

**DEMOCRACIES AND DILEMMAS:
THE POETRY OF ETHELBERT MILLER AND NAMDEO DHASAL**

Sunita Rani Ghosh¹ & Nibir K. Ghosh²

¹Department of Hindi, Agra College, Agra, UP, India.

²Email: ghoshnk@hotmail.com

*Corresponding Email: neetupms@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of dilemmas pertaining to race in the U.S. and caste in India, the focus of the paper is on examining interesting points of similarities and differences that connect two poet activists: Ethelbert Miller from the world's most powerful democracy and Namdheo Dhasal from the world's largest democracy respectively. Aware of the ideals of life, liberty, equality and fraternity that ought to be the defining principles of the democratic state, both poets strive to challenge the status quo, in their own way, through their impactful renderings in verse. The paper also highlights how the two poets foreground the facts of discrimination in their respective societies through a close delineation of ground reality that makes one conscious of the gulf between what is and what ought to be.

Key Words: American Dilemma, African American, Dalit, Black Power, Civil Rights, Dalit Panther

Among the basic issues that continue to occupy a prominent place in the arena of American politics is that of race-relationship. Being situated in both the superstructure and base of society, 'color-prejudice' is a personal as well as a political reality. In the words of Charles T. Davis: "Whatever happens, we can expect that blackness will continue to operate as a creative element, neither as a mark of shame, nor as a badge of honor, in the literature of this country" (28). The pervasive presence of the color line in a nation dedicated to the avowed ideals of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness remains a cause for concern even after 244 years of the Declaration of Independence. As the ambivalence of the "American Dilemma" continues to haunt the conscience of the most powerful democracy in the world, no less problematic is the issue of Caste for the world's largest democracy, India. Though our nation can take pride in upholding its democratic credentials by installing two Dalit Presidents in the Rashtrapati Bhavan, electing a Dalit woman chief minister four times in the largest state in India besides numerous ministers to the union and state cabinets, it cannot be denied that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's dream of liberty, equality and fraternity continues to elude the Dalit community in India.

In view of the dilemmas pertaining to the two democracies, the present paper makes an attempt to examine and explore the paradigms of race and caste respectively as reflected in

the poetry of Ethelbert Miller, a contemporary African American poet and Namdeo Dhasal, the celebrated Dalit icon.

E. Ethelbert Miller

E. Ethelbert Miller (born 1950), the founder and director of the Ascension Poetry Reading Series, has been the director of the African American Resource Center at Howard University from 1974 to 2015. He is the author of the following books: *Andromeda* (1974), *The Land of Smiles and the Land of No Smiles* (1974), *Migrant Worker* (1978), *Season of Hunger/Cry of Rain* (1982), *Where are the Love Poems for Dictators?* (1986, reprinted in 2001), *First Light* (1994), *Whispers, Secrets and Promises* (1998), *Fathering Words: The Making of An African American Writer* (2000), *Buddha Weeping in Winter* (2001), and *How We Sleep on The Nights We Don't Make Love* (2004). He is the editor of the following anthologies: *Synergy: An Anthology of Washington, D.C. Black Poetry* (1975), *Women Surviving Massacres and Men* (1977), *In Search of Color Everywhere* (1994), and *Beyond the Frontier* (2002). In 1979, the Mayor of Washington, DC proclaimed September 28, 1979 as "E. Ethelbert Miller Day." Again in 2001 the Mayor of Jackson, Tennessee proclaimed May 21, 2001 as "E. Ethelbert Miller Day." Miller received the Public Humanities Award from the D.C. Humanities Council in 1988.

In a characteristic pronouncement in his memoir, *Fathering Words: The Making of an African American Writer*, Miller tells us how a person, any person, creates a life and knows it's the right choice:

One night a poem comes to me. Words. Revelations. In the beginning I was a small boy standing on a corner in the Bronx waiting for my father. The sky is gray. I start praying. Suddenly words are escorting me across the street. I reach the other side, proud of what I've done. I can write. My prayers are songs. I can make music. I can give color to the world. This is my life. This is my gift. (Miller, *Fathering Words* 67).

