

RESEARCH PLAN PROPOSAL

Representation of Dalits in Select Works of K. Shivaram Karanth and Vaidehi

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RESEARCH PROBLEM

Indian English Literature pertains to the body of work by those writers from India, who pen strictly in the English language and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous regional and indigenous languages of India. In the 20th century, several Indian writers have distinguished themselves not only in traditional Indian languages but also in English. India's only Nobel Laureate in Literature was the Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore, who wrote some of his work originally in English, and did some of his own English translations from Bengali. In recent years, English language writers of Indian origin are being published in the West at an increasing rate. Indian writers in literature have written in many fields such as on myths, culture, religion, dalit, etc.

The word dalit literally translating to "oppressed" or "broken" is generally used to refer to people who were known as 'untouchable', those belonging to castes outside the fourfold Hindu Varna system. The dalit came into existence in the 1930s as the translation of the phrase 'depressed classes' used by the Britishers for the scheduled castes. First used by Jyotiba Phule, the term was later popularized by dalit leader Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to reflect the situation of the millions of dalits.

The first known dalit writer is the thirteenth century untouchable Bhakti poet of Maharashtra, Chokkamela. The origins of dalit literature in the contemporary usage of the term which is largely written and published in regional Indian Languages, are in the late nineteenth century. In modern times, because of the legacy of Mahatma Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar, dalit literature got impetus of Maharashtra and Ambedkarist thought is still the lifeblood of much dalit literature. Dalit literature has today taken substantial shape in a variety of Indian languages such as Kannada, Tamil, Hindi and Malayalam. A large number of these texts are also available in English translations for a wider audience.

Kannada Literature is the corpus of written forms of the Kannada language, a member of the Dravidian family spoken mainly in the Indian state of Karnataka and written in the Kannada script. Starting with the Kavirajamarga(c.850), and until the middle of the 12th century, literature in Kannada was exclusively composed by the Jains, who found eager patrons in the Chalukya, Ganga, Rashtrakuta and Hoysala Kings. The Veerashaiva movement of the 12th century created a new literature which flourished alongside the Jain works. With the waning of Jain influence during the 14th century Vijayanagara empire, a new

Vaishnava literature grew rapidly in the 15th century, the devotional movement of the itinerant Haridasa saints marked the high point of this era. In the 19th century some literary forms, such as the prose narrative, the novel, and the short story, were borrowed from English. Modern Kannada literature is now widely known and recognized during the last half century. Some of the most widely read writers of dalit literature available in English translation include Laxman Gaekwad, Narender Jadadv, Sharankumar Limbale, Om Prakash Valmiki, Bama, K. Shivaram Karanth, Vaidehi, etc.

The writers of my research K. Shivaram Karanth(1902-1997) and Vaidehi(1945-) have been writing mainly about the issue of caste, class, gender faced by lower caste people in Indian society. Dalit people are oppressed by the upper class people and they are constantly fighting for their identity and for their survival in the society.

In this thesis, I will analyze selected works of the two writers- K. Shivaram Karanth and Vaidehi which thematize and are set against the background of lower caste people. My thrust area in the novels of K. Shivaram Karanth and Vaidehi will be the theme of untouchability.

The chief questions I will investigate are: Why dalits were excluded from the society? How are they being treated by the upper class people? Is there any change in their condition now? Was the oppressed class (woman) more oppressed?

To answer these questions I will compare and contrast the selected novels, analyzing each for the social and psychological implications of Dalits and their condition in Indian society. I will include materials that directly contribute my study of dalit literature to my research. I will also try to refer to the autobiographical and other historical material that has contributed to the writers perspectives on this theme.

BACKGROUND

The term 'Dalit Literature' can be traced to the first Dalit Literary Conference in 1958 in Maharashtra in India. Dalit Literature addresses the oppressed, the untouchables, the victims as well as their oppressors. It is the literature of protest, pain and agony. One of its main concern is the plight of the Dalit women. Dalit Literature in India is an attempt to bring the forefront the experience of discrimination, humiliation, suppression, anguish and mirror forth the depiction of the ill-starred marginalized section of Indian society. Dalit Literature is a protest literature against all forms of exploitation based on class, race, caste or occupation.

The word "Dalit" has been derived from the root "Dal" which signifies crack, open, split, etc. Dalit has come to mean, things or persons burst, split, broken or torn asunder, downtrodden, scattered, crushed and destroyed. The Dalits were "outcaste" because they were not fit to be included in the four folds graded caste structure of the Indian society and were in the state of being a "No People".

Being treated as untouchables, these people are kept away from their rights. They are constantly fighting for their rights and for their survival in the country. Communities are divided according to the caste, class, gender in the society. Upper class people having a some kind of hatred towards the lower class people. However, these people are merely treated as slaves in the society. But then also they did not lose hope, as doing that is to diminish ourselves unnecessarily.

