

**A STUDY OF SELECTED AUTOBIOGRAPHIES IN
DALIT LITERATURE**

A Thesis submitted to

TILAK MAHARSHTRA VIDYAPEETH, PUNE

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.) in English

Research Scholar

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February 2015

Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “*A Study of Selected Autobiographies In Dalit Literature*” which is being submitted herewith for the award of the **Degree of Vidyavachaspati (Ph. D.) in English of Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune** is the result of original research work completed by **Rani Somnath Sarode** under my supervision and guidance. To the best of my knowledge and belief the work incorporated in this thesis has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree or similar title of this or any other University or examining body upon him/her.

Place: Pune

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Date: February 2015

Dr. Mrs. Madhavi S. Pawar

Declaration

I, **Rani Somnath Sarode** hereby declare that the thesis entitled “*A Study of Selected Autobiographies In Dalit Literature*” submitted to the **Department of English, Tilak Maharashtra Open University** for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English** and that the thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any other Degree, Diploma, Associateship or other title.

Place: Pune

(Rani Somnath Sarode)

Date: February 2015

Signature of the candidate

Acknowledgement

Since my studentship of literature I have a special penchant in Dalit literature in English than any other genre of literature. I have read works of many authors British, American, Indian, Canadian and African, but I am fancied more by this Indian Dalit authors in particular. Dr. Madhavi Pawar madam without whose scholarly guidance and deep inside I couldn't complete my research work. Respected Dr. Madhavi Pawar madam was very kind to accept me as a research scholar and to supervise on this work. I do not want to diminish madam's contribution in this research by expressing my gratitude to her but as a matter of fact I sincerely express my gratitude to madam.

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Chapter-I

A Study of Selected Autobiographies in Dalit Literature

1.1 Introduction: Dalit literature

On immense landscape of India, there lived the people of various castes, communities and religions. Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Islam and Christian had seen dominant sects made their essence clear with the religion. Among them most of the communities tried their best to bring the social change in the society, but in vain. Due to this various ways of thinking took place on Indian canvas. One group demanded to have changes in religion and still remained firm to keep the religion as it is. Other group demanded to have changes in the way of life. It gave importance to enrich change in Nineteenth and Twentieth century. As a result of this, society makes two groups such as the exploiter and exploited. There are number of traditions found in India, among them only Christian and Buddhist culture have caring untouchables or *Dalits*. Hindu culture is completely opposite to it, concentrating on god, temple, religious texts and *rushimunies*. There is no value for *Dalits* in Hindu religion, though they are the part of its religion. Therefore, *Dalit* writers use different kind of language than that of the language used in earlier times in literature. They use the language which is known to them but it is considered rustic by the previous writers. *Dalit* writers are interested to portray their peoples past. So they follow the language and dialect of own people, without refining it. *Dalit* feelings come from *Dalit* language only. No other language could express it exactly. So, *Dalit* feelings and *Dalit* language is known as *Dalit* culture.

In many ways it is a protest literature which faithfully mirrors the realities of the Dalit situation and becomes an important weapon to strengthen the Dalit movement. Chokhamela, *Bhakti* poet of Maharashtra knew the first *Dalit* writer of *Dalit* literature. The origin of *Dalit* literature in the contemporary usage of the term is largely written and published in regional Indian languages in nineteenth

century. In the modern era because of Mahatma Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Dalit literature got impetus in Maharashtra and Ambedkarist thought is still the lifeblood of much Dalit literature.

“It is disgraceful to live at the cost of one’s self respect. Self respect is most vital in life. Without it man is a chipper to live worthily with respect one has to overcome difficulties. It is out of hard and ceaseless struggle alone that one derives strength confidence and recognition.”¹

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Dalit literature is about the Dalits the broken class under caste system forms an important and separate part of literature. Dalit narratives have been a part of the Indian social narratives since 11th century onwards, with Sekkizhar's Periya Puranam portraying Dalit women like half-naked and sexually exploitable and praising the killing of thousands of Dalits on Kazhumaram in the hands of *Gnasambandan*. Dalit literature emerged significantly as once and as a collective voice after 1960 starting with Marathi and shortly appeared in Hindi, Kannada, Telugu and Tamil languages from first to last the poems, short stories and most importantly autobiographies. It is frequently compared with the African American literature particularly in picture and issues of segregation and prejudices as seen in Slave narratives.

One of the first Dalit writers was Madara Chennai 11th century cobbler saint who lived in the reign of Western Chalukyas and who is regarded by the father of Vachana poetry. Another poet who finds mention is Dohara Kakkaiyah a *Dalit* by birth six of whose confessional poems survive.

In the 20th century the term Dalit literature came into existence in 1958 when the first conference of *Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha* (Maharashtra Dalit Literature Society) was held at Mumbai a movement driven by thinkers like Jyotiba Phule and Dr.B.R. Ambedkar pioneer of Dalit writings in Marathi was

Baburao Bagul (1930 to 2008). His first collection of stories *Jevha Mi Jat Chorali* (When I had Concealed My Caste) was published in 1963 created a thrash in Marathi literature with its fervent portrayal of a rough society and brought in new energy to Dalit literature. Today it is seen by many critics as the epic of the Dalits and was later made into a film by actor-director Vinay Apte. Gradually with other writers like Namdeo Dhasal these Dalit writings paved way for strengthening Dalit.

Marathi is not only the language spoken in Maharashtra by the majority of the people of a state which was fixed out on linguistic basis in 1960. It is the medium of the most ancient literatures of the Indian sub continent which knows a remarkable modern development. The *dalit* literature is one of its most considerable topical trends since the sixties. The trend is still alive possibly on the increase and a matter of literary debates and dissemination in a score of specialized journals, academic studies, literary conferences and seminars, press reports and articles. The word dalit literally signifies the depressed and suppressed groups of social formations. But it is used in ways which is different with the specificity of background.

Nowadays 'Dalit' is actually used by most of the Maharashtra former untouchable as a comprehensive revolutionary category specifically designating those social sector of Indian society which are culturally, socially and physically self conscious by dominant and obedient sections called untouchability. For radical *dalit* thinkers (for instance Baburao Bagul major ideological of the *Dalit Panther Manifesto of Dalit Panther*,1972) the category is constructed and extended as to carry the history of the revolutionary struggles of all *dalit* people and has the ontological ability to define itself with all the lower castes tribal people and women. The term represents those who have been broken and ground down by those above them in a deliberate manner. When Eleanor Zelliot with most *Dalit* literary figures defines *Dalit* in a very specific sense that involves only the caste and religious dimensions of *Dalit* exploitation other scholars would preferably seek to understand the category in a broader way which allows for instance to

include converted untouchables and others. The term *dalit* is in such a wider sense which applies by priority but not exclusively to the untouchable castes. A study of *dalit* autobiographies seems to carry a noteworthy contribution to answer the question within an anthropological and sociological outline.

Dalit writers faithfully recognize as their sources of inspiration. One is *anti-shudra* since the nineteenth century the term used by Jyotiba Phule and his movement *Satyashodak Samaj*. It designates those located outside the order of the four ideological classes or categories called *varna* (*Brahman, kshatriya, vaishya and shudra*) which legitimately constitute the structure of the fabric formed by full fledged human beings according to the Hindu social privilege this order find its religious foundation in the *Purushasukta*. Another one is *bahishkrut* literature. Ostracized term used by Dr Ambedkar who publishes a book in Marathi under the title **Ostracized Bharat** in which he defines Dalithood in the following comprehensive way.

“Dalithood is a kind of life condition that characterizes the exploitation, suppression and marginalization of Dalit people by the social, economic, cultural and political domination of the upper castes Brahmanical ideology.”²

It is since the sixties the word *dalit* became an unstable slogan for social, cultural and political revolutionary movements launched by untouchables especially the *Mahars* in such expressions as *Dalit* literature (Anand 1992, Dangle 1992, Lanjewar 1995, Gros 1996, Bhoite 1977) and ‘*Dalit* movement’ (Jogdand 1991, Gopinath 1994, Kshirsagar 1994, Pendse 1994). The use of the word in fact tends to be appropriated for the castes traditionally discriminated as untouchable and refers to their specific conditions of cultural indignity and social sub alternate. This control is regularly on denounced as an illegal political discursive event. But the word openly is commonly used or suspected to be used with this restrictive meaning by the supporters as well as the critics and opponents of the *Dalit* liberation movement in India.

It is essential for a right understanding of the *Dalit* autobiographies to keep in mind general past surroundings. *Dalit* autobiographies are literary forms of social protest practices. The critique is used to evaluate *Dalit* literature as being one dimensional namely negatively focusing on revolt only. It is nevertheless obviously a literature especially the first poetry which often pours forth revolt and discharges a burden of hatred and contempt accumulated since centuries or even sometimes hurls abuses at and spits out back on high castes the poison that they had for ages. But that suspected disapproval is actually a form of bold genuine and strongly positive assertion. Reserved and ruined human beings break the status of animal servility to which they were reduced by a shout of complaint which sign the origin of a human being. The unique motivation remains a strong support to lift up one's voice and denounce as loudly as possible breaking for ever a silence for centuries.

1.2 Survey of Research

Dalit literature is the main forum. It is the medium of expression of the experiences of the communities which is exploited and humiliated for ages in India. Dalit literature is studied mostly in regional languages. The origin of Dalit literature in the contemporary usage of the term which is largely written and published in regional Indian language is in the late nineteenth century. Some of the most prominent writers of Dalit literature which is translated in English they are as follows, Laxman Gaikwad, Bama (**Karukku and Sangati**), Dr. Narendra Jadhav (**Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India**), Dr. Sharankumar Limbale (**The Outcaste: Akkarmashi**), Joseph Macwan (**The Stepchild**), Om Prakash Valmiki (**Joothan: A Dalit's Life**), Baby Kamble (**Our Existence**) and Iyamam (**Beats of Burden**). Namdeo Dhasal, Lakshman Mane, Abhimani, Poomani, Marku, Mangal Rathod, Neerave Patel, Perumal Murugan, Palamalai, Daya Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Sachi Rautray, Kumud Pawde, Rabi Singh, Basudev Sunai, Sudhakar, D. Gopi, T.K.C. Vaduthala (T.K.C. Vaduthalayude Kathakal) and Narayan (**Kocharayathi**). Some Dalit critics like Limbale argue that Dalit literature is the exclusive strong point of

writers who are by birth Dalits and that upper caste writers like Mahasweta Devi (**Breast stories**), Sara Joseph (**Thaikulam**), Kumaran Asan (**Chandalabhikshuki**), Mulkraj Anand (**Untouchable**) and Premchand (**Kafan**) Though they are not Dalits they have portrayed the problems and sufferings of Dalits. No one can live without an ethnicity. Everyone and every sub group has a background of its own, similar and common in many respects with the proximate people. That is the social reality which is seen all over the world. *Dalit* and Hindus in this Country are two such groups living in proximate places all over the Country for nearly three millenniums, but still are different, looking diametrically in different directions in many respect, opposed, aggressive and cannot digest or accept the presence of each other, even though social necessities. Therefore, the researcher has focused on new concepts like subjugation, harsh Voices, Feminist Approach struggle of dalit women, self assertion and condition of dalits for survival. The autobiographical study analyzed with special reference to Dr. Sharankumar Limbale's **The Outcaste**, Urmila Pawar's **The Weave of My Life**, Dr. Narendra Jadhav's **Untouchables**, Daya Pawar's **Baluta** and Shantabai Kambale's **Mazy Jalmachi Chittarkatha**. The present research work is to focus on different perspectives and aspects of selected Dalit autobiographies.

1.3 Significance of Research

Dalit called Outcaste is a self-designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as of Untouchables. Dalits are a varied people of several castes. While the caste system has been abolished under the Indian constitution there is still inequity and prejudice against Dalits in South Asia. Since Indian freedom essential steps have been taken to afford opportunities in jobs and education. A lot of social associations have positive necessities for better conditions of Dalits through education, health and services. *Dalit* status has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure such as any involving leatherwork butchering or removal of rubbish animal carcasses and waste. Dalits were working as manual laborer, cleaning streets and latrines. According to Victor Premasagar, "Untouchable castes are of the twice born Hindus." The word

expresses weak points, poverty and humiliation at the hands of upper castes in Indian society.

As making own voice in 1960s, *Dalit* writers change their identity as politician, literary canon, and economist but still they could not change the face of *Dalit* society. Thus, the significance of this research is to focus on *Dalit* lives, women's struggle and their troubles. Dalits are the minor figures in the *chaturvarnya*. By lance a certain voice to the Dalit writers step across the *Lakshmanrekha* of caste and challenge the purity of the *savarna* discourse. Dalit writers challenge the Brahmanical Universalist literary tradition classical aesthetics and the popular images that have been the hallmark of Indian literature monopolized by the upper castes and classes. Discouraging images like that strike and unpleasant colors like black are positively interpreted in Dalit literature. The reality of Dalit literature is distinct so is the language of reality. It uses the crude impolite spoken language. The dialect is specific to Dalits of a region wherever possible and emphasizes the faithful reflection of the heartrending. *Dalit* experiences in terms as simple as possible. *Dalit* literature comes in all types like poems, novels and theatre. The autobiographies are the most popular Dr. Narendra Jadhav a *Dalit* author traces this popularity to the fact that when a group of people who have been denied a voice for centuries begin to talk the natural tendency is to tell their stories. Dr. Sharankumar Limbale's **The Outcaste** shows caste system and its attendant poverty and social stigma follow a dalit everywhere. Unacknowledged by his high caste Patil father Sharan the young protagonist is marginalized because his mother with whom he lives is a low caste Mahar. The agonizing poverty of his childhood is described in simple yet evocative language the most vivid being when his grandmother eats *bhakri* is made out of millets taken from cow dung establishing economic inadequacy as a handmaiden of caste hierarchies. Limbale in an interview notes:

“The span of my autobiography is my childhood. I won't write about my pain and pangs. I won't write about the suffering of my community. So I cannot give importance to my personal life. I am

writing for social cause. My autobiography is a statement of my war against injustice.”³

As a result Dalits were segregated and prohibited from contribution in Hindu social life. For example they could not go in a temple or a school and were mandatory to stay outside the village. Dalits and other castes contact were sometimes observed. Inequality against Dalits still continues in rural areas. It has largely disappeared in urban areas. Some Dalits have successfully incorporated into urban Indian society where caste origins are inferior in public life. In rural area caste origins are more enthusiastically clear and Dalits regularly stay excluded from local religious life though some qualitative records suggests that its strictness is fast moving back.

- In India's most crowded state Uttar Pradesh *Dalits* have revolutionized politics and have elected a popular Dalit chief minister Mayawati.
- Dalits and related groups are found in Nepal and Bangladesh. In Burakumin of Japan, Al-Akhdam of Yemen, Baekjeong of Korea and Midgans of Somalia are similar in status to Dalits.

Dalit literature has produced a fad of autobiographies. One has to be especially sensitive to the distinctive aesthetics created by Dalit writers whose language is generally direct speaking and its imagery hair rising and hard hitting. Dalit literature is being represented through various regional languages such as Tamil, Malayalam, Bhojpuri, Gujarati, Punjabi, Oriya, Hindi and others. What is interesting to note is that there are many common elements of agony that protect Dalit the reason being the harmony of the repressive caste and class categories that exist in various parts of the country. Thus, the significance of this research is to focus on *Dalit* lives, women's struggle and their troubles. Going through all Dalit Literature Researcher is very much keen to study Dalits Sensibility in Maharashtra because she also belongs to the same community.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of Research

The study however is not without limitations. The aspect of writing the self has been carried out by selecting five Dalit autobiographies as the primary sources. The present study is limited only with Selected Autobiographies in Dalit Literature.

- The researcher is dealing with the autobiography written by Dr. Sharnkumar Limbale - '**The Outcaste**': *Akkarmashi*, Urmila Pawar - '**The Weave of My Life**', Dr. Narendra Jadhav - '**Untouchables**': **My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India**, Daya Pawar - '**Baluta**' and Shantabai Kambale's '*Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha*' etc.
- The present study is dealing with selected autobiographies of Dalit literature in Maharashtra.

1.5 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the present research is to find out the following points.

- To study the notion of *Dalit* literature and *Dalit* Autobiography.
- To focus on women struggle in the autobiography
- The self assertion of pain as a means of life.
- To study the condition of Dalits.
- To study *Dalit* autobiographies under the influence of Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule.

1.6 Research Methodology

The methods used for the present research are:

- ❖ Descriptive Method
- ❖ Referential Method

1.7 Research Structure

Before beginning the research, there is a great need to have the research structure. It is an important to include purpose of research, area of research, and time and data collection for research. It needs to have the knowledge of difficulties and problems arising in future.

1.8 Purpose of Research

The purpose of the present research is to study social status of *Dalits*. The central aim of this research is to find out the term *Dalit* or untouchability or the suppression or subjugation of people under the name of caste, religion, dogma etc. It has concerned to *Dalit* author how they have attempted to bring themselves into mainstream.

1.9 Statement of the Problem

“A STUDY OF SELECTED AUTOBIOGRAPHIES IN DALIT LITERATURE”

Autobiography is a story of the writer's own life in which he looks back towards his past at a certain point in his life and creates the character of his own self' with the help of his memory. From the autobiographies of the suppressed people one comes to know about the character of the author how he faced the difficulties and conflicts of his life and with what stuff his personality is formed. Yet while narrating the experiences of his life the author gives an objective analysis of his life and it is due to such objectivity and disinterestedness his autobiography successfully creates the image of his self in conflict with oppressive social and cultural conditions Hence researcher has taken five autobiographies for her studies that are Dr. Sharnkumar Limbale's - '**The Outside**': Akkarmashi, Urmila Pawar's - '**The Weave of My Life**'., Dr. Narendra Jadhav's - '**Untouchables**': **My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern**

India., Daya Pawar's - '*Baluta*' and Shantabai Kamble's *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha*.

Brief Biographical Details of authors

In this chapter researcher has included all selected autobiographies in brief with the writer's introduction.

1.11. The Outcaste: *Akkarmashi*

Akkarmashi a landmark in Marathi *Dalit* literature was written by Dr. Sharankumar Limbale in 1984. It is a Marathi version which is translated as **The Outcaste** in English by Santosh Bhoomkar in 2003. It is the first Marathi *Dalit* autobiography which is translated into Hindi, Kannada, Panjabi, Tamil, Malayalam and Gujrathi. **The Outcaste** is an emotionally violent autobiography of a half caste growing up in the Mahar community and the anguish he suffers from not belonging it completely. A bitter account of the humiliation of a community at the hands of an unthinking privileged class it is a reflection on the darker side of Indian society. Limbale's story is actually of his mother's history and life and his grandmother Santamai. Dr. Sharankumar Limbale's mother Masamai was an untouchable while his father Hanmanta Limbale was a high caste from one of the privileged classes in Maharashtra. He was the *Patil* of Baslegaon village in *Maharwada*. Dr. Sharankumar Limbale's mother lived in a hut while his father lived in a mansion and his father was a landlord mother was landless lady. But Sharankumar Limbale their child was known as half caste.

The dominating theme throughout the book is that Dalits constant battle with hunger. Although Limbale was permitted the opportunity of going to school he had to watch the higher caste children ate lavish meals and could only hope that they would be generous with their leftovers. When he eat greedily those morsels his mother shouted at him when he got home for being so selfish and not saving any for her other member. His grandmother would eat *bhakari* made from the lump she had dug out a quantity of dung so that her grandchildren would have

what little good flour she had left. She made hardly credible sacrifices for all but her house still went starving until they were able to beg on a market day or until a good friend received the contract to remove a dead animal. As a child Limbale definitely believed that hunger controlled men and if there had been no hunger there would have been no trouble and no war.

Another impossible problem that the author suffered his entire life was that he had no identity no home and no place of belonging. His mother had once married properly but her husband had left her and taken his two sons. She began sleeping around particularly with the high caste men of the village. Limbale was born with a Dalit mother and a father who was the chief of a village. He could not get certain papers signed for school because he could not properly identify his caste by his mother or father and they would not accept his grandmother as his guardian because she lived with a Muslim. When the time came for marriage he could not even get married to an outcaste girl because of his impure blood. Ultimately a drunkard who had offered Limbale his daughter but after the wedding would not allow her to leave because of Limbale's past. The clouds of doubt and identity hung over this poor outcaste boy.

A *Dalit* has no personal life of his own but is dissolved in the overcome whirlpool of his community.

“Akkarmashi works as the mouthpiece of the community it depicts their togetherness in triumphs and tribulations as the self belongs to the people and people find a voice in the self.”⁴

As a *Dalit* Intellectual the narrator experiences split identification at various levels as an illegitimate as a *Mahar* and even as an educated *Dalit* who has advanced in social order than his community but at the same time forbidden to step up the established social order by the Hindus. Limbale talks about his birth,

“My first breath must have threatened the morality of the world. With my first cry, milk must have splashed from the breast of every Kunti. Why did my mother say yes to the rape which

brought me into the world? Why did she put up with the fruit of this illegitimate intercourse for nine months and nine days and allow me to grow in the foetus? Why did she allow this bitter embryo to grow? How many eyes must have humiliated her because they considered her a whore? Did anyone distribute sweets to celebrate my birth? Did anyone admire me affectionately? Did anyone?"⁵

However in several acts of incredible power and daring he did not allow socially constructed walls to stop him from getting an education and publishing his story. He came to understand the intensity of separation by the clash between Hindus and Muslims and chose a separate path for him in what he measured to be the warm embrace of Buddhism. He was not the only *Mahar* to conquer the tyrannical system his friend Mallya also succeeded and today both men live happily in spite of the horrors they faced as children and adults.

1.11.1 The Outcaste: Summary

Dr. Sharankumar Limbale is born in 1956 Masamai was his mother and Hanmanta Limbale a Patil of Baslegaon was his father. Masamai was beautiful lady. She suffered for it. She was divorced by her husband Ithal Kamble. After that Hanmanta enjoyed her and then deserted her. Then kaka Patil of Hanoor joined her. The Patil'ss in every village had made whores of the wives of *Dalit* farm laborers. There were Dalit families that survive by pleasing the Patil's sexually.

Masamai his mother treated Sharankumar as her stepson whenever she beat him his grandmother saved him, that's why he had more attachment with his grandmother Santamai. Once Masamai quarreled violently with Santamai from that Santamai left Mahardwada and started living at bus stand with Sharankumar and dada. They lived openly behind the bus stand. They ate and lived in the open space. Dada was a porter. Santamai was a sweeper in the village. In those days three of them tried and worked hard to fill stomach but that were in vain.

Limbale describes the life a man who suffered not only through this caste system but also through the pain of not even being allowed into the caste system he was an outcaste below everyone. The one thing that prohibited his life from the hunger he knew that a man was no bigger than his own hunger and that there was no escape from it. Not only has he suffered from his deep greedy hunger his entire life but he lived under the curse of not having pure blood. Because his mother had out of marriage with the chief of the village nowhere and nobody would accept him. At the end he found his relief in Buddhism. His entire life he had watched religion people and families apart.

1.11.2 Family Background

Satu Mahar was a labor in Hanoor, he married with Bhagumai. They had seven children they were Chandamai, Santamai, Dhonda, Ganga, Revbai, Ahilya and Laxman. Chandamai got married in Barhanpur, Santamai in Teerth, Dhondamai in Chungi, Gangamai in Walsang, and Revbai in Waagdaon. Ahilya in Shirwal and Laxman their brother had married six times but had no child. Chandamai's and Santamai's marriage were failure because Chandamai was a barren and Santamai had borne only a daughter Masamai, Santamai went away with her daughter to live in Honor at her father's home (Satu Mahar).

Santamai the grandmother of Limbale was deserted by her husband she was living with Dada a Muslim by caste. His name was Mahmood Dastagir Jamadar who behaved with Sharan as his real grandfather and took care of him. Masamai the daughter of Santamai had married with Ithal Kamble. She had three children from her first husband Ithal Kamble Bhanudas, (didn't live longer) Suryakant and Dharma. The two sons were snatched away from Masamai and then she was deserted by her husband Ithal Kamble.

Sharankumar was born from her affair with Hanmanta Limbale Patil of Baslegaon. Later he deserted to Masamai after that Masamai had eight girls from Kaka (Yashwantrao Sidramuppa Patil, Hanoor). They were Nagubai, Nirmala,

Vanmala, Sunanda, Pramuta, Shrikant Indira and Sidram kaka was Hindu Lingayat.

1.11.3 Hunger and Poverty

Most of the time Sharankumar's family members his sisters, mother, grandmother, dada and he himself hadn't anything for eating. Sharan used to be very hungry and constantly crying for *bhakari* because he couldn't bear hunger so that time Santamai use to go for begging. Sharankumar was anxiously waited for Santamai.

On the market day Sharan and his sisters use to go in the market for begging and eating whatever they could get there. Sometimes his sisters use to steal something in the market. He was very happy because his grandmother had taken one kilo beef on Wednesday and begs with Sharan for vegetables in the market. Vegetable-vendor gave those onions, chilies, rotten bananas, vegetables etc. Every cloth-vendor paid them 10 paisa. Lots of vegetables she got on Wednesday with that two or three days they could have food but later they have to starve Sharan use to go with his grandmother at wedding feast there he ate hungrily and greedily and use to save some *kheer* for his hungry mother. At the wedding feast people served food to *Mahardwada* but no water.

In his childhood days when an animal died he used to get excited to appease the hunger. In a month many animals died those times he had no problem of his hunger, but sometimes animals' death never occurred at that time he suffered with great difficulty. One day an animal was poisoned to death by Mankunna and Pralhadbaap. Later they skinned dead animal and made short pleases and distributed it in whole Maharwada.

1.11.4 Education

First time Sharan saw lavish and tasty food in the school picnic which was served leftover food to Sharan and his friends by the high caste boys and girls. Whenever teacher visited Sharankumar's house to take him to the school he use to run away.

His actual school started from third onwards. He was a regular student so his teacher promoted him in the next class. Sharan in his life saw a chair, a blackboard, a cane, and a teacher in the school for the first time. In his school everybody's place was fixed. Sharan and his friends Parashya and Umbrya were very slacker boys in their school days. After school he went for swimming with his friends. Later he ate roasted meat at home.

Limbale relates how he owns his name to a sympathetic teacher,

“The teacher decided to enroll my name in the register after I attended school regularly for four to five days. When he was convinced that I was serious about my schooling he asked me my father's name. I did not know my father's name. Strange that I too could have a father!

. . . . The teacher Bhosale by name would sarcastically call me the Patil of Baslegaon. I felt good as well as bad to be called Patil. The name of Hanmanta Limbale, the Patil of Baslegaon was added to my name in the school record. When Hanmanta came to know this he arrived with four or five rowdies. . . But Bhosale the headmaster was an upright man. . . Hanmanta tried all his tricks desperately. He even pleaded. Finally he had to go away unsuccessful. I owe my father's name to Bhosale, the headmaster.”⁶

So, teacher asked his full name but Sharan didn't know his father's name. His mother told to the headmaster that Hanmanta Patil is Sharan's father Patil of Baslegaon. So, teacher registered his name in the school as 'Sharan Hanmanta Patil'. In Sharankumar's village there had classes up to the seventh standard. When he finished his seventh standard education he decided to go to a high school in neighboring village Chungi. There was a rule that free ship was signed by parents and the village *Sarpanch*. In his earlier school days whenever he required his parents sign he put his own thumbs impression in place of his parents. *Sarpanch* knew his family background very well. That's why he refused to sign

form because Sharan took his mother's name as his guardian 'Masamai Hanmanta Limbale' Later Bhosale *guruju* convinced *sarpanch* he signed the form. Sharn had completed his high school education at Chungi and Chapalgaon.

1.11.5 Marriage

Maryappa Kambale was a peon in the *Zilla Parishad* at Barshi. He had four sons Arun, Hari, Rahul, Sunil and a daughter Kusum. Under the influence of liquor he promised Sharankumar to give his daughter to him. Before that Sharankumar tried lot to arrange his marriage but everywhere he heard the same tone that he is from 'impure blood' When Sharankumar was In Sholapur for his further education in Dayanand College on the road he a crossed Maryappa Kambale laid on the road under the influence of liquor . Every time Maryappa came at Sholapur for his own work and demanded money at Sharankumar to go back at his place Barshi. Sharankumar had sympathy for Maryappa. So he gave money to him and reminded that he promised about his daughter and Sharan's marriage. When Maryappa told him about his daughter Kusum that she is matured Sharan was very happy to hear about Kusum. Then Sharankumar got married with Kusum and his sister Nirmi got married with Maryappa's son Hari. Maryappa's other family members were against this marriage. But instead of all these Maryappa Kambale arranged two marriages. Sharankumar wanted his wedding ceremony conducted as per Buddhist rituals but Kaka insisted on traditional Hindu rituals. He does not make a choice. He gets a wife out of sympathy and his occasional bribe his would be father-in-law in the company of alcohol. He notes,

“The girl I married needed to be a hybrid like me to ensure a proper match. A bastard must always be matched with another bastard. No one else will marry their daughters to a bastard like me.”⁷

1.11.6 Dr. Sharankumar Limbale

Dr. Sharankumar Limbale was born in 1956 at Sholapur District a well known Dalit supporter writer, editor, critic and author of 40 books is one among the most renowned Dalit voices in India. Most of his writings are in Marathi and translated into English and other languages.

At present he is working as a Professor, Regional Director (Sholapur Division) of the Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, Nasik. He is a good academician as well as a writer and he occupied so many positions till date. He is an illustrious writer and his writings mostly rest on the Dalit struggle and identity. He is famous for his poetry, short stories and particularly for his masterpiece autobiography *Akkarmashi* (1984).

His autobiography is written in Marathi language and translated into English, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Punjabi, Gujarati, Malayalam languages. However it caught the attention of the world especially after translated into English as **The Outcaste** by Santhosh Bhoomkar. He got lots of awards and won the wider appreciation for his literary ability. His critical work “**Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Studies**” (2004) is considered as a most resource book on Dalit analysis. He is a member of many academic and literary organizations and many scholars did and engaged in active research on his writings. He has won prestigious 14 awards for his literary and social contribution. His other books include *Udrek* [poetry collection] *Bahujan*, *Zund*, *Hindu*, *Upalya*, Dalit Brahman short stories Dalit *Sahityache Saundarya Shastra*.

1.12 The Weave of My Life- A Dalit Woman's Memoir

Aaydan is a general term used for all things made from cane. Translated for the first time in to English as **the Weave of my life** Urmila's memoirs describe the long journey from the *Konkan* to Mumbai, bringing to a realization the struggle of

three generations for dalit modernity about which readers have hitherto heard so little.

Aaydan! What does it mean?

Before plastic began to be utilized for making different objects of everyday use, bamboo was the most common material used to make baskets, containers and other general utilized things in households. *Aaydan* is the generic term used for all things made from bamboo, *awata* is another word. Outside the *Konkan* the job of weaving bamboo baskets has traditionally been assigned to nomadic tribes like the burred. In the *Konkan* region it was the Mahar which undertook this task. Nobody knows why? Even today the practice though the considerably weaker is still prevalent. Her mother used to weave the *aaydans*. She finds that act of weaving and her act of writing are organically linked. Weave is similar. It is the way of pain, suffering and agony that link them. Dalit houses in *Konkan* region were usually not located on the margins of the village but found at its center probably as a matter of convenience for the upper caste of reference is that of *dalit* women's autobiography writing in Marathi.

The Weave of My Life is the memoir of an untouchable woman in India. She gives details of what daily village life was during the time of her grandmother, mother, and her childhood. She also talks about how things have changed for the Dalits during her lifetime. She gives details about Hinduism and Buddhism and the political movements that helped to change the life of the Dalits. **The Weave of My life** written in a realistic mode it is characterized by an honest frank and bold verbalization of a Dalit woman's experiences and may easily be compared with Afro-American women's plot. The English edition by Maya Pandit is quite successful in bringing out the racial flavor of the Marathi original.

In the concluding paragraphs of her Memoir Urmila Pawar writes,

“Life has taught me many things showed me so such. It has also lashed it me till I bled I don't know how much longer I am going to live nor do I know in what form life is going to confront me let it

came in any form I am ready to face it stoically. This is what my life has taught me. This is my life and that is me.”⁸

1.12.1 The Weave of My Life: Summary

Urmila Pawar describes a ritual where a *Mahar* would have a wound inflicted on him and his wife would make to go begging all over the village. At the same time Urmila also describes the fire of resistance that Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar ignited in their hearts especially among woman and portrays how education became the key of transforming the world around them. Urmila’s mother who forced her to go to school and challenged the school teacher who hit her inspiring example.

The Weave of My Life represents a significant departure from the path trod by other dalit autobiographies. It is a complex narrative of a gendered individual who looks at the world initially from her location within the caste but also goes on to transcend the caste identity from a feminist perspective. It captures effectively the transition of the *Mahar* community rooted geographically in the agrarian and rural areas of the *Konkan* region into a people relocated in urbanized spaces like Mumbai, with a more modern sensibility. The journey demonstrates how the lineages of suffering in the past branch out in myriad different ways in the present as a result of the logic of development, modernity and progress followed in the past Nehruvian era in India taking into account the exploitative allowed to function In rural areas they lived a subhuman existence in *Maharwada* in Mumbai they had to live in slums on the banks of *gutters* and *nallah* where rats chewed on their sweat soaked toes. There was increasing feminization of labor and poverty in the era of neo-liberal policies of the market economy. Poor women in cities got some work in the small scale and ancillary industries or in the home based industries and there was no job security. Sexual violence was always present. They suffered more violence at the hands of dominating castes when there caste riots. On the contrary they had to face the double bind of exploitation as workers and housewives.

Urmila Pawar describes the tough bonding loves of these women both in their husband's house as well as in their childhood. This book is a multilayered personalized saga of the social transformation of Dalits in India. At one level it is loving tribute from a son to his father at another it gives an intelligent evaluation of the caste system in India and traces the story of the awakening of Dalits traversing three generation at yet another level it is reflective of the aspirations of millions of Dalits in India. Like many of the earlier works **The Weave of My Life** also portrays the conditions of a subhuman existence of an entire community, shamelessly exploited by the upper castes, reduced to a status of beasts of burden extremely marginalized. In Urmila's autobiography their houses were in the center of the village because it was convenient for the upper caste, or could be attacked from all sides if anything goes wrong. They were supposed to work hard during the preparation of festivals like *Holi* but they were not entitled to participate in it like the upper caste. If they tried to do so they were beaten up till they bleed. They were made to dispose of dead animals: they were entitled only to leftovers of food even on festive occasions.

1.12.2 Family Background

Adgaon was the native place of Urmila Pawar but for her education purpose her family was staying near Ratnagiri at *Phansawale*. Pawar's father set up house in Ratnagiri so that his children and his nephews and nieces would have access to better school education.

Chimaji was Urmila's grandfather he had two children a son and a daughter. Urmila's father educated up to sixth standard and became a school teacher at Sinner. Her mother was an illiterate lady but she had the skill of weaving cane baskets. Pawar's father also serves as a village priest he has inherited this mantle from an ancestor who directly challenged the authority to Brahmin. For a Dalit to take on the duties of a village priest for his community was itself part of a tradition of resistance. When Urmila was in third standard her father died after father's death Urmila's brother Shahu inherited the priesthood while he was only twelve years old. Urmila had two elder sisters Shantiakka and Manjula two

brothers Shahu and Govindada her eldest brother Achyut had died when she was very small.

1.12.3 Hunger and poverty

Weaving of bamboo baskets the main profession of the protagonist's mother indicates their low caste and economic poverty. Pawar has referred about death of her father when she was in third standard. Her mother was not visiting any community functions or any programme but doing her work and nurturing children in her own capacity. She was only two sets of clothes which she wore alternatively for three or four days. They were washing their clothes once a week and she had bad habit of spitting around which was very objectionable for others as Urmila was unaware of this bad manner. Pawar had specifically thanked her teacher Diwalker who had taught her good manners and cleanliness. She got her first scholarship of Rupees 12 (twelve) in the fourth standard and for the first time in her life she could see the Ten Rupees note and one rupee two notes the teacher had asked her to buy two new frocks for herself from the money. Pawar narrates the incident in her memoir,

“Aye was weaving her baskets as usual. She did not see me when I crossed her and entered the house. Her face looked worried. She was engrossed in her own thoughts and her fingers flew over the basket. Going to her, I told her about the scholarship and held the twelve rupees before her. Suddenly her face lit up with a sunny smile and eyes sparkled.”⁹

Urmila Pawar was much sensitive about her caste as well as her poverty so during school period onwards her conscious mind was aware of the limitations of person of lower caste and meaning of poverty not described in the books but in reality. The other important reference about the community living and exploitation of the women is seen in their food preparations for them is very evident from the memoir that separate food preparations were done for men and women and

particularly the daughter-in-law was exploited maximum. Urmila Pawar as a feminist and as a dalit woman has highlighted an issue. When the men went out and women and girls remained at home, they dined at *kata*. A small quantity poured in water and cooked as a soup, with chili powder, salt and a piece of mango or *maul*. This was called *sagar*. Women ate their rice with the watery dish. The song we used to sing Hey what is that funny dug noise what is the foul smell spreading all over?

