Introduction

- Statement of the Problem
- Scope of the Study
- Objectives and Rationale of the Study
- Methodology
- Plan of the Study
A. Statement of the Problem

Indian society is divided into numerous castes and sub-castes numbering roughly over four thousand besides a sizeable number of tribes and other religious communities. Castes have come out of ancient fourfold classification of society known as ‘Varna’. There are four Varnas: (I) Brahmins who were supposed to be the priests and custodians of knowledge; (II) Kshatriyas who were expected to be the rulers and soldiers; (III) Vaishyas who were traders and landholders; (IV) Shudras who provide other needed services. A fifth group, the Panchamas is put at the lowest rung and performed menial and despicable services. They were considered external to the system and, subsequently, are known by several nomenclatures, e.g., Harijan, the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Dalits.

G.S. Ghurye\(^1\) has earmarked six classical features of Indian Caste System, viz., segmental divisions of society based on birth; a definite scheme of social hierarchy; restriction of feeding and social intercourse; civil and religious disabilities; lack of unrestricted choice of occupation and restriction on marriages. This Caste System puts Brahmins at the top and Shudra at the bottom with a sizeable population outside the Varna scheme known as the Untouchables.

The Untouchable or the Dalits, as they are presently known, are one of the most vulnerable sections of society in our country. They constitute nearly 17 percent (over 13 crores) of the total population in the country but have been subjected to multiple oppression and subjugation for centuries and had lived miserable life as Mukundrao Patil, a major figure in the Maharashtrian anti-caste Stayashodhak Samaj, writes “India is a strange place, which collects all sorts of social groups, divided by
different religions, thoughts, practices and understandings. But broadly speaking, they can be categorized into two: the majority low castes that have been devoid of humanity for centuries and a handful who take their pleasure, call themselves superior and live at the cost of the majority. One’s welfare is another’s misery, that is their connection.”

In this way, “majority” was made ‘Untouchable’ section of the society and was called by different nomenclature from time to time like ‘Harijan’ ‘Scheduled Castes’ (SCs) and ‘Dalit’. The term ‘Dalit’ has a wide connotation and is a self-chosen one that is very much prevalent in the contemporary times. The Dalit Panthers in 1972-73 widened the meaning of the term Dalit when they incorporated various religions minorities, women, tribals, backward castes and economically deprived sections in their definition. Today, many social scientists have started referring to the Dalits, untouchables or the SCs inter-changeably. The proposed work also uses the term Dalit for ex-untouchables or SCs who are articulating their self-realization and their struggle against the caste-oppression; their “will to act against exploitation, a ‘determined’ rise from oppression, from death to life, from darkness to light” and continuing their movement.

The second definitional perspective is regarding the meaning and nature of political consciousness with special reference to the Dalits. Political consciousness implies one’s self-image vis-à-vis other social communities, individual’s relations with socio-political location and his/her connectivity with socio-politico-economic structures of the society. Political consciousness characterizes a community’s cognitive
comprehensibility of its objective conditions whose subjective awareness is formed through social experiences, political struggles and cultural traits.

Political consciousness is generally not a homogeneous category in nature and functions but has various levels of latent and manifest expressions operating within it, which are influenced by the complexity of the social structures. In fact, the dialectical relationship between immediate achievements and long-term impact on the whole society can be located in various levels of political consciousness, thus making it a fundamental feature of human existence possessing not only self awareness but even more a remarkable capacity to understand what is happening how, when and where.

Clubbed with political participation, which is not confined to a relatively limited sets of acts such as voting, campaigning or participation through a very formal institutionalised behaviour but which refers to "any voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organized of unorganised, episodic or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods, intended in influencing the choice of public affairs and policies, the administration of public works of the choice of political leaders", political consciousness becomes ‘a functional catalyst’ providing general participation orientations, community mobilization and identity building processes.

Thus understood, political consciousness becomes an instrumental tool for any community to articulate their orientations, identity building processes, mobilization strategies and others aspects of their movements. Accordingly, the Dalit community has shaped themselves for a 'new self-image' starting roughly from the Bhakti Movement (12th to 18th centuries) which attempted to purify Hinduism of its evils and fought
against the tyranny of the caste system and produced great saints like Chokhamela, Eknath, Pandita Ramabai, Kabir, Ravidas and many more who left an immense appeal for the establishment of an egalitarian society. Later on, Mahatma Jotiba Phule emphasized on educational, social and political development of the community which was, articulated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who "played three roles: that of a caste leader, that of an Untouchable spokesman, and that of a national statesman". He formed three political parties (Independent Labour Party, Scheduled Castes Federation and the Republican Party of India) preparing ground for the Dalit Panthers and other formations of the community which were performing task of the proliferation of the political consciousness at various levels from understanding of the self to the transformation of society with a visionary movement. We will analyse brief history of the Dalit movement in India, including Dr. Ambedkar's contribution, in Chapter Three of this study.

