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**BOOK REVIEW ON *PERSPECTIVES ON INDIAN DALIT LITERATURE:*
CRITICAL RESPONSES BY DIPAK GIRI**

Reviewed by Dr. Himani L.V.L

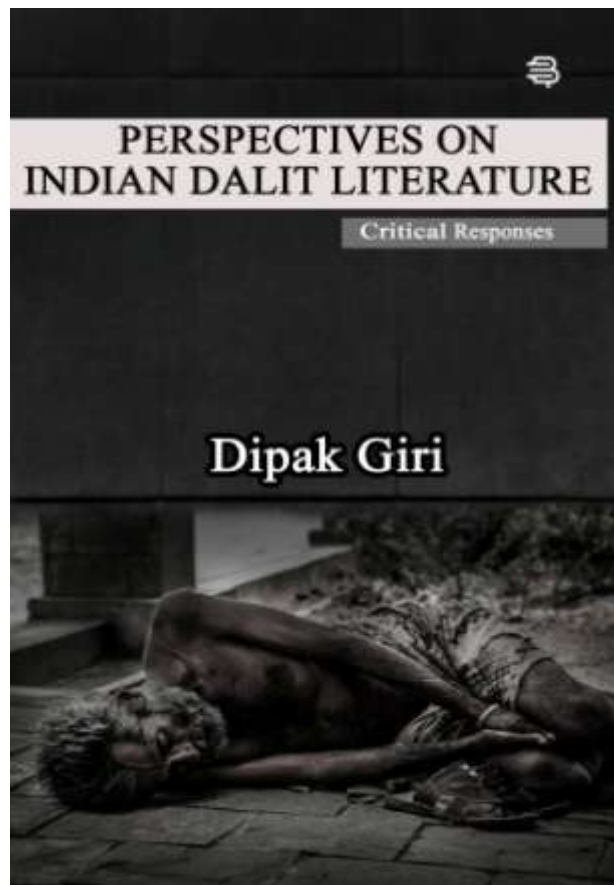
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Perspectives on Indian Dalit Literature: Critical Responses
| Literary Criticism | Dipak Giri

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Dalit literature is one of the most influential and wide spread literary movements that sparked the rage and agony of Dalits by representing themselves, while questioning the deep rooted casteism in the Indian society. As there are numerous works in the form of autobiographies, poems, novels and also the edited books with a good collection of essays or scholarly articles which can become a forum for the discussion of Dalit perspectives, the present book, *Perspectives on Indian Dalit literature: Critical Responses* is such a volume of articles edited by Dipak Giri, from West Bengal, whose meticulous care in the collection of essays made the book to be notified as a worth reading to have a clear understanding of Dalits and what it means to be a Dalit in the society of India. The cover page of the book itself speaks of the content inside, which gives a very pathetic picture of the life of Dalits, who are being considered as still, a no human being and deprived of all the basic human rights, including right to live. In the very 'Introduction', Dipak Giri gives a glimpse of the very origin of the word 'Dalit' and explains the origin of caste system in India by going back to the Vedas and Upanishads. With some references to the Sanskrit lines, he provides the valid evidences of the deep-rooted class system which created the section of Dalits, whose sole purpose of living is to be humiliated and dejected in the hands of the upper caste people.

As literature is a non-restricted platform without any borders and limitations, many writers especially from marginalised sections, globally, represented their pain, plight, sufferings, oppression etc., whether in the form of racism, or colonialism, or sexism, or casteism or untouchability; whatever the form or terminology may be, this platform of literature, has become a device of healing and a place to find the answers for their

