
From Shame to Pride: A Critique on Tamil Dalit Poetry

Dr. K. S. Anish Kumar

Assistant Professor of English, Centre for Distance and Online Education, Bharathidasan University,
Trichirapalli- 620 024, Tamil Nadu

ABSTRACT

Publication Info

Article history :

Received : 28-04-2024

Accepted : 01-05-2024

DOI : 10.30949/dajdtla.v20i1.13

Key words:

caste hegemony, patriarchy,
space, violence, protest.

Corresponding author :

anishkumar@bdu.ac.in

Dalit literature articulates the suffering of the people who are socially conditioned by the oppressive structures that keep them under their surveillance. It emerges as the voice of the silenced and socially excluded and in fact it evolves as a counter narrative to the dominant discourses that occupy the centre. Dalit poetry is essentially poetry of resistance that protest subjugation and oppression and Tamil dalit poetry is not an exemption to this standpoint. In Tamil dalit poetry one can easily trace the influence of Ayotidasa Pandithar, Ambedkar, Periyar and Marx. Dalit poetry rejects social hierarchy that imposes the code of conduct advocated by Manu. It tries to address not only the pathetic plight of dalits but also envisage a promising future. The major objective of this article is to situate Tamil dalit poetry in the broad spectrum of Indian literature by recording its history and its significance. It examines how dalit poetry emerges as protest poetry by accommodating dalit feminism and also revolts against injustice and caste discriminative practices in order to create a viable space.

In his book *Indian Literature: Paradigms and Praxis* K.Satchidanandan traces the evolution of Indian Literature as a literary cannon and investigates how the pluralistic structure of India is getting reflected in its literary productions. He further quotes Kannada writer U.R. Ananthamurthy's observations on the diverse nature of India. He says "If you look for the diversity of Indian literature, you come across its unity and if you look for unity you discover its diversity" (12). Indian literature has a long literary tradition and earliest literary ventures are the orally transmitted literary productions. The bards or minstrels of a particular locality composed songs on the spot and staged them especially at local festivals. They were sometimes hymns to the local deities or narratives of their own life and conditions. In fact most of the songs were choric in nature. They sang for the limited locality and hence they remained unknown to others.

When the printed form came into existence some of the popular narratives of the oral tradition were made available to the reading public along with other printed texts. It is worthy to note that most of the printed texts were available in vernaculars. During the time of Independence, writers and political thinkers across India felt the need for a link language in the absence of a national language. After long discussions English was accepted as link language of India and this turn gave rise to the emergence of Indian English Literature and paved the way for translations of literary texts produced in Indian languages. Some of the writers like Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan wrote directly in English, and some writers like Kamala Das wrote both in Malayalam and English and some of them like Tagore and Girish Karnad wrote in their

mother tongue, and then translated their writings into English. At this juncture one needs to remember the fact the whole body of Indian writings must be treated as a separate dynamic literary movement for it is the direct expression of the writers and it must be differentiated from Indian English writings for they are the trans creations of the writers' experiences in foreign tongue.

Translated texts were read across India and this led to the understanding of the socio-cultural milieu of the land. Comparatively translated texts were less in number than the texts produced in vernaculars. Texts written in Dravidian languages were well received even before Independence. R.W. Frazer, in his book entitled *A Literary History of India*, rightly observes, “Down to the present day the Dravidian languages such as Telugu, Tamil, Canarese, and Malayalam, have accordingly preserved a rich literature of their own.” (303)

Frazer's observation in fact underlines the significance of the South Indian literatures and he clearly records the existence of 'songs of love and war' in Dravidian languages and he further describes about the worship of tribal gods and people's skill in pottery, weaving and dying.

The historical and cultural setting of South India underwent a sea change with the emergence of indigenous writing. Writers of the marginalized sections also started voicing out their issues with the advent of postmodernism. In fact the postmodern era opened up considerable space for the marginalized to narrate their quest for survival and existence. In this context Dalit writing emerged as a counter narrative to the established literary canon.

