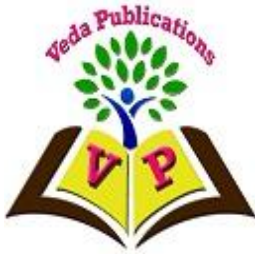


HUMAN RIGHTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE PRESENT SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF TELUGU POETRY

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ABSTRACT



India is a democratic country, where everybody is empowered to enjoy great principles 'liberty, equality and fraternity' because all these were included in preamble in Indian Constitution by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who was chairman of drafting committee of Constitution. After constitution came into force on 26th January 1950 the history of India received an honour to call him as father of Indian Constitution.

Human rights are moral principles or norms, which describe certain standards of human behaviour, and are regularly protected as legal in municipal and international law. They are commonly understood as inalienable fundamental rights" to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being," and which are "inherent in all human beings" regardless of their nation, location, language, religion, ethnic origin or any other status. They are applicable everywhere and at every time in the sense of being universal, and they are egalitarian in the sense of being the same for everyone. They require empathy and the rule of law and impose an obligation on persons to respect the human rights of others. They should not be taken away except as a result of due process based on specific circumstances; for example, human rights may include freedom from unlawful imprisonment, torture, and execution.

Keywords: *Human Rights ,Empathy, Dalit, Telugu Literature.*

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INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of human rights attempts to examine the underlying basis of the concept of human rights and critically looks at its content and justification. Several theoretical approaches have been advanced to explain how and why human rights have become a part of social expectations.

In the entire history of Telugu literature, Dalit have never been written about positively expect by the medieval mystics- Potuluri Veera Brahmam, a shudra social reformer and yogi vemana, a non-Brahmin- both of whom questioned social evils. However, the 19th Century social reforms and 20th century Nationalist poetry, though both dealt with untouchability, suffer from the limitation of silence on the religious sanctity of caste.

Mystics: actively touring Dalit and shudra streets, Potuluri Veerabrahamam and Yogi vemana educated the people on self-respect, social equality and untouchability. They became popular because of their zeal to Reform and simplicity of their language. Their writing as well as their lives. Subsequently, were subject to obliteration: VeeraBrahmam, who became a cult figure, was said to have committed *sajiva Samadhi* burying oneself alive. Dalit intellectuals in the modern period say that upper caste people, unable to digest his popularity, could have buried him alive or forced him to bury himself. Similarly Vemana, who questioned Brahmin hegemony, was branded insane. Their works were either made unavailable or misinterpreted. It was an Englishman, C.P. Brown (1798 – 1884), who edited and recorded *The Lost verses of Vemana*. He had to depend upon local educated Brahmin for tracing and recording Vemana's verses. In the process, the scribes either suppressed or misinterpreted the extant works. What is available of Vemana today can only be what is escaped the eye of the Brahmin and what Brown preserved.

The Mystic's poetry led to drastic change in Telugu language and literature. For the first time, untouchables became the subject of literature. Since Hinduism as a religion has been averse to reformation and modernisation, the mystic attempted reform by questioning the basis of social inequality and discrimination. Veerabraham, known for his *Kaalagnanam*, predicting time Visualised:

When everyone subordinate you
Your chances of reigning the empires would be ripe
The same people who scolded you
Will be cured of their stupidity
And will themselves begin to adore you.

A tradition thus started was to suffer a break in the subsequent times.

REFORM

After a protracted hiatus for about 500 years, caste and untouchability came to the fore in the 19th Century reform by Gurujada Apparao(1862-1915) and Kandukuri Veeresalingam(1848-1919), who championed the concerns of upper caste women. The

reform movement expanded its scope to educating people against social evils like untouchability, child marriage, bride-money, caste and religious hatred. While the mystics used song and verse, the nineteenth century reformers used the short story didactically. The reform movement however suffered the limitation of not coming to terms with the basic tenets and framework of Hinduism and the caste system it did not continue the medieval bhakti tradition. reform was also a reaction to Dalits conversion to Islam and Christianity while historiographers considered both works as benchmarks in main stream Telugu literature Kanyashulkam (1892), Gurujada Apparao's play and Veereshalingam's novel Rajashekara charitam (1880), the first Telugu novel, or silent on caste and untouchability.

NATIONALIST

Nationalist poetry in the subsequent period did not question the basis of caste. Dalit struggles and their challenge to subordination were not represented in nationalist poetry. early leaders of the nationalist movement such as Tonguturi Prakasham Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Burugula Ramakrishna Rao privileged transliterations - translations of Sanskrit works, undermining original Telugu, since the latter was considered the language of Dalits and shudras as if English, which used to be considered the language of the poor during the formative years of English language nationalist literature did not reflect dalit and shudra life. Unnava Laxmi Narayana novel mala palli (1922) and NG Ranga's Harijana Nayakudu (1933) represent this dimension there for Gandhian agenda of 'harijan upliftment' was criticised by Dalit writers like Jalaranga Swami:

You say that you are the descendents of sages
 You call us brothers
 You boast of following the teaching of Gandhi
 Nobody follows (him),
 Is this not injustice?
 You forget the words of Mahatma Gandhi
 You burn with anger at the untouchables.

