

Dalit Poetry – Translation and Representation

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Namdeo Dhasal



Namdeo Dhasal- Golpitha

- Man, you should explode

 Yourself to bits to start with
 Jive to a savage drum beat
 Smoke hash, smoke ganja
 Chew opium, bite *lalpari*
 Guzzle country booze—if too broke,
 Down a pint of the cheapest *dalda*
 Stay tipsy day and night, stay tight round the clock
Cuss at one and all; swear by his mom's twat, his sister's cunt
Abuse him, slap him in the cheek, and pummel him...
 Man, you should keep handy a *Rampuri* knife
A dagger, an axe, a sword, an iron rod, a hockey stick, a bamboo
 You should carry acid bulbs and such things on you
You should be ready to carve out anybody's innards without batting an
 eyelid

- Commit murders and kill the sleeping ones
Turn humans into slaves; whip their arses with a lash
Cook your beans on their bleeding backsides
Rob your next-door neighbours, bust banks
Fuck the mothers of moneylenders and the stinking rich
Cut the throat of your own kith and kin by conning them; poison
them, jinx them
You should hump anyone's mother or sister anywhere you can
Engage your dick with every missy you can find, call nobody too old
to be screwed
Call nobody too young, nobody too green to shag, lay them one and
all
Perform gang rapes on stage in the public
Make whorehouses grow: live on a pimp's cut: cut the women's
noses, tits
Make them ride naked on a donkey through the streets to shame
them

Man, one should dig up roads, yank off bridges

One should topple down streetlights

Smash up police stations and railway stations

One should hurl grenades; one should drop
hydrogen bombs to raze

Literary societies, schools, colleges, hospitals,
airports

One should open the manholes of sewers and
throw into them

Plato, Einstein, Archimedes, Socrates,

- Marx, Ashoka, Hitler, Camus, Sartre, Kafka,
Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Ezra Pound, Hopkins,
Goethe,
Dostoevsky, Mayakovsky, Maxim Gorky,
Edison, Madison, Kalidasa, Tukaram, Vyasa,
Shakespeare, Jnaneshvar,

And keep them rotting there with all their words
One should hang to death the descendents of
Jesus, the Paighamber, the Buddha, and Vishnu
One should crumble up temples, churches,
mosques, sculptures, museums

- One should blow with cannonballs all priests
And inscribe epigraphs with cloth soaked in their
blood
Man, one should tear off all the pages of all the
sacred books in the world
And give them to people for wiping shit off their
arses when done
Remove sticks from anybody's fence and go in
there to shit and piss, and muck it up
Menstruate there, cough out phlegm, sneeze out
goo

- Kill oneself too, let disease thrive, make all trees leafless
Take care that no bird ever sings, man, one should plan to
die groaning and screaming in pain
Let all this grow into a tumour to fill the universe, balloon
up
And burst at a nameless time to shrink
After this all those who survive should stop robbing anyone
or making others their slaves
After this they should stop calling one another names white
or black, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, or Shudra;
Stop creating political parties, stop building property, stop
committing

- Choose what offends one's sense of odour to wind up the show
Raise hell all over the place from up to down and in between
Man, you should drink human blood, eat spit roast human flesh, melt human fat and drink it
Smash the bones of your critics' shanks on hard stone blocks to get their marrow
Wage class wars, caste wars, communal wars, party wars, crusades, world wars
One should become totally savage, ferocious, and primitive
One should become devil-may-care and create anarchy
Launch a campaign for not growing food, kill people all and sundry by starving them to death

Speculations On A Shirt

Crossing over a period of painful love-play,
Let's reject the traditional garden of conventions.

Let's change the sex of Eve.

Let's make Adam pregnant.

Let's speculate beyond animal anxieties.

Hell's quagmire.

The Moon acts like a pimp

In the history of human bonds.

The bull of sexual passion masticates

On a disembodied heath.

We sail in a sinking ship

And turn into savages.
Even just plain cloves burn our tongue;
And we are afraid of light.
This is how liberation itself punishes a human
being.

A human being shouldn't become so spotless.
One should leave a few stains on one's shirt.
One should carry on oneself a little bit of sin.



