

Dalit Consciousness: Plays of Davinder Kumar

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Abstract:

Davinder Kumar holds a prominent place in Punjabi Literature and Punjabi Drama. Besides full-length plays, he also contributed one-act plays and books of dramatic criticism to Punjabi literature. In his plays, Davinder Kumar presents various problems existing in Punjabi society. His dramas particularly highlight the issues of women, the Dalit community, and social corruption.

Keywords: Davinder Kumar, Dalit, Brahmin class, upper class, exploitation, Punjabi drama, Punjabi literature, caste system, Shudra.

Davinder Kumar is considered a major playwright of the fourth generation of Punjabi drama. He received his primary education from the Government Primary School of Manguwal village. He completed his graduation from National College Banga. Later, he earned his M.A. in Punjabi and Ph.D. degree from Punjabi University Patiala. He worked for a long time as a government teacher and later became a Professor of Punjabi at National College Banga.

Davinder Kumar has enriched Punjabi literature with many dramatic works. His famous plays include Vehra Apna Dharat Parai, Daldal, Pinjre De Aar Paar, Kaali Raat Da Chann, Parcham, Din Charde Tarkalaan Dhalian, Nritya Ton Tandav Takk, Koonja Kavan Desh Ton Aaiyan, Anni Juh Da Chanan, Risde Zakhman Di Kahani, and Satrangi Peeng Inquilab Di. Apart from these, he also wrote critical works on drama. His major critical books include Rangmanch, Radio Ate TV: Sidhaant Ate Vihaar, Punjabi Natak: Virsa Te Vartmaan, and Punjabi Rangmanch: Pichhokar Te Paripeksh.

Davinder Kumar based his plays on a variety of themes. Through his dramas, he presented Dalit concerns, agrarian issues, women's issues, social concerns, economic problems, political matters, and migrant experiences.

Davinder Kumar gave special importance to Dalit concerns in his plays. After 1990, Dalit consciousness emerged as a major literary trend in Indian literature as well as in Punjabi literature and Punjabi drama. In Indian society, the Dalit community had been suppressed for centuries. They were deprived of all kinds of rights and were denied political and social recognition.

In contemporary times, many writers and dramatists have prominently represented the Dalit community in literature, and Davinder Kumar is one of them. In his plays Navi Jang, Nritya Ton Tandav Takk, Risde Zakhman Di Kahani, and Vehra Apna Dharat Parai, he foregrounded the lives and struggles of Dalit people.

Since ancient times, the caste system has formed the basis of the social structure of Indian society. According to this caste hierarchy, Indian society was divided into four major classes, where the Brahmin class was placed at the top and the Shudra class at the bottom.

In his play *Risde Zakhman Di Kahani*, we see how the upper class exploits the lower class. Although the upper-class character belongs to the Sikh religion, he does not practice the teachings of the Gurus and instead believes in social discrimination and exploitation of lower-class people. Political parties also fail to provide political space to the Dalit community and merely use them as a vote bank, as depicted in this play.

Another play, *Vehra Apna Dharat Parai*, also presents the problems of the Dalit community. The play portrays the social condition of Dalit women and shows how Dalit people become victims of inferiority complexes.

Davinder Kumar's play *Navi Jang* also represents the struggles of the Dalit community and depicts the rise of a new consciousness among Dalits regarding their rights. Through this play, the dramatist shows that Dalit people are becoming aware of their rights and are preparing to fight a new struggle. The character Jeet creates awareness among Dalits that they should not sell their votes for temptation or greed, but instead elect a candidate of their own choice.

Thus, while presenting Dalit suffering and sensitivity in his plays, Davinder Kumar also gives importance to the awakening of consciousness within the Dalit community.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the plays of Davinder Kumar not only portray the miserable condition of the Dalit community but also foreground the growing awareness among Dalits. His plays express hope, resistance, and the spirit of a new struggle born through social consciousness. Rather than spreading hatred in society through historical references, Davinder Kumar's dramas make a meaningful effort to secure equality and dignity for the Dalit community in society.

References and Notes

1. Davinder Kumar, *Daldal*, Shri Prakashan, Delhi, 1993.
2. Davinder Kumar, *Vehra Apna Dharat Parai*, Kala Sampark, Nawanshahr, 1990.
3. Davinder Kumar, *Nritya Ton Tandav Takk*, Shilalekh Prakashan, Delhi, 2016.
4. Davinder Kumar, *Kaali Raat Da Chann*, Chetna Prakashan, Punjabi Bhawan, Ludhiana, 1999.