

The Outbursts of Dalit Victimization Prevalent in Malayalam Poems: A Special Reference to the Poet Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan

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Abstract

Dalit literature has ever been proclaiming the procrastination of justice obtainable for the excommunicated, exploited marginalized and the humiliated, for ages in the caste-ridden Indian society. Its concern is the experience and sensibility of the Dalit which attempt to stress on dalit identity. Dalit literature mostly assumes the form of a protest literature choked out of the realities of the dalit status even in the twenty first century. The purpose of which is to bring about a positive attitude among the dalits and non-dalits. It also includes hopes and ambitions for the development of a new society having no longer any caste and creed discriminations of any sort. The contemporary dalit literature in India is written and published mainly in regional languages. Several poets, novelists and other literary figures have conveyed their empathy towards the downtrodden. Even the dalit writers could raise their voice against the untold and undeclared discriminations against them. The literary world of Kerala has been trying to envision the status on a reality basis, and thrust open the threshold of their equality and liberty with blazing verse or words. Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan was a famous poet of the state who had kept a 'burning sensation' to the reality. His poems generally reflect on the downright lives of the human beings which include those of the marginalized. His famous poems like *Kurathi*, *Kattalan*, *Kirathacharitham* etc. are remarkable for dalit activism in it through the upright narration and direct depiction of outbursts of the dalits in the verge of extreme exploitation. The problems such as poverty, class hegemony, oppression, pitiable plight of women, injustice etc. form the major part of the above poems.

Key Words: Caste and Creed Discrimination, Protest Literature, Dalit Activism, Burning Sensation, Dalit - Outbursts

Introduction:

The term 'Dalit' and 'Dalit Literature' have ever been a matter of oppression, discrimination and the politics of 'otherness'¹ since it explicitly expresses the experiences of the sort. There was an argument that the Dalit writers who have experienced the real afflictions and trials can only be entitled so and be included in the list. It is irrelevant, since it seems that more and more writers from 'the other

castes' had written a lot in favour of them. The *Chandala Bhikshuki* of Kumaranasan, *Thaikulam* of Sara Joseph from the literary world of Malayalam illustrate the truth. There was another argument that Dalits were not really Dalits during earlier times and had belonged to royal orders as referred to the works of *Sangha Ages*². However, since the first argument that the Dalit Literature was for the Dalit, of the Dalit and by the Dalit was prominent for a

long time, the nature and language found in most Dalit Literary works are usually devoid of a normal formal style. Instead, a fire of blazing words as proliferated from the poignant real lives of the downtrodden was commonly found in such works. The politics of 'otherness' is indirectly bestowed upon them from time to time which hindered even the limited chance to be liberated. Though the politicians 'try to lift up' the status, 'the Sun of their real independence' lies still in the western sea!³ Hence the main aim of Dalit Literature is to produce a social awakening among the Dalits.

The Malayalam poet Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan in some of his poems often has come across the limits. One of his most famous poems, *Kurathi* is an ablaze expression of the oppressed against the traitors and lifelong oppressors who belong to the 'upper class' in the present scenario of 'equality'.

Kurathi:

The poem *Kurathi* has two distinctive sections. One is the 'status narration' of the race of Kurathi along with the benefits and services, she and her race had rendered to the upper class all throughout their lives. The other is the proclamation of their inevitable liberty as originated from the relentless oppression; they had been suffering all the time, along with a challenge against the oppressors. The character Kurathi in the poem has different facets. Her rebellious proclamation is not only a mere challenge against the so called civilized society, but also a blind exposure of their poverty against the hard toil, exploitation against the restless unlimited service for the welfare of the 'upper class' and a lot so on.

The words of *Kurathi* also give way to reveal the pomposity in the politics of 'otherness.' The 'upper caste' was interested in the dance performance of Kurathi as well as her. They wanted all the labours and services of her race in terms of agricultural works and many other ways. They never felt any untouchability, guilty conscience or any other difficulty while making use of their body and mind in the desired forms. But, when the terms of equality were considered, such things never reflected.

The poet Kadammanitta Ramkrishnan himself have sung the poem very nicely which reveals the apt demeanor of the character 'Kurathi. The poet narrates the entry of Kurathi in a way that all her sufferings are burst out in her words. She comes out from her *Malanchooral Mada* [small hut made of cane sticks] like a rough mat made of ripe cane sticks⁴. She comes from the forest full of extra strong cords; she comes out with the chest torn when clutched in the fangs of the hunting dogs; she comes with a number of wounds in her body and the soul. She reaches the platform meant for *Kurathiyattam*, [a dance performed by the women from her caste] in front of the 'upper class'. Instead of the usual dance performance she questions the exploiters sitting in front of her and watching her performance. She reminds them all the services and labours one by one including agricultural works, her race have rendered for a long time for the well being of the upper class. Kurathi narrates a number of other services she and her race had rendered with extreme sacrifice. She claims that her race had confronted even the moments of their lives sacrificed to save the lives of the 'upper class'.

