



Two day National Workshop on
Interface between Dalit Literature and Facets of Development

29-30th October 2014 at RGNIYD, Sriperumbudur 602 105.

Organized by

Department for Socially Economically Disadvantaged Youth (DSEDY)
Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD)
&
Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), Chennai.

CONCEPT NOTE

Literature has its own inherited ideology and politics. Development of different genre in literature across spectrum has witnessed various phases- linked to history, society, culture and politics. Literary discourse brings a reader towards a fuller and more intimate understanding of experience. In this context, auto/biography or semi-fiction are acts to recreate a world as close as possible to reality and objective conditions. These texts have the potential of community emancipation and are historical documents for future generation. The selfhood and self-respect of people is closely linked to their distinctive cultural identity and political economy. It shapes the nature of the relationship amongst human beings and between human beings and the natural world. Self does not exist independent of everyday material conditions and structural practices.

Development is a broad concept, which provide ample opportunity for being both understood and misunderstood. For some scholars, it means merely economic growth, industrial and technological advancement and life style improvements, but for others, development encompasses multiple aspects of not just human beings alone but supposed to be inclusive of everything. Therefore to understand development we need to take into consideration not just

theoretical and empirical source materials but also creative literature. Particularly, Dalit literature, which have specifically dealt with people's objective conditions of everyday materiality that are intertwined with many spheres of lives.

For instance, Siddalingaiah, Baby Kamble and others' auto/biography or semi-fictional narratives draw our attention to understand interconnection between Dalit epistemology with facets of development discourse. Siddalingaiah's portrayal of his childhood memory of his parents struggle, "*One day ...A man had fastened a yoke onto a shoulder...*", indeed, not only knocks the readers subconscious, but also mirrors the past. Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's *Thottiyude Makan* portrays plights of scavengers, which challenges the rationale of the caste system. Similarly, Kalyana Rao's "Untouchable Spring" captures the untouchability, "*Hunger too has untouchability. Labour too has untouchability*", with reference to caste clash during the construction of Buckingham and Ongole Canals. Jeyamohan's *Vellai Yaanai* reveals the naked hidden history of famine and Dalit laborers' struggles in the Colonial period of Madras presidency.

Social sciences and humanities traverse diverse disciplinary boundaries and have become more inter/ intra-disciplinary/ multi-disciplinary. The widening scope of the understanding has resulted in the emergence of new concepts, categories, approaches, perceptions, theories and methods. These dynamics too requires new ways of thinking and engaging with new fields of enquiry.

The studies have demonstrated that the implicit and explicit notions of caste relations linked to gender, sexuality, labour, internal subordination along with other aspects of social dynamics in public sphere have been either ignored or not fully mapped out by the mainstream social science academia and humanities. Scholars have emphatically argued that strengthening interface between literature and development would provide an academic scope for an appropriate appraisal of the challenges, considering the inadequate space and attention given to them until now in social sciences.

Dalit literature plays a crucial role in the process of recovering the cultural memory of the Dalit past and in uncovering the social-cultural subjugation of Dalits. It is during this transformative period of Dalit social, cultural and political upsurge for social equality and

political rights that Dalit literature as genre has emerged in India. In this process, the Dalit autobiographies are more crucial as literary genres because of its anti-caste non-fictional intent.

The proposed two day workshop on Dalit literature interface with development is to understand their multi-dimensional relations, such as how diverse spheres of society and the State have been captured by different writers in literature creatively.

The workshop Objectives:

- To understand Dalit literature and its contribution towards emancipation of society at large
- To discuss contribution of Dalit literature towards enhancing understanding of people's struggle
- To familiarize Dalit literature among the younger generation and to explore interface between literature and human struggle
- To facilitate interaction between Dalit writers and academia

ABOUT RGNIYD

The Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, is an Institute of National Importance by an Act of Parliament No. 35/2012 under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India. It was set up in 1993 under the Societies Registration Act, XXVII of 1975. It functions as a vital resource centre with its multi-faceted functions of offering six academic programmes at Post Graduate level encompassing various dimensions of youth development, engaging in seminal research in the vital areas of youth development and coordinating Training Programmes for state agencies and the officials of youth organisation, besides the Extension and Outreach initiatives across the country. It is fully responsive to the national agenda for inclusive growth, and the needs and aspirations of young people of the country to realise their potentials to create a just society. In view of fulfilling its obligations to the disadvantaged youth the RGNIYD established the Department for Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Youth (DSEDY). The DSEDY regularly conducts capacity building/ skills development programmes with a prime objective of enhancing Leadership, knowledge and entrepreneurial skills among SC/ST youth in India. The existing programme

includes TOT on Employability Skills, TOT on Youth Leadership and Personality Development, TOT on Environment and Sustainability and skill development training programmes (Financial Management and Raising Capital). Further based on the suggestions/recommendations given by the Advisory Committee, the DSEDY included training programme on Social Inclusion and conducting workshop on Dalit literature in the annual action plan 2014-15 of RGNIYD.

About MIDS

The **Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS)** was founded by Dr. Malcolm S Adiseshiah and Mrs. Elizabeth Adiseshiah, in January 1971. MIDS was reconstituted as a National Institute of Social Science Research in March 1977 under the joint sponsorship of the Government of India through the Indian Council of Social Science Research and the Government of Tamil Nadu. The MIDS aims to undertake studies and research pertaining to development problems, with special reference to the agro-rural aspects of Tamil Nadu and the socially and economically backward sections of the population throughout the country, conduct seminars and conferences on development issues concerning Tamil Nadu and the country at large, foster inter-university co-operation among social scientists of the universities of the four southern states, promote inter-disciplinary research, and disseminate information relating to the above activities. The research concerns of the faculty at MIDS are wide ranging. MIDS has become a centre for critical thinking on development issues. The service of faculty members are sought by State and Central Government departments, autonomous agencies, universities and colleges, non-government and international organisations.

Details of participants

Academicians, Research scholars of social science and humanities and writers.

Workshop themes

1. Social Dimensions of Dalit Movement
2. Dalit Literature and Mass Media
3. Dalit Literature and Political perspective

4. Dalit Literature and Human Struggle
5. Dalit Literature and Women
6. Dalit Literature and Youth

Workshop Conveners

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NOTE:

Interested aspirants shall register their names with the workshop conveners on or before 20th October, 2014.