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Research Article



The Rippling of Dalit Consciousness in Contemporary Odiā Poetry

Dr. Pratap Kumar Dash

Associate Professor

P.G. Dept. of English,

Rajendra University, Balangir, Odisha, India

Email: pratapkumardash18@yahoo.com

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5875-7933>


Dr. Susanta Kumar Panda

Assistant Professor,

P.G. Dept. of Odiā,

Rajendra University, Balāngir, Odisha, India

Email: susantakumarpanda362@gmail.com

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6348-4645>

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Abstract

Dalit literature has been influential in the rising awareness for protest or creating literature of social consciousness. The broad domain of Dalit writings includes the deprivation and trauma of certain category of people for some socio-cultural, traditional biases. Maybe one of the tenets of it could be the so-called social stratification or formation of social class. Thus, like writings in many

languages in India, in Odia, lots of writing account for the evidences and experiences associated with Dalit consciousness. It also envisages feminine perspectives giving the account of the autobiographies and plights and traumatic evidences of Dalit authors underlining the issues of caste, class, and gender in the backdrop of social exclusion. Dalit Literature in Odia has a rich history that can be traced back to the fifteenth century. In Odia literary creations such as *Bouddhagāna*, and *Dobā*, *Charyāgeetika*, the anecdotes of social discrimination and casteism are noticed. There is potentiality in contemporary Odia poetry in reflecting on various themes of Dalit consciousness. As it is evident, it starts with saint poet Bhimbhoi who is said to be the first Dalit poet of Odishā in the mid-19th century. Along with glorification of humanitarian attributes, he has outlined the plights of the depraved community. The motifs of Ekalavya, Sanatan, Kalia, Ghinua, Jara Shabara; musical instruments such as baja; the untouchables; Sriya Chandaluni in Laxmi Purana; fingertip print are common in reflecting Dalit issues variously. In this context, this paper focuses on the critical dimensions of Dalit poetry in Odia by including some of the well-known authors such as Gopinath Bag, P.K. Mishra, Nilamani Parida, Ashutosh Parida, Jayadrath Suna, Basudev Sunani, Pitambar Tarai, Akhil Nayak, and Hrushikesh Mallik. Such poets have applied the skills varieties of versification to focus comprehensively on the sensitivity of the traumatic issues of oppression; racial discrimination; socio-cultural taboos; loss of indigenous culture; evil effects of urbanization and politics; existential crisis; victimization of the poor and innocents; loss of ecological harmony; nostalgia and effects of displacement.

Keywords: Protest, Social Consciousness, Feminism, Untouchables, Motifs, Traumatic, Oppression, Discrimination, Victimization, Existential, Displacement

1. Introduction

Dalit literature is a socio-political nomenclature of certain Indian writings that focus on the autobiographical accounts, incidents, and struggles of Dalit community. The historical facts reveal that there were caste-based oppression and discrimination for centuries. Thus, this literature takes in the Dalit writings in various well-known Indian languages such as Marathi, Bangla, Hindi, Kannada, Punjabi, Sindhi, Odia and Tamil choosing literary types such as narrative poems, short stories, novels, plays and autobiographies. The literary movement originated from time to time in line with the incidents of the adversities of feudalistic systems; the so called higher and lower caste-based social injustices in pre-independent India ranging up to the while and post-independence India. Some of the well-known writings during the colonial and post-colonial periods dragged the attention to this genre. They are Jyotirao Phule's *Gulamgiri* (1873) which is a seminal work showcasing the plight of the untouchables. Many authors like Sharankumar Limbale, Namdeo Dhasal, and Bama have contributed a lot to the Dalit literary movement, each offering their unique perspectives on the Dalit experience. B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) has a profound influence on Dalit awareness specifically in his speeches and writings such as "Annihilation of Caste," (1936) and *Who were the Sudras?* (1946). The Dalit Panther movement in Maharashtra has played considerable impact in shaping Dalit literature across India.

Dalit literature has not only portrayed the plights of the untouchable communities but also it invigorates the tenets of women and the poor. In fact, the poor illiterates have long been victims

of social injustice. Long lasting cultural conditions and social hierarchies, beliefs and value systems have put many into utter humiliation and daily life suffering. As a result, Dalit feminism and leftist literature have become a strong part of Dalit literature. Writings on the stories of Dalit women emphasize the matrix of caste, class, and gender in the context of social isolation. Prominent Dalit women authors like Urmila Pawar, Baby Kamble and Pratibha Roy have thrown light on the struggles of the deprived communities, providing a foundation for understanding the complexities of traditional Indian social system.

