Discussion on Indian Dalit Literature - II

Special class

Annie Mahindru • May 7, 2022

INDIAN DALIT LITERATURE

Concept of Dalit

The word ***Dalit*** comes from the **Sanskrit** and it **means** ***downtrodden, suppressed, crushed*** or ***broken to pieces***, literally, its mean ***oppressed*** and is used to refer to the ***untouchable*** casteless sects of India. Dalit, also called outcaste, is a self designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchables or we can say they belongs to a section of society that cuts across religions.

It was **first used** by ***Mahatma Jyotirao Phule*** in the **nineteenth century** in the context of the oppression faced by the erstwhile ***Untouchable*** castes of the twice-born Hindus. ***Mahatma Gandhi*** **coined the word** ***Harijan***, means ***children of God*** to identify the former untouchables.

Dalits are a mixed population of numerous caste groups all over India, South Asia and all over the world. There are many different names proposed for defining this group of people like ***Ashprosh*** (***Untouchable***), ***Harijans*** (***Children of God***), ***Dalits***, (***Broken People***) etc.

Dalit Movements in India

The **earliest known Dalit reformer** was ***Lord Gautam Budha***, who preached the abolishing of untouchability. The **earliest known reformation within Hinduism** happened during the **medieval period** when the **Bhakti movements** actively engaged in the participation and inclusion of dalits. In the 19th century, the ***Brahmo Samaj***, ***Arya Samaj*** and the ***Ramakrishna Mission*** actively participated in the emancipation of Dalits. ***Saint Kabir***, ***Mahanubhava Sect***, ***Varkari Sect*** **in Maharashtra rejected** the **term untouchability** and embraced **Dalits** as Brothers. **Maharashtra** state was the **key state** in the **reformation of Dalit** or on the **transformation of untouchable** to **touchable**.

Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, ***Rajashri Shahu Maharaj***, ***V. R. Shinde*** and ***Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*** were the **prominent social reformers in Maharashtra**. In the 1950, ***Ambedkar*** turned his **attention** to **Buddhism** and **converted thousands** of **untouchable** people in Buddhism with himself. In **West Bengal** ***Chaitanya Prabhu*** initiated **a movement** called ***Namo Shudras Movement*** (***bow to Dalit***) which changed an

attitude towards untouchable community. Overall, Dalit reform movements had been in India since ancient period right from ***Gautama Buddha***. Still it is in course of reforming state by creative efforts of social reformers.

Indian Dalit literature

Dalit literature is one of the **most important literary movements** to emerge in **post-independence India**. The transformation of the stigmatized identity of these so called **untouchables** to a self chosen identity as Dalit is a story of collective struggle waged over centuries.

Dalit literature is **a new phenomenon in the modern era**, where the tormenting experiences of Dalit, Untouchable writers are exposed to present the contemporary social, mental condition before Dalit and non- dalit readers. ***Mulk Raj Anand*** was the first to insulate Dalit literature through his novels like ***Untouchable***, when ***Bakha*** aware of his status as an ***untouchable***;

> *"Posh keep away, posh, sweeper coming, posh, posh, sweeper coming, posh, posh, sweeper coming"!*

The term ***Dalit literature*** was **first used in 1958**, at the first **Dalit conference** of ***Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha*** (***Maharashtra Dalit Literature Society***) held in Bombay. However as an identity marker, the term ***Dalit*** came into prominence in 1972, when **a group of young Marathi writers-activists founded an organization** called ***Dalit Panthers***. The **name expressed** their feelings of kinship and solidarity with ***Black Panthers*** who were engaged in **a militant struggle for African - American rights** in the **U.S.A**. ***Arjun Dangle***, **a writer** and **leader** of the **Dalit Panther Movement**, writes:

> *"Dalit is not a caste but a realization and is related to the experiences, joys and sorrows and struggles of those in the lowest strata of society. It matures with a sociological point of view and is related to the principles of negativity, rebellion and loyalty to science, thus finally ending as revolutionary".*

Indian Dalit literature, which can be **traced back to a corpus of writings from Maharashtra in the 1960s**, refers to literature of the oppressed, usually associated with a diverse group of people historically considered the lowest among the Indian population and

known as ***untouchables***. While Dalit literature developed in response to concerns specific to Indian social and cultural history, over the last 20 years Dalit literature has got itself a **spot in the World Republic of Letters through translations into English**. The style of Dalit literature covers a wide range of literary genres. It solely aims at generating awareness of dalits about their social situation in the society, to all conscious readers.

Printing technology and the **freedom movement**, launched to liberate the country from its British colonial rulers, played a vital role in the social awakening of communities that had, so far, been denigrated as the lower classes. These simultaneous developments would go a long way in contributing to the creation of a specific literary genre that eventually came to be **identified as Dalit literature**: the **literature of the oppressed**. As a result over the years a decent body of work has been made **available in the form** of ***songs, poetry, fiction*** (***short stories*** and ***novels***), ***memoirs*** and ***biographies***.

In this context, well-known **second-generation Dalit politician, *Mrs. Meira Kumar*, former Lok Sabha Speaker**, had to say about **Dalit Literature**:

> *"Great literature, the classics, is time-tested, invariably painted on large canvases and are stories that have shaped generations. And then there are books like Amritlal Nagar's Nachyo Bahut Gopal, which are revolutionary and made a significant impact on me. I object to the classification of literature like this as Dalit Literature. It is the sort of label designed to keep a book in its so-called place. By assigning labels to writing as anarchists, we try to push them further out into the fringe".*

The **first English-language anthologies of dalit literature**, such as ***Barbara Joshi's Untouchable! Voices of dalit Literature*** (1986), ***Arjun Dangle's Poisoned Bread*** (1992), and the ***Anthology of Dalit Literature*** by ***Mulk Raj Anand*** and ***Eleanor Zelliot*** (1992) have served very well as windows on Dalit writing, especially the radical literature of protest that appeared in Marathi and other languages from the 1960s. These anthologies established the uniqueness of dalit writing in modern Indian literature, even as they drew attention to its conditions of production, to questions of style, genre, and resistance, and to the

comparability of this corpus with the literature of indigenous and disadvantaged people from across the world.

