

INDIAN LITERATURE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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Introduction

United Nations (UN), an intergovernmental body established in 1945 for global peace, co-operation and protection of people's rights. India is a member country of UN and it has ratified most of the UN Conventions including - Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR](1948), International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR] (1978), International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [ICESCR] (1978), collectively called *International Bill of Rights*, and International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination [ICERD] (1968).

However, national and international human rights non-governmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International (AI) are of the opinion that India is falling short in implementation these Conventions and fulfillment of its treaty obligations. In its report (2007) to UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) the Human Rights Watch equates *Caste Discrimination against India's "Untouchables"* as *Hidden Apartheid*.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR] enlists 30 Human Rights. The Indian Constitution enshrines fundamental rights to all Indian citizens (Article 14 to 32). All fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution are human rights; but all human rights are not fundamental rights. The fundamental freedoms and human rights of Dalits are routinely violated.

Keywords : Human Rights, Indian Literature, International Conventions, United Nations

Distinct Literature

In Indian literature, the dalit writings have a distinct identity. This body of literature has originated in Marathi language in 1978. Now it is written in all genres; in regional languages of other states; and is also being translated in English. Dalit Literature primarily expresses their pain and anguish and demands for fundamental freedoms, equality and dignity. On the

backdrop of Human Rights Watch “shadow report” (2007); World Congress against Racism (Durban 2001) and World Social Forum (Mumbai 2004) Dalit writings demand to be read from the human rights perspective.

Hence, it would be interesting to take a cross section of Dalit writings translated in English, and study human rights issues and concerns erupting out of those texts. So as to analyze if the texts reflect systemic discrimination, and common patterns to those parts of the country. Similarly, to study if there is any connect between the human rights situation in the texts and the contemporary socio-political-religious situations in India.

Therefore, representative texts from various Indian States translated in English should be studied if there is any compliance with the UN Conventions stated above and similarly the observations of national & international human rights organizations.

Portrayal of Human Rights in Dalit Literature

Almost all the texts in dalit literature are representative texts that exhibit scores of human rights issues violation. There is indeed much research work done on Dalit writings in Marathi and English translations, especially in case of Dalit auto-narratives. However, the researcher proposes to study the select texts from various States of India and evaluate if there is a common pattern of caste discrimination across the texts; secondly, these texts are proposed to be explored from the human rights perspective, considering the UN Conventions as standard; and thirdly it is proposed to find connect/ similarity between these texts and contemporary socio-political-religious situation in India.

It is needed to study Dalit writings from human rights perspectives; to analyze major human rights issues and concerns in the select Dalit writings; to assess if systemic pattern of caste discrimination reflected in the select Dalit writings; to evaluate through the select Dalit writings if the ‘State’ is respecting the UN Human Rights Conventions and fulfilling its treaty obligations; to examine if there is definitive connect between human rights concerns reflected in the select texts and contemporary socio-political-religious developments across these States.

Dalit writings reflect major human rights concerns in the select texts from various States. Dalit writings exhibit that in case of Dalits the UN conventions standards of human rights are violated and the State has failed in its treaty obligation. Dalit writings reflect common pattern of caste discrimination prevalent across the country. There is considerable substance in asserting ‘caste’ as human rights issue. There is definitive similarity between the human

rights issues reflected in the select texts, and the contemporary socio-political-religious developments in India.

Conclusion

Dalit writings reflect major human rights issues and systemic pattern of caste discrimination thus exhibiting definitive connect between the select texts and the contemporary socio-political-religious scenario and developments across the States in the country.

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