“Well, what they cooked was fish water!
Someone has had a bellyful and how!
She wears a short sarees, down to the feet now
To hide what tricking down from her butt.”¹⁰

Urmila Pawar describes in this following quotation both the insult and hunger of the girl child. Whenever they get good dish or complete food, it is difficult for them to control. As Pawar narrates the incident,

“Once I went to attend wedding at my sister-in-law’s place along with two of my nieces. However when we three spout girls set down to eat and begun asking rice repeatedly the cook got angry whose daughters are these anyway? He burst out. They are eating like monsters then someone answered they are from our Sushi’s family! Daughters of Arjun master! On hearing the host came forward. ‘Oh! Are they? All right all right let them eat as much as they want! Serve them well! The cook returned with more rice but being called monster was not easy to digest and we politely declined.”¹¹

When Urmila Pawar refers to her school life and sharing of lunch boxes experience she had specifically mentioned the items prepared by the upper class students and the variety of items attracted her but considering her economic condition at home she never imagined even to talk about them at home.

Urmila Pawar had contributed a whole chapter on food and eating habits in her autobiography, through which she achieves a number of distinct objectives. Firstly the experience of extreme poverty of living with a persistent lack of adequate nourishment is most effectively conveyed through the child's viewpoint. The mother is described as stingy fending off her children's demands while we also see her efforts to make ends meet and to give them what taste and variety she can. Then there is the contrast with young Urmila's upper-caste schoolmates. The children's negotiations with each other and the pain the girl feels tells us a great deal about one of the central aspects of caste hierarchy. And finally throughout the hierarchy it is the women who nurture the culture of their caste and there is an enjoyment and a pride in talking about the food characteristic to one's caste and the food prepared at festivals however meager it may be.

1.12.4 Education

Urmila Pawar explains in her autobiography that how her schoolmaster father used to thrash her and her cousins to make them go to school. As a child she thought this was mere cruelty but later she realizes that he was correct to value education so highly. In her childhood her family was very poor but later she gets a job that enables her to go to college. She had completed her High school education in Ratnagiri. She falls in love with Harishchandras and marries him before she completes her degree but her husband is supportive and she even does her M.A. after they move to Mumbai. But Harishchandra is offended when she goes on to become a writer and wins fame and popularity.

1.12.5 Marriage

Urmila Pawar got married when she was in the school. Her mother had rented the side room to earn little money. A family stayed there. Her husband (Harishchandra) was a friend of the man in that family. He was working in the office. He came there to meet his friend, whenever he came there he saw that girl (Urmila) was very sharp and active he liked that. Both of them got acquainted and

that acquaintance turned into intimacy. They got married. Marriage with Harishchandra was her love marriage in that era which was considered as a very bold step.

1.12.6 Urmila Pawar

Urmila Pawar was born in 1945 at *Phansawale* District Ratnagiri. She was distinguished writer of fiction in Marathi. Her collections of short stories *Sahava Bot* and *Chauthi Bhint* are particularly well known. Her autobiography *Aaydan* received major awards. Urmila Pawar is a major Dalit women writer born in the dalit community of Mahars. Well known as an activist in the dalit and feminist struggler in Maharashtra. She is an acclaimed short story-writer and a dalit feminist historian who has been the target of attacks from fundamentalist organization. The inclusion of her short story 'Kavach' in a textbook for the SNTD Women's University was vehemently criticized by many *Hindutva* activists.. Her documentation with Meenakshi Moon (1989) of participation of dalit woman in the Ambedkarite struggle was a unique circumstance under which dalit women had asserted their selfhood and emerged as activists in the movement. Her autobiography *Aaydan* called **The Weave of My Life** in its English translation has been another landmark a signpost in the history of dalit writing in Marathi which is translated by Maya Pandit.

1.13 Untouchables: My Family's Triphant Journey out of the Caste System in Modern India

Dr. Narendra Jadhav's **Untouchables** explores the world he lived and struggled in through the eyes of his family. It is narrated from the perspective of his father and mother, himself and his teenage daughter. It traces the journey of Damu the author's father from a small village Ozar to Mumbai. Written in the form of a memoir the novel bears testimony to the success of a Dalit family in the course of

a single generation. It is a story of the metamorphosis of Dalits in the context of the social movement guide by Ambedkar.

Arjun Dangle suggests that

“In Dalit autobiographies we see varying facets of the Dalit movement the struggle for survival the emotional universe of Dalits life the man-woman relationship the experiencing of humiliation and atrocities at times abject submission at other times rebellion.”¹²

Dalit autobiographies give to the basics of Post-modern is promulgate self spontaneous nature of the protagonists. The protagonists in dalit autobiographies display self reflective analytical character. Jadhav’s **Untouchables** presents Damu’s self reflexive schizo analytical outlook at the background of strong exploitation. It offers the evolution of three generations of the protagonist’s family. His successful transcendence of national boundaries to become the universal citizen is framed in an inspiring way. Thanks to his grit hard work and courage his children and grandchildren fulfill his ambition prepared with little besides education and willpower. It's a story about dreams coming true the kind that audiences all over the world find appealing. Jadhav says,

“The book is in two levels it's the story of a family on the one hand and also about the social metamorphosis that has taken place over the past 80 years.”¹³.

His autobiography is a dramatic piece of writing that forces us to acknowledge the inhumanity and prejudices of a social order that treat human beings worse than animals. It is an extended version of Narendra Jadhav’s best selling Marathi novel **Amchas Baap Aan Amhi** meaning ‘**Our Father and Us**’ written in 1993. Damu was not born a leader nor become. But he had one exception to rise up against the existing caste system and create his future. An intellectual man with no formal education he worked hard to be acceptable to live with dignity. In his Author’s note Jadhav describes Damu as,

“Damu was not a leader...but he refused to define himself by circumstances and aimed at shaping his own destiny. or, Damu had no formal education ...yet he steered his children to educational heights and inculcated in them the spirit of excellence. Or Damu was not a guru...but he taught his children to believe in themselves and retain human dignity.”¹⁴

Damu was humble yet he maintained goats as special offerings not lions or Damu was an ordinary man but he did an extraordinary thing he stood up against the tyranny of the caste system.

Damu is one of the few assertive independent Dalit characters in Indian writing in English. In the opening of **Untouchables** Damu was doing his *yeskar* duty (village duties to *Mahars*) in his native village Ozar. Damu was running in front of the *Mamledar* senior revenue official announcing his arrival. Afterward Damu was asked to guard the dead body of a woman found floating in the well. He was not allowed to go home to inform his wife and to have his food. He was abused insulted and forced to stay near the well the complete night. The next morning *Fauzdar* (a police officer) arrived and asked Damu to get into the well to draw the dead body out. Damu refused to do so under the cause that he was not supposed to touch the dead body of an upper caste woman. The author declares the caste system is so deeply fixed that change can at best be ornamental. The caste system was disposed by God and not by mortals. It has such a powerful authorize behind it that no laws no reform movements and no revolutions will ever change it completely. The *Fauzdar* was beat Damu for disobey his orders. He was inflexible and firm. He decides to leave his village that night he runs away along with his wife Sonu to Mumbai. Together they started walking towards freedom. In Mumbai Damu struggled hard. Jadhav narrates to survive through the Great depression in the 1930s. He worked in the Railways the Port Trust and some textile mills to earn his living in Mumbai. Inspired by Ambedkar’s call for Dalit

liberation Damu participated in Dalit movement. He had actively involved in the Nasik Temple Entry Movement in 1930, at Mahad Satyagraha in 1927, in the Buddhist conversion movement in 1956, Ambedkar's funeral procession and other activities of the Dalits. He inculcated in his children an ambition to succeed in life through education and hard work. Damu refused to be frightened down by all the odds in his life. He had always confirmed himself as the master of his own motivation. He is offered as a self made man in several ways.

The character of Dr. Jadhav is that of a self-confident Dalit in the text. He inherited the attitude of his father that a human being is a master of his will. He asserts,

“If others look down on me in their belief that my caste is low. It is *their* problem not mines. I certainly don't need to torment myself over it. I pity them for they are the victims of their own obsolete prejudices.”¹⁵

Dalit identity gave Damu's family confidence and pride to reject their certified status as low caste *Mahars*. The making of this modern identity as Dalits is possible because of two historical processes. One is the crossing of from his village to the urban space Mumbai and the other is the Dalit movement led by Ambedkar. Throughout the narration coined by Dr Ambedkar unites all Dalits “Educate, Unite and Agitate”. Damu sees this slogan as his individual task and though illiterate himself he educates his children to the best of his abilities. He even tries to educate his wife Sonu. Fortunately the all children fulfill his desire and raise to high positions in their chosen careers a great achievement for a man who has devoted his life to superior prospects.

Babasaheb Ambedkar's teachings have a profound effect on Damu and Sonu and they realize that they are beginning to develop a sense of self-Truth we sensed a change in the way we carried ourselves. We proudly declare ourselves Dalits and looked everyone in the eye. The plainness of the narrative brings out the pathos in

the story. Damu is shown in this novel as a man of strong character with forward approach and progressive views. He instills a greater point of confidence in his wife. He wins his wife on his side when he explains the purpose of living and meaning of life. In short he makes a scholar out of his life. Finally his wife Sonu understands him and joins him in every stage of upheaval and conflict. The gentleness with which Damu treats his wife is extraordinary for the times and extremely touching. The book ends with the realization that further change is required. The world has to stop treating Dalits as different. It is up to the present generation to carry the torch lit by the tears and blood of their relations. In this Memoir the author examines the issues which are so deeps tabbing and touching. From one angle it is an attack on the social structure of Hindu society. If this novel is studied in another angle it is a call made to unite all the oppressed and humiliated people. To empower themselves for education and finally to stand as one nation of brotherhood to fight against domination subjugation slavery and those who achieve and support the concept of defined superiority which is not only irrational and illogical but also ridiculous.

1.13.1 Untouchables: Summary

Damodar Jadhav (the author's father) is the outstanding person whose story is told in this book. Facing prejudices in his village he leaves for Bombay in 1930. Through purpose hard work and luck he lifts his family out of poverty. His life is energetic by the ideas of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar. Ambedkar may not be as well known to the West as Gandhi and Nehru but is an equally important figure in the story of modern India. His ideas of social justice shaped Indian constitution and continue to shape the national debate to this day. Damu Jadhav faces a rigid social structure in his village where the circumstances of his birth determine his livelihood. The poverty of rural India is heart breaking. But life in the village is not all misery. The Mahar's strong social bonds their love for their gods *Khandoba* and *Mariaai* the joy of their weddings is interesting. One scene in particular stands out the Mahar's Buffalo feast. Later in the book Damu decides that his family will leave the Hindu fold and become Buddhists. Sonu (Damu's

wife) is distraught at having to leave her beloved gods *Khandoba* and *Mariaai*. Her distress is one of the more moving parts of the book. Life in Bombay is different. In the big city Damu is no longer defined by his caste. He finds profitable work in a series of jobs newspaper seller, railway man and port trust employee.

The author's parents fought to stand up for what is right and vowed to give their kids a better life but there are countless other people in India who's story is very different. Dr. Narendra Jadhav's autobiography '**Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India**' is a story of the impact of teaching his children that gave them a sense of self-esteem, pride, uniqueness and awareness of human rights. The details of Dr. Jadhav's parents' life in village India his family's struggles in Mumbai their hard fought successes their conversion to Buddhism under Dr. Ambedkar's influence and his father's strong spirit that sees them through the slings and blows of extreme social and economic practices his uncompromising honesty and his belief in education as the ultimate empowerment of his children. It is also a great story about the love Dr. Jadhav's parents had for both and for their children. Both village and urban India appear in Dr. Narendra Jadhav's **Untouchables** within a reality rarely experienced in works on Indian fiction.

1.13.2 Family Background

Dr. Narendra Jadhav was born in Wadala in Mumbai and spent all his formative years there. His father began living in Wadala in 1938 and all his brothers and sisters were born there. Damodar Runaji Jadhav and Sonubai the parents of Dr. Jadhav had six children Janardhan, Dinesh, Sudhakar, Leela, Trusha and Narendra. Dr. Narendra was the youngest. His eldest brother Janardan was 15 years senior to him. At the time when they were staying at *Juna* (old) Wadala in the railway colony as his father was attached to the railways. That was a slum area. The buildings were barrack-like. There was a light only in the veranda. There was no bathroom. That convenience was outside. Nine members were lived in a room that was 10 feet by 10 feet. Then they had an opportunity to move to

another colony across the yard which was called *Naya* (new) Wadala. But at new Wadala there were *goondas* (scoundrels) and thieves. His father was upwardly mobile. He wanted to improve living conditions. In Naya Wadala there was electricity in the rooms and the bathroom had running water. Damu insisted that would be helpful for children and their study. Damu wanted to give education. Even though it was Naya Wadala the living conditions were only marginally better. That was still a slum. The Social-economic cultural life was terrible. Two things stand out of that life one that was survival of the fittest the second thing that stands out is Damu and he was a strict disciplinarian.

1.13.3 Hunger and poverty

For excellence of a person who spent his childhood in the slums of Mumbai. Narendra Jadhav remembers the early days 'Survival of the fittest was the rule in the slums where he grew up. He was a pretty good fighter so he wanted to be a dada a gangster. He is excellent in his studies and soon outshines leaving everyone spell bound.

Damu recalls the day he learned he was an Untouchable. He was a little boy walking with his father in a village. Having grown thirsty under the hot sun Damu spread water that someone had left under a tree and was told he was not allowed to drink from it. Damu was doing his *yeskar* duties (village duties to Mahars) He narrates in his autobiography that his parents had to move around here and there in the city looking for a proper place when they ran away from village to escape the brutal caste oppression by the upper caste villagers. Life in Bombay is different. In the big city Damu is no longer defined by his caste. He finds profitable work in a series of jobs newspaper seller, railway man, port trust employee etc. Damu worked in the Railways the Port Trust and some textile mills to earn his living in Mumbai. He was a cabin man. His job was to ensure the tracks were clear for goods trains. It involved moving the levers and changing tracks. His cabin was just outside Railway Road Station. He was very proud of his cabin. Damu's wife Sonu used to sell fruits and help him for their family.

1.13.4 Education

Dr. Narendra Jadhav's parents never went to school. (His father taught himself to read Basic Marathi) but they knew the importance of education. They send their children to Chhabildas Boy's high school. The medium of instruction was Marathi. Damu, inspired by Dr. Ambedkar's message, educates people to bring rationality and courage in their personality and to understand their value as a human being. He determines to work hard to give good education to his children for they can be rational and can live with dignity instead of work hard in the sun as was his fate. Fortunately the children fulfill his hope and rise to high positions in their chosen careers where they work for the upliftment of their society. Jayavant becomes an IAS and works extremely for the downtrodden wherever he gets an opportunity. Dinesh as an administrative officer at the Mumbai Municipal Corporation has taken the task to contribute for the development of Dalit and derailing people of the society. And above all Narendra the youngest son of the family has achieved something more than Damu's expectations by contributing not only to the development of Dalit community but to the whole Indian society as well. He has given best as an Economist to apply the policies for the development of Indian economy as an educationist he brought a drastic change in the field of education being the vice chancellor of University of Pune and he is still contributing his best for the betterment of society as a social thinker.

He has done Schooling from Chhabildas high school Dadar upto the fourth standard he went to the Bombay Port Trust School in *Juna Wadala*. B.Sc in Statistics from Ruia College and M.A in Economics from Mumbai University in 1975. He completed Ph. D in Economics from Indiana University USA in 1986. He was honored with the 'Best International Student Award' by Indiana University, USA in 1983.

1.13.5 Marriage

Dr. Narendra Jadhav has married with a Brahmin girl Vasundhara Deshpande on 22nd December 1979. He had done Inter caste love marriage. Firstly Vasundhara's

parents strongly opposed to this marriage. But latter they met to Dr. Jadhav and fixed the marriage on a condition that marriage will be as per the Brahmin rituals. Dr. Narendra Jadhav and Vasundhara Jadhav had two children son Tanmay & daughter Apoorva.

1.13.6 Dr. Narendra Jadhav

Dr. Narendra Jadhav was born in 1953 a leading educationist, eminent economist & policy maker well-known social scientist and bestselling author. Ex-Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh had called Dr. Jadhav a role-model for the disempowered millions in countryside. Dr. Narendra Jadhav is currently serving as a **Member, Planning Commission** (in the rank and status of Union Minister of State). He took this responsibility on June 16, 2009 and was under oath by the Prime Minister on July 27, 2009. Planning Commission is India's top policy oriented think Tank chaired by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.

Shri Montek Singh Ahluwaliaas the Deputy Chairman. As Member Planning Commission Dr. Jadhav's responsibilities include Education, Labor-Employment Skill Development, Sports & Youth Affairs and Social Justice and Empowerment. As well Dr. Jadhav looks the States of Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Goa also the Union Territories of Diu-Daman and Dadra-Nagar Haveli.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav has also been appointed as a **Member National Advisory Council (NAC)** chaired by Smt. Sonia Gandhi with effect from May 31, 2010.

Dr. Jadhav is a prolific writer. In addition to over 125 research papers in economics and 27 major official reports his books are also standard sources of reference for students, researchers and financial analysts.

1.14. Baluta: Daya Pawar

Daya Pawar published his autobiography **Baluta** in 1978. Daya Pawar depicted the story of a low caste child who through hard work obtained education and

became a successful person. Pawar's writing reflects his active participation in the social, cultural and literary movements on the national level his avid following of foreign literature critical and philosophical thinking, firm attitude, deep understanding and sympathy towards social activities and issues. His work was highly successful. He received some of recognition by way of awards. But due to oppressive circumstances he suffered mentally and physically in his personal life. It is this constant suffering that comes through harshly in his writings. One of his poems gives us a sense for his suffering.

1.14.1 Baluta: Summary

Daya Pawar in his autobiography **Baluta** searches the meaning of the reality of the Dalit women. They are subjected to the sexual misuse by the Dalit men. Dalit men involve in immoral activities with Dalit women. Thus the institution of family is challenged through the extra-marital affairs of the Dalit men. He also talks about Dalit men who are exploited by the women from the Maratha castes. But caste is maintained in such relationships. Dalit men who suspect their wives and desert them stand for the diabolic activities of Dalit male bigot.

Daya Pawar or Dagdu Maruti Pawar is one of those who have most explicitly expressed the feeling of being split. He was known in literary circles as a leading writer of poems before the remarkable success of his autobiography '**Baluta**' in 1978 made him one of the most renowned dalit writers in Marathi. He dealt with the atrocities experienced by the Dalits under the Indian caste system. '**Baluta**' recounts the experiences of an untouchable struggling for a peaceful existence mentally but incapable of retaliation in word and action. The strength of this work lies in simple, straightforward to-the-point portrayal and a transparent realistic narration of the culture around him. This brought a critical success in both Marathi and in its Hindi translation and received considerable anti-dalit disadvantage for its frank exposition.' **Baluta**' created ripples in the literary circles and earned him many awards at all levels including one from the 'Ford

Foundation'. This created a new genre in Marathi literature and many autobiographical books talking about harsh experiences and hard realities were quickly written after '**Baluta**'. Word '*Baluta*' draws upon the typical mark of the dalit humiliation having to beg for leftover food as Baluta. **Baluta** historicizes the figure of the stigmatized dalit by locating him within an economy of suffering. Daya Pawar undercuts the invented reality effect of the autobiographical from its origin, characterizing his story as a secret that must not be exposed perhaps because of the shame as well as the pain that attaches to confronting the self for which he writes,

“Dagdu Maruti Pawar
Who carries as his portion?
This *Baluta* of pain
Tied up in the folds (*padaraat*) of his clothes
Because of the structure of Indian society
I am only the beast of burden
Who manifest his words
His desire was that
No one should be told
I also feel
That we should not reveal this to anyone”

Dagdu Maruti Pawar plays on the relationship between secret and revelation instead of celebrating the autobiographical as an authentic act of self representation. In fact Pawar is both a character as well as a concept he is the secret sharer of Indian society whose shocking experiences cannot be linked without rejection the Hindu separation. The problem of dalit selfhood also requires a change in ideas of autobiographical poor quality. What is special about Daya Pawar is his use of language which is not merely that of a deeply introspecting analytical intellectual but of revolt.

The great litterateur P. L. Deshpande has said about **Baluta**,

“The cataract of blind traditions stuck to our eyes that makes us unaware of facts will melt away in the tears that fill our eyes on seeing this horrifying reality will emerge new rays of hope. Reader will then seek to be more human henceforth in life.”¹⁶

1.14.2 Family Background

Daya Pawar’s grandparents were Bhaga and Devki. After the death of Bhaga, Devki had been doing the *Yeskaar* duty in the village. But in those days a widow lady’s duty was against the customs and rituals of the villagers. So village people hadn’t treated her well. Because of the bad behavior of village people she ran away from village with her two children Maruti and Tatyia and settled in *Kawakhana* at Mumbai, where already her relatives were living. *Kawakhana* was the biggest slum area where Daya Pawar had spent his childhood days.

Maruti and Saku had two children Dagdu and Indu. After the death of 10-12 children a boy was born. That time somebody suggested to Saku that keep his name as Dagad, Dhonda etc. May be he will survive and then Saku finalized his name Dagadu Maruti Pawar. Dagadu married with an illiterate girl from Sangamner, Sai. They had a daughter. But after betrayal Daya deserted her and married with another literate lady. They had a daughter, Pradnya.

1.14.3 Hunger and poverty

Hunger plays a very vital role in the autobiography. There is physical and psychological hunger in the life of Daya Pawar. The Dalits have to work hard for earning meals. They sell cane baskets in villages which are scattered to them otherwise they have to beg in the villages and Daya was no exception. He too had to beg in the village. Mother had brought lots of bhakari. Three of these were given by the village chief’s wife. The people had also given her the leftovers. Daya Pawar’s father was a labor in the mill. His job was to burn the wastages. He continuously sat in front of a *bhatti*. Many times he had stolen the pots from the mill and gave to Daya for sell. Daya’s parents were illiterate. His mother had

also done hard work throughout her life for the bread. She went with other women in the market to collect the papers and sold them. She worked in the boarding school also. Many times they hadn't got anything for eating because his father had lots of bad habits like playing cards, (*jugar*) drinking, went at a prostitute etc. After his payment firstly he spent big share for his bad habits and came home with empty hand.

Daya failed in boarding school still he continued to stay there only for his onetime meal. They didn't have proper food no clothes and no houses they often eat stale food. Daya never received good food like sweets and chapattis. He was always haunted with questions like why he was not capable to take good food like high caste people. Why he was not allowed to attend school like other children? These questions inspired him to take education and to achieve all the amenities like high class people. After completing his education for some days he worked as a clerk-cum-lab assistant in a veterinary college. He would inject alcohol into the veins of the dead animals so that they might not decay. He lived in the slum area of the prostitutes and poor working people.

1.14.4 Education

Daya Pawar's '**Baluta**' speaks about various incidents from the life of Dagadu. His autobiography speaks about the continuous efforts of his writers to survive in the unreceptive inhuman social circumstances. While dealing with the ups and downs in the lives of Dalits they throw a flood light on the importance of education in human life in general and in the life of Dagadu. Dagadu putting in school was so remarkable because in those days thousands of Dalits children were underprivileged of education due to lack of interest, poverty and unawareness of their parents. In such hostile social circumstances Dagadu had determined to get education and give some meaning to his life. He firmly believed in the power of education in transforming human life. But getting education for Dalits children was not an easy job because of unfavorable social family and economical conditions. Though there were government run schools where Dalits children

could get free education they were forced to work hard to support other expenses of the school. Not only the hostile social conditions deprived Dalit children of their education but there were also their own people who did not want them to be educated. **Baluta** narrates an incident in which Dagadu's close relatives advise his mother not to send him to school. Their contention was that instead of sending Dagadu to school if he is made to work it will bring home some money for his widowed mother to support the family unit expenses. Daya Pawar writes:

‘Sakhu, why are you sending this boy to school? Are we *Wanis* or *Brahmins*? He will wander in the village lanes and eat whatever he gets... or will look after somebody's cattle. It will also help you financially.’¹⁷

During his school days Dagadu stayed in government aided boarding house which was specially ran for backward class students. Dagadu speaks about his stay in one of such boarding. His mother used to work as a cook in the same boarding house. She was required to cook for 50-60 inmate of the hostel. That was a tedious job. But there was no choice for her. She worked there without complaint as she could have the company of her children. But other students of the boarding accused her of showing too much favors to her son during the meals. Dagadu was disturbed to listen to such accusations. But he was emotionally devastated when the students refused to have dinner because Dagadu's mother had prepared it during her menstrual period. In traditional Indian society a woman is forced to keep away from the touch of others during menstrual period.

After passing Matriculation it was possible for Dagadu to get the job of a teacher. But he opted for higher education. In those days getting higher education was not an easy task for Dalits. Education had instilled self confidence in him. Daya Pawar writes about this change in the attitudes of Dalits. During his schooldays at a *tahsil* place he had realized the true identity of his personality. He had come to know that there is no need to feel inferior to the upper caste students as he can show his talent in studies and overcome them. He writes:

“I realized my true personality at a school in *Tahsil* place. We are devoid of any weakness. We have to break free from the bondages of the village. For that we have to get education. After coming into the town it was surprising to know that I can easily overcome the high caste students in studies.”¹⁸

By bringing in such a change in his attitude Dagadu succeeded in his life. Dagadu who had lost his father at a very early age defeated the aggressive social forces and became a famous writer and social political activist. Actually it was the transformation in the life of this Dalit boy. And this transformation was the result of education. It should be noted here that there were so many boys and girls both in *Shudra* and *Savarna* communities, however only those could get some success in life that had traded on the path of knowledge who had taken some kind of education. Dagadu did the same and could climb the steps of success in his personal and social lives and also showed the path of success to the others.

1.14.5 Marriage

Daya Pawar had got married twice in his life. Firstly when he was in boarding school studying for matriculation and secondly when he deserted his wife Sai. Daya deserted Sai because he had a doubt that she had an affair with Ikbaal a *musalman* person living besides them at *Kawakhana*. Actually Daya was not ready to get marry with Sai because she was illiterate. When he was studying in boarding school his maternal uncle fixed his marriage without his permission. Daya Pawar didn't want an illiterate life partner but when he saw Sai he agreed for the marriage because Sai was very beautiful. She was from Sangamner, District Ahmanagar. They had a daughter Bakula. Daya Pawar had affairs in his life after failure of his first marriage. After leaving *Kawakhana* he started living at Shivdi at his sister's house with his mother in a *chwal*. There was a *Muslim* girl Salma he had ongoing affair with her. But later he didn't want taking any risk of marriage with her. So the better way he stopped his affair and left his sister's house and Shivdi. After Salma he was paying attention in Najma.

1.14.6 Dagdu Maruti Pawar

Daya Pawar was born in 1935 December 20 at Dhamangaon (Taluka: Akola, District: Ahmednagar, Maharashtra) was a Marathi author and poet known for his contributions to Dalit literature that deal with the atrocities experienced by the Dalits or Untouchables under the Indian caste system. He gained fame for his autobiographical novel **Baluta** written as a story by Dagdu Pawar being told to the more literate Daya Pawar. The novel recounts the experiences of an untouchable struggling for a quiet existence mentally tormented but incapable of retaliation in word and exploit. The book stirred Marathi society and was a critical success in both Marathi and Hindi translation. **Baluta** published in 1978 created ripples in the literature circles and earned him many awards at all levels including one from Ford Foundation. It translated into several languages. **Baluta** is a story by Dagdu Pawar as narrated to the more literate Daya Pawar both of who are personal of the author. Many autobiographical books talking about harsh experiences hard realities were written after Baluta. Among his other famous works are *Chavdi* and *Dalit Jaanivaa* which are two of his collections of articles and essential a collection of short stories. He wrote the script for Jabbar Patel's film Dr. Ambedkar. He was appointed with the National Film Development Corporation. Pawar won the prestigious *Padmashri* award the Government of India.

Due to Heart Failure Daya Pawar passed away on December 20, 1996 in Delhi, India.

1.15. *Majya Jalmachi Chitarkatha*: Shantabai Kamble

Shantabai Kamble's *Majya Jalmachi Chitarkatha* published as a complete book in 1986 but presented to readers and television audiences in serial form through the early 1980s is considered the first autobiographical narrative by Dalit woman writer. This book included in the University of Mumbai's syllabus. Shantabai Kamble, the first untouchable women to be appointed as a teacher in the district of Sholapur in 1942 is the most articulate in this regard in “**The kaleidoscopic**

story of my life” 1986 in Marathi ‘*Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha*’ literally means a picture story but also indicates a sense of pieces of pictures being put together like a puzzle. When she reaches the end of her narration and casts a distance glance on the memories laid down before her eyes she firmly attests that since the beginning and all along her life schooling alone saved her from hardships. Shantabai Kamble talked in great detail about the position of Dalit women in society and their active participation in the Ambedkarite movement. Elucidating exactly why and how caste is an integral part of Dalit feminism and how women act as active agents in introducing changes within their communities the texts actually show how the Dalit woman emerges as a separate category in the canon of Indian feminisms a category that to a large extent had been masked under superficial concept of Indian women. The influence and contribution of Ambedkar becomes clear in both these texts. Kamble grew up when the Phule Ambedkarite movement was at its peak and she was exposed to it right from her childhood. She provides us a graphic account of what the life of the Mahars used to be like and how it changed due to Babasaheb Ambedkar. The Phule Ambedkarite movement made Kamble more conscious about her caste identity. She learns to question the deprivation that the Dalits have not only endured for ages but also regarded as their destiny. She acknowledges herself as a product of the Ambedkar movement. Kamble struggled to balance their private and public life she had lived in the same social structure of Hindu society in which woman is considered as subordinate to the husband. She was subjected for her husband’s doubts. But her autobiography deals with grandparents, parents and her community people. The tone of the autobiography is egalitarian and it is not influenced by masculinity. The adversity is an equal challenge for wife and husband. Her autobiography deals with these two contradictory approaches for two religions in which the logical rationality, self awareness and struggle for emancipation are important aspects. In short the basic difference between these two autobiographies is that the former finds romance and thrill in the conversion whereas the later deals with the utter need of conversion as means of emancipation for each and every type of adversity in the life of downtrodden.

Shantabai also recounts how being Mahar she and her community people were discriminated against by the upper castes.

1.15.1 Family background

Shantabai Kamble's father was Sakharam Babar and mother was Gawallakka. Who were agricultural laborers Shantabai had three sisters and three brothers Dharma, Bhagwan and Dattu. Before marriage she was Naja Babar later she got married with Krushnaji Kamble and settled with husband at Atpadi, Dist-Sangli, as a teacher she did a great job for her community and development of the primary school at that time. Her family was from downtrodden society. Her caste is *Mahar*; later on they converted as Buddhist by influence of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar. But Krushnaji got opportunity to educate. Krushnaji get revulsion from his family at every movement. Family members persuade his mentality from education. But of course he concluded his education and later he worked as teacher and married with Shantabai Kamble. Shantabai was born on March 1, 1923. Her birthplace was Mahud at Sholapur district in Maharashtra. She was the fourth daughter to her parents. Her father was desperate to have a male child after having three daughters successively. So the moment Shantabai's father Sakharam heard that another girl was born he immediately wanted to kill the newborn child saying,

“All bloody girls. Granny, hand over that girl And give me the pick and the shovel I'll go and bury her.”¹⁹

But the girl grows and later went to school amidst poverty Krishnaji and Shantabai had five children named Pratap, Vilas, Arun, Chandrakant and Mangal (Gauri Tirmare).

1.15.2 Hunger and poverty

Shantabai Kamble saw disgusting poverty in childhood so that she and her siblings had only one dress each which they washed and wore it turned over in rags. As if that was not sufficient she had to undergo enormous torture when her

husband deserted her for another woman and further humiliated her by accusing her of theft. While her autobiography reveals herself it also gives a vivid portrayal of the evils of insult and humiliation born of that the agony of hunger, poverty, illiteracy and superstitions. *Mahar* caste was the last layer of the society. They don't have right to live as a Human those people live as a slave by God's law. In past *Mahar* families suffered from immense castism. Basic feature of this society was untouchability which kept aside human from literacy economical and social development. Kamble family suffered from all these stages because of castism. They were underprivileged, illiterate and surpass their life shamefully from many generations. She was from poor family. The social and economical status of her family was very low. She remembers her mother telling them when rainy season started

“There is nothing to eat children go and sleep on an empty stomach. I could not find sleep as my stomach was empty. I said to my mother, Mummy gives me anything to eat Naja, there is nothing in the house what to give? She used to reply wiping her eyes. We all used to have a troubled sleep. The memory of those days gives me stomach ache.”²⁰

She recalls that from her first salary she brought two sarees for seven rupees and twelve kilos of *jowar* and nine kilos of wheat for one rupee each.

1.15.3 Education

Education is the weapon which made her strong and sharp in the life. She strongly believed that the path of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. In India the ritual says to lower caste people ‘Education is not their cup of tea’ so education was prohibited for these people. She was from the same background. In India women can’t take education in those days and *Mahar* community was far away from education they even can’t think to educate a girl. But Shantabai's family favors her act her family supports at every step. After education she also joins as a teacher.

She did very well in her studies. She got a stipend of rupees three per month in standard sixth to buy papers, ink, notebooks etc. But when she was in standard seventh a new headmaster named Kadam joined and forced her to leave the school with an explanation that being a girl she would not be able to study in the agricultural school. She had no money to go out of her village to study elsewhere. That was the end of her education. This shows that Dalits in India in general and Dalit women in particular have little choice in planning their career and life. They are restricted.

The worst thing was she was a woman and no girl used to go to school at that time. But her parents decided to send her school because of her extraordinary talent. Her brothers had not taken an education because of the poor condition and decided to do work for family under the construction as a labor. That time Naja was looking the condition of her family and decided to change it. Her mother died when she was in sixth standard. Later she continued her education up to seventh standard and passed. That time she and her father were very happy. None of her brothers went to school. Here Naja is the protagonist of the story who bears the brunt of class caste and gender. She wrote this after she retired from teaching in 1981. This autobiography has also been translated into French.

1.15.4 Marriage

Shantabai was educated in her local school till class seven and thereafter the community leaders put pressure on her father to marry her off. The search began for a school master who would marry her and this led her family to start negotiations with her prospective husband, Kamble Master. Najabai Sakharam Babar (renamed Shantabai Krishnaji Kamble after marriage). Her marital family was also depended on the collection of coal. When she was five months pregnant she discovered that Kamble Master had got a second wife by marrying his own cousin. In disgust Shantabai forced Kamble Master to break their marriage in front of the community elders and went back to her father's house in Mahud. She faced many personal problems during her duties and posting because of her

marriage with Krishnaji Kamble. She remembers that girls did not have the choice to select their life partners. Every decision related to the marriage of the girl was taken by the elder male in the family.

After her marriage she converted as Buddhist. The basic ideology behind this conversion is to fight against wrong rituals and severity of caste the basic inspiration behind conversion is Dr. B. R. Ambedkar told to these people was they should earn status in this world by way of education and unity. Shantabai Kamble was followed his path and she did a great job.

1.15.5 Shantabai Krushnaji Kamble

Shantabai Krushnaji Kamble was born on March 1, 1923 was a Marathi writer and Dalit activist. She wrote first Dalit woman autobiography. She was from the community which was economically and socially deprived class. But her family always built her moral and gradually due to good educational backing she travelled beyond the boundaries.

Shantabai Kamble talked in great detail about the position of Dalit women in society and their active participation in the Ambedkarite movement. Phule Ambedkarite movement made Kamble more conscious about her caste identity. She learns to question the deprivation that the Dalits have not only endured for ages but also regarded as their destiny. She acknowledges herself as a product of the Ambedkar movement. Kamble struggled to balance their private and public life.

1.15.6 Summing Up:

In the first chapter researcher has found that the experiences of caste discrimination, economic exploitation, denial of knowledge and gender dominance are common among the Dalits. The personal narratives of the Dalits deal with the problems of caste, class and gender. Therefore the distinction discussed in the introduction between a social status defined by caste and social status defined by profession can be found in the way that Dalits experience their

success. All authors came to realize the depth of division caused by the conflict between Hindus so they chose a separate path for them in what they considered to be the warm embrace of Buddhism. All the writers insist on their courageous efforts to avail of the facilities of education and be able to survive with the modern world.