In her Introductory essay to the book *An Anthology of Dalit Literature* entitled “Dalit Sahitya: The Historical Background” Eleanor Zelliot brings to light the closeness between dalit literature and 'the movement began by the Mahar caste in the turn of this century'. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar's involvement in the movement gave it a different dimension and accelerated the very purpose of it. The Dalit Panthers Movement (1972) emerged with the inspiration of the Black Panthers Movement and it inhaled the ideologies of Ambedkar, Jothiba Phule, and Karl Marx. Being a social reformer Phule took an extreme step in establishing schools for girls and untouchables. He insisted that Shudras (non-brahmins) and adishudras (dalits) must fight together against their oppression. Gail Omvedt rightly says:

More importantly, he argued that shudras and atishudras together represented an oppressed and exploited mass, and compared their subordination with that of the native Indians in the Americas and the Blacks. Phule's broadsides are, in fact, an expression of a theory not simply of religious domination and conquest, but of exploitation, (*Dalit Visions* 19)

Ambedkar deviated considerably from Phule for his understanding of caste system of India is different from Phule and to him “In every Hindu the consciousness that exist is the consciousness of his caste”, (*Annihilation of Caste* 39). It is worthy to note that Ambedkar did not call the non-brahmins to fight for the rights of untouchables for he firmly believed that the untouchables were totally removed from the caste hierarchy. He rightly observes, “The Untouchable is outside the scheme of creation. The Sudra is Savarna. As against him the Untouchable is Avarna i.e., outside the Varna system” (*The Untouchables* 60). To understand Ambedkar's stand one should make a distinction between Varna and Caste for some believe that both are same. Quigley points out:

It is very clear, then, that *varna* and *jati* are two quite different concepts, yet both have been translated as 'caste'. What exactly is the correspondence between them? Perhaps the most widespread opinion is that *varna* is simply a theoretical category never actually encountered on the ground while *jati* is the 'real' operational unit, the real caste. (*The Interpretation of Caste* 7)

Reformist like Periyar vehemently opposed 'the real operational unit' called jati and to him the institutionalised religion is the cause for the oppression. He openly called for the abolition of caste through his speeches and writings. In order to promote his ideology he started 'Self Respect Movement' and insisted that each and every one possess the right to live a dignified life and nobody is inferior to others.

Unlike Ambedkar and Periyar, Mahatma Gandhi tried to bring untouchables under the Hindu fold by naming the untouchables as 'harijans' which means children of God. In later years dalits negated the word 'harijans', and called themselves as 'dalits'. The word dalit has its origin from Sanskrit, and in Sanskrit it means crack, open, split, crushed, broken and scattered. It is significant note that Ambedkar used to refer Dalits as broken men well before the word 'dalit' came into existence which means more or less the same. Dalits are anthropologically the sons of the soil and hence initially they were referred with a prefix "Adi". Omvedt rightly observers, " Even the names of most dalit movements – Ad-Dharm in Punjab, Adi- Hindu in U.P and Hyderabad, Adi- Dravida, Adi-Andra, Adi-Karnataka in south India- indicated a common claim to being original inhabitants" (*Dalit Visions* 35)

The word Dalit came into existence as an all-inclusive term, and is used to refer the untouchables or broken men across India. They are the oppressed sections of the society and victims of caste domination. They are excluded from the mainstream and lived outside the villages called as 'cheri', and are subjected to all kinds of exploitation like the blacks of America who live in 'ghettos'. According to Manu they must remain outside the villages. He says that they can have dogs and donkeys as their possessions and they can collect food from others in broken dishes.

Writers and social reformers started questioning the marginalised position of dalits and it is worthy to note that dalit literature emerged as the by-product of dalit uprisings across the country. The victimized condition of dalits, their quest for survival and their struggle to live a dignified life are major focal points of dalit writings.

Tamil literary environment underwent a tremendous change with the arrival of dalit literature. Little magazines namely *Nirapirikai*, *Dalit Murasu*, *Puthiya Kodangi*, *Kavithasaran*, *Dalit* and *Podhi* contributed much to the growth of dalit literature by publishing articles on dalit politics, culture and literature. Initially *Nirapirikai* championed the cause of dalits' awareness through its special volume on dalit. It published selections from Marathi dalit literature. One can easily trace the impact of Ayothidasa Pandithar, Rettamalai Srinivasan, Ambedkar, Periyar, and Marx in the articles and creative writings published by these little magazines.

