

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: A Renowned Literary Expert

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Dr. Ambedkar was a profound reader and read thousands of books on various issues, including literature. Due to the busy schedule, he didn't think and write separately on literature. Wherever he got suitable time, he expressed his views on literature. He has not written for entertainment but for the upliftment of millions of downtrodden people. He did not tell fairy tales but the bitter realities of the past to better the future. The purpose of his writing is to make people aware of injustice and to make them fight against it. He uses his writing for public awareness and has no intention of being called a writer. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar dedicated his entire life to his love for knowledge and books. His reading, reflection, and contemplation were incredibly diverse. He read Western literature and especially Marathi literature with equal passion, and he possessed his own unique perspective and set of values when it came to evaluating literary works.

Keywords: Literature, Inspiration, Assertion, Dalits, Upliftment, Humanity

Introduction:

Dr. Ambedkar's writing is a great meditation which aims to bring back the self-respect and glory of the Untouchables. Serious thinking and searching for truth in the most logical and scientific ways are the special features of his writing. His style is not artificial. He truly remains the pioneer who has sharpened the edges of his writing and has given a rebellious nature to it. Dr. Ambedkar has not followed the style of any other writer. He has developed his own style with the help of his own inner quality. He is the gifted writer with uncommon intelligence, equipped with superb logic and rational, secular views which are unaffected by any prejudices. Dr. Ambedkar believed that literature should not be a mere source of entertainment or a tool for egoistic expression, but rather a socially responsible vehicle for human liberation and equality. He advocated for a shift from traditional literature, which he felt ignored or suppressed the experiences of the marginalised, toward literature that actively serves humanity. He believed that literature has a responsibility to serve humanity and that it should be a tool to fight against social injustices and the "darkness" of ignorance. He emphasised that literature should be used to improve the lives of the neglected, rather than focusing solely on intellectual or mythical narratives that do not serve the broader society.

Dr. Ambedkar as a Literary Figure:

The reason for providing this account in detail is to highlight the profound depth of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's intellect. His analysis remains an eternal guide for all litterateurs. Dr. Ambedkar explains the precautions writers must take in their work, emphasising the necessity of brotherhood for national progress, public welfare, and unity. This reflects his intense patriotism. His perspective on literature was remarkably transparent and clear. He has provided fundamental guidance to writers, urging them to broaden the scope of their writing by embracing empathy for the estranged, oppressed, and neglected sections of society and to vividly portray their lives through literature. Renowned literary figures like N.R. Shende and G. T. Madkholkar were present on this occasion. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's indirect contribution to literature is both vast and complex. He believed that literature possesses a revolutionary vision and studied it with great depth. In an interview with H. V. Desai, he remarked, "I have never read literature for the sake of entertainment."¹ This statement reflects the profound seriousness with which he approached the world of letters. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's profound depth as a scholar and literary figure. It notes his extensive study of ancient and mediaeval Marathi literature, as well as his deep dive into the oldest scriptures like the Vedas and Upanishads. Based on his research, he drew sharp conclusions and openly critiqued these texts. He famously described the Vedas as a "worthless set of books",² arguing they represented the beliefs of an ignorant society. In 1944, during a gathering of intellectuals in Madras, he publicly stated that the Vedas were the creation of "fools and madmen".

³He also expressed the feeling that his time was wasted. His study of mediaeval or saintly literature was vast. He believed that by immersing themselves in the path of devotion (Bhakti), the saints blurred the sense of rational awareness. Dr. Babasaheb also held the opinion that Dnyaneshwar should have revolted against the injustice he faced, but that did not happen. His perspectives on literature are evident from an interview given to H. V. Desai, the editor of the weekly magazine 'Prمود.' In this same interview, he stated, "I would do literary work" ⁴ as his preferred activity after politics and even expressed a desire to write an independent novel. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had a deep appreciation for the arts and possessed a keen eye for sculpture. While his lifespan was naturally limited and prevented him, from writing a novel himself, his extraordinary life has inspired numerous novels, not just in Marathi but in many other languages across the world.

Dr. Ambedkar: An Inspiration for Literary Movement:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is the primary inspiration for the post-sixties (Sathottari) Ambedkarite literary movement, and his greatness lies in his call to writers. Having immense faith in literature, he was well aware that the French Revolution (1774–1789) was built on the intellectual foundation laid by the writings of Rousseau and Voltaire. He truly believed that literature could create an environment conducive to revolution. It has been proven that literature has the power to bring about social transformation and enlightenment. Dr. Ambedkar once said, "I want engineers and doctors, but more than that, I want writers." ⁵ It is through this vision of his that our literary world emerged. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar demonstrated the invaluable role that writers play in society, and his followers have truly brought this vision to life. The writers like Shankarrao Kharat, Baburao Bagul, M. N. Wankhede, Gangadhar Pantawane, Raja Dhale, Arjun Dangle, Prof. Arun Kamble, and Yashwant Manohar used their powerful pens to enliven the post-1960s literary movement. Many poets and authors, drawing inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar as their ideal, have made their mark on the global literary stage. However, when this literature—deeply rooted in Ambedkarite thought—emerged within the broader landscape of Marathi literature, it faced significant objections from the established literary circles. Many questions were raised. It was argued that this literature wasn't needed. People asked, "Why this rebellion in Marathi?" and "Why this separate front?" But a flow never stops; it finds its way even through the hardest rocks. And that is exactly what happened. Until then, literature that placed the common man at its centre and sang of his life had not yet emerged. This is why Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is considered the "Writer of Writers" ⁶ His influence brought about a total transformation in the entire world of literature. However, the white-collared, Brahminical writers of Marathi literature refused to accept these transitions, and as a result, their narrow-mindedness became public knowledge. The rebellious literature (Vidrohi Sahitya), born from the inspiration of Jyotirao Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar shattered traditional Marathi literary standards. It forced a change in the very criteria of literature; it was a literary revolution that was suppressed. Yet, talent, knowledge, and imagination are immortal—a fact proven by numerous literary works. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is himself an epic. To historians of literature, the quality of Marathi literature prior to the 1960s (Sathottari) often feels hollow when compared to the depth he provided. Aside from sections of saint literature (Sant Wangmaya), one must ask: where is the robust, superior, and humanistic literature? Is it found in the mundane stories of the "middle-class poha-eaters" ⁷ or those inciting "Rasleela"? Much of the older literary wealth focused on descriptions of the female form rather than the human condition. D. K. Bedekar's famous essay, "Sahityatil Bibhatsa Garatha" (The Loathsome Coldness in Literature), critiques this very lack of warmth and social reality. He argued that traditional literature had become stagnant and disconnected from the suffering and truth of the masses.

