

PROTEST IN CONTEMPORARY REGIONAL WRITINGS - I

Unit Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Marathi Literature
- 1.3 Tamil Literature
- 1.4 Gujarati Literature
- 1.5 Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit aims at making the students familiar with various aspects of Dalit literature that are found in Marathi, Tamil and Gujarati literature.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Dalit literature has been an established branch of literature that has been practiced by several writers all over India. As India is a multilingual country, people belonging to different states speak different languages and express their thoughts and ideas in their own languages giving birth to regional literature. Owing to this multilingual character of the country, Dalit literature is also written in multiple languages. So there is Dalit literature in Marathi, Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati and so on.

1.2 MARATHI LITERATURE

Marathi literature, in general it is believed that a kind of literature that represents an artistic expression of thoughts and ideas, passions, emotions, experiences and actions of human life. It also captures the day-to-day happenings of life like other literature. Marathi literature, too, is considered as a source of pleasure to the Marathi readers from 4000 years and it will remain in the future too. As literature is defined as a 'true reflection of personal, political, religious and spiritual conditions in which the writer lives'. Marathi literature is known as one of the important types of Indian literature has made its deep impact on the canon of Indian Literature.

In early 17th century, Sant Tukaram, a noted poet has achieved remarkable position in Bhakti Literature. His 'Abhangas' are the outcome of peculiar, economical, social, political and religious conditions of his time. Tukaram was greatly disturbed by Varna System (especially two varnas- Brahmin and Shudras). Brahmins considered themselves superiors than all other castes, so the common man was politically, socially, economically exploited.

As per the dictionary, protest means a statement of disapproval when a person or a group is physically, mentally, economically, politically and socially oppressed.

Protest is born when a man decides to get rid of his exploitation and acts accordingly. It means that to express his protest, one has to disapprove his circumstances to reform prevalent condition. Narendra Mohan writes "The foundation of protest is laid when man becomes conscious of his life rights and for their attainment puts himself into protest with body and soul".

Sant Tukaram like all sensitive poets became aware of the oppressive social systems that were framed for torturing of common people under the influence of religious practices. Sant Tukaram with the help of Abhangas spread awareness among the people regarding social and religious practices. In his noted work- 'Tuka Mhane' or "Says Tuka" expressed his protest against religious and social structures. With the help of Abhangas, he expected society to be strong and healthy.

Protest in Marathi literature was explicit in the writings of Marathi writers like Keshavsut, N.C. Phadke; V.S. Khandekar glorified the culture, history and literary values. But, the literature of elite class has very less interest in the exposition of protest elements and ignored the sufferings and exploitations of Dalits. Dalit writers under the philosophical path of Shahu-Phule-Ambedkar exposed their collective protest against their exploitation. It is true that Dalit literature has brought out democratic revolution which demanded a society with equal social rights. It has discussed and exposed the lives of oppressed Dalits and emphasized humanism and criticized the stigmatized social practices. It has also challenged the hierarchy of caste system which is believed to be a root cause of oppression of millions of Dalits for centuries.

The philosophy of Jyotiba Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was the key figure in the formation of protest movement in Maharashtra. He gave birth to Dalit literature in Marathi language. It challenged the very practice of traditional literature and came up with Dalit subjects, styles and techniques. It mainly deals with the exposition of oppression and suppression of Dalit and manifested their protest. In contemporary Dalit writing, Dalit writers initiated writings of Sant Tukaram, Sant Gora Kumbhar, Chokhamela and others.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar started a periodic 'Mooknayak' in 1920 that has again inspired Dalits to compose poems. Contemporary writers like Sharankumar Limbale, Laxman Mane, Dr. Narendra Jadhav, P.E. Sonkamble, Urmila Pawar and Pradnya Pawar, Mallika Amar Shaikh and others. All the writers took Dalit literature at the highest position and exposed the ways of Dalit's liberation, for that they are used literary genres like poems, short stories, autobiographies, travelogues and plays.

Sharankumar Limbale writes," Dalit literature is not neutral because Dalit writers cannot bear their relationship with pain."

With the help of protest, Dalit writers rejected the very foundation of mainstream literature. In Dalit literature, Dalit writers gave large contribution that gave new identity to Marathi literature.

Arjun Dangle edited a book- 'Poison Bread'. It has made a huge impact in literary circle.

Sharankumar Limbale's Marathi autobiography 'Akkarmashi' was translated by Alok Mukherjee in 2004 that extended nature of Indian society. Dalit writers used protest as a tool of manifestations of their humanitarian perspectives and strongly opposed patriarchy and strongly opposed patriarchy, Brahminism, injustice, gender discrimination, problems of education, criticism of male domination, struggle for survival, poverty, and man-woman relationship.

Dalit classics like Daya Pawar's 'Baluta', Laxman Mane's 'Upa', Laxman Gaikwad's 'Uchalya', Sharankumar Limbale's 'Outcaste', Baby Kamble's 'Prison We Broke', and Mallika Amar Shaikh's 'I Want to Destroy Myself' are remarkable ones in the exposition of protest.

Namdev Dhasal's 'Golpitha' is considered as Dalit's classic that manifested the troublesome world of Dalits (men and women).

Dilip Chitre has translated work of Namdev Dhasal, poet of underworld in 2007. Protest of Dalit writing put forth the condition of Dalit men and women in Maharashtra due to the handling of day to day subjects. Now a day Dalit literature has become a curriculum of many departments of colleges and universities.

Protest can be considered as one of the weapons of Marathi Dalit writers that gave similar identity to them as that of African-Americans.

1.3 TAMIL LITERATURE

Tamil Protest Literature is vibrant like Marathi Dalit literature. Historically, protest literature in Tamil Nadu began from dalit movement from Maharashtra. Tamil Nadu writing evaluated the subjects of Tamil Nadu related to marginalised groups in its vibrant, multifaceted, innovative literary field. Tamil Dalit Literature followed the path of Maharashtra Dalit Literature. This is why readers mostly find out strong resemblance between Tamil and Marathi Dalit writing. Tamil Dalit Literature expressed the aesthetic tradition of dalit writing. It mainly focuses on the denial of human rights to Dalits. Tamil Dalit writing flourished after 1990s out of the hesitations of political movements of 1960s to 1980s. Basically, it took inspiration from anti-Brahmanist movement found in 1925 by E.V. Ramasami in Tamil Nadu. The aim of this movement is to offer rights to backward class and stop discrimination against them. Dalit writing in Tamil Nadu was strongly affected by political parties and various social movements. Writers in Tamil Nadu identified social inequality, economic disparity, caste discrimination and so on. Dalit writers expected to free the backward class people from all kinds of domination.

In 1970s and 1980s protest writing in Tamil Nadu was largely influenced by Marxism, Ambedkarism that gave birth to eminent intellectuals, who with the help of their narratives exposed problems of working class, oppression and inequality. In addition to that, the writers also exposed the capitalist nature of society that mainly exploits backward class strata of the society. Protest writing deals with this kind of exploitation and social hierarchy. Protest writers use their tongue for the literary expression. During 1960s and 1970s, Dalit writers use only their tongue who exposed social issues and sociopolitical condition that influenced Tamil Dalit people. Tamil Dalit Literature mainly centred on focusing discrimination of dalits socially, politically, economically which is done by upper class society.

Tamil dalit writing flourished in novels, short stories and autobiographies. This type of literature described social evils as it was influenced by Ambedkarite philosophy, which is a mainly exposed Dalit issues. A dalit writer Sivakami wrote first Dalit novel 'Pazhayani Kazhidalum' (The Grip of Change) in 1988 that discusses the issues of Dalit leadership. In addition to that, it has also pointed out corruption, manipulation, and power politics especially by upper class politicians. 'The Grip of Change' is the best example of protest writing which gives the message of unity towards improvement of Dalits. She has also highlighted the issues of Dalit patriarchy, exploitation of women at home by Dalit man-father, brother, husband, son, father-in-law. Her second novel 'Anandhayi', focuses on violent exploitation of female's body and points out that how family is embedded in patriarchy as an oppressive system that makes women an object of sexuality. Sivakami is one of the earliest dalit writers who exposed double exploitation of dalit women on account of gender and caste by the hands of upper class men or dalit man.

In 1992, Bama was a powerful dalit women writer. Significant dalit work was published and written like 'Karukku' which has highlighted oppression of dalits at the hands of state police, panchayat council, upper class and at the church. Bama shows multiple subjects related to dalits life (women). She also highlights various forms of oppressions of dalits.

Tamil Dalit writing was influenced by Periyar who works very hard in the reformation of dalits conditions. He is also known as the father of 'Dravidian Movement'. He shows his criticism of Brahminism and the orthodox foundation of Hinduism in Tamil Nadu. Bama is considered as one of the most popular writer famous for social protest. Her second novel 'Sangati' also comments on Dalits life. Bama's novel renders writing as an act of sociopolitical exercise.

Dalit writing in Tamil Nadu based on the caste and gender forms important issues were put forth by poets, playwrights, short story writers and novelists. Primarily, they had expressed their protest against caste discrimination, injustice, exploitation, gender discrimination, poverty, etc. In contemporary protest writing, Dalit women's contribution is remarkable, that is considered as lively, vibrant, witty, full of aesthetics of protest. In short, Tamil protest writing stands for rebellion spirit. Almost all Dalit writers show their protest against the established social order.

1.4 GUJARATI LITERATURE

Gujarati Dalit literature emerged in 1970s and flourished after 1980s. It has its roots in Dalit Marathi literature and Dalit movement i.e. the Panther Movement. Some writers and activist in Gujarat also started similar organization, the founding chairman of the organization, Dr. Ramchandra Parmar started a Dalit magazine called 'Panther in 1975'. It was the first Gujarati magazine, exclusively for Dalits. Before that in 1956, many poems had been written as a tribute to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar by the little educated Dalit mill workers.

Ramchandra Parmar published 'Anjali' (tribute) was considered as a powerful work of protest writing in Gujarat.

Dalit Gujarati voices did not imitate the tradition of mainstream literature and was distinct in Dalit consciousness. Poems in Gujarati literature received warm response from the readers due to their protest. The first ever Gujarati Dalit novel 'Angaliyat' (The Step Child) by Joseph Macwan appeared in 1986, while it exposed brutality of untouchability and the stigma of it. The first anthology of

Dalit short stories was published by Mohan Parmar and Harish Mangalam in 1987.

Some social movements in Gujarat also made Dalit writers more conscious about their identity and existence. The anti-reservation agitation in the year 1981 and 1985 by the upper caste awakened the spread of Dalitism among the scattered Dalits. The writer became rebellious and started expressing protest against upper class in Gujarat. Many magazines were dedicated to Dalit writing- 'Aakrosh' (1978), 'Kala Suraj' (Black Sun), 'Toddfoed' magazine, the first anthology of Gujarati Dalit poems, Dalit Kavita was edited by Ganpat Parmar and Mansi Jani appeared in 1981 and then Gujarati Dalit poetry has flourished and gave large number of poems like 'Chingari' (1982) by Kalidas Pandey, 'Asmita' (1984)

By Chandu Maheriya, 'Eklavya- No Angutha' (1987) edited by Nilesh Kathad and many more. Joseph Macwan's 'The Step Child' is considered as one of the milestones in the journey of protest writing in Gujarat. It has depicted the pain and sufferings of dalit and raised its voice against Gujarati upper class people.

Gujarati short story collection 'Varta' (1987) edited by Mohan Parmar and Harish Mangalam. Short stories in Gujrat literature also contributed in raising the voice of dalits against the exploitative system.

Guajarati Dalit writing imitated literary forms and techniques of Marathi Dalit writers. Mohan Parmar and Harish Mangalam explored their protest in their short story collection. Like Marathi literature, Gujrati Dalit literature, too flourished in plays biographies, autobiographies, essays and folk literature. In case of English translation, Joseph Macwan's 'Step Child' is prominent in the delineation of Dalit literature. Protest, in dalit literature played an instrumental role to empower dalits during 1980s to 1990s.

Gujrati Dalit writers started expressing Dalit's miserable condition, exploitation on different grounds. In the preface of 'Asmita', Macwan says, "The last ten years of the history of dalit literature is, essentially the history of the expression of the agony experienced by the exploited."

Gujrati protest literature stands for true expression and experience of marginalized society that differs from mainstream literature, in case of use of language and subject matters. It intended to reach to the last man of the society, along with that it has employed simplicity of expression, common man's language, it has also beautified limitless subjects in Gujrati literature- poverty, casteism, male domination, problems of survival, gender discrimination, struggle for survival, problems of education, human relationships, exploitations, man-woman relationship, inequality, racism, liberation of dalits. Gujrati mainstream literature, protest writers think that it is rootless because it has initiated western trends and movements like existentialism, symbolism and Marxism. During 1960s to 1970s, protest writer's role became instrumental in bridging the gap between writers and its public. Protest literature in Gujrat established a bond with Gujrati Dalits and sensitized about Ambedkarite philosophy. In contemporary scenario (20th century), the practice of translation boosted Gujrat literature. Macwan's 'Step Child' is considered as ground breaking translation by Rita Kothari in the year 2004. Protest is one of the important apparent elements in Gujrati Dalit writing that has extended the aim of Dalit writing in India.

1.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Write notes on the following:

1. Marathi Literature
2. Tamil Literature
3. Gujarati Literature
4. Protest in Dalit literature



munotes.in

PROTEST IN CONTEMPORARY REGIONAL WRITINGS - II

Unit Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Kannad Literature
- 2.3 Hindi Literature
- 2.4 Bengali Literature
- 2.5 Check Your Progress
- 2.6 Bibliography

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit aims at making the students familiar with various aspects of Dalit literature that are found in Marathi, Tamil and Gujarati literature.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Dalit literature has been an established branch of literature that has been practiced by several writers all over India. As India is a multilingual country, people belonging to different states speak different languages and express their thoughts and ideas in their own languages giving birth to regional literature. Owing to this multilingual character of the country, Dalit literature is also written in multiple languages. So there is Dalit literature in Marathi, Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati and so on.