In the beginning there were discussions on whose writing does essentially present the dalit condition? Is it by dalits? Or by non-dalits? In his book *Sathiyam, Theendamai, Tamizhar Ottumai (Castes, Untouchability, Unity of Tamils)* Rajendra Cholan says that one cannot easily answer the question 'What is dalit literature?'. He is of the opinion that literature produced by a writer from a suppressed caste cannot be called as dalit literature for the writer may write about

the suppressed condition of dalits or may even write about non-dalits. He further says “Literature produced by dalit writers cannot be also called as dalit literature for they may write about the suppressed condition of dalits or justify the suppressed condition of dalits” (*my trans*, 172). At last he endorses Daya Pawar's (one of the pioneers of dalit literature) statement that dalit literature must uphold dalit consciousness. From this one can come to conclusion that anybody can produce dalit literature and it should contain dalit consciousness and if it does not contain dalit consciousness even it is produced by a dalit it cannot be viewed as dalit literature. In fact Rajendra Cholan puts forth his Marxist ideological stand that anybody can write about anything for writing is a democratic act. In contrast to his standpoint Bama, one of the most vibrant dalit writers of Tamil, in an interview observes:

One cannot generalise dalit literature. Does Marxism focus on caste?. In my opinion caste is not the focal point of Marxism. Dalitism is better than Marxism for the latter concentrates mainly on economic independence and revolutionary democracy (...). When we combine both (Dalitism and Marxism) it may reduce the space of dalitism. (qtd. in Venaktesan 135)

According to her only a dalit can present his/her suffering, and the pain he/she experienced in his/ her writing. A dalit's experience is an insider's view and writings by non-dalits on dalits are outsiders' perception and they can be treated as second hand perceptions, and may not be authentic. It is very clear that Bama treats dalitism as a separate ideology and refuses to place it in the place of Marxism.

Daya Pawar and writers and critics like Raj Gouthaman stress that dalit literature must reflect dalit culture. In one of his essays, Raj Gouthaman clearly defines dalit culture as follows, “Dalit culture should distinguish itself as sub-national, defined in contrast to the national. It is inevitable that dalit sub-culture will have close similarity to that of tribals, blacks and women. Such culture can only be a protest culture” (*No Alphabet* 153).

Dalit literature not only depicts the sad plight of dalits but also reiterates the need to protest the dominant culture that suppresses them and pushes them to the periphery. Dalit consciousness and dalit culture are the twin binding forces that operate behind dalit literature and hence it is not only a literature of protest but also a literature of liberation.

In his preface to the text *An Anthology of Dalit Literature* Mulk Raj Anand writes “The process of poetry arising out of the cry can be felt in most dalit poems, because in these utterances protest seems to come from the insulted and injured, who have laboured for generation for the supers, their hands with dirty work. One can take almost any dalit poem and feel the cry rhythm arising from itself (xi). Unlike classical poetry which gives importance to love, sex and family relationships, dalit poetry is a cry for liberation that can be equated with the blacks' cry for existence. Both share a common platform for both experience suffering and their anguished voice emerge from their struggle for survival.

Sometimes dalit poetry revisits myths to address the dalit condition of the present. For instance Tryambak Sapkale's poem entitled “Eklavya” uses the mythical personality, Eklavya, who faced untold sufferings for he wanted to excel in archery. In fact the poet makes an appeal to Eklavya

The round earth,
A steel lever
in my hand

But no leverage?
 Oh Eklavya
 you ideal disciple!
 Give me
 the finger you cut off;
 that will be my fulcrum. (*An Anthology* 152)

The poet wants to possess the power of Eklavya's finger which was cut off at the request of his guru Drona to prevent him from excelling Arjuna. Dalit poetry gains strength from all possible sources and Tamil dalit poetry is not an exception to this idea.

Rajamurugupandian, Prathiba Jeyachandran, Mathiyalagan, Indran, N.D. Rajkumar, Ravikumar, Thenmozhi, Ku. Umadevi, Sukirtharani are some of the predominant voices of Tamil dalit poetry.