One of the main contributions of K. Shivaram Karanth and Vaidehi to show the problems dalit people are facing in the society. They are treated as slave or merely object. The lower caste people are oppressed in the hands of upper class people in Indian society. In my thesis I wish to study the novels of K. Shivaram Karanth and Vaidehi(translated from Kannada into English) to find out the reasons for the ill treatment to Dalits conditions responsible.

K. Shivaram Karanth was born on 10 october 1902 in the Udupi district of Karnataka in a Kannada family. He was a Kannada writer, social activist, environmentalist, yakshagana artist, film maker and thinker. He was described as the 'Rabindranath Tagore of Modern India' who has been one of the finest novelists- activists since independence. The another writer of my research is Vaidehi was born on 12 february 1945 to A.V.L. Hebbar and Mahalakshmi in

Kundapur taluk of Udupi district, Karnataka. She belongs to Kota Brahmin Community mainly found in Kundapur. Vaidehi is a well-known writer of Modern Kannada language fiction. Vaidehi is one of the most successful woman writer in Kannada and winner of many prestigious literary awards.

In K. Shivaram Karanth's *Choma's Drum* (1978) Choma is an untouchable bonded-labourer in a village who is working along with his family for a landlord, due to paltry loan of twenty rupees-borrowed from him years ago. Due to his social status, he is not allowed to till his own land, something that he desires more. Though he managed to rear a pair of bullocks that he found straying in the forest, he cannot use them to till the land. He comes in contact of Christian missionaries who try to convert him the lure of the land, but Choma does not want to let go of his father. He releases the fury that fate has beset on him, by beating his drum.

In Vaidehi's *Vasudeva's Family: Asprushyaru* (1982) Asprushyaru offers new insight into the practice of untouchability. Who is touchable? Who is untouchable? Such as meaningless separatist system is further complicated by educated dalits who set up their own hierarchies segregating themselves from people of their own caste. The novel depicts the conditions of untouchables and focuses on the eradication of oppressive systems of discriminatory practices perpetuating untouchability. But, Vaidehi's delineation of caste consciousness in this novel is more complex and steers clear of any oversimplifications. The transformation is not easy in Vasudevaraya's household but, nevertheless, it rears a new generation of children who think for themselves and question traditional beliefs and practices.

There are other contemporaries who also wrote about the Dalit issue like Bama's autobiography novel *Karukku* (1992) focus on caste-based and gender discrimination. Novel deals with the experience of a dalit woman in a variety of social institutions like the village, the family, the educational system, the church and the clergy. Novel structured as a series of memories and recollections, the author examines her own experience first as Roman Catholic and then as a woman and as a dalit. The narrative is a polemic between the self and the community and deals with the issue of caste oppression specifically with in the Catholic Church and its institutions.

Narendra Jadhav's *Outcaste: A Memoir* (2003) this narrative is a multilayered personalized saga of the social metamorphosis of Dalits in India. At one level it is a loving tribute from a son to his father. At another, it gives an intelligent appraisal

of the caste system in India and traces the story of the awakening of Dalits traversing three generations. At still another level, it is reflective of the aspiration of millions of Dalits in India. But outcaste is much more than a personal recounting of the downside of the caste divide in India. It also examines Dalit issues in the context of the Dalit's awakening.

OmPrakash Valmiki's *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* (2007) is an autobiographical account of his birth and upbringing as an untouchable, or Dalit in the newly independent India. It is a story of survival, of oppression as severe as slavery or apartheid, and of triumph, as the author gets education and learns to embrace his uniqueness and become a spokesman for his community.

Mulk Raj Anand's novels *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936) are the best examples which deal with an issue that still persists as a problem of untouchability in Contemporary India. Mulk Raj Anand, a pioneer of Indian writing in English, gained an international following in his life. His novels *Coolie* and *Untouchable* set an entire generation of educated Indians thinking about India's social evils that were perpetuated in the name of religion and tradition.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

My research methodology would be to interpret and analyze the selected primary sources of the proposed novelists. I will support my findings with my analyses which also deal with the similar theme of untouchability in contemporary times.

My primary attempt would be to study the sociological and psychological impacts on those characters that have undergone such experiences in their lives. The questions I wish to investigate are: How do sociological and psychological conditions distort the psyche of these people? What are the reasons behind their troubles? How the treatment towards them is different from other people? How do we perceive Dalits in literature? What new dimension opens up with the study of Dalit literature?

Therefore, the primary object of my study would be an in depth study of the proposed works (K. Shivaram Karanth and Vaidehi) from the sociological and psychological perspectives. To establish my point, biographical and historical materials will be used.

To support my findings I will compare and contrast the representation of untouchability as depicted in the works of some other contemporary writers.

TENTATIVE CHAPTER PLAN

1. Dalit Literature
2. Dalit identity in the works of K. Shivaram Karanth and Vaidehi
3. Representation of women/men
4. Narrative Technique
5. Conclusion

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