LITTLE MAGAZINES IN INDIA AND EMERGENCE OF DALIT LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

As encyclopaedia Britannica defines: —Little Magazine is any of various small, usually avant-garde periodicals devoted to serious literary writings.‖ The name signifies most of all a usually non-commercial manner of editing, managing, and financing. They were published from 1880 through much of the 20th century and flourished in the U.S. and England, though French and German writers also benefited from them.

HISTORY

Literary magazines or ‘small magazines’ are traced back in the UK since the 1800s. Americas had North American Review (founded in 1803) and the Yale Review (1819). In the 20th century: Poetry Magazine, published in Chicago from 1912, has grown to be one of the world’s most well-regarded journals. The number of small magazines rapidly increased when the independent Printing Press originated in the mid 20th century. Small magazines also encouraged substantial literary influence. It provided a very good space for the marginalised, the new and the uncommon. And that finally became the agenda of all small magazines, no matter where in the world they are published: To promote literature — in a broad, all-encompassing sense of the word — through poetry, short fiction, essays, book reviews, literary criticism and biographical profiles and interviews of authors. Little magazines heralded a change in literary sensibility and in the politics of literary taste. They also promoted alternative perspectives to politics, culture, and society.

In India, the beginning of Little Magazine is found in the early 20th century when many marginal content writers have started voicing their ideas in these non-commercial, non-mainstream journals and magazines. The regional and vernacular writers found a new medium in these periodicals. Dalit writings, especially Dalit poetry has gained a lot of momentum via these small magazines which were highly regional in nature; both the language and the circulation.

Dalit literature is a literature of revolt and enigma, protest and negativism. The social, economic and cultural inequality faced by ‘Untouchables’ finally made them start and join many movements. The protest against establishment of the Dalits gained the very first expression amidst the Dalit literature. In the midst of the cobweb of poems, fiction, novels and autobiographies the age-old questions of Dalit identity was addressed. These movements have a long history and which also is spreads into many verticals of parallel protests. The Dalit literary movement in India is significant not only from the literary perspective but it has changed the whole spectrum of socio-political writings in many parts of India. It has provided a new avenue of liberation for Dalits.

Caste system, ‘Verna’ system, untouchability and social discrimination have subjugated a very large part of our society. Dr. Ambedkar named it ‘Dalit’ and Indian Constitution called it ‘Scheduled Caste’, but this marginalised group has existed consistently in our history of time. Shudra, Atishudra, Pancham, Avarna, Ashtrushya, Chandal, Antyaj, Dhedh, Bhangi, Harijan, Dalit, Dpressed class, Bahujan... are some of the identities given to them with little pride and more of insult. So the need of any literature or journalism which gives voice to these people is very clear.

THE BEGINNING

Dalit literary movement began in Maharashtra, the birthplace of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Many small scale Marathi literary journals have supported this movement. According to the Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Marathi Literature, —The focus of these magazines is their insistence on locating contemporary Marathi poetry in the context of the tremendous social changes that have taken place due to
globalisation and the policies of the Indian Government like liberalisation and privatisation. For example, on the cover page of his first magazine „Mook Nayak” on 31st January 1920, Dr. Ambedkar has put these lines of Tukaram’s Abhanga:

—kaykaruaatandharunia bheed, Nishank hai taund vaajvile
Navhe jagi koni mukkikat yanchya jaan Sarthak lajun nahve heet.

(Why should I keep quiet now? I have been anyways speaking openly. There is no place for a mute in this world. Nothing is gained by keeping quiet)

Historically, „Mook Nayak” (1920) is considered a first attempt in Marathi dalit magazine. But before that „Dinbandhu” started by Iyotiba Phule (1877) was a starting point. Phule disciple Gopal Buva Walangkar started „Vital Widwansak” in 1888. In 1908 „Somvanshiya Mitra” was started by Shankar Prasadlik who was working for the removal of untouchability. It was continued till June 1910, almost 23 months. In 1907 „Bahishkrut Bharat” was started by „Dippressed Classes Mission Society’. Dr. Ambedkar has mentioned some contemporary magazines like „Dinmitra”, „Jagrak”, „Decdan”, „Reyat”, „Gyan Prakash” and „Subodi” in his „Mook nayak’. Dr. Ambedkar had managed some of these magazines in his wide spread public life;

1. **Mook Nayak-** 1920-1923
2. **Bahishkrut Bharat-** 1927-1929 3. **Samta –** 1928-1929
4. **Janta –** 1930-1956

Though all these magazine don’t come under the category of „Little magazine’, they have contributed significantly in establishing dalit writing is Marathi and other languages.

The Dalit Literary movement has gained momentum in 1960s and 70s, and The Little Magazine movement has contributed largely in reaching out to the masses with the short stories, comparative articles and burning poems. The „Dalit’ has got a new face of „Anry Young Man’ in the pages of these little magazines. These magazines provided a spatial social thought process which helped some of the protest literatures to get established as a mainstream study.