2.2 KANNADA LITERATURE

The origin of protest literature of the dalits is believed to be started in 11th century with Kannada poet Chinnaiah, a cobbler saint poet who composed some couplets in the early writings of Kannada literature. In Kannada literature, it is believed that he is the father of Kannada Dalit writing mainly focused on dalit problems and their animal like position. Another Kannada poet of 12th century is Kalavve followed the tradition of protest. He also challenged the upper class in the following lines:

“ Those who eat goats
 Foul and tiny fish
 Such, they call caste people
 Those who eat the sacred cow
 That showers frothing milk for Shiva
 Such, they call out-castes.”

Dalit literature in Karnataka emerged from dalit movement in 1970s, but it is being affected by dalit panther movement of Maharashtra. There are many social movements' which records the protest of social reformers in Kannada history. It was the first time Basavappa, a social reformer raised his voice against caste discrimination in Karnataka, that gave rise to new social movement (protest writing in Kannada literature). 'Vachana Sahitya' was considered as early type of protest writing that aims to uplift the socio economic condition of Non-Brahmin caste that gave birth to Anti-Brahmin movement in Karnataka in 1917.

Dalit movement in Karnataka aimed to bring social change with the help of speeches and literary writing. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was the main guiding force in their writing that developed Kannada protest writing. Many dalit intellectuals obtained degrees from universities and throughout that education could be considered as a path of progress. The source of dalit writers in Karnataka was undoubtedly a literature produced by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Shudra writers also contributed for the growth of Kannada dalit literature which is highlighting social hierarchy but all they had targeted caste system, Brahmanism and religious beliefs. Kannada writers exposed Brahmanism which Brahmins thought that a kind of mental status which accepts superiority over another man and it attaches inferiority to the fellow writers strongly believed in humanity and demanded justice and criticized slavery against dalits.

Kannada contemporary literature was dominated by 'Siddalingaiah', a professor of Kannada in Bangalore University raised voice against injustice, caste discrimination and exploitation through his poems. He mainly focuses on Dalits problems that have given new direction to Kannada literature.

Birth, rebirth, hunger, sexual exploitation, gender discrimination were the key themes of Kannada protest writing. Kannada autobiographies are equally popular in the definition of dalit issues. Siddalingaiah's 'OoruKeri' is a Kannada autobiography that expose the auto-biographical account of their writer that also shows the conflict between upper and lower caste based on various issues. It also manifests the poor condition of dalits and downtrodden people of Karnataka 'Ooru' (village). Kannada dalit writing brilliantly exposed the pain and anger of dalits. The exposition of protest is quite identical in the writings of Kannada classics e.g. poetry, autobiography, short stories concentrated on various aspects of dalits through which they had uncovered ignorance, lack of awareness, superstitions. Above all, Kannada dalit writers sensitized about importance of education. Thus, Kannada contemporary writing is devoted for social change.

2.3 HINDI LITERATURE

Hindi Dalit Literature took inspiration from Maharashtra, which has undergone many social changes and exposed multiple subjects related to marginalized community. Hindi Dalit writing, too, followed the philosophical path of Shahu, Phule and Ambedkar, that has given strong support in development of Hindi Dalit writing in India.

Panther Movement of Namdev Dhasal, Raja Dhale and Arjun Dangle gave inspiration to the development of Hindi writing. Hindi Dalit intellectuals rebelled against inhuman treatment of Brahminism which did not consider Dalit as a human being.

Hindi dalit writing was a part of socio-political movement in India. It stands for protest against untouchability of institutionalized systems of caste hierarchy. Hindu Dalit writing also emerged out of the agitation of Dalits in India. They

were strongly influenced by the figure Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and raised protest against their exploitation. Writers contributed to fictions, poems, autobiographies through which they had criticized the very foundation of Hinduism. Dalit writers like Marathi writers exposed the tyranny of upper caste Hindus over Dalits.

Hindu Dalit writing developed after 1980s for as a part of protest movement.

Kaushalya Baisantri, a prominent Dalit writer wrote a famous autobiography in Hindi- 'Dohra Abhishap', 'The Double Curse' which has exposed traumatized conditions of dalit women in male dominated society. She has discussed gender based discrimination and injustice against women. She also criticized the practice of patriarchy in India especially related to Dalit women. In addition to that, she has strongly believed in Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's philosophical path as a means of emancipation and empowerment of women.

The role of English in contemporary India, gave strong support to translation studies. English language played a key role in popularized Hindi text. It serves as a link to the language both in India and Abroad. In case of Hindi Dalit writing, English language played a crucial role in popularizing Hindi classics.

In Hindi Dalit writing, Omprakash Valmiki is known as a famous Dalit figure, who wrote his famous autobiography 'Joothan'. It has been considered as a kind of master stroke to the mainstream writing (Hindi). 'Joothan' explored many issues related to dalits. Besides 'Joothan', he had published a collection of poems entitled 'Bas Bahot Ho Chuka' (1997), 'Ab Aur Nahi' (2009). Apart from that, he wrote two short story collections.

Valmiki, a renowned dalit writer exposed the practice and traditional mindset of the people. His autobiography, 'Joothan' protested against upper class community. In addition to that, he also shows violence against dalits due to caste stigma. 'Joothan' is an account of dalits in new India that brings new experiences to dalits' community. This autobiography was originally written in Hindi language. Later it was translated in English by Arun Mukherjee in 2003.

Like Marathi dalit writing, Hindi writers too, went against the mainstream writing. 'Apne Apne Pinjre' is a well-known autobiography written by Mohandas Nimishray which exposed the author's protest against established order along with that it reveals pain and sufferings of dalits due to caste discrimination. Hindi contemporary protest writing, gave new dimensions to Indian literature as a rebellious literature that throws away inhuman practices against dalits.

Protest is one of the weapons by which writers try to heal the dragon of caste system and exploitation.

2.4 BENGALI LITERATURE

When it comes to Dalit literature in Bengal, the name of Manohar Mouli Biswas comes at the forefront as he has been very active in Dalit literary movement. He is influenced by the writers like Daya Pawar and Arun Kamble whom he met at a Dalit literary conference held in Hyderabad in 1987. This meeting encouraged Biswas to undertake the movement of uniting Dalit writers of Bengal that resulted in the establishment of Bengali Dalit Sahitya Sanstha. This Sanstha provided active support to Dalit writers to get their works published. However, it doesn't mean that there was no Dalit literature as such in Bangla language. In fact, its roots can be traced in 19th century itself, particularly in Matua sect as its followers had started to challenge and denounce the Brahmin dominating

hierarchical Hindu social structure. Few other Dalit writers also expressed their displeasure against such unjust treatment rendered to their community but it remained invisible due to the deliberate neglect by the mainstream critics and also due to the partition that divided Dalits into two countries. It was because of this historical fact that Bangla Dalit voice remained unheard when Dalit writers in other states like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, etc. had started to attract the attention of the world towards the plight of Dalits in India by voicing the unjust conditions of their lives through their literature.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, however, Bangla Dalit writers came together and started to write about Dalit experiences in their works. Under the leadership of Manohar Mouli Biswas, Bengali Dalit Sahitya Sanstha started a literary journal named, *Chaturtha Duniya*, that provided the much needed platform to new Dalit voices to get their works published. Besides the Sanstha also initiated an annual lecture series that helped Dalit intelligentsia to come together and exchange their views on common issues related to Dalits in West Bengal.

All these efforts led to create conducive atmosphere for the development of Bangla Dalit literature. Slowly the movement spread all over the state and began to get recognized at national and international level. The writers like Manoranjan Byapari, Raju Das, Namita Das, Samar Ray, Anil Sarkar, Kalyani Thakur, Manju Bala and others have emerged as strong voices in Dalit literature.

2.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Write short notes on the following:

1. Kannad Dalit Literature
2. Hindi Dalit Literature
3. Bangla Dalit Literature

2.6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dangle, Arjun (1992) Ed. *Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.
- Dangle, Arjun (ed) "Dalit Literature: Past, Present and Future" in *Poisoned Bread*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1994.
- Dasan, M. Pratibha, V. Chandrika, C.S. and Pradeepan Pampirikunnu (2012) Eds. *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing*, OUP India
- Dutta, Angana and Sarangi, Jaydeep (2015) Trans. Eds. *Surviving in My world: Growing up Dalit in Bengal*. Kolkata: Stree-Samya.
- Franco, Fernando, Macwan, Jyotsna & Ramanathan, Suguna (2004) *Journeys to Freedom: Dalit Narratives*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- Limbale, Sharankumar. (2004) *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature* Orient Longman.

- Manohar, D. Murali (2013) Ed. Critical Essays on Dalit Literature. New Delhi: Atlantic.
- Prasad, Amar Nath and Gaijan, M.B. (2007) Dalit Literature: A Critical Exploration. ISBN 81-7625-817-2.
- Ravikumar and Azhagarasan, R (2012) Eds. The Oxford Anthology of Tamil Dalit Writing. New Delhi: OUP India.
- Ravikumar (2009) Venomous Touch: Notes on Caste, Culture and Politics. Calcutta: Samaya
- Satyanarayana, K and Tharu, Susie (2013). The Exercise of Freedom: An Introduction to Dalit Writing. New Delhi: Navayana.
- Shalin Maria Lawrence (2019) Vadachennaikkaari: Urban Dalit Literature. a mixed genre essays: Chennai.
- Joshi, Prakash Bal (2019-03-09). "'Dalit Literatures in India' review: Voice of protest". The Hindu.
- Patterns of Dalit Literature: Dr. N. Singh, Publisher: Vani Prakashan, New Delhi-110002, Edition: 2012
- Akshaya Kumar (14 March 2014). Poetry, Politics and Culture: Essays on Indian Texts and Contexts. Routledge.
- "TAMIL: Dalit literature". The Hindu. February 26, 2008.
- Satyanarayana and Tharu (2013). The Exercise of Freedom: An Introduction to Dalit Writing. New Delhi: Navayana. p. 21. ISBN 9788189059613.
- R. S. Morkhandikar. "Dilemmas of Dalit Movement in Maharashtra: Unity Moves and After." Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 25, no. 12, 1990, pp. 586–590. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4396063 [1]. Accessed 21 July 2020.
- "Remembering Annabhau Sathe, The Dalit Writer Who Dealt a Blow to Class and Caste Slavery". HuffPost India. 2019-08-01. Retrieved 2019- 08-02.
- "Annabhau Sathe – Remembering The Founder of 'Dalit Literature'". Velivada. Retrieved 2 August 2019.



HARRIET BEECHER STOWE'S UNCLE TOM'S CABIN - I

Unit Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Slavery as a Social Institution
- 3.2 Introduction to Harriet Beecher Stowe
- 3.3 Introduction to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
- 3.4 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Brief Summary
- 3.5 Check Your Progress
- 3.6 Bibliography

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to:

- Know the life and works of Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Understand Harriet Beecher Stowe's approach towards Abolitionism
- Get acquainted with various literary aspects of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
- Get familiar with the characters from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

3.1 SLAVERY AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

3.1.1 Slavery as a Social Evil: Slavery is considered a social evil because it is a system that deprives individuals of their basic human rights and dignity. It is a form of exploitation that treats people as property, denying them the freedom to make choices, to work for their own benefit, or to live their lives in accordance with their own beliefs and desires. Slavery has been practiced in various forms and in different parts of the world throughout history. In America, slavery was particularly brutal and inhumane, with enslaved African Americans being treated as less than human and subjected to harsh conditions and brutal treatment by their owners.

Slavery is an evil because it violates the principles of equality, justice, and respect for human dignity. It treats people as mere objects, without regard for their humanity or their rights. It creates a system of oppression that perpetuates inequality and perpetuates social and economic disparities. The abolition of slavery in the United States was a critical step in the country's history, but it did not eliminate the lingering effects of slavery on American society. Racism, discrimination, and systemic inequality continue to be major issues in America today, and the legacy of slavery is still felt by many communities.

Recognizing slavery as a social evil helps to raise awareness of the ongoing struggles for equality and justice, and highlights the importance of addressing the root causes of oppression and inequality. It serves as a reminder of the importance of valuing and respecting the inherent worth and dignity of all human beings.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's
Uncle Tom's Cabin - I

3.1.2 Slavery in America: Slavery in America refers to the system of enslaving African people and using them as forced labor in the United States from the early 17th century until the end of the Civil War in 1865. It was a brutal and inhumane system that had a profound impact on American history, culture, and society. African people were first brought to America as slaves in 1619, when a Dutch ship carrying 20 Africans arrived in Jamestown, Virginia. Over the next several centuries, millions more were brought to America as slaves, primarily from West and Central Africa. They were forced to work on plantations, farms, and in urban areas, and were treated as property rather than as human beings.

Slavery was legal in the United States until the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865, which abolished it. During this time, slavery was the foundation of the Southern economy, and many slave owners fiercely defended their right to own slaves. Slaves endured brutal living and working conditions, including long hours of hard labor, harsh punishments, and separation from their families. They were not considered citizens, and had no rights or protections under the law.

Resistance to slavery took many forms, including slave revolts, underground railroads, and individual acts of rebellion and escape. The abolitionist movement, led by people like Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, played a critical role in ending slavery and promoting equal rights for African Americans. The legacy of slavery in America is still felt today, and the country continues to grapple with the systemic racism and inequality that resulted from centuries of enslavement and discrimination.

3.1.3 Anti-Slavery movement: The anti-slavery movement in America was a social and political movement that sought to end the system of slavery and promote the rights and freedoms of African Americans. The movement emerged in the late 18th century and gained momentum in the early 19th century, fueled by religious, moral, and political arguments against slavery.

The movement included various groups and individuals who advocated for the abolition of slavery through different means. Some groups, such as the American Anti-Slavery Society, used direct action and protests to raise awareness and push for legislative change. Others, such as the Underground Railroad, focused on helping enslaved people escape to freedom. Key figures in the anti-slavery movement included Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, William Lloyd Garrison, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, among many others. They used their writing, speaking, and activism to draw attention to the cruelty and inhumanity of slavery, and to push for its abolition.

The movement gained significant political traction in the mid-19th century, with the formation of the Republican Party and the election of Abraham Lincoln as President. The Civil War, fought from 1861 to 1865, ultimately led to the end of slavery with the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865. Although slavery was formally abolished, the fight for racial equality continued, as many African Americans continued to face discrimination and violence in the years that followed. The legacy of the anti-slavery movement can be seen in the ongoing struggle for civil rights and social justice in America today.

