their meetings. How will people with their heads in the clouds understand what adversities and troubles we have faced?67

Since Phule, other leaders too recognised this necessity of a cultural/literary assertion. The mass conversion of Dalits to Buddhism under the leadership of Ambedkar, for example, became a remarkable event from a political point of view. But it served the even greater purpose of cultural assertion. A conference was scheduled to be held in December 1956 under the presidency of Ambedkar, which could not be held due to his untimely demise the same December. But in 1958 the first conference of Dalit writers was organised by the Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha in Bombay. This Conference passed a resolution, the Resolution No.5, which read as follows:

...the literature written by Dalits and that written by others about the Dalits in Marathi is accepted as a separate entity known as Dalit Literature and realizing its cultural importance, the universities and literary organizations should give it its proper place.68

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68 Ibid., p.242.
In the same year, in an article published in the February issue of Prabuddha Bharat\(^{69}\), Bandhumadav, a prominent cultural figure, wrote that:

> Just as Russian writers helped the revolution by spreading Lenin's revolutionary ideas through their works, our writers should spread Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy to the villages...politics is just one way of attacking opposition. Unless we attack from all sides we can not defeat those who have inflicted injustice on us for the last thousand of years.\(^{70}\)

Ambedkar's teachings and philosophy became the guiding force for Dalit Literature. There grew, however, three streams of writers who engaged in writing about Dalits: the first was a group of creative and progressive writers who felt that Ambedkarism and Marxism were mutually reinforcing and that caste and class had to be fought simultaneously; the second group considered Ambedkarism as being complete in itself and therefore did not want any other ideology to be amalgamated with it; the third category of writers wanted their writings to be called 'Buddhist Literature' instead of Dalit Literature. In the subsequent period, the last group became the weakest and could not develop itself systematically.\(^{71}\)

These three groups represented a literary revolt against the establishment. The second trend in particular, which was influenced by Marxism, was represented in the fiery poems of Narayan Surve. Surve provided a momentum to progressive writings in the early 1960s. Soon, there followed a movement to publish *Little Magazines* by angry young poets. Baburao Bagul's rebellious poems were published in a little magazine titled *Fakta*. But this movement did not last long and was dubbed as a literary fraud by many critics. Arjun Dangle's description, however, differs from this analysis and he notes that though there were some lapses within these literary outputs, criticisms often rained down from ivory tower critics who were engaged in 'art for arts' sake'.\(^{72}\)

Since the establishment of Milind College by Ambedkar in Aurangabad, Marathwada was rapidly becoming the educational capital for Dalits in

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\(^{69}\) *Prabuddha Bharat* literally means 'Enlightened India'. It was a journal started by B. R. Ambedkar in 1930 to rationalise Indians on the teachings of Buddha.

\(^{70}\) Arjun Dangle, *op. cit.*, 241.


\(^{72}\) Ibid, p.244.
A Copy of Asmitadarsh

A Visual from Asmitadarsh
Maharashtra. M. B. Chitnis, the principal of Milind College, though a Brahmin himself, took serious interest in the literary and cultural endeavours of Dalit teachers and students. M. N. Wankhade returned from the United States after finishing his higher studies, and he received there a first-hand exposure to the sufferings and discrimination faced by the Black community. His exposure to the militant Black literature inspired him to do a comparative study of Blacks and Dalits.

These literary trends also received support from new literary bodies espousing the cause of Dalit literature. The Maharashtra Boudha Sahitya Parishad, for instance, held its conference at Bhusawal in 1967. This conference became a historic point in the history of Dalit Literature. M. N. Wankhade highlighted the need for Dalit writers producing their own literature so that they could realistically present their own problems just like the Black writers did. Soon after this conference, students and teachers of Milind College (Aurangabad) took the initiative to start a Marathi quarterly titled Asmitadarsha under the editorship of Gangadhar Pantawane. Baburao Bagul’s second collection Maran Svasta Hot Ahe (Death is Becoming Cheaper) also won the state award in 1968, which generated a great deal of discussion on both appreciation and criticism.