Recently released novel ***Pyre*** by ***Perumal Murugan*** (translated by ***Aniruddhan Vasudevan***) carefully sidesteps naming castes but there are enough cultural indicators embedded in the story to make it apparent that ***Saroja***, **the bride**, is a Dalit and hence the hostile reception she receives in her husband's village.

Oorakali by ***Irathina Karikalan*** describes the life of **a Dalit**, ***Mandayan***, who grazes the cattle of the whole village andgets food and some clothing in return. ***Pavunamma***, **his daughter** impregnated by someone in the master's house and dies a horrible and painful death to abort the child.

Poisoned Bread by ***Arjun Dangle's*** says;

> *"Even if a Mahar gets educated no one will ever call him brahmin. A mahar is a mahar even is passes LLB and becomes a barrister".*

It is obvious that literature that came from oppressed sections have been othered. There is a lot of Dalit poets whose poetry and writing challenged dominant caste norms and take us to the lives of their community and who remind us that caste and patriarchy are not exclusive. Some notable Dalit poets and writers are:

Mukta Salve

Mukta Salve was **one of the first Dalits** who openly question and criticise the discriminatory caste and gender norms of the Indian society in the 19th century through **her essay** ***Mang Maharanchya Dukhavisatha*** (***About the Grief of Mahar and Mangs***) when she was only fourteen.

> *"Oh, the Mahars and Mangs, you are poor and sick. Only the medicine of knowledge will cure and heal you".*

This essay published in ***Susie Tharu*** and ***K. Lalita's*** ***Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to Present*** and later became **one of the first works of Dalit literature**.

She belongs to the Mang community, which considered as one of the lowest and ritually impure communities within the caste system.

Namdeo Laxman Dhasal

Namdev Laxman Dhasal (1949 - 2014), is a poet and fiction writer of repute in the world of Marathi poetry who is also a political activist and **founder** of the **Dalit Panther Party** in Maharashtra, formed along the lines of the **Black Panther movement in the United States**.

He included in his poetry many words and expressions which only Dalits normally used. In ***Golpitha*** (1972), he adapted **his language** to that of the **red-light district**, which shocked middle class readers.

Poet and critic *Dilip Chitre* described his first collection of poetry ***Golpitha*** thus:

> *"It reveals whatever others would strive to shove under the carpet of poetry. This is my considered opinion more than three decades after its publication and I had no hesitation in writing that Namdeo's poetry, from that outstanding start, is Nobel Laureate material".*

American scholar *Dr. Eleanor Zelliot* stated;

> *"most important poet in Dalit literature in recent times is Namdev Dhasal, as no one can beat Dhasal in the powerful imagery, evocative language and bold statements against the system".*

The **Library of Congress has acquired his eight titles**.

Poetry Collections

- Golpitha (1972); Moorkh Mhataryane (By a Foolish Old Man); Tujhi Iyatta Kanchi? (1981, How Educated Are You?); Khel (1983, An Erotica); Gandu Bagichha (1986, Fragrant Garden); Priya Darshini (about the former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi); Ya Sattet Jiv Ramat Nahi (1995, Life is not interested in this Century); Mi Marale Suryachya Rathache Sat Ghode (I killed the Sun's Seven Horses); Tuze Boat Dharoon Mi Chalalo Ahe (I walked holding your finger)

Novels

- Ambedkari Chalwal; Andhale Satak

Awards

- Soviet Land Nehru Award (1974, for Golpitha); Maharashtra State Award (1973, 1974, 1982, 1983); Padma Shri (1999); Golden Lifetime Achievement Award by Sahitya Akademi (2004)

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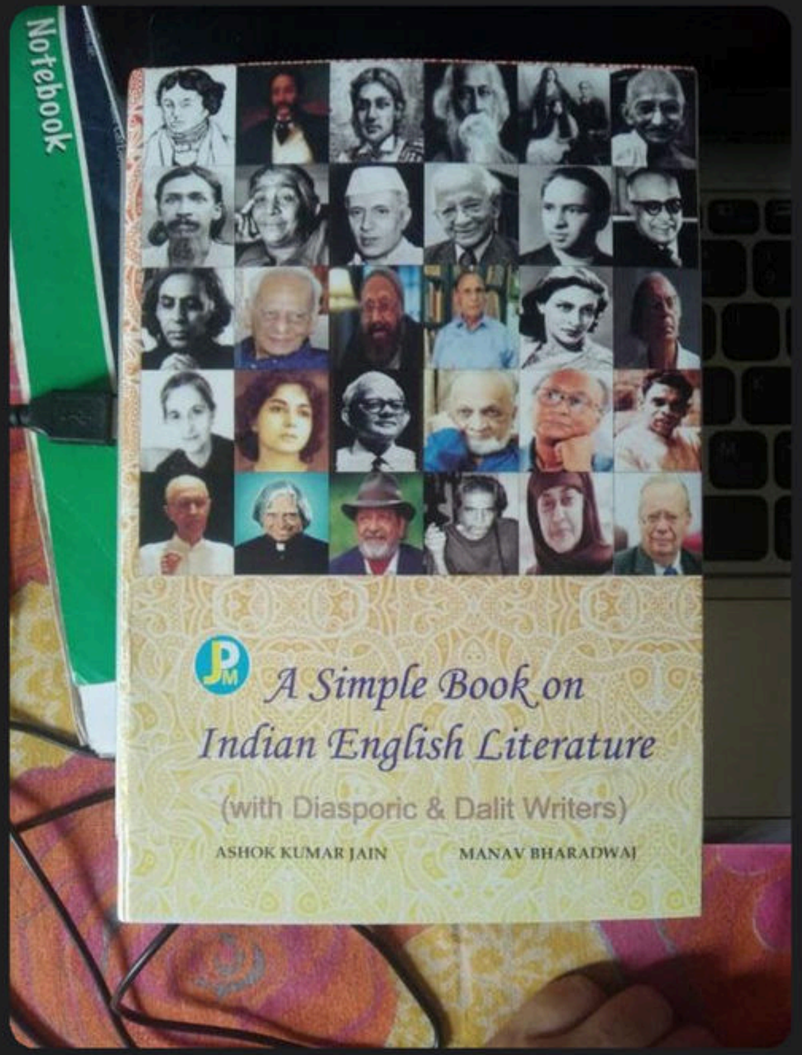
▲ 1 • Asked by Priyanka

Please help me with this doubt



Meena Kandasamy

Meena Kandasamy, born in 1984 to Tamil parents, she began writing poetry and translating books by Dalit writers and leaders into English at age 17.