3.2 INTRODUCTION TO HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

3.2.1 Harriet Beecher Stowe: Harriet Beecher Stowe (born June 14, 1811 died July 1, 1896) was an American writer and philanthropist, was an American author, abolitionist, and social activist. She is best known for her novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin," which was published in 1852 and became a bestseller. The novel depicted the harsh realities of slavery and was instrumental in bringing the issue to the forefront of the national conversation in the United States.

Stowe was born in Litchfield, Connecticut, into a family of prominent religious leaders and educators. Her father was a Calvinist preacher and her siblings included several noted writers and educators. She began her writing career by publishing stories and articles in magazines, and later wrote several novels and nonfiction works.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin" was inspired by Stowe's own experiences and her interactions with people who had been enslaved. The novel tells the story of a slave named Tom who is sold from one owner to another, and depicts the cruelty and brutality of slavery. The book was an immediate success and was widely read in the United States and Europe.

Stowe's work had a significant impact on the abolitionist movement, and she became an influential figure in the fight against slavery. She also wrote and spoke out against other social injustices, including the mistreatment of Native Americans and the inequalities faced by women.

Stowe continued to write and publish throughout her life, and her works include several novels, collections of essays and articles, and a memoir. She died in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1896, and is remembered as one of the most important writers and activists of the 19th century.

3.2.2 Harriet Beecher Stowe as a Writer: Harriet Beecher Stowe was a prolific and influential writer who is best known for her novel, "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Published in 1852, the book is widely credited with helping to galvanize the anti-slavery movement in the United States, and is considered one of the most important works of American literature.

Stowe's writing was widely praised for its emotional power and moral clarity, and she became one of the most famous and influential writers of her time. She continued to write throughout her life, publishing more than 30 books and countless articles and essays on a wide range of topics. Harriet Beecher Stowe's writing explored a wide range of themes, but several common themes can be identified across her works. These themes reflect her deep commitment to social justice, moral reform, and the promotion of Christian values. Some of the most prominent themes in her writing include:

- **Abolition and Anti-Slavery:** Stowe's most famous work, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," was a powerful critique of the institution of slavery in the United States. She used her writing to raise awareness of the brutality and inhumanity of slavery and to call for its abolition.
- **Christian Faith and Morality:** Stowe's writing often explored the relationship between Christian faith and moral values. She believed that Christianity should inspire people to act with compassion and justice towards others, and many of her works reflect this belief.

- **Women's Rights:** Stowe was a strong advocate for women's rights, and her writing often addressed issues related to women's education, suffrage, and social and political equality.
- **Temperance:** Stowe was a committed advocate for temperance, and many of her works addressed the negative effects of alcohol on individuals and society.
- **Family and Community:** Stowe's writing often focused on the importance of family and community in promoting social and moral values. She believed that strong families and communities were essential to building a just and equitable society.
- **Overall,** Stowe's writing was characterized by a deep commitment to social justice, moral reform, and the promotion of Christian values. Her works continue to be widely read and admired for their emotional power, moral clarity, and social relevance.

In addition to her writing, Stowe was also a prominent social and political activist, and worked tirelessly for the causes she believed in, including abolition, women's rights, and temperance. She is remembered today as a groundbreaking writer and a powerful voice for social justice and equality.

3.3 INTRODUCTION TO *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*

Harriet Beecher Stowe grew up in the Northeast but lived for a time in Cincinnati, which enabled her to see both sides of the slavery debate without losing her abolitionist's perspective. Cincinnati was evenly split for and against abolition, and Stowe wrote satirical pieces on the subject for several local papers there. She often wrote pieces under pseudonyms and with contrasting styles. Though Stowe absorbed a great deal of information about slavery during her Cincinnati years, she conducted extensive research before writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She wrote to Frederick Douglass and others for help in creating a realistic picture of slavery in the Deep South. Her black cook and household servants also helped by telling her stories of their slave days.

Stowe's main goal with *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was to convince her large Northern American readership of the necessity of ending slavery. Most immediately, the novel served as a response to the passage of the **Fugitive Slave Act of 1850**, which made it illegal to give aid or assistance to a runaway slave. Under this legislation, Southern slaves who escaped to the North had to flee to Canada in order to find real freedom. With her book, Stowe created a sort of exposé that revealed the horrors of Southern slavery to people in the North. Her radical position on race relations, though, was informed by a deep religiosity. Stowe continually emphasizes the importance of Christian love in eradicating oppression. She also works in her feminist beliefs, showing women as equals to men in intelligence, bravery, and spiritual strength. Indeed, women dominate the book's moral code, proving vital advisors to their husbands, who often need help in seeing through convention and popular opinion.

Uncle Tom's Cabin was published in episodes in the *National Era* in 1851 and 1852, then published in its entirety on March 20, 1852. It sold 10,000 copies in its first week and 300,000 by the end of the year, huge numbers for the mid-nineteenth century. Today, analysis of both the book's conception and reception proves helpful in the readers understanding of the Civil War era. Within the text

itself, the reader finds insights into the mind of a Christian, feminist abolitionist.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin is a powerful and emotional story about the horrors of slavery in the United States. The novel follows the lives of several enslaved African Americans, including the main character, Tom, who is a devout and kind-hearted man.

The story begins with Tom being sold away from his family and taken to a plantation in Louisiana. There, he meets other slaves who have also been torn from their families and forced to work under brutal conditions. The novel depicts the inhumane treatment of slaves, including beatings, whippings, and separation from loved ones.

As the story unfolds, readers are introduced to several other characters, including the evil slave owner Simon Legree, who represents the worst aspects of slavery, and Eliza, a slave who escapes with her child across the frozen Ohio River to freedom.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin" became an instant bestseller and is widely credited with helping to bring about the end of slavery in the United States. The novel's vivid depiction of the realities of slavery and its effect on individuals and families touched the hearts and minds of readers, and it played an important role in shaping public opinion on the issue of slavery in the mid-19th century.

3.4 *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*: BRIEF SUMMARY/PLOT OVERVIEW

Having run up large debts, a Kentucky farmer named Arthur Shelby faces the prospect of losing everything he owns. Though he and his wife, Emily Shelby, have a kindhearted and affectionate relationship with their slaves, Shelby decides to raise money by selling two of his slaves to Mr. Haley, a coarse slave trader. The slaves in question are Uncle Tom, a middle-aged man with a wife and children on the farm, and Harry, the young son of Mrs. Shelby's maid Eliza. When Shelby tells his wife about his agreement with Haley, she is appalled because she has promised Eliza that Shelby would not sell her son.

However, Eliza overhears the conversation between Shelby and his wife and, after warning Uncle Tom and his wife, Aunt Chloe, she takes Harry and flees to the North, hoping to find freedom with her husband George in Canada. Haley pursues her, but two other Shelby slaves alert Eliza to the danger. She miraculously evades capture by crossing the half-frozen Ohio River, the boundary separating Kentucky from the North. Haley hires a slave hunter named Loker and his gang to bring Eliza and Harry back to Kentucky. Eliza and Harry make their way to a Quaker settlement, where the Quakers agree to help transport them to safety. They are joined at the settlement by George, who reunites joyously with his family for the trip to Canada.

Meanwhile, Uncle Tom sadly leaves his family and Mas'r George, Shelby's young son and Tom's friend, as Haley takes him to a boat on the Mississippi to be transported to a slave market. On the boat, Tom meets an angelic little white girl named Eva, who quickly befriends him. When Eva falls into the river, Tom dives in to save her, and her father, Augustine St. Clare, gratefully agrees to buy Tom from Haley. Tom travels with the St. Clares to their home in New Orleans,

where he grows increasingly invaluable to the St. Clare household and increasingly close to Eva, with whom he shares a devout Christianity.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's
Uncle Tom's Cabin - I

Up North, George and Eliza remain in flight from Loker and his men. When Loker attempts to capture them, George shoots him in the side, and the other slave hunters retreat. Eliza convinces George and the Quakers to bring Loker to the next settlement, where he can be healed. Meanwhile, in New Orleans, St. Clare discusses slavery with his cousin Ophelia, who opposes slavery as an institution but harbors deep prejudices against blacks. St. Clare, by contrast, feels no hostility against blacks but tolerates slavery because he feels powerless to change it. To help Ophelia overcome her bigotry, he buys Topsy, a young black girl who was abused by her past master and arranges for Ophelia to begin educating her.

After Tom has lived with the St. Clares for two years, Eva grows very ill. She slowly weakens, then dies, with a vision of heaven before her. Her death has a profound effect on everyone who knew her: Ophelia resolves to love the slaves, Topsy learns to trust and feel attached to others, and St. Clare decides to set Tom free. However, before he can act on his decision, St. Clare is stabbed to death while trying to settle a brawl. As he dies, he at last finds God and goes to be reunited with his mother in heaven.

St. Clare's cruel wife, Marie, sells Tom to a vicious plantation owner named Simon Legree. Tom is taken to rural Louisiana with a group of new slaves, including Emmeline, whom the demonic Legree has purchased to use as a sex slave, replacing his previous sex slave Cassy. Legree takes a strong dislike to Tom when Tom refuses to whip a fellow slave as ordered. Tom receives a severe beating, and Legree resolves to crush his faith in God. Tom meets Cassy, and hears her story. Separated from her daughter by slavery, she became pregnant again but killed the child because she could not stand to have another child taken from her.

Around this time, with the help of Tom Loker—now a changed man after being healed by the Quakers—George, Eliza, and Harry at last cross over into Canada from Lake Erie and obtain their freedom. In Louisiana, Tom's faith is sorely tested by his hardships, and he nearly ceases to believe. He has two visions, however—one of Christ and one of Eva—which renew his spiritual strength and give him the courage to withstand Legree's torments. He encourages Cassy to escape. She does so, taking Emmeline with her, after she devises a ruse in which she and Emmeline pretend to be ghosts. When Tom refuses to tell Legree where Cassy and Emmeline have gone, Legree orders his overseers to beat him. When Tom is near death, he forgives Legree and the overseers. George Shelby arrives with money in hand to buy Tom's freedom, but he is too late. He can only watch as Tom dies a martyr's death.

Taking a boat toward freedom, Cassy and Emmeline meet George Harris's sister and travel with her to Canada, where Cassy realizes that Eliza is her long-lost daughter. The newly reunited family travels to France and decides to move to Liberia, the African nation created for former American slaves. George Shelby returns to the Kentucky farm, where, after his father's death, he sets all the slaves free in honor of Tom's memory. He urges them to think on Tom's sacrifice every time they look at his cabin and to lead a pious Christian life, just as Tom did.

3.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Write a note on slavery as a social institution.
2. Discuss the spread of slavery in America.
3. Explain the anti-slavery movement in America.
4. Draw a bio-literary sketch of Harriet Beecher Stowe
5. What are the common themes in the writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe?

3.5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Adams, Bluford (December 18, 2014). "'A Word or Two on the Other Side': Harriet Beecher Stowe in the Debate Over Women's Health". *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*. **60** (4): 593–633.
2. DiMaggio, Kenneth (2014). "Uncle Tom's Cabin: Global Best Seller, Anti-slave Narrative, Imperialist Agenda". *The Global Studies Journal*. **7** (1): 15–23.
3. Hedrick, Joan D. (1994). *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life*. Oxford University Press.
4. Kellow, Margaret M.R. (November 2013). "Women and Abolitionism in the United States: Recent Historiography" (PDF). *History Compass*. **11** (11): 1008–20.
5. Klein, Rachel N. (October 1, 2001). "Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Domestication of Free Labor Ideology". *Legacy*. **18** (2): 135–52.
6. Koester, Nancy. *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Spiritual Life* (Eerdmans, 2014). pp. xi, 371.
7. Nichols, Anne (2016). "Harriet Beecher Stowe's Woman In Sacred History: Biblical Criticism, Evolution, and the Maternal Ethic". *Religion & Literature*. **47** (3). Retrieved September 20, 2018.
8. Pelletier, Kevin (2013). "David Walker, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and the Logic of Sentimental Terror". *African American Review*. **46** (2): 255–69.
9. Blackburn, Robin, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London: Verso, 1997)
10. Davis, David Brion, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)
11. Davis, David Brion, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966)

12. Eltis, David, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Harriet Beecher Stowe's
Uncle Tom's Cabin - I

13. Kolchin, Peter, *American Slavery: 1619-1877* (London and New York: Penguin, 1995)

14. Walvin, James, *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery* (London: HarperCollins, 1992) |

15. Walvin, James, *A Short History of Slavery* (London: Penguin, 2007)



munotes.in

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE'S UNCLE TOM'S CABIN - II

Unit Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Character Sketches
- 4.2 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Major themes
- 4.3 Conclusion
- 4.4 Check Your Progress
- 4.5 Bibliography

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this Unit are to make the learners familiar with:

- Major characters of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and
- Major themes *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

4.1 UNCLE TOM'S CABIN: CHARACTER SKETCHES

4.1.1. Uncle Tom

A good and pious man, Uncle Tom is the protagonist of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Tom is initially shown as a noble, long-suffering Christian slave. Stowe intended Tom to be a "noble hero", and praiseworthy person. Throughout the book, far from allowing himself to be exploited, Tom stands up for his beliefs and is grudgingly admired even by his enemies. Even under the worst conditions, Uncle Tom always prays to God and finds a way to keep his faith. As the novel progresses, the cruel treatment that Tom suffers at the hands of Simon Legree threatens his belief in God, but Tom withstands his doubts and dies the death of a Christian martyr.