Maharashtra Boudh Sahitya Parishad held another conference at Mahad in 1971 and produced a programme which, according to Raosaheb Kasbe, deserved the status of being called the manifesto of Dalit literature. Baburao Bagul stated in his presidential address:

Dalit literature is not the literature of those who advocate revenge. It is also not literature which spreads hatred. Dalit literature first and foremost advocates the significance of humanity and liberation and it is a historical necessity too. Hence it takes on a separate name and identity. What the Dalit writer and what someone in America writes is after all a poem. If this is true, why does Dalit literature assume this name? There are two reasons for this—one is to be found in your own self and the other is to be found in the Indian literature so far in this country."^73

Dalit writers however started realising that only writing provocative poems would bring nothing, unless this anger was translated into concrete political actions. These young writers became more familiar with Black Literature and Black Movements in the US and derived inspiration from them. The founding of the Dalit Panthers in 1972 was a direct consequence of this. At the centre of these trends was the question of the definition of the word Dalit itself. Raja Dhale for instance, though he was the founding president of the Dalit Panthers, later adopted the staunch Ambedkarite position and questioned Bagul’s definition, noting that:

By defining the word the Dalit as not only Buddhists and Untouchables, but all those exploited masses, an attempt is being made to club the victims of atrocities and those who are responsible for these atrocities. Who can deny the fact that in the Worli riots, those who committed atrocities were not exploited labourers? Don’t the menial workers in the rural areas steal the show in stripping women, boycotting the untouchables and setting ablaze their hamlets? Why then this amalgamation of the exploited and the exploiters? It seems this attempt is made just to make the word Dalit comprehensive. And this is done because Baburam Bagul has defined the word in similar fashion in the Buddhist Literary Conference held at Mahad.74

The debate on how to define the word ‘Dalit’ and subsequently what would constitute ‘Dalit Literature’ was far from over. Whereas one group looked at the Dalit literature as the literature written by Dalits and about Dalits, this group was confronted by another which found this definition too sectarian and parochial. Sharatchandra Muktibodh, in his definition, tried to bring about a rapprochement by accommodating both these definitions of Dalit literature. He noted that:

Dalit Literature is the literature produced by the Dalit consciousness. Human freedom is the inspiration behind it. That is its implied value. The nature of this literature consists in a rebellion against the suppression and humiliation suffered by the Dalits in past and even in present...the Dalit consciousness is obviously not subjective...the pains and pleasures are lived and experienced by individuals alone...but the content is essentially social...a Dalit writer is bound to have a Dalit point of view; but this is not enough for a literary artist. It is essential for him to experience a Dalit insight of his own, through it. This is true of any point of view...a Marxist view, for instance would not necessarily produce a Marxist work of art.75

These definitions cannot obviate the fact that this literature, although new in the Marathi language and even newer in other Indian languages including Hindi,

has to be recognised as reflecting the life of millions of Indians. Raosaheb Kasbe noted:

> When we speak of the relationship between the literature of the Blacks and that of the Dalits, we must understand the similarity and dissimilarity between the two. We ought to discuss it seriously and elaborately...every miserable man is in search of some remedy that would end his suffering. But even the use of desperate remedies fails to end all the sufferings. However, philosophers have succeeded in discovering the remedies to end man-made human suffering. Neither Buddha nor Jesus nor Marx has ever claimed that he could entirely free man from suffering. They have, however, promised to end the material sufferings that man has inflicted on man. The social, political and cultural miseries of the Indian Dalits are man-made and, therefore, they have plausible causes. We can also see clearly the way to end them.76

Raosaheb Kasbe refuted the view that Dalit literature is not understood by critics belonging to other castes. Those who propagate this false propaganda desired to kill this literature by blacking it out. For him, those who claimed that they understood it remained busy interpreting it in their own ways and those who maintained that it was distinct played the role of escapers. As literature cannot be created in a vacuum, Kasbe has identified two most important issues before Dalits: first, the cultural conflict, and secondly, the problem of cultural assimilation. Due to its relation with social context, however, Dalit literature like most other literature, of necessity, represents social phenomena.77

### Comparing Black Literature and Dalit Literature

A comparative study of the Black and Dalit literatures would naturally mean a critical study of the life of Blacks and Dalits as a whole and the kinds of dominant structures to which they were exposed in their respective countries. Blacks are not the original inhabitants of America and they did not go to America by choice. As is well known, they were forcibly taken there and were forced to enter into servitude, becoming merely a tool of production for the White man. They were uprooted from their language, culture and history. What remained with them was an African body and African mind. Over a period of time, though, through

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77 Ibid, p.290.
interaction with the White race, a certain amount of ‘White blood’ entered their bodies and they also went through a process of acculturation.78

On the other hand, though Indian Dalits have lived within the subcontinent for time immemorial and have acquired the language, religion, culture and history that they currently possess through a ‘natural process’, they have still been forced to experience discrimination and prejudice for generations. And this has happened despite their absolutely identical racial profile with the rest of the communities within the subcontinent. Ambedkar elaborated upon this theme in his *Annihilation of Caste*, stating that:

> Caste System does not demarcate racial division. Caste is a social division of people of the same race. Assuming it however to be a case of racial divisions one may ask: what harm could there be if a mixture of races and of blood was permitted to take place in India by inter-marriage between different Castes? Men are no doubt divided from animals by so deep a distinction that science recognizes men and animals as two distinct species. But even scientists who believe in purity of races do not assert that the different races constitute different species of men.79

A few Black leaders like Marcus Garvey, by establishing the ‘Universal Negro Improvement Association’ advocated for ‘pan-Africanism’ and inspire the African people for a global mass movement to take them back to Africa. Similarly, Elijah Muhammed, through his ‘Nation of Islam’, advocated for ‘Black separatism’. None of these schemes materialised finally. Thus, they all remained integrated with the White society, yet separated and forced to do menial jobs and they were made to settle in the ghettos outside the White localities. As Dalits belonged to this country, the question of leaving the country never arose. However, like the Blacks, they were forced to survive on the outskirts of the villages.

Both the American Blacks and the Indian Dalits have historically been members of a closed society in their respective countries, and they have both been relegated to the fringes of the mainstream. This is quite literally true as both the Dalits and Blacks have usually had their habitats outside the perimeters of the town, living in segregated ghettos or *bastis*. Both have been subjected to peculiar

forms of class oppression. One major difference, however, is that though caste is not in the least determined through biology, race to a certain extent is, for it is the colour of the skin that is the defining feature in this case. In this sense, it could perhaps be said that while races are, to an extent, pre-ordained, caste is entirely man-made. However, the major similarity between the two is that just as Blacks cannot change the colour of their skin voluntarily, so can the Untouchables never denounce their caste. The Black man becomes ‘blacker’ because his entire identity revolves around the colour of his skin, while the low-born Dalit becomes even ‘lower’ as his entire identity is defined by his caste. In such a scenario, it no longer matters if the Black man is ‘quite fair’, as even a hint of ‘blackness’ can relegate him to an inferior position, and there are several occasions when fair-complexioned Blacks try desperately to conceal their racial origin. Untouchables, similarly, try their best to appear ‘chaste’ and ‘upper caste’, thereby camouflaging their true identity, something that has been beautifully depicted by Baburao Bagul in his collection of short stories titled Jevha Mi Jaat Chorli Hoti (When I had concealed my Caste).

Basing itself on this feeling of inferiority, a peculiar trend began amongst the Blacks in the United States of America whereby many Afro-Americans started changing their dark complexion and straightening their curled hairs. Bon Ton Society of Washington D. C. and Blue Vein Society of Nashville in the 1930s are a few examples of such groups which were rampant in the United States. Tony Morrison, in The Bluest Eye, which she wrote in 1970, tells the story of an eleven-year old Black girl who used to pray for her eyes to turn blue so that she could be as beautiful and beloved as all the blond, blue-eyed children in America. Morrison later wrote in the afterword to her first novel that:

The assertion of racial beauty was not a reaction to the self mocking, humorous critique of cultural or racial foibles common in all groups, but against the damaging internalization of assumptions of immutable inferiority originating in an

A Visual from Asmitadarsh
outside gaze. I focused therefore on how something as grotesque as the deionization of an entire race could take root inside the most delicate member of society: a child; the most vulnerable; a female.82

In a very similar way, Dalits found themselves caught within this vortex of self-denigration and self-loathing. Dalit literature made its mark by criticising and highlighting this dominant feeling and by trying to bring about a new awareness of social revolution. It focused the reader’s attention on Dalit life *per se* and not on the perception of Dalits by the higher castes. With the writings of Narayan Surve and Baburao Bagul, Dalit literature adopted a new revolutionary stand and vigorously began its onward march towards class analysis along with a depiction of Dalit pain and suffering. It highlighted the hidden fires of anguish and rebellion in the Dalit mind, focusing mostly on the ‘low-lives’ within the urban slums.

In the case of America, the idea of biological superiority based on race is clearly depicted in religious literature like the *Old Testament*, where Jehovah made his covenant with Abraham and with his progeny, i.e., those descended biologically from Abraham. In the *New Testament*, there appears a vivid description of conflict between this view and a radical view of universal brotherhood.83 The cultural superiority of the Aryans is visible in the Hindu scripture, the *Ramayana*, where there is a description of Shambhuk (belonging to Shudra jati) being beheaded by for performing penance (which was not permitted for lower castes) by Lord Rama.

