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Inclusion of Dalit Literature in School Education

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Abstract

Dalits are extremely important, and Dalit literature is an attempt to illuminate us about the discrimination, brutality, and ostracization faced by the Dalit community in India. Members of the Dalit community have been pushed to the margins, and the majority has ignored their lived experiences. The introduction of Dalit studies in schools, which include poems, novels, memoirs, and short stories, will gradually improve their situation by depicting the nuances and evolution of the Dalit identity. Dalit literature is one of the most important literary phenomena in post-independence India, attempting to restore dignity to a long-wronged community. On both an individual and communal level, studying Dalit literature will be synonymous with reflecting on Dalit consciousness. As a result, schools throughout India should incorporate Dalit Literature into their school-specific curricula. Keywords: Dalit, literature, school education, inclusion, community

Introduction

The term 'Dalit' refers to a particular group or community in India which has been ostracized, exploited and humiliated due to caste structure and social order ardently followed in India. The etymology of the word 'Dalit' can be traced to the root word dal in Sanskrit and dalan in Hindi meaning 'broken down' or 'broken to pieces.' Dalit Literature has emerged as a form of social resistance literature principally aimed at community identity formation and bringing about political and economic changes among the Dalit population. Dalit literature represents the collective consciousness of social, political, economic, and racial discrimination, suffered by the Dalits for hundreds of years.

Before understanding that why we should include Dalit Literature in school education, we must know that since time immemorial Education system in India had been quite Brahmanical. From the ancient time to the present day, the system had continuously tried to marginalize a large section of people who were called untouchables. Since ancient times there has been a systematic propaganda to distort various facts about Dalits saying that these people have no history, no literature and no civilization. Dalits, considered to be the lowest in the hierarchical Indian caste system were subjected to systemic oppression and are a subaltern community who experience the trauma of persecution in ways that are unique to the complex social, cultural, political, and economic environment prevailing in India. Dalit children compete with animals around them for their survival, and their mode of living is always on a dunghill. The Dalit experience has been fraught with physical, mental, financial and social insecurity among children ; the unfulfillment of the primal needs have triggered a constant sense of anxiety and a strong need for security in the minds of Dalits. Dalits are an important part of society. But right from the ancient period, they have been subjugated under the pretext of subordinate, inferior cogs of the prestigious

Hindu society. Dalit literature is an outburst of the burning flame of exploited people from many centuries, the suppressed anger erupts through self-narratives of Dalit literature.

The need to study and understand Dalit reality.

The development and growth of Dalit literature is taking place at a rapid pace over the last two decades. The word Dalit literature will be used as long as Indian men/women are exploited under the pretext of caste and economic inequality. Dalit literature is a form of writing that restrains all exploiters. It advocates strongly human values such as equality, liberty, fraternity, and justice. Dalit writing is a post-independence phenomenon and the emergence of Dalit literature has a great historical significance in the present day. Decoding the narratives in Dalit literature meticulously investigates the narratives in Dalit literature and it chiefly concentrates on the class, inequality and various issues, ideologies and perspectives related to it.

Cultural awareness and expression are among the major competencies considered important to develop in children, in order to provide them with a sense of identity, belongingness and appreciation of other cultures and identities. It would also build a positive cultural identity and self-esteem among the children. Thus, cultural awareness and expression are important contributors both to individual as well as societal well-being. He mentioned that Ancient Indian civilization is one of the most important civilizations in the world. The foundation of India's glorious cultural heritage and progress was the era of education. Education was accorded utmost importance in ancient India, whose primary objective is the development of the personality of the individual. The need for education was always accepted for the physical and spiritual upliftment and the duly fulfilling of various responsibilities.

Introducing Dalit Studies in school curriculum will help in accomplishing the following objectives: 1. To identify the major issues faced by children in Dalit Literature 2. To interpret the prerequisite issues and ideologies repre-

sented in Dalit autobiographies 3. To interpret the realization of oppression and the resistance of Dalit children. 4. To evaluate possibilities of transformation and emancipation of Dalit children 5. To corroborate diverse issues mentioned in the selected Dalit autobiographies 6. To enhance the possibility of Dalit women's emancipation from generational plight. 7. To study the rise, growth and development of Dalit literature with its consequences on society. 8. To explore the disjuncture and relation of the power of upper caste with Dalit children.

