Aesthetics of Dalit Literature and Satyam
Shivam and Sundram : An Overview

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The purpose of Dalit literature is to inform Dalit Society of its slavery and narrates its pain and suffering to upper caste Hindus. The purpose is very didactic. Its sole aim is to spread the feelings of universal brotherhood by defining the things universally true. It does not curtail the truths by the mystery of caste, religion and culture. It has its own truth and beauty. It is not an art for art’s sake but the wonderful art for life’s sake. It has its own exploration and aesthetics. Its beauty lies in its inspiration for social transformation.

Sharankumar Limbale in his well known book on Dalit aesthetics "Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit literature" says ...........

Is it appropriate to expect pleasure or beauty, instead of inspiration for social transformation, from a literature that been written primarily to raise awareness? Dalit writers believe that their literature should be analyzed from a sociological perspective focused on social values than on beauty. An exclusively aesthetic consideration of Dalit literature will disregard the Dalit writers’ fundamental role, and hence is not acceptable to Dalit writers. Rejecting traditional aesthetics, they insist on the need for a new and distinct aesthetic for their literature—an aesthetic that is life-affirming and realistic. In other words, Dalit writers have demanded different yardsticks for the literary appraisal of their works. It is the firm conviction of Dalit writers and critics that if yardsticks change, the concept of aesthetics will change too.

The aesthetic theory of Dalit literature is not acceptable to the upper caste critics. And they reject it by saying that Dalit literature does not need a separate aesthetic and that it should be critiqued on the basis of eternal values. They don’t try to grasp the aesthetic

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analysis of Dalit literature and its reflection on social evils. But on the contrary, I want to say that there is the argent need of Dalit aesthetic. If an aesthetic consideration of Dalit literature is to be undertaken it will be necessary to do so in the context of its uniqueness, inspiration, creation, role and features. This awareness has existed from the early days of Dalit literature. Instead of starting this discussion, we should examine the perception and criticism of Dalit literature completely. Otherwise we shall not go ahead. We cannot go across the parameters without the comprehensive analysis of Dalit literature and it's aesthetics. We also should remember that the aesthetic consideration of Dalit literature must be based on Ambedkarism which provides it a social value.

**Untruth:** What is the place of 'satyam' in the lives of the Dalit, and the Adivasi.? Is that truth about which such pride is expressed, and which is considered triumphant, really the truth? Is it truth that the Brahman was born form Brahma's mouth and the Shudra from his feet? Is it truth that one is born a Shudra because of sins committed in a previous life? Since there is no truth in any of this, satyam should really be asatyam.

**Unholy:** Hindu scriptures have deemed the touch, shadow and speech of the Dalit person as defiling. Food, water and people become impure from the touch of the untouchable. Not only human being and even god becomes polluted. Separate settlements, riverbanks and cremation grounds have been arranged for untouchables.

For the nomadic and criminal tribes, there is neither village nor home. They have to wander constantly, and beg to live. What kind of shiva is this? These communities have to steal to survive. Human beings are deemed criminals by their birth. What sort of shiva is this?

Adivasis live the life of forest animals—what form of shiva is this?

Shudras serve the three upper varnas. They have no right to power, property, prestige and knowledge. Is this shiva?

Even today Dalit’s are tortured by being called Dalit. Injustice and ill treatment are inflicted on Dalit women. This is the Hindu religious custom.
**Unbeauty:** Dalit's should live outside the village; they should take inauspicious name; they should not accumulate property; they should possess only donkeys or dogs; and they should wear clothes meant to dress corpses. They should not learn Sanskrit or read the vedas, lest by doing so, they become aware of their oppression. They were forced to live an inauspicious, uncultured and untouchable life. But, since they did not live mutely according to prescription, provision for serious punishment was made for any breach of the injunctions.

1. Shambuka meditated, and was therefore killed.
2. Eklavya acquired learning, but his thumb was cut off.
3. Shivaji was called a Shudra when he laid claim to the throne.
4. The dancer women of the Kolhati community adorn the beds of men. These rich upper caste Hindu men disrobe the women who perform nautanki. The women dance to please patrons in order to survive. How can they be expected to show spousal loyalty?