The one contrast between Dalit and Black situations could be the start of violence that was a chief feature of the slavery in the United States, though this was of course also pervasive in the Dalit context. During slavery, for example, Black men and women did not even possess the right to lead a family life, since Black women were ‘owned’ by the White masters. Even after the abolition of slavery, extremist White organisations like the Ku Klux Klan84 killed thousands of Blacks

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84 Ku Klux Klan refers to several past and present far right wing organisations in the United States of America which emerged with the sole agenda of protecting rights and furthering interests of white Americans by spreading hate against Black Americans and indulging in mindless violence.
in public places, after humiliating them in several perverse ways. Blacks, suffering under massive poverty and deprivation, were forced to abandon their homes and hearth and move to the North where millions of them had to live despicable lives in the ghettos.\(^{85}\)

Despite the fact that Blacks in the United States saw violence in a stark and naked way, the one similarity between the situation of Dalits and Blacks, of course, lies in their equally deteriorated economic conditions. Dalits, after all, represent more than two-thirds of the total population of landless agrarian labourers in India even today, while Dalit women are most vulnerable to rapes and atrocities by the landowning upper castes to this day. Janardan Waghmare too, while comparing the Black and Dalit literatures, has suggested that the social condition of Dalits in India resembled that of the Blacks in America. He agrees that Dalits are not subjected to physical torture like the Blacks and that they were not bought and sold in the open market like the Blacks nor were their families uprooted like their American counterparts’ were.\(^{86}\) However, Dalits too were subjected to a good deal of mental torture, and physical torture has also been depicted in short stories and novels like in the story titled \textit{Sadgati} by the famous Hindi novelist Munshi Premchand.\(^{87}\)

There exists, amongst scholars and critics, an agreement on the mutual relationship between literary creation and human experience. The experience is often rooted to a culture and is also, in the final instance, linked to politics. Thus, even when a writer tries to keep aloof from political activity, his literary creation or the literary movement as a whole, of which he is a part, can never escape politics. Several Dalitist scholars, for instance, might disagree with the Marxist philosophy


\(^{86}\) Ibid.

\(^{87}\) \textit{Sadgati} (‘Righteous Path’) is a short story by Munshi Premchand. The acclaimed Indian film director Satyajit Ray later made a film based on this story.
A Visual by Emory Douglas
in totality, but it usually becomes difficult for them to stay away from politics as a means for social and cultural transformations.

As a matter of fact, a majority of Dalit literature lacks class awareness, though they are extremely aware of the question of caste. And therefore, on many occasions, Dalit literature is accused of not going beyond caste boundaries and of not being able to think of the deprived non-Dalit masses. However, the writings of a few remarkable Dalit authors like Anna Bhau Sathe Baburao Bagul, Narayan Surve and Namdeo Dhasal to name a few, do ponder over the question of class and class-awareness with great intensity. The question of translation of the issue of class into literature is a separate issue, and it is needless to go into the question of the ‘what gives rise to class-awareness’ in literature, but from the point of view of a literary movement, it is necessary to widen the scope of literature in order to keep the movement alive. Black writers have made such an attempt.

Panther Literature

The founders of the Black Panther Party like Huey P. Newton and Booby Seale, were masters of rhetoric. The Black Panther newspaper became the mouthpiece of Black Panther Party, and Elridge Cleaver too, on joining the party, started helping with the party newspaper. He soon came in the limelight with his collection of prison letters published as Soul on Ice in 1967. In 1970, Bobby Seale wrote Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton. Toni Morrison edited To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton88 in 1972 and a year later J. Herman Blake wrote Revolutionary Suicide with Huey P. Newton. All these works explored the platform and programmes of the BPP.

Most of the writings of Black Panthers were militant in their ideology and their language was rich in rhetoric. Elridge Cleaver wrote an article titled

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88 Toni Morrison and Huey P. Newton, To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton
‘Revolution and Education’ from Algeria in order to remind the Black Panther of its commitments, which was published in the party’s newspaper. It noted that:

We are not reformists; we are not in the movement to reform the curriculum of a given university...we are revolutionaries, and as revolutionaries, our goal is the transformation of the American social order. In order to transform the American social order, we have to destroy the present structure of power in the United States, we have to overthrow the government...we say we will do this by any means necessary...and the only means possible is the violent overthrow of the machinery of the oppressive ruling class.99