Dalit literature speaks of revolts, not passivity. It inspires progress despite all odds, not backwardness. Dalit literature urges its readers to fight for both bread and roses. The history of injustice this community has been suffering needs to stop once and for all, and Dalit literature takes a step towards bringing in a brighter tomorrow. Dalit Literature is an expression of "Dalit consciousness" about identity (both individual and communal), human rights and dignity, and the community, as well as a sociopolitical movement seeking redress for historically persistent oppression and social justice in the present. As a result, in Dalit Literature, childhood becomes a framework for displaying diversity and traditional values, giving their identity a distinct flavour and providing a vast opportunity for me to explore new areas in Dalit Literature.

Dalit cultural awareness and expression are among the major competencies considered important to develop in children, in order to provide them with a sense of sensitivity and identity, belonging, as well as an appreciation of other castes and identities. It is through the development of a strong sense and knowledge of their own cultural history, arts, languages, and traditions that children can build a positive cultural identity and self-esteem. We need to incorporate Indian knowledge and tradition in the fold of education in such a way that it becomes our 'way of life'. It is thus the moral re-

sponsibility of all the stakeholders in the Indian educational system to strive for quality and equitable education for all by extending stimulating courses on Dalit Studies to the students at a young age.

It is important to include Dalit Studies in school curriculum as it conveys to the whole world about the social, political, economic and educational status of people and this message is conveyed by emphasizing exploitative, desperate, and humiliated sections endowed with grief, demonstrating how they are still suppressed and enslaved. Dalit Studies further delves into the humiliations and sufferings endured by the oppressed.

Introducing Dalit Literature/Dalit Studies in Schools

Teaching Dalit literature to students will help help them delve deeper into Dalit identity and these events will help them develop sensitivity toward the other castes that exist in society. Dalit Studies in schools will be based on understanding the anguish, desperation and social issues of Dalits in India. Books, presentation papers, articles, published and unpublished thesis, and journals related to Dalit Literature can be studied and read in school curriculum in detail.

Excerpts from famous Dalit writings like Jhoothan by Omprakash Valmiki, The Childhood on my Shoulders by Sheoraj Singh Bechain, Karukku by Bama Faustina, The Untouchable by Mulk Raj Anand, The prisons we broke by Babytai Kamble, Annihilation of Caste by B.R Ambedkar and many more can be included in the school curriculums.

The students will be acquainted with inhumane experiences which are not some kind of accident or mishap at various stages of life, but rather the daily routine of a torturous journey. Insult and exploitation are unavoidable in the world of dalits. Happiness, if it exists at all, is unintentional and fleeting. The Dalit community has suffered generational, multi-faceted and institutionalized discrimination as a result of the implementation of the Hindu caste system in Indian society for religious and political reasons. This

casteist practice has left a clear mark on social division and inequality and has severely damaged this community's identity. Teaching Dalit Literature in schools is important for instilling ancient values in today's education system, owing to the fact that there are many gaps that the modern education system does not address. The school curriculum should include excerpts of Dalit identity and how they were coping with India's future aspirations in areas such as education, health, and environment.

Wherever possible, these elements will be accurately and scientifically incorporated into the school curriculum particularly as a part of Indian Knowledge Systems which seeks to instil in students a rootedness and pride in India, and its "rich, diverse, ancient and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions fostering the vibrancy of all Indian castes and languages".

Today the content of Indian school education, in all domains of knowledge, is largely based on modern Western cultural and intellectual traditions. The importance of incorporating Dalit Literature and indigenous languages into the mainstream curriculum should be made mandatory. Sensitivity towards Dalits should be ingrained in the personalities of students at all levels, from kindergarten to Class 12. Dalit studies can be integrated and incorporated into traditional curricula and we should consider streams and the appropriate type of cultural conglomeration.