Tamil dalit poetry considerably deviates from the yardstick of Tamil modern poetry in its perception and presentation. In Tamil dalit poetry one can witness the pathetic plight of dalits and their refusal to tolerate the injustice that is inflicted upon them in the name of caste.

In early writings one of the major issues one comes across is dalits' refusal to pronounce the name of their own caste in public. They took it as a burden and a shame and to them it is a hurdle for their progress. Prathiba Jeyachandran explains how the name of his own caste wounded him. He hesitated even to pronounce his caste and at the same time when somebody pronounced his caste he felt ashamed. In the poem "The Question" he says,

When I was young,
 I folded my arms together
 and told them the truth.
 Their faces
 at the time
 carried the repulsion
 of having stepped
 on shit. (*No Alphabet* 211, Translated by K. Srilata)

It has been a haunting experience for him for the question chases him wherever he goes and pierces "my (his) senses like an arrow". The privileged used to call them by the name of their caste whenever they are angry with them.

In dalit poetry the ideals of Ambedkar are explicit in early writings and implicit in later writings. Raja Murugupandian's poems explicitly present the impact of Ambedkar on dalit condition and condemn the politicians who just made him an idol to be worshipped rather than following his ideals. In his poem "Dr. Ambedkar" he says

In the past
 people who found
 untouchability
 even in their files
 now worship him
 yes, mentioning him
 they collect votes (*Sila Dalit Kavithaikalum* - 59-60, *my trans.*)

According to the poet Ambedkar name is exploited by the politicians for the vote bank of dalits. In the same poem he criticises the politics behind naming of dalits. “Those who are devoid of/human dignity/should not find shelter under/the dirty word Harijan/ they should assemble/ under one umbrella/ dalit” (59 *my trans*).

Rajamurugupandian negates to be named dalits as harijans. To him it is a dirty word though it is coined by Gandhi. He urges dalits to come under their own umbrella (dalit) to find shelter. From this one can come to conclusion that they did not want to be named and they wanted to name themselves.

The aesthetics of dalit poetry underwent a notable change with the arrival of N.D.Rajkumar. In his poems one can easily find the fusion of magic and mantra used to control deities. The following lines can be treated as an epigraph to his poems for it encapsulates the poetics of his poetry.

If anyone not of our own
happens to read this manuscript :
Heads will roll
hearts will beat to death
brains will curdle.
All that one has learned
will be lost.
Now,
I have placed curses
on my own words. (*World Literature Today* 59)

(Translated by Anushiya Sivanarayanan)

Rajkumar tries to uphold the rural Tamil culture and hence jungle gods and deities finds a prominent place in his poems. His skillful use of animal imagery can be found in an untitled poem. The poem begins with the dance of cobra. He says that his poem has become a poisonous one after consuming poison from the cobra, and his poems are scattered like fragrance of flowers. He says “Frightened /to smell them alone/you bring to your aid/those soaring birds of prey”. (*World Literature Today* 59) (Translated by Anushiya Sivanarayanan)

The cobra in the poem stands for dalits and 'birds of prey' denotes the oppressors and when the poem progresses the birds of prey fly away and disappear like a dot and hence beyond the reach of the snake and this metaphorically states the high position of the upper caste in the social hierarchy. The last part of the poem appears to be a confession and a note of protest:

\ I cannot touch
the shadow of your wing.
I will be born
again and again.
as a devil
a ghost
as Kali
and Isaki.
As the vengeful furies
I will terrorize you and follow you ...
(*World Literature Today* 59)

(Translated by Anushiya Sivanarayanan)

The poet concludes by accepting the fact that the fight has been happening from time unknown and the cobra will take its rebirth in the shape of devil, ghost and Kali and Isaki (Kali and Isaki are village deities) to take revenge on the oppressors.