Dalit Literature resists literary conventions and language rigidities and tries to create its own poetics against the set politics of the classical literature of the upper caste.⁵

The language used is distinctive of the real life which sometimes may seem to be uncouth, impolite spoken language. Kurathi points her fore-finger towards them and gaffes certain crucial questions. She asks, whether they broil and eat her black children, and prick their eyes filled with tears.⁶ She asks them if they are digging even the graves of the downtrodden. At the same moment she reminds the 'elite class' that they should remember how they themselves had become so. The women protagonist Kurathi actually reminds all other members of the 'elite society' that they live on with the endless sweat showered by the downtrodden in the fields and everywhere. The conflict between the upper and lower castes, the resultant discontentment and dissatisfaction are evident in her words. Their new generation babies lie in the sack clothes hung along the stretched branches of the wayside trees in the scorching sun sucking their own slender and muddy fingers instead of the breast milk. They had never ever even thought of their work being accounted somewhere. Since the status never changes, they can never expect a better future. The society has ever asked them to work without any rest so that they get all the facilities and luxuries. Thus the shame, sorrow, anger and indomitable hope, evident in the words of Kurathi form the identity of Dalit Literature.⁷ Kurathi stands with a state of being of '*No People*' since her race was being trampled over with the very menial and dirty tasks as narrated in the poem. Voice of Kurathi is that of a 'crucified race'. In addition, studies and

news updates confirm that the segregation towards the downtrodden has not yet vanished completely in many parts of the contemporary India.

Dalit Literature aims at the articulation of human sensibility⁸ and hence the Dalit oriented literary texts become the tools for reconstruction of the race. Dalit writers leave the world of romantic fantasy so as to expose the darkness of the reality. To be precise, they are in search of a new human perspective acknowledged as a breath of real human suffering. This is evident in the poem as we read further. Kurathi asks the society where her muddy children have food, shelter and oil to light lamp in the evening. The question was a little louder and when they were in the pit dug by them. The answer was the sliding of earth into the pit so that the whole sounds are buried in it. After some time the mine is reopened as nothing had happened before. They were termed as '*harijans*' for being marginalized which they do not want anymore. Towards the end of the poem Kurathi challenges the traitor- society saying that she was born and brought up with a hard core and that she cannot be defeated anymore. Besides, she gets ready to retaliate for all the exploitations and treason she and her race have been experiencing. She threatens that if the upper class people destroy the children who had been fed by her breast milk, she would prick her breast and throw it on the ground so that the fire ablaze thereby would burn them all. She would lash her hair upon the ground and perish the whole mankind.

The conflict between the Harijans and the upper class started erupting not only because of the discontentment and dissatisfaction among the Dalits with their

past status, disabilities and frustration, but also as a part of their ardent desire and attempts to improve the status by means of 'individual efforts'⁹. Hence Kurathi is a 'representative individual'. Kurathi raises the narrations and challenges as the needs of the time. The down trodden will continue to bear the atrocities as such until they come forward and retaliate in accordance with the circumstances. Kurathi assumes the form of a protagonist in many respects. She is a women of action and finds the life as with full of adventure. She is shown through different eyes and different angles¹⁰ viz. the embodiment of the downtrodden, exploited, oppressed women, alienated and a lot more.

Kirathavrutham:

In the poem *Kirathavrutham*, the only change is in gender. *Kirathavrutham* literally refers to the story of the downtrodden. Like the Kurathi in the previous poem, the *Kattalan*[a savage] reveals the status of the extreme exploitation of their natural habitat due to the inhuman treatment which eradicated even the least possibility of their survival. The dwellers of the forest have thus become losers in all respects. The extreme

Kattalan:

The poem *Kattalan* is a reference to another *Kattalan*. Here, a *Kattalan*[a savage] comes out narrating his piteous condition. The *Kattalan*¹² cries out saying that he was born and brought up below the some wild root. He could yearn for 'the breast milk of the dark clouds' only. He was brought up by 'champing the blue vein of the night' and sucking the blood. River water and wild fruits were the other means of living. Once he killed a bird when he was very hungry. But he could

grief and rage against the oppressors are prevalent in his blazing words. He stands with a 'flambeau in his chest'¹¹ which clearly indicates the heat inside. He roars like a black panther struck by a gaff but sometimes sobs by himself frantically. He asks himself and the trespassers, where he can find again the beautiful forests full of resources where he and his race had led a peaceful life. He wanders aimlessly in search of the lost resources one by one. They have cut all the trees and caused the annihilation of his race. He realizes that the loss was too irremediable even to feed his children, which arouses in him exasperation towards the outrageous acts of the modern exploiters. From the outskirts of his extreme tolerance, he stands abreast and threatens the trespassers like *Kurathi*. He affrights to cut the hand and legs of the intruders with his stone-axe. He is even ready to cut their throats and throw in the river. He would like to become a deluge and destruct all enemies. The laments, shrieks and even violence of the *Kattalan* depict again the status of a race physically and socially excluded from normal life. At the same time his words have certain close resemblance to a deep pain in the destruction of the resourceful nature also.

not bear the grief of its pair. The people accused him for the cruelty and serious wounds were stamped permanently in his body and the soul. He wandered in the forest for long then, without any shelter. He staggered along the stony paths and across the thorny valleys throughout the rest of his life. He got always only the waste materials whatever thrown out by all. When the flowers blossomed, he got only the withered petals; when the fruits are ripened, he could collect only the rind. The words clearly depict the blind

discrimination. He raises some questions at the moment against the loss of the natural habitat. He asks where he can get some natural medicinal leaves for his head ache. But he realizes that the Earth has become poor. He hears about the devastated nature everywhere which has close resemblance with him.

Marginalization of a group or individual by the centre in the name of caste, race etc. is actually short-lived.¹³ The centre can subdue and suppress the marginalized voice for a short period of time. But can never silence them forever. Once they find their true voice, they cease to be marginalized. Dalit writings in general, assume strength on this statement.

The land reforms¹⁴ after the independence were a positive step towards the emancipation of the downtrodden. But it was practically hijacked by the other castes or upper castes with high political influence and using the loop holes in the laws, so that almost all land and power have been retained again indirectly by themselves. The influence of Dalit Literature seeks prominence in this scenario to tear out the masks of the exploitations, educate the illiterate, convince them the reality to assert their identity and grievances in an unbridled voice.

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