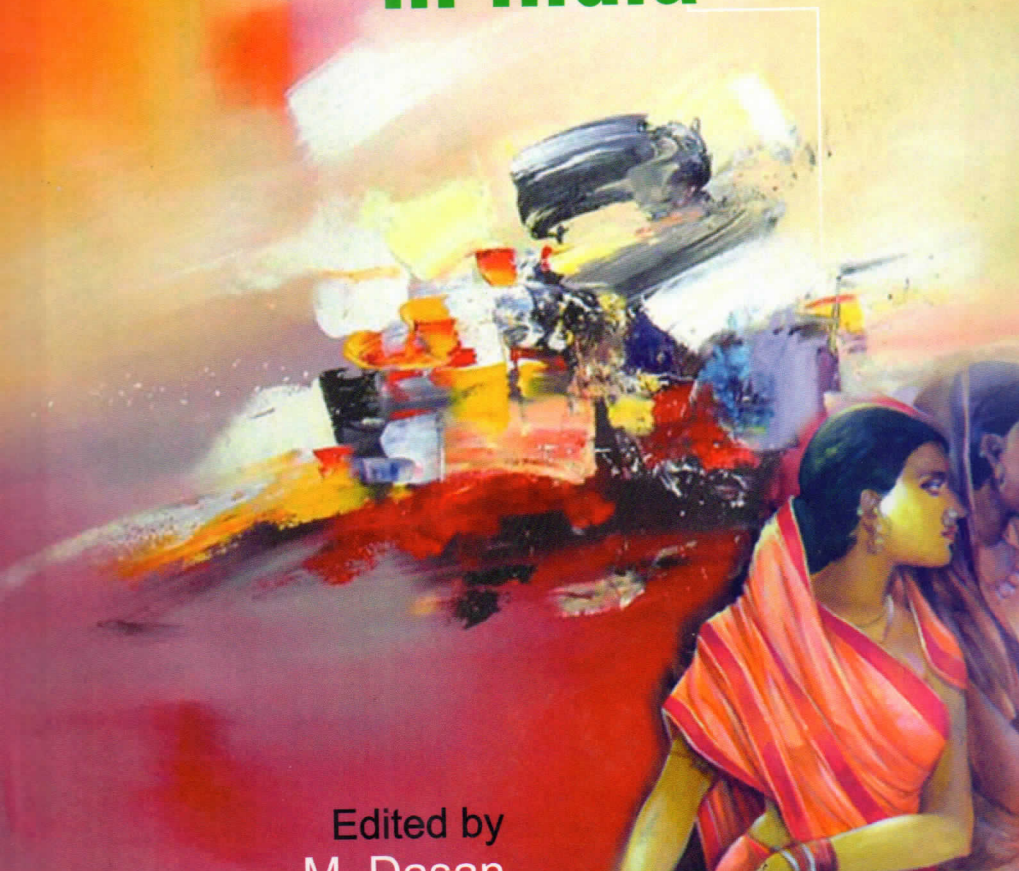


Counter Cultural Discourse and Dalit Literature in India

Edited by
M. Desan



Counter Cultural Discourse and Dalit Literature in India

This book contains seventeen critical essays on various aspects of Dalit culture and literature contributed by eminent scholars and academics in the country. The unifying force of these articles is the counter cultural discourse they project. The book provides a birds eye view of the Dalit writings in various Indian languages so as to enable the English readers in India and abroad to understand the politics and poetics of Dalit writing vis-a-vis African-American literature, Canadian First Nations literatures, Australian Aboriginal literature which may enable them to take up cross cultural, comparative studies with an interdisciplinary perspective. It is expected that the papers presented in the book would be of immense value not only to students, researchers and academics of Culture Studies, Comparative Studies, Gender Studies, Comparative Studies and Dalit Studies but also to general reader.

M. Dasan serves institutions of higher education in the country in various capacities. He has held various academic and administrative positions in Calicut and Kannur Universities for about three decades. He has published about 40 research articles in prestigious journals and books on a wide variety of topics and has presented papers in international seminars held in countries like UK, USA, Canada, Australia, China and Cuba. He has authored/edited more than eight books including Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing and Theyyam : Patronage, Appropriation and Interpolation. He was a recipient of Shastri Indo Canadian institute Fellowship and UGC Research Award.