Kalaivanan E.M.S is one of the recent voices in Tamil dalit poetry. His poems visualise the life and conditions of Navithars. While referring to Navithars K.K.Pillai says, “Ambattan is the name of the barber, through the ages. He was also known as Navidan. (....) Quite often he was a medicine man, having the knowledge of Ayurveda system of medicine. The Ambattan women have been for ages the midwives in the Tamil country” (64)

Kalaivanan's stubborn rejection of the caste system, that give preferences to the privileged keeps barbers at the bottom of the caste hierarchy find a place in his poems. His realistic portrayal of suffering makes his poems as testimony of life writing. The following is an untitled poem that is included in his collection of poems *Oru Savarakaranin Kavithai Mayirukal* (A Barber's Poems of Hair).

Those who went for funeral
and barber shop
should enter the house
after taking bath
in order to get rid off
the hairs that stick on to the body
and the touch of the barber (23 my trans.)

To Manu death is one of the major sources of impurity along with birth and menstruation. Kalaivanan tries to address, that the mere touch of the low caste makes the other castes impure. In his book *The Untouchables* Ambedkar observes:

... the impurity of...the Untouchables of India, quite unlike the impurity arising from birth, death etc., is permanent. ... They are born impure, they are impure while they live, they die the death of the impure, and they give birth to children who are born with the stigma of untouchability affixed to them. It is the case of permanent hereditary stain which nothing can cleanse. (46)

In the meantime women poets started dominating the literary platform of Tamil. Their poems faced both applause and contempt at the same time. Some appreciated their literary ventures and a few vehemently attacked their poems and passed sexist remarks on them. For instance Kutti Revathi's collections of poems *Mullaikal* (Breasts) faced severe criticism for its title itself. In fact a new literary trend came into existence with their arrival.

Among them Sukirtharani needs a special mention for her poetic voice records the anguish of existing in the world of caste hegemony as dalit and a woman. The confessional tone of her poems makes her poems look like life narratives. In one of her poems entitled “I speak up bluntly” she recollects her experiences as a dalit. The poem opens with 'the slice of life' of a dalit in the power oriented set up which excludes 'others' and forces them to depend on the upper caste for their survival.

I shooed away crows
 while flaying dead cows of their skin.
 Stood for hours, waiting
 to eat the town's leavings-
 then boasted that I ate hot, freshly cooked rice.
 When I saw my father in the street
 the leather drum slung from his neck.
 I turned my face away
 and passed him by.
 Because I wouldn't reveal
 my father's job, his income,
 the teacher hit me. (*Wild Girls* 197)

(Translated by Lakshmi Holmstorm)

This is the actual situation in which a dalit is forced to encounter in rural India until recent times. In fact dalit children used to weep silently on the back benches of classrooms. It is disheartening to note that caste discrimination still exists in schools. The survey conducted by the Times News Network in Tamil Nadu Schools reveals the fact that caste discrimination prevails in many forms. The survey says,

Discrimination varies from making dalit students clean toilets to separate Caste-based queues for noon meals to disparity in allowing play time, lab time, and participation in arts festivals, besides caste clashes among students. Caste discrimination was found in all districts. (*Sunday Times of India* 3)

The poem ends with an open proclamation of her own caste for after encountering severe caste disparities she has gained courage over the years to speak up boldly without any inhibitions.

But now
 if anyone asks me
 I speak up bluntly
 I am a Parachi (*Wild Girls* 197)

The movement that happens within the poem from inhibition to reveal to speaking up bluntly reminds of the movement of negritude. In the article entitled "Negritude in Anti-colonial African Literature Discourse" Galafa says:

Negritude literary endeavours were one of the many possible and convenient ways African people had under racist and colonial repression and suppression for protestation and revolt. Interconnecting activism and art vis-à-vis politics and literature, a negritude writer therefor rejects certain ways of life, a state imposed on Black people, uses negritude as a weapon... (290)

Like a negritude writer who revolts against dual suppression Sukirtharanis protest the upper castes who dominate them and patriarchy that controls emotions and aspirations of dalit women.

In her poem "Portrait of my village" she presents a gruesome picture of her village- an unequal space of caste discrimination where survival itself has become challenge. She says

Our bare feet are drenched
 by the pain of caste that drips from our lips
 as we drink tea from palm- leaf cups,
 standing at the untouchable distance,
 while the portrait of our village
 frames itself at a place of double existence,
 always vigilant (*Wild Girls* 203)

These lines try to depict the rural space as a space of insecurity for all the actions are under the surveillance of the vigilant eyes which monitors them throughout their lives. Almost all in villages caste divides people and caste hierarchy still follows the footsteps of Manu who advocated to push dalits to the margins.