In 1940, Bal Sitaram Mardhekar was the most prominent name. He influenced many small non-periodical magazines in next thirty years. In India, the small magazine gained strength in the culturally rich atmosphere of the 1950s and 60s in a movement to publish literature in regional languages. **Shabda** was published by Dilip Chitre, Arun Kolatkar and ramesh Samarth.

- **Vacha** and Aso published writings of radical and angry young writers like Namdeo Dhasal, Vasant Dhake, Vasant Gurjar, Vilas Sarang and Manohar Oak.
- Arun Kolatkar, Ashok Shahane and Dilip Chitre started the earliest and most influential little magazine in Marathi „Shabda” (1954-1960)
- Bal Sitaram Mardhekar brought modernism in Marathi Poetry through **Abhiruchi**- a little magazine in 1946.
- From 1955 to 1975 avant grade poetics found its expression in little magazines like „Shabda’, Vacha’ and literary periodicals like „Asmitadash’.

The movement started full-heartedly in Marathi literature in the period 1955-1975. The era was dominated by the little magazine movement where writers Dilip Chitre, Arun Kolatkar published cyclostyled Shabda. In the early 1960s the movement took the revolutionary writers by storm, ushering in modernish and the Dalit movement.

Writers like Baburao Bagul, and Shankarrao Kharat emerged because of The Little Magazine Movement which has provided an angry and an accusative face to the literature. It became more questioning with the passing time and Dalit Literature gained momentum as a strong voice. The Marathi little magazine movement lost momentum in the 1970s and 1980s, but a resurgence in the 1990s saw the founding of journals Abhidhanantar, Sausthav and Shabdavedh.

The Little Magazine Movement in Marashtra saw a new high under the writings of Baburao Bagul, Madhav Bandhu and Shankarrao Kharat. Bagul’s writings included collection of short stories „Jenwah Mee Jaat Chorli Hoti” (when I robbed a caste), conventional story writing in Marathi „Sood” (Revenge), his novels Aghori and Kondi - the exemplifying stories of misery. Bagul was the first writer to associate Dalit
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Parmar had also started "Mangal Prabhāt" in 1949. "Antyaj Patrika" was a magazine supported by non-Dalits. Ambedkar influenced some of the Dalit magazines like "Bhurubandh" (1939). It started with the main objectives like - to remove untouchability, rebel against Hindus and to spread awareness in Dalits. A weekly named "Challenge" started in 1946 from Mumbai by Advocate Hirji Patel. Its cover page carried "Jai Bheem" and "Jai Fedration." Though it could not survive for more than a year, it has contributed a lot in spreading dalit "Chetana".

A magazine called "Jai Bheem" was the supported by All India Scheduled Caste Federation. Though it cannot be called a little Magazine, it was major Dalit magazine. Post 1960 in Gujarat saw an array of small time magazines dealing with issues related to Dalits.

- Garud: (1971-78), Dalpat Srimali, who was earlier a Gandhian activist, has started Garud. He was vocally critical about the double standards and hypocrisy of some of the Gandhians. Garud provided a platform for new writers writing about injustice to Dalits or issues of untouchability and provided a voice to a large number of voice-less people.
- Dalit Bandhu: Started in 1973 and continued for a longer time than other contemporaries. It had a special 'Dalit Kavitā Corner'.
- Taras: started in 1943 in Mumbai, it is a publication of a specific caste (Mahyavanshi) but it has published many articles, short stories, essays and travelogues.
- Akrosh: started in 1978, it published the works of Neerav Patel, Dalpat Chauhan, Pravin Gadhi and Yogesh Dave during 1981 Gujarat riots, it has created lots of buzz with its radical writings.
- Kalo Suraj: first published in 1979, it is also known as the mouth piece of Dalit poetry. Some prominent writers who wrote in it are Dr. Pinakin Dave, Mohammad Sheikh, Dr. Mafat Oza and Joseph Macwan.
- Panther: Started in 1975, it was a publication of 'Dalit Panther- Gujarat'. Panther leaders like Ramesh Parmar and Nagin Parmar were editors. Some of the important writers like Neeraj Patel, Jayprakash Dolas, Angat Chauhan, and Raja Jadav had contributed in its success.

Disha: Since last 25 years, this is the only magazine still continuing with Dalit writings. Many translations of Marathi Dalit literature, poems of Mangal Rathod and B.V.Vankar and articles of N.V.Chavda are some of the highlights of this magazine. Some other important magazines in this category are "Lagam", "Parishd sandesh", "Samaj Mitra", "Avasar", "Kahani", "Mukti nayak" and "Prabudhda Bharat".

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