Tom is described, early in the book, as a physically powerful man, very dark-skinned, with African features. When the book opens, he is somewhere in his middle 40s — still in the prime of life. Tom, although apparently born in the United States, is said to be "truly African". Tom is "childlike" and "simple"; but it does not mean that he is intellectually slow, but that he is entirely focused, unburdened by complexities of motive or doubt, confident of the goodness of God. It is important to recognize that Tom's passivity is not a character flaw, not a failure to act when he ought to act, but really a kind of action and a species of resistance. With each of his masters, from Shelby to Legree, Tom is pitted against materialism, which is the basis of slavery. Even in its most benign form, as manifested in St. Clare, this materialism denies the spiritual, denies human love, turns every human connection or virtue into something to be used for profit — the "making" of money. Tom's passivity owes not to stupidity or to

contentment with his position, but to his deep religious values, which impel him to love everyone and selflessly endure his trials. Indeed, Tom's central characteristic in the novel is this religiosity, his strength of faith. Everywhere Tom goes in the novel, he manages to spread some of the love and goodwill of his religious beliefs, helping to alleviate the pain of slavery and enhance the hope of salvation. And while this religiosity translates into a selfless passivity on Tom's part, it also translates into a policy of warm encouragement of others' attempts at freedom. Thus, he supports Eliza, Cassy and Emmeline's escape from the Legree plantation. Moreover, while Tom may not actively seek his own freedom, he practices a kind of resistance in his passivity. When Legree orders him to beat the slave girl in Chapter XXXIII, he refuses, standing firm in his values. He will submit to being beaten for his beliefs, but he will not capitulate or run away.

Stowe's original subtitle for Uncle Tom's Cabin was "The Man Who was a Thing"; she meant it ironically, of course, because Tom refuses to be made a "thing." His inaction is this refusal; his passivity is love — Love that is the recognition of the human spirit in one human being by another human being; it is the antithesis of materialism and of slavery. Tom's courage, his strength, and his heroism are all based in the Christian love — the good — that he freely chooses throughout the book.

4.1.2. Eva

Eva's real name is Evangeline St. Clare. She is the daughter of Augustine St. Clare. Eva enters the narrative when Uncle Tom is traveling via steamship to New Orleans to be sold, and he rescues this 5 or 6 years old girl from drowning. Eva begs her father to buy Tom, and he becomes the head coachman at the St. Clare plantation. He spends most of his time with the angelic Eva. Eva constantly talks about love and forgiveness, even convincing the slave girl Topsy that she deserves love. She even touches the heart of her sour aunt Ophelia. Eventually Eva falls terminally ill. Before dying, she gives a lock of her hair to each of the slaves, telling them that they must become Christians so that they may see each other in Heaven. On her deathbed, she convinces her father to free Tom, but because of circumstances the promise never materializes.

4.1.3. Eliza

Eliza is the central figure in one of the two major plots, which she sets in motion by running away. She is the first example of a mother whose young child is sold, and she turns out — ironically — to be the only example of a child returned almost miraculously to a mother. She has what is probably the most famous scene in American literature when she leaps across the breaking ice on the river Ohio. Eliza is conventionally good and her character is drawn from life.

Remembering Eliza's childhood, Cassy tells Tom that Eliza was a timid, obedient child. Traumatized early by being sold away from her mother as a slave, then taken to Kentucky and given to young Mrs. Shelby, Eliza no doubt transferred her affection as much as possible to her new mistress and did what she could to please this very conventional and kind but passionless woman, becoming as much like Mrs. Shelby as possible.

4.1.4. Simon Legree

If Tom is the book's Christ-figure, Simon Legree is without a doubt its anti-Christ, its arch-villain, or — as Cassy describes him — its vampire. In several

ways, as a character, Legree is indeed Tom's antithesis. After he had spent some years at sea living a dissolute life, he was "almost persuaded" by his mother's prayers to reform but instead chose sin.

Whereas everyone whose life Tom touches is lifted and helped, Legree affects everyone near him for the worse. Like all of Tom's owners and like the book's other profiteers from the business of slavery, Legree is a materialist who sees human beings as nothing but material that can be used for profit. Legree not only sees clearly what he is and what he does to others but also revels in it. He may tell the men in the riverboat bar that he uses slaves up and buys new ones for economic reasons, and he may pretend that he is concerned to keep Tom more or less healthy, or at least alive, in order to realize Tom's cost to him. But in truth, what he really wants is to exercise the absolute power of life and death — and more, the power of moral destruction — over these people. What Legree wants, finally, is worship and fear; he has gone beyond capitalism and the profit motive and come out the other side.

4.1.5. Augustine St. Clare

Augustine St. Clare, Tom's third owner and the father of the novel's saintly child, is an odd and interesting character, a combination of qualities that we finally find coherent and human. He is a thoughtful spokesman against slavery, and a reluctant materialist.

St. Clare's character contains a huge contradiction, in that he is a slave owner who supports his life by the system of Slavery he rejects morally and philosophically. This is understood to be a result of a traumatic experience in St. Clare's past: His heart was broken. If he had married his true love, it is implied, he would have lived in the North and opposed slavery more truly and effectively for he grew up with the system and hated it personally. But, alas, St. Clare was cheated and betrayed; he foolishly married Marie, who could probably not breathe without the help of slaves. Thus, he has become cynical; knowing what is right but careless of the state of his own soul. His obligation to Eva keeps him from becoming entirely degenerated, and his moral despair allows him to live with the guilt of enjoying a comfortable life that is supported by owning slaves.

4.1.6. Topsy:

Topsy is a "ragamuffin" young girl in Uncle Tom's Cabin. When asked if she knows who made her, she professes ignorance of both God and a mother. She is transformed by Little Eva's love.

Like Chloe, she is a real person whom Stowe sketched expertly in a very few lines, whom we care about. Topsy is someone who has been severely battered by slavery. Topsy enters the book filthy, bruised, and scarred, dressed in a gunny sack, eight or so years old, and saved from a life as a tavern scullion by St. Clare. She is what our age would call a "survivor" — a little girl who will manage, with any luck at all, to land on her feet at all times.

Topsy is also an example of what happens when human beings are treated as commodities. Her parents were breeding stock, no more or less, and she was raised on a farm like a herd animal, not knowing who her mother was. Her only use is as physical labor. The physical abuse Topsy has endured is awful; the mental abuse — an absolute lack of expectation for her development — is worse; and worst of all is the spiritual abuse. Only Eva and Ophelia see Topsy as a child of God, and only Eva (at first) sees her as lovable. Topsy herself knows nothing

of love. She has never been loved, she has never loved, she does not love herself. This is the real crime committed against Topsy, and it is the crime that slavery commits upon humanity — not only slaves but all of those who participate in or support it: the subordination of love to profit.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's
Uncle Tom's Cabin - II

4.1.7. Miss Ophelia:

Miss Ophelia is the cousin of Augustine St. Clare. She comes from Vermont. She is pious and hard- working woman. She comes to help St. Clare manage the household. Ophelia opposes slavery in the abstract. However, she finds actual slaves somewhat distasteful and harbors considerable prejudice against them. After Eva's death, and through her relationship with Topsy, Ophelia realizes her failings and learns to see slaves as human beings. Stowe hoped that much of her Northern audience might recognize themselves in Ophelia and reconsider their views on slavery.

4.1.8. Aunt Chloe:

She is Uncle Tom's wife and the Shelbys' cook. Chloe often acts like a jovial simpleton around the Shelbys to mask her more complex feelings.

4.1.9. Arthur Shelby:

He is the owner of Uncle Tom in Kentucky. Shelby sells Tom to the cruel Mr. Haley to pay off his debts. An educated, kind, and basically good-hearted man, Shelby nonetheless tolerates and perpetuates slavery. Stowe uses him to illustrate that the immorality inherent in slavery makes villains of all its practitioners— not just the cruelest masters.

4.1.10. Emily Shelby:

Mr. Shelby's wife, Emily Shelby is a loving, Christian woman who does not believe in slavery. She uses her influence with her husband to try to help the Shelbys' slaves and is one of the novel's many morally virtuous and insightful female characters.

4.1.11. George Shelby:

Called "Mas'r George" by Uncle Tom, George is the Shelbys' good-hearted son. He loves Tom and promises to rescue him from the cruelty into which his father sold him. After Tom dies, he resolves to free all the slaves on the family farm in Kentucky. More morally committed than his father, George not only possesses a kind heart but acts on his principles.

4.1.12. George Harris:

Eliza's husband and an intellectually curious and talented mulatto, George loves his family deeply and willingly fights for his freedom. He confronts the slave hunter Tom Loker and does not hesitate to shoot him when he imperils the family.

4.2 *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*: MAJOR THEMES

4.2.1. The Evil of Slavery

Uncle Tom's Cabin was written after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which made it illegal for anyone in the United States to offer aid or

assistance to a runaway slave. The novel seeks to attack this law and the institution it protected, ceaselessly advocating the immediate emancipation of the slaves and freedom for all people. Each of Stowe's scenes, while serving to further character and plot, also serves to persuade the reader—especially the Northern reader of Stowe's time—that slavery is evil, un-Christian, and intolerable in a civil society. For most of the novel, Stowe explores the question of slavery in a fairly mild setting, in which slaves and masters have seemingly positive relationships. At the Sheldons' house, and again at the St. Clares', the slaves have kindly masters who do not abuse or mistreat them. Stowe does not offer these settings in order to show slavery's evil as conditional. She seeks to expose the vices of slavery even in its best-case scenario. Though Shelby and St. Clare possess kindness and intelligence, their ability to tolerate slavery renders them hypocritical and morally weak. Even under kind masters, slaves suffer, as we see when a financially struggling Shelby guiltily destroys Tom's family by selling Tom. A common contemporary defense of slavery claimed that the institution benefited the slaves because most masters acted in their slaves' best interest. Stowe refutes this argument with her biting portrayals, insisting that the slave's best interest can lie only in obtaining freedom.

In the final third of the book, Stowe leaves behind the pleasant surface of life at the Shelby and St. Clare houses and takes her reader into the Legree plantation, where the evil of slavery appears in its most naked and hideous form. This harsh and barbaric setting, in which slaves suffer beatings, sexual abuse, and even murder, introduces the power of shock into Stowe's argument. If slavery is wrong in the best of cases, in the worst of cases it is nightmarish and inhuman.

4.2.2. The Incompatibility of Slavery & Christian Values

Writing for a predominantly religious, Protestant audience, Stowe takes great pains to illustrate the fact that the system of slavery and the moral code of Christianity oppose each other. No Christian, she insists, should be able to tolerate slavery. Throughout the novel, the more religious a character is, the more he or she objects to slavery. Eva, the most morally perfect white character in the novel, fails to understand why anyone would see a difference between blacks and whites. In contrast, the morally revolting, non-religious Legree practices slavery almost as a policy of deliberate blasphemy and evil. Christianity, in Stowe's novel, rests on a principle of universal love. Stowe insists that if all people were to put this principle into practice, it would be impossible for one segment of humanity to oppress and enslave another. Thus, not only are Christianity and slavery incompatible, but Christianity can actually be used to fight slavery.

4.2.3. Race

It's hard to imagine a more complex topic than the theme of race in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stowe wrote this novel in order to demonstrate the moral necessity of abolition. The novel shows that slavery is utterly immoral and the domination of one group of people by another based on race is unacceptable. Blacks are depicted as having the same kind of souls and the same claims on God's love that whites have. The hero, Uncle Tom - a black slave, is nobler than any of the whites he meets.

What was revolutionary about this novel in 1852 is that it suggests Black people have substantive contributions to make to society and an equal stake in a Christian afterlife. But what's very dated is its 19th century vision of racial

identity. This novel is an interesting and important milestone in the history of race relations in America.

4.4 CONCLUSION

Thus, the central lesson Harriet Beecher Stowe wanted readers to learn after reading Uncle Tom's Cabin was that slavery was an unjust and un-Christian institution. By emphasizing the brutality of slaveholders, in particular Simon Legree, who has Tom beaten to death and regularly rapes Cassy, Stowe showcased that slavery both victimizes the enslaved and corrupts the morality of the slave owner.

Uncle Tom's Cabin also offers another lesson for readers. It is an example of the power of literature and art to shape public opinion. Published in 1852, the book both played on Northern discontent with the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and intensified this public perception of the incident. Harriet Beecher Stowe is considered by many to have written this most influential American novel in history. When she met President Lincoln in 1862, he reportedly called her "the little lady who started this big war." Indeed, Uncle Tom's Cabin was the first social protest novel published in the United States.

4.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Discuss Uncle Tom as the protagonist of Uncle Tom's Cabin
2. Describe Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe as an anti-slavery novel.
3. Discuss the theme of the evil and immorality of slavery as reflected in Uncle Tom's Cabin.
4. Discuss how Uncle Tom's Cabin is a significant novel underscoring the issue racial discrimination.
5. Do you agree that Simon Legree is indeed Tom's antithesis? Elaborate.

4.6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ammons, Elizabeth (1986). "Stowe's Dream of the Mother-Savior: Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Women Writers Before the 1920s". In Sundquist, Eric J. (ed.). *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0521302036.
- Frick, John W. (2016). *Uncle Tom's Cabin on the American Stage and Screen*. Macmillan US. ISBN 978-0230114074.
- Griffiths, Katie (2016). *Harriet Beecher Stowe: Author and Abolitionist*. Cavendish Square Publishing. ISBN 978-1502619303.
- "H. B. Stowe's Cabin in D. W. Griffith's Movie". *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture, a Multi-Media Archive*. Department of English, University of Virginia. Retrieved February 21, 2022.
- Jordan-Lake, Joy (2005). *Whitewashing Uncle Tom's Cabin: Nineteenth-Century Women Novelists Respond to Stowe*. Vanderbilt University Press. ISBN 978-0826514769.

