Chapter 5

Conclusion

Many critics have seen anthologies inducing an ephemeral engagement with the works of different writers. One might ponder over anthology’s role which could be interpreted as offering either a short cut to learning or providing a genuine enlightenment to its readers. An anthology is partially engaged in both the experiences. For readers who seek to consume literature not intensively but extensively gaining a little of everything, it becomes a readily endurable source. Equally good it remains for those who have a constraint of time and can afford only limited time for their study. The form of anthology does promote a culture of ephemeral encounters as against sustained engagements. The readers who lack a desire for an indepth involvement joyously celebrate the genre’s suitability to their requirements. Significantly those who aspire to delve deep into the regions of their study, exploring in detail the various aspects; tend to fall back on the original sources. Since there is no mediating effort they acquire knowledge which is unconditioned.

However this does not mean that the role of anthologies and the anthologizer needs to be underestimated as the genre has acquired a distinct status primarily on the ground of providing interesting and at times startling revelations. Anthology’s role in being a potent source to deconstruct, de-privilege and decenter hegemonic and ideological structures and perspectives is undisputable. Whenever an anthology omits or overemphasizes, identifies or un-identifies, continues or discontinues a particular aspect or trend, it vividly reveals not only its own process of construction but also its function as a strong empowering and a disempowering source.

The reader might question the existence of a superimposed order in an anthology. The anthologist toils hard to create a specific impression of his/her work more importantly by bestowing order and unity upon the same. The entire enterprise works on the formula of unity in diversity. The entries are united because they belong either to the same genre, historical period, movement or they share their themes and relevance. Yet they remain diverse in the very fact that they are different works by different writers. While enunciating on a super imposed order that anthology tends to foster, the term ‘imposed’ may invite a scrutiny of the persisting negativity that it implicitly embodies. It points towards the destitution and vulnerability of the reader who remains subject to the essential task of anthologization. The thought erupts abruptly that the order which is ‘imposed’ may not be an order at all if it lacks
an organized and an enlightening revelation of new things, new values and new concepts. As long as an anthological assortment imposes an order on individual entries that gives them a new relevance and a whole new significance it remains an endurable order to be fostered. Though every entry in an anthology is inevitably influenced by the framework of which it becomes a part yet what is offered to the readers is a joyous affirmation of creative variations.

Anthologies afford a distinct charm and fascination to its readers. The genre has successfully formed its place in the world of books and enjoys a firmly established status which cannot be viably demolished or challenged by any other generic formation. Its readers are the ones who are enchanted by a desire to smell the finest flowers; the supreme, unsurpassed and excellent works. At the same time they are also the ones who want to behold the frequently changing contours that define the literary realm. They could be the ones fascinated by difference or pleased by similarity; or those who are at once guarded by a fervent and fierce desire to know the literary culture and tradition.

Single author collections create a new world or purport to enumerate upon its varied aspects. Anthology by contrast bestows a new form and unity upon this world already formed and created. However both tend to offer different set of experiences and the latter offers a more intriguing one. Anthologies have certainly witnessed a vigorous progress in the notable domains of pedagogy and market and have also succeeded notably in forwarding the political issues of concern. The genre’s obvious advantageous features that would have succeeded in establishing its strengthened status in the first place includes; preservation of works from vanishing into eternal obliviousness, offering works from different historical periods and thereby influencing the process of historical periodization, providing visibility to new writers, reassessing the canon, accelerating the process of intertextuality, enlarging a sense of literary culture and literary tradition, bringing into vogue different literary styles and patterns and offering a comparative analysis of works brought together.