Education plays a very important role in empowering Dalits. It can bring about a positive attitudinal change. It increases economic social and political opportunities available to them. It decreases the fertility rate. It brings dignity, prestige, recognition and status to Dalits. Follow of Buddhism and setting a personal example of academic achievement, Ambedkar is everywhere in all author's life. The philosophy of Ambedkar brought a new consciousness among the Dalits. The consciousness about their exploitation, atrocities and injustice experienced by the Dalits help them in shaping their intellectual life. *Dalit* writing doesn't aim at spreading against the Hindus but to fights for the human rights.

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Chapter-II

2.0 Struggle of Dalit women

The rise of Dalit autobiographies as a source of Dalit cultural identity becomes important in India as untouchables. However Dalit autobiographies maintain certain ambivalences as the authors and many women struggle to settle their low caste identity with their current urban middle class status and their claims to represent all members of the Dalit community. According to the Hindu caste hierarchy there were four castes namely the Brahmins (priestly caste), the *Kshatriya* (warriors), the *Vaishyas* (traders) and the *Shudras* (menial task workers). Below this four caste steps there was another rung of peoples who were called the untouchables (*Panchamas*). Among the untouchables the status of women was further eroded and closely linked to the concept of purity. This was what the rigid, fundamentalist Hindu promotes through continuation of caste system commanding the Brahminical values to maintain the caste system. In a male dominated society. *Dalit* women suffered unimaginable oppression not only through caste but gender too from which there was no escape. Women often referred to as a thrice Dalit as they suffer from the triple oppressions of poverty being female and being female Dalits. Many Dalit women were denied access to education to meaningful employment health provision and were the first to suffer the negative thinking. Access to upper caste wells was forbidden. Worst of all Dalit women were exposed to many forms of violence and were frequently raped as a way to humiliate Dalit men.

The autobiographies begin by briefly exactness the relationship between caste labor and sexuality drawing particularly on Dalit feminist reflections of a live experience of caste. It highlights the dialogues between many women concerned in different forms of sexual labor. This attempt was still ongoing and therefore a development. The discrimination that *Dalit* women were subjected to was similar to racial discrimination where the former was discriminated and treated as untouchable due to descent for being born into a particular community. The caste system declares *Dalit* women as impure and

therefore untouchable and socially excluded. This was a complete negation and violation of women's human rights. *Dalit* women were thrice discriminated treated as untouchables and as outcastes due to their caste face gender discrimination being women and finally economic impoverishment due to unequal wages disparity with low or underpaid labor. Even today in modern times we see the severe oppression and exploitation of *Dalit* women. The Laws of the *Manusmriti* have an overpowering effect on the level of education reached by *Dalit* women. The caste discrimination inherited by birth leaves *Dalit* women facing multiple oppressions that violate their economic political social and cultural rights. The most deprived section of the society comprises of *Dalit* women who were the poorest illiterate and easy targets for harassment. The women face not just caste violence inflicted on them by the dominant castes but status violence also. Culture was dynamic changes never static with identities and shared experiences. Family religion and education system used to be the main elements of culture. Culture was influenced by medium. Rituals were always carried out by people who were reinforcing the meanings of life. The Hinduism History which has degrading *Dalit* women through dogma and concept of purity then affects culture which can work as a channel for progress of *Dalit* women's living environment. *Dalits* to adopt a life style with untouchability practices. Sanskritization was an alien faith to *Dalits* the spirituality of *Dalits* was replaced by Sanskrit spirituality. The *Dalit* life in continuation that is of dead and living was the integral spirituality of *Dalit* culture. Upper caste culture endangers *Dalits* uniqueness and reliability. It increases and wipe out *Dalit* culture instead of enriching the culture. The culture was reflection of resistance from the past to the present and moves to shape a blueprint for the future life which becomes a flowing stream. There was continuity of collective life in *Dalit* culture. Traditional culture was a way of living. Meanwhile what would be the question of duties of a wife? Who was the head of the family? Wives were devoted to their husbands and afraid of even mentioning the name of their husband. Barren woman considered to be *amangalam* and bad omen in the society. Puberty was viewed as flowering stage in a girl's life as pleasurable. Fertility women were referred to mud waiting to receive seed. Woman in marriage were framed to be obedient and submissive wives. Motherhood was expected to be nurturing fearful good

wives and bearers of worthy sons. Society allows multiple forms of sexual behavior to co-exist practically but not socially. Particularly lower caste laboring women who were Dalit women treated as the sexual property of the men of the all caste. The other caste women were treated as good and lower caste Dalit women as bad women because of Dalit women social status was low subordinated that was why they were made to be sexually available to other caste. Dalit women were marked as natural and fit victims of violation contrast to upper caste women who were considered to be pure and custodian of chastity. Chastity of upper caste women could be taken up as big issue in their culture because of being submissive wives who was called *pativratas*. The lower caste women were considered not to be chaste. Sexual purity was anticipated caste purity which was honored by the society. Dalit women follow the Rituals more than the Dalit men. Dalit women associate with earth. Cultural programme of festivals was only moment for the Dalit women who get into trance. It was the only time they express their inner feelings and speak against other caste men husbands and demanding the local alcohol chicken good food and behave like goddess. To show the closeness with the nature they sing songs about their forefathers mothers the children and they abuse the landlords through their songs. After the hard work in the day during the night they sit together and chat with each other. They use lot of proverbs for talking and fighting. They tease each other and their kin who were about to be married with them. They relate with each other and while calling the person they will not use the name but the relationship. They sing when a baby was born when a girl attains puberty. These practices we never find with women of other caste. Dalit women were very strong and they give birth to more children. They work equally with the man that's why they oppose male dominance. They prove that they were stronger than the men. Dalit women work hard to survive. They were very open minded, innocent and were not exploit others but exploited by others. They have good characters. Dalit women everyday relates themselves with people in four ways.

- ❖ With their family members, children and husband.
- ❖ With the traders who buy their goods.
- ❖ The other caste landlords who give them work.

❖ Relate with isolated relatives during programs.

Now beyond this the new attempt was that Dalit women attended several programs like conferences meetings, workshops and training programs which allowed them to meet with many Dalit women. Dalit women were illiterates. They knew only work related to land. They have not achieved even as one present politically. They remain only voters. They had no chance of learning about the country the other ethnic groups and languages. Not all the Dalit women were member of the movement as well as in the political party. They were not involved in village politics. Dalit women leadership was also controlled by the men. Dalit women had their own language. They preserved their language of their land. They had their own justice that is why they do not have permanent enemies amongst themselves. For many years they followed the Rituals of the land. They were different from other castes women because they do not depended on their men like others. They worked equally with men. When the men were taking the spade, Dalit women were ready with their basket to take mud. Every work was both Dalit men and women work equally. Dalit women were workers and they were not slaves to their husbands. They had very strong resistance power which has to be constant.

After the invasion of *Aryans* Dalit culture was destroyed. Dalits lived under the dominant Brahminical culture. Dalit culture based on pure and impure concept as Sanskritization was thrust on the oppressed, downtrodden communities especially on Dalit women. Dalit culture was silenced. Dalits through the struggle gave life to the culture that faced the death by the main culture. Dalit culture is freedom, unity, equality, a culture of battle towards freedom. Dalit culture is sealed through various forms of theatre which is revolutionary disturb and leads to action which is political action.

The dominant brahminical culture from which the *Devadasi* system is extended to Dalit community is prevailing Dalit women. The people around so called civil society therefore do not share the problem with Dalit women. All the writers insist on their courageous efforts to avail of the facilities of education and be able to cope up with the modern world. Shantabai Kamble the first untouchable woman to be appointed as a teacher in the district of

Sholapur in 1942 is the most articulate in this regard in **The Story of my Life (1986)**. When she reaches the end of her self-narrative and casts a distant glance on the memories laid down before her eyes she firmly attests that since the beginning and all along her life schooling alone saved her from hardship.

Bhimrao Gasti in **Berad (1987)** and **The Cry(1993)** is the most effective example of a capability to get rid of the suffering of the past, take stock of the collective history of the community and one's personal experience and find in it inspiration for further struggles. *Berad* is the name of the caste of the author a caste administratively classified since the British as a criminal case. The author is Ph. D. in chemistry. He was working in a laboratory in Hyderabad till he resigned in 1975 this was the time of Emergency to work for the upliftment of his community and dedicate himself to social action.

Ramchandra Taware is an artisan, of the service caste of potters ***Kumbhar***. Against the services that they offer to the families of the village which the narrative tells us they were recognized the customary right to receive remuneration in kind at the time of harvest festivals or domestic ceremonies. This counter gift is called *balute* hence the name of *Balutedar* given to the artisan castes which enjoy this right. R. Taware's autobiography **The Potter's Tool (1983)** raises two critical questions first how this practice is actually performed and second, how it is perceived by the artisans themselves. The writer bluntly tells us that this practice actually is a form of social relation to be identified as bonded labor. In the village the *Balutedar* is a bonded labour. The story of his family is a representative one. All *Balutedar* families were under the rule of the Patil. *Balutedar* have to bear atrocities. They were exploited by the established class. The *Balutedar* has no alternative but to mutely bear the injustice of the village rule. He accordingly shows how the practice of *Balute* is exploitation in disguise and projects the potter condition as a figure of the boycott of artisan castes by the village. When there used to be marriage in the village *Maharin, Partin, Kumbharin, Malin* used to get a sari. The sari used to be of a very inferior quality. If some of them were complaining about the quality the answer used to be if you want to take this you take it otherwise we have nothing else to give you. Or someone would say

that from tomorrow we will not allow you to take clay. Sometimes his mother had to come back without getting a sari. For the sake of the *Gavgada*, the village rule and order we had to bear it. Everybody was not like that. Some people used to give some food and clothes on the occasion of marriage. But everything depended on their whims. Social identity and status were a matter of legitimately belonging to a recognized lineage that is a legitimate descent this legitimacy being defined by the rules of endogamy and exogamy of the prevailing kinship system. The sexual exploitation of lower caste women by higher caste landlord gave birth to children who were considered as belonging nowhere and to nobody except their mother. But the latter is herself as a result stigmatized as a whore who has polluted the purity of the descents. Mother and children remain as a result socially ostracized.

2.1 The Outcaste: Dr. Sharankumar Limbale

Dr. Sharankumar Limbale, author of **The Outcaste (2003)** first served as a teacher and then later on, took a job in Post Office as telephone operator. He introduces himself as a worker of the Dalit Panther and a bastard *Akkarmashi*. The Marathi word refers to the child born from extra marital relations and is used only as an abuse. As a child the author used to stay in the *Maharwada*. There people used to tease him by using this derogatory word which he deliberately chose as a title for his book. He was born out of the sexual exploitation of *dalit* women by caste Hindus. His mother was a *Mahar* a landless woman agricultural laborer and his father a landlord and village ruler Patil. That is not a life of Limbale's only but the slavery is forced on him. An attitude of blunt confrontation of the overall inhuman social order is maintained throughout the book. Masamai, Limbale's mother was married to Vithal Kamble. Kamble was working as a bonded labor on yearly agreement (*salgadi*) in the fields of Hanumanta Limbale the Patil of the village of Basalgaon. Hanumanta Limbale managed to break the marriage of Masamai and Vithal Kamble to take Masamai as a keep. The caste *Panchayat* drove out Masamai from Kamble's house. She was not even allowed to take her children with her. Vithal Kamble married again. The author was born from the relation of both of them. After some years Hanumanta started quarrelling with

Masamai and threw her out. Eventually Masamai left Basalgao and came to Hannur to stay with her mother Santamai.

In the *dalit* communities for a woman to be a beautiful and attractive is a curse. Generally those who have got superiority by Varna and who have inherited wealth used to rape *dalit* women. Sharankumar's mother had given birth to twelve children from three men. His father was Lingayat his ancestors were Lingayat that is why he is a Lingayat. His mother is *Mahar* her ancestors were Mahar that is why he is a Mahar. But the Muslim Mahammud Dastagir Jamadar alias Dada became his guardian. Then was he not a Muslim? Had his love no right on him? His coordinately cord is joined to whom? Dada had a first Muslim wife but they had no issue. She went away. Dada spent all his life with Santamai his maternal grandmother. He looked after him like his grandson. His caste or religion never became an obstacle.

One Mahar Machindra Anna told him,

“This public square of the Mahartakya does not belong to your father. Your father is in Basalegaon. Why were you staying in Hannur?”¹

For many days he did not go to the Mahar public square. He thought if he goes there they will beat him they will abuse him. He had no right either like sparrows. If he start and go to Basalgao, they will beat him. He returned back. When he was back, Kaka Dada, Masamai, everybody used to look at him as a stranger. Kaka asked Dada,

“Why do you keep Sharan? Whose is he? Drive him out of the house. Dada used to say I have to keep him because of Santamai.”²

Sharankumar used to feel. In whose embrace should he go? Who will tell him you were mine? Mother rejects father rejects.

Sharankumar Limbale was born of an encounter between his mother a woman of the Mahar caste and a high caste man who forced himself upon her. Limbale describes in a very frank language his childhood where he and his

fellow Mahars were confronted with grinding poverty and hunger as well as rank discrimination by high caste Indians. He describes discriminatory incidents in his public school. In school he and other Mahar children were expected to accept leftover food from the higher caste children. They were not allowed to draw water from public wells in case they pollute the well but instead had to wait for higher-caste children or teachers to draw the water for them and pour it into their hands or cups. Limbale had another mark of oppression that of having been born with no father. Basically he was a product of a rape but was considered a bastard because his high caste father did not recognize him. So in many ways he was outcaste within a community of outcastes. Limbale exposes about how Mahar and other Dalit women have been forced into sexual encounters with higher caste men. Limbale was able to escape from his poverty and oppression and become a professor of economics, writing and publishing many books. However in this book he lays out in stark language how he grew up and what he faced.

Tromila Wheat reviewed that

“What is it like to grow up as an impoverished outcaste in modern India? Perhaps the best way to find out is through the words and emotions of those who have lived through the experience and who have the education and talent to write so expressively about it. One obvious source is Sharankumar Limbale’s recent autobiography, *The Outcaste Akkarmashi*.”³

The pain in above lines is of women which is the greatest blot on humanity in the world even though it is an endowment by god. Deprived of every comfort right and entity she is reduced to mere mute being. From the time immemorial she has been passive, subjugated, slaved and bothered. She is periphery margin object and other while male is the centre, mainstream, subject and self respectively. She is the easy prey of atrocities and burden of the household and societal values left with the subhuman status. Resulting in nineteenth century for equal status the demand was heard with social, cultural and political movement in North America. Mary Wollstonecraft launched a powerful attack on second class status of women with the feminist writing followed by John

Stuart Mill Margaret Fuller. While in twentieth century Virginia Woolf, Simon De Beauvoir, Mary Ellman, Barbara Johnson, Rita Felski, Toril Moi launched their attacks on patriarchal ideology concept of gender and marginalized roles allotted to women in and ocentric world.

Sharankumar Limbale considers *Dalit* have been deprived of power property and position. It was propounded that god created this hierarchy so that Dalits may not rebel against this social order. Thousands of generations of Dalit have continued to endure this injustice. Thus god resides in the holy and religious text written by human being for what Dalit women were suffering to a greatest degree from centuries. That had been earlier supported as the root cause of suffering for women in India are those so called Hindu religious books says Ambedkar in his essay **Rise and Fall of Hindu Women**. *Manusmritii*, Vedas that were the governing agent of Indian society allots the role to the wife to be *pativarta* that dictates her slave like restricts ones chastity and labor women as a sex object and promotes child marriage but also justifies a number of violent atrocities on women.

Dalit women's condition is worst as they suffer distinctly. *Dalit* women face triple burden of caste, class and gender in which she sums up the plight of *Dalit* women highlighting the fact that they were a distinct social group and cannot be masked under the general categories of Women or Dalits. Besides the active movements and agitation against male dominated society feminine sensibility has been the concern of the writers who created a body of feminist literature in the last two decades of the last century raising diverse issues that woman have to confront in and out of home startlingly excluding of the Dalit women who were in more inhumane conditions than the women in general for their socio-economic status is contrastingly different from the women in general. Ruth Pawar Jubavala, Nargis Dalal, Anita Desai, Attia Hussain, Shakuntla Rama Rao, Nayan Tara Sehgal, Vimla Raina Kamla Markandey, Kamla Das and others have not provided space for Dalit women. Hopeless of justice and true representation as legacy of Mahatama Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar, Dalit they came to promote writing in regional languages in different genres poetry, stories and autobiographies with great authenticity.

For autobiographies was experienced-base rather than the imagination or speculation.

Limbale's autobiography is an objective work that shows little bitterness or remorse. The author includes an excellent introduction that introduces the caste system to the Western reader. The humiliation of the Dalit community at the hands of an unthinking privileged class and the hopelessness of the situation of women born in lower castes.

Urmila Pawar in **The Weave of my Life** the sufferance of the *Mahar* community's survival is as complicated as the weaving of *Ayadan* made by Urmila's mother and Baby Kamble in **The Prison We Broke** the unlivable conditions Mahar Community's ignorance lack of education and their unimaginable conditions that they had gone through. All these Dalit autobiographies create testimonies of caste based oppression, anti caste struggles and resistance but Limbale brought forth the heart rendering savagery of *Patilki* against the Dalits especially women. Berreman argues

“The human meaning of caste for those who live it is power and vulnerability, privilege and oppression, honor and degradation, plenty and want reward and deprivation security and anxiety that is ridiculous with reference to.”⁴

Dalit as they have power, privilege honor abundance and reward of being offered leftover and dead animals humiliation beaten murdered and raped and turned whore of the high caste. Limbale highlights that women not only have to perform the menial jobs reserved for low castes paid for only the leftover of the Patil families family appointed in service of village council while rest of the people had to serve the Hindu families individually as Santamai.

“Swept the streets in the village and lit the bonfire that lit the villagers warm during winter. She had to collect the leaves for the madder plant that they smoked in their pipes. She had to smear with the dung the platform of the village square where the villagers gathered for meetings and functions. Sometimes she was asked to take files to the town office which was ten

miles away. Dada was then working as the village night watchman.”⁵

Since Dalit had no occupation except to serve high caste people they were in liquor business brew or adulterating that they serve caste Hindus. There were seven-eight family members in business engaging whole family including women and children who prepared it and sold it engaged all the family members as Limbale describes,

“Kamalakka (neighbor) and Nirmi (sister of Limbale) went to Chungi to get the stuff. Kamalakka was a robust woman who had been deserted by her husband. Nirmi was about ten years old. The two of them left very early that morning. They had to walk six miles to and fro.....they were drunk and lying by the roadside when we found them. Kamalakka’s sari was all disheveled. Nirmi’s eyes were so heavy.”⁶

The family in business liquor had accustomed to the liquor irrespective of sex and age i.e. male, female, old and young. One had to taste the stuff to brew liquor as Nirmi, Kamalakka or Limbale himself had done. This evil to say epidemic had shuffled almost every resulting in quarrels and fights as sometimes. Santamai too got drunk and if on that day Dada (grandfather of Limbale) was drunk there would be a fierce quarrel between them. Santamai sometimes beat Dada. Sharankumar Limbale uncovers the lust of the Patils while serving the liquor to the Patil’s many times Limbale saw them holding his mother’s hand while she severed those drinks. But one should not mistaken that untouchability was non-existent rather it was more authoritative that unmasks the Hindu society of their hypocrisy and lustrous nature for the untouchable women. Untouchable becomes more touchable lustrously and more untouchable practically drunkards accepted liquor from the house of *Mahar* but not water. They had affair with the *Mahar* women but wouldn’t accept the food they cooked.

Dalit Women’s position was worse than the slaves for slave may change his position in capitalistic world but not a woman. They were exploited by one

then by another. Treated unequally in patriarchal system they were deserted by their husbands victims of domestic violence and ill-treatment particularly lower caste laboring women, who were treated as the sexual property of the men of the all caste. The other caste women were treated as good and lower caste Dalit women as bad women because of Dalit women social status was low subordinated that is why they were made to be sexually available to other caste. Evil eyeing and treating them as whore or concubine high caste has made numerous happy families split as Jagannath Patil's son lured Harya's wife away. The news spread all over the village as well as the *Maharwada*. Harya caught his wife red handed with Bhimanna. Dalit women were easy prey of their lust they were separated from their husbands and kept as keep the same was true in the case of Masamai mother of Limbale,

“Ithal Kamble (the husband of Masamai, Limbale's mother) toiled on the farm owned by Hanmanta Kamble a Patil. Who helped him during hard times? But while helping Ithal Kamble the Patil's intention was quite different. This rich man was out to ruin a poor man's family the relation between husband and wife came to an end. Hanmanta Limbale lured Masamai. She was given a rented house at Akkalkot which she accepted. It was a kind of revenge to live openly with the same man who had uprooted her from her family. Hanmanta Limbale now possessed her like a pet dove. They lived happily. Masamai became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Who's the father of this boy? Hanmanta didn't want any of this to happen but who disown a child?”⁷

But the main cause is the beauty of Dalit women though the concept of aesthetics and beauty is a boon everyone wishes to live but it proves to be a curse for Dalit women. Concept of cleanliness and beauty in Dalit is not tolerated by those who had imposed the duty of menial jobs that pinches as a peck in eyes thus ravish it away from Dalit no matter what mean they by scripture politics and practice or by force. Caste Hindu tendency to possess the every resource that pleases them is testimony and richness and resourcefulness

is misfortune for Dalits. Masamai was beautiful lady so she suffered for that. She was deserted by her husband after him Hanmanta enjoyed her and then leaved her. Dr. Limbale never received wholehearted love by his mother. People who authorized by religion in high caste, and inherit property have exploited the Dalits. The Patils in every village have made whores of wives of Dalit farm laborers. A poor Dalit girl has invariably been victim of their lust. There is a whole breed born to adulterous Patils. There were Dalit families that survive by pleasing the Patils sexually. The whole village considers such house as house of the Patil's whore. Even the children born to her from her husband were considered the children of a Patil. Besides survival on the charity of a Patil what can such household expect? So it is not only single case but customs and traditions of Patils as a Patil always a big landowner has a Dalit Woman as his whore that causes exploitation of Dalit women and reduces to nothingness. As such Masamai was the whore of Hanmanta Limbale who kept her till she pleased without problem but intercourse creates i.e. reproduction not acceptable to the Patils then left her with their own blood to be called bastard. A keep is only kept never married as Masamai again was a kept by the Yeshwantrao Sidramappa Patil head of village of Hanoor the keeper of Janu a *Gondhali* women along with Masamai and bore eight children. Undoubtedly a keep remains always a keep no matter how many children he made her bear to. Unmistakably a keep is not to found but fondle. Moreover shamelessness of high caste transcends all limits as even after causing her bear eight children one wishes to share the keep as kaka was persuading his mother to sleep with Hanmanta who was on visit to Hanoor reveals Limbale. Limbale unveils candidly that his mother committed not adultery for lust but for bread as they (Masamai and Santamai) hadn't sold their bodies to appease their lust. His villagers have provided them with bread so they repay much to them. They provided bread but in exchange to satisfy their lust with women.

As Sharmila Rege discusses that

“Strict controls were imposed on the high caste Hindu wives that controlled their labor and chastity sanctified by religious scripture. Thus the controlled behavior and body of high caste

women attributed to legislation while the social and sexual labor of the lower caste women was made available to the land economy. Social behavior and labor of poor women lets open access to the women of Dalits that causes sufferance and agony. The world full of wolves and vultures for the Dalit dove is inescapable.”⁸

If one escapes one way she gets entangled other way. No matter one accepts it freely or forcibly. Rangoo Damunna’s sister in law chose to be prostitute for bread and Masamai had been too had Kamalakka not persuaded. Others were repeatedly raped for working in their farms as Devki a spinster worker in Girmallya’s farm was pregnant is indubitably by the farm owner. Nothing matters one is a laborer in farms or near the boundary of their farms thrash and rape was a common practice while the Dalit men had protected their mansions and farms but never saw beautiful face of wives of Patil but they had forced Dalit to be raped.

Dalit women were badly insulted and beaten as if they were slaves. Some of farmers even harassed them sexually pulled them into the crop and raped them. Dalits sacrificed their daughters, wives, sisters and daughter-in-laws to dark nights in Patils mansion. Distinctly high caste people perpetrated more atrocities on Dalits mainly victimized women. The high caste people can rape keep and molest Dalit women but daring to look lasciviously on high caste women by Dalits commits crime against which they attack murder set fire their houses register criminal cases against the victims of their atrocities and more they rape their women as Limbale writes about occurrence of such incident,

“Whole village went to court against Dalit men who were sentenced to prison for a year. When they returned after serving their term, every man’s wife had had a baby. The Dalit women had been raped when their husbands were in prison. A village always acts atrociously like this against dalits.”⁹

Supplementary Dalit women spoilt junior had the same blood to practice. The elder used to go to the mothers and youngsters to daughters. Falsely pretending to marry enjoyed the body of Dalit girls and later deserted thus violating the marriage sanctity that Nandu (son of senior Patil) marries Nagi (sister of Limbale). As such marriages were usually not acceptable in society of high caste they just dispose of the marriages after sometime as though already married to Nagi. Nandu had married some other girl.

Moreover Dalit women had also affairs as Santamai had been seen chatting to Imam. Suman (declared sister of Limbale) had eloped with various lovers many times Nagi with Nandu, Kondamai go with Manakunna and later Damunna though she was married to Kherubaap, Ambumai with Kacharuajja but affair with *Mahar* was not allowed in society. The terror of *Mahar* community was so intense that Masamai requested,

“They will force us to sleep with them. You’d better stop your affair with Shewanta.”¹⁰

Helpless *Mahar* could not resist against the illegitimate relation of Patils with their women. Hunger and vulnerability forced Dalit women to be pregnant and mothers of children of high caste men. Somehow if they bring illegitimate up they push them to identity crisis. Father does not acknowledge such children. Ultimately what caste they belong to as they were born of different caste parents? Who will marry illegitimates born of high caste father and low caste mothers? What religion they belong to if they born of different religion? These were the slaps on the faces of such children as Limbale feels himself. Concerns of Limbale seem justified as such children were not taken as pure in *Mahar*. No one get ready to marry their children. Limbale siblings suffer this humiliation. The girls has been married off at early age with the older people married-many times may be because of high caste people to save them from Hindus as Nagi was married to Kumar a deserted already by two wives. Pami and Indira’s marriages were fixed at age of seven and eight-nine and Vanis married to Jumma son of Rangoo prostitute. Pami and Indira returned home never to go back to their husband because by them the in-laws had come to

know that Masamai was a *Mahar* as father-in-law and kaka (father of Limbale's sisters) were *lingayat* while mother-in-law is *Mahar*.

Dalit women were quarry not only of caste exploitation but of patriarchy too in their own community. Patriarchy plays a very vital role in treatment to women. In male dominated society Dalit women suffer unimaginable oppression not only through caste but gender too from which there was no escape. Indifferently they were treated brutally in male dominated society women stands no more than the clothes that can be retained and changed at anytime and age. Hindu religious scripture has significantly affected society irrespective of caste.

Arjun Dangle on Dalit Literature explained,

“Limbale draws attention to the fact he is the ‘illegitimate’ Progeny of the liaison between an upper caste and landlord and a dalit woman.”¹¹

Kacharuajja married once again with a wife to be his daughter Kumar too old with kids for Nagi third wife Jangam for Vani too old. More women were deserted with reason beaten and battered by their husbands as Chandamai and Santamai were deserted for unable to bear. Nagi, Vani Pami and Indira for the reason they were helpless. Kondamai was ill treated in the night. Further for the slightest reason as not being amendable to the household was tortured as Harya was ready with a knife to cut his wife's nose and breasts on being found in bed of another man. Limbale was advised to not treat her like a wife. Let her rot for the reason that parents of Kusum Sharan's wife were not letting him live with Kusum on account of unemployment. Thus child marriage, early motherhood, desertion of women, cruelty and marriage of old people again and again is signal of status of women in patriarchal system. Thus the hardships of Dalit women were not simply due to their poverty economical status or lack of education but were direct result of the severe exploitation and suppression by upper classes.

To conclude Sharankumar Limbale has offered the situation and trauma in life of Dalit women how they suffer at every step of their daily routine in caste

hierarchy not only economically socially and physically but sexually too like a doll and commodity to use and throw. For this sexual exploitation the children born to as such suffer in life at every step in and out of their own community too at the prospect of marriage and other social roles. The repeated exploitation in male dominated society they were battered deserted and physically tortured. Further they were the sufferer of patriarchy that gets sanction from the religious scripture across the world. Consequently it is predominantly the religious scripture that is the root cause of all above illiteracy, unemployment, resource less caste system and patriarchy that has reduced Dalit women to level of commodity. Sharankumar Limbale leaves the questions of this section to the society explicit and implicit to be answered.

2.2 The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs: Urmila Pawar

The original title of Urmila Pawar's memoir is *Aaydan* a word from the local dialect spoken in the villages that form the background of her life. *Aaydan* is the name for the cane baskets that her mother wove to sell for additional income for the family. Translated into English as **The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs** it takes us from her childhood memories of life in the village and her mother's constant struggle to make it, through her school and college days in the town of Ratnagiri to her life after her marriage in Mumbai where she encounters a feminist group and later becomes a writer and organizer of Dalit women. The time span it covers is from just after India's independence in 1947 to the end of the century. The lives of different members of her family her husband's family her neighbors and classmates were woven together in a narrative that gradually reveals different aspects of the everyday life of Dalits and their constant struggle for survive the manifold ways in which caste asserts itself and grinds them down. The author's point of view is also woven from two strands that of the young girl uncomprehendingly witnessing instances of caste injustice patriarchal domination and the daily compulsions of poverty and of the mature woman looking back on these with the insights she has gained later on in her life. And yet the narrator's position is neither central nor distanced it is constantly engaged.

M. S. S. Pandian says about two recent Dalit autobiographical texts *Karukku* and *Vadu* originally written in Tamil.

“The everyday the ordinary a temporality that is not teleological and a language of affect and in comprehension invest caste with certain presentences and immediacy and opens up a space for moral and political appeal to the upper castes. The burden of caste is returned to the upper caste.”¹²

In Urmila Pawar’s writing there is plenty of the ordinary and every day and a temporality that goes back and forth from her own childhood to episodes in the life of her mother and her elder brothers and sisters and back. Much has been written. The sufferings of the Dalit were like those of the black slave in America the sufferings of community. Not only this because the path to emancipation is also a social project rather than an individual one the Dalit autobiography combines witnessing and experiencing in an act of sharing that gives it a political there is a sheer drop down to the sea.

The Weave of My Life begins with a detailed description of the harsh landscape of the *Konkan* region on the west coast of India and the relation. Dalit women their own lives harsh and full of toil have with this landscape. The range of the *Sahyadrs* runs along the coastline and there is a sheer drop down to the sea. It begins with the village Dalit women’s journey to sell their wares rice bags firewood grass in the town market. The women walk in a group accompanied by their children for how can they leave them behind and who will look after them back in the village? They talk curse and gossip among themselves as they climb the hills along thorny paths buffeted by strong winds. Their rambling progress as they trace their zigzag route is echoed in their talk and sets the tone for Urmila Pawar’s writing in this memoir of a Dalit woman’s life.

In the words of Sonali Rode,

“Urmila Pawar's *Aaydan* describes her long journey from Kokan to Mumbai bringing the struggle of three generations for

a Dalit modernity about which readers have hitherto heard so little.”¹³

Urmila Pawar is now a well known writer in Marathi her work consists mainly of short stories and a history of the role of women in the movement for the emancipation of the Dalits or untouchables led by Bhimrao Ramji (affectionately and respectfully known as Babasaheb) Ambedkar in the early twentieth century which she wrote in collaboration with Meenakshi Moon published in 1989. In chapter 8 of her autobiography Pawar tells us about starting out as a writer. Earlier she had been an enthusiastic participant in school and village plays this gave her confidence to speak on the stage and while she was working in Mumbai she came in contact with organizers and political activists among different groups of Dalits. She is struck by situations involving caste and gender prejudice and begins to put down her thoughts in the form of short stories. After some of these are published she meets other writers and becomes aware of matters of style and structure. Toward the end of the book she takes up her project of recording the histories of older Dalit women who took part in the Ambedkar movement. The transition from an oral to a written form of self-expression in Urmila Pawar's own life echoes the story of emancipation of the Dalits. It is interesting that Pawar's first attempt to form an organization of Dalit women is by starting a literary group called *Sauvadinia* coined name that adds a feminine ending to the word for conversation or dialogue.

In Pawar and Moon's account of an earlier era of the struggle for Dalit liberation find repeated accounts of Dalit women in the 1930s and forties going up onstage in a public meeting where even to read an announcement or to propose or second a motion is an extraordinary act of self-emancipation. This is because untouchability the most extreme manifestation of caste in Indian society functions through a prohibition not only of touch and of certain occupations but also of the public use of speech. It is only the Brahmins who can enunciate sacred texts but the untouchables are even further silenced by the authority of caste. So for these Dalit women, who were also silenced by the authority of patriarchy to make a public use of speech was at the time truly

revolutionary. The political scientist Gopal Guru has underlined how Dalit women preserved the emancipator character of the public use of language in the post independence period when according to him. Dalit cultural politics was beginning to lose its edge. During Ambedkar's lifetime and also after his death in 1956 the tradition of *Ambedkari jalsas* did much to mobilize and politically awaken Dalits across Maharashtra. These troupes drew upon the musical traditions of the Mahar the largest Dalit caste in Maharashtra and also on different forms of religious and folk singing imbuing them with a message of Dalit liberation.

Dalit women were invisible in the cultural landscape that was completely dominated by Dalit males. Further traditionally Dalit women had performed in the erotic song and dance form of the *tamashas* patronized by upper caste men. Ambedkar urged Dalits to give up those occupations and traditions that were demeaning and humiliating or in the women's case sexually exploitative. And so according to Guru the moral code imposed by Dalit patriarchy forced women into private spheres and denied them free visibility. However he adds that in the post Ambedkar era women also developed their own cultural forms of protest. Urmila Pawar writes about how after they became Buddhist the women of her village at first found it hard that they could no longer sing the old religious songs but later on they weaved their own words into the old tunes talking of their beloved leader affectionately as Baba or Bhim of his first wife Ramabai and of his social message. After Ambedkar's conversion in 1956 shortly before his death Dalits all over the state followed him in giving up the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses and embraced the Buddhist faith. Urmila Pawar was a young schoolgirl at the time. While thousands of Dalits became Buddhist on the occasion of Ambedkar's own conversion in Nagpur in eastern Maharashtra in October 1956 this wave of conversion reached her village in the Konkan only after Ambedkar's death on December 6. Pawar describes the grief expressed by all around her on that day young and old women and men weeping uncontrollably while she (Urmila Pawar) was only just beginning to understand what had happened. And she tells us then the conversion happened quite suddenly Crowds of people from the surrounding villages marched to the grounds of Gogate College in Ratnagiri until it

resembled a sea of humanity. We went there too along with Govindada and the other villagers. Several instructions were being issued from the loudspeakers hanging overhead. Then came the reverberating sound of *Buddham Saranam Gachchami*, and we too joined the chanting of the crowd. After the ceremony we went home. Govindada and the villagers collected the idols and various pictures of the gods and goddesses adorning our walls which *Aaye* used to worship every day and threw them into a basket. This was a historic moment in the lives of Dalits in Maharashtra. Throwing away the pictures and idols of Hindu gods and goddesses was significant in two major senses it meant renouncing the lowly place that was accorded to Dalits in the Hindu caste hierarchy and it also entailed giving up superstition and ritual in favor of a more enlightened view of the world. Buddhism gave the Dalits a new vision of life the possibility of living in a totally new way free of bondage and subjugation. Toward the end of **The Weave of My Life**, Urmila Pawar returns to her village after living in Mumbai for many years. She sees tarred roads in place of the stony, thorny pathways she used to walk to school on and tiled houses in place of huts. But when she looks into the interior she is disturbed to find that the old gods and goddesses and rustic talismans to ward off evil spirits have returned to the homes of the neo-Buddhist villagers. The Konkan region with its rocky paths its precipitous slopes and the nearness of the sea the always palpable presence of a wild and unruly nature has traditionally been a breeding ground for all kinds of superstitions and belief in ghosts and the occult doings of neighbors. This is an integral part of the culture of the Konkan and with the Dalits there is added the constant struggle for survival in conditions of unremitting labor and extreme poverty. This region was also one of the areas that many of Ambedkar's followers originated from. Urmila Pawar tells us about the villagers fight to emerge from these conditions to a better life through the eyes of the rebellious child that she then was who sees her father merely as a hard and even cruel man. He is willing to thrash his children and his nephews and nieces to put them through school. Yet the narrator also makes us see that his harshness is necessary for the Dalit child's road to education is full of obstacles. The children are made to sit apart they are singled out to perform duties like sweeping the school they are beaten without reason and for the Brahmin teacher still feels that untouchables have

no right to an education. Pawar's father set up house in Ratnagiri so that his children and his nephews and nieces would have access to better schools. When Urmila's sister takes up a job and is about to give it up because of the hardships it entails her father helps out. That's when Baba decided to stay with her. He brought his luggage to her tiny room and helped her hold on to the job. Pawar's father also serves as a village priest he has inherited this mantle from an ancestor who directly challenged the authority of the Brahmin. For a Dalit to take on the duties of a village priest for his community was itself part of a tradition of resistance.