Dalits are not only subjected to inhuman violations but also associated with evils of the society and this becomes the undercurrent of Sukirtharani's poem "Pariah God". Through the poem she investigates the word 'Pariah' and its social connotations as reiterated by caste Hindus. It is important to note that the word refers to a low caste. The word comes from the word 'parai', a musical instrument usually played in weddings and funerals. The people who earned their living playing this musical instrument were pushed to the corner of the villages. The poet's grandfather was a notable player of parai. In his analysis of the word K.K.Pillai in his book *The Caste System in Tamil Nadu* says, "In early times the Paraiyas were drummers and labourers. They served as grave diggers, watchmen and scavengers. But some Paraiyas took to weaving and large number of them became agricultural labourers and domestic servants" (63).

In the poem these people are associated with stealing and snatching by the upper caste people.

You say
 the beak that steals
 the worm-ridden grain spread out to sun
 is a pariah crow.
 You say
 the mouth that snatches
 along with your wrist
 is a pariah dog. (*No Alphabet* 313)
 (Translated by Meena Kandasamy)

In the poem the implied 'I' (may refer to any dalit) addresses the privileged 'you' and the poem presents how they are associated with inhuman beings like crow and dog. Their natural habit of eating etiquette is termed as stealing and snatching and poet tries to bring to light these acts are associated with only low caste people. The poet tells the oppressors that there must be a pariah god. In fact the poet tries to deconstruct the idea of one god and his omnipotence and omnipresence because her god is a blood thirsty god who resembles village deities.

Sukirtharani continues to concentrate on the atrocities against dalits and exposes how dalit women are dually suppressed. Through her unique poetic language she describes how dalit women are annihilated by caste hegemony. While commenting on her language B.Mangalam says "In her six published anthologies, Sukirtharani seeks to evolve a new language to articulate the pattern of violence as well as resistance against the nexus of

patriarchy and caste structures” (74)

In most of her poems men are portrayed as agents of power who exploit women and reduce them into mute symbols. Being conscious of their suffering the poet articulates their suppressed voices and hence she becomes the representative of the vulnerable sections of society. Her poem “Ippadiku Eval”(Yours, Eve) is a testimony of dalit feminism. It extends the atrocities against women one can witness in the poem “Miggamigga Satharanamanavai” (Very very ordinary things). In the poem Adam symbolises masculine vigour and to the poet the modern man is the incarnation of Adam who exploits women for his existence. She lists out how women are sexually exploited and murdered cruelly. Some are raped and killed by inserting iron rods into their private parts. She concludes,

Adam, I feel suffocated
because you increase
your atrocities
I will gift you
a double edged sword
castrate yourself. (*Ippadiku Eval* 43. *my trans.*)

Sukirtharani not only questions the patriarchal codes but also threatens the predators who exploit women and tries to voice out the fact that dalit women have the power to resist all kinds of violence exercised on their bodies

It is worthy to note that in the postmodern era Tamil dalit literature has emerged as an unavoidable literary movement that encompasses the socio-cultural ethos of dalits. In the beginning Tamil Dalit poetry reflected the ideals of Ambedkar, Periyar and Marx to some extent. Poets like Rajamurugandian used poetry as a medium to advocate and address harijan - dalit conflict. In fact with the arrival of poets like Ravikumar, Mathiyazhakan, Thai.Kandasamy and N.D.Rajkumar , the Tamil literary environment witnessed new perceptions and new modes of presentation .For instance Ravikumar's poem “Pond where...” captures the village reality, and clearly states the truth that the dalits are not allowed to fetch water from the common pond. He writes “When you can/wash your cattle/rinse your shit-rags/clean your arse/ where we alone / may not fetch water” (*Oxford Anthology* 18) (Translated by Vasantha Surya)

A close reading of Yazhan Aathi's poems reveal the fact that atrocities against dalits are his serious concern. The poems of N.T.Rajkumar adds more colour to dalit poetry for he has used his expertise in magic and exorcism in his poems. His perception and his haunting poetic voice is not only new to dalit poetry but also new to the Tamil literary landscape.

