

## FOUNDATIONS OF DALIT AESTHETICS IN INDIAN LITERATURE: A STUDY

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### Abstract:

There are different literary theories available to understanding the Indian literature. Those include theories such as Liberal Humanism, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Queer theory, Marxism, New Historicism, Postcolonialism, Stylistics, Narratology, Rasa theory, Alankara Sastra and Ecocriticism, etc. The theories were been launched by different theorists in literature. There are many regional theories among Indian literary theories one of them is Aesthetics. Works of literature have been interpreted by readers with the help of literary theories. Moreover, these theories have contributed more for the better understanding of present phenomenon on any particular cause. In the same way, Dalit writers are creating a theory for the evaluation of their literary works with the help of new literary tools. There are some approaches to read Dalit literature like subaltern studies and Dalit studies etc. For the first time in Indian literature, Dalit writers have been made an attempt to create Dalit aesthetic theory since 1996, in order to understand Dalit literature in the right way. There are many literary theories to assess Indian literature. Dalit writers have uniqueness in writing style against mainstream Indian writers. Even though there are present theories such as Rasa theory and Alankara Sastra, the latter are not sufficient to study Dalit literature. Therefore, there is a necessity for the foundations of Dalit aesthetic theory. Sharankumar Limbale mentions in his book *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature*, 'Sharad Patil is a Marathi writer who gave an idea on the aesthetics of Dalit literature in Maharashtra'. Sharankumar Limbale started Dalit aesthetics theory at first in Marathi. Research scholar Milind Eknath Awad did Ph. D research work on *Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit* in 2009, from JNU, Delhi. There are some research papers, which were written by professors and research scholars in recent times. Those research works studied details about Dalit aesthetics. This research paper is going to study the foundations of Dalit aesthetic theory. In addition, it studies Dalit aesthetic theory and its prominent changes until now.

Key Words: Foundations, Dalit Aesthetics, Indian Aesthetics, and Dalit literature

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**Introduction:**

Western aesthetics has roots from Greek philosopher Plato and Aristotle with their theory of mimesis in the west. Indian aesthetics has its forms from Bharatha Munis's Natya Sastra in Sanskrit the theory of rasa well-established theory by ancient Indian scholars. Interest in Indian aesthetics has revived in recent times since its rebirth in the middle of 20th century. One of the leading experts of Indian aesthetics, KC Pande asserted equivalence between classical Sanskrit notions of imitation (anukrti) and the Greek theory of mimesis, A K Coomaraswamy, following P Masson Oursel, underlined the difference between the two traditions. Indian aesthetics is the underlying spiritual beliefs of the Indian religious-philosophic mind. In addition, the procedure of the aesthetics has relationships of the symbol and the spiritual states explaining in detail. Meanwhile, the study of Indian aesthetics has received more serious attention in India and outside India, by various Indian and foreign scholars.

When this is the situation in Indian literature on aesthetics, research scholars have done research on Indian aesthetics as much as possible. Dalit literature is not set into the Indian aesthetic framework, which has become a revolutionary idea in the Marathi language in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dalit writers and Savarnas were discussing the Dalit literature and its movement in different forms and purposes in Maharashtra. Sharankumar Limbale is one of the Dalit writer and critic in Maharashtra, who took this idea into serious to develop a separate theory for Dalit literature. He wrote a book *Dalit Sahityache Saundaryashastra* in Marathi and published in 1996. Alok Mukherjee (Translator) translated it into English with the title *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature History, Controversies, and Consideration* (2004).

Sharankumar Limbale wrote in his book "The discussion of the aesthetics of Dalit literature received an impetus from Sharad Patil's Abrahmani Sahityanche Saundaryashastra. He made us aware that since Dalit literature did not have its own aesthetics; it had to rely on Brahmanical aesthetics" (Limbale 2014, 113). "Patil refers to aesthetics as a weapon and believes that revolutionary literature must acquire this weapon. Because he has described middle-class, upper-caste literature as Brahmanical or counter-revolutionary, should it, therefore, be conceded that the aesthetics of Marathi literature is like a weapon? How does it matter anyway? Has Marathi literary aesthetics not been used already as a weapon against Dalit literature? It is necessary to explore these questions" (Limbale 2014, 114).