The Brahmin who usually had a monopoly on the priesthood exacted tribute and profit from every occasion in the villagers lives from birth marriage and death to illness, infertility or madness. The Dalit priest on the other hand is partly healer partly teacher and counselor. His approach to religion is pragmatic certain rites have to be carried out as a matter of custom. He is not above using meaningless mantras to lend dignity to his ministrations as long as this serves to comfort the supplicant who comes to him. The religious practice of the Dalits is thus shorn of the mystification that surrounds the figure of the Brahmin priest his monopoly over the interpretation of the sacred law thinly disguising his economic greed. The Dalit priest's role is to dispense human wisdom in the context of the everyday. After their father's death Urmila's brother Shahu inherited the priesthood though he was only twelve years old. People made concessions for the small priest and gave him only jobs he could handle. Anecdotes like these in Urmila Pawar's memoir can be read for their deep insights into caste as it is lived by the Dalits with its small cultures of resistance that help to make the ever present pain of untouchability more bearable. Her own experiences of caste discrimination are narrated with an interweaving of humor or with wry asides of self deprecation. At school the Dalit children are saddled with bothersome task son one occasion the master hits Urmila with the unjustified accusation that their family cow has made a mess in the verandah. She runs home crying and is cheered to find that her mother is willing to confront the teacher and demand justice. After her marriage Pawar is subjected to discrimination when she and her husband look for rented accommodations in the town of Ratnagiri they have to vacate two

rooms after the landlady discovers their caste. In one place her landlady's daughter's strike up a friendship and want to borrow a sari.

Urmila generously shows her all her wedding saris but when the girl discovers Urmila's caste she suddenly lost her voice. Picking up my brocade sari she walked off. Here is the paradox of untouchability that it is fine to borrow a Dalit girl's sari but not to have social intercourse with her or drink tea in her house. But Urmila Pawar's tone in telling us this story is not the incomprehension of the suffering subject of the worst kinds of Dalit oppression and violence rather it is ironic. After all landladies in small towns are notorious for their caste sensitivities and it would not be only Dalits who are likely to undergo this kind of discrimination. One of the most moving anecdotes recounted in this memoir is of the village celebrations of the spring festival of *Holi*. Mahar youths are made to do the hard work of cutting down branches and trunks of trees and carrying them to the field where a fire will be lighted at dusk. But they are not allowed a place in the celebrations it is the upper caste men who carry the palanquin of the goddess and the Mahars are forbidden to touch it. But the Mahar boys who by this time have poured lots of drink down their throats jump up and try to touch the palanquin. They have been affected by the mood of defiance that is peculiar to the *Holi* festival when it is acceptable for men and women to howl and curse in public. These are age old traditions that have been followed by all castes for centuries. On the day after the full moon people throw dust and cow dung at each other these days it is customary to spray one another with colored water. While praying for prosperity and the diversion of calamities from the village the upper castes also ask that the calamities be visited on the *Mahar*. This is another role thrust on the untouchables that carrier's misfortune as well as pollution, protectors and sanitizers of the village who are reviled rather than revered. The defiant *Mahar* boys are soundly kicked and beaten for their transgression. The narrative here chillingly adopts the technique of the ordinary the youths return to their families receive some comfort from their mothers and sisters and run back into the fray only to get beaten up again. Then the festival moves on to the next stage and everyone enjoys the dramatic performances staged in the light of the full moon petro-max lamps and the raging *Holi* fire.

One of the special features of Urmila Pawar's memoirs is her account of patriarchy among the Dalits. It begins in the second chapter with the description of the marriage ceremony of her eldest brother. This marriage took place before the Mahar converted to Buddhism but Urmila Pawar's family had already cut down on the number of rites to be performed. She gives details of the rituals of a Mahar wedding which the reader of the Marathi original will easily recognize as being different from those of a traditional Hindu wedding. The all important *saptapadi* or seven circling of the sacred fire by the bride and groom for instance is replaced by arranging seven piles of rice on a wooden plank for the bride to step on. When the rituals are over the traditional games begin. After her account of several games,

Pawar remarks:

“All these games were basically intended to control the bride and keep her in check. But when they were being played everybody laughed and had a good time. These were happy occasion in their lives.”¹⁴

Women from her village traveled to the marketplace at Ratnagiri to sell various equipments. They trudged the distance with huge heavy bundles with firewood or grass rice or semolina long pieces of bamboo baskets of ripe or raw mangoes on their heads. Their loads would be heavy to break their necks. Early in the morning they start their journey to Ratnagiri. *Phansawale* and Ratnagiri the road was difficult as it wound up and down the hills. When they came to the first hill the angry women would curse the *moolpurush* of our family who had heard them would have died again. The reason for the abuse was quite simple because it was he who had chosen this particular village *Phansawale* for this people to settle. It was an extremely difficult and inconvenient landscape as it lay in a difficult to understand channel in a far off corner of the hills. Two high hills were between the village and the outside world. The sharp climb with their narrow winding paths full of jutting pointed stones and pebbles were extremely slippery. One wrong step will roll down to one's death somewhere in the bottom of the deep valleys. Then there were two big rivers to cross. After crossing the hills and the river son a long dusty and

dirty path till they reached the city. Every time a toe crushed against a overhang stone a curse rang out probably making the poor ancestor turn in his grave.

Occasionally the women heard the terrifying roars of a tiger even in large daylight and certainly incidents of tigers attacking people on their way were not rare. Danger lurked everywhere. It crawled across one's path in the form of poisonous snakes such as *ghonus* and *phurse* who looked as if they wanted to inquire casually after the travelers. The barren open spaces were covered with bushes as sharp as the teeth of those creatures and resembled some ancient body armor. The howling wind blew continuously. Then there was a huge deep well on the way without any protective walls around shrouded in the mist of chilling stories of evil spirits lurking there. And as if all this were not enough there would be freaks and perverts hiding in shrubs and trees who occasionally assaulted the helpless women. Later on in the book Pawar gives us more serious examples of patriarchal oppression of women both within the Dalit community and along the lines of caste hierarchy with upper-caste men enjoying a license to exploit Dalit women sexually. The temple priest sexually abuses a young girl from the nomadic Komati community the young Urmila sees her coming out of the inner sanctum in tears and does not understand. Her mother and her elder sister Bhikakka are more victims of dire poverty than patriarchy but a detailed account of the ill-treatment of another sister Manjula at the hands of her in-laws followed by several cases of similar treatment of daughters-in-law. On the other hand Urmila Pawar tells us of her own experience of affection and friendship from members of her husband's family. There is a terrible story of a widow who becomes pregnant and kicked in the stomach by women of the village till she aborts the fetus and later dies. Noting the self righteousness of the village women who feel that they are upholding the honor of their community is the only comment Pawar offers us with regard to this incident. She does not mention whether the woman in question was a *Dalit* though that seems unlikely. However the Dalit women of the village certainly participated in the spirit if not the act of punitive violence.

On the whole however Dalit widows were not treated with the same degree of exclusion as in the Brahmin community. Although Pawar does not touch on

the issue of widow remarriage she gives us a small linguistic essay on the term *randkisooj* which translates as widow's swelling or widow swelling. Urmila has heard the phrase from her mother who claims that although she is a widow she does not have the *randkisooj*. She asks her elder sister about it and gets the following reply:

“You know for some women when their husbands die it are a release from oppression. Then they look a little better fresh so people say they have got the *randkisooj*. Then she grew grave and said but let me tell you I have always been like this somewhat plump even before my husband died.”¹⁵

This explanation is perhaps an adequate comment on the nature of dalit patriarchy. The earthy phrase more so because the word *raand* means both a widow and a prostitute in Marathi tells us that many a woman is so badly treated by her husband that she blossoms out a little after his death. And yet the freedom to joke about it the common use of such a phrase also signifies that widows are not completely suppressed.

Urmila Pawar's use of earthy language is no longer a new stylistic device. Dalit autobiographers have used the vocabulary of the *Mahars* and the *Mangs* to define a world foreign to the experience of most of literature. Pawar is aware that there is not much shock value left in the use of this vocabulary. But she gives us an experience of the women's cursing the words they use in quarrels the open discussion of bodily functions and of the polluting work that the untouchables are forced to do. The crude language the openness is also an integral part of Dalit culture. The women's songs especially those composed after the conversion to Buddhism carry the touch of the soil the strength of bodies accustomed to hard labor. Her account of her romance with Harishchandra the man she eventually marries also does not shy away from discussing the physical aspects of their relationship.

Maya Pandit's translation succeeds to a great extent in conveying the flavor of this speech and the down to earth. She retains the use of Marathi kinship terms that are so much a part of family relationships and gives us a glossary to their

meaning. It is always challenging to translate a linguistically diverse text from one language to another and here it has been done with considerable accuracy and ease.

Urmila Pawar devotes to a description of food and eating habits in her family and community. This helps her to accomplish a number of distinct objectives. First the experience of extreme poverty of living with a persistent lack of adequate nourishment is most effectively conveyed through the child's viewpoint. The mother is described as stingy fending off her children's demands while we also see her efforts to make ends meet and to give them what taste and variety she can. Then there is the contrast with the food habits of young Urmila's upper caste schoolmates. The children's negotiations with each other and the pain the girl feels tell us a great deal about one of the central aspects of caste hierarchy. And finally throughout the hierarchy it is the women who care for the culture of their caste and there is an enjoyment and a pride in talking about the food characteristic to one's caste and the food prepared at festivals however meager it may be. Women are the cultural carriers of caste and it is through the patriarchal control of women that caste divisions are maintained.

In the later chapters of **The Weave of My Life** Urmila Pawar moves with her husband to Mumbai and works at a job in a government office. Here the narrative picks up speed as she adjusts to life in a metropolitan city. The ubiquitous presence of caste cannot be entirely forgotten even there. There are daily pinpricks and occasionally bigger jolts of caste discrimination. But Pawar makes good use of the newfound freedom and attends meetings meets women's groups and most important begins to write. Here her weaving technique is at play as she intersperses the narrative of her own achievements with her observations about the society around her. Her feminism becomes more pronounced. Her increasing activity and fame as a writer makes her husband uncomfortable. There is tragedy she loses a college going son and problems to be resolved. She stands by both her daughters when they go against their father's wishes marrying men of their choice. Pawar's autobiography has been much acclaimed in Marathi literary circles. It has won

prizes and is currently in its third edition. But she says that the book has also received its share of flak especially in the Dalit community. She has been criticized for her association with upper caste women's groups and her open exposition of Dalit patriarchy has not been welcomed. The movement for the emancipation of the untouchables carried on for some time after Ambedkar's death but the co-operation of many of its leaders by the ruling Congress Party eventually blunted its revolutionary edge. Ambedkar for his part like the nineteenth century social reformer Jyotiba Phule before him was always very clear that a fight for the emancipation of Dalits would have to take up the cause of gender equality. Even today cultural and political movement leaders organizing against caste invoke the names of Ambedkar and Phule. Urmila Pawar talks about this several times in the later chapters of her book today's Dalit leaders are not very open to women raising issues of gender. Some might say that patriarchal attitudes have hardened since the 1990s when fundamentalist religious organizations began to dig in their heels on the Indian political scene. In fact the radical face of the Dalit movement began eroding even earlier with the rise of the ShivSena in Mumbai a party that mobilized disaffected non Brahmin youth of the city using a fascist rhetoric directed first against southerners in Mumbai and later against Muslims. Similarly though some dialogue between Dalit women's organizations and the mainstream women's movement it a problematic term today have been initiated there is still distrust and suspicion. The issues raised on each side do not translate well into the rhetoric of the other. There has not been enough genuine dialogue or attempts to forge a common program.

In any case Urmila Pawar is today quite deeply involved in a political attempt by Dalit women's organizations to bring together the movements against gender and caste inequality. Recently she was one of the organizers of protests in Mumbai on the brutal murder of a Dalit woman and her daughter in a village named Khairlanji in the Bhandara district at the eastern end of Maharashtra state. The story is depressingly familiar. An upwardly mobile Dalit family attracted the anger of the village upper castes as they owned a bit of land a daughter was studying in college and her mother bought her a bicycle. Attempts to harass them by trying to encroach into their land were

resisted. The retaliation of the upper castes was visited upon the two women Surekha and Priyanka Bhotmange. Their bodies stripped naked were found dumped in a river. A recent court verdict has acquitted three of the accused and pronounced a death sentence on five others for murder. However the judgment denies any caste motivation for the crime and also refuses to take cognizance of the accusation of gang rape since evidence of the latter has been systematically destroyed. Dalit women's organizations in demanding justice for the victims of this crime seek to underline how violence especially sexual violence is perpetrated on Dalit women whenever it is felt that the caste order has been transgressed. The involvement of the state and the media in suppressing these implications of the Khairlanji violence has however not been taken up either by Dalit political organizations or women's organizations as a major issue though some protests have been organized by women organizations at the local and national levels. If one wishes to understand the complex interweaving of caste and patriarchy and how it affects the lives not only of Dalit women but of men and women of all castes living in contemporary India, Urmila Pawar's book has much to offer. This is about how the politics of culture is played out in the lives of ordinary women and men in a situational context vastly different from her own. She may also understand something of the role that Dalit women can play in shaping the politics of the future.

This book is a meaningful narrative of the social transformation of Dalits in India. At one level it is loving tribute from a daughter at another it gives an intellectual review of the caste system in India. This is the story of the awakening of Dalits traversing three generation at yet another level it is reflective of the aspirations of millions of Dalits in India.

In the concluding paragraphs of her Memoir Urmila Pawar writes,

“Life has taught me many things showed me so such. It has also lashed it me till I bled I don't know how much longer I am going to live nor do I know in what form life is going to confront me let it came in any form; I am ready to face it

stoically. This is what my life has taught me. This is my life and that is me.”¹⁶

Urmila Pawar reflects that it is a radical rational humanistic category developed in the rebellion of those oppressed and humiliated by the social system. She sees her realization of becoming a modern human being emerging from the Phule Ambedkarite movement and granting individuality to both men and women from the women’s movement in Maharashtra. Sharmila Rege in her afterword writes,

“Memoirs of humiliation and resistance delineate the reproduction of caste as a form of modern inequality both in the village and the city. People would first purify the *Aaydan* the basket woven by dalits by sprinkling water on it. At school teachers would pick on dalit girls to clean the dung on the school verandah when it was the turn of their class to undertake the cleaning.”¹⁷

2.3 Untouchables’ My Family’s Triumphant Journey out of the Caste System in Modern India: Dr. Narendra Jadhav

‘Untouchables’ My Family’s Triumphant Journey out of the Caste System in Modern India is a story of awakening of Dalits. It is a story of one Dalit family’s struggle motivated by Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar who touched the lives of millions of Dalits. Damodar Runjaji Jadhav was just one of them. The author’s father Damu was an ordinary man who did extraordinary things in his life. He stood up against the oppression of the caste system by teaching his children to believe in themselves and reclaim their human dignity. Damu’s guts and sinews are too strong his response to Ambedkar’s call to Dalits to “Educate, Unite and Agitate.”

Damu comes to Mumbai to escape from the domination of the upper castes in his native village Ozar in Nasik District of Maharashtra. His struggle for survival and his conversion under the guidance of Dr. Ambedkar from servility to awakened self-consciousness is the main theme of this book. Damu was not a leader nor did he ever become one. But he had an exception to rebel

against the existing caste system to create his own destiny. An intelligent man with no education he worked hard to live with dignity. Damu is abused and severely beaten up for refusing to take out a rotten body from a well. His forefathers had worn clay pots around their necks to keep their spit from polluting the ground and brooms tied to their rumps to demolish their footprints as they walked. Damu's story is different from those Indian Dalit autobiographies which repeat and lighten the horrors of untouchability. The simplicity of narrative brings out the depression in the story and conquest of the Damu's family describing various landmarks like a drastic transformation under the influence of Dr. Ambedkar in realization of their self esteem and finally their empowerment through education. **Untouchables' My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India.**, brings to the fore what is the place of a Dalit in the eyes of policemen and upper caste people. He writes Walking home slowly he was looking forward to some that tea and *bhakri* is homemade millet bread when a policeman came looking for him:

“Eh Damu Mahar I have been looking all around for you.
Where have you been wandering around, you son of bitch?”¹⁸

The constable seemed flustered and Damu sensed that something terrible had happened. He told Damu that a dead body had been found floating in the broken well by the Mangroves.

“You will sit guarding the body till the *Fauzdar* and the police party comes to inspect the scene and write a report the constable ordered. Nobody should be allowed near the well. Remember if anything happens to the corpse your body too will end up in the well.”¹⁹

This clearly indicates that Dalit's duty was to carry the corpse and listened to the orders of policemen. The policeman did not care in the least whether Damu was hungry or not. When Damu told the policeman that he hadn't eaten since morning he lifted his pointer as if to hit him.

“Do you see my baton? He asked brandishing it I’ll stick it up your ass and you will see it come out of your throat. I’ll beat you up so badly that you will forget the name of your father.”²⁰

This clearly shows a picture of exploitation, fear, terror, repression and oppression of a Dalit by a policeman. Dalit writers like Om Prakash Valmiki and Sharankumar Limbale and others who have attempted to negotiate the challenge of securing narrative authority by emphasizing the experience of discrimination and Dalit identity as two necessary criteria for writing. Dalit autobiographers also negotiate the issue of authority to represent the Dalit community by presenting their autobiography not as a result of this desire for personal recognition but as a response to the requests from the Dalit community for representation.

Dalit autobiographies are not simply the narration of life stories. They are also used by Dalit writers as a means of political assertion. For example Dr. Narendra Jadhav in his autobiography **Untouchables’: My Family’s Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India**, speaks about Dr. Bhimrao (Babasaheb) Ambedkar leading thousands of Dalits to the *Chavdar* Pond in *Mahad* in a peaceful agitation for water rights and soon he will launch a *satyagrah* demanding entry into the Kala Ram Temple for Dalits. There is an incident described in the text where Damu the chief protagonist of the story is seen as rebelling against the whole traditional society when the *fauzdar* turns his foul tongue on Babasaheb Ambedkar. For Damu Babasaheb is god. Damu decides he has had enough. He will throw away the depressed crutches of village duties that have been load with him and he return to Mumbai. The harsh opposition of Ambedkarites to Mahatma Gandhi’s description of untouchables as Dalits finds no place in Damu’s story. Where as in Moon’s even the anti Gandhi expression during his visit to Nagpur forcing him to turn back is debated and described. In comparison Vasant Moon’s **growing up Untouchable in India** is more political. Damu works for the Dalit cause from time to time in the early years and more constantly later. He does not discuss issues of political dispute as Moon does. Damu’s guts and sinews are too strong to Ambedkar’s call to Dalits to “Educate, Unite, Agitate”

too complete. His story lives in the present the recent spurt in Dalit literature in India is an attempt to bring to the forefront the experiences of discrimination violence and poverty of the Dalit. These experiences have for long been silenced and marginalized as unliterary with religious and social sanction.

Alok Mukherjee a literary theorist and a human rights activist rightly sums up the significance of Dalit writing,

“Indian literary history and theory as well as the teaching of Indian literatures are spectacularly silent about Dalit literature. Yet dalit cultural and critical productions make a significant critical intervention in the thinking and writing about Indian society, history, culture and literature. He identifies two of the important functions of Dalit writing. Firstly Dalit writing attempts to deconstruct the dominant caste constructions of India identity and secondly it constructs a distinct Dalit identity. Dalit writing presents a dalit centric view of life and constructs Dalit identity in relation to Colonial identity and Indian identity.”²¹

More recent is the trend to deny their existence altogether. The growing quantity of Dalit texts, poems, novels and autobiographies however seeks to approve this while describing the nuances of Dalit cultures. Dalit literature comes in all genres the autobiographies are the most popular. This extraordinary growth in Dalit writing is part of growing need of the dalits themselves to coherent their experiences. These texts which have for centuries been refer to the margins offer a challenge to literary aesthetics which with its caste and gender bias have for long been concealed descriptions of the distress of being an untouchable and the target of upper caste ideology and machinations these voices question the institutions and ideologies that have placed them at the margins. Even more distressing are the stories of Dalit women it bad and worse. This autobiography has definitely used as political assertion. This is not limited to a small area but links the individual to his entire caste community as a way of gaining power and support in a group

struggle against oppression. India's Ex-Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's observation of the autobiography substantiates the following view,

“Like life of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar or indeed the life of our beloved former President the late Dr. K. R. Narayanan the life story of Dr. Jadhav is also a story of change, great courage, progress and hope . . . Narendra's autobiography must shape our social and political vision. It must shape our educational policy.”²² (Dr. Manmohan Singh, November 16, 2005. Address)

This strong positive message is engraved in the minds of the reader. Dr. Narendra Jadhav's autobiography '**Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India**' is a story of the impact of teaching his children a sense of self respect dignity identity and awareness of human rights. He leaves his native village Ozar in Nasik and comes to Mumbai. Once again we find that villages are the den of caste consciousness in India. A Dalit finds it very difficult to succeed in a village. Especially big cities give opportunities to Dalits. This conversion of the family from an exploited to a self awakened human entity is the central part of this autobiography. The author's father fights the hierarchy of caste and created his own destiny. The autobiography describes how the father was mercilessly beaten and insulted in the village. But in different Dalit tales his story does not at exploitation but it goes beyond. It brings family's success of the struggle. It's a positive story and ends in achievement. It underlines the importance education. A poor family conquers middle class status because of father, strength of the mother and hard work of the children. India is plentiful with such raw potentials. Shonali Muthalaly explains in her review on "**My Review of Narendra Jadhav's autobiography**" that,

“This amazing and intense story will make you laugh a little cry a lot and assess your life in great detail. A heart wrenching account told from Narendra's parents Damu and Sonu's point of view each chapter ending with one's narrative and picking up with the other's on the same event and continuing forward.”²³

The Dalit autobiographies reflect a flaming desire for freedom from the command of caste. Dalits experience is a sense of disgust from upper castes. The chance of birth stigmatizes them forever. Even small children know how they are inferior from the bigger people. Now the vast majority of India is not to feel marginalized anymore. They enjoy what the constitution has granted them what Nature has given them. Time to ask or beg has gone. Time to feel dignified has come.

2.4 Baluta: Daya Pawar

Baluta title is generalizing the status of rural untouchables. It records the struggle of a writer for peace with no chance of revenge in word. These are investigative reflections on the autobiographical narratives written in prose by *dalit* authors in their mother tongue Marathi. The most genuine autobiographical masterpiece of N.S. Suryavanshi, **Things I Never Imagined** (1975) and the sensation caused in the literary circles of Maharashtra by Daya Pawar's **Baluta**(1978) may be considered as marking the rising of the *dalit* autobiography at the horizon of the Marathi literary establishment. They show variety in respect of length mode of production degree of elaboration quality of editing, printing publication and publicity.

The autobiography recounts the experiences of an untouchable women struggling for a peaceful existence. He earned fame through his autobiographical prose work **Baluta** those talks about the harsh realities of the caste system and the painful life of dalit women in India. He gave expression to the oppression of the Dalits through his verse. With effective verses like his first collections of poems **Kondvada** he voiced the atrocities and oppression faced by generations of the Dalit. **Baluta** is a story by Dagdu Pawar as narrated to the more literate Daya Pawar. The strengths of the autobiography are the simple straightforward and to the point portrayal and a transparent realistic illustration of the ethos around him. The book stirred Marathi society and was a critical success in both Marathi and its Hindi translation. This autobiography created a new genre in Marathi literature. Many autobiographical books are talking about harsh experiences and hard realities after **Baluta**. Use of language is special about Daya Pawar which is not merely

of revolt but of a deeply introspecting analytical intellectual. Pawar's writing's reflects his active participation in the social, cultural and literary movements on the national level. His work was greatly effective. He received recognition by way of awards. He suffered mentally and physically due to unfair situation in his personal life. It is permanent suffering that comes through sharply in his writings. **Baluta** resemble the legendary bird phoenix which kills itself on a funeral pyre but is reborn from the ashes.

Anupama Rao considers that

“Baluta as a representative of Dalit literature wasn't just a more faithful narration of the Dalit experience but that it presented an ethical challenge to the caste Hindu whom it implicated.”²⁴

Dalit literature too is born from the ashes of the anguish anger of the unjust social system based on caste and class inequities and is an expression of the agony suffered by these deprived groups for ages. It is the main an attempt to establish an independent identity for him. It engages the theme of protest directed against the existing intellectual and social system. It also opens several debates on the issues of caste and identity politics. It has become an expression of community rather than the individuals by challenging traditional literary aesthetics traditional slogans ideologies and idioms of existing.

Baluta by Daya Pawar depicts crude realities of the caste system in India. Daya has a staunch intellectual vein. He is well versed in world literature. All his life he was involved in various social movements of Dalit uplifting. The book depicts a Dalit's struggle for a peaceful existence. Daya suffers by physically and mentally. The autobiography shows deep compassion towards his people and his constant spirit. The book portrays the exposure of Dalits. The autobiography also received anti Dalit backlash. But Daya Pawar succeeded in bringing to notice the dilemma of the masses of Dalits. **Baluta** his traditional village shares as remuneration for performing stigmatized labour. Pawar has characterized his story as a secret that must not be revealed perhaps because of the shame as well as the pain that attaches to confronting himself. Pawar plays the relationship between secrecy and shock instead of

celebrating the autobiographical as an authentic act of self representation. Definitely Dagdu Maruti Pawar is both a character and a concept. He is the secret sharer of Indian society whose shameful experiences cannot be related without rejecting the agreement of Hindu privacy. The narrative progresses throw light on different phases of life like customs practices, education, financial realities and gender bias. The diversity of narrative concerns is united by the writer's continuous analysis. It is a first person narration of the marginal consciousness struggle is a matter of inspiration for him and others giving an account of discrimination and deprivation. The harsh reality of life is recognition and assertion living on the boundaries of the marginalized as young expendable human material exposed. Pawar's struggle reflects his active participation in the social cultural and literary movement on the national level. *Baluta* is an expression of his introspective thinking solid position deep understanding and understanding towards social activities and issues. Due to the oppressive circumstances he suffers mentally and physically in his personal life. The work portrays the infirmities within the civil society permeated with caste and class distinctions and the reader is filled with sensitivity to the situation and condition of the protagonist his autobiography is strongly emotional testimonies about the suffering of past life as pains of death. They want to confirm about them and plan them as historical evidence in front of against humanity. The wish to forget a former condition of domination and its semantics make them angry one ought not to be ashamed of a past which was not fault but society's crime. To put the past on record is a duty of justice to the ancestors whose humanity was crushed but could not be altogether eliminated by the Hindu *Dharma*. Keeping record of their agonies and efforts to survive is to redeem them hand and remind the new generations who tend to return into the folds of a racially repressive society of the one who has shown humanity the way of justice and love Ambedkar a god. This is the actual story of his life. But it is also a story of The Untouchable. In his life social and political worker, labored with great dedication and faithfulness for *dalit* and nomadic people the slum dweller those living on pavements the prostitutes of *Kamathiwada* etc. They were firstly a mockery Dagadu altered in Dyam or D. M. As a consequence the doubt about the capacity of the image or the name to reveal a real identity is a denunciation of the social identity

obtained at birth. In other terms society denied a human identity and on the other hand gave a social identity that makes one shivering a dreaded identity. The boy received a mineral name and he survived but recognized as a stone. He was later known as *Dayaa* name which carries a call for people's pity that pity that the sight of the *potraj* inspires to the on lookers and passersby on the street and that the narration of his life will similarly elicit from the readers. At that time untouchability was observed in the most abominable manner. But he used to eat the meat of dead animals because that was the only way to live. Those who had reduced human beings to such a state ought to be ashamed. When the village ostracized the *Mahar* he starved and his mother too. If the animals of the village fell victim to an epidemic ostracisation was inevitable. A bitter gourd used to be tied near the village boundary to announce that the Mahars were ostracized. Mahars were then forbidden to set their foot in the village. Nobody was allowed to give them work. They could not even buy salt and chilies in the village. Nobody would give them food or water. During such an ostracisation the Marathas would pull the corpse of the animal which dies in the epidemic out in the field. Seeing their food eaten by the vultures was a painful sight for the Mahars. The Mahars used to pray God Rokdoba to have mercy on their children. But Rokdoba was the god of the Marathas. How could he has pity on them? The starved Mahars would go at night to fetch that rotten meat which gave out a foul smell. Even the inflorescence of a cactus that caused itching was eaten. Marathas were still scared to cause enmity with the Mahars. A *Mahar* may suffer beatings docilely beg bear with insults during daytime, at night he becomes a tiger. Then the Maratha who has hurt him is taught a lesson. The *Mahar* may steal his animal set fire to the feed up root his crop and stuff the well with it. The next day the same *Mahar* would go and sympathies with the Maratha along with the village.

Pawar's graphic description of life in the *Mahardwada* a place outside villages reserved for Dalits shocked and still does. **Baluta** is a term for the structure of village duties that Dalits had share in the village produce. Which was not followed by short story collections of comparable power **Baluta** inaugurated a stream of explosive autobiographical narratives. It was not easy to tell these

personal stories of disgrace and domination. At one point in **Baluta** Pawar writes,

“What I had seen of the life of *Mahars* in my childhood has cut a permanent gash in my heart. The past will never be erased. It will go only when I go. The layers of abjectness that you see on my face even today have their source in those times. Hard as you might scrub them all you will do is draw blood. They will not come off. However Pawar balances his personal pain with the thought that telling these stories is politically important. Some Dalits feel such stories are like digging up a garbage dump. But if a man does not know his past he will not know which direction he must take in the future.”²⁵

2.5 Majya Jalmachi Chitarkatha: Shantabai Kambale

The autobiography *Majya Jalmachi Chitarkatha* by Dalit woman writer Shantabai Kamble the protagonist of the story Naja bears the brunt of class caste and gender. Naja is from the Mahar caste one of the biggest Dalit communities in Maharashtra. Najabai Sakharam Babar (renamed Shantabai Krishnaji Kamble after her marriage) was the first dalit woman teacher in Sholapur district. She began teaching at the Sholapur District Board School in 1942. She completed two years of teacher training and served as an education extension officer in the Jat taluka of Sangli district in 1952. She wrote *Majya Jalmachi Chitarkatha (The Kaleidoscopic Story of My Life)* after her retirement from teaching in 1981. The autobiography was first serialized in Purva magazine in 1983 and was teleserialised as Najuka on Mumbai *Doordarshan* in 1990. It has also translated into French. The word *Chitarkatha* means a picture story indicates a sense of pieces of pictures being put together like a jigsaw puzzle.

She explained,

“My parents have given me education. My husband was a school master. We have therefore given education to our

children. Friends of my age who continue to stay in the village say to me you are educated. Your children also are educated. Now you are well off. Otherwise see what we are. We go as daily wage earner. Hired one day jobless the next. This is how we live starving. Had we studied we would have lived well like you. To think of it, it is true do I tell myself. My children have studied and succeeded. None of my brothers went to school. They learnt to be masons. One does not always find work in this line. One never eats one's fill. One feels cramps pain in the stomach as soon as the rainy season starts. I remember my mother telling us. There is nothing to eat today. Children go and sleep on an empty stomach. I could not find sleep as my stomach was empty. I said to my mother Mummy give me anything to eat. Naja there is nothing in the house. What to give? She used to reply wiping her eyes. We all used to have a troubled sleep. The memory of those days gives me stomach aches.”²⁶

In fact the direct and sober narration of events which marked the initial seven years of her schooling give a relevant account of two opposite dynamics. On the one hand traditional constraints regulate everyday life and make school appear as a burden unnecessarily breaking a precarious set of strategies of immediate survival. On the other hand an untouchable school master personally committed to the cause of educational uplift of untouchable castes makes a point to open a separate class in the untouchable hamlet itself and forcefully intervenes to enroll girls too. The author's testimony is a glaring record of that blend of chance and purpose which often determines the course of life of marginalized human beings particularly of women. The latter's lot actually looks like a hazard. Shantabai's access to schooling is socially symbolic in this respect. It is due to a mixture of natural dispositions a will more or less aware of its motivations and objectives and the casual availability of friendly circumstances. Shantabai's promotion appears a matter of complete luck as everything apparently starts with a trick of a committed school master keen to enroll the girl despite the objection of his father. Seen from within her

schooling experience shows the way personal resources turn through constraints inhibitions and handicaps of any sort. Now in her sixties Baby Kamble looks forward but with painful feelings as she observes that the learned generation of today has totally driven Babasaheb out of its life.

Najabai Sakharam Babar (renamed Shantabai Krishnaji Kamble after marriage) was the first dalit woman teacher in Sholapur district. She began her teaching career in Solapur District Board School in 1942 and completed two years teachers training in 1952 to become the education officer of Karad^{taluka} in Sangli District. Shantabai retired in 1981 and wrote her autobiography *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha (The Kaleidoscopic Story of My Life)* in which she related her experience as a dalit woman who had managed to break both caste and social barriers.

Shantabai was born in Mahud *Budruk* to parents who were agricultural laborers and bull tenders for middle caste peasants. But their economic deprivation did not make them stop dreaming about their daughter's education. As Shantabai recalls whenever her mother related stories of hardship she would finish the story by telling her that it was important to study for better life. Thus Shantabai was educated in her local school till class seven and thereafter the community leaders put pressure on her father to marry her off. The search began for a school master who would marry her and this led her family to start negotiations with her prospective husband Kamble Master.

Shantabai explains the circumstances of her marital family which also depended on the collection of coal and soon moved to Kargani where she and Kamble Master lived. At this time she got pregnant and when she was five months pregnant she discovered that Kamble Master had got a second wife by marrying his own cousin. In disgust Shantabai forced Kamble Master to break their marriage in front of the community elders and went back to her father's house in Mahud.

After she came home she received a call for an interview as a school teacher in Akluj. She was then offered a place as a reliever in place of a teacher who was on medical leave. Shantabai recalls that there was no bus to Akluj so she

would travel half the way on horseback and the rest of the way on foot every day. The work was tough and she would often suffer from fever. In any case she was seven months pregnant and forced to apply for maternity leave. In the process she miss carried her child and lost her infant. She petitioned the Sholapur School Board whose chairman was involved with Ambedkar movement for a permanent job. On the eighth day she received an appointment as a school teacher in Kurduwadi School where she was paid a substantial sum of Rs 15 per month. She recalls that from her first salary she brought two sarees for seven rupees and twelve kilos of *jowar* and nine kilos of wheat for one rupee each.

At this time Kamble Master used to visit her regularly and he started spreading the message that he was coming to Kurduwadi to check on his wife so that she would not marry a second time. He finally managed to pressurize Shantabai to take long leave and shift back with him. However Shantabai's marital problems did not end there and the second wife came back. After a series of quarrels and clash Shantabai once again returned to her father's home with a second child and was posted to Kaldas in 1949. She faced many personal problems during her duties and posting.

When she got to her new workplace she was advised to return as she was told that two previous teachers had left because they were beaten up and sent back in shame. In return she told the villagers that they should judge her by her work and took up her duties at the school which was in the middle of a Brahmin habitation. Shantabai recalls how people of the lower castes were happy and would declare that our teacher has come. They began to send their sons and daughters to school and gradually the people of Kaldas got convinced that the teacher was good for them. At the same time she also had to face discrimination from the upper castes who would not allow her to fill water from the village well. She recalls that the flow meant for the untouchables always had stagnant water.

In Kaldas Kamble Master visited her regularly and even borrowed money from her to build a house in Kargani where he was working at that time. At the end of one year in this school Shantabai hoped to return to a stable life in

Kargani as her husband's second wife was dead by then. But as she puts it she did not live too long in the new house because she got admission to a two year teacher training course at the Women's College in Pune. Here Shantabai has an interesting tale to narrate. She says that though the college did not practice untouchability a Brahmin girl from Pandharpur refused food every time she was served by a dalit. So all the lower caste girls complained and the superintendent threatened the girl with expulsion if she refused to eat food. The next time she was forced to eat the chapattis Shantabai served her.