Poems of Thenmozhi, Sukirtharani and Ku.Umadevi go beyond the articulation of suffering of dalits and question the people who never allow them to live with dignity. The brutal and treacherous violations that are exercised on the dalit women's body is one of the prime concerns of Sukirtharani's poems. Violation of women's body is often equated with violation of the land in her poems for men as agents of violence who exploit them for their own survival. Her poems mark the union of dalit women and nature who protest patriarchy and hence she evolves as a dalit feminist.

Dalit poetry has already started disturbing the mainstream by countering its aesthetics and perception. The protest nature of dalit poetry is common phenomenon of dalit literature and

hence it is counter narrative to the mainstream narratives. The migration from shame to pride that once evinces in dalit poetry in particular and dalit literature in general stresses the idea that being a dalit is not a matter of shame but a matter of pride and hence dalit poetry needs to be accepted as a proud procession of modern Indian literature.

Works Cited

- Ambedkar, Dr.Babasaheb. *Annihilation of Caste with A Reply to Mahatma Gandhi*. Dr.Ambedkar Institute of Social and Economic Change, 2011.print
- Ambedkar, B.R. *The Untouchables*. Dravidar Kazhagam Publications, 2015. Print
- Anand, Mulk Raj and Eleanor Zelliot. editors. *An Anthology of Dalit Literature*. Gyan Publishing House, 2018. print
- Cholan, Rajendra. *Sathiyam, Theeidamai, Tamzhar Ottumai*. Mangai, 2011. Print
- Frazer, R. W. *A Literary History of India*. T. Fisher Unwin, 1907, https://www.rarebooksocietyofindia.org/book_archive/196174216674_10153039356716675.pdf
- Galafa, Beaton. "Negritude in Anti-colonial African Literature Discourse" *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.12, no.4, October 2018 pp 287-298. <https://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol12no4/12.4-8-Galafa.pdf>
- Holmsstrom, Lakshmi. *Wild Girls, Wicked Words*, Kalachuvadu Publications, 2012. Print
- Kalaivanan E.M.S. *Oru Savarakaranin Kavithai Mayirukal*. Dravidian Stock, 2022
- Mangalam. B. "A Language of One's Own: The Politics of the Body, Language and Identity in Sukirtharani's Poetry" *All About Ambedkar: A Journal of Theory and Praxis*. Vol. 2. No.2. 31 December 2021, ISSN 2582-9785. pp. 70-87 https://c9b9863e-ad35-427b-a791263fcf09e.filesusr.com/ugd/1f8eaa_a6a56e214eb046f0a8f7a6518933d587.pdf
- Murugupandian, Raja. *Sila Dalit Kavithaikalum...* Annam, 1994. print
- Omvedt, Gail. *Dalit Visions*. Orient BlackSwan, 2012 .print
- Pillai, K.K. *The Caste System in TamilNadu*. MJP Publishers, 2007. Print
- Quigley, Declan. *The Interpretation of Caste*. Clarendon Press, 1995
- Ravikumar and R.Azhagarasan. editors. *The Oxford Anthology of Tamil Dalit Writing*. Oxford UP, 2012. print
- Satchidanandan, K. *Indian Literature: Paradigms and Praxis*. Pencraft International, 2008. print
- Satyanarayana, K. and Susie Tharu. Editors. *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writings From South India*. (Dossier 1: Tamil and Malayalam. Penguin, 2011. Print
- Sivanarayanan, Anushiya. "Five Tamil Dalit Poems: N.T.Rajkumar" *World Literature Today*, May-August 2004, 59. <https://tamilnation.org/literature/dalit.pdf>
- Sukirthatani. *Ippadikku Eval*. Kalachuvadu Publications, 2022

Times News Network. “Caste Discriminations in 30% TN Schools” Sunday Times of India,
Trichy/Madurai, December 24, 2024 pp 3
Venkatesan, Pa. *Tamil Naval Illakiyamum Bamavin Sangathiyum-Oru Dalithiya*
Paarvai. Akaram, 2008. print