2. An Overview of Dalit Literature in Odisha

Dalit literature in Odia has a substantial story that dates back to the fifteenth century. Sudramuni Sarala Dasa presented social protest in his writings. As a *Sudra* or untouchable by caste, he ventilated the voices of the marginalized in his writings using the language of the common people. His major works are the *Odia Mahabharata*, *Bilanka Ramayana* and *Chandi Purana* which focus on events and mundane affairs of real-life situations and ultimately form part of protest against the linguistic dominance of Sanskrit as a language of the high class and educated people.

The *Panchasakha* (Five bosom friends) poets, Balarama Dasa, Jagannatha Dasa, Achyutanda Dasa, Jasobanta Dasa, and Ananta Dasa dominated Odia literature from 1450 to 1550 AD, and raised voice against the dominance of Sanskrit in literature. They adopted the colloquial Odia language to write *Jagmohan Ramayan*, *Odia Bhagabata*, *Harivamsa*, *Premabbakti Brahmagita*, and *Hetudaya Bhagabata*. Through their writings, they also created and recreated anecdotes to raise awareness against social discrimination, untouchability, feudalistic exploitation and supremacy of the so called people of social hierarchies.

Bhima Bhoi, a 19th century poet from Kondh tribe and one of the founding followers of Mahimā Dharma (a belief that all are equal before the Creator who is represented as the void i.e. devoid of the worldly illusion) continues to write protest literature as subgenre of Dalit literature. His writings such as the *Stuti Chintamani*, *The Srutinisedha Gita*, and *The Nirbeda Sadhana* attacked orthodox rituals and customs of Odia society. He sought to redefine and redesign Odishan societal norms.

In 1953, Dalit Jati Sangha (Dalit League) was founded by Govinda Chandra Seth, Santanu Kumar Das, Jagannath Malik, Kanhu Malik, and Kanduri Malik. These leaders, who were also creative writers, wrote literary pieces to bring awareness among Dalits. Seth's biography of Ambedkar and Das's novels *Anbhana*, *Vitamati*, *Sania*, and *Pheria*, deal with caste inequality and social injustice. In the 1970s and 1980s, Dalits in Odisha began affirming themselves through their writings. Bichitranda Nayak was a well-known Dalit writer publishing *Anirbāna* (Liberation) in 1972 using the term "Dalit" in several of his poems. During the Ambedkar centenary celebrations, a significant number of Odia Dalit poets and writers were inspired to write about their own histories. Educated members of the community began openly discussing caste, class, and gender exploitation in Odia society. The poets of this period leave the romantic sensibilities so as to become realists. Primarily, they focused on the rural and agrarian contexts followed by themes of love and youth. Poet Sachi Routray can be a burning example of this. Their revolutionary expressions of common people are apparently visible from their poetry. The different themes of oppressor and oppressed are also noticed taking poetic turn. In his "Sarba Binashara Pathe" i.e. the path of destruction, he focuses on how in the pretext of religion, the so called leaders of the

then society, exploit the poor and illiterate. Marxism and socialism are the main source of inspiration for such poets. He criticises the so called rules and regulations of human society that divides and discriminates people. Similarly, Ananta Pattnaik expresses his compassion towards the victims of social injustice. He portrays how the labourers and workers altogether suffer throughout their life. In his 'Kinchit,' 'The Glimpses of Shadow,' 'Debased People,' like collections are well-known for this. Another helmsman, Manamohan Mishra has represented him as the spokesperson of the oppressed. Being deeply concerned about human society, he has raised his voice against untouchability, social injustice, and prejudices too. His poems 'Kotikanthe,' 'Janedaka,' and 'Jibanara Jayagana' are some of the popularly read ones. There are some more poets like Lakshmidhar Nayak who writes 'Pralya Pathe,' 'Biplabi Prana,' 'Agantuka'; Raghunath Das' 'Mruguni Stuti,' 'Dakshayajna'; Subala Kar's 'Agami,' 'Kuli,' poems from Udayana; Brajanath Rath's 'Nishabda Pratibada,' represent Dalit consciousness from different social and cultural view points.