In 1953 a year after Shantabai finished her training she and Kamble Master were appointed to Dighinchi where both of them started adult literacy classes in the dalit colony of *Baudhdhwada*. She enrolled forty women in her class while her husband started educating dalit men. The education officer of the area was very impressed with this work and the chairman of the *Zilla Parishad* also recommended a reward. But upper caste Brahmin leaders refused to give them the award of *Gramgaurav*. However by this time the fame of the Kambale had spread wide and the education officer of Karangi (the place where they had a house) got them transferred back as he wanted the schools in his area to be improved. She recalled that they started a campaign for the enrolment of dalit girls in school. By the time of her retirement she and her husband had together reformed the school and improved its reputation. She was appointed as an education extension officer five and a half months before her retirement. The discriminatory mindset of the people did not change even after her achievements. At the farewell function on her retirement she was asked to sit on the podium but the presiding officer forgot to mention about her promotion She wonders,

“This dalit headmistress from this village has become Education Extension Officer. She has been promoted. It would have been better if he had mentioned this but perhaps he forgot to do so...”²⁷

Perhaps both patriarchy and caste were at play here and Shantabai had defied both. She too concludes her autobiography on a note of personal dissatisfaction and uncertainty for future. Although her beliefs tell that it is

possible to lead a meaningful life yet it has not been possible for her to do so far. Her support is the knowledge.

Shantabai Kamble is an activist of Ambedkar Movement. She is aware of the oppressions under which the Dalit community people have to suffer. She is proud of to be a Mahar community woman. She asserts herself as a real citizen of the land which is named after their caste i.e. land for Mahar is Maharashtra. But as true activist she is upset by the social condition of her community people she wants to orient them she wants to introduce the new generation with the life of Dalit during the last fifty years. This is her intension behind the autobiography so it is the history of her community people rather than the routine description of the author's family matters. She had lived in the same social structure of Hindu society in which woman is considered as assistant of husband. She was subjected for her husband's doubts. But her autobiography deals with grandparents' parents and her community people. The tone of the autobiography is egalitarian and it is not influenced by masculinity. The adversity is an equal challenge for wife and husband. Her autobiography deals with these two contradictory approaches for two religions in which the logical rationality self awareness and struggle for emancipation are important aspects. In short we can say that the basic difference between these two autobiographies is that the former finds romance and trill in the conversion whereas the later deals with the utter need of conversion as means of emancipation for each and every type of adversity in the life of downtrodden.

2.6 Summing Up:

To sum up, in the second chapter researcher has described the pain and the discrimination of *Dalit* women. They were subjected which was racial discrimination where the earlier was discriminated and treated as untouchable due to born into a particular community. Dalit Women's position was worse than the slaves. They were exploited by one by another. They were thrice discriminated, treated as untouchables and as outcastes, due to their caste, face gender discrimination being women and finally economic impoverishment due to unequal wage disparity Treated unequally in patriarchal system they were deserted by their husbands' victims of domestic violence and ill-treatment

particularly lower caste laboring women. Dr. Sharankumar Limbale's autobiography among all other autobiographies is most sensitive and aware of the problems facing women as a gender inequality. It is however a burden of hatred and contempt since centuries and sometimes abuses and spits out back on lower castes the toxin that they had consumes for ages. But that negativity is actually a form of bold and positive assert. Because self-conscious and ruined human beings break that position and condensed by a shout which was the signals of a human being. These autobiographies hold certain ambivalences, as the authors and many women struggle to reconcile their low caste identity with their current middle class status.

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Chapter-III

3.0 Self-designation of Dalits in selected autobiographies

Dalit also called Outcaste is a self designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as of Untouchables. Dalits are a varied population of several castes. While the caste system has been abolished under the Indian constitution there is still discrimination and prejudice against Dalits in South Asia. Since Indian independence important steps have been taken to afford opportunities in jobs and education. Many social associations have encouraged for the better conditions of Dalits throughout improved education, health and employment. There are many different names for defining this people like *Pinkham's* (5th varna), *Ashprush* (untouchables), *Harijans* (Children of God), Dalits (Broken People) etc. The constitution of India recognizes them as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The word Dalit comes from the Sanskrit means ground, suppressed, crushed or broken to pieces. It was first used by Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century in the circumstance of the domination faced by the last untouchable castes of the twice born Hindus. According to Victor Premasagar the term expresses their weak point, poor quality and disgrace at the hands of the upper castes in the Indian society. The Indian caste system is organized into four main groups.

There is also a fifth group that is outside of the caste system the people in this class are literally outcasts. Hinduism with a central belief in rebirth has scripture that explains how people are born based on the *karma* they acquired. The people born into the lowest strata of society often into an existence of grinding poverty and limited opportunities are known by various names including untouchables. Dalits, *Harijan* (the term Gandhi used) and slum dogs (from the 2008 movie *Slumdog Millionaire*). The government of India identifies untouchables with scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (SC/ST). Some forward strides have occurred particularly in urban areas and there has been step up to the lives of Dalits and opportunities existing to them. This is due largely to legal procedures positive action and activism. The Indian

constitution and an excess of laws exclude discrimination based on caste. Nongovernmental organizations such as the Dalit Freedom Network and Karuna work to provide educational opportunities job training, healthcare and legal illustration for untouchables. Nevertheless the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws has proven challenging as the social stigma against Dalits. Injustice against untouchables is still especially in rural areas.

Fourteen out of eighty six autobiographies relate to women nine are autobiographical narratives one is a biographical profile of one's sister written by her brother (More **Imprints of Foot**, 1983) after her death one is a faithful transcript of interviews of a political leader (Dani **Day and Night Fighting** , 1990) by a woman friend two are interviews of women comedians taken by men (Wadkar **I'll Tell, Listen!**, 1970), Mang Queen of Tamasha, 1996), and another one is a novel describing the life of tribal communities (**Garbit** 1995). A few of them (**Sarvagauda Closed doors**, 1983) were spared the inhuman oppression (Girhe **The Pains of Death**, 1992) of their sisters.

The author of **Inner Explosion** (1981) Kumud Pawde was not deprived of satisfactory educational facilities in the company of upper caste children in an urban setting. She was still deeply hurt by the discriminatory attitudes of the mothers of her own school girl friends from the Brahmin community. She used to hear them warning their daughters to guard themselves against her:

“Do not touch her. Keep yourself at a distance from her. Do not play with her! Otherwise do not come home anymore. The girl child wonders I take a bath every day as they do with soap. My clothes are properly washed. My house is even better kept than theirs. Then why do they scorn me?”¹

She flares up One day on the occasion of a religious ceremony in the house of a Brahmin school friend the young girl stays listening spellbound the chant of *Vedic Sanskrit* hymns all of a sudden she is severely scolded and chased out from the place. While she clears off she hears the following phrase,

“These *Mahars* how puffed up they have become nowadays”²

The specificity of struggle against domination is to place a special emphasis on education. Dalit identity based on subordination described as an identity built around an ethos of mobility. The project of social mobility at the heart of group identity socially dominated. The very broad diffusion within some ex-untouchable castes of Ambedkarist ideology embodied in the slogan Educate, Organize and Agitate set off a fairly improbable process many families completely bereft of cultural capital started to place great value in their children’s education in an almost devotional manner enabling them to succeed at school and thus in society. But Dalit and Ambedkarist ideology is not limited to education. It also dictates the adequate behavior successful in particular by setting imperative the necessity to pay back to society. Collective mobility is intended into the Dalit identity. Unlike the situation in Europe and in United States where identity conflicts that are not easy to deal with the upwardly mobile Dalit has at his disposition a kind of ideological tool that efficiently helps him to minimize the force of these identity conflicts.

Since 1951 caste has not been included in Indian government censuses and only so called scheduled groups are. These groups include scheduled castes or SC category that includes castes traditionally considered as untouchable. Scheduled tribes or ST a category bringing together a whole collection of groups that supposedly form the aboriginal population of India and are also considered as untouchable the *other backward classes* or OBC a category that mainly includes castes from the *shûdra* category. The members of these three categories benefit according to different modalities from reservation policies in the public sector in higher education and in politics.

The incorporation of a Dalit identity centered on the struggle against caste oppression happens in a number of ways. While people from the *Mahar* caste were more exposed to the Ambedkarist movement and as a result integrated earlier into this political identity. The definition of the Dalit identity cannot be limited to an Ambedkarist and *mahar* identity. We believe that being Dalit

above all means refusing the social order of the Brahmin order. There are diverse ways to be Dalit and there are nuances in positioning and different social journeys but the common basis is the decision to inscribe the struggle against domination at the centre of social identity. Dalit cause is a sign of a very special way of managing the individual challenges posed by the experience of upward mobility.

This brief glimpse of the issues raised by the experience of upward mobility in India enables us to grasp how despite a radical change in professional status caste identity continues to structure the way people locate themselves in the social freedom. Whereas social mobility generally implies a strong process of individuation or loss or confusion of belonging this does not seem to be the case with the Dalits who experience this kind of mobility. We therefore see that the distinction discussed in the introduction between a social status defined by caste and social status defined by profession can be found in the way that Dalits experience their success. It would in fact seem that the reason for which caste identity is considered as structuring that despite their success. People continue to consider upwardly movable Dalits as untouchables. The weight of this stigmatized identity often means that they prefer investing their efforts at social recognition within a caste group with which they share an experience of discrimination rather than towards a peer group with which they share certain class attributes but who are always tempted to define them by their caste identity.

The attempt is to make a typological display of various distinctive figures of *dalit* subaltern awareness. The inner quest of identity the cultural criticism of the iniquitous Hindu dispensation and the social struggles to assert one's human dignity take various forms according to the vision and capacity of each writer. On the other hand some recurrent types of strategy can be defined. These self narratives stand direct proof to the unchallengeable creative potentialities of the human agent.

Untouchability appears as one syndrome though indeed the most clearly articulated and ideologically tightly constructed example of ostracism in

human societies of wide systems of socio cultural banishment and estrangement. The various forms of systems actually spread along a range with a graded scale and blend in very complex ways. Autobiographies display telling descriptions of these ways. The usual dichotomy and clear opposition of the two extremes The Brahmin at the top and The Untouchable at the bottom is a dangerous simplification, conceptually inadequate and analytically misleading. One of our aims and possibly one of the significant contributions that *dalit* autobiography studies are bringing to the construction of sociological theories of human discrimination will be to recognize in the complexity of the everyday web of personal relationships those various blending types of ostracism or banishment *bahishkar* by which some human beings expel others out of their human constituency denying them a right to the plenitude of humanity. Define as explicit and motivated rejection at the image of a systemic cultural social economical and political quarantine as a theoretical alternative to the dead ends of the present use of the recent sociopolitical idiom of *dalit*.

There is no denying the fact that the first *dalit* autobiographies and the great majority of those which followed were written by authors not only from those castes marked by the social stigma of them almost exclusively those Mahar people (Robertson 1938; Pillai Vetschera 1994) who belonged to the Buddhist tradition reactivated by Ambedkar after 1956. Still representatives of other ostracized communities tribal, nomadic and criminal communities were soon prompted by the same will namely to criticize and put an end to the altogether inhuman condition to which they had been fated for ages. Few are the non Buddhist *dalit* autobiographies. But all writers are historically different each of them in his/her own way. They have in the sphere of influence of the *dalit* liberation movement and more precisely of its charismatic leader Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as much comforting the socio cultural motivations of the movement as supported by its socio-cultural or even political and organized militancy.

Here is with the figures of self assertion and protest and the ways of a quest and construction of an identity of one's own on the part of those who have

been denied a full human dignity and whose consciousness was made forcibly internalize patterns of cultural depreciation and social sub alternate. This is a field of investigation upon which social scientists have ever hardly focused their attention.

These written life narratives described as autobiographical testimonies. This label properly points to their social intentionality and functionality. It also selects some of their attribute structural features regarding semantics stylistics and language. Moreover in this view these personal and direct indications surely provide relevant documents of social history though they may not belong to discipline. Still they are in affinity with the concept of social history as understood by historians of the school of Subaltern Studies. From the point of view of study prefer another linguistic systematic concept of social discourse. The term points the historical and cultural processes that texts commence first as actual cognitive performances and as social agency within the liberation movement of the *Maharashatrian* and Indian *dalits*. These dimensions could even be considered at three levels of agency that of the intervention of the author of the autobiography that of the editor of such texts and that of the publishers.

Some autobiographies are strongly emotional testimonies about the suffering of past life as pains of death. They want to testify them and project as historical facts in front of the tribunal of mankind to attack the Hindu as a crime against humankind. One ought not to be ashamed of a past which was not our fault but society's crime. To put the past on record is a duty of justice to the associates whose humanity was smothered and crushed but could not be altogether eliminated by the Hindu *Dharma*. Keeping record of their agonies and efforts to survive is to transfer them and remind the new generations who tend to return into the folds of a culturally brutal society who has shown humanity justice and love. The exact feature of figure is the hurt that the memory of the past brings with it. To remember is as stabbing as the actual suffering of yesteryears. Still the authors through their narratives overcome the

suffering of ancestral embarrassment. With strength of mind they burst the abscess and try to uproot the evil.

A writer Nanasahab Jhodge takes as title for his autobiography **Pricking Thorn** (1982) a word *Phanjar* which allocate a tree with sharp thorns.

“If such a branch carried by the wind lies in one's path and if while walking barefooted one happens to step on it blood will come out the wound would become a painful purulence as if bitten by a scorpion and one would be forced to limp. It is not only that one cannot easily walk with comfort like the one who wears footwear it is that the thorn pricks and remains deep inside and continues to cause pain.”³

The author confesses to be one such wounded being leading a wretched existence considered the lowliest of untouchables. They were firstly a mockery Dagadu altered in Dyam or D. M. As a consequence the disparagement about the name to reveal a real identity is a criticism of the social identity obtained at birth. In other terms society denied a human identity and gave a social identity that makes one shaking a terror identity. The boy received a stone name and he survived but recognized as a mineral. He was later known as Daya a name which carries a call for people's pity that the sight of the *potraj* inspires to the on lookers and passersby on the street and that the narration of his life will similarly elicit from the readers. Yet the autobiography is expected to break that stone of silence imposed by internal inhibition shame and fear.

“Now it seems you wish me to take an axe in my hand and break it. I do not know whether it will crack or not.”

4

Shantabai Kamble the first untouchable woman appointed as a teacher in the Sholapur district in 1942 is the most articulate in this regard in **The Story of**

my Life. When she reaches the end of self narrative and casts a distant glance on the memories laid down before her eyes she firmly attests that since the beginning and all along her life schooling alone saved her from hardship. She recalls,

“My parents have given me education. My husband was a school master. We have therefore given education to our children. Friends of my age who continue to stay in the village say to me. You are educated. Your children also are educated. Now you are well off. Otherwise see what we are. We go as daily wage earner. Hired one day jobless the next. This is how we live starving. Had we studied we would have lived well like you.”⁵

To think of it is true her children have studied and succeeded. None of her brothers went to school. They learnt to be masons. One does not always find work in this line. One never eats one's fill. One feels crimping pain in the stomach as soon as the rainy season starts. She remembers her mother telling them,

“There is nothing to eat today. Children go and sleep on an empty stomach. I could not find sleep as my stomach was empty. I said to my mother Mummy give me anything to eat. Naja there is nothing in the house. What to give? She used to reply wiping her eyes.”⁶

They all used to have a troubled sleep. The memory of those days gives her stomach aches.

In actual fact the direct and sober narration of events which marked the initial seven years of her schooling give a relevant account of two opposite dynamics. On the one hand traditional constraints regulate everyday life and make school appear as a burden unnecessarily breaking a precarious set of strategies of immediate survival. On the other hand, an untouchable school

master personally committed to the cause of educational uplift of untouchable castes makes a point to open a separate class in the untouchable hamlet itself and forcefully intervenes to enroll girls too. The author's testimony is a glaring record of that blend of chance and purpose which often determines the course of life of marginalized human beings particularly of women. The latter's lot actually looks like a hazard. Shantabai's access to schooling is socially symbolic in this respect. It is due to a mixture of natural dispositions a will more or less aware of its motivations and objectives and the casual availability of congenial circumstances. Shantabai's promotion appears a matter of sheer luck as everything apparently starts with a trick of a committed school master keen to enroll the girl despite the objection of his father. Seen from within her schooling experience shows the way personal resources may steer through constraints, inhibitions and handicaps of any sort. Social identity and status are a matter of legitimately belonging to a recognized lineage that is a legitimate descent, this legitimacy being defined by the rules of endogamy and exogamy of the prevailing kinship system. The sexual exploitation of lower caste women by higher caste landlord give birth to children who are considered as belonging nowhere and to nobody, except their mother. But the latter is she as a result stigmatized as a whore who has polluted the purity of the descents. Mother and children remain as a result socially ostracized.

Dr. Sharankumar Limbale an author of **The Outcaste** (*Akkarmashi*), *Bastard* (1984) first served as a teacher and then later on took a job in Post Office as telephone operator. He introduces himself as a worker of the *Dalit Panther* and a bastard. The Marathi word refers to the child born from extra marital relations and is used only as an abuse. As a child the author used to stay in the *Maharwada*. There people used to tease him by using this derogatory word which he deliberately chose as a title for his book:

“I was born out of the sexual exploitation of *dalit* women by caste Hindus.”⁷

The mother was a *Mahar* a landless woman agricultural laborer and his father a landlord and village chieftain Patil,

“This is not a life of mine. This slavery is forced on me.”⁸

An attitude of blunt confrontation of the overall inhuman social order is maintained throughout the book. Masamai Limbale's mother was married to Vithal Kamble. Kamble was working as a bonded labor on yearly agreement (*salgadi*) in the fields of Hanumanta Limbale the Patil of the village of Baslegaon. Hanumanta Limbale managed to break the marriage of Masamai and Vithal Kamble to take Masamai as a keep. The caste *Panchayat* drove out Masamai from Kamble's house. She was not even allowed to take her children with her. Vithal Kamble married again. The author was born from the relation of both of them. After some years Hanumanta started quarrelling with Masamai and threw her out. He said, Sharan is not my son. Eventually Masamai left Baslegaon and came to Hannur to stay with her mother Santamai.

In the *dalit* communities for a woman to be a beautiful and attractive one is a curse. Generally those who have got superiority by *varna* and who have inherited wealth used to rape *dalit* women. In every village we can see children born out of relations between *Patils*, *zamindars* and *dalit* women laborers. In his mother had given birth to twelve children from three men.

One Mahar Machindra Anna told him this public square of the Mahar, *takya*, does not belong to your father. Your father is in Baslegaon. Why are you staying in Hannur? For many days he did not go to the Mahar public square. He thought, if he go there they will beat and abuse him. He has no right either on *pandhari* (caste Hindu residential space). Nor hit on *takya*. His father is not a Mahar. In the Mahar hamlet he is a Mahar untouchable. If he goes to Baslegaon will his father accept him? His father stays in a big mansion. His mother is in a hut. Where will the live and die? Where are his roots? ... Sometimes he used to start and take the way to Baslegaon. But soon afterwards he used to get afraid. They will kill me. When the small one of the sparrow goes out of the nest and is touched by human beings; it has no place again among sparrows. He is like it. If he start and go to Baslegaon, they will

beat him. He used to return back. When he was back, Kaka, Dada, Masamai, everybody used to look at him as a stranger. Kaka used to ask Dada, “Why do you keep Sharan? Whose is he? Drive him out of the house. Dada used to say I have to keep him because of Santamai. [Ibid] He used to feel, “In whose embrace should he go? Who will tell him, you are mine? Mother rejects, father rejects. Why has mother not done abortion? Why has she not killed him when he was born? They call him sore, *kadu*? Why are children punished for parents' crimes? When he looks at his mother and become angry. But when he look at Masamai and Santamai, he become sensitive. They have sold themselves for somebody's whim. Beyond bread, there is a world also. The bread is in the hands of establishment and our honor is equally in their hands. With one hand, they give us to eat for our hunger. With the other hand, they enjoy our women. He does not bear the sight of Masamai who is caught between those two hands. Sita was released? Who will release his mother? his ancestors were watchmen at the Patil's houses. When Patil was out, ancestors never envisaged of going and enjoying the Patil's wife. On the contrary, they gave their daughters, wives and daughters-in-law in the hands of Patil as victims.

When he enrolled in the school the teacher asks his father's name. He did not know that he should also have a father! This idea was so strange to him. Hanumanta Limbale's name was written as his father's name. When Hanumanta knew this he came to Hannur with five people. He went and met the head master. Bhosle *guruji's* salary was seventy rupees. Hanumanta was offering one hundred rupees as a bribe and frightening the teacher with his gun. But the teacher was firm. He said,

“The mother should tell the name of the father of the child. And I will put the same name in the book.”⁹

Hanumanta quarreled. He bowed down at the feet of the teacher but in vain. Because of Bhosle teacher Sharan got a father. Dr. Sharankumar Limbale's autobiography is more than a mirror. When an individual sits in judgment upon his whole existence, environment and society his biographical testimony

obtains the status of a particular synthetic standpoint that of a subject reading through his private destiny the crossing and interweaving of the social structures and dynamics which run right through him. From this vantage point the particular reaches the status of a universal concrete subject keystone of a social analysis. The autobiography provides fields of mediation between the generality of a structure and the historicity of an individual's practice and cultural innovation the biographical approach becomes a social hermeneutics by focusing on the singular as a centre of social cultural reinterpretation and restructure.

Secondly, the women's memoirs are the only ones capable of showing in a positive light the particular forms of resistance such as violent religious rituals and collective practices of possession usually derogatorily written off as crass superstitions. These modes of dissent and defiance do not fit into rationalist diagrams of progressive militancy class consciousness and scientific struggle. They originate from a subjective spontaneity, which remains to be understood for itself. Baby Kamble hints at this when she describes and comments

“Upon apparently nonsensical rituals to which series of generations have succumbed, offering and sacrificing their lives to gods made of round stones only. This was truly the way that women found in their down trodden condition to keep themselves alive.”¹⁰

A Human being ought to keep his mind engaged in some pursuit in order to find joy somewhere and grow shoots of hope. While nourishing these shoots of hope with all the strength of their soul, they surely made them grow. *Dalit* autobiographies are memories with a motive. They are no mere chronicle for archives of social history. Events are retained selectively i.e. intentionally. The Self is narrative reconstructed in a performance of identification. Each narrative is a remake of life through a travelling back which originates in a decision to break away with the prescribed socio-cultural models of interpretation. This decision originates in a will to henceforth exist for oneself. The alienated self is done away with. The narrative reconstruction is nothing

less than a creative assertion of one's identity. Memory inaugurates a radically different temporality. The active process of reconstruction of oneself is equally a remaking of history (Brunner, 1987: 11-32) to the extent the previously ostracized individual emerges as the subject or foundation of an inverse history. The past is revisited, recomposed, reassessed and recognized in the light that finally shines at the moment of fulfillment. That light reveals takes out the veils that overshadowed the real history. The accomplishment of the end holds the key to a renewed insight into history and shows the way for a genuine re appropriation of one self. In that new light the true appears false and vice versa.

The uniqueness of Dalit literature perhaps lies in its ability to give meaning to capture the fury, domination and exploitation personified in touching and powerful literary expression. Veena Deo's essay on Urmila Pawar's short stories and autobiography not only complicates the Dalit experience in terms of gender but also brings to light the fascinating use of the pen by a Dalit woman writer to tell the stories of oppressed women in their everyday relationships inside and outside the family.

Bali Sahota's contribution in theory locates the paradoxes of Dalits in the larger circumstance of liberal democratic system in India. He rightly points out how the politics of the dominant not only excludes Dalits and other oppressed people from the power structures but also makes them vulnerable to reactionary politics for their survival. D. R. Nagaraj's remarkable writing which located the pre colonial roots of an anti caste original tradition and linking them to modern Dalit politics. The essay advises one to look beyond the state and its institutional structures leading to a new direction in the politics of the oppressed.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav's **Untouchables: a Memoir** a best seller in the Marathi language as **Our Father and Us**. Jadhav's father under the influence of Ambedkar made sure his sons were highly educated and Jadhav himself is now a member of India's Planning Commission. Humanity, cleanliness, social equality and justice all these principles of identity are the legacy of Ambedkar

Movement to Chhotu Damu's last son. This legacy helped Chhotu to develop his self through the hard corners in his life. He maintained his self respect whenever he is commented despite coming from a lowly caste government's son-in-law a different version for the practice of untouchability. His egalitarianism backs up him at Vitthal temple in Pandharpur when he concludes:

“Dignity after all rests in the mind and heart and soul. I have to reclaim it not from outside but from within.”¹¹

His self is developed fully when he looks back to the journey from his excellence in Sanskrit at school to the declaration as Best International Student. Even the third generation Apoorva is not tied by religion or background. Her Dalit identity remains an extra terminology for her identity as an Indian. She holds the global civilized viewpoint for the incidents like Gujarat earthquake. Its autobiographical tune appealed the readers. The literature is dealing with social realities of the recent past through the perspectives of the Dalits. The authors are the witnesses of such facts in their autobiographies. These autobiographies are dealing with the changes that took place in the author's lives due to their conflict to Dr. Ambedkar in reality either or his values. Generally autobiography deals with the continuing assessment of the author's self but the Dalit autobiographies deal with the community of the protagonist as the self of the author emerges through the community. It stands for We and not for I. Dr. Narendra Jadhav's autobiography '*Amacha Baap ani Ahmhi*' is translated as **Untouchable** and Baby Kamble's autobiography '*Jina Amuch*' is translated as '**The Prisons We Broke**' describe the changed lives of the protagonists due to their participation in Ambedkar Movement. Actually these are not the life narratives of the authors but the lives narrated here include the whole community which participated in the emancipator movement in the 20th century mostly in Maharashtra. The study of these autobiographies in the context of Ambedkar Movement will deal with the inculcation. The realization of Dali hood is indication in Dr. Jadhav's autobiography. Damodhar Runjaji

Jadhav, Damu had realized the untouchability in his childhood when he had to quench his thirst. His father pleased his logic with the dispute that being Mahar their touch pollutes the water. Even at village tea shop his identification of Mahar restricted his entry. But at the age of 12 he ate *samosa* in a hotel at *Chowpatty*. And at the Gora Saheb's house in the city he is treated as human being without any caste prejudiced identity.

“He gave me a hand to stand up and made me sit on the couch next to him. I was very uncomfortable and felt totally out of place.”¹²

These ambiguous experiences helped him to understand that the randomness of untouchability is based in the caste system and village structure. Afterwards he confirms the awareness of self.

These autobiographies deal with the troubled situation of illegitimate children born to an Untouchable woman and her higher-caste sponsor (in the case of Kishore Shantabai Kale's dancer mother) or master as in Dr. Sharankumar Limbale's **The Outcaste**. Vasant Moon tells the complex colorful lively life of a Nagpur locality of Mahars and the influence upon them of Ambedkar and the Buddhist conversion. Urmila Pawar the only woman represented here the flexibility of the *Mahar* in unpromising circumstances comes through in her writing. There are many more Dalit autobiographies and memoirs and many more sides of Dalit life to be revealed in other language context. The Dalits undoubtedly suffer from many disadvantages and severe types of discrimination. However these perhaps ought not to be seen as racism but an equally troubling classicism.

The Dalit autobiographies reflect a burning desire for freedom from the control of caste. Dalits experience a sense of disgust from upper castes for no fault. The chance of birth stigmatizes them everlastingly. Even small children know how they are inferior from the upper castes people. Now time has come for the vast majority of India not to feel marginalized anymore. They must enjoy what the constitution has granted them. Time to ask or beg has gone.

Time to feel noble has come. The term is used by Limbale in his text **Towards an Aesthetics** of Dalit Literature, History Controversies and Considerations. Subaltern sections of the society like women religious minorities and the working class. The Dalit Panthers too in their manifesto defined Dalits as members of SC and ST Neo-Buddhist working people landless and poor peasants' women and all those who are exploited politically economically and in the name of religion. We are educated only because these facilities exist they were like a father. If there were no facilities we had no such education would have been at home grazing cattle and helping our parents. Limbale's words demonstrate the centrality of the reservation policy for the purpose of socially empowering the Dalits and leading to assimilation with the mainstream society failing which he raises the secessionist demand of our own Dalits. The demand for a separate Dalits is a manifestation of the community understands of us prohibiting from the institutions of the society and a refusal to tolerate its perpetuation. Dalit autobiographies celebrate the community moral thread. There is an important difference in the women's autobiographical account of their experiences with the larger community and the men's. Baisantri and Bama's narration of the role of the community in their personal development is not pure enthusiastic. The dialectic of the individual and the society bias more in favor of the former and women define their prejudice considerably in opposition to the community strength and principles. This detachment of women from the community is most important due to the ideological and structural nature of the society which is overpoweringly patriarchal.

Limbale's **Outcaste** describes in detail the exploitation of Dalit women by the upper castes and by the Dalits too. As a young unmarried girl Baisantri faces sexual threats from several quarters including much respected leader of the Dalit community who worked with Ambedkar. Limbale states that every village Patil had a Dalit woman as a mistress and that beauty is a curse for the women. He also mentions the survival of the practice of devoting daughters as temple dancers in the Dalit society that sexually exploit women in the name of religion. Interestingly **The Outcaste** among all other autobiographies by men

in this study is most sympathetic to and aware of the problems facing women as a result of gender inequality. This is perhaps so because Limbale as an illegitimate child violates one of the most sacred values of patriarchy the sexual purity of women. As the mistress of Patil Masamai's (Limbale's mother) sexuality transgresses the domestic space and the children born are outcastes. Limbale as a man who challenges patriarchal by the virtue of the very conditions of his birth is ideally situated to expose victimize women. He too has an ambivalent relationship with his community as a man he is allowed to pursue educational and professional career without any excitement on the part of the community yet his illegitimacy disrupts his smooth integration with his society. Limbale has to bear social insult each time the endorsement of the father's name is required for official purposes. As in Baisantri who had internalized the patriarchal saying of the necessary educational superiority of the husband becomes a victim of this sexist ideology when she marries Devendra Kumar Baisantri despite initial reservations as he happened to be the most qualified Dalit in her knowledge. Her married life was tremendously unhappy as the husband turned out to be a very selfish, self-doubting and sexist man. Limbale's autobiography ends by reiterating what he has tried to present as the overwhelming experience of his and his community's life their status as outcastes. **Outcaste** becomes a metaphor for the frequent kinds of exclusions that disrupt an individual's harmonious integration with the society and Limbale's continual omission from the social privileges is powerfully reflected in the name that he gives to his newborn son. He chooses to call his son Anaarya which means lowborn and of mean social figure. Although it is possible to read this gesture as a rebellion against the hegemonic value system by a celebration and assertion of one's difference yet the name remains a potent symbol of dispossession. The autobiographical quest for identity has come to naught for the protagonist as even the conclusion of his life's narrative does not give him any answer to the question he has posed innumerable times in the course of the narrative namely if his birth is illegitimate and then what values is he to follow? In addition if values determine one's identity then what is his identity? Moreover if he has failed to find a valid identity for self then what is the advancement in his subject-hood?

Dalit autobiographies occupy a vital position in the repertoire of Dalit literature. This can partly be attributed to the debate over the agency of representation of the Dalit in media and literature. Dalit autobiographies have an advantage over creative writing and poetry in the scene that one should have lived the life of a Dalit to represent it through the medium of discourse. While there is an authentic fear of the slide of whatever representational power the Dalits have gained over self of the caste establishment by their inclusion. Dalit literature is essentially literature of rebellion and unchallengeable from a promise to a structural transformation of the society. Its irreverence towards the established Hindu beliefs texts and deities is a part of its efforts to present an alternative episteme a system of knowledge and beliefs that had been brutally suppressed and erased from the public memory. The relationship of Dalit literature with the regional literature replicates the conflicted relationship of Dalits with the Indian society. Dalit literature is a part and apart from the establishment. In order to preserve its prejudice it must resist the temptation of endorsing totalizing practices like essentialism and normative identities. It must also guard against the tendency of being insistent on the exclusive authority of a subaltern voice as there are no innate and enduring categories of liminality. Only Dalit literatures are succeed in its vision of revolutionizing society and establishing an equal social and culture position. Dalit identity is that constructs their experiences of upward mobility.

The caste of a Hindu Indian Limbale frequently determines everything about his life including the clothes he wore the person he married and the food he had eaten. Limbale describes the life a man who suffered not only through this caste system but also through the pain of not even being allowed into the caste system he was an outcaste below everyone else. The one thing in his life as a child was hunger he knew that a man was no bigger than hunger and there was no escape from it. Not only did he physically suffer from deep greedy hunger in entire life he lived under the curse of impure blood. Because his mother had out of wedlock with the chief of the village he belonged nowhere and no one would admit him. In the end he found salvation in Buddhism. His entire life he had watched people and families separately and he wanted no part of it.

Another nearly impossible hurdle that the author suffered his entire life was the fact that he had no identity no home or place. His mother had once married but her husband had left her and taken their two sons. She began inactive with the high caste men of the village. Limbale was born with no identity by mother or father. He could not get guaranteed papers signed for school because he could not have proper identity and they would not accept his grandmother as his guardian because she lived with a Muslim. When at marriage he could not even get married to an outcaste girl because his blood was impure. Ultimately a drunkard who had offered Limbale his daughter would not allow her to leave after the wedding because of Limbale's background. The clouds of doubt and identity hung over this poor outcaste boy his entire life.

However in several acts of incredible power and bravery he did not allow these socially constructed walls to stop him from getting an education and publishing his story. He came to realize the depth of separation caused by the conflict between Hindus and Muslims and chose a separate path for him in what he considered to be the warm of Buddhism. He was not the only Mahar to beat the brutal system his friend Mallya also prevailed and today both men live happily despite the horrors.

Limbale's autobiography is a good quick read that would interest any students taking a course on modern India. It is an objective work that shows regret. Though dispersed territorially Dalits share a common desire to break the shell of caste inequality through their protesting narratives. These life narratives present details of the lives of various Dalit communities including their life customs and beliefs along with their suffering and humiliation in the caste-ridden Indian society by constantly shifting the focus of attention between the individual and the community. They depict the growth of the Dalit protagonist from his/her childhood to youth through a series of tales of humiliation and protest. Whether it is the *Mahar* or *Uchalya* community their treatment by caste Hindus is the same and marginalizes them from the mainstream according to the dominant discourse of the society. It is as a revolt against this

sidelining alienation and stereotyping that the Dalits present a truthful picture of their life from the Dalit point of view and produce a counter discourse that is specifically a Dalit discourse driven by Dalit ideologies.

Even the titles of their narratives are closely associated with their everyday life and are metaphors for their poverty humiliation and misery. For example in *Marathi* the word Limbale's **The Outcaste** means an outcaste a person who is not accepted by other people. The word itself is formed and attributed to the Dalits according to the high caste class Hindu ideologies and which denotes both exclusion and alienation. In his retrospective narrative *Outcaste* Limbale narrates his own humiliating life in the *Mahar* community not from standing outside and giving an objective account of his life but from standing within the narrative. The story is told from an absolutely Dalit point of view. His position in society as between the excluded and the illegitimate forms a major factor in molding his identity.

Limbale states

“Whenever I heard that reservation facilities for Dalits were about to be cancelled it used to scare me. If these facilities are cancelled give us our own Dalits then. We are educated only because these facilities exist they were like a father to us. If there were no facilities we would have had no such education would have been at home grazing cattle and helping our parents.”¹³

Limbale's words demonstrate the centrality of the reservation policy for the purpose of socially empowering the Dalits and leading to digestion with the mainstream society failing which he raises the secessionist demand of own Dalits. Dalit women have frequently been called thrice Dalits as they are exploited by the forces of caste and gender. Women have to struggle in their families to study and develop a career. Both Baisantri and Bama mention that their parents hesitant to their education as they feared that they would not find suitable educated partners for their highly educated daughters. Education

for men is considered normative while a highly educated wife of a less educated man is seen as oddness. Marriage is considered essential to a woman's life and Baisantri frequently has to hear tremendously uncharitable and nasty remarks from her neighbors who are well schooled the values of the community about her unmarried status. Bama citing her own experiences writes that,

“A single woman finds survival extremely difficult as all sorts of men gather towards her showing their teeth.”

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Limbale's **The Outcaste** describes in detail the exploitation of Dalit women by the upper castes and Dalits. As a young unmarried girl Baisantri faces sexual pressure from several quarters including renowned leader of the Dalit community who worked with Ambedkar. Limbale states that every village Patil had a Dalit woman as a mistress. He also mentions the existence of the practice of devoting daughters as temple dancers in the Dalit society that sexually exploit women in the name of religion.