- Lott, Eric (2013). *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*,
- "People & Events: Uncle Tom's Cabin Takes the Nation by Storm". Stephen Foster – The
- Robbins, Hollis. "Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Matter of Influence". Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Archived from the original on November 10, 2010. Retrieved December 24, 2011.
- Rothstein, Edward (October 23, 2006). "Digging Through the Literary Anthropology of Stowe's Uncle Tom". The New York Times. Retrieved March 10, 2022.
- "Slave narratives and Uncle Tom's Cabin". Africans in America. PBS. Retrieved February 16, 2007.
- Smith, Gail K. (2001). "The Sentimental Novel: The Example of Harriet Beecher Stowe". In Bauer, Dale M.; Gould, Philip (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing*. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0521669757.
- "Stand still and see the salvation". Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture, a Multi-Media Archive. Department of English, University of Virginia. Retrieved February 20, 2022.
- Stowe, Charles Edward (1911). *Harriet Beecher Stowe: The Story of Her Life*. Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Stowe, Harriet Beecher (1854). *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*. John P. Jewett.
- Stowe, Harriet Beecher (1991). *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Modern Library ed.). Vintage Books. p. 150. ISBN 978-0679602002.
- "The Classic Text: Harriett Beecher Stowe". University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Library. Archived from the original on May 16, 2008. Retrieved March 10, 2022.
- Tompkins, Jane (1985). "Sentimental Power: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Politics of Literary History". *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0195035650.
- "Uncle Tom's Cabin: A 19th-Century Bestseller". The University of Alabama. Retrieved
- Weinstein, Cindy (2004). *The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0521825924.
- Williams, Linda (2001). *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O. J. Simpson*. Princeton University Press. ISBN 978-0691058009.



Y.B. SATYANARAYANA'S MY FATHER BALIAH - I

Unit Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Y.B. Satyanarayana's *My Father Baliah*
- 5.3 Conclusion
- 5.4 Important questions

5.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this Unit are to enable the students to understand:

- The life of Y.B. Satyanarayana
 - *My Father Baliah*
-

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Y.B. Satyanarayana is a writer of a very famous autobiographical work, named *My Father Baliah*. He was a teacher by profession holding a Ph.D. degree in Chemistry. He has a vast experience in the field of teaching and administration as he worked as a principal in Hyderabad. Besides his love for teaching, Dr. Satyanarayana was also actively engaged in social activism that led to the establishment of the Centre for Dalit Studies in Hyderabad.

Y.B. Satyanarayana's *My Father Baliah* is a story of hardships of a Dalit family caught in the middle of the conservative structured society. It deals with the life experiences of three generations of Baliah whose life is changed due to the forced migration of his father, Narsiah, who had lost his land to a local feudal lord. "A book written with the desire to make known the inhumanity of untouchability and the acquiescence and internalization of this condition by the Dalits themselves, Y.B. Satyanarayana chronicles the relentless struggle of three generations of his family in this biography of his father. A narrative that derives its strength from the simplicity with which it is told, *My Father Baliah* is a story of great hardship and greater resilience."

5.2 Y.B. SATYANARAYANA'S *MY FATHER BALIAH*

Y.B. Satyanarayana's book *My Father Baliah* is a family biography of four generations. The author's grandfather left his ancestral village steeped in casteism and feudalism and took employment in the railways. This crucial event paved the way of education and prosperity in the family. The book is replete with the history of discrimination that the author's father, grandfather and his great-grandfather as well as the Dalits are subjected to. It is about the earnest effort on the part of the author and his brothers to

lead a life of dignity and self-respect with the help of their father. The book is a tribute to author's father Baliah and it is written in his memory. At the same time, it describes the plight of the Madiga caste. It also staunchly critiques the acquiescence and internalization of the degrading caste oppression and untouchability by the Dalits themselves.

Y. B. Satyanarayana's *My Father Baliah* narrates the story of four generations beginning with Narsiah, his son junior Narsiah, junior Narsiah's son Ramaswamy alias Baliah and one of Baliah's sons Y.B. Satyanarayana. The author, Dr. Y.B. Satyanarayana who hails from a poor Dalit family began teaching first at the Government Junior College and then at a private college. At the age of thirty-three, he became the principal of Dharmavant College of Science and Commerce, Hyderabad. He is currently the president of the Centre for Dalit Studies. But the book is not all about his hardship and achievements. It is about the history of the family members who overcame the oppressive caste system and feudalism by dint of their hard work and education. The word 'memoir' (from French *mémoire*: *memoria* meaning memory or reminiscence) is a collection of memories.

In *My Father Baliah*, Prof. Satyanarayana records the events in which he gets involved and 'leads the reader into the historical period.' American literary scholar and memoirist Nancy K. Miller regards that the etymological root of the word 'memoir' consists of the double act of recalling and recording: "To record means literally to call to mind, to call up from the heart. At the same time, record means to set down in writing, to make official. What resides in the province of the heart is also what is exhibited in the public space of the world".

Here Y. B. Satyanarayana has closely observed significant historical events and interpreted those events in the lives of his family members in particular and his community in general. An ardent follower of Dr. Ambedkar's teachings, he began to take an avid interest in Dalit literature and history in the early 1990s, and started studying the progress of Dalits in various fields. *My Father Baliah* is an odyssey of four generations of a dalit family in Andhra Pradesh from despair to success, from suffering to prosperity, from "illiteracy to the highest levels of education that the modern system of education offers; from a hand-to-mouth existence to a life that allows for deep reflection and self-development." The book is a detailed insight into the world of untouchables and their ways of living and most importantly how they are marginalized from the society. Through this story, the author documents the inhuman cruelty and nonchalant attitude of the other caste towards the untouchables, especially towards the Madiga caste, the brutality and inhumanity of the caste system on the repressed and the poorer section and also the internalization of this condition among the untouchables themselves.

During the late nineteenth century the author's great-grandfather, the senior Narsiah, a Madiga, received a huge tract of land gifted by the Nizam of the Deccan. A chamar by caste, he was gifted fifty acres of agricultural land for making a pair of shoes made from the hide of a young calf for the Nizam. However, he could not retain the land owing to the

insurmountable pressure from the landowners. The local Dora only permitted Narsiah to occupy two acres. However, Narsiah is happy with his lot as he succeeded to evade the wrath of the landlord. This situation is not uncommon in lives of Dalits.

Narsiah's main concern was for his son Ramaswamy who lost his mother at such a tender age. Narsiah's migration from Vangapalli, in the Karimnagar district of Telangana, his native village proved to be a watershed moment for the Yelukati family. This incident gave rise to a life of dignity with education and self-respect instead of a life of utmost suffering, humiliation and bonded labour. With the help of his maternal uncles, junior Narsiah got a job in the railways. Here the author gave a detailed picture of the world of gangman and pointsman and the heavy, arduous menial jobs that they have to execute to earn their living. He married for the second time on the insistence of his maternal uncles. Ramaswamy's plight became worse. He had to bear brunt of his stepmother's anger though he was very close to his brother and sister, Yelliah and Pentamma. He was also pained to see his father's helplessness and was determined to find a job. Ramaswamy was appointed as a 'box man' at the Bellampalli railway station. Soon he got married to Narsamma. In a few days he was promoted to the post of pointsman. Narsiah was very proud of his son Ramaswamy who devoted his leisure time in reading. However, Ramaswamy was implicated in a case of theft in Secunderabad. One of his friends was caught red-handed while stealing a bottle of liquor from a carton in a wagon. As Ramaswamy was standing by his side, he too was interrogated and was dismissed from service. Seeing his distress, Narsiah implored the higher officials to reinstate his son into the service. Narsiah who had a good reputation in the railway office was able to secure the job for his son with one condition. The assistant personal officer Mr. Franklin proposed that the name Ramaswamy should be changed in order to suppress the incident. Ramaswamy took a new name Baliah Ankus. Thus Ramaswamy came to be known as Baliah and got a new lease of life. He was resolved to do his duty with dedication and not to cause any trouble to his father anymore.

5.3 CONCLUSION

It can be seen that Y.B. Satyanarayana has attempted to realistically present a Dalit family of Baliah, who goes on to suffer in Indian hierarchical social structure. The sufferings of the family are the result initially of the family's loss of land in its ancestral village and then due to the forced migration to a new land.

5.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Discuss Y.B. Satyanarayana as a Dalit writer.
2. What do you understand about the life of Baliah?
3. Discuss Satyanarayana's skill of story-telling.



Y.B. SATYANARAYANA'S *MY FATHER* *BALIAH* - II

Unit Structure

- 6.0 Objective
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Baliah: A Changed Man
- 6.3 The Indian Railways
- 6.4 Conclusion
- 6.5 Check Your Progress
- 6.6 Bibliography

6.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this Unit is to lead the learners towards the remaining part of the book, *My Father Baliah*, wherein the writer has emphasized the importance of education in one's life.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As Ramaswamy was renamed as Baliah after that unfortunate incident, he decided to lead a more controlled and disciplined life.

6.2 BALIAH: A CHANGED MAN

Baliah had realised the importance of education and insisted that his children should be educated in order to get job in the railways to put an end to all suffering. Baliah's world revolved round railways. He had the dream of making his children not collectors or bureaucrats but railway officers and stationmasters. Baliah left no stone unturned to get his children educated. He inculcated the same passion in his children and most of his children too imbibed the urge of their father to be educated. They all had a secured childhood though the living condition was appalling. They had to live in a small railway quarter. The ambience was not conducive to education or to acquire knowledge through any media. For ages the Dalits have been deprived of education which is the main reason behind their never-ending agony and plight. Although Baliah learned to read and write a little, his sons are the real first-generation learners in his family. Baliah was determined to help his sons to pursue higher studies at any cost. Along with Baliah his elder son Balraj ensured that the children get quality education. The author Y.B. Satyanarayana, his elder brother Abbasayulu, Narsimlu and Anjiah realized and fulfilled the dreams of their father and

their brother Balraj. Despite several odds and adversities, the author Y.B. Satyanarayana pursued higher studies and became a professor, obtained a Ph.D. and became the Principal of a college, a post he held until his retirement. As he knew the pain of discrimination against the Dalits, he founded a voluntary organisation to lend a helping hand to Dalits.

Y.B. Satyanarayana's My
Father Baliah - II

6.3 THE INDIAN RAILWAYS

My Father Baliah inspires one to achieve the desired goal overcoming difficulties of all sorts. According to Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English, “[Memoir] usually relates to a certain period in a life, which often coincides with an interesting time in history, a time often of general change” (1009). Here the memoirist Prof. Satyanarayana provided the description of one of the most important events in Indian history –inauguration of Railways. Railways were laid on a large scale during the late nineteenth century. When the first railway train opened to the public, it was a red-letter day in Indian history: on 16 April 1853 at 3.30 p.m., a train with fourteen carriages carrying 400 passengers steamed out of Bombay station to a twenty-one-gun salute and reached Thane station at 4.30 p.m., covering a stretch of twenty-one miles.

This was the beginning of the era of the railways. The Great Indian Peninsula Railway Company, as it was then called, has now turned into the Indian Railways, the world's largest railway network. The British had three excellent reasons for establishing a large railway network: to develop trade and commerce, to establish a quick and efficient administrative network, and to quickly and efficiently quell any threat to their colony from their European neighbours and co-colonizers. (19) Y.B. Satyanarayana has chronicled the hardships and struggle of his family- the Yelukatis. He introduced the world of gangmen and pointsmen, hitherto unknown to us. The gangsmen and the pointsman are mostly from Dalit community as they had to do arduous and odd jobs considered unsuitable for the upper caste people. “Much manual labour was required to lay the railway tracks through the length and breadth of the country, through thick forests and high mountains, and over surging rivers” (20). Untouchables were recruited in such hazardous jobs because “barring a few sudras, no other ‘touchable’ was ready to undertake them” (20).

These workers were called gangmen. Untouchable workers were forced to carry heavy rails on their shoulders through different terrain. Sometimes they became prey to wild animals or poisonous snakes. Fatal accidents were common. When a train hit a cow, the act of distribution of its meat by skinning the dead animal usually fell upon a madiga pointsman. Nevertheless, this system enabled the untouchables to gain access to railway jobs which in turn gave them entry into the railway quarters. They started living alongside the sudras in the same areas, sometimes even the same buildings. The Sudras still tried to maintain untouchability, though. As the author pointed out, “It was a strange situation: untouchables, who were outcasts and segregated in every village, were suddenly living in the same quarters as Sudras!” (20)

The environment had changed tremendously. The untouchables were given the opportunity to be educated and they learned many new things. The author has described that railways, in its nascent stage required people in large number to operate the 'shunting' process- "the formation of trains by coupling coaches to the engines when required, and detaching them when no longer necessary" (20). A person working this risky and hazardous job is called a 'pointsman.' As Prof. Satyanarayana has put in, "He [a pointsman] had to run between the rails, lift the heavy metal chain (weighing more than 100 kilograms) of a stationary bogie, and couple it with the hook of a bogie approaching slowly from the opposite direction" (21).

This uphill task often proved dangerous and caused accidents if the pointsman slipped while running on the tracks or happened to come under the wheels of the moving bogies. In fact, Baliah met with one such accident in Secunderabad. The author described other important happenings associated with railways which gave us valuable information of that age. In 1957 the railways stopped issuing rations and also the supply of subsidized groceries to railway staff. The enormous expansion of the railways and the growth in the number of employees led to this decision on the part of the railways. As a result, that the employees suffered a sudden, heavy blow, and the effect was felt in Baliah's family too (115). In spite of all these downsides, working in the railways provided the family with the opportunity to come out of the clutches of casteism. As K. Srilata has pointed out, the family is one of many dalit beneficiaries of the British railway system. The railways represent a relatively caste-free space, a space which holds out the possibility of growth. In the railway colony, caste is markedly less-pronounced even though it does not entirely disappear. For one thing, the employees live side by side- the sudras beside the untouchables-something that would be unthinkable in the village. The colony also has schools for the children of the employees. In fact, Dr. Satyanarayana has stated in the preface, "Three generations of my family have worked in the railways and lived in railway quarters. I often wonder where my family would have been had my grandfather not migrated from his village since, among Dalits, progress is visible mostly in the families of those whose forefathers had secured jobs under British India". (xx) American writer and literary critic, William Zinsser pointed out that memoir focuses "on a time in the writer's life that was unusually vivid, such as childhood or adolescence, or that was framed by war or travel or public service or some other special circumstances." (15) Here the writer reconstitutes himself in recalling, remembering and reminiscing about the cities and towns he had lived in childhood and adolescent period. Their life was beset with many mishaps and tragedies like the death of Shama, the infant girl of the family and the suspicious disappearance of Yadagiri, one of the author's brothers (160). The family was saddened by the demise of the author's grandfather: Life had come to an end for the untouchable from Vangapalli who had not turned back after burying his wife in the village had now bid his final farewell. Had he not joined the railways, the history of their family would have been different. His demise was painful to us. (160) The author, Y.B. Satyanarayana, his

father Baliah time and again reiterated the unprecedented decision on the part of junior Narsiah, the author's grandfather. After his retirement Baliah had gone to Vangapalli to reclaim the inherited land which his father had left behind. He wanted to take up agriculture with the purpose of earning some money. He filed a litigation case against those who had occupied the land. Nonetheless all his attempts were thwarted and this devastated him. However, the book is not all about sufferings and struggle. It also upholds the bright side of the world of the railway employees. Had my father not felt the importance of education, had he not been in the railways, we would probably not have seen the days and good fortune that we did. His determination was responsible for us getting an education despite our poverty and social maladies like segregation and untouchability that were quite prevalent in that era. (xxi) The presence of caste oppression in towns was subdued to a certain extent. Education and employment helped them to get liberty from the clutches of feudalism and caste discrimination. The family had moments of joy and celebration at the success of children. The day the three brothers, Satyanarayana, Narsimlu and Anjiah became graduates was a memorable day for the family. Baliah, author's father took minute care to the overall wellbeing of the family members. He used to take the family to pilgrimages during the vacations to relieve them from the drudgeries of life. Once he took them to Rishikesh, a pilgrim town in north India. The beautiful memories of the trip- the silly argument among the children to sit by the window in the train, the munching of snacks and meals during train journey, first encounter with the dark tunnel, sightseeing in Delhi by Tonga, visiting temples in Rishikesh left an indelible impression in the author's mind. Again, Baliah took his sons to Bombay once where Abbasayulu worked and also to Rameshwaram, a pilgrim centre in the southernmost part of the country.

