



DALPAT CHAUHAN: A VOICE FOR VOICELESS

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Human history and civilization has witnessed various types of acts of discrimination. It takes different forms, and modern society is not an exception. It is at the stake of cultural history and has influenced many social, cultural, and economic occurrences that we experience today. Society is a place where all are expected to live enjoying all the rights and carrying out responsibilities. It is an understood fact that everyone must give room for others' liberty and should cause no hindrance to any sort of development and freedom of others. In fact, nobody reserves the right to interfere into others' space of individuality; living together, as quoted by Will Rogers "We will never have true civilization until we have learned to recognize the rights of others." (Rogers, Online)

In India, since ages, caste functions on the individual through stigma and punishment going to the extent of brutal assault leading to death. Caste and Class bias hinder the mobility and results into social crystallization within specific margins. Inequalities and bigotry are linked occurrences and underline each other. Disproportion between social groups causes injustice and favoritism and naturally, one group that is socially, economically, and culturally 'advanced', takes on dominant moves to oppress the other which is comparatively weaker. However, culture itself is a product of interdependence among individuals and groups. The conduct of individuals and their choices donate to the discerning reinforcing and weakening essentials of culture. Yet it is allocation of authority. Nevertheless, from the ages, in spite of having ideological logistics, human beings are seen not following the social codes. Naturally, legends are emerged out of the urge to orient people and the society for a better and healthy aura to live in.

In Indian context, the fact cannot be denied that approximately one-sixth of its population suffer neglect and humiliation because they are born in long depressed class. The Hindu 'class hierarchy' made all possible and deliberate attempts to keep a particular segment of the society aloof from the mainstream and succeeded in excluding Dalits from social, political, cultural, and economic domains. Therefore, unwillingly though, this class had to live in utter poverty, a life full of ignorance and mortification. How awful it is to have 'no identity'!

A well designed strategy was adopted by so called 'high' class and caste people against the Dalits in India. They were deprived of education. Since education can lead to knowing the 'self', the dalits were calculatedly kept beyond the border. They never had

access to education and thus could never enjoy self-esteem. Quite naturally, with the passage of time, changes were seen. As it is said that nothing is permanent, this painful situation had to be altered which gave birth to revolt against biased mind-set spread all the corners of India and in this respect, literature played a very imperative role.

Gujrati Dalit Literature hits the uncontrolled social evils like bias, mayhem, inequality, paucity, and infringement of human rights. It also talks about predicament of the downtrodden section of the society. This literature is a discourse of revival and awakening. It is a bitter truth that even after so many years Indian independence, Dalits have seen no momentous drifts in their lives. Talking about Gujarati Dalit poetry that broadly stepped into the scenario around 70s with the ground-breaking *Aakrosh* (explicit narration of mutiny), paved a way for numerous literary persons to pen down tyrannies of Dalits and also to make the world aware of the dire need to alter despondent situation in which a Dalit had to survive. The chief focus of Gujarati Dalit literature, especially of poetry, had been to mirror bitter experiences and reaction to the innumerable sufferings of this community. In a sense, it was an insurgency against Brahminic ideology that kept these people deprived from the mainstream for many centuries with horrors of humiliation at large. As Dr. B.R. Ambedkar asserted, ignorance and blind acceptance are the roots of any injustice, these poets strived hard to make the society aware of *place* and *rights* of Dalits. In his masterpiece- *Annihilation of Caste*, Dr. Ambedkar expresses:

“This is only another way of saying that, turn in any direction you like, caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reform, you cannot have economic reform, unless you kill this monster” (Dr. Ambedkar, 31)

Principally inspired by philosophy, thoughts and actions of Dr. Ambedkar, Dalpat Chauhan dedicated his writings to a noble cause of upliftment of down-trodden people in the society. All his writings are centered around Dalits and their long-aged suffering at the hands of so-called superior class. His poem *Untouchable* is an account of throbbing practices which he experienced in his life. In this poem, he gives an account of school experience. Ideally talking a school is divine place where a child gets molded for his future. Unfortunately, for a community that has long been deprived of every right to enter school to share equality is the toughest task. Hurting bullets in the form of words that you are untouchable went deep into the mind of the poet rather his blood leading to a sense that his very existence is worthless. Entire body of the poet is now infected with a trauma of being ‘nothing’ in this world. The bitter truth that he is not able to associate himself with others, he cannot enjoy like others do and thus is very aching for the poet. His agony is countless, limitless and beyond explanation. Though seems to be an exaggeration, it is an honest expression that his pain is similar to that of hundred scorpions biting one at a time. Acrimonious experiences during childhood in any one’s life leave scars on the mind that can hardly be terminated. In this case, situation of the poet seems to be the same.

In a way the present poem is an expedition that takes readers to vistas of the world that is kept disconnected for long with the ages of modern acceptance. Caste system prevailed in Indian society limited this class to minimal opportunities disapproving the fact that they are also human beings and reserve and deserve every right. Then it is quite natural that the poet triggers out a very simple yet piercing question to God why is he called untouchable, what element in him makes him an untouchable, where such

classification came from. And then the poet moves on to plead for equality in all sense. However, he arrives at a conclusion that Hindu religion is the originator of such discrimination and discards it rationally. He then finds a solution that only socialism and absence of religion could give justice to all segments of the society.

In his yet another poem, *The Conversation on a Magashar Night*, Dalpat continues to expose the torment of Dalits living in the society that alienates them in every way. The conversation takes place on a chilly winter night in an open landscape bearing with 'cruelty' of nature.

Dear, do you feel cold?
Come close.
But what shall we cover ourselves with?
The Sky or the earth?
In your body the magshar freezes,
Shivers since long.

As a matter of fact, nature treats all equally. But chilly night for the narrator and his companion has brought inescapable truth that equality does not exist in the society for all should have the same feeling and sensation towards changing weather. However, unfortunately the truth is unpleasant here. They don't even have enough clothes to keep themselves warm and safe and dreadfully, earth is mattress and sky turns blanket for them. Through this episode, Dalpat attempts to pose that ideologies are not and have never been enough to eradicate social ill practices; proper agenda and actions are indispensable.

Darling, how many eras we have to pass?
Darling, We can not count Two things
Firstly, The stars in the sky
And secondly, insults your and mine.

Excruciating experiences are further epitomized as the narrator is bothered as to when this suffering comes an end. The first verse in this stanza is an epic showing oppression of down-trodden and refers to entire human society not limiting itself to any particular territory. This assertion has universal appeal. Individuality is put on stake when his/her fundamental rights are impinged and apparently, agonies take the form of rebellion. Countless abuses, insults and dishonor will certainly lead to either inferiority or to strident repulsion. However, it needs a promising leadership to raise the voice of the voiceless. Dalpat Chauhan scrupulously made an attempt to give such people a voice so as to bring about a change in the situation they live.

Dalpat Chauhan came up with a new conscience in fact to educate the mass with an intention to over-throw the authorization in selected hands. He revolted against traditional norms that targeted one group in the society and deliberately kept them away from mainstream. A true revolutionist, Dalpat not only raised voice against injustice but he made this segment aware of their miserable situation. In a way, he proved to be a torch-bearer for the upliftment of the Dalits.

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