Limbale's **The Outcaste** among all other autobiographies by men in study is most sensitive to and aware of the problems facing women as a gender inequality. This is perhaps so because Limbale as an illegitimate child violates one of the most revered values of patriarchy the sexual transparency of women. As the mistress of the village Patil Masamai's sexuality transgresses the domestic space and the children born are outcastes. Limbale who challenges patriarchal by the virtue of the conditions of his birth is supremely positioned to expose the agents of sexism that victimize women. He has an unsure relationship with his community while as a man he is allowed to pursue educational and professional career without any argument on the part of the community his illegitimacy disrupts his smooth integration with his society.

The Dalit identity does not merely mean identify oneself with the Dalit self but to bring awareness among the fellow Dalits. When a Dalit narrates about himself one does not narrate ones personal history what one narrates is the

history of his community.. The Durban conference on racism was an attempt at tracing out the validity of the Dalit identity in the postmodern context. However the mainstream writers and the media belonging to the upper castes were quite indifferent. The main stream discourse has focused by and larger on the accommodation and segregation of Dalit people into a Hindu world of culture and living a world where Dalit identity is absorbed. The mainstream discourse is focused on the division of the Dalits into Hindus Christians, Muslims and Buddhists. Dr. Sharankumar Limbale depicts the resonance and interface between the Dalit movements in India.

Identity in Dalit perspective is the similarity in terms of culture and living experiences. The experiences of caste inequity economic exploitation rejection of knowledge and gender power are common among the Dalits. The personal narratives of the Dalits deal with the problems of caste, class and gender. In this context the language and culture of the Dalits play key role in depicting the Dalit identity. Dalit autobiographies are written in Dalit idiom. While introducing and addressing the characters in their personal narratives the Dalit writers use such vocabulary different from the one used by the mainstream writers. They use the pronouns I, we and our representing Dalits and you, yours, they and their for addressing the non Dalits especially the so called selected upper castes.

One of the significant characteristics of the Dalit autobiographies is that the Dalit writers never find themselves away from their community. They identify themselves within their community. Ghanshyam Shaw writes in this regard

“Identity is concerned with the self esteem self-image of a community real or imaginary dealing with the existence and role who are we? What position we do have in society other communities?”¹⁵

How are we related to others? Nothing standing differences in the nature of Dalit movements and the meaning of identity there has been a common quest for equality self-dignity and eradication of untouchability. The self esteem and self-

image are the two key aspects of the autobiographies selected for the study Sharankumar Limbale's **The Outcaste**, Dr.Narendra Jadhav's **Untouchables**, Daya Pawar's **Baluta**, Urmila Pawar's **The Weave of My Life** and Shantabai Kambale's *Mazyra Jalmachi Chittarkatha* These autobiographies depict the lives of the narrators and their people.

The narrators of the selected Dalit autobiographies find their community as the protagonist of their narratives. They agree that their association with their community is inseparable and they do not dissociate themselves with their community. Sharankumar Limbale writes in **The Outcaste**, "My history is my mother's life at the most my grandmothers. My ancestry doesn't go back go back. My mother is an untouchable while my father is a high caste from one of the privileged classes of India. Mother lives in a hut father lives in a mansion. Father is a land lord mother landless. I am Limbale's Outcaste (half-caste). I am condemned branded illegitimate." [Ibid: 2003: IX] Limbale raises the question of identity. He states that he was a half-breed of an upper-caste father and a Mahar mother. He deplores that his upper caste father never dares to accept Limbale as his son. Limbale states the weak condition of his mother who became a victim in the hands of an upper caste man. The dilemma of Limbale's mother is analytical. By narrating the problem of his mother Limbale projected a unique identity for Dalit women.

Limbale presents his mother who has been cheated again and again exploited most deliberately in every relationship she strikes burdened with a roll call of children and upbringing. The author however shows a remarkable understanding of their situation. There is no cursing or blaming them in his narrative there is not even a tone of pity for them in it. Limbale identifies himself with the *Mahar* community. He writes,

"The umbilical cord between our locality and the village has snapped as if the village torn asunder has thrown us out of it. We had grown up like aliens since our infancy. This sense of alienation increased over the years and to this day my childhood haunts me." ¹⁶

Limbale mentions about the division between the *Maharwada* and the village, where the Patils and other upper caste people live. Caste discrimination and constant battle with hunger are the major themes of Limbale's autobiography. The question of identity is equally an integral part of his life story. The impossible hurdle that the author suffered his entire life was.

The original title of Urmila Pawar's memoir is *Aaydan* a word from the local dialect spoken in the villages that form the background of her life. *Aaydan* is the name for the cane baskets that her mother wove to sell for additional income for the family. Translated into English as **The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs**, it takes us from her childhood memories of life in the village, and her mother's constant struggle to make ends meet through her school and college days in the town of Ratnagiri to her life after her marriage in Mumbai where she encounters a feminist group and later becomes a writer and organizer of Dalit women. The time span it covers is from just after India's independence in 1947 to the end of the century. But this trajectory is not the essential narrative line in a book whose title is a better metaphor for the writing technique that Urmila Pawar adopts. The lives of different members of her family her husband's family her neighbors and classmates are woven together in a narrative that gradually reveals different aspects of the everyday life of Dalits the manifold ways in which caste asserts itself and grinds them down. The author's point of view is also woven from two strands: that of the young girl uncomprehendingly witnessing instances of caste injustice patriarchal domination and the daily compulsions of poverty, and of the mature woman looking back on these with the insights she has gained later on in her life. And yet the narrator's position is neither central nor distanced. The everyday the ordinary a temporality that is not teleological and a language of affect and incomprehension invest caste with certain presences and immediacy and opens up a space for moral and political appeal to the upper castes. The burden of caste is thus returned to the upper castes. In Urmila Pawar's writing there is plenty of the ordinary and everyday and a temporality that goes back and forth from her own childhood to episodes in the life of her

mother and her elder brothers and sisters and back. Much has been written of how Dalit autobiographies play down the role of the narrator subject. The sufferings of the Dalit are like those of the black slave in America the sufferings of her community. Not only this because the path to emancipation is also a social project rather than an individual one the Dalit autobiography combines witnessing and experiencing in an act of sharing that gives it a political force. The first Dalit autobiographies written in the Marathi language appeared in the 1970s and women writers soon followed the men. Sharmila Rege's recent book on what she calls the testimonial of the Dalit woman brings out its unique role in exposing the reality of both caste and gender domination in Indian society.

Urmila Pawar's memoir follows in this genre what is different is that unlike her predecessors she approaches her subject both as a writer with some literary achievement already under her belt and as an activist who has tried to organize Dalit women and has a specific stance on Dalit feminism. It seems that her objective is to document both caste and patriarchy in the lives that enter into the weave of her memoir. The language of affect and of incomprehension that Pandian writes of are somewhat toned down as compared to some of the earlier Dalit autobiographies.

The Weave of My Life begins with a detailed description of the harsh landscape of the *Konkan* region on the west coast of India and the relation these Dalit women their own lives harsh and full of toil have with this landscape. The range of the *Sahyadris* runs along the coastline and there is a sheer drop down to the sea. The main crop is rice the poor grow a form of red millet that thrives on the thin soil, but there are also fruits that are native to the region, like several choice species of mangoes, cashews and the red *ratamba* fruit that is dried and used as a flavoring for curries. There are heavy rains during the monsoon, but the water runs down into the sea, and paradoxically it is hard to find enough water for drinking and washing during most of year. The life of village Dalit women's begins with journey to sell their wares rice bags, firewood, grass in the town market. The women walk in a group

accompanied by their children for how can they leave them behind and who will look after them back in the village? They talk curse and gossip among themselves as they climb the hills, along thorny paths, buffeted by strong winds. Their confused progress as they trace their zigzag route is echoed in their talk and sets the tone for Urmila Pawar's writing in this memoir of a Dalit woman's life.

Urmila Pawar is now a well known writer in Marathi her work consists mainly of short stories and a history of the role of women in the movement for the emancipation of the Dalits or untouchables led by Bhimrao Ramji (affectionately and respectfully known as Babasaheb) Ambedkar in the early twentieth century which she wrote in collaboration with Meenakshi Moon published in 1989. In her autobiography Pawar tells us about starting out as a writer. Earlier she had been an enthusiastic participant in school and village plays this gave her confidence to speak on the stage and while she was working in Mumbai she came in contact with organizers and political activists among different groups of Dalits. She is struck by situations involving caste and gender prejudice and begins to put down her thoughts in the form of short stories. After some of these are published she meets other writers and becomes aware of matters of style and structure. Toward the end of the book she takes up her project of recording the histories of older Dalit women who took part in the Ambedkar movement.

The transition from an oral to a written form of self-expression in Urmila Pawar's own life echoes the story of liberation of the Dalits. It is exciting that Pawar's first effort to form an organization of Dalit women later in her life in Mumbai is by starting a literary group called *Samvadini* a coined name that adds a feminine ending to the word for conversation or dialogue. In Pawar and Moon's account of an earlier era of the struggle for Dalit liberation we find repeated accounts of Dalit women in the 1930s and forties going up onstage in a public meeting.

This is because untouchability the most extreme manifestation of caste in Indian society functions through a prohibition not only of touch and of certain

occupations, but also of the public use of speech it is only the Brahmins who can enunciate sacred texts, but the untouchables are even further silenced by the authority of caste. So for these Dalit women who were also silenced by the authority of patriarchy to make a public use of speech was at the time truly revolutionary. The political scientist Gopal Guru has underlined how Dalit women preserved the emancipator character of the public use of language in the post-independence period when according to him Dalit cultural politics was beginning to lose its edge. During Ambedkar's lifetime, and also after his death in 1956 the tradition of *Ambedkari jalsas* did much to mobilize and politically awaken Dalits across Maharashtra. These troupes drew upon the musical traditions of the Mahars, the largest Dalit caste in Maharashtra and also on different forms of religious and folk singing imbuing them with a message of Dalit liberation. However Gopal Guru says,

“Dalit women were invisible in the cultural landscape that was completely dominated by Dalit males.”¹⁷

Further traditionally Dalit women had performed in the erotic song and dance form of the *tamashas* patronized by upper-caste men. Ambedkar urged Dalits to give up those occupations and traditions that were demeaning and humiliating, or in the women's case sexually exploitative. And so according to Guru,

“The moral code imposed by Dalit patriarchy forced women into private spheres and denied them public visibility.”¹⁸

However he adds that in the post-Ambedkar era women also developed their own cultural forms of protest. Urmila Pawar writes about how after they became Buddhist the women of her village at first found it hard that they could no longer sing the old religious songs but later on they wove their own words into the old tunes talking of their beloved leader affectionately as Baba or Bhim of his first wife Ramabai (Rama-ai), and of his social message. After Ambedkar's conversion in 1956 shortly before his death Dalits all over the

state followed him in giving up the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses and embraced the Buddhist faith. Urmila Pawar was a young schoolgirl at the time. While thousands of Dalits became Buddhist on the occasion of Ambedkar's own conversion in Nagpur in eastern Maharashtra in October 1956 this wave of conversion reached her village in the Konkan only after Ambedkar's death on December 6. Pawar describes the grief expressed by all around her on that day, young and old, women and men weeping uncontrollably, while she was only just beginning to understand what had happened. And she tells us then the conversion happened quite suddenly. Crowds of people from the surrounding villages marched to the grounds of Gogate College in Ratnagiri until it resembled a sea of humanity. We went there too along with Govinda dada and the other villagers. Several instructions were being issued from the loudspeakers hanging overhead. Then came the reverberating sound of *Buddham Saranam Gachchami*, and we too joined the chanting of the crowd. After the ceremony we went home. Govinda dada and the villagers collected the idols and various pictures of the gods and goddesses adorning our walls which *Aaye* used to worship every day and threw them into a basket. This was a historic moment in the lives of Dalits in Maharashtra. Throwing away the pictures and idols of Hindu gods and goddesses was significant in two major senses: it meant renouncing the lowly place that was accorded to Dalits in the Hindu caste hierarchy and it also entailed giving up superstition and ritual in favor of a more enlightened view of the world. Buddhism gave the Dalits a new vision of life and identity the possibility of living in a totally new way free of bondage and defeat.

Toward the end of **The Weave of My Life**, Urmila Pawar returns to her village after living in Mumbai for many years. She sees tarred roads in place of the stony, thorny pathways she used to walk to school on and tiled houses in place of huts. But when she looks into the interior she is disturbed to find that the old gods and goddesses and rustic talismans of the neo Buddhist villagers.

The Konkan region with its rocky paths its precipitous slopes and the nearness of the sea the always flagrant presence of a wild and unruly nature has

traditionally been a breeding ground for all kinds of superstitions and belief in ghosts and the occult doings of neighbors. This is an integral part of the culture of the Konkan and with the Dalits there is added the constant struggle for survival, in conditions of unremitting labor and extreme poverty. This region was also one of the areas that many of Ambedkar's followers originated from. Urmila Pawar tells us about the villagers fight to emerge from these conditions to a better life through the eyes of the rebellious child that she then was, who sees her father merely as a hard and even cruel man. He is willing to thrash his children and his nephews and nieces to put them through school. Yet the narrator also makes us see that her harshness is necessary for the Dalit child's road to education is full of obstacles. The children are made to sit apart they are singled out to perform duties like sweeping the school they are beaten without reason, for the Brahmin teacher still feels that untouchables have no right to an education. Pawar's father set up house in Ratnagiri so that his children and his nephews and nieces would have access to better schools. When Urmila's sister takes up a job and is about to give it up because of the hardships it entails her father helps out. That's when Baba decided to stay with her. He brought his luggage to her tiny room and helped her hold on to the job.

Pawar's father also serves as a village priest he has inherited this mantle from an ancestor who directly challenged the authority of the Brahmin. For a Dalit to take on the duties of a village priest for his community was itself part of a tradition of resistance. The Brahmin who usually had a monopoly on the priesthood exacted tribute and profit from every occasion in the villagers lives, from birth, marriage, and death to illness, infertility, or madness. The Dalit priest on the other hand is partly healer partly teacher and counselor. His approach to religion is pragmatic; certain rites have to be carried out as a matter of custom. He is not above using meaningless mantras to lend dignity to his ministrations, as long as this serves to comfort the supplicant who comes to him. The religious practice of the Dalits is thus shorn of the mystification that surrounds the figure of the Brahmin priest his monopoly over the interpretation of the sacred law thinly disguising his economic greed. The Dalit priest's role is to dispense human wisdom in the context of the everyday.

After their father's death Urmila's brother Shahu inherited the priesthood though he was only twelve years old. People made concessions for the small priest and gave him only jobs he could handle. Anecdotes like these in Urmila Pawar's memoir can be read for their deep insights into caste as it is lived by the Dalits with its small cultures of resistance that help to make the ever present pain of untouchability more bearable. Her own experiences of caste discrimination are narrated with an interweaving of humor or with dry asides of self disapproval. At school the Dalit children are saddled with bothersome tasks on one occasion the master hits Urmila with the unjustified accusation that their family cow has made a mess in the *verandah*. She runs home crying and is cheered to find that her mother is willing to confront the teacher and demand justice. After her marriage Pawar is subjected to discrimination when she and her husband look for rented accommodations in the town of Ratnagiri they have to vacate two rooms after the landlady discovers their caste. In one place her landlady's daughter strikes up a friendship and wants to borrow a sari. Urmila generously shows her all her wedding saris but when the girl discovers Urmila's caste she suddenly lost her voice. Picking up my brocade sari she walked off. Here is the paradox of untouchability that it is fine to borrow a Dalit girl's sari, but not to have social intercourse with her or drink tea in her house. But Urmila Pawar's tone in telling us this story is not the incomprehension of the suffering subject of the worst kinds of Dalit oppression and violence rather it is ironic. After all landladies in small towns are notorious for their caste sensitivities and it would not be only Dalits who are likely to undergo this kind of discrimination.

One of the most moving anecdotes recounted in this memoir is of the village celebrations of the spring festival of *Holi*. *Mahar* youths are made to do the hard work of cutting down branches and trunks of trees and carrying them to the field where a fire will be lighted at dusk. But they are not allowed a place in the celebrations. It is the upper-caste men who carry the palanquin of the goddess, and the *Mahars* are forbidden to touch it. But the *Mahar* boys who by this time have poured lots of drink down their throats jump up and try to touch the palanquin. They have been affected by the mood of defiance that is

peculiar to the *Holi* festival when it is acceptable for men and women to howl and curse in public. These are age old traditions that have been followed by all castes for centuries. On the day after the full moon people throw dust and cow dung at each other these days it is customary to spray one another with colored water. While praying for prosperity and the diversion of calamities from the village the upper castes also ask that the calamities be visited on the Mahars. This is another role thrust on the untouchables that of carriers of misfortune as well as pollution protectors and sanitizers of the village who are reviled rather than revered. The defiant Mahar boys are soundly kicked and beaten for their transgression. The narrative here chillingly adopts the technique of the ordinary the youths return to their families receive some comfort from their mothers and sisters and run back into the fray only to get beaten up again. Then the festival moves on to the next stage and everyone enjoys the dramatic performances staged in the light of the full moon petromax lamps and the raging *holi* fire.

One of the special features of Urmila Pawar's memoirs is her account of patriarchy among the Dalits. She explained the marriage ceremony of her eldest brother. This marriage took place before the Mahars converted to Buddhism but Urmila Pawar's family had already cut down on the number of rites to be performed. She gives details of the rituals of a *Mahar* wedding which the reader of the Marathi original will easily recognize as being different from those of a traditional Hindu wedding. The all important *saptapadi* or seven circling of the sacred fire by the bride and groom for instance is replaced by arranging seven piles of rice on a wooden plank for the bride to step on. When the rituals are over the traditional games begin. After her account of several games Pawar remarks all these games were basically intended to control the bride and keep her in check. But when they were being played, everybody laughed and had a good time. These were happy occasions in their lives. Later on in the book Pawar gives us more serious examples of patriarchal oppression of women both within the Dalit community and along the lines of caste hierarchy with upper caste men enjoying a license to exploit Dalit women sexually. The temple priest sexually abuses a young girl from the

nomadic Komti community the young Urmila sees her coming out of the inner sanctum in tears and does not understand. Her mother and her elder sister Bhikiakka are more victims of dire poverty than patriarchy but in chapter 5 we have a detailed account of the ill treatment of another sister Manjula at the hands of her in-laws followed by several cases of similar treatment of daughters-in-law. On the other hand Urmila Pawar also tells us of her own experience of affection and friendship from members of her husband's family. There is a terrible story of a widow who becomes pregnant and is kicked in the stomach by women of the village till she aborts the fetus and later dies. Noting the self morality of the village women who feel that they are upholding the honor of their community is the only comment Pawar offers us with regard to this incident. She does not mention whether the woman in question was a Dalit though that seems unlikely. However the Dalit women of the village certainly participated in the spirit if not the act of punitive violence. On the whole however Dalit widows were not treated with the same degree of exclusion as in the Brahmin community. Although Pawar does not touch on the issue of widow remarriage she gives us a small linguistic essay on the interesting term *randki sooj* which translates as widow's swelling or widow swelling. Urmila has heard the phrase from her mother who claims that although she is a widow she does not have the *randki sooj*. She asks her elder sister about it and gets the reply 'You know for some women when their husbands die it is a release from oppression. Then they look a little better fresh so people say they have got the *randki sooj*.' Then she grew grave and said, 'But let me tell you, I have always been like this somewhat plump even before my husband died.' This explanation is perhaps an adequate comment on the nature of dalit patriarchy. The earthy phrase more so because the word *raand* means both a widow and a prostitute in Marathi tells us that many a woman is so badly treated by her husband that she blossoms out a little after his death. And yet the freedom to joke about it the common use of such a phrase also signifies that widows are not completely suppressed.

Urmila Pawar's use of earthy language is no longer a new stylistic device. Both Dalit autobiographers and Dalit poets have used the vocabulary of the

Mahars and the *Mangs* to delineate a world foreign to the experience of most readers of literature. Pawar is aware that there is not much shock value left in the use of this language. But she gives us examples of the women's cursing the words they use in quarrels the open discussion of bodily functions and of the polluting work that the untouchables are forced to do. The raunchy language, the openness is also an integral part of Dalit culture. The women's songs especially those composed after the conversion to Buddhism carry the touch of the soil the strength of bodies accustomed to hard labor. Her account of her romance with Harishchandra the man she eventually marries also does not shy away from discussing the physical aspects of their relationship.

Urmila Pawar devotes an entire chapter the third to a description of food and eating habits in her family and community. This helps her to accomplish a number of distinct objectives. First, the experience of extreme poverty of living with a persistent lack of adequate nourishment is most effectively conveyed through the child's viewpoint. The mother is described as stingy fending off her children's demands while we also see her efforts to make ends meet and to give them what taste and variety she can. Then there is the contrast with the food habits of young Urmila's upper-caste schoolmates. The children's negotiations with each other and the pain the girl feels tell us a great deal about one of the central aspects of caste hierarchy. And, finally throughout the hierarchy it is the women who nurture the culture of their caste and there is an enjoyment and a pride in talking about the food characteristic to one's caste and the food prepared at festivals however meager it may be. Women are the cultural carriers of caste and it is through the patriarchal control of women that caste divisions are maintained.

In the later **The Weave of My Life**, Urmila Pawar moves with her husband to Mumbai and works at a job in a government office. Here the narrative picks up speed as she adjusts to life in a metropolitan city. The ubiquitous presence of caste cannot be entirely forgotten even here there are daily pinpricks and occasionally bigger jolts of caste discrimination. But Pawar makes good use of the newfound freedom and attends meetings meets women's groups and most

important begins to write. Here too her weaving technique is at play as she intersperses the narrative of her own achievements with her observations about the society around her. Her feminism becomes more pronounced. Her increasing activity and fame as a writer makes her husband uncomfortable. There is tragedy she loses a college going son and problems to be resolved. She stands by both her daughters when they go against their father's wishes marrying men of their choice.

Pawar's autobiography has been much acclaimed in Marathi literary circles. It has won prizes and is currently in its third edition. But she says that the book has also received its share of flak especially in the Dalit community. She has been criticized for her association with upper-caste women's groups and her open exposition of Dalit patriarchy has not been welcomed.

The noted Dalit writer Shanta Gohkale has observed as,

“Narratives of Dalit woman's voyage through life told with a sense of irony and humor. *Aaydan* is marked by honesty of its narration.”¹⁹

The movement for the emancipation of the untouchables carried on for some time after Ambedkar's death, but the co-optation of many of its leaders by the ruling Congress Party eventually blunted its revolutionary edge. Ambedkar for his part like the nineteenth century social reformer Jyotiba Phule before him was always very clear that a fight for the emancipation of Dalits would have to take up the cause of gender equality. Even today cultural and political movement leaders organizing against caste invoke the names of Ambedkar and Phule. Urmila Pawar talks about this several times in the later chapters of her book today's Dalit leaders are not very open to women raising issues of gender. Some might say that patriarchal attitudes have hardened since the 1990s when fundamentalist religious organizations began to dig in their heels on the Indian political scene. In fact the radical face of the Dalit movement began eroding even earlier with the rise of the Shiv Sena in Mumbai a party that mobilized disaffected non Brahmin youth of the city using a fascist

rhetoric directed first against southerners in Mumbai and later against Muslims.

Similarly though some dialogue between Dalit women's organizations and the mainstream women's movement it a problematic term today have been initiated there is still distrust and suspicion. The issues raised on each side do not translate well into the rhetoric of the other. There has not been enough genuine dialogue or attempts to forge a common program though there is more talk of gender and caste today than at any time in the past. Pawar shows the distinction of male female positions and titles awarded to them. She says when any man is promoted he would become a 'Bhaushaeb' or 'Raosaheb' but a woman officer will remained only a 'Bai' without the title of Sahib. As a Dalit writer she felt as it is an insult to her position and background. Today all women are called 'Madam' due to English language. This has generated the question of self respect among the women. Pawar has highlighted the other important issue of male child through the example of her own brother Sahu. The appeal for male child is highlighted when her brother had son. The *namkaran* was to be performed at Ratnagiri. The word *Namkaran* has replaced as *Barse*. On this event in a conversation sisters have raised property issue rights of girls after marriage as Dr. Babasaheb's New Hindu code bill is also discussed.

“Don't you know that Babasaheb had asked in the Hindu code Bill to give the daughters their share of property so come on get up now.”²⁰

She has also narrated another incident of daughter's property rights when all the sisters were together for the Sahu's son's naming ceremony and with hope they have clash with the brother. However her mother scolded the daughters that why should they expect something from the brother since they are well versed and happily settled. It means once married the daughters have no right to obtain any material advantage from their parents.

Pawar has also narrated the story of Joyti whose husband had male child craze. She has reflected in her story *Shalya* Joyti's story that gave birth to five

daughters. When she was expecting for the sixth time she was afraid because of her husband would torture her for the girl child. She exchanged with other unmarried girl's a baby boy. Pawar writes that when she invited to read this story in a function Harischandra insisted that they should keep their son with them to show others that they have a son in real life. Similarly the issue of daughter's rights after marriage is a sensitive issue that she has focused through her own example.

She has published her first storybook 'Sixth Finger' through *Samvadini* Publication. In the publication function Shri Sushilkumar Shinde, Arun Sadhu, Shri Nerurkar, Chhaya Datar and Shri Bhalchandra Mungekar were remained present. However at home her position was uncomfortable as Harischandra always felt underestimated himself compared to Urmila's success. She narrates this agony like this,

“His attitude towards me was full of contradictions. On the one hand he was proud of my writing he admitted to his friends and relatives. However on the other he immensely resented my being recognized as a writer my speaking in public programmes and my emerging as a figure in the public domain.”²¹

When she refers to her autobiography writing she continuously remembers her mother and her effort to weave the basket. Urmila looked her writing as an escape to forget the sad incident about son so there was no connectivity in her writing. Shri Sushilkumar Shinde remarks,

“But she has lost one son but got another it means she could establish herself as a writer.”²²

If one wishes to understand the complex interweaving of caste and patriarchy and how it affects the lives not only of Dalit women but of men and women of all castes living in contemporary India, Urmila Pawar's book has much to offer. Sure those non-Indian readers too will find articulations here that they

can resonate with. A careful reader will learn much about how the politics of culture is played out in the lives of ordinary women and men in a situational context vastly different from her own. She may also understand something of the role that Dalit women can play in shaping the politics of the future.

The focus of Pawar's autobiography however is on the self. She talks about her personal life and her life experiences. Nevertheless the community always emerge large in her autobiography as her fiction. She admits,

“What the writer writes about is social reality and not his/her individual life.”²³

Urmila Pawar's **The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs** is a remarkable piece of work to say the least. It has been translated into English by Maya Pandit. Urmila begins her journey from *Konkan*. Her story is the story of three generations of Dalit family to straight life of modernity. The family comes to Mumbai. It's observation that Dalits never speak against English language, Western culture etc. because they know what this language has done for them. Western ideas Democracy, equality and liberty came to India via English language and Western influence. Only Dalits know the suffocation of rural site. In Mumbai no one cares as who you are. Urmila honestly talks about what it means to be a modern, sophisticated and liberated. She admits that the outlook, Dalit vote bank political affairs and its dangers. To be a Dalit woman is double slave a slave to caste and patriarchy. For her both the Dalit movement and the feminist movement are equally important. Dark world for a Dalit woman crushed by upper caste and then beaten by men of her own caste it's an unwelcoming. This autobiography tells us Dalit modernity how each life is different and its world. Urmila's mother was a single parent. She talks at length about the newly mixture patterns of patriarchy in background. Family domestic violence and patriarchy scheme create new traps for women. It's a wonderful piece of work definitely admirable more concentration than it has received.

The Dalit autobiography is understood as a genre because it adds to the growth and development of Dalit literature. The personal narratives of the Dalits speak about the daring journey of the entire community in the process of self-assertion, liberty, self-respect and empowerment. And the same journey gives than a unique identity which is nothing but exploring the experiences of a entire people's history through narratives. Laxman Mane's **Upura** (1997), Laxman Gaikwad's **The Branded** (1998), Vasanth Moon's **Growing up Untouchable in India** (2001), Narendra Jadhav's **Untouchables** (2003), Sharan Kumar Limbale's **The Outcaste** (2003), Omprakash Valmiki's **Joothan** (2003), Joseph Mackwan's **The Stepchild** (2004), Arvind Malgathi's **Government Brahmana** (2007), and of women writers Bama's **Karukku** (2000), Viramma Josiane Racine Jean Luc Racine's *Viramma: Life of a Dalit* (1997), Urmila Pawar's **The Weave of My Life** (2007) and Baby Kambale's **The Prisons We Broke** (2008) are the Dalit autobiographies in which the protagonists trace out the origin of Dalit identity and celebrate the self of their community.

Urmila Pawar's '*Aaydan*' represents progress and development of dalit literature. Pawar represents the marginalized group in two manners as a woman writer and a Dalit literary person. The noted Dalit writer Shanta Gohkale has observed,

“Narratives of Dalit woman's voyage through life told with a sense of irony and humor. *Aaydan* is marked by honesty of its narration.”²⁴

Urmila Pawar's *Aaydan* was published bit by bit in Marathi publication 1984 known and mainly her first night marriage narration has attracted many in those days. Urmila writes in her prologue of *Aaydan*.

“Before plastic began to be utilized for making different objects of everyday use bamboo were the most common material used to make baskets containers and other things in general utility of the household. *Aaydan* is a

general word used for all the things made from bamboo; awata is another word. Outside the Kokan the job of bamboo basket was traditionally being assigned to nomadic tribes like *Burud* community. In the *Kokan* region however it was the Mahar caste which under took this task.”²⁵

She refers autobiography about her mother and father who was a teacher a reformist for the community but inside her house he was a typical patriarchal and typical person. She has also narrated the submissive and oppressive character of her sister-in-law *Paravti* has no power in their house in their house to eat or sleep on her own wish. She has also given references of her school life particularly the items of the lunch boxes which show the separation of upper, middle class and Dalit community. The uncommonness of item brought by the upper class classmates as she wrote, she couldn't think to talk to her family. Financial conditions were not permitting. The sexual abuses and harassment at the school reveal attention. She has sharper observations about her family members and cultural changes in her sister's language. Similarly the language is shaded by caste. Pawar exemplifies how Brahminical language can create a barrier among Dalit's instead of facilitates. Generally use the more formal plural form of 'you' of *Marathi* to address their husbands. The behaviors of tai in her marriage with her husband her brother-in-law and use of brahminical dialects which created a distance between the husband and wife. as Pawar writes,

“I used to feel so angry about Tai's s imitating the Brahmin Godbole family using and in-laws indeed. Our uneducated illiterate village women were much better. I think Tai's use of honorific created Distance between herself and her husband, which was never there in a husband and wife relationship in our community.”²⁶

Urmila Pawar as an activist of the woman's Dalit movement and have presented her three generations through her mother's character and her

mother-in-law. Urmila has narrated her three roles as a daughter, wife and mother. She has confessed that the environmental, communal and financial conditions are basis problems for her and her community. Urmila Pawar a major voice in contemporary Dalit literature recounts in her autobiography *Aydaan* (Basket, 2003), the aftermath of her daughter Manini's birthday party to which she had invited the child's classmate Kishori and her older brother. On returning home the brother told his mother that there were portraits of Gautam Buddha and Ambedkar in the Pawar home. The following day the mother arrived at Urmila Pawar's house stood outside the door and said abruptly, Next time my daughter visits you please don't give her anything to eat. We are Marathas and we don't allow it. Dalit homes to atrocities like the killing of four members of the Bhotmange family in *Khairlanji* in September 2006 exhaustively recorded by Anand Teltumbde in his book **Khairlanji A Strange and Bitter Crop** (2008) the upper-castes continue to discriminate against and oppress Dalits. Women have come to grasp that they are twice as exploited by upper castes and by their own men. Therefore the Dalit feminist voice has grown more and more strong more than years. In *Aydaan* Urmila Pawar note down the incident that sprang the first split in her marriage. She had scored good marks in her Bachelor's examination and was planning to go for Master's programme. Her husband told her there was no need to study further stay at home and look after the children's studies. Knowing that she was completely capable of balancing home, job and higher study, she replied,

“Why don't you pay some attention to the home for a change? It will help if you don't go to the bar for a drink every evening but come home and look after the children's studies you.”²⁷

An Autobiography is as a genre which is rarely practiced by Indians as compared to that of poetry and fiction. It shows the major issues of category, social group and gender in the Indian context. Apart from recording a woman's finding of assertion of identity it also offers a portrait of the Indian culture including inter-communal relations, clashes, and tolerances. Weaving

happens to be the essential metaphor of the present memoir. Weaving of bamboo baskets the main profession of the protagonist's mother indicates their low caste and terrible economic poverty. Pawar has referred about death of her father when she was in third standard. Her mother was not visiting any society programmers but doing her work and nurturing children as her ability. In the school days she was only two sets of clothes which she wore alternatively for three or four days. They were washing their clothes weekly once. Urmila was innocent of bad manner spitting around her. Pawar has specially thanks her teacher Diwalker who had taught her good manners and cleanliness. in the fourth standard she got her first scholarship of Rupees 12 (twelve) and for the first time in her life she could see the Ten Rupees note and one rupee two notes the teacher has asked her to buy two new frocks for herself from the money.

Pawar narrates the incident in her memoir like this,

“Aye was weaving her baskets as usual. She did not see me when I crossed her and entered the house. Her face looked worried. She was engrossed in her own thoughts and her fingers flew over the basket. Going to her I told her about the scholarship and held the twelve rupees before her. Suddenly her face lit up with a sunny smile and eyes sparkled.”²⁸

The other important situation about the community living is seen in their food preparations at home. It is very clear from the memoir that separate food preparations were done for men and women and mostly the daughter-in-law is exploited. Pawar as a feminist and as a dalit woman has highlighted an issue as she writes,

“When the men folk went out and women and girls remained at home they dined at *kata*. A small quantity poured in water and cooked as a soup with chili powder, salt and a piece of mango or maul. This was called

sagar. Women ate their rice with the watery dish. The song we used to sing, Hey what is that funny dug noise what is the foul smell spreading all over”

Well, what they cooked was fish water!

Someone has had a bellyful and how!

She wears a short sarees down to the feet now

To hide what trickling down from her butt.”²⁹

As Urmila mentions,

“The older rituals to mark birth, marriage and death were given up and new ones gradually came to be finalized according to Buddhist religion.”³⁰

Pawar has given very minute details of oppression and exploitations of girl child and women. Sometimes the humiliation is so much that it is biting to the reader with his/her sensibility. Pawar describes in this following quotation both the insult and hunger of the girl child. Whenever they get good dish or complete food it is difficult for them to control. As Pawar narrates the incident,

“Once I went to attend wedding at my sister-in-law’s place along with two of my nieces. However when we three spout girls set down to eat and begun asking rice repeatedly the cook got angry whose daughters are these anyway? He burst out. They are eating like monsters’ then someone answered they are from our Sushi’s family. Daughters of Arjun master. On hearing this, the host came forward. Oh! Are they? All right all right let them eat as much as they want. Serve them well the cook returned with more rice but being called monster was not easy to digest and we politely declined.”³¹

Adgaon was the native place of Urmila Pawar but for her education purpose her family was staying near Ratnagiri. Pawar remembers the school days memory. One day her classmates at school had decided to cook a meal. They had discussed what everyone should bring rice lentils and so on.

The community was having faith in the blind faith and inexperience medical support. Her father has not at all taken care of Sushil her elder sister after her marriage she died with her agony and pain. Sometimes Urmila Pawar feels that for outsider and society her father was a reformist but for his own daughters he has patriarchal approach. She narrates the case of Parvati sister-in-law who has rejection to eat on her own in her house. She was living a desperate life. Through her case Pawar shows the exploitation and domination of women. This is similar to the Black Feminist theory. Black so exploited both ways from white people and the male equivalent of their own community. When Pawar refers to her school life and distribution of lunch boxes experience she has purposely mentioned the items prepared by the upper class students but considering her financial condition she never talk about them at home. She felt shamed in her English language class where her teacher used to abuse her for her poor command over the subject. He used to scold her,

“This is English the milk of tigress it is not easy like acting in plays.”³²

Urmila remembers her first salary she has received after her marriage and it indicates her happiness at one point but at the same time she was aware that she has to give it to her husband, Harishchandra. Thus the characters are only changed but the faith has remained the same. Urmila remarks Harishchandra, her husband also got the bad experience of caste when he left his job at Ratnagiri and joined the office of District Superintendent. Harishchandra had understood the strong caste barriers existing even in upper castes also. Even the educated people treated him like an untouchable. This horrible experience had changed his mind and decided to go for a job in the city. He has reached to end very strongly for the bias due to low caste treatment and decided not to do

job in the village. He remembers the call given by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to youth that they should go to the city and forget the caste barrier.