Among the African American influences that shaped the poetic sensibility of Miller, the name of Langston Hughes remains uppermost. He notes in his blog in a post entitled "The Buddha Smile of Langston Hughes":

Sometimes while walking alongside a river or lake I feel a little Langston in me. Suddenly I have a desire to throw all my possessions into the water and listen to my heart. I interpreted the throwing away of his books as the search for another way to live; I saw it as being the journey of the poet. (Miller, Blog).

Miller thinks much of his writing was an outgrowth of his politics and his involvement with other cultural communities. Inspired by the Black Power and Black Arts Movement, Miller realised the importance of blackness and the need to be aware of what was going on in society. Reading works by Amiri Baraka, Haki Madhubuti, and Sonia Sanchez brought him in close contact with African American writings. Langston Hughes and Richard Wright connected him to a tradition he was not aware of while growing up in New York.

Miller has had a key role to play in the relationship between Jews and Blacks in contemporary America. As one of the founders of the "Windows & Mirrors" cultural series which is coordinated by the DC Jewish Community Center and the African American Resource Center at Howard University, Miller strives to create cultural programs that seek to find common ground between two different communities with shared traditions. The focus is

on what was accomplished during the Civil Rights Movement by Blacks and Jews working together and the challenges that such an association faces today with more African Americans becoming Muslims and supporting the Palestinian position in the Middle East. In urban areas around the United States, African Americans now interact more with Latinos and Koreans. With the shift in demographics, new political alliances are occurring. Miller is aware of the fact that the assimilation of Jews in mainstream American society, polity and economics is bound to affect the relationship of friendliness that had once existed between the two communities. His concern motivated him to establish the "Windows & Mirrors" program at the D.C. Jewish Community Center. The terms "Windows & Mirrors" are metaphorical says Miller in his interview:

I believe it's necessary for a person to look into a mirror and achieve a level of self-awareness as well as cultural awareness. It's also important after looking into a mirror to turn away and confront the situation outside the window. Looking out the window requires the compassion to understand others. (Ghosh 59).

Like many contemporary African Americans, Miller too is attracted by the tenets of Buddhism. He has always been attracted to the monastic tradition. The book *Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse opened a door and changed his thinking. He states in the same interview:

I think the sacrifice one has to make to become a Buddhist is what I find attractive. Discipline and patience are things I struggle with on a daily basis. Prior to my interest in Buddhism I read quite a bit about Islam. The work of Hazrat Inyat Khan and other Sufi writers began showing up on my bookshelves in the 1970s. I've never been interested in belonging to a church or religious institution. I find the calling to one's faith to be a very personal pursuit and undertaking. (Ghosh 59-60).

Miller doesn't agree that the average African American citizen continues to be an "invisible man" at the dawn of the 21st Century. He finds Black people to be more visible than ever before with the world becoming a place filled with color. On the contrary he feels that white people today are becoming invisible and that with DNA research being available it might be possible to conclude that whiteness no longer exists. He emphasizes how almost everyone in the ivory tower is today connected to the Internet. He would like to see more writers (instead of movie stars) run for political office. For writers can serve the state as well as the arts. The writers he admires for their political expression include Langston Hughes, Pablo Neruda, Wole Soyinka, Salman Rushdie, June Jordan and Amiri Baraka.

Being a literary activist and being interested in documenting literary history, Miller has shown active interest in the compilation of black poetry anthologies. *Synergy* documents Black writers living and publishing in Washington DC.; *Women Surviving Massacres and Men* puts together a feminist collection of work. *In Search of Color Everywhere* is a book one would find in many Black person's home. Miller emphasizes the need for a new orientation of ideas at the dawn of the 21st century that is essentially different from whatever the African American poet has experienced hitherto. In his Preface to *Beyond the Frontier* he writes: "At the dawn of the 21st century, we must discover our true beauty. Poetry is a vehicle to transport us beyond forever. Beyond the frontier, beyond this world (which once enslaved us), lies a new consciousness" (Miller 2002: xx). According to him,