My Father Baliah was published in 2011. In the book release function, the chief guest and retired IAS officer K.R. Venugopal pointed out, "I look upon it as a source book for the implementation of Right to Education."² He called this book an 'epic story of a Dalit family.' In Rajnikant's movie Kabali, he is seen going through this highly inspirational book. Baliah and his children retained their self-esteem through all their lives. They did not budge an inch from their stand when it comes to their self-respect. All along his service period Baliah was known for his strength of character, integrity and sincerity and also for his intolerance of officials who ill-treated the subordinate staff (77). He vehemently objected to officials who addressed their subordinates with contempt and with derogatory terms. For this reason, he was transferred many a time. But Baliah was determined to preserve his self-respect. Baliah also instilled in his children the importance to lead a life of self-respect. To meet the ever increasing expenses of his school-going children, Baliah even worked as a coolie and his wife, the author's mother, Narsamma also worked in the fields to help raise the money. Their mother, in fact, played an important role in educating her children "toiling her life away working as an agricultural labourer in the fields" (163). The author earnestly desired to give his parents a comfortable life and his wish came true by dint of his education and employment. Nothing could deter Satyanarayana and his brothers

from achieving the desired goal as they had the patience, perseverance, dedication and determination to come out of the destructive influence of caste, untouchability and poverty. The author mentions that there was a tremendous change in their lifestyle owing to education. They in every respect looked similar to people from the upper castes because of their attire and the way they spoke. All these changes were due to education among the Dalit families (186). However, the Dalits cannot evade the caste question altogether. Ramaswamy alias Baliah, unlike his Sudra colleagues, was not allowed to enter the houses of the upper-caste guards. He had to endure the arbitrary behaviour of the wives of railway officials (40). The presence of caste can be felt sometimes when the landlords became aware of the caste of the tenants and compelled them to vacate the house as soon as possible. This created a tremendous problem for the author's family too. As S.R. Sankaran had stated, "the caste system and its attendant social stigma followed a Dalit everywhere-even into the city, necessitating concealment of caste while studying, renting out a house, or even engaged in the office" (xvi). Dalit writer and literary critic Omprakash Valmiki rightly asserts in his book *Joothan*, "When caste is the basis of respect and merit, important for social superiority, this battle can't be won in a day. We need an ongoing struggle, a consciousness that brings revolutionary change both in the outside world and in our hearts, a consciousness that leads the process of social change." (Valmiki 132) The book is also a tribute to Dr. Y.B. Abbasayulu, the author's brother. In the mid 1970s, Abbasayulu who was the first doctorate and the first professor in their family went to Australia to present a paper at an international seminar, and their family was ecstatic. Abbasayulu came to the aid of his brothers whenever they were in trouble. The sacrifice of Balraj is also worth remembering. Though he took job in the railways at the age of eighteen, he took utmost care in the education of his brothers. The author expresses his heartfelt gratitude to the family members, thus paying tribute to his grandfather Narsiah, his father Ramaswamy alias Baliah, his mother Narsamma, and his brothers Balraj and Abbasayulu, his elder sister Bachamma who at one point of time started working in the paddy field along with her mother Narsamma to support her family. She took care of the household chores and even supervised the education of her brothers. In the front cover of *My Father Baliah* Gita Ramaswamy said, "Quietly brave, immensely enlightening-the colours of Satyanarayana's memories break the boundaries of Dalit narrative." The author wrote this memoir about his father and his family in particular and about the Dalits in general to protect the history of the marginalized people of our country and their inimitable sacrifice. He has also an agenda to disseminate this history among the future generations "who should know about our past in order to create a better future" (xxii). As the author himself said in the Preface, "At another level, this is the story of a community. It has been my lasting desire to show the present Dalit generation- and more so the future generations- how Dalits struggled" (xx). As William Zinsser has pointed out, "Memoir is how we try to make sense of who we are, who we once were, and what values and heritage shaped us. If a writer seriously embarks on that quest, readers will be nourished by the journey, bringing

along many associations with quests of their own.” (6) Dr. Y.B. Satyanarayana’s memoir leads us to venture into the quest of identity.

Y.B. Satyanarayana’s My
Father Baliah - II

6.4 CONCLUSION

Thus, Satyanarayana’s autobiographical work, *My Father Baliah*, throws ample light on the lives of Dalits and attempts to make the world aware of the sufferings and unending humiliation of Dalits in hierarchical Indian society. It makes the readers to think of this social evil on a serious note and pushes them to change their attitude towards Dalits.

6.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Draw the character sketch of Baliah.
2. Discuss the caste-based exploitation mentioned in *My Father Baliah*.
3. Bring out the role of education in the life of Dalits with reference to *My Father Baliah*.

6.6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ambedkar, Bhimrao Ramji. “The Untouchables Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables.” Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, vol.7. Ed. Vasant Moon. Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1990. pp. 233-382.
- Ambedkar, Bhimrao Ramji. Waiting for a Visa. In Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol. 12. Ed. Vasant Moon. Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1993. pp. 661-691
- Anand, Mulk Raj and Eleanor Zelliot, eds. An Anthology of Dalit Literature. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing, 1992.
- Brueck, Laura. “Bending Biography: The Creative Intrusions of ‘Real Lives’ in Dalit Fiction.” *Biography* 40.1 (Winter 2017): 77-92.
- Charsely, Simon R. Caste, Cultural Resources and Social Mobility. In *Challenging Untouchability. Dalit initiative and experience from Karnataka*, ed. Simon R. Charsley & G.K. Karanth. New Delhi: Sage, 1998.
- Chinna Rao, Y. Dalit Movement in Andhra Pradesh: A Historical Outline of a Hundred Years. *Indian Historical Review* 42.1 (2015): 113–139.
- Couser, G. Thomas. “Signifying Selves: Disability and Life Writing.” Academia.edu. n.d.
www.academia.edu/9137321/Signifying_Selves_Disability_Life_Writing. Accessed 10 May 2017.

- Dangle, Arjun, ed. *Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature*. Hyderabad. Orient Longman, 1992.
- Gidla, Sujatha. *Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017.
- Jadhav, Narendra. *Outcaste: A Memoir*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003.
- Jangam, Chinnaiah. *Dalits and the Making of Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2017.
- Limbale, Sharankumar. *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies and Considerations*. Trans. by Alok Mukherjee. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004.
- Nambissan, Geetha B. *Equity in Education? Schooling of Dalit Children in India*. *Economic and Political Weekly* 31.16/17 (1996)
- Omvedt, Gail. *Dalits and Democratic Revolution: Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India*. New Delhi: Sage, 1994.
- Satyanarayana, Y.B. *My Father Baliah*. Harper Collins, 2011.
- Satyanarayana, K and Susie Tharu, eds. *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India. Dossier I: Tamil and Malayalam*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2011.
- Satyanarayana, K. "Dalit Configuration of Caste: Representation, Identity and Caste." *Critical Quarterly* 56.3 (2014)
- Shah, Ghanshyam, ed. *Dalit Identity and Politics: Cultural Subordination and the Dalit Challenge*. Volume 2. New Delhi: Sage, 2001
- Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. 2nd ed., U of Minnesota P, 2010.
- Valmiki, Omprakash. *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*. Trans. Arun Prabha Mukherjee. Samya, 2003.
- Venkat Swamy, P. R. *Our Struggle for Emancipation: The Dalit Movement in Hyderabad State, 1906-1953*. Hyderabad: Ambedkar People Trust, 1953.
- Zinsser, William, editor. *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*. Mariner Books, 1998.



POETRY - I

Unit Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Introduction to Kamala Das
- 7.3 The Looking Glass
- 7.4 Forest Fire
- 7.5 Conclusion
- 7.6 Check Your Progress
- 7.7 Bibliography

7.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this Unit is to make the students familiar with:

- Kamala Das as a Poetess
- Kamala Das's 'The Looking Glass'
- Kamala Das's 'Forest Fire'

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The poetess Kamala Das is known to her readers as one of the most outspoken persons in literary world in India. She has influenced on many people minds who are interested in literary expression. Kamala Das's poetry is more often the expression of her personal feelings and ideas about which she feels strongly.

7.2 INTRODUCTION TO KAMALA DAS

In the history of Indian literature, the name and frame of Kamla Das is almost like that of Sylvia Plath in world literature. Kamala Das, born on March 31st 1934 in Kerala, is considered as one of the most powerful poets of confessional writing who has inspired women to struggle against the domestic and sexual exploitation and related matters before and after marriage in Indian society. In that Das follows the path of American poetry but discusses Indian subjects related to women.

Kamla Suraiya, popularly known by her one time pen name, Madhavi Kutti and nowadays by her married name, Kamla Das. She had established

herself as a popular Malayalam and English writer from Kerala. In India she is mostly famous for her poems which shows women's issues child care and Indian politics. 10 in her short stories poetries and essays wrote genius subjects of women in a male dominated society.

Kamla Das first book of poet's summer in Kolkata had attracted Indian readers and initiated confessional mode in Indian context at the age of 42 has published during autobiography my story which was originally written in Malayalam. Letter on sea herself translated it into English.

As far as poems are considered an introduction hot moon in Malabar are considered remarkable 1. Das is known for herbal and Frank expressions with the help of her poems she is covering drivers range of subjects related to women's existence. Das road in English that give her international recognition like American confessional poets emotional and sexual problems which are arriving from her unsatisfied relationships only shows the problem of Indian women who had been trapped into Indian customs and traditions.

7.3 THE LOOKING GLASS: THE POEM

Getting a man to love you is easy
Only be honest about your wants as
Woman. Stand nude before the glass with him
So that he sees himself the stronger one
And believes it so, and you so much more
Softer, younger, lovelier. Admit your
Admiration. Notice the perfection
Of his limbs, his eyes reddening under
The shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,
Dropping towels, and the jerky way he
Urinates. All the fond details that make
Him male and your only man. Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers. Oh yes, getting
A man to love is easy, but living

Without him afterwards may have to be
 Faced. A living without life when you move
 Around, meeting strangers, with your eyes that
 Gave up their search, with ears that hear only
 His last voice calling out your name and your
 Body which once under his touch had gleamed
 Like burnished brass, now drab and destitute.

7.3 ANALYSIS OF 'THE LOOKING GLASS'

In the poem, 'The Looking Glass', Kamla Das aims at making the world aware of the naked reality of male dominated society. With the help of this poem, she brings out the contrast between men's and women's body. Here she says that it is quite easy for woman together man but the woman must be honest about her womanly needs.

Kamla Das gives suggestions to women about how to get the maximum possible pleasure out of her sexual experience. A woman should make no secret of her sexual requirements when she is going to have sexual intercourse with the man. A woman should not feel shy about admiring a man's body. She should stand nude in front of the mirror and ask her partner also to stand naked by her side so that they can enjoy his feelings of physical superiority over her by virtue of his bodily strength. This will make the man to feel stronger while on the other hand the woman will be softer, younger and lovelier.

These lines are nickel in nature with the help of that she suggests petrol car mentality of man in judging women's physical qualities. The soft, young and lovely body of the women is what makes the man believe that he is strong. It suggests that women should enjoy a feeling of her own superiority on him because her body is softer and lovelier than her partner. She also suggests that to know the perfection of man's limbs, his eyes which are rebelling when the water enters his eyes, she should not the Simon in which she walks upon the bathroom floor dropping of towels, the jerky way in which he urinates. All these details about the man's body and his movements should actually please woman and make her think that this particular man is the only one who can satisfy her fully and in every way when they lie together in the bed.

Then the poet again continues to suggest woman that they need to accept a man's admiration and praise of her body. They should give her lover everything that she is capable of giving to a lover in bed. She should make it possible for the man to smell her long hair, the sweat between her breasts, the warm shock of her menstrual blood. She should also make him conscious of her womanly hungers. There is nothing difficult in doing all this.

to do all these things if she does her sinus and immediately and behaves only in the matter reflects a kind of dependency of women in order to satisfy her body hungers.

At the end, Kamala Das also says that the women should gift her womanly qualities to the man. With the help of these lines Kamla Das considers that sexual exploitation of women takes place at home. The poet points out that real difficulty for man lies in the submission of our body to her lover with whom she had a most pleasurable experience of sexual act.

However, she also feels loneliness when she loses her lover and never comes back she feels that her life is meaningless and then her eyes would keep search for her defaulter lover that leads to the emotional and psychological loss of her.

Living without him afterwards may have to be face here she also says that dependency of women leads to the misery the women becomes a walking Cops that her body which is used to get pleasure has to ultimately suffer.

