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An Alternative Voice in Dalit Writing: A Study of Manoranjan Byapari

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Abstract

Dalit literature which has so far been pioneered and represented by prominent voices like Mahasweta Devi, Mulk Raj Anand, Munshi Premchand and others is challenged, revived, revisited as well as enriched by the new emergent and less known Bengali writer, Manoranjan Byapari (b.1950). The writings which stem from his real life experiences not only highlight the issues of poverty stricken and caste ridden society but also present the miserable plight of Dalits from the perspective of an insider. The declining shift in the identities of Dalits from “Namashudra” to “Chandal” or “untouchable” is seen as the outcome of the creation of self-proclaimed hierarchy, at the hands of upper class Hindus (Brahmins). This division has led to the creation of the social construct of ‘Chandals’ which becomes a symbol of lower caste untouchables. With its demeaning and dehumanizing effects, the identity of a Chandal has been dealt at length by Byapari in his novel *Ittibritte Chandal Jivan* (Interrogating My Chandal Life) (2012) in which he portrays the unadulterated real- life accounts of the subaltern-Jeeban, a young Dalit boy. The present paper aims to study how the world, in which Byapari dwells, is flooded with beasts in the guise of humans. The paper is a stark challenge to the binary of upper/lower caste that proves how the animalistic behavior is seen as an instinct prevalent in all humans irrespective of their class, caste, creed, religion sex, etc. Also, exposing his state of being a victim and presenting the personal as representative of Dalit lives, he is indeed creating a different lens that will allow us to analyze and challenge the hierarchy prevalent in the society as a Dalit insider thereby giving an alternative reality significant in representing the other.

Keywords: Chandal, Caste, Dalit, Sexuality, Law, Injustice

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