Many people of color have triple identities. I know people who will first say they are Muslims. Second, African Americans. Third, American. We have to think about 'electronic skin' and how people communicate without knowing

another person's color or sex on the Internet. It's ridiculous for an African American writer to be writing about only race while other people are looking at pictures coming back from Mars. African American poets need to be writing about people visiting us from other planets. (Ghosh 62)

In *In Search of Color Everywhere* Miller presents many contemporary poets who are trying to "reject" the negative images associated with blackness whereas in *Beyond the Frontier* he talks of the journey of men and women who are explorers and space travelers, embracing the blackness at the end of the universe, and bending light into new images. He cites Robert Hayden's "American Journal" from the concluding section of *In Search of Color Everywhere* to show the connection between the two books. "American Journal" deals with outer space, our next frontier. He thinks it would be sad to undertake travel to other planets and carry our human nonsense with us and asserts:

One of the beautiful things about space exploration has been how different countries have been working together. Our Space Shuttle crews have consisted of astronauts of different cultural backgrounds. Space holds so much promise for mankind. Do you think if someone sent Amiri Baraka to the moon he would be wasting his time writing poems about Jewish conspiracy theories? New experiences should provide new images. (Ghosh 67)

Miller's collected work reveals a wide variety of styles and ways of expression for he believes in experimenting quite a bit with the language. Miller is not unmindful of how the marketplace today is influencing black literature. He says "It's sad but we must sometimes look at books as commodities" (Ibid. 65). As a result, he doesn't mind including a number of sensual/erotic poems in *Beyond the Frontier*. His rationale for such inclusion seems to be motivated by the idea that such poems "will attract a wider readership and perhaps a person will be directed to the more political and historical material" (Ibid.). On most occasions Miller can often be intrinsically political. In his poem "Not Slavery But South Africa," he states:

the distance
between
oppression & freedom
is not measured by time
or separated by the borders
of countries

the distance
between
oppression & freedom
is measured by our willingness
to fight & destroy our fears
to understand
the distance
already traveled. (*First Light* 100)

Captivated by the personality of Malcolm X, Miller has composed a series of poems on the life and work of the great leader that tell the sad saga of a charismatic leader's journey from innocence to self-discovery. "In Malcolm X, August 1952," Elijah Muhammad is seen by Malcolm as an inspired prophet capable of changing America. In "Malcolm X, 1964" we see a disillusioned Malcolm lamenting: "once i submitted to a man I believed/ was divine. Now a new journey begins/ with myself" (*First Light* 96). Like Becket in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, Malcolm in "Malcolm X, February 1965" visualizes his impending doom: "there are brothers/ waiting to do me harm. I will die for them/ as only I can" (*First Light* 97). Miller affirms the relevance of Malcolm's life and philosophy in contemporary times. He says: "Malcolm is a force now which is unbelievable. Now we say Malcolm is a martyr okay but who did he die for? It's for black people of course. We see now how his ideas have affected an entire generation. The ultimate sacrifice that you can make is giving your life for a cause. All we have now are T.V. martyrs who are not ready for any kind of sacrifice" (Ghosh 69).

In view of the post 9/11 developments, Miller feels how African Americans deal with Islam is going to have its implication for the entire Muslim world. The real thing is how Muslims handle the women's question here and in other parts of the world. He visualizes that the bigger split is going to be between Islam and Christianity. Miller sees the recent increase in religious conflicts around the world as an indication of history repeating itself in the fashion of medieval times. Contemplating on the grounds of the said conflicts he remarks:

This might be a result of many nations existing outside the modern world. Poverty in the midst of wealth creates a terrible imbalance between people. Another major development today is a criminal international network with markets, drugs, and weaponry. The criminal element favors weak governments. There is also an Islamic fundamentalist movement which opposes Western cultural philosophy and ethics. It has its own framework and worldview. Scholars and intellectuals need to examine the influence of Bosnia on international affairs. The atrocities which took place there affected an entire generation of Muslims. One would think that with the new technology and the entrance into the electronic and information age this would be a period of Enlightenment. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. (Ghosh 70)

As a writer and activist, Miller is acutely concerned with the crisis in the African American family. He ascribes this mainly to the lack of respect for authority. He feels there is too much democracy: "If you ask whether I was afraid of my father I would say sure I was. Kids today grow up with no such fear or respect" (Ghosh 72).

