Research Paper Literature

# Myth and History in Dalpat Chauhan's Plays

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**KEYWORDS**

Oppression of Shudras, Ati-shudras and women has been documented since Vedic times. Dalits were kept away from the concept of knowledge and ultimately power. According to Nietzsche "knowledge is power and power is knowledge." In India, Savarnas controlled knowledge to maintain their hegemony over the whole society. In the beginning they divided the society on the basis of the work and then the caste was used as an identity. This, identity became an eternal black-spot for a Dalit. This identity made it easy to rule over them not only physically and mentally also. Not only Dalits were forced to live on the outskirts of the society, but in the case of literature Dalit writing has been totally erased. In order to avoid Dalits' touch Savarnas have placed Dalits outside the village but in the field of knowledge they have gone one step further. Even if a Dalit wants to describe him/herself, s/he has to depend on others; s/he has no control over self-representation. Savarnas represented Dalits the way they want.

The situation was changed after the advent of British rule and their in the field of education. The gates of education and thus knowledge were opened for all without any discrimination of caste and creed. Dalits also took advantage of this opportunity and slowly raised their levels of education. In the 1880s and 1890s Mahatma Phule worked vigorously for the educational development of the Dalits. Dr. Ambedkar devoted his whole life for the all round development of the Dalits in all the facets of life and he was successful in giving constitutional rights to the Dalits. He used literature as a tool to give proper shape to Dalit idea and ideology. He also addressed and provoked Dalits to use pen and present their views on a massive scale. Thus, Dalit literature came into existence.

It was around 1975 that Gujarati Dalit literature came into its own. The entry of Dalit literature into Gujarati mainstream literature was accidental and unprecedented. Writers from the Dalit community could not ignore the sad fact that the Dalits were being subjected to petrifaction in an insensitive society. They wrote massively on the issues of oppression, social inequality, communalism and fanaticism. Gujarati Dalit literature emerged on massive scale after the anti-reservation riots of 1981 and 1985. These riots gave birth to Gujarati Dalit writers like Dalpat Chauhan, Neerav Patel, Pravin Gadhvi, Harish Mangalam, Shankar Painter, Sahil Parmar, Mohan Parmar, B.Kesharshivam, Joseph Macwan and many others. All these writers have presented their views not only in one genre but they have successfully pored their agony in various genres of literature- short story, poetry, fiction, autobiography and drama.

Dalpat Chauhan is a well known figure as far as Gujarati Dalit literature is concerned. He has used all genres of literature to depict his pain and agony. His novels and poetry represent Dalit agony in a powerful way but in the field of drama he is marvelous. In his one act plays he has very subtly presented his views on the Dalits and their present situation. He has used mythological motif as a literary tool and tried to break them and they are all based on Manu's dictum i.e. brahmanical ideology. In his plays he has presented humanitarian ideas and tried to throw away anti-human ideology.

A.S.Rao has rightly pointed out in his essay " Myth and History in Contemporary Indian Novel in English" that

> Myth and history contribute to the enrichment of literariness of literature. The dominant is the ruling motive of literature. One of the dominant modes at present is myth and another is its counterpart history. Myth is used in its mediations and subversions presenting history in terms of 'synchronic study' of language. History which is known to public and thus it serves as an ultimate signifier and signified. While using myth and history as a literary device, the content and context is Indian thus it becomes easy for a writer to present his views. He/she can show the change very easily. In The Great Indian Novel Shashi Tharoor has used the Mahabharata as a political allegory to present the then political situation of India. For him Indian political scene is same as it was in the days of Mahabharata.[1]

Dalpat Chauhan has used *Mahabharata, Manusmriti* and *Vedas* not only to show typical situation of Dalits after sixty years of independence. Thus, society which has changed drastically in the field of economy but not in the field of sociology- this is what Dalpat Chauhan has carried out in his plays.

Dalpat Chauhan has used history and myth in a unique way to represent Dalit idea and ideology. He used irony and realism as a major tool in his plays. At present in Indian writing in English, post-colonial and postmodernist theories are in vogue. Dalpat Chauhan has used Hindu religious texts as a base to contradict upper caste ideology. In his view, time doesn't changes for Dalits in India. Though the world is telling change is inevitable but in India everything is stagnant for the Dalits. In his play, *Sanjay ane Chhagan* when Sanjay wants to visit and see whole India like Gandhiji, Chhagan replies satirically that there is no need to visit whole India but it is good enough to visit only one village. In his view, one village represents whole India as the society and sociological condition is same in all five lacs villages of India. In each village one will find tenants, serfs, atrocities on Dalits and women, problem of Dowry, untouchability. Everywhere the exploitation is same. Thus, it is a wastage of time and energy both it one wants to visit India in a nutshell. Thus, he has rightly brought out socio-economic and political situation of the Dalits.

