

From the Editorial Desk

'Dalit literature' is a term that has come into prominence over the past five decades to refer to the literary writings of people belonging to low castes held as untouchables by the Hindu caste society. The word 'Dalit' literally means ground, down, crushed, oppressed, torn apart, etc. Dalits who have been made silent by the Hindu caste system are now the speaking subject thanks to education. Dalit literature is a part of the Dalit movement which aims at bringing a new social order based on equity and social justice. Thus, Dalit literature is a literature of dignity.

Dalit literature has opened up new avenues to understand Indian society, culture and literature from new perspectives. Dalit writers across regions have come out with new themes on issues which are of national importance. The way Dalit writers are raising questions around aesthetics, language, genres, and themes in literature has never been addressed before so openly. Thus, the coming of Dalit literature has diversified the category called Indian literature. With its raw and everyday language of the oppressed, Dalit literature has raised its voices against the hegemonic forces that have appropriated all sorts of resources—whether social, cultural, economic or religious—of the country for centuries. Dalit literature, by initiating debates on the themes such as caste, class, ethnicity, language, religion and gender, among others, has already started destabilizing the power-centre and is rewriting Indian history, culture, aesthetics and philosophy in a major way. This makes Dalit literature an important force to reckon with.

In this issue of *Fortell*, we invited papers addressing various issues relating to Dalit literature such as Dalit language, aesthetics, genres, myths, and problematics of translating Dalit texts. We got an overwhelming response. Out of many we are able to accommodate only ten articles in this volume. Structurally, we have put the articles in chronological order going from a general theoretical and philosophical topic to more particular region and language-based. Mukesh Kumar Bairva has dealt with the current pandemic due to the Covid-19 situation. Taking cues from the Foucauldian, Heideggerian and Levinasian ethic and care of self, he proposes to explore and theorize the Ambedkarian ethic of care. Vandana, on the other hand, argues how theoretical concepts such as Dalit knowledge hold the power to intervene the cognitive domains of both the oppressed as well as the oppressor. Meenakshi Malhotra raises

several pedagogical issues while examining Dalit life-writings. Brati Biswas documents the powerful presence of Dalit aesthetics in Bangla Dalit poetry. Provakar Palaka while reading Sharankumar Limbale's famous autobiography *The Outcaste* emphasizes how an individual Dalit's story intersects with the story of a community and the nation at large. Narender Kumar investigates how a Punjabi Dalit poet Madan Veera powerfully raises current Dalit issues such as caste humiliation, socio-economic condition, and cultural exploitation in his poetry. Bageshree R. Bageshwar studies the reasons behind the emergence of Marathi Dalit periodicals and discusses the contributions made by various Dalit journalists to the success of the Dalit movement. Taking Ajay Navaria's Hindi short stories, Deepak explores the dilemma faced by the urban Dalit middle class. Shibangi Dash reads social realism and Dalit sensibility in Devanoora Mahadeva's famous Kannada novel *Kusumabale*. Abhinav Piyush via Rajat Rani Meenu's Hindi short stories tries a robust Dalit feminism which contests both Hindu Indian and Dalit patriarchy.

Besides these articles, we have included in this volume book reviews and language activities. An interview with Panchanan Dalai, a poet, translator and a faculty member of the Department of English, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi has also been included. Dalai's understanding of Dalit literature particularly his emphasis on certain pedagogical practices may interest many readers. We hope this special volume will inspire the readers to carry on further researches on various aspects of Dalit literature.

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