In the 90s, Odia poetry is replete with a number of facets ushering social, cultural and creative manifestations. Dalit consciousness is one of them. The tribal and other so called neglected communities can be included in this category since they have been traditionally looked down upon. For generations together, they have become victims of atrocity, exploitation and deprivation. Some of them are treated as untouchables. They are the victims of caste-based discrimination. They belong to the lower strata of caste division in the traditional society being Sudras, whereas there remain three other higher castes like Brahmin, Kshyatriyas and Baishya. It is said that this kind of division attributes to the Vedic divisions of people accorded with such titles befitting to their nature of works. Brahmins do the worshipping and teaching works; Kshyatriyas are basically warriors and farmers; Baishyas do business and industry; and Sudras perform the petty works related to the rituals of birth, death, wedding and similar such works.

In the course of time, the issues and experiences; the awareness of such social maladies give vent to critical attention of the creative artists thus leading to the formation of a sub-genre in mass literature. These literary works speak of the plight of the victims of the so called low caste people almost like the plights of the working class people. The nuances regarding the Dalit countenance in India is obtained from Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's writings and speeches. Such accounts aim at waging a revolution by inculcating Dalit consciousness and endeavour to establish new society devoid of casteism and socio-cultural prejudices. It seems that Dalit literature is a replica of Leftist consciousness. Even then, it is like the sister concern of Late Capitalism which tends to the formation of the groups like producers and consumers. If people lack the purchasing capacity at par with others, then they feel as if they are the second rate citizens. The leftist ideology drives the force of the love for own land and community; their rights and opportunities. Evidently, "language is a potential means for them to wage such movements of transformation." (Gāhān, Kapileswar, 13: 2009). Although such issues, movements have been reflected on the basis of local issues, they bear the testimony of an integral of global racial as well as social consciousness movements." (Pāndab, Satrughna, 140: 2007).

3. Dalit Consciousness in Contemporary Odia Poetry

In Odia literary creations such as Bouddhagāna, and Dohā, Charyāgeetikā, the anecdotes of social discrimination and casteism are noticed. In the 5th Century B.C., the reference to coordination between Aryans and Non-Aryans has been delineated by Sarala Das. Similarly, in the Panchasakhā Period, the traditional poets like Balarām Das, Jagannāth Das, Achyuta Das, Anant Das and Jashobanta Das have reflected on the classless society in their classical writings. Balaram Das in his *Jagamohan Ramayan*, *Bhaba Samudra*, *Lakshami Purana* like scriptures reflected on Dalit consciousness. Jagannath Das in his *Odia Bhagabat* speaks of no discrimination or untouchable like social maladies. Achyutananda in his *Kaibarta Geeta* and *Gopālanka Ugāla* put emphasis on each and every category of people.

Saint poet Bhimbhoi is said to be the first Dalit poet of Odishā in the mid-19th century. Along with glorification of humanitarian attributes, he has outlined the plights of the deprived community. Through his poems, “he has tried to develop awareness among the Dalits, but do not succeed so much.” (Bārik, Abhaya, p.92: 1996). While a propagator of Mahimadharma, he declares through his poem, “Let there be plight in my life like hell, I must render services for the liberation of all.” Although he belongs to the lower hierarchy of the so called social class of those days, he calls for emergence of humanitarian attributes to shower to upkeep human dignity. Subsequently, lots of poets divert their attention to writing with focus on the leftist tones and class consciousness. However, after 80s, the attention of a host of Odia poets is again diverted to Dalit consciousness. Poets like Ashutosh Parida, Jayant Mahapatra, Prasanna Kumar Mishra, Shatrughna Pandab, Hrushikesh Mallik, Kumar Hassan, Sadashib Das and Basant Muduli are prominent among them. In the first half of the 20th century, another group of poets emerged Basudev Sunani, Pitambar Tarai, Akhil Nayak, Balaram Naga, Bichitrananda Nayak, Bharat Majhi, Narendra Bhoi, Gopinath Bag, Pratibha Bhoi, Hemant Dalapati, Lenin Kumar, Samir Ranjan, Sanjay Bag, Ramesh Malik, Chandrakant Malik, Kumaramani Tanti, Supriya Malik, Basant Malik, Anjubala Jena, Mohan Jena, Samuel Dani, Anand Mahanand, Panchanan Dalai, and Pravakar Palka. Some poets now extend their topics towards the plight of the displaced and the exploitation of the poor people too.