She is one of the most famous feminist writers and activist in India. Her focus was mainly on caste annihilation, feminism and linguistic identity. She says;

> *"Poetry is not caught up within larger structures that pressure you to adopt a certain set of practices while you present your ideas in the way that academic language is"*

Poetry Collections

- Touch (2006), Ms. Militancy (2010)

Novels

- The Gypsy Goddess (2014), When I Hit You or A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife (2018), Exquisite Cadavers (2019)

Gummadi Vittal Rao (Gaddar)

Gummadi Vittal Rao (1949, popularly known as ***Gaddar***) is a well known Telugu poet, balladeer, and activist, a former naxalite now joined the movement for Telangana's statehood.

He took the **pseudonym Gadar** (now **Gaddar by accident**) as a tribute to the Gadar Party which fought the British rule in Punjab. Lakhs of printed copies of his songs have been distributed and sold over the last three decades.

Awards

- Nandi Award for Best Male Playback Singer (2011)

Dr C S Chandrika

C.S. Chandrika is well known for her fiction and non-fiction in Malayalam who is also a social scientist, activist, and columnist, involved in women's, human rights and environmental concerns.

She is one of the editors of ***The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing***, which is collection of Malayalam Dalit writing of 20th century.

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▲ 1 • Asked by Aru Jane

Please help me with this doubt

Works

- Pira; Bhoomiyude Pathaka; Ladies Compartment; Ente Pachakkarimve; Kleptomania (story collection); Aarthavamulla Sthreekal (Essay); K. Saraswathiyamma (monograph).

Awards

- Prestigious Muthukulam Parvathi Amma Award (2010, for Aarthavamulla Sthreekal); Thoppil Ravi Award (2012, for Kleptomania)

Bama

Bama or ***Bama Faustina Soosairaj*** (1958), is a Tamil Dalit feminist, committed teacher and novelist. She is regarded as one of the pioneers of Dalit feminist literature has also become a significant regional voice among the women of the subcontinent.

After schooling, she joined as a teacher at a Catholic Christian school. During her teaching experience, she found out that the Catholic nuns oppressed the Dalit children and teachers. These experiences formed the basis for her **first novel**, *Karukku* published in 1992.

> *"We who are asleep must open our eyes and look about us. We must not accept the injustice of our enslavement by telling ourselves it is our fate, ... It is we who have to place them where they belong and bring about a changed and just society where all are equal". (from* ***Karukku****)*

Her recently published work is a **collection of 13 essays**, *Single By Choice: Happily Unmarried Women*, about unmarried women in India talking about their singlehood.

Novels

- Karukku (1992; 2nd ed. with postscript, 2012); Sangati (1994); Vanmam (2002)

Short Stories Collection

- Single By Choice: Happily Unmarried Women!

Essays

- ~~Crossword Book Award (2000, for Karukku)~~

Awards

- Crossword Book Award (2000, for Karukku)

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▲ 1 • Asked by Aru Jane

Please help me with this doubt

Daya Pawar

Daya Pawar or ***Dagdu Maruti Pawar*** (1935 - 1996) born to a Mahar Dalit family in Dhamangaon, Maharashtra was a Buddhist by religion, an Indian Marathi language poet known for his contributions to Dalit literature that dealt with the atrocities experienced by the dalits or untouchables.

He was best known for **his autobiographical novel *Baluta*** (1978), written as a story.The novel recounts the **experiences of an untouchable** struggling **for a** peaceful **existence, mentally** tormented **but incapable of retaliation in word and deed.**

He gave expression to the oppression of the Dalits through his verse.

"Shilekhali haat hota, tari nahi phodla hambarda,
Kitr janmachi kaid, kuni nirmila ha kondvada.
(The hand was crushed under a stone, yet no outcry was heard
How many generations of imprisonment? Who created this prison?)"

Apart from poetry, Pawar published **two collections of essays,** a book of **short stories,** and the **screenplay** for ***Jabbar Patel's*** movie ***Dr Ambedkar.***

Publications

- Baluta (Autobiographical novel); Kondwada (Poems); Vital (Short stories); Chawdi (Essays); Pasang (Columns)

Awards

- Maharashtra Government Award (1975, for Kondwada); Maharashtra Government Award (1979, for Balute); Ford Foundation Fellowship (1982); Padmashri (1990)

Urmila Pawar

Urmila Pawar (1945) is a prominent figure in the dalit and feminist movements. She written in Marathi language, have often been hailed as a critique of social discrimination.

She is best known for **her autobiography *Aaidan*** **(translated into English** by ***Maya Pandit*** and released under the title ***The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs***).

Pawar's **short stories** including ***Kavach*** and *A Childhood Tale* are widely read and form the part of the curriculum at various Indian universities.

In 2004, the **Maharashtra Sahitya Parishad** awarded her the **Laxmibai Tilak Award** for ***Aaidan***, but **refused to accept** it, saying that the:

"metaphors, images, and symbols in Marathi literature have remained tradition-bound".