Similarly, the founders of Dalit Panthers including Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale, J. V. Pawar, Bhai Sangare, Avinash Mahatekar, and Arjun Dangle also wrote prolifically both in prose and verse. These militant youths were influenced by Baburao Bagul who himself had participated in movements of Dalit labourers. Namdeo Dhasal, for example, wrote Golpitha in 1972, which was the same year in which the Dalit Panther Party was formed. It soon became a classic and attained a similar hallowed status as Elridge Cleaver’s Soul on Ice. Namdeo’s rhetoric on politics is reflected in the following words:

All I wanted was a revolution...In my view there should be no borders of nations confining us. There should be no armies. After all we belong to this world. Whatever that happens in this world is done for the sake of the humanity, and while this is being done, humanity faces obstacles; and I will say that I love those obstacles too. My vision is not restricted to the ground under my feet...I love Mao. I love Fidel Castro and his friend Che Guevara. I love Ho Chi Minh. I love Marx and I love Lenin. I love those people in their own time.90

Similarly, there were similarities between the writings of Black Panther activists like Huey P. Newton, who was not only Minister of Defense of the BPP, but also the chief ideologue and theoretician of the party, and Dalit Panthers like Raja Dhale. Huey Newton borrowed from several militant and revolutionary figures like Lenin and Mao. Newton was highly influenced by the self-defence philosophy of Malcolm X. He wrote in the party newspaper that:

There are no laws that the oppressor makes that the oppressed are bound to respect...Black People have suffered too long and we must draw the line somewhere. There is a big difference between thirty million unarmed Black people and thirty million Black people armed to the teeth...We are not alone...We have allies everywhere...People all over the world are rising up. The high tide of

काळा स्वतंत्रयिदिन

1

ह्यादाच्या काळावर चालणारा अजूनचा फण सुरू. सुंदरत गुंडाने पाणी पडतात. खाली गाणे गुंडाची गडी बोट होत आहे. उदाहरणार्थ, परेकेने, मोहोने, पेटने वगैरे कन्माली विद्याय्याची चलावून सरासर रैखन अंग घडत आहे. विद्याय्याचा छत्रक रुप बघत आहे. स्वतंत्रयाचा सौंदर्यजनक संस्थान काळा दिवस पाणिने हरा आहे. मुंबई ही महाराष्ट्राची अ हि पाणी गट आहे. प्रमुख महाराष्ट्राचा वौजांत, आपण सर्वजननी गिरिजानंद शाळेश्वर अन्नवाळे माहित ह्याची हदसांत उमडत. तिचे त्याचे बुले... मुंबई ह्याचे ठोक वदध्ये रविवारे रविवारे ह्याची बाही नाही. दृष्टिकोणातील आपण असमावस्था करत आणि गुंडांचे सांस्कृतिक कौशल्याने गुंडाची हदसांत ते कम्पनीवर स्वतंत्रतेची शुरू करणे प्रयत्न करत. दरम्यान येण्याचे शांत निर्धार, स्वतंत्रतेच बुलू आपाट ध्यान देती. मुंबईवरेकाळ विद्याय्याची धारी पहरते. लंबी युद्ध आणी बाही आही.

मृत्युवृद्धी जास्तीत आपल्या तौक्यातील युक्तीशी आपल्या शहीदांच्या सम्मानात विद्याय्याचे बहुसंख्य वाचकांना आता. तरह तरहाच्या दुर्गम सागरात वाचकांच्या साक्षात्कारात नाहीत. नंतर म्हणजेच ह्याचा हद व मंदू आहे ते कसे आणि आणि विषयाच्या वापरात जाणे हेक्कन आपण सर्व काळेत संप्रेक्षित असणारे उपसंधान आपण हेक्कन विषयाचे संरक्षणाची शक्ती यासाठी आहे. मुंबई गडी लागती. तोलु लागती. आपण आपल्यांना सत्यांतर न्यिक्षे विद्याय्याची कार्यवाही जण. दरम्यान विषयाचे समस्त नागरिक सम्मान सावधान वाचकांना आहे. जोरे, सोहळे परत असेत तर मुंबई आपण वर्ष आहे. आपल्यांना.

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दरम्यान प्र. सर. काळांने बोलते- एका स्वयंवराची राही, बाजारात आही. या काळातील बाहक कसे आमीतून वाचतात ते आर्थिक रास्तेत भर वेजन दाखवले, रविवारे नवमाच्या वाराणसी, बांधणारे अर्धमूळ्यांची बाहक बेचता ! काळी राहत एकपूर्ण व नवमाची ह्याची आहे, पण प्रतिभेत विशेषत्ते हे.
revolution is about to sweep the shores of America...sweeping away the evil
gentry and corrupt officials.  