The looking glass is one of the remarkable confessional poems that boldly discusses man-woman relationship, love and lust and patriarchy. With the help of the poem, she gives an ironic suggestion about the needs of men's ego. She has to allow him to feel he is superior. The woman is quite cervical that exposes brilliantly the sexual relationships.

Thus, the poem 'The Looking Glass' can be read as a poem that makes the readers aware of the idea of gender and female sexuality. Kamala Das has commented on the patriarchal mindsets of the society that doesn't allow women to express their sexual desires by advising women to come ahead and speak openly about their bodily needs which are often suppressed. So if women want to have gender equality and challenge patriarchy, they have to voice their emotions and thoughts freely.

7.4 'FOREST FIRE': THE POEM

Forest fire

Of late I have begun to feel a hunger

To take in with greed, like a forest fire that

Consumes and with each killing gains a wilder,

Brighter charm, all that comes my way. Bald child in

Open pram, you think I only look, and you

Too, slim lovers behind the tree and you, old

Man with paper in your hand and sunlight in

Your hair... My eyes lick at you like flames, my nerves

Consume; and, when I finish with you, in the

Pram, near the tree and, on the park bench, I spit
 Out small heaps of ash, nothing else. But in me
 The sights and smells and sounds shall thrive and go on
 And on and on. In me shall sleep the baby
 That sat in prams and sleep and wake and smile its
 Toothless smile. In me shall walk the lovers hand
 In hand and in me, where else, the old shall sit
 And feel the touch of sun. In me, the street-lamps
 Shall glimmer, the cabaret girls cavort, the
 Wedding drums resound, the eunuchs swirl coloured
 Skirts and sing sad songs of love, the wounded moan,
 And in me the dying mother with hopeful
 Eyes shall gaze around, seeking her child, now grown
 And gone away to other towns, other arms.”

7.5 ANALYSIS OF ‘FOREST FIRE’

The poem, ‘Forest Fire’, speaks about the poet's appetite for sensory input and for taking in, soaking up, all of the experiences and images around her. With wild abandon she 'eats' them and consumes them until they become a part of her. Her hunger and desire to write, create a longing like a fire inside of her. Later, she will take all of these experiences and write something and 'give birth' to it, but the child will be in other arms in many other towns. So, the symbolism is the creative 'fire' as the poet's inspiration and desire to create, and the created work as a child.

Kamla Das has achieved phenomenal status for her poetic contribution in the history of Indian poetry dance with the help of it establishes herself as voice of protest women against the patriarchal the present poem forest fire invents conventional forces on the process of poetic creation and the cell in addition to that insert it also project on universal appeal of Kamla Das that shows her criticism of patriarchy does in her most of the poems shows the theme of love and lust hunger

But the present poem for a fire is complex in nature which describe this human conscious which she regards originates from a poetic self. Does shows Harsh criticism of man woman relationship in Indian context whereby she criticizes principles of patriarchy in the poem forest fire is used as a symbol that kanjoos whatever comes that stands for politic cell that also consumes whatever comes before as a result she achieves brighter like forest fire point swallows that happens around her.

Offset I have begin to feel a hunger to take in with greed like a forest fire that consumes.

There is a suggestion that Kamla Das wants to give to the women that they must not give the fear of death in their day to day life for a fire throws away all the restrictions which were imposed by patriarchy with the help of her own experience that covers exploitative nature of male dominated society that gives injustice women and various platforms. Rahman rightly says that the prime target of Kamla Das is to project human consciousness.

In the poem that says that she can John's like a forest fire solo all human experience out of them poetic creation happens. Kamla Das regards it as an inspiration for her poems.

Forest fire fine poem of Kamla Das included in the political election summer in Kolkata in this particular poem Das did not use confessional mode.

Devendra Kohli almost supports to Kamla Das and he says

Kamla Das' involvement is politically more appealing as well as more convincing when she is liberating herself from her own sufferings.

Celebrates herself by involving herself into the process of poetic creation in the forest fire does demonstrates her versatility as a poet and holds that her experience is around her are responsible in the creation of poetry in Indian context women find herself trapped in the materials and life and almost allows male to dominate. Das through the poem find a way to enjoy the life rather than sufferings that has no fear now offer challenges which makes waste of the women sub miss you and subservient secondary.

The element of protest is quite identical explicit in the present poem that gives her an identity a protest poet does dedicated whole life to protest against this humiliating relationships the present poem is full of use of images and symbols that ads into the regionals of the poem that forest fire is an autobiography does not exactly to be categorised as confessional poem nowhere in the poem she makes reference to her private self represents women cell that display her protest against male domination or patriarchy.

Summary:

The poetess says that in the recent times she has started to experience an extreme hunger and wants to take in everything that she sees greedily. She compares her hunger to the forest fire and draws a similarity between her hunger and the forest fire throughout the poem. She says the forest fire consumes everything on the way and as it consumes, it becomes brighter and burns with more charm. The fire after consuming so many things on the way is not satisfied and does not stop; it continues to grow more wildly and with more force. The forest fire creates a sense of fear, awe and fascination in anyone who sees it. In the same way, the poetess' hunger to take in everything on the way she sees does not stop after she has seen and

observed things to her fill. Her eagerness to see more things, observe them and take inside her mind's eye keeps growing and increasing in its intensity. She is not satisfied with just looking at things on her way. She wants to observe them minutely, take in each and every feature and retain it both alive and fresh in her memory. As a poetess and creative writer, all her senses are open to experience the world around and she is not satisfied with the experiences she gets and wants more and more of it. As a woman in a male dominated society, she does not often get chances to go out of the confines of her house and experience the outside world. As a result, whenever she finds an opportunity, she tries to observe as many and as much things around her and tries her keep them in her memory. Those memories become her companions during her loneliness in the confines of her house and also become the inspiration for her poetry.

The poetess is in a park and she is eager to see as many people and as many things as possible and keep them in her memory. The baby in the pram with its bald head and toothless smile, the lovers who hold hands and hide behind the trees to talk in secrecy and the old man with sunlight falling on his head sitting in the bark bench and reading a newspaper attract her attention. She looks at all three of the simultaneously and tries to etch them deep into her memory. She says she does not just look at them but trying to lick them up with her eyes and take them inside her mind. She compares her intense gaze on them to the flames of the forest fire that licks and consumes things on the way. Just like the forest fire leaves out the useless and waste ashes as it passes by, the poetess too leaves behind very few things as waste or unnecessary in the course of her intense observation. She goes on to say that she has taken in not only the sights she has seen but has also retained the sounds and smells related to the sights. The baby continues to laugh, smile and sleep inside her mind. In the same way, the lovers and old man continue to carry on with their work and all exist with their own individuality within the mind of the poetess. As the poet feels happy that she is able to recall and retain everything in mind, she also recalls and visualize whatever she has seen long back.

In the park, she has observed the life during day time. and in recalling, she recalls the life she has seen during night times. She could see the lights glimmering and not burning brightly; the sounds of the wedding drums and songs can be heard. The cabaret girls are dancing in an enticing manner showing of their sexuality and the eunuchs too dance with their colourful skirts swirling around them. There seems to be so much fun and happiness around but as the poetess recalls the songs and the moans made by these cabaret girls and eunuchs, she could feel that there is so much pain and suffering hidden in them.

When the poetess relives the memories of the unsaid pain and suffering of the cabaret girls and eunuchs she had listened to, she remembers her own pain. As a woman, she was not allowed to voice out her opinions, thoughts, pains and sufferings. Even if she tries to do it, she is not allowed and is highly criticized by the people around her if she disobeys them. By this, the poetess refers to the way her works were denounced and criticized

in her own country whereas they have been given the due credit and appreciation in the world outside. She compares herself to a dying mother who longs to see her child appreciated and able to do so but at least feeling happy that the child is appreciated and well cared for in the distant land. Here, the poetess compares the creative writer and her work of creation to the mother and her child. The poetess also brings in the idea that the process of creating a piece of work is equal to the process of nourishing a child inside the womb and giving birth to it in a safe manner

7.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Write a note of Kamala Das.
2. Critically appreciate Kamala Das's poem 'The Looking Glass'
3. Comment on the central idea of Kamala Das's poem 'Forest Fire'.

7.7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Manohar, D. Murali. Kamala Das: Treatment of Love in Her Poetry. Indear Kumar Gulbarga: JIWE, 1999.
2. "Cheated and Exploited: Women in Kamala Das's Short Stories", In Mohan G Ramanan and P. Sailaja (eds.). *English and the Indian Short Story*. New Delhi: Orient Longman (2000). 117–123
3. "Man-Woman Relationship with Respect to the Treatment of Love in Kamala Das' Poetry". *Contemporary Literary Criticism* Vol. 191. Ed. Tom Burns and Jeffrey W. Hunter. Detroit: Thomson-Gale, 2004. 44–60.
4. "Individuality in Kamala Das and in Her Poetry". *English Poetry in India: A Secular Viewpoint*. Eds. PCK Prem and D.C. Chambial. Jaipur: Aavishkar, 2011. 65–73.
5. "Meet the Writer: Kamala Das", *POETCRIT* XVI: 1 (January 2003): 83–98.



POETRY - II

Unit Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Meena Kandasamy and her Poems
- 8.3 Jyoti Lanjewar and her Poems
- 8.4 Conclusion
- 8.5 Check Your Progress
- 8.6 Bibliography

8.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this Unit is to introduce the learners to:

- Meena Kandasamy and her poems
- Jyoti Lanjewar and her poems

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Meena Kandasamy and Jyoti Lanjewar are the post-modernist poets writing on the common issues that are closely related with them and their lives. Both of them write about Dalits and dalit experiences with Dalit consciousness that has enabled them to stand apart from their contemporary poets and created a place in the history of Indian literature.

8.2 MEENA KANDASAMY AND HER POEMS

Meena Kandasamy is one of the famous Indian poets, fiction writer, translator, an activist from Tamil Nadu.

She was born in 1984. Meena is known as one of the young poets from Tamil Nadu. Her work mostly centres on feminism and anti-caste movement in Indian context. As a poet, Kandasamy has published two collections of poetry namely 'Touch and Militancy'. Kandasamy because of her collections received great attention and approved from readers. In 2002 she has edited a magazine 'Dalit'.

She had associated herself with International Institutes like University of Kent. She also takes interest in public speeches related to controversy political issues namely caste, corruption, violence and women's rights.

She is known for her writing that has affected social medias like Facebook and Twitter.

She was born to Tamil parents. By profession they were University Professors. She has completed her schooling from Chennai itself. In the later part of her life she has completed her Ph.D in socio-linguistics from Anna University, Chennai. She also engages herself in translating the books of Dalit writers. As a writer, primarily she has focused on caste, issues of feminism and individual identity. She was greatly influenced by the Indian identity. She was greatly influenced by the Indian poetic tradition of Dalit writing. her two poetic collections are available in different languages.

Her poetry is most of the time considered for the projection of female self and struggle.

“ My poetry is in tears. My poetry screams in anger... My poetry smells of blood. My poetry salutes sacrifice. My poetry speaks like my people.”

Meena Kandasamy's works have been published in various anthologies like the Anthology of Contemporary Indian Poetry, 'The Little Magazine'. She has been invited as a great speaker in India and in foreign universities. Kandasamy with the help of her literary exercises brought a revolutionary change in the arena of dalit writing.

8.2.1 ADWAITA: THE ULTIMATE QUESTION

Non Dualism
Atman Self
Brahman God
Are Equal
And Same.
So I
Untouchable Outcast
Am God.
Will You
Ever Agree?
No Matter
What You
Preach Answer
Me. Through
Your Saints.
One More
Final Question
Can My
Untouchable Atman
And Your
Brahmin Atman
Ever Be
One
?

8.2.1.1 Analysis of 'ADWAITA: THE ULTIMATE QUESTION'

Poetry -II

Meena Kandasamy in the present poem uncovers social structure that even divides Gods and beliefs. Being a social activist, she shows her protest against the basic foundations of religion. She uncovers the basic foundation of Hinduism that separates the Indians from unity or harmony. The poet is having an ultimate question about the existence of God. As a human being she asks questions to Hindu scriptures (Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Vedas). Meena Kandasamy being a marginalised poet asking questions to Hindus who strongly believe in Hinduism and its very foundation of it. She believes in humanity, one soil and evil practices in India)

“Non dualism

Brahman God

Are equal and same

So I ---“

Here she expects that there must be one soul and why there is separation has been made on the basis of religious practices. In the present poem her purpose is very clear to show her protest against religious foundations that Denise the existence of dalits or marginalized.

THEMES

Adwaita: The Ultimate Question" is a poem written by Meena Kandasamy that speaks to the themes of spirituality, mortality, and the search for transcendence. The poem is named after Adwaita, the giant tortoise that was believed to have lived for more than 250 years in the Alipore Zoo in Kolkata, India.

The poem uses Adwaita as a symbol of the human quest for immortality and spiritual transcendence. The speaker reflects on the tortoise's long life and wonders whether it has found a way to transcend the limitations of mortality.

The poem then moves on to explore questions of spirituality and the search for transcendence. The speaker asks whether it is possible to find meaning and purpose in life beyond the physical realm, and whether there is a way to transcend the limitations of the human condition.

Throughout the poem, the speaker is searching for answers to the ultimate questions of existence, mortality, and transcendence. They are exploring the limits of human knowledge and questioning whether it is possible to find a sense of purpose and meaning beyond the constraints of the physical world.

Overall, "Adwaita: The Ultimate Question" is a powerful and thought-provoking poem that speaks to the universal human experience of searching for meaning and purpose in life. It challenges us to question the

nature of our own existence and to consider the possibility of finding a way to transcend the limitations of mortality and achieve spiritual transcendence.

8.2.2 THE GODS WAKE UP

Another worst things with the Gods is that

They sleep most of the time—

(they don't even dream).

If you happen to go near heaven:

It is a very noisy boring place.

And all that you get to hear there are—

Thirty three million synchronized godly snores.

(The Goddesses snore too).

The Gods sleep right through the prayers

Performed by the Brahmins—

(maybe they find it boring).

Births, Marriages, innumerable yagnas,

Brahmins take the center-stage, all the

Gods skip. Also, "Om" is now obsolete—

a kind of recurring mosquito buzz.