Apart from these features, anthologies have offered themselves as essentially valuable tools of assistance to the instructors as well as to the students. The structuring of the syllabi by the universities and the number of hours allocated to the study of the same, together with the generic fruits that anthology bears have allowed it a significant status. As an extensive source of knowledge where multiple creative energies are mustered together; anthology gets the consent of both the instructors and the students.
The release of pedagogical anthologies by most of the front-rank publishers, as well as the university publication houses at considerably low prices, has furthered its appeal in the realm of pedagogy. Anthologizers want their books to be handled in specific ways. They direct the instructors and students towards the intended direction by the use of the pedagogical apparatus. Even though the use of an anthology’s pedagogical apparatus has faced much criticism, yet it is its overuse which has been a cause of its larger disdain. Many anthologizers recognize its pernicious effects and observe the virtue of restraint by avoiding an access or overindulgence in the same. A cogent and a cohesive collection for the earnest student will do justice to the rubric under which all the entries are assembled without diminishing the importance of the individual entries. At the same time it would endeavour to comprise an apparatus that is not disorienting and overambitious in making generalizations and painfully limiting the student’s comprehensibility of the subject but informative and useful.

A concretization of canon is attained by the general anthologies but more so by the pedagogical anthologies that allow a sustained existence to its writers and their works. The academic relevance of the writer and their works ensures them a place in the canon, and it is the pedagogical anthology that emphatically pronounces the same by its respective inclusions and exclusions. The traditional, pedagogical and the multicultural canon is reflected and reinforced in unison in a pedagogical anthology. However most of the anthologies taught to students have adopted a perspective, and they work to impart an understanding of the same.

Taking cognizance of the essential changes in the themes and perspectives that most of the pedagogical anthologies forward one might consider that the genre has effectively responded to the postcolonial situation of the student who wants to probe the past and the future to comprehend the simultaneously forceful and emerging sense of identity and selfhood. Recently developed anthologies have succeeded in combating and challenging the complex pedagogical situation where the students had been subjected to a pedagogical complacency primarily because of anthologies constructed on uncritical, indisputable and traditional patterns of reading.

Anthologies that incorporate and foster critical pedagogy have forged ahead a legitimized questioning and scrutiny of knowledge. They purport to bring before the readers varied set of experiences. In the entire process what is allowed to the reader is freedom. Freedom to agree or disagree, affirm or negate, comply or disobey with varied stances, perspectives and thought processes. New compilations foster a scrutiny of issues relating to oppression,
racism, casteism, gender bias, globalisation and human rights and in relation to these it 
purports to enhance students knowledge of their existence in the present world. A major 
conundrum that remains in pedagogical anthologies is that the genre is majorly influenced 
and is devised according to the current academic requirements; at the same time it influences 
the pedagogical situation and experience by its distinct formation. Anthology fosters new 
pedagogical relationships by challenging the hierarchy and allows an aporia of rewarding 
pedagogical oppurtunities.

Anthologies remain vital sites that uncover the hidden agendas of the anthologizer. Surprisingly the elusive act of anthologization seldom remains hidden in some anthologies and is subject of glaringly overt pronouncements of the anthologizer. Gender or caste-based anthologies have gradually realised their political potential. Most of the women anthologies published during the 60s and 70s have been ignorant of a politically conscious act of anthologization and naively aimed to extend visibility to the marginalised sections. Notable general anthologies on women writings (by Lal and Bandyopadhyay) lack an introduction, forward or an afterword to enunciate their claims. However the recent trend has been towards a more concrete understanding and purposeful usage of the subtle act of anthologization on part of the anthologizers whereby anthologies tend to interrogate ideologies, historical formulations and social experiences of the marginalised sections.

An enormous revision of the literary history is offered by a rigorous and a methodical scrutiny of the same. Well-entrenched structures are dismantled and traditional thought processes are questioned by anthologies that offer works of marginalised sections. The texts are to be absorbed in peculiar ways and the anthologizer unfurls the patterns before the readers. In such anthologies individual texts are valued not so much for their aesthetic significance but for allowing a rewarding opportunity to probe the marginalised situation in numerous ways. The considerations pertaining to canon, representation, literary recognition and visibility are tremendously negated in identity-based assortments, though inevitably a counter canon is constructed in such works. The editors tend to bring forth a particular historical, social and political experience through the framework of anthology. In the entire process an anthological compilation succeeds in offering its readers a possibility to analyse the varied threads that have been woven in the writings of the marginalised sections.