Autobiography

- Aaidan (translated into English by Maya Pandit and released under the title The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs)

Short Stories Collection

- Sahav Bot (Sixth Finger); Mother Wit

Awards

- Laxmibai Tilak Award (for Aaidan)
  (She refused to taken it)

D. Ravikumar

D. Ravikumar (1961) is Tamil intellectual, writer, lawyer politician and an anti-caste activist. He was the editor of the magazine, ***Nirapirikai*** and the co-founder of the anti-caste publishing house ***Navayana***, along with ***S. Anand***.

Potry Collection

- Avizhum Sorkal (2009); Mazhai Maram (2009); Vaanil Vitterintha Kanavu (2017)

Short Stories Collection

- Kadal Kinaru (2014)

Edited

- The Oxford India Anthology of Tamil Dalit Writing; Waking is Another Dream (a n anthology of poetry on the Eelam genocide)

Non-fiction

- Venmous Touch: Notes on Caste, Culture and Politics

Anant Rao Akela

Anant Rao Akela is a poet, folk singer and publisher. He sold his first work, an eight-page pamphlet titled ***Ram Rajya Ki Nangi Tasveer***, at village fairs and in markets in 1980.

He join the Bahajun Samaj Party in 1985, for whom he wrote poems that were recited at public meetings held by BSP leaders. He has own publishing house name, Anand Sahitya Sadan.

Works

- Shambook Rishi (Baahmasi); Bheem Gyan-Gitanali; Buddha Gyan-Gitanali; Baspa Ke Bol; Mere Mishanary Geet; Angulimaal Katil Kyo Bana (All song collections); Yug Pravartak Ambedkar (Play) and Baba Saheb Ne Kaha Tha.

Baburao Ramji *Bagul*

Baburao Ramji Bagul's (1930–2008), fiction dwells heavily on the social and economic deprivation enforced by the caste system, as well as the revolt of those oppressed by the system.

One of the **pioneers of the Dalit Panthers**, the Marathi writer shot to fame with his 1963 collection of short stories ***Jenvha Me Jat Chorali Hoti*** (***When I had Concealed My Caste***).

Works

- Jenvha Me Jat Chorali Hoti (1963); Akar (1967); Maran Sast Hot Ahe (1969); Sud (1970); Pawsha (1971); Pashan (1972); Dalit Sahitya Ajache Kranti Vignyan; Ambedkar Bharat (1981); Aghori (1983); Apurva; Kondi (2002); Bhumihin; Mooknayak; Sardar; Vedaadhi Tu Hotas; Dalit Dahitya : Aajche Krantividyan

Awards

- Harinarayan Apte Award (1970)

Jatin Bala

Jatin Bala (1949) born in East Pakistan, had lost his parents early childhood and had to bear the tribulations of the Bengal partition without the support of a family. Despite having to live in refugee camps, he educated himself.

One of his stories, ***On firm ground***, is included in translation in Survival and some other are in Translation.

Potry Collection

- Jeebaner Naam Jantrana (The name of Life is Pain); Minati Keu Rakheni (Nobody Has Kept Request); Aamar Shabdai Shanita Astra (A Verse as a Sharpened Weapon, translated into English by Satya Debnath)

Short Stories Collection

- Nepo Nidhan Parba (Nepo Slain Episode); Gondir Bandhe Bhangan (Dissolution in the Barrage of Circle); Vanga Banglar Dui Mukha (Two faces of Broken Bengal); Samaj Chetanar Galpo
- Stories of Social Awakening: Reflections of Dalit Refugee Lives of Bengal(translated from Bangla into English by Jaydeep Sarangi)

Novel

- Aamriter Jiban Kotha (Life of Elixir); Shikarh Chhenrha Jeeban(Root Severing Life, Autobiographical)

Research Articles

- Dalita Sahitya Aandalan (Dalit Literary Movement); Bastu Badi Motua Aandalan (Materialistic Motua Movement); Satya Aannetion (In Search of Truth); Itihasher Aloke Sri Hari Guruchand o Matua Aandalan (Sri Hari Guruchand in the light of History and Matua Movement)

Awards

- Nitish Smriti Sahitya Award; Kobi Nikhilesh Smriti Award; Sahittyik Moni Mondal Smriti Award; Dabdaha Patrika Award; Ambedkar Literary Award by The University of Calcutta

Ajay Navaria

Ajay Navaria began his academic career teaching Hindu religious scripture and ethics as an associate professor of Hindi Literature at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi. ***Unclaimed Terrain***, an **English translation of his short stories** was featured in a **Guardian list of best books in 2013**.

Short Stories Collection

- Patkatha aur Anya Kahaniyan (2006, The Sript and Other Stories); Yes Sir (2012)

Novel

- Udhar ke Log (2009, People From the Other Side)

Ratan Kumar Sambharia

Ratan Kumar Sambharia (1956), born in a village in the Rewari district of Haryana, Sambharia has been living in Rajasthan for over three decades. His political writing and activism made him an icon of the Dalit movement. Many of Sambharia's works deal with the experiences of marginalised communities in India. His writing has been translated into several languages, including Kannada, Marathi, Punjabi and Sindhi.

Mridul Bhasin **choose 15 stories from his collections, translated into English** and published under the title ***Thunderstorm*** (2015), that shed light on various **aspects of Dalit life** in a casteist society.

Short Stories Collection

- Banga Aur Anya Laghukathaye (1996); Hukama Ki Duggi: Kahani Sangraha (2003); Kaal Tatha Anya Kahaniya (2010); Dalit Samaj Ki Kahaniyan (2011); Khet Tatha Anya Kahaniya; Airgun ka Ghoda; Pratinidhi Lahghu Katha Shatak

Plays

- Samaj ki Naak (Ekanki Sangrah); Bima; Ujas; Bhubalya

Awards

- Navjyoti Katha Samman; Sahara Samay Katha Award (2006); Awarded by Vice President of India for his story Chapadasan (The Attendant); Kathadesh Akhil Bhartiya Kahani Pratiyogita (2007, for Biper Suder ek Kine); Rajasthan Patrika Srajnatmak Puraskar (2007, for Khet); Hariyana Gaurav Samman (2017)

Baby Kamble

Baby Kamble or ***Babytai Kamble*** (1929-2012) is one of the earliest women writers from the untouchable communities. She wrote in her spare time at the shop she ran with her husband for a living. Her **autobiography** ***Jina Amacha*** (translated into English titled ***The Prisons We Broke*** by ***Maya Pandit***) gave us one of the first critiques of two fold patriarchy; an experience of Dalit women's lives recognizing their dual oppression: by gender and caste.