As Homi Bhabha has rightly pointed out in his book *Nation* and *Narration*

> "Nations like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation or narration might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from the traditions of political thought, and literary language that nation emerges as a powerful political idea in the west.[2]

In the light of the above statement we can easily place how Dalits were outcaste and at present also though they are Indian they are not part of the mainstream culture. Dr. Ambedkar

has denied accepting India as a nation in the light of above quotation very early in the 1950s.

Dalpat Chauhan has used history in a conventional sense of the word. History represents a chronology of events and happenings over the intervening millennia. They have become a part of recorded history. Myth strengthens the fictionality of the fiction; history justifies the claim of the text on actuality. Dalpat Chauhan has used how myth and history are interwoven in the life of Dalit. He has not only disclosed the pretence of the upper caste but successfully overthrow the idea of religion and God. He has employed texts like *Vedas, Manusmriti* and *Mahabharata* to present Dalit's plight in the post-independent India.

In his one act play *Antim Charan* he has disclosed how Yudhisthira has exploited the concept of truth and overpowered his brothers, wife and society. In this play, Yudhisthira and a Voice are the only two characters. Thus, his inner voice present his agony with which he is living but the reality is totally different. He has to act according to Dharma whereas his conscience doesn't allow doing it. The voice makes the reality more painful and debunks the concept of heaven. In order to achieve eternity Yudhisthira, his brothers and their wife Draupadi started to move towards the Himalayas. In order to have eternal place in the heaven Yudhishira should not look back until he reaches the heaven. If he breaks the promise then his brothers and wife will be turned into stones.

Here, Dalpat Chauhan has disclosed the greed of heaven in the Pandavas. But the Voice screams and rejects the concept of eternity. The voice rightly points out that Death is the only truth which is universally accepted while all other truths are relative. It also argues that you have envisaged eternity for yourself and for your loved ones so you will not find death and thus the heaven. It has also criticized Yudhisthira's stand for his lifelong services for "truth". The Voice rightly points out how Yudhisthira has deceived the whole world in order to give answers to the questions like- why did he gamble out his brothers and wife? Why did not he permit to place fire in the Lakshagruha? Why did he speak a lie during the war? The Voice opens out the selfish side of Yudhisthira and says you can not claim to speak only truth during your lifetime. Yudhisthira was stunned and can not reply to any of the questions. Thus, Dalpat Chauhan has presented a different facet of Yudhisthira's and overthrew his acceptance as a God. In this play, Dalpat Chauhan has also thrown light on the present situation of Dalits.

*Sanjay ane Chhagan* which I have mentioned earlier is another play where Dalpat Chauhan has used myth and history as a literary device and criticized the religion and religious dogmas. In this play, Sanjay and Chhagan are the main characters. There are four minor characters also. When Sanjay meets Chhagan, he remembers only past and not present. The conversation between them throws light on the relativity of time and human existence. There is a reference to Draupadi also. She cries for help but nobody comes forward to help her. In this play also there is a voice who talks with Draupadi. The talk between Draupadi and the voice is pinpointed. The Voice rightly points out how a woman was considered as a commodity in the *Manusmriti* and Yadhisthira's use of Draupadi as a property in the gamble. When Draupadi listen this religious dictum she was furious. Here Dalpat Chauhan wants to say only Draupadi has faced one public insult and she has replied violently, then what will be the condition of a Dalit who is facing such insult throughout his life. When Dalits demand for their rights upper caste people react violently. The anti-reservation riots of 1981 and 1985 are the example of the upper caste people's psychological attitude towards Dalits. They want to exploit Dalits not only socio-economically, politically, physically but mentally also. For them, Dalits should serve them without any reward becomes they are meant to be their slaves. But Dr. Ambedkar has subverted the reality into a reverie. He fought throughout his life for the upliftment of Dalits and whatever progress we are seeing at present in the lives of Dalits are the results of his life-long efforts. Dalpat Chauhan has praised these efforts in his play *Bhedhav no Bhusnar.*

In *Diwalo* also Dalpat Chauhan has condemned *Manusmriti*. Here, he has talked about various atrocities like not to allow Dalits to enter temple, and other public places, not to allow to use pond and well and untouchability. How upper caste people do not allow an Avarna to marry a savarna woman. Abhijit who wants to marry an upper-caste girl, Brahmanism did not allow doing so. He can't create his own heaven. In this play, Dalpat Chauhan propagates the public to overthrow the casteist ideology and to create a world where everyone is living equally and happily.

The interaction between myth and history is brought out. Though the projection of history through mythical framework is a recurring structural motif in Indian writing in English but Dalpat Chauhan has used these structural motifs in a different perspective. This is what I have analyzed in this paper.

## REFERENCES

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