Significantly the politics of anthologization lies in the fact that entries that apparently remain distinct are yet united by being a part of the framework in an anthology which further
tends to trace uniformity of purposes across varied literary creations. Dalit anthologies not only reflect the socio-political history but also attempt to deconstruct and decentralize the settled notions of hegemonic structures. Though general anthologies have included Dalit writings yet the ones that are exclusively devoted to their works gather texts that exclusively address the social, psychological and economic issues that affect their lives. By the medium of anthologies what comes to the force is the vociferous aggressiveness of both the writers and editors to denounce the power structures. Such anthologies stage what might be termed as an orchestrated protest. Identity-based anthologies have successfully created a pedagogical market for themselves and have moved beyond their cloistral regional territories by making their presence felt to a worldwide audience. Ingenious process of anthologization is concretely manifest in the selection of entries on the same subject, genres, and hierarchical position however with different perspectives and viewpoints.

The inclusion of essays by both Dalit and non-Dalit writers by Dangle reflects on the complex Dalit predicament and attempts to bring before the readers the intriguing peculiarities and deviation of stances. Specific texts are gathered to distinctly state the impediments and frustrations of a particular marginalised position. Such anthologies not only succeed in documenting the social, religious and political concerns of the editors but also extend a historically and politically conscious reading experience to its readers. The selections and preferences related to a particular work, writer, and even genre is directed towards addressing the issues pertaining to identity politics. Texts that reflect upon a particular historical movement, controversies, and political and social predicament gain an instant approval of the anthologizer who finds them fitting naturally in the essential organizational design of an anthology. Such works tend to define the socio-political identity of groups in relation to the larger reality in which they find themselves placed.

Noticeably Dalit and women writers do not react adversely to the compartmentalisation and the ghettoization that identity-based anthologies foster. On the contrary what is noticed is a sense of delight and celebration in availing a viable opportunity through the medium of anthologies which allows the marginalised to be heard, understood and gain recognition and visibility. Apparently an anthologists assemblage can be politically advantageous if it reinforces the material facts of history and affords a rewarding opportunity for the readers to re-read past social relationships in a new context and allow the possibility of new social relationships and a new outlook.
The remarkable growth of the Indian book industry has certainly led to an unprecedented spurt in the formation of anthologies. Significantly, anthology has established its reputation as the flourishing product of the market. Its product value is primarily related to its abundant endowments. Its commercial proliferation pertains to the gratification offered to the rising consumer class. Having answered the call of the time, anthologies tend to offer variety in an essentially compact form. While on the one hand it establishes its relevance and esteem for the readers inviting them to absorb the literary culture, on the other hand it proves economically advantageous product of the market to the publishers. The copyright privileges allow the genre an unprecedented growth and sustenance.

Keeping in mind its prospective readers, the editors remain particularly alert towards their ideological, social and political stances. Noticeably, Dalit and women anthologies were majorly published by non-profit publishing houses and in the near future the readers may expect a number of influential identity-based anthologies by mainstream publishers who have caught the fancy of the same and are producing recognizably appealing anthologies to explore its rising market. Recently, Oxford University Press released an anthology of Tamil and Malayalam Dalit writing namely *The Oxford India Anthology of Tamil Dalit Writing* (2012) and *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing* (2012). Front-rank publishers have displayed an increased interest in anthologies of homosexual writings. Oxford, Penguin and Routledge have published notable anthologies on gay and lesbian writings.

The genre has successfully explored the pedagogical market so much so that not only the anthologies published by university publication houses but also by leading publishers have set exceptionally low prices. Until and unless the university publication houses respond actively to the changing pedagogical scenario, the private publishers can expect to enjoy a sustained demand of their works. The general anthologies have witnessed a commercially fruitful proliferation especially when released in paperbacks. Such works appease a wider range of audience and target different classes of consumers. Noticeably, the generic preferences of the anthologizer are also related to the economic considerations that go into the construction of anthologies. The choice of genre, the rank and literary reputation of the editor, the selection of periods, works, writers, and variation in the stances of editors are some of the significant factors which have been influenced by the current needs of the market. However, taking cognizance of the ample rewards the genre yields to the readers as well as to the publishers, anthologies shall continue to witness a promising and successful future.