An activist, she ran a residential school for socially backwards students in a village near Phaltan in Maharashtra until her death in 2012.

Leeladhar Mandloi

Formerly the director general of Doordarshan and All India Radio, the Hindi author has published 35 books on poetry, literature, and culture. He has won several national awards such as the Samsher Samman, the Nagarjun Samman, and the Sahityakar Samman. He has also produced around 300 telefilms on short stories.

Potry Collection

- Ghar Ghar Ghuma; Rat Birat; Mager ek Aawaj; Dekha-Adekha; Yeh Badmasti to Hogi; Dekha Pahli Dafa Adekha; Upasthit hai Samudra etc.

Other

- Andman Nikobar ki Lok Kathayey; Pahad aur Pari ka Sapana; Ped bhi Chaltey Hai; Chand ka Dhabba etc.

Awards

- Ram Vilas Sharma Samman; Vageswari Samman; Raja Samman; Puskin Samman; Nagarjun Samman etc.

Imayam (*V. Annamalai*)

Imayam (**pen name** of ***V. Annamalai***) is a prominent and a well known Tamil novelist from Chennai. He wrote five novels, five short story collections and a novella. He is closely connected with the Dravidian Movement and its politics. His novels ***Koveru Kazhudhaigal*** (***The Mules***) and ***Arumugam***, have won acclaim within Tamil literature and have been **translated** into **English** and **French** respectively.

Potry Collection

- Koveru Kazhudhaigal (1994, Novel); Aarumugam (1999); Man Baaram (2002); Sedal (2006); Video Mariamman (2008); Kolai Cheval (2013); Pethavan (2013); Savu Soru (2014); En Katha (2015); Narumanam (2016); Selladha Panam (2018); Nan Maaran Kottai Kathai (2019); Vaazhga Vaazhga (2020)

Awards

- Akshara Award (1994); The Autham Adigal Award (1998); Tamil Nadu Progressive Writers' Association Award, The Agni; Contemporary Tamil Literature - The Hindu (2018)

Mimi Mondal

The **first Hugo Award nominee from India**, ***Mimi Mondal*** is a speculative fiction Dalit author. She also received the **Poetry with Prakriti Prize** in **2010**, the **Octavia E. Butler Scholarship** for the **Clarion West Writing Workshop** in **2015** and the **Immigrant Artist Fellowship** from the **New York Foundation** for the Arts in 2017.

She currently lives in New York. Her **first book**, ***Luminescent Threads: Connections to Octavia E. Butler***, edited **with** ***Alexandra Pierce***, is a finalist for the **Hugo Awards 2018** and the **Locus Awards 2018**.

Anita Bharti

Anita Bharti (1965) is a prominent poet, writer, critic, and activist for Dalit and women's rights who has been in the forefront in bringing Dalit women's perspective into Hindi literature.

She is the **editor** of ***Yathastithi se Takraate Hue Dalit Stree Jeewan se Judi Kavitaayein***, **a collection of work by 65 poets** on the **lives of Dalit women** and the challenges they face.

Her ***Samakaleen Nariwaad aur Dalit Stree ka Pratirodh*** offers a valuable appraisal and critique of contemporary feminism and the Dalit women's position.

Awards

- Radhakrishnan Teacher Award (1994); Indira Gandhi Teacher Award (2007); Delhi State Teacher's Honor (V); Savitribai Phule Award from the Ramikaika Foundation (2015); Savitribai Phule Honors from Women's Journal (2016)

Kanwal Bharti

Kanwal Bharti, the son of a cobbler, started **writing poetry and articles at the age of 15** to highlight the sorry condition of Dalits. After struggling for years in poverty, his poetry was discovered and he shot to fame. While pursuing his graduate studies, he became a columnist for the **Hindi weekly newspaper Sahkari Yuga**.

His work was **included in course books prescribed** by multiple universities. An **author of 15 books**, he was awarded the Dr Ambedkar National Award in 1996 and Bhim Ratna award in 2001.

Works

- Kashiram key do chehre 2013; Kabir Ek Vishleshan (2015); Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu (2016); The case for Bahujan Literature (2017);Jati ka Vinash (2018); RSS Aur Bahujan Chintan (2019); Periyar Dashan Chintan Sacchi Ramayan (2020)

Award

- Dr Ambedkar National Award (1996); Bhim Ratna Award (2001)

Omprakash Valmiki

Omprakash Valmiki (1950–2013) was an Indian writer and poet, well known for his autobiography, ***Joothan***, considered a **milestone in Dalit literature**.

Potry Collection

- Sadiyon Ka Santaap (1989); Bas! Bahut Ho Chuka (1997); Ab Aur Nahin (2009)

Short Stories Collection

- Salaam (2000); Ghuspethiye (2004) Amma and Other Stories; Chatri

Other

- Dalit Sahitya Ka Saundary Shaastra (2001); Safai Devata (2009, history of the Valmiki community); Do Chera (a play); Usey Veer Chakra Mila Tha (a play); Joothan (autobiography)

Awards

- Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Rastriya Purskar (1993); Parivesh Samman (1995); New India Book samman (2004); America Samman; Sahitya Bhusan (2008-2009)

Surajpal Chauhan

A **winner of the Hindi Academy Award**, the Aligarh native is a prolific author of both poetry and prose. His poetry collections include ***Prayas***, ***Kyun Vishwas Karun***, and ***Kab Hogi Wah Bhor***.