The Weave of My life written in a sensible fictional mode it is characterized by an honest frank and bold expression of a Dalit woman's experiences and easily compared with Afro-American women's narrative. The English translation by Maya Pandit is quite successful in bringing out the racial flavor of the Marathi original.

In the concluding paragraphs of her Memoir Urmila Pawar writes,

“Life has taught me many things showed me so such. It has also lashed it me till I bled I don't know how much longer I am going to live nor do I know in what form life is going to confront me let it came in any form I am ready to face it stoically. This is what my life has taught me. This is my life and that is me.”³³

Pawar although writes almost twenty years after Kamble Both faces similar problems in upholding her individual identity as a woman use for her of lams and the very food she eats are integrated to her Dalit identity. The transition from written to oral form of self-expression in Urmila Pawar's own life is suggestive step of emancipation of the Dalits. It is interesting that Pawar's first try to form organization for women in Mumbai is by opening a literary group called *Samvadini*. Untouchability was the tremendous sign of caste in Indian society. Through a prohibition not only of touch and of certain profession but also of the public use is only Brahmin who can utter sacred texts but the untouchables are even additional sided authority. Dalit women who were silenced by the authority of patriarchal make a public use of speech was at the time of revolution. Urmila sees a close association of silent pain between the weave of *Aaydan* and her writing. It was because of that she called her autobiography *Aaydan*.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav's autobiography **Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India** is a story of the impact of teaching his children that gave them a sense of self respect, self-esteem, identity and consciousness of human rights. He left his native village Ozar in Nasik and came to Mumbai. Once again villages are the lair of castes in India. For a Dalit its very difficult to succeed in a village. Cities give opportunities to Dalits. This change of family from an exploited to a self awakened human is the central part of this book. The father chose to battle the hierarchy of caste and created his own fate. The book describes how the father was cruelly beaten and insulted in the village. It brings the achievement of family to the front. It's a positive story. It ends in victory. It underlines the significance of empowerment through education. A poor family attains middle class position by the grit of the father's power and hard work for the children. India is rich with such rare latent.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav identifies himself with the people to whom he belongs to in his **Untouchable** (2003). Irrespective of the qualification he acquired and the position he reached he could not stop himself finding among his community people. Jadhav writes:

“These people, raw, down to earth, unpolished are the ones to whom I belong I thought. Born in the confines of poverty illiteracy and ignorance they were at different stages of struggles in life. But they are my people I thought with a sense of belonging as they looked at me with awe. In their eyes I had managed through hard work and perseverance to climb out of the morass of untouchability illiteracy and backwardness.”

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The expressions like the one to whom I belong and but they are my people simply that Jadhav always identifies himself with his community. Jadhav states that no matter what he did where he went or what success he achieved he would always be looked upon as a Mahar an untouchable. Jadhav's

argument is suggestive of the caste identity irrespective of the place position and success. Jadhav writes further:

“It is unfortunate truth of our society that whatever height a man might scale.”³⁵

Dr. Narendra Jadhav’s **Untouchable** is about the journey of a Dalit family from a small village Ozar to a big city Mumbai. It presents the story of a Dalit family in search of Dalit pride. It portrays the harsh and unequal village life and the success of the three generations. The central narrative follows the transformation of this family. It was the great transformation of Jadhav’s family into a very successful family of eminent scholars and office.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav’s **Untouchables’ : A Memoir** is another autobiographical narrative that traces the journey of a Dalit family from ignorance and neglect to knowledge and fame as an equal and integral part of society. In this transformation an important role has been played by education that has truly proved the label to freedom. Like Valmiki Jadhav also depicts the new changes brought by education and remove all kinds of caste and social divisions. The book requires the journey undertaken by Jadhav’s illiterate parents Damu and Sonu from a small village at Ozar in Maharashtra to the city of Mumbai to escape discrimination. Belonging to the Mahar community the story discloses the struggles and suffering tolerated by them to ensure education for their six sons. The work is not only a individual story of survival and success but inherent in the description of struggle, expectation and aspirations of millions of people forced to live a sub human existence owing to caste or some other kinds of class distinction common in society. In the book his struggle as a young student when he sat at a corner of the class room scared like a rat yet his determination and the faith of his parents finally triumphed to overcome the age old barriers of conquest.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav’s autobiography is a journey of finding out remedies to trespass the boundaries of caste and gender. Jadhav’s **Untouchable** represents the struggle of the Dalits against caste discrimination illiteracy and poverty.

Having the weapons of education empowerment and democracy Damu the protagonist and his wife Sonu fought for self assertion and self respect which are denied to them for years. It is not the life story of Damu and Sonu but a story of all the Dalits. Narendra Jadhav's father Damu was inspired by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar:

“Damu was not a leader but he refused to define himself by circumstances and aimed at shaping his own destiny. Damu had no formal education...yet he steered his children to education heights and inculcated in them the spirit of excellence. Damu was not a guru...but he taught his children to believe in themselves and reclaim human dignity. Damu was often humbled...yet he maintained. Goats are sacrificial offerings not lions. Damu was an ordinary man they said but he did an extraordinary thing he stood up against the tyranny of the caste system.”³⁶

Damu educated his wife and children. Damu a young man in his twenties worked as a *yeskar*. As a *yeskar* Damu's duty was to announce the arrival of the officials to the village and taking care of the guests and their horses and watch the dead bodies in the village. Damu announced about the great arrival of the *Mamledar*: Damu was running as fast as he could in front of the *Mamledar's Tonga* heralding his arrival. Out spacing the house he ran until he felt his legs would give way. He ran singing the honor of the *Mamledar* alerting the villages that respectable person was arriving. Damu had to wait outside the house of Patil until the *Mamledar* came out of Patil's home. Damu was tired and hungry by the time the *Mamledar* left the place and Damu walked home slowly. Scarcely had Damu reached home when a policeman came looking for him. Damu sensed that something had happened. The constable told Damu that a dead body had been found floating in the broken well by the mangroves.

Damu who did not eat anything since morning pleaded with the constable that he would be back in no time after eating something. But the constable lifted his baton as if to strike him,

“Do you see my baton? I’ll stick it up your ass and you will see it come out of your throat. I will beat you up so badly that you will forget the name of your father.”³⁷

Unable to face the constable Damu ran towards the mangroves without stopping anywhere. Mahars were not treated as human beings and they were treated as people without self respect. Damu worried much about his wife who would not take water without some word about him and requested the constable that at least he could inform his wife that Damu could come only after the cremation of the body found in the well. Unable to convince the constable Damu got ready himself to the assigned duties. Narendra Jadhav explains the poor condition of Damu. He said that Damu managed to keep awake pacing up and down and drinking water to quench his hunger. He waited impatiently for the *Fauzdar*. The police would draw the body out the report would be written and the dead women would be handed over to her family. Then he could go home. He expected this to take no more than an hour or two at the most.

Namya, one of Damu’s cousins came to the well bringing some *bhakris*. Namya told Damu that everyone especially Sonu worried about Damu all the night and gave the *bhakris* to Damu but Damu was not ready to eat because the constable and the *Fauzdar* might arrive at any moment. Even as they were talking to each other the constable arrived. The inhuman behavior of the constable indicates that the Mahars are not permitted to have meals.

“What did they care if a Mahar liver or starved or even died? All they were concerned about were the high-born.”³⁸

He came cracking his whip having arrogant look. Damu was ordered to fetch hay and water to the *Fauzdar's* horse. Moving around the *Fauzdar* looked into the old well which was out of use for a long time. Thinking of how to pull the dead body out of the well the constable the village Patil and *Fauzdar* discussed something and the constable ordered Damu finally to pull the body out. But the *Fauzdar* cracked his whip at Damu. The attitude the constable and the *Fauzdar* showed towards Damu resulted in self-realization. Unable to tolerate the discrimination Damu stood up and gripped the half-raised whip. As the constables always prove the power of their sticks on Dalits, the two policemen severely punished Damu until he lost senses. Jadhav writes,

“He (Damu) lost all sense of what was happening as he lay on the ground, jerking and convulsing at every blow and whiplash as it landed on his body.”³⁹

Damu who was bold enough to face the punishment to any extent cried out with all his might. Patil rushed forward and pleaded with the *Fauzdar* to forgive Damu. At home all the family members found fault with Damu and said that he committed a grave mistake by disobeying the order of the *Fauzdar*. They scolded Damu that he had broken the Mahar's tradition by challenging the government officials. Listening to his family members Damu said,

“What kind of a tradition is this that treats Mahar's worse than cats and dogs?”⁴⁰

Damu was ready to face death but strongly decided not to go to *yeskar* duties. The incident suggests how Damu was able to face the *Fauzdar*. He believed in dignity which he had learnt from Dr. Ambedkar and his philosophy.

Untouchables' is one of the best post colonial autobiographies. **Untouchables'** is a multilayered personalized saga of the social metamorphosis of Dalits in India. At one level, it is a loving tribute from a son to his father at another level it gives an intelligent appraisal of the caste system

in India and traces the story of the awakening of Dalits traversing three generations. At still another level it is a reflective of the aspirations of millions of Dalits in India.

The author Dr. Narendra Jadhav is an eminent economist banker public speaker and social worker. **Untouchables'** is an expanded version Narendra Jadhav's best selling Marathi novel "*Amcha Baap Aan Amhi*" written in 1993. The Dalits as a matter of fact have no literary history of their own and they had produced no literature till the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The names like Shambuka in the Ramayana, Eklavya in the Mahabharata, Valmiki the great composer and poet of Ramayana and few others in ancient times and Chokhamela, Rohidas and some others in the medieval period could be accepted as the great predecessors of the present Dalits. The term Dalit now reached all the corners of India and it has also drawn attention of foreign literary persons and academicians. Dr. Ambedkar is the apostle of the Dalits. Mr. Shankarrao Kharat has written his autobiography **Taral Antaral** is read in all crises of society. Mr. Bhagwan Das from Delhi, L.R. Bag from Jalandhor, Dr. Munshilal Gautam from Aligarh, Keshav Meshram and Vaman Hovel from Mumbai, Yashwant Manohar from Nagar, Dr.Ggangadhar Pantawane from Aurangabad, Namdev Dhasal , Raosaheb Kasbe many more have a name on the literary horizon as Dalit writers and as creating a new saga by way of their writings. After all Dalit writers follow the message of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and their literature has main at its center.

Around 165 million today Dalits are almost three times the population of the UK or France. This large mass of humanity is trying to find self expression denied to them for hundreds of years. In this struggle against caste discrimination illiteracy and poverty their weapons are education, empowerment and democracy. This is a story of such family. The book is a multi layered narration of the under privileged who suffered at the hands of the privileged for centuries. His outcaste is a wonderful narrative which describes how his illiterate parents raised their six children to become successful human beings. Narendra who belongs to Mahar caste was chosen as

the best International Student at Indiana University, USA, where he did his Ph. D in the early 1980.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav's parents never went to school. (His father taught himself to read Basic Marathi) but they knew the importance of education. They send their children to Chhabildas Boy's high school. The medium of instruction was Marathi. I used to sit in a corner like a scared rat. I studied Sanskrit because this was denied to all my forefathers. Narendra Jadhav expresses his personal agony through these words. His tone may seem to be loud, but his protest is true. He believes that Dalit literature is a literature of genuine protest. His mode of thinking is different from other Dalit writers. Some criticizes Dalit literature as immature. Narendra Jadhav's book has positive contents and poetic quality. He scored 93% marks in Sanskrit but missed the Jagananath Shankershet scholarship by two marks. Everyone was surprised when they saw his score in Sanskrit. His Sanskrit teacher thought that the scorers name might be Bhave, Bapat, and Phadke of Gokhale. Dr.Jadhav was hard worker. He had a self confidence. His Sanskrit teacher sent a word for him but he didn't go to meet the teacher. He wanted to avoid the conflict. T.S. Eliot has said that "The passions of a poem are somehow related to the passions of the society that produce it." Dr. Jadhav believes in the Maxism "Do not wait to strike until the iron is hot but make it hot by striking". It's the courage of Narendra Jadhav that counted as he fully knew that "Success is never final and failure never critical."

Damodar Runjaji Jadhav and his wife Sonu are the main characters of the autobiography both are the protagonist of the story whose protest against the injustice is a unique one. His father was against the word,

"Harijan. If Harjans are the people of God who are the other people the devils? " ⁴¹

He used to ask one cannot be genuinely human unless one has become the bearer of a culture and education in its widest sense must produce a determinate citizen type. His father attended a meeting addressed by Dr. B.R.

Ambedkar which moved him so much that he decided to spread the message of Dr. Ambedkar. 'Educate, Unite and Agitate'. His Father and Mother were converted to Buddhism in 1956 when Dr. Ambedkar gave a call to join Buddhism. Damu the protagonist has a bitter experience while bringing of the children. He controls himself while narrating these experiences. One villager calls Narendra damu mahar's son while others used a dignified language

The consciousness of Dalithood⁶ is evidenced in Dr. Jadhav's autobiography. Damodhar Runjaji Jadhav. Damu had realized the untouchability in his childhood when he had to quench his thirst. His father satisfied his logic with the argument that being Mahar their touch pollutes the water. Even at village tea shop his identification of *Mahar* restricted his entry. But at the age of 12, he ate *samosa* in a hotel at *Chowpatty*. And at the Gora Saheb's house in the city he is treated as human being without any caste prejudiced identity.

“...he gave me a hand to stand up and made me sit on the couch next to him. I was very uncomfortable and felt totally out of place.”⁴²

These paradoxical experiences helped him to understand that the arbitrariness of untouchability is based in the caste system and village structure. When he participates in the *Mahad Satyagraha* in 1927 he confirms the awareness of self.

Damu never likes that his wife is gossiping with neighborhood women on some unimportant issues like catering, their daughter's marriages, dowry and imminent festivals. He starts to repeat the teaching to his wife. He always told her to read about the Ambedkar Movement. He encourages Sonu to go to school and do social work like Savitribai. He is of the opinion that both men and women need to be educated. He would begin reading out in his broken way from a book written by Babasaheb for Dalits or a book on some social worker and expect Sonu to repeat every sentence after him. Whenever there is nobody to listen, he would repeat the same to Najuka or to his mother. He vows to give his children the highest possible education as a mission of his

life. Damu accepts the principles of democracy and rationality while taking decision of changing the religion. With the spirit of liberty Sonu argues that their ill-treatment as untouchables at the hands of touchable is a result of their bad deeds in the past lifetime. It is a conflicting matter for her to leave the religion and follow another. But at last she remembers her mother's words...

“Soney your man is like your God. Obey him always unquestioningly.”⁴³

The couple followed conversion to get equality and to deny religious hegemony of the priestly class. The self-respect, rationality, humanity, cleanliness, social equality and justice all these principles of identity are the legacy of Ambedkar Movement to Chhotu Damu's last kid. This legacy helped Chhotu to develop his self through the hard corners in his life. He maintained his self respect whenever he is commented despite coming from a lowly caste government's son-in-law a different version for the practice of untouchability. His self is developed fully when he looks back to the journey from his excellence in Sanskrit at school to the declaration as Best International Student. Even the third generation Apoorva is not tied down by chase religion caste. Her Dalit identity remains an extra appearance for her identity. She holds the universal gentle viewpoint for the happening like Gujarat earthquake.

This book is a history of positive search for excellence of a person who spent his childhood in the slums of Mumbai. Dr. Narendra Jadhav remembers the early days. Survival of the fittest was the rule in the slums where I grew up. I was a pretty good fighter so I wanted to be a dada a gangster. He is excellent in his studies and soon outshines leaving everyone spell bound. There is no sigh of deep resentment and use of words depicting hatred for the society. The attitude of Damu is sober though he thinks that “Whatever heights a man might scale his caste is never caste off. It remains an inseparable identity.” Thus it is noticed that **Untouchables** is an autobiography of Dr. Narendra Jadhav which is a “Story of Change, great Courage, and Progress of hope.” **Untouchables** are an impressive writing that forces us to accept the cruelty

and injustice of social order that treats humans worse than animals. He knows the word of Dr. Ambedkar. Lost rights are regained by begging but relentless struggle and Goats are used for sacrificial offerings and not lions. Throughout the narrative runs the slogan coined by Dr. Ambedkar “Educate, Unite and Agitate”. He taught his children. Do anything but do best Excellence in that field. The end with the realization that further change is require. The whole has to stop treating Dalits as different. It is up to the present generation the torch lit by the tears and blood of their ancestors.

The poet Daya Pawar’s autobiography **Baluta** the next landmark in Dalit literature, was published in 1978 hitting upper-caste critics and readers. **Baluta** was the first autobiography written by a Dalit. Pawar’s realistic explanation of life in *Maharwada* a place outside villages kept for Dalits surprised readers. **Baluta** is a term for the system of usual village duties that Dalits had to perform for a share in the village. Unlike *Jewha Mi Jaat Chorali Hoti* which was not followed by short story collections of similar power. **Baluta** inaugurated a flow of unstable autobiographical narratives. It was never easy to tell these personal stories of humiliation and oppression. At one point in **Baluta** Pawar writes,

“What I had seen of the life of *Mahars* in my childhood has cut a permanent cut in my heart. The past will never be erased. It will go only when I go.”⁴⁴

Pawar balances his personal pain with the thought that telling these stories is politically significant. Some Dalits feel such stories are like digging compost dump. But if a man does not know his past he will not know which track he will take in future. Dalits who had moved up the economic ranking into the middle-class and who were embarrassed of their past and present were criticisms of **Baluta**. This class of Dalits has come to be known as Dalit Brahmin. Yet one among them the educationist economist and policy maker Narendra Jadhav has himself authored an autobiography **Aamcha Baap Aan Amhi** (Our Father and We 1993). As the title indicates the story of how he and his siblings grew up under the influence of Ambedkarite father Damodar

Runjaji Jadhav. In writing this autobiography Dr. Jadhav draws his father's detailed notes about the events of his life keeping his father's language. Ten years later he published prolonged version of the book in English incorporating stories related by his mother. This version ends with an interesting appendix written by his 16-year-old daughter Apoorva. Born in Bloomington, Indiana, she has said about her identity, "I am just Apoorva not tied down by religion or caste." [Ibid]

And yet it is not so easy to forget that even today Dalits are considered outcasts by caste Hindus. Urmila Pawar a voice in modern Dalit literature narrate in her autobiography **The Weave of My Life** the result of her daughter Manini's birthday party to which she had invited the child's classmate Kishori and her older brother. On returning home, the brother told his mother that there were portraits of Gautam Buddha and Ambedkar in the Pawar's home. The following day the mother arrived at Urmila Pawar's house stood outside the door and warned Urmila in harsh language.

There is also another issue that has been exercising Dalit minds in recent years can Dalits afford strictly and cover themselves into a corner? Why should politically dedicated writers hold firmly apart not only from upper-caste but also from Dalits who are not politically committed but are fine writers all the same? Years ago Raosaheb Kasbe author of **Ambedkar ani Marx** (Ambedkar and Marx, 1985) wondered whether it was not probable to examine Grace and Dhasal or Grace and Pawar together. A related question of social relations has also come to the fore in current period. Dalits have moved from village to town, educated themselves and entered middleclass professions. They have encountered and developed close to members of the upper castes certainly leading to inter-caste relationships ending in marriage. Sanjay Pawar's play **Kon Mhanta Takka Dila** (Who Says I Gave a Coin) first performed in 1990 deals with the caste quarrel arising out of an educated Dalit youth's relationship with a Brahmin girl. Pradnya Daya Pawar's short story **Vihar** from her collection **Afwa Khari Tharavi Mhanoon** (So That Rumour Might Prove True, 2010) deals with the reverse theme. Here a Dalit activist Karuna

falls in love with Sagar a Brahmin scholar and supporter of the Dalit. She belongs to a Bauddha supporter group whose members are pledged to marrying only neo Buddhists. Karuna's decision to marry Sagar upsets the leader and her co-workers but is supported by her Ambedkarite sister Sujata who believes that caste inflexibility will harm the better source of equality and a just society.

'**Baluta**' by Daya Pawar depicts crude realities of the caste system in India. The book depicts Dalits great effort for a passive survival. Daya suffers both physically and emotionally. The book shows his deep sympathy towards Dalits and firm beliefs. The book portrays the helplessness of a Dalit. The book also received anti Dalit reaction. But Daya Pawar succeeded in bringing the troubles of Dalits.' *Baluta* draws typical sign of the Dalit humiliation having to beg for leftover food as Baluta or his traditional village share as remuneration for performing stigmatized labour.

Pawar shows association between secret and revelation instead of celebrating the autobiographical as genuine act of self-representation. Dagdu Maruti Pawar is a character as well as a concept he is the secret sharer of Indian society whose shocking experiences cannot be related without disavowing the pact of Hindu. The problem of Dalit selfhood requires a change in ideas of autobiographical interiority. *Dalit* litterateurs think that so long as the discriminative caste system exists.

Pawar's **Baluta** (*Ramnagari, Balute*) both authors deal with the topic of caste the protagonists being a low-caste barber (*Ramnagari*) and an untouchable Mahar. Their literary techniques of representing the humiliations suffered by members of low castes however are quite different from one another. Pawar's **Baluta** is analyzing from the point of view that portrayal of social identity and placing it in the context of subaltern studies. Rainer Lotz compares two well-known novels which are concerned with women who are trapped in unhappy marriages and finally die tragically. In spite of the thematic closeness the novels convey different messages and thereby elucidate basic cultural differences. While Fontana following Flaubert criticizes the social and

educational systems and the moral code of bourgeois society Premchand praises his heroine's adherence to her role and only finds fault with individuals such as Nirmala's husband and her relatives for failing to do their preordained duty. **Baluta** was the first autobiography to be written by a Dalit. '**Baluta**' is a term for the system of traditional village duties.

The autobiographical writing by Daya Pawar represented a crossing of the boundaries in many senses of the term. This was a crossing of the limit that divided the mixed from the pure the sacred from the wicked and lower strata of the society. This act of writing by a Dalit of his community's suffering itself represented an act of offense. This writing represented a crossing of the boundaries from the margins of Marathi literary culture into the mainstream of Marathi literature itself. The act had thus become controversial for various reasons. But then Pawar's writing managed to break the stranglehold of the dominant Universalist aesthetics in Marathi through his radical act of self assertion in the language of his own caste, class and community. The book challenged the notion of universal brotherhood as well the dominant aesthetics of high caste Marathi language. Many Dalit books followed *Baluta* and these Dalit articulations which had once occupied a place on the margins of Marathi cultural production have today come to occupy almost the central place in it. For the translator thus Dalit writing poses an interesting set of challenges on the cultural and political level within India itself.

Maybe because of the disgrace and pain that attaches to confronting the self which he writes.

“Dagdu Maruti Pawar
Who carries as his portion⁷
This baluta of pain
Tied up in the folds [*padaraat*] of his clothes
Because of the structure of Indian society
I am only the beast of burden
Who manifests his words
His desire was that

No one should be told

I also feel

That we should not reveal this to anyone.”⁴⁵

Lower caste women by contrast experience far fewer controls over their physical freedom Shantabai Kamble explained in her autobiography *Majya Jalmachi Chitterkatha* that although she enjoyed her work and was independent, self-condense and assertive her case reiterates how the traditional norms relating to feminine and masculine duties continue to exist. Another such case was Shantabai Kamble who had obtained a good job as a result of her education. She emphasized that women have to manage everything and work hard to get out of the ordinary channel. She and her daughter opened that they did not benefit from equal status with their male counterparts. They felt that their employment was taken for granted there was nothing special or unusual about it to command any special status or respect. Their complaints were not addressed in a different fashion. These women filled their roles in the family with equivalent concern. This is not a dalit specificS problem but it was common in dalit families. Few informers were prepared to voice their claim in these respects within the family. When she reaches the end of her self-narrative and casts a distant glance on the memories laid down before her eyes she firmly attests that since the beginning and all along her life schooling alone saved her from hardship.

In actual fact the direct and sober narration of events which marked the initial seven years of her schooling give a pertinent account of two opposite dynamics. On the one hand, traditional constraints regulate everyday life and make school appear as a burden unnecessarily breaking a precarious set of strategies of immediate survival. On the other hand an untouchable school master personally committed to the cause of educational uplift of untouchable castes makes a point to open a separate class in the untouchable hamlet itself and forcefully intervenes to enroll girls too. The author's testimony is a glaring record of that blend of chance and purpose which often determines the course of life of marginalized human beings, particularly of women. The latter's lot

actually looks like a hazard. Shantabai's access to schooling is socially symbolic in this respect. It is due to a mixture of natural dispositions a will more or less aware of its motivations and objectives, and the casual availability of congenial circumstances. Shantabai's promotion appears a matter of sheer luck as everything apparently starts with a trick of a committed school master keen to enroll the girl despite the objection of his father. Seen from within her schooling experience shows the way personal resources may steer through constraints, inhibitions and handicaps of any sort.

The women's autobiographies are specific in identifying forms of strength and revolt in fields far from the male domain of socio-economic and political systems of power. The repressive control of male hegemonic dominance is the central substantive issue which is significantly confronted within the sphere of the private and family life women's mutual rapports religious rituals and female trance daily labour relations rapports with children. Life stories only could reveal hidden attempts of resistance usually unaccounted in the annals of historians. They moreover substantiate the rationale behind the claim that subordinate consciousness is no dead subjectivity no purely repetitive prescribed consciousness, and no quiet consensus. External constraints smother wishes and enforce silence. But deep within, preserved and latent hidden and simmering internal motions of dissent are stirred up by struggles for basic survival. Women's memoirs are the only ones capable of showing in a positive light the particular forms of resistance such as violent religious rituals and collective practices of possession usually derogatorily written off as crass superstitions. These modes of dissent and defiance do not fit into rationalist diagrams of progressive militancy class consciousness and scientific struggle. They originate from a subjective spontaneity which remains to be understood for itself. Shantabai Kamble hints at this when she describes and comments upon apparently nonsensical rituals to which series of generations have succumbed offering and sacrificing their lives to gods made of round stones only. This was truly the way that women found in their down-trodden condition to keep themselves alive. A Human being ought to keep his mind engaged in some pursuit in order to find joy somewhere and grow shoots of

hope. While nourishing these shoots of hope with all the strength of their soul they surely made them grow.

When she reaches the end of herself narrative and casts a distance glance on the memories laid down before her eyes she firmly attests that since the beginning and all along her life schooling alone saved her from hardships. My parents have given me education. My husband was a school master we have therefore given education to our children. Friends of my age who continue to stay in the village say to me 'you are educated your children are also educated, now you are well off. Otherwise see what we are? We go as daily wage earner. Hired this is how we live starving. Had we studied we would have lived well like you.' To think of it is true. None of my brothers went to school they learnt to be masons. One does not always find work in this line. One never eats one's fill. One feels crimping pains in the stomach as soon as the rainy season starts. She remembered her mother telling them that there is nothing to eat children go and sleep on an empty stomach. But she could not find sleep because her stomach was empty. She used to reply wiping her eyes. The memory of those days gives them stomach ache. Here Naja is the protagonist of the story, who bears the brunt of class, caste and gender. She wrote this after she retired from teaching in 1981. This autobiography has also been translated into French. The direct and sober narration of events which marked the initial seven years of her schooling give a pertinent account of two opposite dynamics. On the one hand traditional constraints regulate everyday life

Shantabai's father looked for a schoolmaster husband for her and she was married to Kamble master soon after this. For some time they lived happily together then when Shantabai was five months pregnant her husband was pressured by his maternal relatives into taking his cousin as a second wife. Shantabai was disgusted by this and asked him to give her a *sodchitthi* or simple formal divorce before he married again. However later she lived with him on and off and bore him three children after several miscarriages. She left for her natal home where her father supported her in her resolve, and, soon after, she obtained a job in a school in a town at some distance. People told her

it would be impossible for her to keep her job as a single woman in a small town but she declared that she was capable of facing any difficulties that came her way. Shantabai tells her story in the non-standard Marathi of the title, with certain flatness and a matter of fact air that contrasts with the colorful. She later attends teachers training college and retires as an education officer in the government a post that carries considerable authority. The tone of the autobiography is egalitarian and it is not influenced by masculinity. The adversity is an equal challenge for wife and husband. Her autobiography deals with these two contradictory approaches for two religions in which the logical rationality self awareness and struggle for emancipation are important aspects.

3.1 Summing Up:

To sum up, in the third chapter researcher has demonstrated that Dalits had at the disposition of ideological tool that efficiently helped them to minimize the force of identity conflicts. Identity centered on the struggle against caste oppression happens in a number of ways. The definition of the Dalit identity cannot be limited to an Ambedkarist and *Mahar* identity. It believes that being Dalit above all means refusing the social order of the Brahmin order. The search for identity in these autobiographies is not the identity of an individual but of the dalit community. The inner quest of identity, the cultural denunciation of the iniquitous Hindu dispensation and the social struggles to assert one's human dignity take various forms according to the will, vision and capacity of each writer There are various ways to be Dalit and there are nuances in positioning and different social journeys but the common basis is the decision to inscribe the struggle against domination at the centre of social identity. Declaration of the Self the aspects of Dalits as a deconstructive force to de Brahman's the Indian history and to reconstruct the Dalit form. The questions of identity and self-respect made Dalits interrogate the established conventional social structures. Dalit writings in the name of self-respect attracted wide critical acclaim of readers from all over the world. The formation of the Dalit identity was based on giving a unique political identity through active participation in the process of making a modern India.

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s Chapter-IV

4.0 Evaluation of the condition of Dalits

In the context of traditional Hindu society Dalit condition has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure such as any involving leatherwork butchering or removal of rubbish animal body and waste. Dalits worked as blue-collar employee cleaning streets, latrines and sewers engaging in these activities were considered to be polluting to the individual. As a result Dalits were usually kept apart and excluded from complete participation in Hindu social life. For example they could not enter a temple or a school and required to stay outside the village. Complicated defense were sometimes observed to avoid incidental contact between Dalits and other castes. Prejudices against *Dalits* still exist in rural areas in the everyday matters such as access to eating places, schools, temples and water sources. It has mostly vanished in urban areas and in the public area. Some Dalits have successfully integrated into urban Indian society where caste origins are less important in public life. In rural India caste origins are more willingly clear and Dalits often disqualified from local religious life though some qualitative facts suggests that its brutality is withdrawing.

The caste system has produced numerous rules about Untouchability that run day to day connections among social groups in the Indian society. When Dalits attempt to resist the unjust rules imposed upon them revenge by upper castes is rapid and aggressive. Dalits who try to declare their rights face the risk of collective and economic boycott and even physical pressure. A shortcoming of the country's approach towards the welfare of Dalits is that actions on atrocities are mostly seen as a law and order issue divorcing them from the larger policy for social justice. Atrocities do signify a major barrier to socio-economic mobility of the community. Policy maker should take into account that ending violence. Dalits is a basic obligation for success of redistributive policies rather than assuming that these policies by themselves would result in an end to violence and discrimination.

Since centuries Dalits have been the most deprived and discriminated as part of the typically caste divided Indian society. They have been suffering by humiliation, less respect, dignity and civilization. The last three thousand years of human history terrible disgust of the caste system in society. The global communities take for granted responsibility in bringing justice to the Dalits who have been systematically depressed their value, dignity, culture and rights by the upper caste people. What is miraculous that even after 65 years independence and as India is participant to many international agreements as Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Though in 1950 Untouchability was abolished by Indian constitution there is no difference in the life of Dalits and their essential human rights are dishonored on a daily basis. India is the world's largest democratic country. It is simply a democracy of the few, for the few and by the few and is probably the largest violators of human right acts. What is inferior to notice that untouchables cannot get a bucket of water from the village well or mingle in village tea stalls or cafes as their contact would pollutes all. In fact Dalits have been considered the most degraded, downtrodden exploited and the least educated in Indian society. They are considered untouchables because their touch is considered polluted. The caste hierarchy has put these people at the lowest ebb so they are outcaste. For decades they are banned from sharing water, food and shelter and forced to live in ghettos and hence they are referred as segregated. The dirty water of entire village flows their houses are segregated from the other part of the village. This area is known as *Maharwada*. This is the recognition mark which is still attached to this community. They have been socially, culturally and politically subjugated and marginalized.

Thus dalit women seem to be simple addition in the literary movement. Both typical feminists and dalit men can be blamed for the crime of divorcing dalit women. How dalit women have been silenced by ordinary feminism? Under such weak conditions who are the partners of dalit women? Mainstream and feminist movements in particular seem to be misguided in their understanding of dalit women. Many dalit and non dalit scholars share an idea that dalit

women are free than high caste women. Examine the specialty of dalit women's experience with patriarchy and oppressed sexuality.

They are of the opinion that lower caste women are not private like upper caste because their men depend on them for survival. Joshi and Liddle also write about the non sexual and the sexual divisions of labor. They suggest that lower castes women are forced to start work for earnings. While addressing the matter of sexuality they state Lower caste women are less controls over their physical freedom. The financial benefits and the social restriction of privacy are unknown to them. *Sati* was never demanded of them. In many lower caste communities separation was accepted and widows and divorced people could remarry without shame. This analysis of Liddle and Joshi suggests that dalit women though economically poor but go ahead sexually open minded life than upper caste women. That was 1986 and this is 2014 where it ties in with the common dialect by upper and middleclass women who suggest that dalit women are better because they can drink, smoke and abuse or hit back their husbands. The romanticizing of dalit women's life is also a characteristic. Dalit patriarchy is more self ruled than Hindu arguing that certain customs like *paadapuja* are not set up between the dalits. They also note the frequency of beating wife in dalit families and that the beaten wife has the right to attack public by shouting and abusing the husband. Though by understanding the original reason of criticizing brahmanical patriarchy and its strict system it is hard to read as democratic patriarchy. For that matter how can any patriarchy be autonomous in nature? Some dalit feminists like Urmila Pawar have analyzed the differences between Brahman and dalit women. Pawar explode some myths regarding the gender question in relation to the dalit movement. There was a broad gap between dalit and Brahman women on financial, communal and educational levels. Along with caste based atrocities she was constantly under the risk of rape in the family she had to bear the physical violence. Thus there is a constant movement between an understanding of the liberation that dalit women's economic independence provides women and the oppressive economic deprivation of the community. Pawar continues women in India identify with their caste over and above their gender. The progressive feminist Uma Chakravarti writes as,

“Upper caste men and women have both defended patriarchal institutions strongly as they see them as a barricade of their higher position in society. She states patriarchy was and is a necessary aspect of class order and social stability women then would and did resist its reformulation.”¹

Women tied to the family circle continue to attach the beliefs and practices of some dalits. This is particularly true who are looking for rising mobility. Dalit women have been constantly working outside in the fields. The new fact of middle classes called for domesticating dalit women. These dalit men reproduced their domination by upper castes through a constant permission and request of force to dalit women. Patriarchal norms would not permit the family unit to survive on a woman's income. In general this attitude is changing. When families realized that their financial load would less if both worked. They allowed women to work in public.

The villages have a vertical unity provided by many castes and horizontal unity provided by caste agreement with further villages. Villages are usually divided into communities of the same castes with the main castes living in the heart of the villages and the lower castes and Untouchables on the border. Towns and cities are often divided into neighborhoods of the same castes with the dominant castes living in nice neighborhoods and the lower castes and Untouchables in the slums. Other terms used to describe them include Depressed Classes *Avarna* (outside the *Varna* system) *Antyaja* (last-borne), Outcastes (inaccurate since they are in caste system), *Adi-Dravida* (meaning original *Dravidians*) external caste backwards castes *Panchama* (meaning fifth *Varna* a term developed to accommodate inter caste offspring into the caste system) and *Pariah* (a term used by the British based on the name of the major Untouchable group of Tamil Nadu). Their low rank is based in on the general belief often associated with Hinduism that traditional occupations dealing with death excrement blood such as butchers, leather workers, scavengers' latrine cleaners and street cleaners are polluting to other castes and touching them

ought to be avoided. Unspoken in this construct is the belief that Untouchables deserve lot in life. Because of *karma* and as a punishment for sins they are in the position dedicated in earlier lives. Untouchability is not unique to South Asia. In some places Untouchables are not allowed to use the cups or utensils used by others castes members at restaurants and stalls. Sometimes they are served from coconut shells or rather than in cup water poured into their hands. In some cases higher castes will not even agree to the lower castes shadows go down on them and Untouchables were obligatory to wear bells to alert upper class Hindus that they were coming. If a member of a high caste touches an Untouchable they are supposed to take bath and perform a ceremony to recover purity. Untouchables in the countryside have traditionally lived in separated city or segregated neighborhoods. In the cities they frequently lived in separate slums. In many cases they regularly used their own well, roads, footpaths and bridges. In some places Untouchables live in rural community downwind from villages with non Untouchables residents so their wind doesn't pollute the higher caste people in the villages. Such separation is regarded as essential actions to protect others from polluting company.