Namdeo Dhasal

Namdeo Dhasal (1949-2014), the Marathi Dalit poet, activist and co-founder of the Dalit Panther movement, exploded on the Marathi literary and cultural scene with the publication of his debut poetry collection *Golpitha* published in 1972. With *Golpitha*, this poet of blood, sweat and anger emerged as the undisputed spokesman of the Dalit agony, pain and anger that had lain dormant for centuries. In his Foreword to the first edition of Dhasal's *Golpitha*, Vijay Tendulkar, the noted Marathi playwright observed as under:

The world of Namdeo Dhasal's poetry – the world known as 'Golpitha' in the city of Mumbai – begins where the frontier of Mumbai's white-collar world ends and no-man's land opens up. This is a world where the night is reversed into the day, where stomachs are empty or half empty, of desperation against

death or the next day's anxieties, of bodies left over after being consumed by shame and sensibility, of insufferably flowing sewerages, of diseased young bodies lying in the gutters braving the cold by holding their knees to their bellies, of the jobless, of beggars, of pickpockets, of holy mendicants, of neighborhood tough guys and pimps..... (Dhasal 2007: 10)

Vijay Tendulkar's note is a testimony to the impact that Dhasal created with his maiden poetry collection. The transformative potential of Dhasal's poetry is no less significant in his other poetic renderings like *Moorkha Mhataryane Dongar Halavile* (1975), *Tuhi Iyatta Kanchi* (1981), *Khel* (1983), *Gandu Bagichha* (1986), *Ya Sattet Jeev Ramat Nahi* (1995), *Mee Marale Suryachya Rathache Ghode Saat* (2005), *Tujhe Bot Dharoon Chalalo Ahe Mee* (2006) and various prose writings. The awards and honors that came his way in his poetic career are: The Soviet Land Nehru Award (1974) for *Golpitha*, the Maharashtra State Award for literature in 1973, 1974, 1982, and 1983; and Padma Shri award for literature from the Government of India in 1999. In 2004, he received the Sahitya Akademi's Golden Life Time Achievement Award. Dhasal attracted international attention with the publication of *Namdeo Dhasal: Poet of the Underworld – Poems 1972-2006* selected, introduced and translated from the Marathi by Dilip Chitre.

At the very outset of his perceptive essay, "Poetry of the Scum of the Earth," in the above collection, Dilip Chitre draws our attention to the connotation of the term Dalit:

The word Dalit is used in Marathi to mask the stigma inherent in the word *asprushya*. This is done in deference to political correctness; for *asprushya* means untouchable – and that category of human beings regarded as loathsome by caste Hindus in India does not legally and constitutionally exist in the Indian Republic.... In practice, however, untouchables not only do exist in India in large and significant numbers, but they also continue to be loathed and hated as much, if not more, than ever before. Crimes against stigmatized communities are a regular feature of Indian life; and among the stigmatized, the Dalits are a prime target. (Dhasal 2007: 7).

Introducing the poet in his inimitable style, Chitre writes: "Namdeo is a born activist and Dalit Panther his *raison d'être*, as much as poetry is the life of his spirit. Namdeo cannot separate his activism from his poetry, and his poetry is only the literary form of his activism" (Ibid. 15).