Cruelty

I am a venereal sore in the private part of language.
The living spirit looking out
of hundreds of thousands of sad, pitiful eyes
Has shaken me.
I am broken by the revolt
exploding inside me.
There's no moonlight anywhere;
There's no water anywhere.
A rabid fox is tearing off my flesh with its teeth;
And a terrible venom-like cruelty
Spreads out from my monkey-bone.

Release me from my infernal identity.

Let me fall in love with these stars.

A flowering violet has begun to crawl towards horizons.

An oasis is welling up on a cracked face.

A cyclone is swirling in irreducible vulvas.

A cat has commenced combing the hairs of agony.

The night has created space for my rage.

A stray dog has started dancing in the window's eye.

The beak of an ostrich has begun to break open junk.

An Egyptian carrot is starting to savour physical reality.
A poem is arousing a corpse from its grave.
The doors of the self are being swiftly slammed shut.
There's a current of blood flowing through all pronouns now.
My day is rising beyond the wall of grammar.
God's shit falls on the bed of creation.
Pain and roti are being roasted in the same tandoor's fire.
The flame of the clothless dwells in mythologies and folklore.
The rock of whoring is meeting live roots;
A sigh is standing up on lame legs;
Satan has started drumming the long hollowness.
A young green leaf is beginning to swing at the door of desire.
Frustration's corpse is being sewn up.

A psychopathic muse is giving a shove to the statue of
eternity.

Dust begins to peel armour.

The turban of darkness is coming off.

You, open your eyes: all these are old words.

The creek is getting filled with a rising tide;

Breakers are touching the shoreline.

Yet, a venom-like cruelty spreads out from my monkey-
bone.

It's clear and limpid: like the waters of the Narmada river.

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Dalpat Chauhan



- **Dalpat Chauhan**
- Dalpat Chauhan is a leading Gujarati Dalit writer who has published two collections of poems, *To Pachhi* [So Then] and *Kyan Chhe Suraj?* [Where is the Sun?], and three novels, *Malak* [The Homeland], *Gidh* [The Vultures] and *Bhalbhankhalu* [The Dawn]. He is also a dramatist and short-story writer and has edited five collections of Dalit poems and short stories. His poems have been translated into English. Chauhan has received several literary prizes, including the prestigious Gujarat Sahitya Akademi award in 2000 for his poems *Kyan Chhe Suraj?*

Dalpat Chauhan

Untouchable

The first day in school,
the doom's day.
With trembling hand I did not write
One, two, three...
I wrote
On the fireland of burning desert,
My chest,
My caste.
Since then
'I am untouchable, untouchable, you can not touch me',
Echoed in every atom of my existence.
It was an introduction to pain caused by hundred scorpion bites
When I crossed the threshold of classroom
As one climbs the highest peak of Himalayas.
Far from others, in that corner
I got like Shankar

A lonely place.
In the eyes that very moment was born
the dance of destruction of Tripurari
and revolved around.
I would sit there with a precious treasure,
A broken slate in schoolbag.
The time sobbed and the sky was dry.
It was pain of Eklavya at the door of Drona
With recitation of lessons I had rhyme of footfall
But I cannot forget the echoing of my footfall from a distance .
The eye that was dirty
Emptied itself,
The brass pot of tears

The time of wiping off of nose drip
On dirty shorts and torn-sleeved shirt has fallen off
The line of hate drawn in childhood has become darker.
Like Sahasrarjun I embrace the world in my arms
I measure in my steps the sayings of Bali.
In the eyes circle of sky,
In the head held high
Fire-acid-violence-scholarship too.
O god of hate
I search till day
On which part of my body
Are written the richas of untouchability.
That's why, o giver of name untouchable,
I ask you
Where is the name that you gave me
Which has tortured me all my life?

(From To Pachhi)

The Conversation on a Magshar Night

Darling: this I remember
The village pond sings slow song
Magshar shivers: in your lap
With inadequate clothes.

And I , feeling miserable
Whom do I do?

Dear, do you feel cold?
Come close.
But what shall we cover ourselves with?
The Sky or the earth?
In your body the magshar freezes,
Shivers since long.