Manoranjan Byapari

Having migrated from Bangladesh to West Bengal in the 1950s, ***Byapari*** was illiterate until his mid-twenties. Now he is a prolific author, having **written 10 novels**, more than **a hundred stories**, and **an autobiographical novel** *Itibritte Chandal Jiban*.

Having spent his youth in penury and without education, it was during a two-year imprisonment that Byapari taught himself the Bengali alphabet and started reading and writing. While working as a rickshaw puller after he came out of prison, he met the late ***Mahasweta Devi*** who asked him to write. His literary career started when he wrote an article ***I pull Rickshaw*** for **Devi's journal Bartika in 1981.**

Mukta
Salve.

Muktabai belonged to the Mang or Matang community, which was considered to be one of the lowest and ritually impure communities within the caste system. She had no access to education until 1852, when Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule started their third girls' school at Vetal Peth in Pune. These schools were open to women of all castes and communities, and it was here that Muktabai's education began.

"The Brahmins have degraded us so low; they consider people like us even lower than cows and buffaloes."

After merely three years of schooling, Muktabai wrote her essay 'About the Grief of Mahar and Mangs'. It highlighted the atrocities committed against the Mahar and Mang communities, such as the seizing of their lands to build huge houses for the upper castes, and the inhuman treatment meted to these communities, especially during the rule of Bajirao Peshwa. It also revealed the vulnerability of Dalit women, who had to endure childbirth without a roof over their head, or a doctor to treat them in case of complications.

But her work goes far beyond simply documenting the practices prevalent during that time. She questioned the legitimacy of Hinduism, a religion she had no access to, but was expected to follow. She analysed how the upper-caste Brahmins manipulated religion to control the power structure within the society, by depriving the Mangs of food, clothing, shelter, and education. She believed that gaining knowledge could shift these power structures and create a better future for the Dailt communities. And she did all of this after just three years of receiving education herself.

This essay was first published in a Marathi journal named Dnyanodaya in 1855. Incidentally, this was also the year of Jyotirao Phule's first publication, Tritiya Ratna. A part of the essay was published in N. V. Joshi's book 'Description of Pune City' in 1868. This essay was translated into English and published in Susie Tharu and K. Lalita's 'Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to Present' in 1991.

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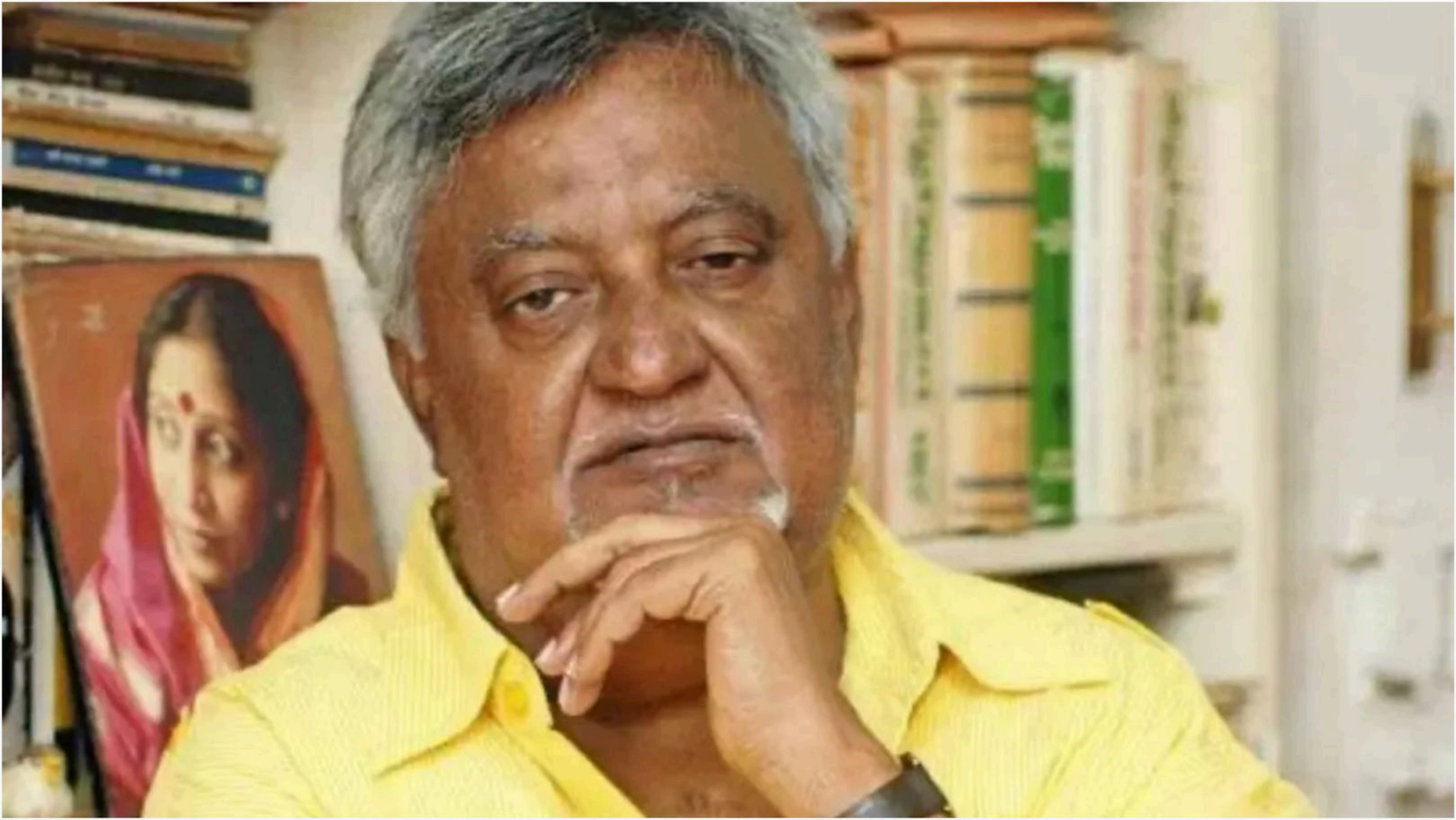