Political consciousness is expressed through various means including the literary expression. This study starts by accepting the possibility of a close interaction and relationships between politics, literary and creative expressions. Besides, it gains impetus from recognition of the necessity to understand the nature of this relationship in concrete situation to have a holistic understanding of true nature of some social and political movements, in particular, the Dalit movement, in contemporary India.

The significance of relationship between politics and literary expression can be objectively defined only when we take a comprehensive view of social reality around us that comprises of what we classify as the political, social, economic, cultural and ideological aspects of a social reality. It is necessary to examine and investigate social
reality with a comprehensive approach analysing all aspects of particular phenomenon and their mutual interaction and significance.

By accepting this possibility of a close relationship between politics and creative literature, this study tends to recognize the nature, extend, depth and impact of this relationship in the objective situations to have a holistic understanding of the Dalit movement in contemporary Indian society. The first question, in this direction, is that of defining literature and literary expression.

The general assumption of this study is straightforward that all writers, great or minor ones, are confronted with political issues of their times in their works. Either they draw inspiration from any political development of their period or their works have left an important impact on the course of the political issues. This impact is more important in case of the political literature like the Dalit literature where Dalits, by the very nature of their movement, choose to deny hegemony of the caste order and its various justifications.

Literature is neither a static collection of written expressions authored by a writer nor documentation. Rather it is ever-evolving and developing keeping tune with the changing times. Literature and its concepts are deeply associated with the development and progress of society. It is basically the development of the heart of the people and a cherished, assetful accumulation of knowledge of a particular time period reflecting society in a mirroristic way. Literature becomes a christened reflection of the feelings of the masses along with the social relation weaved with the literary imagination by a writer.
There are various schools of literature and its sociology, for instance, the
Positivism, Formalism, Empiricism and Structuralism, where each school of thought has
a particular opinion about literature and its sociology. Empiricists regard literature as a
social fact, which possesses no definite element, meaning or nature but is an integral part
of the storehouse of knowledge and its Mata narratives. One has to understand the
specific and objective situations of social phenomenon to get a holistic view of literature
that emphasizes on a close interaction and inter relationship among the author, his/her
works and the readers.

This relationship prompts to examine various socio-eco-political, aesthetics,
psychological and ethical aspects of the author, his/her works and the readers along with
the objective conditions. Some scholars are of the opinion that socio-political institutions
also play vital role in the development of literature and insist on their study, importance
and significance.

Another set of scholars consider literature as a social activity affected by the
changing nature of the society while Marxists view literature as a social product in a
capitalistic society which reflect the conditions of production, marketing and
consumption, also, becoming a historical evidence, possibly, developing the social
consciousness.

There are various schools of thought for the study of the sociology of literature
e.g., Positivist (Hippolyte Adolph Taine); Formalism (Victor Shklovski); Structuralism
(Lucien Goldmann); Sociological Literary Criticism (Leo Lowenthal); and Marxists
(Georg Luckas, Raymond Williams). We'll discuss these schools in Chapter Two of this
study.
Thus analysed, literature can be said a christened accumulation of knowledge represented by an author through various mediums of written/ unwritten expressions narrating feelings, experiences, ethos of a particular social actor or phenomenon which may be affected by the complexities of a given socio-political and cultural system or may be affected vice versa. Political literature is a loaded category and we'll examine existing Hindi Dalit Literature with this perspective.

Thus seen, literary expression is a creative exercise to transform social reality into various mediums of expression which works as an analysing framework for socio-political and cultural phenomena and becomes a treasured repository of knowledge. This expression differs and varies in degree, intensity, scope and success from author to author and within one author from work to work. But different ways of expressions to translate political development into literary texts with political and creative imagination comprehend their ability to harness and demonstrate the social development and to produce masterpiece political literature. Some times we find a serious coherence coming out of various political viewpoints and also a mutual connection between literature and political ideas, debates and issues.

To identify and sketching out a theoretical framework for the study of close interaction between politics and literature is a challenging task examining different viewpoints about this relationship where some denounce such a thing while other emphasized political role and its importance in literary expression. We'll analyse, in subsequent chapters, particularly in chapter two, this role focusing mainly on the Idealist (Benedetto Croce), Positivist (Taine), Formalist (Shklovski), Structuralist (Goldmann),
Sociological Literary Criticism (Lowenthal) and Marxists (Lukacs, Raymond Williams) standpoints, thus, exploring a theoretical narrative.