While propagating Dalit aesthetics he has considered the mainstream critiques of aesthetics. Sharankumar Limbale says that Dalit literature is a movement, and a vehicle of pain, sorrow, questions, and problems. Since Dalit literature is life-affirming literature all strands of it are tied to life.

“The Idea of beauty has been discussed in the criticism of Marathi literature. B. C. Mardhekar, R. V. Patankar, Surendra Barlinge, Narhar Kurundkar, M. P. Rege, Sharatchandra Muktibodh, D. V. Kulkarni and Prabhakar Padhyahave made important contributions to the literature on aesthetics” (Limbale 2014, 114).

“Pleaser and aesthetic value: Everyone has a sense of beauty, but only the aesthete has the aptitude for tasting beauty” (Limbale 2014, 114).

“Aesthetics and Dalit literature: if pleaser is the basis of the aesthetics of Marathi savarna literature, pain or suffering is the basis of the aesthetics of Dalit literature Will readers are distressed or angered, or will they be pleased by reading the pain and revolt expressed in Dalit literature? It is a literature that is intended to make readers restless or angry. How can the aestheticism in discussions of beauty be reconciled with the ‘Dalit consciousness’ in Dalit literature? This revolutionary consciousness is based on ideas of equality, liberty, justice, and solidarity, rather than pleasure. This is why it is important for Dalit critics to change the image of beauty” (Limbale 2014, 115).

“Dalit literature is a new literary stream of the post-independence period. Not only is it new, but its form and purpose to are also different from those of savarna Marathi literature. Therefore, it cannot be appraised using traditional aesthetics” (Limbale 2014, 114). According to Yedunath Thatte stated ‘revolt as tenth rasa and cry as the eleventh rasa in 1999 in his work. Everybody knows the nine-rasa theory popular in India. Each rasa has been tasted by sipping one after another its taste and smell through moth. Could Dalit literature has tasted in such a way. The answer is negative for the above question. In terms of Dalit literature, the rasa theory of aesthetics appreciation seems insufficient. There is less number of articles on rasa theory. This has to go further developments to include tenth and eleventh rasa in literature’ (Limbale 2014, 115).

"Position of Dalit writers on the aesthetics of Dalit literature: Dalit literature is not a pleasure giving literature. Consequently, the aesthetics of Dalit literature cannot be based on the principles of an aesthetics literature that privileges pleasure derived from beauty. This is why there is a felt need for a separate Dalit aesthetics" (Limbale 2014, 116)

“Materialistic aesthetics of Dalit literature: The traditional theory of beauty seems abstruse and spiritualistic. The aesthetics, which proposes that the beauty of a work of art is its artistic rendering of reality, is a materialist. Dalit literature rejects spiritualism and abstraction, its aesthetics is materialist rather than spiritualist” (Limbale 2014, 116).

"Aesthetics of Dalit literature and Ambedkar's: Ambedkar thought is the inspiration for Dalit writers. The work of art is label standard and sub-standard. All of the Dalit writers got

inspiration of Ambedkar revolutionary thoughts and ideas. Why is there a qualitative difference among them? However, Dalit literary works cannot be accepted as beautiful for this reason alone. The standards of a work of literature depend on how much and in what way an artist's ideas-embodied in the work-affect the readers. The intensity with which Dalit readers will feel the Dalit writers experience, will not be shared by non-Dalit readers. On the other hand, there will also be a difference in the degree to which non-Dalit and Dalit readers will find the Dalit writers' experience unique because the experience is a part of the Dalit readers' daily life" (Limbale 2014, 117).

"Dalit literature and the question of Preference: Aestheticist criticism examines how a work of art influences the mind and heart of the reader. Evaluation and taste hold an important place in the view of any literature. Without this criticism remains incomplete. The reader is an important participant. This reader's preference is already or yet to be formed. The reader has the certain pre-determined assumption that precedes reading. The reader examines whether these assumptions are challenged or confirmed by the text. ....The reader's mindset is informed by class and caste...." (Limbale 2014, 118).

"Freedom as aesthetic Value: Are human beings only beauty-mad? Do they only want pleasure? The answer to both questions is no because hundreds of thousands of people appear to be passionate about freedom, love, justice, and equality. They have sacrificed themselves for these ideals. This implies that for the social values are at least as dear to their lives as, if not dearer than, values of art. Equality, freedom, justice, and love are the basic sentiments of people and society. They are many times more important than pleasure and beauty" (Limbale 2014, 119).