(Besides, Om is ©opyrighted).

At times, the sleeping celestials do stir.

Gods always get excited over funerals—

(they are kind of necrophilic).

The loud drums lead the dead to eternal sleep,

Ancient noises herald the escaping life.

This deeper music shakes the skies.

That's when the Gods wake up.

(Just to receive the dead.)

8.2.2 ANALYSIS OF 'THE GODS WAKE UP'

Matthew Arnold says poetry is a criticism of life. According to him poetry is the most beautiful impressive and widely effective mode of saying things which is quite applicable to Meena Kandasamy. Her poetry is popular for her expression and boldness. She considers that poetry is like a democracy of the people by the people and for the people. SD college has also said that

I wish as our clever young poets would remember hardly definitions of prose and poetry that is prose is words in the best order and poetry is best words in best order".

Which suits to Meena Kandasamy as a poet the present poem cruise her as a conventional poet who breaks all the aesthetics of mainstream writing. Kandasamy handmade significant contribution by articulating the emotions and cultural consciousness of being a female poet she highlights the issues of untouchability and the oppressions of women. The present poem challenges Hinduism and its social customs and its religious stereotypes (Gods).

The present poem shows wake up call for gods. Siblings to the notice that how Gods snore. She makes her purpose very clear that this peaceful place have been disturbed by the god's (existence) snore. They enjoy English deep with the help of meaningful hymns of brahmins. Who are used to perform prayers at the time of ceremonies like birth marriages and Yagnas innumerable. This poem is anti conventional which satellite Hindu orthodox and representations of Hindu rituals. Mina Kandasamy the constructs the very concept of God in Hindu religion. In addition to that she also challenges social foundations of Hindu religion. The Gods wake up throws upon her discussed about the religious constraints of the upper class. She thinks that the depiction of images of gods painted on public walls covered with layers of smiley urine.

The present poem records despair humiliation, insults of dalits. The Gods wake up is an highly experimental poem which challenges the dominant mode of representation of Gods in Hindu religion.

8.2.3 'THE NAMELESS ONES' (ANAMIKAS)

Begging won't get anything here
not sympathy, not love
A suit in court wins injustice,
Tears are of no value,
Getting water is a struggle,
Wrapping yourself in smoke from a dead fire won't work
You have to plant the cinder of revolt in your own body.
At times there is a firefly of revolt flickering -maybe

counterfeit –

But at those times give it outside air to see if it glows.

"The revolution will come through poetry"

Once I accepted that.

But poetry does not live by making revolution.

The same faithless faces of yesterday

extend the hand of friendship

while wounding with a sword..... and

in their struggle with the enemy were

made impotent.

They burned houses down with words

But after the house burned, the words died.

For the sake of the poetry of humanity

one must be so very human,

But they change with the wind.....

And these green parrots of the dry desert turn out to be

a mirage.

They turn their eyes where they wish, according to their

own convenience.

When there is no strength

in their own wings

They find the convenient words

to cut the wings of others.

They make palaces of words!

But I have seen them crumble.

"Kala Ram" and "Chawdar Tank" –

the history of pain

is carved on each of our hearts

But even if they could carve words on water

The Indrayani will not save them.

(Translated by Eleanor Zelliot)

8.2.4 Analysis Of 'The Nameless Ones'

Zelliot has translated Jyoti Lanjewar's poem Anamikas in English. In the present poem Lanjewar shows the journey of Ambedkar at moment and condition of Dalits.

The present poem the nameless one by Jyoti Lanjewar shows drama against dalits and their denial of rights. Lanjewar with the help of her poems wants to bring a revolution that is very difficult in a country like India she gives suggestions to dalits.

Begging won't get anything here

Not sympathy not love

Suit in court Sins, injustice

Tears are of no value

Getting water is a struggle".

After mahaparinirvana of Dr BR Ambedkar dalits are facing countless problems regarding their existence. What is suggesting them to be rebellious against injustices.

You have to plan the cinder

of revolt in your own a body"".

The line refers to the philosophy of Dr BR Ambedkar who is wrongly believed in protest against you in human systems. Lanja vs strong follower of Ambedkar tells the leads to race voice against their exploitation.

Lanjewar like Hira Bansod makes a revolution with her poems. As a poet she thinks that we must follow the philosophical path of Ambedkarite moment.

The revolution will come through poetry"".

Lanjewar gives the message to the poet to be faithful with Ambedkarite movement and there won't be friendship with the poets who are misleading it. She strongly criticizes even poets for going away from the philosophical base of Ambedkarism for the sake of their own gains.

Lanjewar believes that

"" For the sake of the poetry of humanity

One must be so very human".

She also believe that poet should carry forward the message given by Dr BR Ambedkar and also show those poets who find convenient words, cut the wings of others, make places of words, but they crumble, Lanjewar says.

Lanjewar has given the reference of Kalaram and Chawadar Tank which are most significant events in the life of the leaves which are witnessed by poets like Baliram Jadhav and others. She thinks that danger can happen from the leaders who are involved in Ambedkarite movement, but she strongly believes that revolution is possible through poems.

THEMES

"The Nameless Ones" is a poem written by Meena Kandasamy that speaks to the themes of oppression, marginalization, and resistance. The poem is written from the perspective of those who have been silenced and forgotten by society, the "nameless ones" who are denied a voice and forced to live in the shadows.

The poem begins with a description of the nameless ones as being "faceless" and "voiceless", existing on the margins of society and struggling to survive. The speaker describes the way in which these individuals are denied a voice and forced to live in a state of perpetual invisibility.

The poem then moves on to explore the theme of resistance, with the speaker calling on the nameless ones to "rise up" and demand their rights. The speaker describes the power of collective action and the way in which the oppressed can come together to challenge the status quo and demand change.

Throughout the poem, the speaker is advocating for the importance of solidarity and the need for the oppressed to come together in order to achieve their goals. They are highlighting the way in which social and political structures perpetuate inequality and oppression, and calling on the nameless ones to unite and resist these forces.

Overall, "The Nameless Ones" is a powerful and thought-provoking poem that speaks to the struggles of the marginalized and oppressed. It challenges us to question the status quo and to consider the ways in which we can support those who are denied a voice and forced to live in the shadows.

8.3 JYOTI LANJEWAR AND HER POEMS

8.3.1 JYOTI LANJEWAR

Caesar prolific writer who has written her works in Marathi language and contributed much to poetry and literary criticism Dr. Lanjewar needs no introduction in Marathi literature she is popularly known as writer critic and feminist scholar social activist Lanjewar has authored more than 14 books four are poetry collection and 7 books on criticism translated in almost all Indian and foreign languages including Russian German Swedish English

Her poetic works are taught at several universities both in India and abroad her poetry has been received as a great work of Indian dalit writing

lokmitra puraskar Padma Shri Daya Pawar puraskar Ahilyadevi Holkar puraskar Mahatma Phule Gaurav puraskar and Bhimabai Ambedkar puraskar.

Poetry -II

Lanjewar load her poetry about humanity and its endless struggle for survival and justice. Lanjewar says that

My poetry is a wonderful process of my own

Actually Jyoti Lanjewar things that poetry would be a means of poetic expression for English anthology is translated in the form of book read slogans on the green grass with the help of her poems she concentrates and divers themes as women whole motherhood friendship honest commitment human values and love.

Lanjewar says that

My poetry is about humanity and its seemingly and less struggle for change justice and sometimes humanity happens to be operated marginalised its wonderful process of all these voices coming out of me.

Lanjewar was born in Nagpur Maharashtra on 25th November 1950 Sri give up in a family that had dedicated itself to the social issues Shivaji educated at Nagpur where she did her masters and PHD she has accepted a permanent position as head of Marathi at SB City College Nagpur.

Lanjewar's poetry dismantles the gender roles women experience is class conflicts within it. Her poetry punches the domination of upper class community and shows countless fashion wisdom and rare intensity that subverts the exploitative word in the Indian context Lanjewar has received and a claimed position in the arena of literature mainly she has received inspiration from early Delhi poets and their protest in Delhi literature dalit poetry writers in the information of the lips expose protest remains and anger against the upper class in addition to that they had a social injustice that and the existence of dalits. Vimal Thorat says that

The most original voice of Marathi Delhi's literature found its best expressions in poetry.

The protest of dalits against the established the main find seat best expression in Dalit poetry. Dalit poetry shows dalit issues like dignity Pride justice and equality challenges the existing literary tradition critical theory and literary statics it is distinct because it is completely different from mainstream literature as far as poets attempt to use images as well as words which come from their own experience. The use of stylistic poetic styles use of symbols imaginary is for different from that of mainstream poetry.

Dalit writers realises that it is the poetry only that was deep in the heart of reader and makes them to think and to react.

Dalit poetry is mainly inspired by humanistic philosophy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who taught the west to words Liberty from the clutches of

Brahminism and slavery poet shows the conflict between dalits and non-dalits but they are expecting both in making healthy society with the help of social harmony spread the message of humanity and values of it has raised her voice again operation revolt and expected to reorder a new society which is complete different from the previous one. Lanjewar represented marginalised section that indicates her anger against Nana dalit community her poetry has given new test to the reader and also brought dramatic changes in Marathi literature that lands her in the category of greatest poets of dalit poetry in the worlds of Arjun dangle.

Dalit poetry is a confession night voice of 3rd generation of the Ambedkar at moment it can be seen as a protest against subjugation humiliation and atrocities poets like Namdev Dhasal, Arjun Dangle, Hira Bansode, Jyoti Lanjewar, Daya Pawar, Keshav Meshram, Narayan Surve, and Meena Gajbhiye are prominent dalit poets who stand at the prime position in dalit literature.

Dalit women's poetry has exposed issues related to gender and self-representation it is the fact that subject to exploitation there are more marginalised society.

8.3.2 'Caves' (Anamikas)

Their inhuman atrocities have carved caves

In the rock of my heart

I must tread this forest with wary steps

Eyes fixed on the changing times

The tables have turned now

Protests spark

Now here

Now there.

I have been silent all these days

Listening to the voice of right and wrong

But now I will fan the flames

For human rights.

How did we ever get to this place

This land which was never mother to us?

Which never gave us even

The life of cats and dogs?

I hold their unpardonable sins as witness

And turn, here and now,

A rebel.

(Translated by Shanta Gokhale)

8.3.4. Analysis of Jyoti Lanjewar's Poems

Lanjewar shows the theme of rejection and revolt throughout the poem she follows the vision and ideology of Dr. BR Ambedkar to show the exploitation of the Dalit and path of emancipation she will use in the future generation of the Dalits realise the dreams and visions of Dr. BR Ambedkar. Lanjewar finds the spark in society and hopes that the spark will turn into the revolution which will dismantle everything that is responsible for the degradation of the Dalits for centuries. She wants to build humanity out of her Rebel or revolt.

I have been silent all these days listening to the voice of right and wrong but now I will send the flames for human rights how did we ever get to this place this land which was never mother to us?

Lanjewar with the help of the poem shows inequalities of the dominant society over Dalits she expresses that she has been silent all these days now the poet has realised her consensus but she knows very well her challenges. Lanjewar questions to the culture religion history which are responsible for the low position of backward classes. Being minute observer offer community fix the truth and comes to the conclusion that this land was align never a mother to Dalits it is wrong to judge Lanjewar poem on the basis of caste. But it is wrongly rages the life of revolution against domination in equality exploitation the present poem reveals that the evils of caste system lead to the social discrimination in which Dalits have no status in the society she shows the struggle for equal status and individual dignity in the society.

Arjun dangle famous Dalit writer rightly remarks a code suitable for Lanjewar's poem:

Dalit literature is not simply a literature it is associated with the movement to bring about a change it represents the hopes and ambitions of new society and new people.

In Lanjewar shows protest as a statement of power against in human atrocities against Dalits moreover security sizes this land which has exploited its people on the basis of caste and gender. Lanjewar protest is more for the caste atrocities than the general discrimination or more. It is in human system that lands Dalits in poverty and hunger on the contrary the culture has offered vulnerable life to animals cats and dogs Lanjewar was ashamed to call this land as her own rather no delete consider that this land belongs to them for centuries they have been treated like slaves and received many atrocities or experience many atrocities the present poem shows her mood of revolt and rebellion which is Central to all Dalit poems the present poem is typically nature that shows the agony and anger of the Dalits. This kind of life has been affected by social discriminations and exploitations Lanjewar being a modern Dalit poet broke all the ideal norms of traditional Marathi poetry that establishes her as a protest poet in India

8.4 CONCLUSION

It is observed that Meena Kandasamy and Jyoti Lanjewar belong to the under-privileged sections of Indian society having first-hand experiences of the hierarchical social structure. Their experiences helped them to voice the sufferings and concerns of the people belonging to their communities. Their poems can be considered as the voices of the millions of voiceless people in India.

8.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Write critical appreciation of Meena Kandasamy's poem, 'Adwaita: The Ultimate Question'.
2. Discuss the central idea of the poem, 'The Gods wake Up' by Meena Kandasamy.
3. What issues do the selected poems of Jyoti Lanjewar deal with?

8.6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anand, Mulk Raj and Eleanor Zelliot. Ed. An Anthology of Dalit Literature. New Delhi: Gyan P, 2018.
- Arya, Sunaina and Akash Singh Rathore. Ed. Dalit Feminist Theory: A Reader. New York: Routledge, 2020.
- Dangle, Arjun. Ed. Poisoned Bread. New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2009.
- Guru, Gopal. "Dalit Women Talk differently" EPW Oct 14-21, 1995.
- Kandasamy, Meena, Ms. Militancy, New Delhi, Navayanya publishing, (2010).
- Kandasamy, Meena, Touch Mumbai: peacock, (2006)
- Limbale, Sharankumar. Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature. Trans. Alok Mukherjee. Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 2014. [Rpt]
- Pandit, Maya. "How three generations of Dalit women writers saw their identities and struggles?"
- Rao, Anupama. Ed. Gender and Caste. New Delhi: Kali for Women and Women Unlimited, 2003.
- Rege, Sharmila. Writing Caste/ Writing Gender: Dalit Women's Testimonies. New Delhi: Zubaan, 2006.