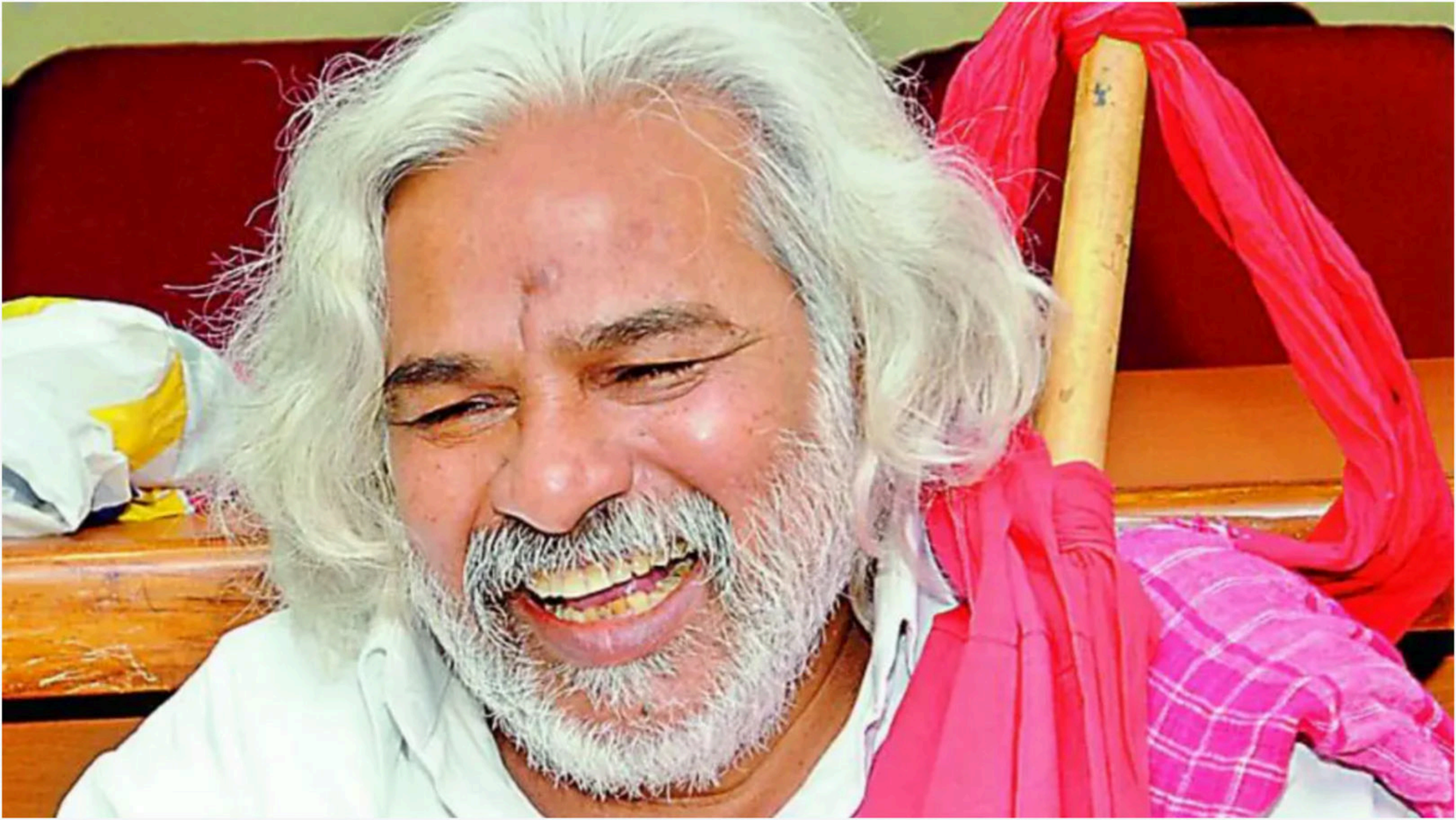

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