"The following standards can be set down for the evaluation of Dalit literature.

Artists must be motivated by their experience.

Artist must socialize their experience.

Artists' experience must have the strength to cross provincial boundaries.

Artists' experience must seem relevant to all time" (Limbale 2014, 120).

"Savarna Marathi critics have written voluminously in Dalit literature from its beginning. There are more savarnas than Dalit critics of Dalit literature. Their critique of Dalit literature is mired in the issue of taste. Dalit writers do not find this criticism genuine. Savarna critics some are questioning and some are unquestioning on Dalit literature. Dalit writers need not bother about traditional aesthetics" (Limbale 2014, 121). Milinda Eknath Awad wrote in his thesis "The most powerful weapon that exists is the imagination. In order to escape the oppressive cultural norms and flawed assumptions of the caste system, there is a need to liberate the imagination and articulate dreams for a life-affirming future. "Reality" is the lens through which we see the world so that if we want to create a different world, there is a need to create new lenses. The foundation of Aesthetics of Dalit is a reality. The materiality

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of Dalit thought works as an anti-thesis to the spirituality that gets fructified into the caste system” (Awad 2009, 1). Anita says in her research article “Dalit aesthetics draws its inspiration by the Ambedkarite philosophy and Dalit literature makes it its guiding force. Sharankumar Limbale sets the following tests for the formation of Dalit aesthetics: author’s experience be authentic; those experiences be generalized; those experiences should not be just region specific; text should instill inspiration for an egalitarian social system” (Anita 2015, 2).

Ajay Navaria discussed in his article “The future Dalit aesthetics would be formed from the term ‘individual dignity and equal opportunities’ as stated by Dr. Ambedkar in the preamble of Indian constitution” (Navaria 2015, 7). Dalit writers got inspiration from Ambedkar writings in India.

Professor R. S. Jolate described in his article “Dalit Aesthetic Theory has similarities with the theories of subaltern literature, African American Literature as well as with problem play, and Drama of Ideas” (Jolate 2016, 1).

According to Gupta Dalit poetry has the potentiality to stand with mainstream poetry “Thus, we see that the standards set for aesthetics for Brahmanical discourse cannot be applied to Dalit poetry completely as Dalit poetry is born out of the realistic experience of Dalits-their pain, agony, suffering, anger rebellion, and revolt. It demands a separate aesthetics based on Ambedkarite thought. However, we also see that in some poems of few Marathi Dalit writers the elements of aesthetics applied to mainstream literature are also present. Therefore, it would be wrong to say that Dalit poetry is completely devoid of literary aesthetics. It is, in fact, rich in aesthetics as it has the elements of both Dalit aesthetics as well as mainstream aesthetics. However, the examples of elements of literary aesthetics from mainstream literature are very few” (Gupta 2016, 7).

Anupama Rao says in her article “The literary qualities of Dalit writing surely require engagement on their own terms albeit through a genealogy of aesthetic experiment in Marathi literature” (Rao 2017, 13). There is much-strengthening research article coming up on Dalit aesthetics to prove the theory in literature. Dalit literature is having the qualities of uniqueness to study the aesthetics elements which the theory is formulated in its. Dalit aesthetics theory is still under developing stage at present in literature.

#### Conclusion:

In this research paper was been proved clearly on Dalit aesthetic foundations laid by different scholars. Marathi writer Sharad Patil gave hint to the Dalit writers for the launch of Dalit aesthetics at first in one of his books. It was led to Dalit aesthetics formation by Dalit writers and critics. Dalit aesthetics idea has raised the formation of theory from Dalit literature by critics in Maharashtra. Then Sharankumar Limbale wrote the book on Dalit aesthetics with

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his scholarly Marathi work in 1996. Milind Eknath Awad did research on Dalit aesthetics to establish new aesthetics identity of Dalit literature. He gave in his thesis clear idea about Dalit aesthetics formation. Scholars like, Gupta, Anupama Rao, Jolate, Ajay Navaria, Anita, Yatendra Kumar Nigam, and others were been written many research papers on Dalit aesthetics to develop further more in literary theory. At present, many scholars are working on Dalit Aesthetics in India and aboard. In the future, much work has to be done in this field for further development.

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