To talk of specific poets like Ashutosh Parida’s ‘Ghinuara Lohita Sakala,’ ‘Ekalavya,’ ‘Amanbiya,’ ‘Uddeshya Achhi Anek,’ ‘Andha Desha,’ ‘Bajabrutanta,’ ‘Pratipakshyara Byuha,’ ‘Ayudha,’ ‘Tume Achha Boli,’ ‘Emiti Maribi Nahin,’ *etc.* In his poem ‘Ekalavya,’ his voice becomes hard as he says:

Specifically, his poetry anthology *Chandāla* is full of such consciousness. This collection depicts the suffering as the social reality. Thus, he has felt the presence of this *Chandāla* in him. The day to day life the *Chandāla* becomes full of suffering. He becomes of motif in the society and a type character.

The poet writes:

Only I was present;
No rights on the earth;
No rights on water;
Nor in the books and scriptures;
No rights on the way and the market place
Bound to drone in the hell like lumps of worms. (‘Ekalavya,’ *Chandāla*, 24)

The life of Chandāla remains like an unsolvable theorem. In his poem 'Ekalavya,' he speaks of the continuity of this social maladies from generation to generation:

I Ekalavya move from generations to generations
 Carrying along my unquenched thirst
 And countless brothers and friends;
 The highest pain of
 Sons and daughters and grandchildren
 Moved along the towns and cities;
 Amidst harvesting fields; valleys and forests;
 The wounds of corruption, fraudulent;
 Moved along with the agitated curiosity
 Bows and arrows! ('Ekalavya,' *Chandala*, 46-47)

There is a reference of Ghinua, the well-known character of Kalandi Charan Panigrahi as he says:

We the Ghinua folk wander from place to place
 Looking for traces of blood
 That spills from the mouth of tiger
 We axe whatever looks like the face of a tiger;
 Since all that looks like a tiger
 Hallucinates our communities. ('Ghinuara Lohita Sakāla,' *Kabitā Ekatra*, 44)

In the poem of 'Suicide of Saraswati,' he argues how brutally passive we are in a society. He says:

Were you becoming alone?
 Got tired fighting in a dreadful labyrinth?
 Thought to confess the matter
 In the face of death
 Whatever you had to say really! ('The suicide of Saraswati,' *Akrānta Askhara*, 60)

In his 'Bājā Brutānta,' he takes the metaphor of a baja and says:

Is this the sound of the bāzā?
 Or the painful howl coming out for decades;
 Reaction against
 Being beaten up strongly by a bony hand!

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I am rolling in the street;
 Holding my bleeding fate;
 Come out of the humiliating slavery of generations;
 Seeking justice
 Before a defunct democracy
 Sitting here face down. ('Bājā Brutānta,' *People Having No Country*, 16-17)

In his poem 'Nainpadithibā Loka,' he refers to Vālmiki foregrounding mythological stories in which the saint had become a heap of anthill and thus says that this man has suffered a lot and bent since time immemorial:

He is bent and bent in this way;

That is not known since when
 It seems time is held up in his clutch!
 Is he lying as an anthill to become another Valmiki?
 To write another epic sitting on the altar of meditation—
 The story of a person who is pierced in arrows uncountable! ('Nainpadithiba Loka,'
Sabaramati, 32)

In his poem, 'Chhana Manisa,' Pitambara Tarai says:

My fate is a forest of thorns;
 My destiny is adhered to it.
 Full of worries and anxieties—
 Is it a coincidence or conspiracy? ('Chhana Manisa,' *Abhājana*, 34)

Referring to the context, he adds from his 'Achhaba' that:

You have lapsed all your life like the main pillar
 Of the trench—
 Surrendered yourself before the verdicts of the master;
 But now, no more. ('Achhaba,' *Itara*, 45)

Poet Akhila Nayak raises his voice against the so called oppression in the history of humanity.