This work primarily focuses on the literary expression of political consciousness among the Dalits largely in the northern region of the country. We find a rich variety of Hindi Dalit Literature in the area and it becomes crucial to make a selection from such a vast variety of literary expression. Hindi region has several specificities in terms of the Dalit politics and literature. First of all, the ideals of Dr. Ambedkar started influencing the course of the Dalit movement in this region only during early-1950s. We also notice influence of Mahatma Gandhi on the politics and anti-colonial struggle in this region. This factor shaped not only the political but also literary expression of this region. Hence, it is important to understand all these factors to get a holistic view of politics and literature in the Hindi region.

Placing Hindi Dalit literature amidst these theoretical narratives is not only necessary but also urgently required so as to understand, analyse, address and highlight socio-cultural and politico-economic dynamics of the Dalit community. The Dalit literature, primarily, narrates first hand experience of the community aiming to make aware of multiple oppressions and also to protest/revolt against the upper castes domination in Indian society. Dalit writers believe that literature needs to be interpreted/narrated or written sociologically and Dalit literature must be interpreted not only as a piece of artistic work but more than that as representation of that time and those situations faced by the community which are being narrated by the writer.
Of course, this perspective is placed in altogether different Weltanschauung and demands realistic, empirical and authentic notions of aesthetics called as the Dalit aesthetics. Here, Dalit writers negate traditional notions of literary aesthetics and experience the need for the construction of new aesthetics that could capture their problems, torture and pain faced and experienced by the individual or community. This notion of aesthetics puts ‘man’ at the centre of narration and analysis aspiring for equality, freedom, justice and solidarity for the whole of humanity. We would examine Hindi Dalit Literature with this perspective in subsequent chapters, especially in Chapter Three.

It is important to understand the very meaning and nature of the Hindi Dalit Literature. Hindi Dalit Literature is, in fact, political literature due to its in-built denial of hegemony of the Indian Caste System and its inspiration drawn from the Dalit Movement. Dalit Literature considers man as its centre and depicts trauma, pain, exploitation and suppression of the community in a very creative and lucid expressive ways.

To understand the Dalit Literature requires in-depth sociological analysis of the community, its protests, its self-articulation and movements. This study, in the subsequent chapters, explores the nature and depth of these aspects related to the Dalit movement and attempts to associate it with the Dalit aesthetics and narratives.

It is to be noted here that this kind of understanding regarding interaction between literary expression and political consciousness facilitates to present a complete picture of any movement, its ideological, socio-economic, politico-cultural basis and provide a comprehensive narrative.
B. **Scope of the Study**

This study is exploratory in nature and emphasizes on the qualitative framework of analysis. To understand level of political consciousness among the *Dalits* through literary expression is not an easy task, if not an impossible one, and it remains complex and challenging. Primarily, this study makes an effort to search for a theoretical basis of relationship and interaction between politics and literary expressions from the socio-politico-ideological viewpoints. In this context, it explores to investigate various theoretical debates, e.g., the Idealist, Positivist, Liberal and Marxist of the areas.

The study endeavours to explore extent and depth of literary expressions in the Hindi *Dalit* Literature spreading through various time spans. Hence, it proposes to study various noted figures of Hindi literature like Munshi Premchand, Jagdish Chandra, Amrit Lal Nagar, Mannu Bhandari, Mohan Dass Naimishray, Om Prakash Balmiki, Malkhan Singh, Jai Prakash Kardam, Lalchand ‘Rahi’ and Suraj Pal Chauhan. This has provided an opportunity to encompass a wide range of the twentieth century that covers the Ambedkar period and comes down to the contemporary *Dalit* movement in the country.

This study has made an attempt to cover major time spans of the twentieth century as expressed through a juxtaposed and complex relationship between literary expression and level of political participation among the *Dalits*. Historically and intellectually, it assesses various aspects related to this subject like literature and protest, literature and communicative dimensions in the extent of the work.
Three kinds of literary studies have been critically examined in the course of this study:

a. Studies identified as classics of their age in the backdrop of their socio-historical conditions; *(Representative studies)*

b. Studies identifying aspects of literary expressions and their structures in relation to the parallel social systems in which they originate and thereby their impact as well; *(form-based studies)*

c. Studies identifying tendencies of literature that can be seen over a range of several works and thereby to place them in their socio-political origin *(studies narrating trends)*

C. **Objectives and Rationale of the Study**

1) Political consciousness is expressed through various means; literary expression is one of them, hence, to assess and examine their relationship.

2) To discuss various ideological debates on the sociology of literature and placing the Hindi *Dalit* Literature in a perspective.

3) To investigate socio-political contexts represented in the Hindi *Dalit* Literature.

4) To understand processes shaping the consciousness of the *Dalits* in specific socio-political conditions.

5) To understand the nature of representation of the *Dalits* in Hindi Literature.

6) To examine how political consciousness affects the *Dalit* aesthetics in Hindi Literature.