In a section entitled "Namdeo on Namdeo" in Chitre's volume, Dhasal categorically points out he did not have to turn "consciously to poetry" as he had begun to play with words as soon as he learnt to speak Marathi as a child. When he was in the third grade at school he composed his first song. At a school in the Baney Compound in Mumbai he came in contact with his school teacher, Narayan Shankar Kokate, who gave Dhasal his first taste of literature. Dhasal quickly became familiar with Marathi prosody and could quote examples of "metres, stanza structures, rhyme schemes and figures of speech at will from memory" (Dhasal 2007: 165). Consequently, he wrote romantic nature poems and love poems. It was around 1960 that he began to be aware of concepts focusing on revolt against the system. Around this time, the response of people to his love relationship with an upper caste Hindu girl led him to discover that "even so-called liberated and progressive people in establishment politics are privately communal and casteist" (Dhasal 2007:166). Deeply affected by the sham he found all around, he turned to an altogether different mode of life:

I threw myself into a life that made me a taxi driver for a living and a young man who rushed into all sorts of experiences ranging from visits to opium and hashish smokers' dens to the houses of prostitutes.... I boozed. I visited brothels. I went to mujra dancing women's establishments and to houses of ordinary prostitutes. It was a revelation of a tremendous form of life. *It was life*. Then I threw all rule-books out. No longer the rules of prosody for me. My poetry was as free as I was. I wrote what I felt like writing and how I felt like writing. I had found my weapons and I sharpened them. Nothing was going to stop me now. I went on writing, unshackled and liberated.... The only rule I followed was not to miss in my writing any of the subtleties and nuances of the life I lived.... A deep belief that humanity is a person's greatest source of strength is ingrained in me. That is where I come from. This is why I was able to capture in my work such nice nuances of life. *Golpitha* is only an *observation*. (Dhasal 2007: 166-167)

The note of independence and militancy evident in Dhasal's narrative makes one recall the mood prevalent in African American poets during the Civil Rights era and the Black power movement in America during the 1960s. Also implicit in his declaration of independence is his ability and resolve to use words as weapons to give the "wretched of the earth" the urge to create a space of their own. In the poem "Cruelty" he asserts:

I am a venereal sore in the private parts of language.
The living spirit looking out of hundreds of thousands of sad, pitiful eyes
Has shaken me.
I am broken by the revolt exploding inside me. (Dhasal 2007: 100)

His angst against the harsh realities of discrimination on caste lines is apparent from his poem "Water" wherein he writes: "Upstream, the water is all for you to take/ Downstream, the water is for us to get/ Bravo! Bravo! How even water is taught the caste system" (Dhasal 2007: 44). At the end of the poem Dhasal reminds the oppressors of the wrongs committed by them even with respect to such an element as water:

O torturers
There is no duty in this world more graceful than giving a gift of water
When there is a shortage of water
You change your city as you would change your shirt
Tell us, then,
What should they change
Who thirst and die without water? (Ibid. 46)

In the poem "So That My Mother May Be Convinced," Dhasal invokes his Dalit mother and reminds her how she never understood that "This land does not value the woman, the Shudra, the worker, the landless" (Anand and Zelliott 60). He reaffirms that her sacrifices in raising her son will not go in vain as he, her son, has resolved to rebel "against this culture, this tradition, this custom, this thought and these justifiers of the status quo" and reassures her that he intends to recover the identity that was denied to him for centuries. He tells her: "Mother, your son is not a child/ He is the son of this age's rebellion./ He can see clearly the injustice, himself as victim" (Ibid. 61). His tone turns volatile as he prays to her:

O mother of poverty, don't think my hardship is trivial.
Look, poverty's at the door.
Don't come in my way with love and affection.
Don't forecast defeat for the weapon which the 20th century put in your son's hands.
A weapon increases respectability!
We had no history. A weapon will create history. (Ibid. 65)

Dhasal was largely inspired in his new-found role of Dalit activist by the socialism of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's vision of a truly secular, socialist, pluralistic and republican, federalist India. His restless voice found expression in the creation of "Dalit Panthers," a militant organization akin to the Black Panthers in the United States. According to Dilip Chitre the idea of Dalit Panthers "fitted into the global mosaic of anger, protest, demonstrations, violence, and youthful revolutionary upsurge that swept across France, Germany, parts of Europe, Africa, America, and Asia. It had an instant following of young Dalits throughout Maharashtra" (*Outlook*).