Satyam, shivam, sundram- these are fabrications used to divide and exploit ordinary people. In fact, the aesthetic concept of ‘satyam, shivam, sundaram’ is the selfish mechanism of upper caste Hindu society. It is necessary to replace this conception of aesthetics with one that is material and social.

1. Human being are first and foremost human— this is satyam.
2. The liberation of human being is shivam.
3. The humanity of human being is sundram.

Satyam, shivam, is a foolish aesthetic concept. There is no truth and beauty in the world comparable to that which is found in human beings. Therefore, it is essential to discuss the equality, liberty, justice and fraternity of human beings. In my opinion, that discussion will be the discussion of the aesthetics of Dalit literature.

Pleasure is the basis of any literature except Dalit literature. Dalit literature bases on pain and sufferings, and the aesthetics of such literature is unique in itself because it is very difficult to develop the aesthetics on pain, suffering and contrast. It is the long process by which the aesthetics of such literature develops. Dr. Manager Pandey in his book says that.................

“No aesthetic is built in a day. It covers a very long time. And the aesthetic which is based on pain and suffering takes more time to be
Now the question is will the readers be distressed or angered or will they be pleased by reading the pain and revolt expressed in Dalit literature.

It is a literature that intends to make readers restless or angry. How can the aestheticism in the context of beauty be reconciled with ‘Dalit consciousness’ in Dalit literature? This revolutionary consciousness is based on the ideas of similarity, freedom, justice and solidarity, rather than pleasure. Therefore, it is essential for Dalit critics to change the concept of beauty. The imagination of beauty is linked to prevailing ideas in every age. For instance, kings, and emperors used to be the subject of literature but today the people living in huts and cottages are the fit subject to the literature, esp to Dalit literature. It has become necessary to transform to imaginary of beauty because it is not possible to investigate the creation of Dalit literature and its commitment to revolt and rejection within the framework of traditional aesthetics.

Dalit literature is a new literary stream of post independence period. It is not only new but its form and purpose are different from those of Savarna literature. Therefore, it can not be appraised using traditional aesthetics.

In formulating the aesthetics of Dalit literature, it will be necessary to explicate beauty. Is such an explication possible? It is not possible to do so on the basis of imagination and conventions. According to this theory, the beauty of any writing lies in its expression of world consciousness. This traditional theory is universalistic and spiritualistic. The aesthetic which propose that the beauty of a work of art is its artistic rendering of reality, is materialistic. Dalit literature rejects spiritualism and abstraction, its aesthetic is materialistic than spiritualist.

The source of this materialistic approach of aesthetic is none but Baba Saheb Dr. Ambedkar himself. The revolutionary thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar inspires them to create such aesthetics. However, Dalit literary works can not be accepted as beautiful for these reasons alone. The standard of a work of literature depends on how much and in what way an artist’s ideas - embedded in the work - affect the reader. Dalit writers will have to decide how best to
express Ambedkarite thoughts in their literature. That work of Dalit literature will be recognized as beautiful and good which causes the greatest awakening of Dalit consciousness in the reader.

The artist’s personality is reflected in his work and reader’s personality is unified with this reflection. In this way the writer and reader become one in this artistic creation. The meeting of the two depends on their possessing common values. The intensity with which Dalit readers will feel the Dalit writer’s experience, which can not be shared by non-Dalit readers. In this way there will also be a difference in the degree to which none Dalit and Dalit readers will find the Dalit writers experience unique, because this experience is the experience of Dalit reader’s daily life. It should be kept in mind that while the concept of beauty in Dalit literature cannot be universal concept but the Ambedkarite inspiration expressed in it can be of universal value. And the description of the aesthetics of Dalit literature is hidden precisely in this consideration. Dalit writers have rejected traditional artistic standards and aesthetics and they have developed a separate aesthetics of their own.

Works Cited
1. Limbare, Sharankumar : Towards on Aesthetic of Dalit Literature.