Dr Ambedkar's Assertion to the Writers:

On May 2, 1954, at the renowned Marathi literary institution Vidarbha Sahitya Sangh in Nagpur, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar presented his reflections on literary criticism and issued a call to writers. He stated, "Literature should be created in such a way that it eliminates discrimination in life and fosters well-being through constant vigilance and awareness. Today, we are failing to produce a school of literature (literary theory) that truly advances social and national life. Our independent nation is in dire need of unity and fraternity. Unity and brotherhood must become the very core of our nation. Without strong collective strength, a powerful union cannot be built. Therefore, it is essential to create a humanistic science within the field of literature and art. A wave of nation-building revolution must surge through the literary world. I would like to urge the writers to express noble life values through your work. Do not keep your minds narrow; make them expansive. Do not restrict your voice within four walls; let it spread. Do not confine your pen to your own personal problems. Instead, let its brilliance be directed toward dispelling the deep darkness in our villages. Never forget that in this country, there is a vast world of the neglected and the backward classes. Understand their pain and suffering deeply, and strive to uplift their lives through your literature. True humanity lies in that effort." ⁸ Dr. Ambedkar focuses on the responsibility of the author as well, as it explains the nature of the book. He says, "Authors ought not to be above being reminded that it is their first duty to write agreeably. Some very disagreeable men have succeeded in doing so, and there is, therefore, no need for anyone to despair. Every author, be it grave or gay, should try to make his book as ingratiating as possible. Reading is not a duty and has, consequently, no business to be made disagreeable. Nobody is under any obligation to read any other man's book." ⁹ Dr. Ambedkar made these remarks regarding the role of literature in serving humanity, emphasising that literature has a responsibility to reach the marginalised, depressed, and suffering masses rather than being limited to elite, confined spaces. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's assertion to the writers is very clear. He says, "Through your literary creations, cleanse the stated values of life and culture. Don't have a limited objective. Transform the light of your pen so that the darkness of villages is removed. Do not forget that in our country the word of the Dalits and the ignored classes is very, extremely large. Get to know intimately their pain and sorrow, and try

through your literature to bring progress in their lives. True humanity resides there.”¹⁰ Dr. Ambedkar cautioned writers against glorifying regressive mythical stories that reinforce social hierarchies, as these contribute to a stagnant and unequal society.

Dr. Ambedkar and Dalit Literature:

The primary goal of literature is to serve people and promote human values like liberty, equality, and fraternity and to use literature to connect, enlighten, and uplift distant localities and the underprivileged (untouchables) rather than keeping it restricted to educational or aristocratic centres. Literature must reflect the actual feelings, emotions, and experiences of human beings, particularly those of the suffering and oppressed. He famously stated that literature should not remain confined within “four walls” but must reach villages and distant localities to “dispel the darkness” of ignorance. Literature should be used to develop the lives of the marginalised and help them express pain that has historically gone unheard. For Dr. Ambedkar, the literary “form” (poetry, prose, etc.) is secondary to the “content” and its potential to unite disparate communities and foster social justice. Dr. Ambedkar emphasised this to advocate for a new type of literature, often termed ‘Dalit literature’, which focuses on expressing the sufferings and realities of the underprivileged classes, rather than remaining in traditional, elite, or urban circles. This perspective helped shape the movement of Dalit literature, advocating for a literature of action and social reform, as highlighted in studies on Dalit literary movements.

Conclusion:

It is well-established, through numerous available references, that Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar possessed a profound vision for literature. Within the literary world inspired by him, a writing ideal was created for human welfare and social transformation. This literature, which eventually reached great heights, had its beginnings in Dr. Ambedkar's own workplace—specifically the Milind College campus and the Nagasenvana area in Aurangabad, renamed as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar. Dr. Babasaheb himself gave invaluable guidance to Prof. Bhalchandra Phadke, urging him to build a theatre movement. He encouraged using that medium for literary reflection and to authentically portray the actual lives of the people. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's entire work is incomparable, but failing to acknowledge his contribution to literature would be an act of ingratitude. For the past decade or two, literature inspired by the Phule-Ambedkarite ideology has been weakening. In this era of globalisation, issues have become increasingly complex and need to be addressed through the medium of literature. There is a pressing need for the creation of original, creative work. Just as Black (Negro) literature has emerged as a leader in global literary wealth, our literature—rooted in the core values of 'pain' (vedana), 'rebellion' (vidroh), and 'rejection' (nakar)—has not lagged behind. However, in the present day, literature must become more dynamic as new contexts emerge. Today, writers should move in the direction given by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

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