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suppression in the hands of dominant. This edited volume of *Perspectives on Indian Dalit Literature: Critical Responses*, compiles all such essays written by various scholars from different parts of India. In fact, these essays are based on the popular writings by Dalit writers who portrayed the wretched lives of Dalit people and their struggle to live at least, the life of a human being. Editor, Giri in the Introduction has provided various names of the great thinkers and advocators like Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Kabir, Chokkamela etc., apart from the writers, who paved the way for the development of Dalit consciousness. “Who did keep this poison in India? Who did create the word “Caste” with which comes the division, the divide, the conceit, the egotism, self-boasting, self-assumptions, the separation, the gap, the discontinuity, the variation, the differences, all these are called PRIDE and PREJUDICE” – the underlying meaning of these lines from the Introduction, echoes throughout all the essays, thus insisting on the importance of Dalit movement and Dalit consciousness. The article presenters have given a detailed analysis of their chosen works of the most prominent Dalit and non-Dalit writers who gave the voice to the suffering of these people in their works. From the writers like Munshi Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand to the female writers Bama etc., everyone had a profuse understanding of Dalit system in various forms. All these writers, with their varied Dalit perception, attempted and succeeded in bringing the recognition of Dalit problem on the international platform.

The essays have been compiled in such a way by the editor, that a reader can have a complete understanding of the Dalit consciousness even though he/she is not aware of anything about the seriousness of the issue. For example, Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* has been analysed with a deep understanding of the negative aspects of untouchability in India by Dr. K.D. Sonawane and also another presenter Parimal Kumar in his essay brought into light the condition of women and their humiliation as portrayed in *Untouchable*. Another essayist Anup Kumar Rakshit presents post colonial feminist reading from Baby Kamble’s *The Prisons We Broke*. Women’s emancipation is a distinct phenomenon in Dalit literatures where women have been subjugated and neglected without any representation. In post

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colonialism the concern for the position of women in the male dominated society has given a rise for the concept of ‘Double Colonization’, the term which was coined by Holst-Petersen and Rutherford in their anthology *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Postcolonial Women's Writing* (1986). This concept examines how women are subjected to the domination and suppression by the upper class men, for belonging to the marginalised sections and at the same time oppressed in the hands of their own men in their families. In this context, women belonging to Dalit community have been neglected even in the writings of the writers written to address the problem of Dalits. It’s only because of the efforts of some Dalit writers like Bama, and others, women problems and their plight has started to be recognised on various literary platforms. We can also find the struggle of Mahar community and Mahar women in particular, from the state of Maharashtra, historical Marichjhapi massacre in the post-partition Bengal, exploration of Dalit identity etc., in the collected essays. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s name is inseparable when it comes to the idea of Dalit, and hence the essay by Manas Barik which is based on *Ambedkar, 1978: Equality for All or Death for India*, a poem by Namdeo Dhasal, is a must read as it is a tribute to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The final essay in the volume is presented by the editor himself with a deep insight into the selected short stories of Munshi Premchand who was considered as a first pioneer of Dalit consciousness. This essay of the editor presents various pictures of Dalit suffering as portrayed by Premchand in his short stories. With his lucid style of using the words, editor Giri, delves deep into the idea of Dalit and its understanding from the portrayal of realistic incidents in Premchand’s short stories.

Conclusively, this book is a worth of reading to know about the plight of marginalised classes in India in the name of Dalits. The efforts of the editor in compiling such essays on one platform signify his interest and vision for working on the concept of Dalit consciousness. His style of language and references used in introducing the essays exhibits his diligent reading and gathering of information from various sources. From Sanskrit texts of *Upanishads* to Afro American Feminism, and many, are the references one can find in the introduction of the essays. Being an editor, he successfully brought this book, *Perspectives on*

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Indian Dalit Literature: Critical Responses, as a holistic approach to understand the Dalit consciousness and various other concepts related to Dalit. Books of such kind may give rise to proliferate Dalit ideologies and their representation on international platforms apart from discussing the decade long sufferings in the hands of dominant class. And hence the efforts of writers, scholars, editors etc., who work on Dalit literatures echoes to put an end to the silent suffering just because of being Dalit and gives a call to identify themselves as Dalits by fighting back through their ideologies with all the resilience and perseverance. Thus Dipak Giri's edited volume justifies its title by weaving together the essays of same thread with Dalit emancipation.

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About the Reviewer:



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