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Contents

Preface

List of Contributors

Introduction

1. The Buddha in Dalit Literature: Histories and Contexts
2. Marathi Dalit Literature: An Overview
3. A Survey of Dalit Autobiographies
4. Contemporary Dalit Theatre in India
5. Gujarati Dalit Literature
6. Kannada Dalit Literature: A Brief Survey
7. Evolution of Telugu Dalit Literature
8. Telugu Dalit Women Poets: The Distinctive Voices against Caste and Gender Discrimination
9. Boundaries Defined and Negated in Dalit Writing
10. Nature and Development of Hindi Dalit Literature
11. Alienation, Consciousness and Assertion: An Interpretation of Oriya Dalit Narrative
12. Dalit Literature in Rajasthan: A Voice Lost in the Wilderness
13. Rich Heritage of Punjabi Dalit Literature and Its Exclusion from Histories
14. Dalit Literature in Tamil: An Overview
15. The Poetics and Politics of Dalit Poetry in Malayalam
16. Short Fiction and Minor Histories: The Politics of C Ayyappan's Short Stories in Malayalam
17. The Polyphony of Dalit Criticism in Malayalam

Short Fiction and Minor Histories: The Politics of C Ayyappan's Short Stories in Malayalam

Ajay Sekher

Past must be given a chance to avenge.

C Ayyappan, "Smarakam"

Today the word Dalit provides a possibility for radical alliance among the people or subaltern. As you know it is not a caste. If it could include almost everyone the story would change. There needs to be a feeling among the people that this new category is something better if the tendency towards self-rejection is to be stopped. If self-revealing becomes better than self hiding everyone would come out in the open. I am sure that today's young people who could understand any story could do that as well.

C Ayyappan, "Interview"

There is a general understanding in the literary public sphere of Kerala that the novel is truly capable of dealing with history in an effective and fictional way. But a look at contemporary author C Ayyappan's short fiction would challenge this consensus. C Ayyappan has carved his niche in the literary and cultural domain of Malayalam with a few volumes of short stories. His portrayal of history and subjectivity with cultural specificities and complex regional diversities are distinctly unique and outstanding. With his keen sense of social and historical inequality, his fictional representation of the contemporary reality of caste and his scathing critique of cultural elitist discourses in Kerala he has placed himself among the most radical and socially oriented fiction authors in Malayalam like Basheer, Pattathuvila and Kovilan.

His short fiction proves that the genre of short story is also capable of exploring and exposing repressed and erased histories and subjective experiences of such

The Polyphony of Dalit Criticism in Malayalam

— *Ajay Sekher*

The contemporary critical practice that evolves within the Dalit writing in Malayalam is vibrant with a variety of voices and divergent perspectives. There is an increased presence of people from all walks of life cutting across age, gender and community here. The diversity and difference that exist in the socio-cultural life of the marginalized also get reflected in their intellectual and cultural interventions.

We have intellectuals engaging with historiography, literary and cultural criticism, social and political commentary, activist propaganda and other modes of critical enquiry. Though they differ in various issues and points of view the ideological underpinning is the social justice and democracy paradigm embedded in the works of Dr Ambedkar. The significance of Ambedkar is that the democratic movement he led was a historic act for regaining the voice and agency of the subaltern in India silenced and crushed for many millennia (Omvedt). It was a radical attempt to break “the silences of centuries that brood over the history of invasion and colonization” as Tony Morrison puts it while looking at the history of racism in her Afro-American context (Morrison).

The intellectual legacy and cultural trajectory of Ambedkarism in this critical context is not just a 20th century development but a culmination of more than two millennia old indigenous resistance against barbaric invasions and cultural colonizations. The most eloquent articulations of this protest can be identified in the challenge of Buddhism against caste and Brahmanism, the pre-Buddhist Kapila, Charvaka and Ajeevaka traditions (Sekher). The Sramana tradition of various schools of Buddhism and Jainism became the rock bed of alternative epistemologies and cosmologies in India. It is all the more relevant in South India and Kerala that was part of the ancient Tamilakam.