He says:

The light we had obtained for ages together—
 They rejected it and called darkness;
 They detected worms and poison in our boiled rice, tola and gruel-millet kheer;
 They made a face towards our culture and tradition, and beliefs and values;
 They lacerated our green-grass life—
 As infernal or hell.
 Did not count us as human beings;
 Twisted their nose—forest worms!
 Rejected our forest gods and goddesses;
 Called us mediocre Dangar
 And imposed on us their obvious administration
 Saying that they are the sole savours of all of us. ('Kukuda,' *Dhobafarafara*, 15)

Jayanta Mahapātra's 'Kholatāda', 'Bhāta' and Prasanna Mishra's 'Sanātan of the Truck Tipper.' Mahapatra's Kholatada speaks of the nature of work of a character who works as a scavenger and his body has become a stuff of scavenges, but he has no other way because he has to meet his hunger. His life time struggle continues to placate his hunger. Prasanna Mishra says in his poem:

'Sanatan, don't prostrate your head like this;
 You will continue to be with folded hand forever
 It is declared that you're dead although you're alive
 You protest; protesting is your rights. (*Sanatan of the Truck Tipper*, 54)

Hrushikesh Mallik in his poem 'Dhanasaunta Jhia,' says of the plights of an untouchable girl who collects paddy stalks. She is denied to make up herself with alatā or kājā and even denied to dream.

Hey girl, don't thrash your legs, you're denied to wear alatā
 Don't shed tears; you're denied to wear kajal

- - -

Take me out of the confined trench

Take me near your cool and green field

Your lap burns

In the thirsty fire of my ancestors;

Your wet locks of hairs get dried in the hot air of the thick lips. (*Dhānasauntā Jhia and Other Poems*, 22)

He continues in his 'Basusena,' that the Dalits live a chaotic life which cannot be defined in a sane sequence.

Hey branchless traveller

This earth is not yours

In the rusty ego of the so called society

The history of this land is built upon

It can never be yours.

- - -

The daylight mocks at you

Whereas the light of the evening passes comments;

The echo of the own voice is heard around;

How much shall I close my ears? ('Basusena,' *Dhānasauntā Jhia and Other Poems*, 28)

The poet draws attention towards the sensitivity of a boy who has been cursed by the caste system. He is unable to express his pain admixed with innocence. The poet thus renders his emotion:

The light of the day ridicules

The shadow teases me in the evening

My voice echoes and gets lost uncomprehended. (*Basusena,' Dhānasauntā Jhia and Other Poems*, 29)

It continues to throw light on the future generations compassionately and broods over their ways of life which is going to be cramped with the social maladies. God will give them life their unknown mothers will give them birth having full of dreams and aspirations. But, society will customize them into its needs and turn them as unfortunates. In this context, the poet outlines:

Getting birth from unfamiliar mothers

Just like the falling of the fresh jasmine amidst the swinging of bouquets

I can only be the representative of such unfortunates

And I am worth it. (Basusena, *Dhānasauntā Jhia and Other Poems*, 31)

Referring to the varieties of religious and cultural traditions associated with the temple of Lord Jagannath, he says in the voice of the lord:

The temple, the lord and Grand road;

The worshipping of the great Panda;

Tonnes of bhoga; golden decoration of the lord;

The car festival; many festivals and fairs;

All these are useless for me. (*Kālīā Ubācha*, 12)

- - -
 He had told me so many things;
 Made me listen to many rules and ethics
 Made goddess Lakshmi stood in the house of an untouchable
 Because I hated the untouchable
 Turned me to a beggar! (*Kaliā Ubācha*, 15)

The poems of Satrugna Pandav like ‘Mendhā,’ ‘Pichurāstā,’ ‘Nainpadithibā Loka,’ ‘Kāu kathā,’ ‘Jhala,’ ‘Pāni,’ and ‘Ghāsakathā’ speak of the plight of the destitute. In ‘Ghasa,’ he represents ship and grass as the symbols of suppression. For him, crow also stands as a symbol of untouchable. ‘Nainpadithiba Loka’ represents the condition of the day labourers those who become victims of exploitation although sincerely render services throughout their lives. Basudev Sunani in his poems like ‘Anek Kichhi Ghatibāra Achhi,’ ‘Gaon Mundaku Jā,’ ‘Tutha,’ ‘Ie Mandira,’ ‘Untouchable,’ ‘Mahulabana,’ and ‘Amruta Khojuthiba Manisa’ talk of the various facets of socio-cultural taboos which victimizes the Dalit communities. In his poem ‘Prarthana,’ he prays to God in order to identify the reality of everyone in making naked. In ‘Tutha,’ he speaks of the torture encountered by the Dalit communities. In his poem ‘Suradipa and Gahantia,’ he says:

Recently, he has left his village
 Cleaning dishes at a hotel
 Cleaning tables, floors;
 Serving food to the customers
 Filling his stomach twice a day eating stale cakes and stuffs. (Suradipa and Gahantia,’
Sabaramati, 65)

Further, in his poem “Mendha” which is sheep in English, he says in the context of endless suffering of the innocent poor children working here and there as day labourers:

They don’t know how to fight Freed from the herd,
 Goes on boiling the whole day
 To meet the burning of stomach.... they have to tolerate torture.... bones crack
 Neck bends Unable to look at the light of the setting sun. (‘Mendha,’ *Sabaramati*, 36)

In his ‘Nain Padithiba Loka,’ he presents philosophical and symbolic features of the Dalit victims. The insurmountable counter-plight has been a construct, a motif and a permanent symbol of defeat:

He is bent forever!
 Nobody knows since when
 Perhaps, time is held up in his wrest
 And maybe, he has turn to become an anthill
 Expecting to become monk Valmiki one day?
 In the altar of meditation,
 Does he plan to write a mournful epic
 Of the victims of the uncountable pierce of torture? (‘Nain Padithiba Loka,’ *Sabaramati*,
 38)

According to Basudev Sunani, when Dalit people protest against the injustice done to them, their so called masters attack them like swarm of bees; make them put into the ditch of hatred; speak

them diabolically; give them ultimatum of surrendering themselves or remain starved. Thus, he writes criticising such people:

Hey the so called masters!
 Have a look at the rational side of humanity;
 Why do you become so irrational?
 You remain untouchable forever
 Or you will not be called for services;
 Your stomach will be set with fire. ('Tutha,' *Ashprushya*, 46)

Sunani seems to give a running commentary in his poems giving the daily life accounts and instances of suffering of the working-class people. Poet Nilamani Parida's 'Padatika' reflects Dalit consciousness remarkably. He writes:

They have drawn Laxman's line;
 High and low; rich and poor; touchable and untouchable
 Thanks to their knowledge and power;
 Only for their successors,
 They have been making the system suitable
 At the cost of punishing some others
 Such that even God himself cannot change. ('Ganadebata' *Padatika*, 56)

He talks of the political boundary called below poverty line. It says of the indescribable accounts of daily life of the poor. The irony is that whenever such people come forward to protest or present their viewpoints have been trampled. To quote the poet in this context:

Don't obstruct the path;
 Don't control the movements;
 Make the Dalits free from bondage of ages;
 You have only understood the meaning of living life;
 The heartbeat gets suffocated continuously;
 Their alienation
 Express your commitment to love the Dalits
 Once again, oh the god of the mass—
 Open the cover of the so called world
 And see that there is an ocean of tears
 And the sky of humiliation
 Amidst which they live! ('Ganadebata', *Padatika*, 67)

Akhila Nayak has a series of poems written on the realities of Dalit communities. He has raised voice against the capitalists in his poems 'Khetapurāna,' 'Gadhuā Bela,' 'Gulikhati,' 'Dhoba Farafara,' 'Indradhanu,' etc. In his poem 'Kukudā,' he gives a call to the exploited communities to be aware of their rights and raise voice against oppression as he says:

While looking for the eggs laid yesterday
 She has forgotten that today also she has to lay eggs. ('Kukuda,' *Dhobafara*, 44)

One poet Pitambara Tarai reflects on the plights in a more emotional tone as he says in his poem 'Uchhakula':

It is not the story of these days

Right from the times of our forefathers

The fate of you and me is the same

You earn eight annas and repay twelve. ('Uchakula,' *Sudrakara Sloka*, 20)

There is one poem titled 'Jota' means shoes which he takes as a metaphor to reflect on the life-long suffering of the labourers. The shoe says:

See, my precarious situation matches with that of yours.

We both are used to tolerating humiliation and torture.

I am always trodden, till my end I am trampled under feet

- - -

Always compromise with my situation;

Always submissive and faithful. ('Jota,' *Jane Aparichita Loka*, 45)

The poet thus advocates the unspoken pain of the poor ushering life like situations and strongly protests exploitation aiming at a movement to establish the tenets of socialism.

In his poem 'Pachhaloka,' he reflects on the prejudices of how the Dalits are deprived of making the Darshan of the deities in the ground that it is unholy and loses sanctity of the deities. His poems 'Shudrakara Shloka,' 'Achhaba,' 'Tipachinha,' 'Bhalaloka O Apana,' and 'Jota' speak of the typical conditions of Dalit people.