7) To explore the possibility for a theoretical narrative of *Dalit* politics and literature.
D. Methodology

The Ecological Model of Research primarily guides this study that consists of four concentric circles. The first one deals with the individual actor, his personality and behavioural traits; the second one represents immediate context in which that actor is placed; the third one represents formal/informal institutions of social structures and their relationship with the actor and the fourth one investigates social, economic and cultural environment. In this way, a comprehensive effort has been made to explore and understand the social reality being operated at different tiers of social, political and cultural levels.\textsuperscript{9}
This endeavour requires both primary and secondary sources. As this study is concentrated on Political Consciousness among the Dalits, authoritative works on the Dalit Movement and politics in India were consulted time and again.

To examine literary expressions, wide range of literary works in Hindi literature were consulted, particularly the Dalit literature so as to ascertain relationship between political consciousness, literary expression and the Dalit aesthetics. Apart from the major texts, critiques and other literary summaries are also being analysed in the course of this study.

Major texts are:

2. Kafan (1936, Story): Premchand

Apart from this, secondary data like census, newspapers, journals, seminar reports, research papers and thesis as well as other authoritative material available were utilized.
E. Plan of the Study

The study has been divided into six chapters. In this first chapter, which is Introductory, we have already dealt with a brief analysis of the problem, its nature, conceptual framework, definitional perspectives and methodology.

In the second chapter titled ‘Political Consciousness, Literary Expression and Search for Theory’ an endeavour has been made to define the meaning and nature of political consciousness. Ideological debates on political consciousness and interplay of politics and literature have been dealt extensively in this chapter. Challenging task of defining literary expression, its relationship with political consciousness, debates pertaining to the interaction between creative literature and politics has been undertaken exhaustively during the course of this chapter. This chapter also explores influence, impact and implications of political movements on literature and vice versa, and attempts search for a theoretical narrative.

The third chapter titled ‘Dalit Consciousness, Movement and Literary Expression’ deals with the meaning and nature of the term Dalit consciousness including the word Dalit, meaning of the term movement, a brief history of the Dalit Movement in India, Dalit Literature and Dalit Aesthetics, influence of Dalit Movement on the Dalit Literature.

Chapter fourth titled ‘Critical Analysis of Selected Works of Hindi Literature’ examines critically selected works of Hindi littérateurs like Godan, Kafan (Premchand); Dharati Dhan Na Apana (Jagdish Chandra); Nachyo Bahut Gopal (Amrit Lal Nagar); Maha Bhoj (Mannu Bhandari); Apne Apne Pinjare (Mohan Dass
Naimishray); Kranti Shesh Hai (Lalchand 'Rahi'), Suno Brahaman (Malkhan Singh); Joothan (Om Prakash Balmiki); Gunga Nahin Tha Mein (Jai Prakash Kardam) and Harry Kab Aayega (Suraj Pal Chauhan). This chapter deals comprehensively with all the selected texts and examines prevalent political and literary streams in those texts. We have attempted to provide a critical analysis of all the works so as to have a holistic view of literature and politics.

An attempt is made in chapter fifth titled 'Theoretical Narrative of Dalit Politics and Literature' to construct a theoretical narratives of the Dalit politics and literature. In this chapter, we have dealt with the Durban Process and the Bhopal Conference and Declaration to highlight the contemporary issue before the Dalit politics and also analysed briefly some of the views on the issue of aesthetics for the Hindi Dalit Literature.

Finally, the conclusions obtained from the study have been presented in the last chapter titled 'Trends, Summary and Conclusions' in a holistic manner which aims at providing some meaningful insights and possible remarks. This is followed by an exhaustive bibliography and annexure necessary for the study.
Notes

1. Ghurye, G.S. Caste and Race in India (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1932)


7. Various books and texts on the meaning and nature of literature and its sociology have been consulted to arrive at a working definition of literature. Several debates around these issues are discussed in the subsequent chapters.

8. Defining Hindi Dalit Literature is a difficult task. There are two major line of arguments: one advocates that only that literature could be termed as Dalit Literature which is being written by the Dalit authors (because only they can express authentic picture of the trauma and exploitation) while another line of argument advocates that even if an upper caste author is writing that could depicts authentic picture of the Dalit community then his/her work could be termed as a part of the Dalit Literature. This study has focused on both kinds of work and analyzes works of Munshi Premchand, Mannu Bhandari, Amrit Lal Nagar, Om Prakash Balmiki and Mohandas Naimishray.

9. Both primary and secondary texts were consulted for methodology; major texts are Partha Nath Mukherji (ed.), Methodology in Social Research (Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000), Ranjit Kumar. Research Methodology (London: Sage Publications, 1999); Pauline V. Young. Scientific Social Surveys and Research (Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India, 1992). Ecological model is being considered most feasible to understand, examine and analyse the nature and scope of the subject where a close correlation between political consciousness and literary expression could be properly understood.