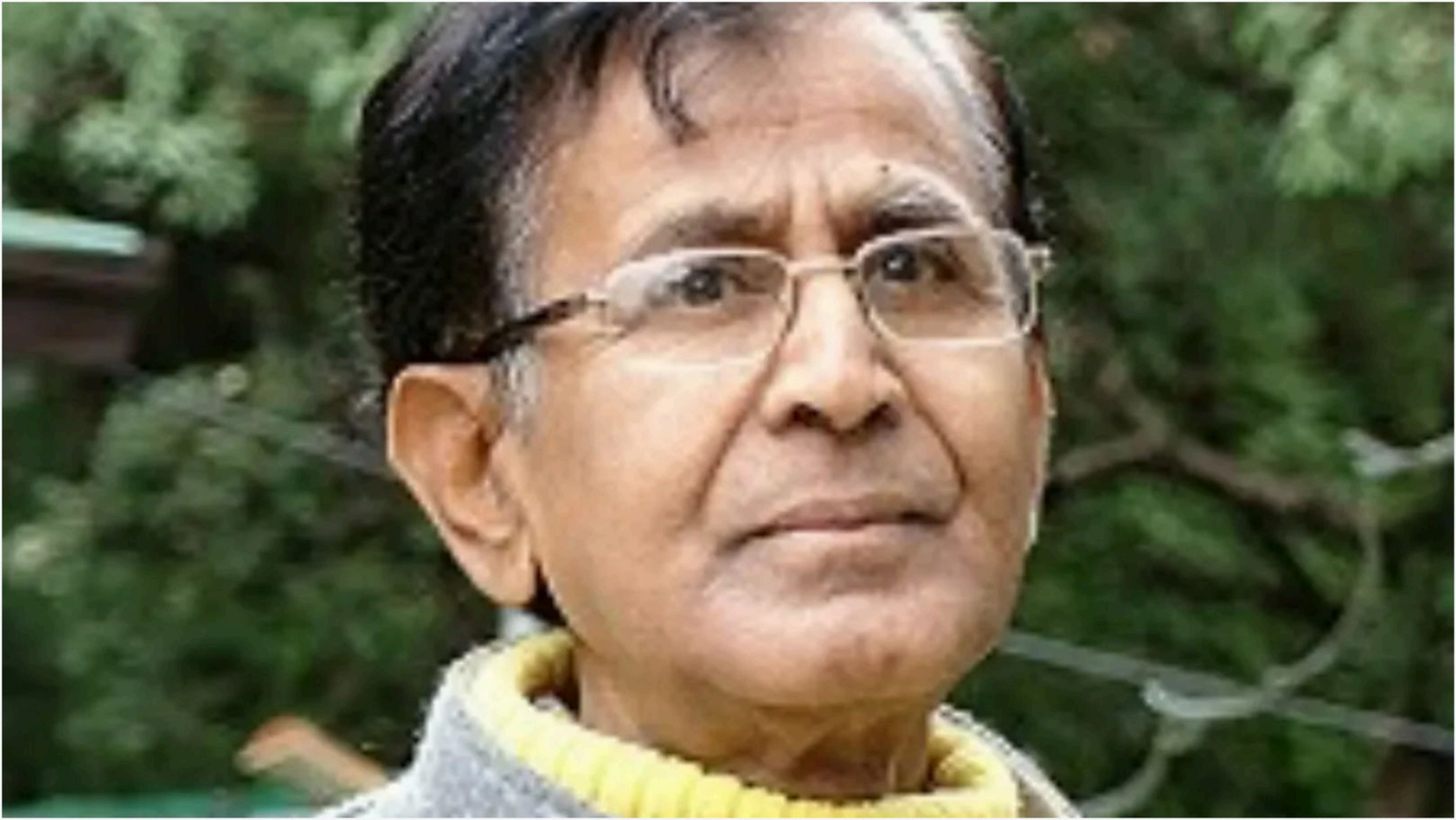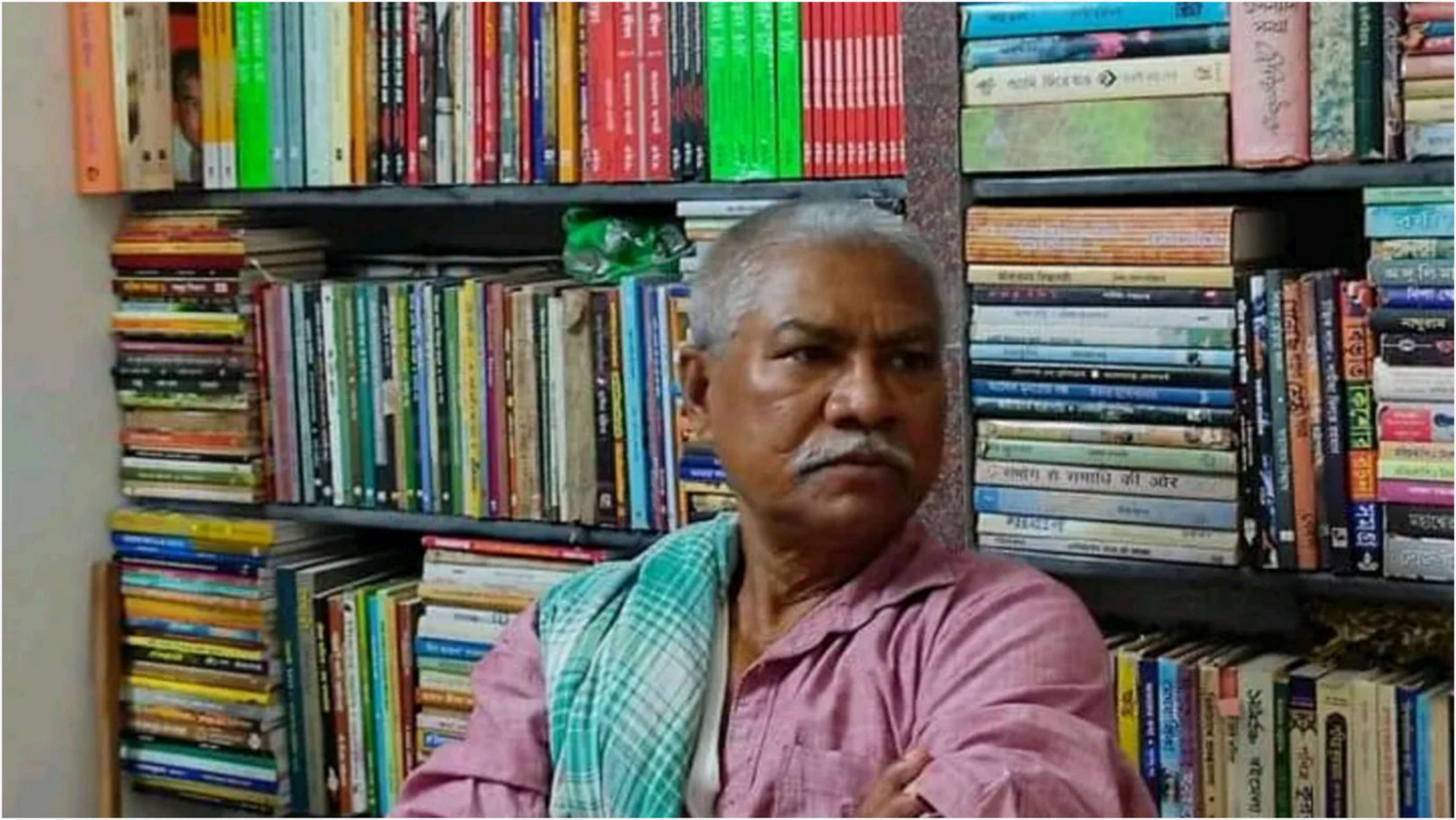
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