Dhasal, time and again, invokes the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar in his poems. In the poem "Ode to Dr. Ambedkar" Dhasal states: "My ropes are pulled towards you, you who conceived of giving a burial/ To the cages of religion, caste, gender and race preserved under armed protection;/ My ropes are pulled towards your achievement" (Dhasal 2007: 37) and continues emphatically, "You've smashed the head of the god-given wind/ That created room for a wobbly nation and its restless people;/ You've pierced through the voluptuous thighs of those ghostly nymphs that cast/ Their spell upon us. My history starts from you, the age of everyman you launched" (Ibid.). Again, in the poem "Ambedkar: 1980" he addresses the Dalit icon thus:

You died, but didn't cease to be.
Like us, you slept with your wife
You brought forth children, but didn't let them flap in the wind
While we grew up like this, like that, somehow, anyhow.
But our children
Will never dare deny your affection
Academician/ technician/politician/ scientist/philosopher
These men will define you any which way

But you lived like a man
There was no acting in it
No dramatics, no imitators ... (Anand and Zelliott 56).

Dhasal's lament in the poem "Water," cited earlier in this essay, turns to hope as he records the changes brought about by Dr. Ambedkar and his missionary zeal:

Now this is old stuff,
That they wouldn't touch us when they gave us water
Now this is old stuff,
That they made us sit outside the school on veranda...
Now they and we are all alike. (Anand and Zelliott 56-57)

Like many African American writers and poets who were drawn in the 1930s to the lure of Communism's promise of liberty and equality, Dhasal too, as one of the founders of Dalit Panthers, was attracted for a while to the communist ideology. In due course he realized the futility of following such ideological illusions that provided nothing concrete. He now understands the futility of various isms and reposes complete faith in *Ambedkarvad* that inspired the underdogs to become self-reliant through education:

This world's socialism,
This world's communism
And all those things of theirs,
We have put them to the test
And the implication is this
Only our shadow can cover our feet. (Ibid. 57)

Though Dhasal's faith in the ideals preached and practiced by Dr. Ambedkar never wavers, he is not unaware of the suffering and humiliation that his people continue to contend with: "The times are wholly yours/ but your people still suffer" (Ibid. 58). However, Dhasal has full faith in the fact that the precepts of Dr. Ambedkar would actually succeed in ushering the dawn of liberty, equality and fraternity he had envisaged:

The lord of the people is never ugly
He comes from among men
True/Holy/Beautiful
Babasaheb Ambedkar i
Is true, holy, beautiful
Otherwise this book has no meaning...

While I was writing this
Three O'clock struck
though I want to have a drink
I don't feel like drinking.
I only want to sleep peacefully
And tomorrow see no varnas, no castes. (Anand and Zelliott 59)

Though an ardent champion of Ambedkarite ideals, Dhasal is extremely skeptical of the followers who have donned the mantle of Dalit leadership from time to time. In the poem "Ambedkar: 79" he writes:

Your followers act like false gurus
They use a loincloth for a tie and babble
Their heritage is mother-fucking
Like Yama fucked Yami, they fuck their sisters
These impotent Arjuns of countless generations-
All they can do is pop some virgin's cherry,
The sun in their blood
This bubbling mass
Who will pop it with a pin?
This sad lonesome rain, where is it going?
Won't somebody set this city on fire? (Anand and Zelliott 54)

Endowed with fiery zeal of Malcolm X, Dhasal creates powerful poetry to set “this city on fire.” Like an angry young man with his soul on fire, Dhasal talks of hunger and poverty investing them with the power to shake the establishment to its very foundation. In the poem “Poverty as My Own Independent Piece of Land,” Dhasal boldly declares:

I am headless body of a rat with a pyramid rising above me
Meat and fish
Rice and eggs
Bootleg liquor and flowers of white champak
Kisses, embraces, coital postures, jewels,
And beds, and a house with a leaking roof,
And the rhythm of a lullaby.
I am squeezed: in my yearning
Feminine beauty flowers
The Mona Lisa painted by Leonardo da Vinci
In the service of A-B
Rain driving down in sheets, a dying cigarette,
A dehydrated dancing girl,
Contrasting color harmony
I too have poverty as my own piece of land. (Anand and Zelliott 73-74)