In this empty moonlight of magshar
Your teeth plays a drum
And in the mosquito song
Darling, how many eras we have to pass?
Darling,

We can not count
Two things
Firstly, The stars in the sky
And secondly, insults your and mine.
Darling ,
Have you watched your blooming face in the lakes?
I can not afford to buy you a mirror,
In the desire to buy it
How many springs we lived with
I can tell if I can count the wrinkles on your face.

I scratch
The wound scars on your back.
This is the only sign of our being
Companions of this and
Future lives.
you too, remember this?

(From To Pachhi)

The tortured time

Mother

Why do you search me with the shaded eyes?
It was only the give and take of the life bygone.

I know, mother
You aspired for
The bringer of water from the well
You longed to buy
Kambiyu, kandiyu, kediyu1,
You would give auspicious welcome to the gavan1
You longed for kumkum handprint on the doors
But alas!

- The Kumkum handprints are
Carved only on the village office
With my own blood.

Smothered breath and smell of burning skin
severed my relation with you.

Your henna hedge dried

Your road to village entry empty

Now why do you search the five footsteps
in your sky: the sun and the moon
will not shine as marriage lamps.

- Yes, where is my walking stick?
Your voice drowns and
I, whose soul is not at rest, imprisoned in
The flask of darkness.

Mother

I am the caste of an oak plant
Even if I burn and burn,
Others are only irritated by the smoke.

Mother

I am a plant
Who does not need plough,
I will erupt
Breaking the stones
like the red shades of your eyes.

- Mother

I remember only those who are dear to God (and I am not),
I am the species of a hawk, I will come back again
To frolic on your courtyard,
the cowdung floor decorated by your old hands.

Mother

In the end I wanted to bid you
Last farewell
But the tortured one
Found no time.

Ornaments and clothe bought for marriage

(From Anthology Dundubhi)

Critical comments

- Namdev Dhasal is one of the important writers of Marathi literature. His 'Golpitha' is an anthology; it is a remarkable creation of the subaltern (Suppressed) literature. It is an expression of people who have been oppressed by the society since many years. It reflects the inner affliction, emotion, feelings, and pains of suppressed people. Subaltern literature in Maharashtra developed in the period of Post Independent, after 1960s.

- The great legacy & main source of the inspiration come from philosophy of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule, Saint Kabir and Lord Buddha. Subaltern literature in Maharashtra brings out substantial changes in different sphere of thinking process. Dalit Movement started in Maharashtra at the beginning of 20 th century for the sake of social reformation and it played the vital role for being construction of subaltern literature

- It is an attempt to root out established social system and work for to re-establish new social order on the principle of justice, liberty, equality, humanity and paternity.
- Namdev Dhasal in his poems of Golpitha bitterly criticised the social evils of present social system. Golpitha is representative of out casted and abandoned people of the society.

It is an attempt to ignite the people for their fundamental rights. It is quest for identity; poems seek to who is responsible for the degradation of the dalit people. It is pungent attack on superstition & social evils.

- It is a revolt against humiliation and inhumane things. It worships the principle of humanism for the equality. Revitalizing the spirit of Amedkarite Movement is one of the objectives behind creation of Golpitha.

- “The world of Namdev Dhasal’s poetry of the world known as Golpitha’s in the city of Mumbai- begins where the frontier of Mumbai’s white –collar world ends and a no-man’s land opens up.
- This is a world where the night is reversed into the day, where stomachs are empty or half- empty, of desperation against death, of the next day’s anxieties, of bodies left over after consumed by shame and sensibility, of insufferably flowing sewages of diseased young bodies lying by the gutters braving the cold by folding up their knees to their bellies, of the jobless of beggars of pickpockets, of holy mendicants, of neighborhoods tough guys and pimps”
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Essence of Dalit Poetry

- Revolt against present system:
- Explosive usage of language terminology:
- Critical commentary on socio economic & political disparity
- Humanism is the central theme
- Pungent comment on social evils
- Exploitative approach of higher society:
- Re establish of social order for the equality
- Ambedkarite Philosophy & Marxism