

The Common Cultural Forms as an Aesthetic Tool in Bangla Dalit Poetry*

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Abstract

The paper is an attempt to study the nuances of the Dalit popular cultural forms that are part of their daily life impacting their literary representation. The paper will be studying the strategies of the poet Gautam Aali in the context of Bangla Dalit poetry, to understand how he challenges the hegemony of the given modes of dominant aesthetics through the use of popular forms. Gautam Aali critiques the deeply ingrained casteism of Bengali 'Bhadralok' society. He aligns himself with the folk poets of the "kobi-gaan" tradition of Bengal. According to him it is a tradition that critically evaluates society from the commoner's perspective. Aali celebrates the oral folk tradition as an equal and parallel tradition to the dominant literary tradition.

Keywords: Bangla Dalit, popular culture, aesthetic, dominant

The popular cultural forms are a part of the daily life of the Dalits and are used by them in their literary representations to create a separate and different aesthetic space. In the context of Bangla Dalit poetry, I will be closely reading one of the poems of the poet Gautam Aali to look at the strategies the Dalit poet uses to challenge the hegemony of the given modes of dominant aesthetics through the use of the popular forms.

Gautam Aali belongs to the Namasudra caste, a first-generation literate from this Dalit community. He is closely associated with the Bangla

* Based on the author's unpublished doctoral research.