Poet Bichitrananda Das criticized the untouchable tradition of the society. He is of the opinion that the so called higher class people live a life of pretention because they deprive the Dalits from being a part of the mainstream society. He says his poetry is the voice of the Dalit and expresses their language and emotions.

Poet Bharat Majhi also reflects on the plights of common people in daily life activities. He categorically criticizes the decisions that made people displaced and scattered. He finds that such people become the victims of simplicity and trust in the emerging social system. They cannot comprehend the strategies of the capitalists as well as the government for not making them rehabilitate and make them lose their culture and traditional artisanship. His poems like 'Ekatharake,' and 'Mahanagara Padya' ironically depicts the so-called development through industrialization and urbanization.

Gopinath Bag writes in his poem 'Drona' that these social maladies have been in practice since long. Casteism has been given a demonic shape throughout. He refers to the mythological story of Jārā Shabar who got misguided only for the deliberate negligence of Dronāchārya. He writes the voice of Jārā:

You stifled all my brightness

That to very cleverly

That to involving myself

I am the victim of your hateful mentality

Because I am a Shabara by caste. ('Drona,' *Kichhi Kabibara Achhi*, 57)

After Super-cyclone of 1999, the victims of it become utterly destitute. In his poems, 'Bhoipilara Gita,' 'Dangara Talara Gaon,' 'Pachāra Tāku Pachāra,' he expresses the unspeakable agony of the victims. Poet Jayadrath Sunā emphatically advocates for the tribal. He says in his 'Pachhaku Thare Bulidekha':

Why do you deliver long speeches?

We do not want

Indira housing scheme; rice for two rupees

Old age pension, or life insurance scheme.

We want our danger; our streams of water; salap tree; dates tree;

Gruel with millet or mud huts. ('Pachhaku Thare Bulidekha,' *Sbosa and Other Poems*, 24)

In the poem 'Jhadipoka O Jhitipiti,' poet Jayadrath Suna has taken two commonly noticed creatures to represent a fable-like sense of understanding of the fact of Dalit life since both the creatures represent a low quality life in our senses. Thus the poet writes:

Why do you encourage us to fly again and again?

I am destined to crawl now.

Also I know that your life is with velvet mattresses

In the glowing palace;

But, mine is destined to be in the municipality dustbin. ('Jhadipoka O Jhitipiti,' *Sbosa and Other Poems*, 56)

In 'Kalia Ubācha,' Basudev Sunani expresses his deep anguish for the so called restrictions imposed by the higher caste people of the society for which the low caste people are deprived of directly viewing their cherished divine lord.

Pooh-pooh-pooh

It is not known in which system, it is there

Untouchables have to stay away

Have the darshan of their sacred lord through a hole

- - -

It is understood that here 'rule' means

Like a pet dog

As per the instruction of the owner

Sit up and take notice

Bound in the chains and helpless! (*Kaliā Ubācha*, 28)

Prasanna Mishra in his 'Truck Dālāre Sanātana' speaks of the plights and ultimate destiny of the unidentified day labourers. He creates a common name Sanātana as a representative of the class of labourers. He finds that such categories of people have no identification. They are daubed in powdered soil of the construction sites; mines; and move around in the carriers of the trucks or come out of stones and earth from the hills and valleys. He happens to be the eternal victim of their masters. He thus writes:

Covered up with red soil

You will search for your real body

Children will call you the ghost of Vālmiki

Who has come out of the ant hill.

Birds in the broken branches and torn creepers

Would talk about your existence

Whether you would remain alive or die;

And resolve that you will definitely die of suffering.