Raja Dhale, on the other hand, was the founding President of the Dalit Panthers and saw the liberation of Dalits through the adoption of the path of Ambedkarism and not that of Marxism. He argued that India was not prepared for class struggle since ‘class formation’ could not be easily achieved. For him cultural revolution had to precede the political-revolution and in this, his thoughts were very similar to Newton’s. Dhale wrote an article titled ‘Kala Swatantra Din’ (Black Independence Day) in Marathi which got published in the 25th Independence Day issue of Saadhana in 1972. In this article, he questioned the notion of nationalism and juxtaposed it against the question of dignity of women and wrote in the following words:

It is not the Brahman woman who is stripped naked in a Brahman village. That is done to the Dalit woman. And what’s the punishment for this crime: a month’s imprisonment or a fine of Rs.50. There is a fine of Rs.300 for dishonoring the national anthem or national flag. What else is a flag if not mere cloth? A symbol created in specific colours? Disrespect to that symbol draws heavier fine than dishonoring a beautiful, alive and real lady. Should not this national flag and its honor be shoved in someone’s ass? Nation is made of people. Is the sorrow of the nation’s people bigger than the sorrow of the disrespect shown to the nation’s flag? The cost of our honor is lesser than that of a piece of cloth. Should not the punishment for this crime be greater than that for disrespecting the national flag? How else would the people feel love for the nation?

Other remarkable tracts and essays were also written both by the Dalit Panthers and the Black Panthers and they must be mentioned here. David Hillard, Chief of Staff of the BPP and Lewis Cole, for instance, wrote This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party (1989), where they sketched in detail the internal dynamics and working of the party. Elaine Brown’s A Taste of Power: A Black Woman’s Story (1992) and Kathleen Cleaver’s Liberation, Imagination and The Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and their Legacy (2001), which she co-authored George Katsiaficas, elaborated upon certain aspects of the party which had not been chronicled earlier, like the ‘gender-question’ and the question of ‘international

91 The Black Panther, 21 August 1970.
92 Raja Dhale, Kala Swatantra-Din, Saadhana, 15 August 1972, pp.131–32.
Arjun Dangle: One of the Founders of Dalit Panthers

L. D. Bhosle, Dalit Panther, Secretary, Pune Chapter
solidarity. These later writings of Panthers were more critical of their own struggle, as is reflected in Elaine Brown's words:

We can't be free using strategies based on emotion or rhetoric...we have to look at the objective conditions and develop strategies and tactics related to them. And those conditions are in a constant state of flux-like everything else in the nature. So our tactics must be adapted accordingly.94

This tone of self-criticism also crept into the Dalit Panther literature in India. Arjun Dangle, for example, was a noteworthy Dalit Panther author who compiled poems, autobiographical extracts, short stories, essays and speeches and produced a remarkable anthology titled Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature (1992). This anthology reproduced writings of all varieties and was not at all intended to be a hagiography of the Panthers. The tone of self-criticism was also present within Dalit Panthers as Sharan Kumar Limbale from the Dalit Panther Party of Pune wrote Dalit Panthers which dealt with the history of the party, its different chapters, the factionalism within it and the subsequent splits in the ranks of the party. Limbale later wrote extensively in various journals about the aesthetics of Dalit Literature. His autobiography Akkarmaashi (The Outcaste) was translated into several Indian languages and was also adapted for the stage by several theatre groups across India. Later writings, including Limbale's, were sometimes extremely critical of the activities of Dalit Panthers, as is reflected in this extract from Limbale's novel titled Hindu:

Dalit activists have become vultures. Once the atrocities are done on Dalits, they feel happy about it. They meet the victims immediately, make petition, call protest demonstration and hijack the credit for themselves of the entire episode. They popularise their own leadership. They do not erase the episode, rather they keep it alive. Those who have indulged into atrocities are blackmailed and money is demanded from them.95

Both Dalit and Black Panther movements were not, thus, 'perfect' struggles in this sense: both suffered from their own internal problems, which were diagnosed by activists within the party itself. Literature was also an important tool in assessing the Dalit condition as a whole and also in assessing the successes or

drawbacks of Dalit activism. This chapter has tried to focus on these various aspects of the movement, using literature as a 'peep-hole' to gauge reactions and patterns of resistance.