Namdeo Dhasal’s outpourings portray his passion for bringing into limelight the injustice, oppression, discrimination, neglect and humiliation that the Dalits have been subjected to in Indian society. His poetry is the poetry of struggle and survival. It is about how human life ultimately prevails against all odds through the determination of the oppressed in building a better world for themselves. Notwithstanding his Baconian wisdom in his attempts at upward mobility, Dhasal has been remarkably consistent in his world-view. In a world driven by religious fanaticism, racism, populist politics, economic greed, corruption, and crime, his is the tenacious spirit of the marginalised that has discovered self-belief as an inextinguishable source of life. With his unique style, Dhasal has revolutionised the Marathi literary landscape and inspired a whole movement of Dalit literature in the rest of the Indian languages.

Taken together, both Ethelbert Miller and Namdeo Dhasal are alert to the events and challenges surrounding them and often address the variable human factor in the inequities of power in the two principal democracies of the world. Despite the individual stance taken by each one of them, it is heartening to see how they are near unanimous in their approach to the changing global scenario that calls for an extensive vision, both in terms of life and aesthetics, that reinforces the need to resolve dilemmas to envision a future without the fetters of race and caste.

Works Cited

- Anand, Mulk Raj and Eleanor Zelliott. Ed. *An Anthology of Dalit Literature (Poems)*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1992.
- Chitre, Dilip. “Poet of the Underworld.” *Outlook*, 29 June 2007.
- Davis, Charles T. *Black is the Color of the Cosmos: Essays on Afro-American Literature and Culture*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1989.

Dhasal, Namdeo. *Namdeo Dhasal: Poet of the Underworld – Poems 1972-2006* selected, introduced and translated from the Marathi by Dilip Chitre. New Delhi: Navyana Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 2007.

Ghosh, Nibir K. “Ethelbert Miller: I Can Make music, I Can Give Color to the World.” *Multicultural America: Conversations with Contemporary Authors*. Chandigarh: Unistar Books Pvt. Ltd., 2005. pp. 52-72.

Miller, E. Ethelbert. Ed. *Beyond the Frontier: African American Poetry for the 21st Century*. Baltimore, MD: New Classic Press, 2002.

Miller, E. Ethelbert. *Fathering Words: The Making of an African American Writer*. New York: St. Martin’s, 2000.

Miller, E. Ethelbert. *First Light: New and Selected Poems*. Baltimore, MD: New Classic Press, 1994.

Miller, E. Ethelbert. <https://onbeing.org/blog/e-ethelbert-miller-the-buddha-smile-of-langston-hughes/>. Accessed 01 March, 2020.

About the Authors:

Dr. Sunita Rani Ghosh is Head, Department of Hindi at Agra College, Agra. She was Visiting Scholar in the Department of Asian Languages in University of Washington, Seattle, U.S.A. during 2003-04. Her writings have appeared in reputed journals. Her essay, “Bani Rahengi Kitaben” is prescribed in the Foundation Course for undergraduate students in M.P. Government degree colleges. She has authored *Hindi Bhasha* and edited *Erasing Barricades: Woman in Indian Literature, Gandhi and His Soulforce Mission, India: Diversities and Convergences, and Bose: Immortal Legend of India’s Freedom*.

Dr. Nibir K. Ghosh is UGC Professor Emeritus at Agra College, Agra. He was Senior Fulbright Fellow at the University of Washington, Seattle, USA during 2003-04. Author/editor of 15 widely acclaimed books, he is Chief Editor of *Re-Markings* (www.re-markings.com), an international biannual journal of English Letters which is in its 21st year of publication. An eminent scholar and critic of American, British and Postcolonial literatures, he has published widely on various political, socio-cultural and feminist issues in prestigious journals.