Dalit Literature should not be separated from the syllabi in Classes 1-3, but should be integrated into the curriculum and programme. Short stories about Dalits their chivalry, bravery, manifesting the theme of Indian Knowledge systems should be narrated in these classes. Dalit identity should permeate the student's mind and heart. For Classes 4 -7, one course on Dalit studies rooted in our Indianness should be embedded or should be included in the school curriculum. Dalit history should be introduced in Classes 9-12 and one chapter should be devoted to empowerment of Dalits and their history focusing on the Sanskrit based Upanishads and Indian

ethos. These classes should follow a structured curriculum on Dalit Studies that imparts knowledge. Innovative approaches to introducing and infusing through pictorial representation of Dalit culture are required. In order to promote Dalit Studies in schools it is imperative to create an appropriate curriculum on “Dalit Identity”. This initiative can change generations. The Dalit studies should include lessons on life, nation and value system of life in India.

Dalit literature can be incorporated to promote the following procedures:

- Develop specific courses focusing on Dalit Studies.
- Infuse excerpts from Dalit literature into existing courses using relevant examples and concepts.
- Preserve original traditions, texts through appropriate means.
- Research by studying original texts and understanding their relevance for sustainable societal development.

- Disseminate knowledge.
- Make teachers more sensitive towards Dalit history
- Develop clear indicators to detect and address discrimination in schools; lay out appropriate disciplinary measures.

“Dalit studies” will include the evolution and status of Dalits from ancient India to modern India, and a clear sense of India’s future aspirations with regard to education, health, environment, etc. Dalit cultural awareness and expression are among the major competencies considered important to develop in children, in order to provide them with a sense of identity, belonging, as well as an appreciation of other caste, cultures and identities. The new curriculum in schools can showcase how Dalit trauma in small children and young adults is truly unique because it is not caused by environmental factors such as famines or droughts, or by trauma inflicted by one person on another; rather, it is trauma engendered by the social institution of the caste system, which has been religiously sanctioned for centuries and transcends religious boundaries. While untouchability has been legally

abolished for many decades and Dalit urban status has improved, the stories bear witness to the centuries of suffering and trauma that Dalit children have had to endure.

The advent of Dalit literature, comprising poems, novels, memoirs, rectify this situation slowly by depicting the nuances of the Dalit culture. Dalit literature is one of the most important literary phenomena in post-independent India attempting to restore dignity to a community that has been wronged for ages. Their struggles relating to their stigmatized identity as “untouchables” are finally being acknowledged. Dalit literature has come to be associated with Dalit consciousness on both an individual and communal level. The failure to adequately teach Dalit history in schools has resulted in a massive gap in school curricula; students should be sensitive to the ugliness of the past from an early age, not a sanitised version of it. The understanding of our history by our youth is critical to the future of our democracy. It is not the purpose of teaching Dalit history to air one’s dirty laundry. It is about exposing the hidden roots of casteism, which is the source of injustice in today’s society. Collectively, it is found that Dalit Literature is mistaught, mischaracterized, sanitized, and sentimentalized—leaving students poorly educated, and contemporary issues of race and racism misunderstood. India is still struggling with history of Dalits and its aftermath. The front lines of this struggle are in schools, as teachers should do the hard work of explaining this country’s history and helping students to understand how the present status relates to the past.”

Conclusion

The recent insinuation of Dalit identity in the Indian public sphere is the result of a political process as well as a silent revolution in Dalit society through education and literature. For the rural and urban development of India, it is necessary to know the reality of Dalit culture and life. The Dalit writers have exposed the unique Dalit world, life and sensibility into their

writings. So, without Dalit literature reality of India could not be understood. Dalit literature is playing a very crucial role to understand India with her ground realities about socio-cultural, political and educational facts. Students in schools should be aware of caste driven social inclusion/exclusion which challenges lives of a certain section of society. Students from a very young age should be aware of the various social exclusions and inclusions.

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