- - -

At times, you will find the young lady
 Swiftly moving up the bamboo ladder
 Bearing a cement cauldron;
 Moves up and up the floors like a light piece of cloud;
 When her apron gets half unveiled from her body;
 And look like the unfurling of a flag of an unknown temple. (*Truck Dālāre Sanātana*, 45)

Contemporary poet Sanjaya Kumar Mishra reflects on the callousness, unorganized and absurdity of caste-based society. He adds to the substance of his Dalit poetry by including realistic portrayal of the problems of modern India like poverty, immigration for survival and displacement of poor rural folk. He highlights how these new social issues cause the disintegration of society, indigenous culture and identity leads to liminality and hybridity like factors. He focuses on how the poor and illiterate people suffer from casualties, death, and disease and at times become the victims of fraudulence. It seems as if each of the victims of suppression, oppression and negligence have stories of their own. He writes:

By crossing over utter disaster caused by dadni-merchants;
 Crossing over the fire and water, I have returned tomorrow.
 Already I have lost two of my children for malnutrition;
 Helplessly, I have returned yesterday escaping disaster. ('Dadan,' *Dhasa*, 37)

In the post-independent Odisha, like other states of India, large scale water reservoirs, industrial and urban projects were initiated. This results in the displacement of thousands of rural people those who have been living amicably in their own lands for generations together. It becomes increasingly difficult to accept this by the rural folk those who have been mostly agrarian, live on forest products and used to a traditional society. The places like Hirakud, Kalinganagar, Niyamgiri, Lower Suktel and many such areas soon lose their natural ambience in order to get transformed with government initiatives. This results in suffering of those rural folk although government adopts some policy of giving compensation. In this context, Susanta Mishra writes:

Office buildings have been built;
 Pitch roads too.
 It looks quite urbane now.
 But, it is difficult to leave the birthplace so easily.
 It is a loss for the village folk
 But huge gain for the officers and political people
 In many ways. ('Lower Suktel,' *Dhasa*, 26)

Similarly, in his poem 'Ame Janichhu,' he tells about how the families living together for generations get disintegrated in the process of construction and destruction. It seems as if there is no other way but to get displaced in order to claim yourself to be modern and developed. Bulldozer has become the symbol of demolition of civilization. Earlier, people were afraid of natural calamities and pandemics; but now, people are afraid of peoples and the machines used by them to be developed and powerful. This on the other side makes some other people poor and powerless. In some poems like 'Samaja,' the poet broods over the firm decision of certain communities to keep holding their age-old values and traditions. They never accept such programmes of industrial and urban development. They can never forget their hills, valleys, rivers

and deities. They feel that their community feelings give them life. They are overwhelmed with the smell of their vegetations in the wild lands and gets emotionally touched to life with dust and clay. The poet writes:

They can smell the earth of their own
Can guess the life of their bones and flesh
For that, they sacrifice their lives
Asking to return their lands; their trees;
And dream too. (Shosa, 45)

The changing facets of human being with the change of nature, culture and mental constructs, various interpretations of Dalit issues get more of poetic protractions. In fact, newer issues like disaster victims, refugee plights, and modern existential social alienation abound in this literature too.

4. Critical Discussion and Conclusion

Dalit consciousness in Odia poetry is vast and full of socio-cultural varieties. It reflects on the mythological stories of Ekalavya, Jārā Shabara, Sriyā Chandāluni, and some other stories most commonly available in *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharat* and Puranas. What's more, it is based on the culture of Lord Jagannath in which the staunch devotees like Sālabeḡa and Dāsia Bāuri have been variously referred to as the important role of the Dalit in Odishan society. Sudramuni Sarala Das and Blind devotee and poet Bhimabhoi like great poets of the ancient days stand powerful even in modern poetry. The role of freedom fighters from tribal communities Laxman Naik of Koraput, Ratna Naik of Keonjhar, Kamala Lochan Dora Bisoyee, Chakra Bisoyee, and Nabaghana Kanhar of Ghumusar, Dayanidhi Dharua of Mayurbhanj, Rindo Majhi of Kalahandi, Tama Dora of Malkangiri, Dharanidhar Nayak of Keonjhar, Veer Surendra Sai of Sambalpur, Madri Kalo and Nirmal Munda of Sundergarh have been greatly acknowledged for their contributions for bringing about social reformation. The plight of the working class, the feudal systems which adopt the slavery (Haliā) and the plights of the traditionally identified as (not constitutionally) lower caste people have been taken as the subject matters of such poems. Their simplicity, honesty, hark working nature and services to the society have also been taken as subject matters of modern Odia Dalit poetry. Their natural rights and the urgency of social reformation have also been greatly presented in such poems. Poets like Bichitrananda Nāyaka says with a revolutionary undertone that the spirit of Dalit consciousness is burning like the blood red sun; or it sparks out the fury of Durbāsā spread across the sky dreaming of utmost victory; and the perspiration of the Dalit must make them unfettered of the mental prison created from time immemorial.

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