Literary historians neglected Dalit poetry written parallel to the mainstream one. Kusuma Dharmanna, for instance, wrote against caste oppression untouchability and discrimination focusing on the Aadi Andhra- Boyi Bheemanna claimed that the Dalits were descendants of Arundhati and Vashishta Jala Rangaswamy denounced the Aryan conquest that enslaved the Dalits, and wrote about the glory of the pre Aryan past and Gurram Joshua, who declared caste and poverty his enemies was critical of the complacent and self-serving poets who were unmindful of socio economic problems.

One is a romantic poet, The Other a poet with a Heart of Stone
 One more, a poet who weeps-
 Together, they console Each Other.
 How will this Indian nation flourish?

'Dalit Mahasabha,' the first organised modern Dalit movement launched by poet activist Katti Padma Rao and civil rights champion Bajja Tarakam in 1985, began to fight the

atrocities in Karamchedu, Neerukonda, Thimma samudram, Chundur, vempenta and charlapalli. Since then, young Dalits began to produce a powerful body of poetry in 1995 the first anthology of Dalit Telugu poetry Chikkanou Tunna Pata (thickening song) was edited by G. Laxmi Narasayya Tripuraneni Srinivas, followed by Padunekkina Pata (sharpened song) (1996) edited by G. Laxmi Narasayya. Both anthologies though not exclusively Dalit, or concerted efforts to foreground Dalit ethos, angst, protest, Heritage myth and alternative vision. Some Dalit poets in the anthology emerged with New Voices giving a direction to Young and emerging Dalit poets who later on brought out number of anthologies and little magazines which served as a platform for new debates.

A staunch critic of Gandhi and Hinduism Dharmana (1898-1948) presided over the Aadi Andhra conference a farmer activist writer and orator he ran a periodical, Jayabheri, to propagate Dr Ambedkar ideology. He says

On the pretext of music they bring women to the temples
Marrying them off to the deities every year,
They make love to them.
They allowed even the white lords.
Oh god!

If we, the malas, want to enter the temples, they fret and fume.

Jashuva (1895-1971), who worked in an elementary school, was recognised as the voice of the depressed caste, and he received public acclaim and literary honour. He says-

It's unfortunate to be born a bat.
Doomed and detested,
Can't I be fed as a cat?
Sought after like a rat?
Hailed like the swan?
Or blessed like a unicorn?
In the shadow of the night.

Kahti Padma Rao (b.1953) taught Sanskrit and subsequently became a full-time activist. A founder of 'Dalit Mahasabha,' he fought against atrocities in Karamchedu, Tchundur and other places. A prominent Dalit activist, thinker, poet and critic he says...

I am black
My beloved earth rejoices my tears
The seeds I have sown in the plough lines
Sprout under my tender feet.

Jupaka Subhadra (1963) completed her masters in Telugu literature and took up a job at the secretariat in Hyderabad. An activist and feminist, she writes about her experience taking active part in social and trade union activities. Ayyayyo Dammakka is her collection of poetry she says...

Avva, my mother---
She's not a wick-lamp, safe in wall's ledge
She's the sun went astray in the rug of the sky.

She's a famine in the stretched out phallu
Of the mother-earth.

Paidi Tereshbabu born in Ongole district, Paidi Tereshbabu (1963-2015) works as a senior grade announcer in all India radio, Hyderabad. A voluminous writer, he has published three anthologies of poetry and won several awards. Tereshbabu wrote poetry on various aspects of Dalit life with a pungent criticism of Hinduism. He says...

While a fox solicited dead bodies,
Files desired to have only wounds.
Look my dear leaderly fly,
I don't remember where we met,
But I must know our kinship relation.

Dr. G.V.Ratnakar an academic, translator and poet, Dr. Ratnakar (1972) who was born in Prakasham district, teaches Hindi in Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad. He authored four books, translated forty books into Telugu including Omprakash Valmiki's Joothan and Dr. Ambedkar's writings. He says....

My birth, determined in the womb,
Caste and religion inscribed before I was named,
I was excommunicated without my knowledge.
You have torn me into two
Separating my eyes and legs from me.
Having given them
Two glimpses, two works and two sounds.

Dalit poetry in Telugu, as in the other Indian languages, passed through three phases: written about, writings themselves and writing about the dependent Dalit castes. Each phase, generating newer genres and styles, influenced the mainstream writing.

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