In some places Dalits are prevented from reading or studying Hindu scriptures. Those that did were sometimes severely beaten as a punishment. Untouchable children are often prohibited from attending classes with children from higher castes. Even educated Untouchables with high level government jobs are forced to sit at the feet of Brahmins when they return to their villages. It has been said that some Untouchables are consequently polluting a corpse which itself is regarded as polluting.

In some places Dalits are banned from understanding or studying Hindu scriptures. Those that did were sometimes harshly beaten as a punishment. Untouchable children are also banned from attending classes with children from higher castes. Yet educated Untouchables with high post government jobs are made compulsory to sit at the feet of Brahmins when they return to villages. It has been said that some Untouchables are consequently polluting a body which itself regarded as polluting.

Dr. Sharankumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* published in 1984 is an acknowledged masterpiece. An emotional violent autobiography is of a half caste growing up in the *Mahar* community and the torture of not belonging to it. Written in the dialect of Mahar community of Maharashtra it gives numbing account of the embarrassment of the community at the hands of an unthinking advantaged class. Sharan is disturbed by the question of his cracked identity and asks himself,

“Am I an upper caste or an untouchable?”²

The work is a harsh analysis of the lack of sympathy that the lower castes have tolerate for centuries. Limbale tells heart rending methods of struggle for hunger. The dominating theme of the book is the dalit's continuous battle with hunger.

“Eating baked bread that smells of dung or stealing grain left with corpses at the crematorium seems routine to him Maharwada village enclave of the untouchable Maher's meant a heap of *jowar* gathered at the resting place of a corpse. Each person was like again. Why don't they eat the jowar connected with the rites of the dead? It too was food. Why should such jowar not be touched?”³

Although Limbale is allowed the privilege of going to school he had to watch the higher caste children eat lavish meals and could only hope that they would be open-minded with their leftovers. When he eats greedily morsels his mother would shout at him when he got home so selfish and not saving any for her or his sisters. His grandmother would eat *bhakari* made from the corn she had dug out of the load of dung so that her grandchildren would eat good flour they had. She made unbelievable surrender still her house went hungry until they were able to beg on a market day or until a good friend received the agreement to remove a dead animal. Limbale firmly believed that hunger can be controlled by men and if no hunger no fighting and no conflict. Limbale tells us everything about his life including the clothes he will wear the person

he will marry and the food he will eat. Limbale describes the life of a man who suffered not only caste system but also the pain of not even allowed into the caste system. His complete life he lived under the curse impure blood because his mother had out of wedlock with the chief of the village. His entire life he had watched people and families separately and he wanted no part of it.

The present study makes an attempt to examine the duplicity of the ancient caste system and how its selfish followers commit crimes for their material comforts and luxuries. It further discusses how the sufferer and protagonist Limbale challenge the system itself and its long beliefs which are somewhat not the same and prejudiced against the downtrodden as portrayed in **The Outcaste**. The original Marathi version of *Akkarmashi* is written in 1984. Later it was translated into English in 2003. Limbale became renowned and popular after his autobiography was published. **The Outcaste** has portrayed the condition of enslaved, exploited and harassed life of a Dalit woman and her children who are born from different Hindu men through his autobiography. Dr. Sharankumar Limbale is the son born to a Dalit woman from a Hindu man. According to the social system he is an illegal child. He does not belong to any of the castes religions. He is fatherless though he has a father and has no identity. Limbale's mother belongs to the Mahar caste and his father is from the Lingayat caste. In fact his parents are not married.

Limbale has pointed out in his autobiography that Indian society is Hindu society in particular has been extremely old fashioned, traditional, superstitious, unscientific and hypocritical. **The Outcaste** reveals that since the social order in Hinduism is hierarchical the members of it at the lowest ring are bound to suffer and get victimized in a variety of ways by those at the higher ranges of society. Dalits are forced to live life of obedient and submissive slaves who are never supposed to disobey their oppressors. According to the caste system they cannot fulfill their basic needs if it is against the system.

The Outcaste shows that Dalits have been poverty stricken people. The system of their society has indeed imposed poverty on them. They have been

thrown away to periphery which has almost been completely neglected. Moreover it discloses that poverty makes the poor to steal. It makes them beggar. At the same time it makes them to tell falsehood. Limbale writes that he himself had to steal food to fill his stomach. He had to beg whenever necessary and his grandmother had to tell lies. **The Outcaste** points out that poverty makes them to eat what animals eat when there is no way to have food. For instance Limbale`s sister had to eat banana peels to satisfy her hunger. As a result one can state that Dalits in India often have to eat used food. They have to wear used clothes and footwear. At times they have to starve. The Dalits in Limbale`s locality have habitually eat discarded and stale food. Sometimes they eat what is not safe to eat for human beings. Most of them are equal to beggars. Limbale reports how his sister and he had to eat useless peels of bananas. By evening when the market dispersed. Vani had collected banana skins which people had thrown after eating. She sat by the street and ate the skins.

“I hit Vani. I snatched the skins and threw them away to stop her from eating them. Suddenly I changed my mind. I collected the banana skins and wiped them with my shirt as they were soiled. Then I went to the river sat in a corner and started eating them. When I saw our teacher approaching I threw away the skins. It was as if I was throwing away my stomach with hunger in it.”⁴

He writes that sometimes they have to tell lies and some other times they have to steal eatables. Limbale does not mind stealing eatables when it becomes a need.

Since they do not have a regular means of income they have to depend on their oppressors. They are always paid less than what they deserve to get for their work. The same point is narrated by Bama in her book **Karukku**. She writes,

“Our hard work was exploited half the time by our Naicker employers. The rest of the time we were

swindled by these tradesmen. So how was it possible for us to make any progress?”⁵

The Outcaste describes that everything regarding the life of the Dalits is determined and controlled by the caste Hindus. That is why one can remark that Dalits are treated as bonded laborers because the social system in Hinduism, **The Outcaste** reveals completely unequal and unfair. Limbale the Outcaste presents dark aspects of the Indian society especially of the caste Hindu one. In such a society in which Dalits and non-Dalits live practice of untouchability is necessarily observed by the caste Hindus. As a result the powerless and ignorant Dalits are subjected to maltreatment and excruciatingly humiliation. But **The Outcaste** exposes that no one finds any logical behavior in it because the supporters of untouchability do not strictly follow Limbale records,

“This is Narayan Patil’s well. Last year the *Mahar* dig and built it. The spades and shovels of *Mahar*’s were used to dig the well. The *Mahar* gave their sweat for it. They also used explosives. They the *Mahars* are the reason why there is water in the well. But now the same *Mahars* are not allowed to draw water from it not even drinking water.”⁶

Limbale describes that Hindus in the system wholeheartedly love and sympathize with animals but they are not seen to have sympathy with the Dalits when they indeed do. That is the Dalits are observed as lower to animals. Limbale documents Hindus see the cow as their mother. A human mother is cremated but when a cow dies they need a *Mahar* to dispose of it. The owner weeps when one of her animals dies. The cow pain looks sad. **The Outcaste** points out that the Dalits are given inhuman treatment by Hindus. Moreover if any Dalit lady is good looking and happens to be ignorant and powerless she is bound to get sexually harassed and maltreated by them. As a result she is hated and discriminated against not only by the Hindus but by the untouchables also. Masamai is one such victim who has to suffer at each and every step in her life because she has been made to lead a kind of life which is

completely against her wish. **The Outcaste** further portrays how the behavior of Hindus is rational and hypocritical. On the one hand Hindus follow untouchability and unabashedly categorize against the Dalits on the basis of the caste system. They look down upon them because they have power. Alternatively they do not follow the carry out of untouchability as it should be followed. The autobiography points out that since the caste system in which Dalits live is unequal discriminatory undemocratic and indifferent to the Dalits they cannot get justice though they try best to get it. Taking into consideration class and role of the caste system the non Dalits especially Hindu men hardly hesitate to harass exploit and victimize the Dalits. A number of Hindu men often try to have illegal sexual relationship with Dalit women. Dalit women were badly insulted. They were beaten like slaves. Some farmers even harassed them sexually pulled them into the crop and raped them. Similar episode is narrated by Kishor Shantabai Kale in his autobiography **Against All Odds** in which a Hindu politician buys a young Dalit girl to quaint his lust for some days. Jagtap was a politician and Kondiba (father of the sexual victim) could see his pockets overflowing. In Shanta's life as per *Kolhati* tradition Jagtap took the place of a husband although she was an reluctant bride. On condition that she would not have sex with any other man he maintained her and her family. He was her Kaja or Yejma Limbale asserts that Dalits are branded as inferior human beings in the names of god's goddess's religious scriptures and such metaphysical phenomena. As a consequence they have been considered to be untouchable. By the way he interprets the illogical code of behavior followed by the members of the caste system. He used clean clothes bathed every day and washed himself with soap and brushed teeth with toothpaste. There was nothing unclean. Then in what sense was he untouchable?" A high caste that is unclean was still considered touchable! According to him they (Dalits) have been forced to live outside the boundaries of the localities of Hindus. But when Hindu men want to have sex with the Dalit ladies they openly disobey the social norms only if they need such ladies for relieve and enjoyment. In the same manner, Limbale's caste Hindu father disobeyed the practice of untouchability to have illegal sexual relationship with his Dalit mother. However he could not go against the caste system and did not look after her and his own son Limbale himself as a responsible

husband and father. **The Outcaste** reveals that in fact it has been a part of Hindu men's lives to use the communal influence and force Dalit women to fall a prey to their sexual lust. Limbale narrates that Masamai was well settled in her married life with her husband. She was a beautiful woman. Her husband Ithal Kamble was a servant on the farm of Hanamanta.

Limbale a Hindu married landlord Kamble's life was weak in almost every sense because Dalits have been supposed to do only slavish and menial works according to the system. That is why Kamble was poor to live a human life. He was following the system in a passive manner. He was an ignorant poor and powerless man. He was working like a slave for Limbale's family. Limbale writes,

“He was one of the beasts that toiled on the farm. The animals in the shed he looked after were no different from this bonded laborer.”⁷

Here one can state that the entrenched caste system has determined and maintained the nature and function of the life of the downtrodden. It has made their lives completely dependent on Hindus. As a result this particular hope of the Dalits on the oppressors has crippled them forever. It can be said that the root cause of the pathetic condition of the Dalits lies in the unfair structure and nature of the caste system.

Subhash Chandra, a researcher remarks in relation to the dependence of Dalits that,

“The Dalit class is completely dependent on the non-Dalits to fill their stomachs. They are helpless to eat the discarded food of the non-Dalits to satiate the hunger of the stomach.”⁸

Limbale points out that everything is set for both the downtrodden as well as for their counterparts by the caste system. However being a Hindu Hanamanta

Limbale transgresses the code of conduct set by the caste system. He establishes an illegal sexual relationship with Kamble's wife Masamai who easily falls a prey to his cunning policy. As a result the caste *panchayat* forces Kamble and Masamai to get a divorce. Now Masamai is alone and free. Being the situation Hanamanta Limbale lures her and keeps her as his concubine. In this way he keeps her for his sexual lust for a few months. For his sexual need Hanamanta Limbale does not follow untouchability with Masamai. But when a son is born to them he instantly and deliberately reject his son Sharankumar. Here one can remark that although Hanamanta Limbale is not an obedient and true follower of the system he pretends to follow it. Since he cannot go against the system he directly refuses to accept his son from a Dalit woman. That is he rejects to take responsibility to bring up his son. He is portrayed as a hypocrite. He is not a true lover of Masamai. But he pretends to be and utilizes her. He is never afraid about the weak condition and poverty of Masamai. Masamai and her all children have to suffer from malnutrition. Even though he is a landlord he never cares for Sharankumar Limbale. His activities show that he is a cunning and bad man. But Limbale writes that the system has identified him as someone better to the Dalits who are almost completely helpless and innocent. Another Hindu married landlord called Yeshwantrao Patil who is the father of eight children with Masamai unlawfully does not take the responsibility of bringing up the children. All the children go hungry all the time although Patil is not worried about them. Through his activities are seen that he is careless, selfish and cunning person. But just because he is born in a Hindu family he is considered to be superior to the Dalits. One can say that though Hanamanta Limbale and Patil are adulterers and criminals they are not seen punished because the system is in their support. Not only Hanamanta Limbale and Patil are hypocrites but the system itself functions as a hypocrite. Here it can be stated that the view of the well-established system are not just enough to follow to lead a human live especially for Dalits. That is why many of the members of it directly or indirectly fail to obey it. Due to this hypocrisy nature of the Hindu followers of the system the Dalits begin to doubt the sincerity of the caste system itself.

Limbale points out that most of the literate people in India are branded as educated. However highly and well educated one Hindu is they are not able to detach themselves from the influence of the upbringing of the caste system. Generally injustice maltreatment and atrocities are carrying out against the untouchables in the rural areas. However even metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai are no exception. Whenever a Dalit come to a city for a room on rent he is asked his caste by the non-Dalit house owners. If he tells his caste untouchable he will not given a room. In such situation the Dalit has to walk here and there in search of a rented room. If he does not get it he has to go to the Dalits locality in the city for a room. Or he has to live in an unclean locality. At times they have to tell lies and hide their castes. This frustrating story of a Dalit is narrated in **The Outcaste**.

“However I went to Latur. I faced the problem of finding a house in a new town and my caste followed me like an enemy. Latur was such a big place with huge buildings, houses and bungalows but I was turned away wherever I went. They said frankly ‘we don’t want to rent out our house to Muslims and Mahars.’ Should I put this town to the torch? Such a big town-but I could not get a single room.”⁹

Every town and person was conscious about the caste. Limbale focuses on the point that since Dalits are ignorant powerless and unaware of the truth they are most of the time exploited and subjected to suffering humiliation abuses. There is no fellow feeling between them. The non Dalits always hate Dalits. Therefore the downtrodden are concentrated to more or less by them. In a critical situation there is only one thought before them. That is to fill their stomachs because they are struggling for their whole life to earn their bread and butter. The dominating theme throughout the book is the Dalit’s regular conflict with hunger. Although Limbale is allowed going to school he had to observe the higher caste children eat lavish meals and could only hope that they would be liberal with their leftovers. When he ate greedily those morsels his mother yells at him when he got home and not saving any for her or his

sisters. His grandmother would eat *bhakari* made from the corn she had dug out a pile of manure so that her grandchildren would have what little good flour she had left. She made incredible sacrifices but her house still went hungry until they were able to beg on a market day or until a good friend received the deal to remove a dead animal. As a child Limbale firmly believed that hunger controlled men and if there had been no hunger there would have been no strife and no war.

So they have no time to think of other good or bad right or wrong phenomenon in the life. **The Outcaste** portrays that Limbale is one of the greatest victims of the caste system which is based on the concept of god yet he is not completely a staunch atheist. He says that he does not agree of this religion of this country and this god. But throughout the autobiography one can find that hardly any character in it is an atheist.

Limbale describes that like other Dalits students at school he was victimized by his non Dalit especially by Hindu teachers and harassed by his schoolmates. When taken into consideration all the autobiographies by Dalit authors it can be said that in fact, in Indian schools it has been a tradition for non Dalit teachers and students to harass and insult the Dalit students. In other words the Dalit students are made to work all the while rather than to make them learn how to study. It can be stated that they are deliberately misguided and their attention is diverted from their studies. More importantly it is extremely important to bring about a revolution among non Dalit teachers so that they would stop becoming discriminatory and would stop subjecting Dalit students to dire atrocities and injustices.

In addition to this **The Outcaste** displays that Dalits are treated very badly and subjected to humiliation if ever they make attempts to reject humiliation and maltreatment inflicted upon them. They are most of the time addressed in an arrogant and bad mannered. They are made to adopt discouraging names. One can find inauspicious names for Dalits in each and every Dalit autobiography. In **The Outcaste** it such names of Dalits like Kacharuajja which means dust grandfather. Limbale has reveals that Dalits are helpless and powerless. Hence they have to do certain things in secret. People in the world eat non-vegetarian

food. But when Dalits eat it they have it very secretly because the Hindus consider it wrong though they themselves eat it silently. It could be commented on that non Dalits are hypocrite.

At the same time they are unable to tolerate what downtrodden do. Besides **The Outcaste** exposes that because of the inferiority complex in relation to Dalits and superiority complex regarding them non Dalits cannot tolerate the well being and upliftment of Dalits. As Dalits get comforts they start suffering. In this connection Limbale documents the Hindu community was hurt because with the facilities given to them Dalits were getting an education and becoming aware of their rights. A generation of militant youths generated by the movement also threatened the Hindus and the thought of untouchables being satisfied lives with jobs made available to them forced. Dalits refused to do the ordinary jobs that they once did for Hindus. Such changes in the Dalit community occurred with their conversion to Buddhism. The thought that the community which had lived the life of cats and dogs for thousands of years was now behaving as equals was unacceptable by the high caste. Dalits have to hide their caste identity in order to escape from the calamity brought about by the caste conscious society because they are helpless. That is why they are unable to confront the discriminatory forces in the society. While talking about the rejection of the Hindus to the reservation policy he clearly says that they cannot understand the suffering of the Dalits.

One can see that Limbale's life story is quite different from those by other Dalit writers. **The Outcaste** describes that he had to suffer not only at the hands of Hindus but at of the Dalits because he was born to an untouchable mother and a touchable father. Here he is the greatest victims in the cattiest society. Dalits and non Dalits have equally subjected him to extreme humiliation and suffering. Limbale narrates one such story in which his in-laws insult him.

“That evening my father-in-law came home drunk and picked a quarrel with me. My mother-in law was already annoyed with me. Whenever I quarreled with

my in-laws Kusum my wife became tense. The problem of pure and impure blood meant nothing to her.”¹⁰

Maryappa Kamble said,

“My son is the president of the Dalit Panthers. He is highly respected by his followers. You say that you are a relative of that Muslim. You are the cause of humiliation for us among our own caste. We have told everyone that you are of pure blood. You must have some self-respect otherwise don't enter our house I felt insulted.”¹¹

Though Dalits are the worst sufferers of the caste system they are unable to discontinue following it. Here Limbale's wife comes under the class of exemption who accepts him as her husband because for her it does not matter if her husband belongs to an another caste. It means she refuses the extremely powerful system.

Therefore **The Outcaste** represents when Dalits have got educated in the twentieth century they sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly have tried to disobey the system. Limbale points out in his autobiography that as he got mature he began to go against the social norms and practices which were totally illogical and anti human. Although the Dalits are not allowed to enter temples his friend and he entered the temple in his village when they were young boys. When they were served tea in separate cups meant for Dalits at a village hotel they complained against the hotel owner to the police. The Dalits have not been considered to be addressed with respect according to the system. But Limbale began to respect those Dalits who were really respected. He remembers he stopped saying *namaskar* and started saying *Jai-Bhim*. He became critical of the system and convention. He disowned his father's caste and wanted to get married according to the Buddhist rituals. In addition to these anti system deeds of him there are other innovative and radical acts such as inter caste marriages.

The journey from Daya Pawar's *Baluta* to Limbale's *The Outcaste* is the story of social history. In these autobiographies connecting different periods and put in dissimilar levels of society domestic and personal space is regularly propelled into a whirlpool of confused conflict with caste politics and power. The writer gives details of a story of social truth that its own historical reality. They function at individual, social and cultural level bringing the past and the present. Dagdu Maruti Pawar dealt with the atrocities experienced by the dalits or untouchables under the caste system in different forms of literary genre. His autobiography *Baluta* recounts the incident of an untouchable struggling for a peaceful existence emotionally under attacked but unable of revenge in action. The autobiography is written as a story by Dagdu Pawar being told to the more literate Daya Pawar. The book received significant anti dalit blowback for frank exposition.

The book exposes not only harsh insult and shameful behavior of unfair upper caste persons making hell of dalit lives but the question of hunger and survival as well dominates. *Baluta* as it was named in *Marathi* represents the ideal symbol of the dalit's embarrassment for leftover food as *Baluta* or his fixed village share as fee for performing stigmatized labor. Pawar has characterized his story as a secret that must not be revealed perhaps because of the shame as well as the pain that attaches to confronting the self of which he writes in his autobiography. Pawar plays on the relationship between secrecy and revelation instead of celebrating the autobiographical as an authentic act of self representation. Indeed Dagdu Maruti Pawar is both a character plus a concept he is the secret sharer of Indian society whose shocking experiences cannot be related without reject the deal of Hindu ambiguity. The narrative progresses throwing light on different chapters of life including way of life, practices, education, profitable realities and gender bias. The diversity of plot concerns is combined by the writer's constant analysis. It is a first person narration of the minority consciousness and their struggle is a matter of inspiration for him and for others giving an account of discrimination and deprivation as a stage of recognition and assertion living on the limits of the marginalized unessential human exposed to the harsh realities of life.

Prof. Jasbir Jain in her work **Contesting Post Colonialism** has talked about,

“Such memory narrative and the homogeneity which is there but has raised a very important question that how does one define outer reality? Is it defined and shaped only by the cultural other or does reality also manifest itself in the act of living. The self in dalit writings is constantly in the process of being formed it is the environment and the external control forces which loom large. Experiencing the pathos and pain which the memory of the actual happenings brings to the writer the reader feels the shock and a sense of loss at the unaccountable misery borne by some even in the so called progressive time.”¹²

Dalit narratives are not only self portraits but also a social explanation and memorial which lies bare pain. Constructed as the performance of shocking experiences suffered by the protagonists, opening in the vulnerable years of childhood they show the load of individual on the border treated as outcastes and looked with doubt. The tedious encounter with injustice burns carefully into the memory of the protagonist marking their development during life carrying mark of negative response and domination.

The original title of Urmila Pawar’s memoir is *Aaydan* a word from the local dialect spoken in the villages that form the background of her life. *Aaydan* is the name for the cane baskets that her mother wove to sell for additional income for the family. Translated into English as **The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman’s Memoirs** it takes us from her childhood memories of life in the village and her mother’s constant struggle to make ends meet, through her school and college days in the town of Ratnagiri to her life after her marriage in Mumbai where she encounters a feminist group and later becomes a writer and organizer of Dalit women. The time span it covers is from just after India’s independence in 1947 to the end of the century.

But this trajectory is not the essential narrative line in a book whose title is a better metaphor for the writing technique that Urmila Pawar adopts. The lives of different members of her family her husband's family her neighbors and classmates are woven together in a narrative that gradually reveals condition and different aspects of the everyday life of Dalits the manifold ways in which caste asserts itself and grinds them down. The author's point of view is also woven from two strands that of the young girl blankly witnessing instances of caste injustice patriarchal domination and the daily compulsions of poverty and of the mature woman looking back on these with the insights she has gained later on in her life. And yet the narrator's position is neither central nor distanced it is constantly engaged.

The Weave of My Life begins with a detailed description of the harsh landscape of the Konkan region on the west coast of India and the relation these Dalit women their own lives harsh and full of toil have with this landscape The first chapter begins with the village Dalit women's journey to sell their wares rice bags firewood grass in the town market the most extreme manifestation of caste in Indian society functions through a prohibition not only of touch and of certain occupations but also of the public use of speech it is only the Brahmins who can enunciate sacred texts but the untouchables are even further silenced by the authority of caste. So for these Dalit women who were also silenced by the authority of patriarchy to make a public use of speech was at the time truly revolutionary. Anecdotes like these in Urmila Pawar's memoir can read for their deep insights into caste as it is lived by the Dalits, with its small cultures of resistance that help to make the ever present pain of untouchability more bearable. Her own experiences of caste discrimination are narrated with an interweaving of humor or with dry asides of self deprecation. At school Dalit children are saddled with bothersome tasks on one occasion the master hits Urmila with the unjustified accusation that their family cow has made a mess in the *verandah*. She runs home crying and is cheered to find that her mother is willing to confront the teacher and demand justice. After her marriage Pawar is subjected to discrimination when she and her husband look for rented accommodations in the town of Ratnagiri; they have to vacate two rooms after the landlady discovers their caste. In one

place her landlady's daughter strikes up a friendship and wants to borrow a sari. Urmila generously shows her all her wedding saris but when the girl discovers Urmila's caste she suddenly lost her voice. Picking up her brocade sari, she walked off. Here is the paradox of untouchability that it is fine to borrow a Dalit girl's sari but not to have social intercourse with her or drink tea in her house. But Urmila Pawar's tone in telling us this story is not the incomprehension of the suffering subject of the worst kinds of Dalit oppression and violence rather it is ironic. After all landladies in small towns are notorious for their caste sensitivities and it would not be only Dalits who are likely to undergo this kind of discrimination.

One of the most moving anecdotes recounted in this memoir is of the village celebrations of the spring festival of *Holi*. *Mahar* youths are made to do the hard work of cutting down branches and trunks of trees and carrying them to the field where a fire will be lighted at dusk. But they are not allowed a place in the celebrations it is the upper caste men who carry the palanquin of the goddess and the *Mahars* are forbidden to touch it. But the *Mahar* boys who have poured lots of drink down their throats, jump up and try to touch the palanquin. They have been affected by the mood of defiance that is peculiar to the *Holi* festival when it is acceptable for men and women to howl and curse in public. These are age old traditions that have been followed by all castes for centuries. On the day after the full moon people throw dust and cow dung at each other these days it is normal to spray one another with colored water. While praying for prosperity and the diversion of calamities from the village the upper castes also ask that the calamities be visited on the *Mahars*. This is another role thrust on the untouchables that of carriers of misfortune as well as pollution protectors and sanitizers of the village who are reviled rather than revered. The disobedient *Mahar* boys are soundly kicked and beaten for their misbehavior. The narrative here frighteningly adopts the technique of the ordinary the youths return to their families receive some comfort from their mothers and sisters and run back into the dispute only to get beaten up again. Then the festival moves on to the next stage and everyone enjoys the dramatic performances staged in the light of the full moon petromax lamps and the strong *Holi* fire.

One of the special features of Urmila Pawar's memoirs is her account of patriarchy among the Dalits. It begins in the second chapter with the description of the marriage ceremony of her eldest brother. This marriage took place before the Mahars converted to Buddhism but Urmila Pawar's family had already cut down on the number of rites to be performed. She gives details of the rituals of a *Mahar* wedding which are different from those of a traditional Hindu wedding. The all important *saptapadi* or seven circling of the sacred fire by the bride and groom for instance is replaced by arranging seven piles of rice on a wooden plank for the bride to step on. When the rituals are over the traditional games begin. After her account of several games Pawar remarks:

“All these games were basically intended to control the bride and keep her in check. But when they were being played everybody laughed and had a good time. These were happy occasions in their lives.”¹³

Afterward Pawar gives more serious examples of patriarchal oppression of women both within the Dalit community and along the lines of caste hierarchy with upper caste men enjoying a license to exploit Dalit women sexually. The temple priest sexually abuses a young girl from the nomadic *Komati* community the young Urmila sees her coming out of the inner sanctum in tears and does not understand. Her mother and her elder sister Bhikiakka are more victims of dire poverty than patriarchy and the ill-treatment of another sister Manjula at the hands of her in-laws followed by several cases of similar treatment of daughters-in-law. On the other hand Urmila Pawar also tells us of her own experience of affection and friendship from members of her husband's family.

There is a terrible story of a widow who becomes pregnant and is kicked in the stomach by women of the village till she aborts the fetus and later dies. Noting the self-righteousness of the village women who feel that they are upholding the honor of their community is the only comment Pawar offers us with regard to this incident. In general Dalit widows were not treated with the same degree

of exclusion as in the Brahmin community. Although Pawar touch on the issue of widow remarriage she gives us a small linguistic essay on the interesting term *randki sooj* which translates as widow's swelling or widow swelling. Urmila has heard the phrase from her mother who claims that although she is a widow she does not have the *randki sooj*. She asks her elder sister about it and gets the following reply,

“You know for some women when their husbands die it is a release from oppression. Then they look a little better fresh so people say they have got the *randki sooj*. Then she grew and said but let me tell you I have always been like this somewhat plump even before my husband died.”¹⁴

This explanation is perhaps an adequate comment on the nature of dalit patriarchy. The earthy phrase more so because the word *raand* means both a widow and a prostitute in Marathi tells us that many a woman is so badly treated by her husband that she blossoms out a little after his death. And yet the freedom to joke about it the common use of such a phrase also signifies that widows are not completely suppressed.

Urmila Pawar devotes an entire chapter the third to a description of food it's in her family and community. This helps her to accomplish a number of distinct objectives. First the experience of extreme poverty of living with a persistent lack of adequate nourishment is most effectively conveyed through the child's viewpoint. The mother is described as stingy fending off her children's demands whiles her efforts to make ends meet and to give them what taste and variety she can. Then there is the contrast with the food habits of young Urmila's upper-caste schoolmates.

As she writes

“The upper caste girls always used words like Ladu, Modak, karanjya, Puranpolya. They brought such novel items in their tiffin boxes as well as at times we went on excursions. However I never asked myself the stupid question why we do not prepare such dishes at home?

We were aware without anybody telling us that we were born in a particular caste and in poverty and that we had to live accordingly.”¹⁵

The children’s negotiations with each other and the pain the girl feels tell us a great deal about one of the central aspects of caste hierarchy. And finally throughout the hierarchy it is the women who look after the culture of their caste and there is an enjoyment and a pride in talking about the food characteristic to one’s caste and the food prepared at festivals however small it may be. Women are the cultural carriers of caste and it is through the patriarchal control of women that caste divisions are maintained.

The other important reference about the community and exploitation of the women is seen in their food preparations at residence. It is very clear from the memoir that separate food planning was done for men and women and mainly the daughter-in-law is oppressed maximum level. Pawar as a feminist and dalit woman has highlighted an issue as she writes,

“When the men folk went out and women and girls remained at home they dined at kata. A small quantity poured in water and cooked as a soup with chili powder salt and a piece of mango or maul. This was called sagar. Women ate their rice with the watery dish. The song we used to sing. Hey what is that funny’ dug noise what is the foul smell spreading all over?

Well what they cooked was fish water!

Someone has had a bellyful and how!

She wears a short sarees, down to the feet now

To hide what trickling down from her butt.”¹⁶

In the later chapters of **The Weave of My Life** Urmila Pawar moves with her husband to Mumbai and works at a job in a government office. Here the narrative picks up speed as she adjusts to life in a metropolitan city. The everywhere presence of caste cannot be entirely forgotten even here there are daily and occasionally bigger jolt of caste discrimination. But Pawar makes

good use of the newfound freedom and attends meetings meets women's groups and most important begins to write. Here too her weaving technique is at play as she intersperses the narrative of her own achievements with her observations about the society around her. Her feminism becomes more pronounced. Her increasing activity and fame as a writer makes her husband uncomfortable. There is tragedy she loses a college going son and problems to be resolved. She stands by both her daughters when they go against their father's wishes marrying men of their choice.

Pawar's autobiography has been much acclaimed in Marathi literary circles. It has won prizes and is currently in its third edition. But she says that the book has also received its share of aggravation especially in the Dalit community. She has been criticized for her association with upper caste women's groups and her open exposition of Dalit patriarchy has not been welcomed. The book exposes not only severe insult and contemptible behavior of oppressive upper caste persons making hell of dalit lives but the question of hunger and survival.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav's **Untouchables': My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India**. brings out this impact in many different ways. From most important expressions for opening wells and temples long closed to Dalits reviving the practice of Buddhism leading the drafting of the Constitution and setting a personal example of academic achievement. Ambedkar is everywhere in Dr. Jadhav's life. **Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey out of the Caste System in Modern India**. is written in mainly exciting way. It is not an autobiography of the talented Dr. Jadhav who has a Ph.D from the US and is a member of the Planning Commission of India. Actually it is the story of his father and mother. Each chapter exchange between his father's viewpoint (Damu) and mother (Sonu) but keeps moving forward in time. Only at the end does Jadhav (Chotu) himself come in. The story of Damu and Sonu is interesting enough to read just because of whom they were and the times they lived in. At one level it is a tribute from a son to his father while on the other hand it is the story of the Dalits through three generations. The story begins in 1930s when Damu

the protagonist of the story is continuously addressed as Mahar in his ancestral village in Western Maharashtra where caste firms one's destiny. Influenced by Dr. Ambedkar's teachings Damu stands against the Police and the caste system. However a few things stood out. One of these was the strong religiosity of Sonu Jadhav. She came across as an extremely religious. Indeed the chapter where Damu proposes that the family convert to Buddhism is quite exciting with Damu's political interpretation of religious belief coming into conflict with Sonu's more personal and spiritual understanding. The book traces the unexpected journey of Damu from a small village at Ozar in Maharashtra to the city of Mumbai to run away from discrimination. It was a voyage that brought back his self-respect and touchability. In the city he earns respect in different jobs in spite of being a low caste and an uneducated. His inflexible spirit encouraged his wife who realized that their freedom could be possible only through the search of educational excellence. At another level it gives an intelligent appraisal of the caste system in India and traces the story of the awakening of Dalits traversing three generations. At another level it is a reflective of the aspirations of millions of Dalits in India. **Untouchables ': My Family's Triumphant Journey out of the Caste System in Modern India.** is also the story of Sonabai the mother of author. Her virtue as a pre-pubescent bride and shocked lack of enthusiasm to give up her old and trusted gods for the unknown Buddha are case of an ordinary Dalit woman's experiences. In the book Sonu's story alternates with that of Damu's. This is more than a mere personal account of the caste divide in India. It examines the Dalit beginning organization by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar the Independence movement the Civil Disobedience Movement Gandhiji's relation with Ambedkar the through conversion of Dalits to Buddhism in 1956 and caste in its current reality. One can find Ambedkar's call for the Dalits to "Educate, Unite and Agitate" as a frequent idea in the book. **Untouchables ': My Family's Triumphant Journey out of the Caste System in Modern India.** is the first book to portray Ambedkar as a character in the story. There is also a long note at the end of the caste structure and Dr. Ambedkar. Dr. Jadhav has sensibly retained many Marathi words in the text thus retaining the spirit of the story. Personal story keep the book lively and easily readable. The book ends with a note of self recognition that in modern India self-respect rests in the minds and

hearts of people and those old prejudices do not really matter. **Untouchables'** gives an interpretation of caste which is surprisingly different and helpful.

Dr. Jadhav's description of his conquest of the Vithoba temple was another best moment. Denied entry for centuries by the Hindu priestly order the Dalit was greeted by the chairman of the temple trust and the head priest when he arrived for *puja*. This stone was the boundary beyond which the untouchables were not allowed to step. The touchable had the temple. The untouchables had only the stone. Their boulder stood strong and alone a few feet outside the temple. The boulder became their temporary Vithoba crude beat by the elements quite unlike the richly dressed decorated idol of the god within. In the struggle against caste discrimination illiteracy and poverty their weapons are education, empowerment and democracy. This is a story of such family. The book is a multi layered narration of the under privileged who suffered at the hands of the privileged for centuries. His autobiography is wonderful narrative which describes how his illiterate parents raised their six children to become successful human beings.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav's parents never went to school. But they knew the importance of education. They send their children to Chhabildas Boy's high school. The medium of instruction was Marathi.

“I used to sit in a corner like a scared rat. I studied Sanskrit because this was denied to all my forefathers.”¹⁷

Dr. Narendra Jadhav expresses his personal agony through these words. His tone may seem to be loud but his protest is true. He believes that Dalit literature is a literature of genuine objection. His mode of thinking is different from other Dalit writers. Some criticizes Dalit literature as immature. Dr.Narendra Jadhav's book has positive contents and poetic quality. He scored 93% marks in Sanskrit but missed the Jagananath Shankershet scholarship by two marks. Everyone was surprised when they saw his score in Sanskrit. His Sanskrit teacher thought that the scores name might be Bhave? Bapat? Phadke or Gokhale? Dr. Narendra Jadhav was hard worker. He had a self confidence.

His Sanskrit teacher sent a word for him but he didn't go to meet the teacher. He wanted to avoid the conflict.

“T.S. Eliot has said that “The passions of a poem are somehow related to the passions of the society that produce it.”¹⁸

Dr. Jadhav believes in the maxims. Do not wait to strike until the iron is hot but make it hot by striking. It's the courage of Narendra Jadhav that counted as he fully knew that,

“Success is never final and failure never fatal.”¹⁹

Damodar Runjaji Jadhav and his wife Sonu are the main characters of the autobiography. Damu is the protagonist of the story whose protest against the injustice is a unique one. His father was against the word *Harijan*.

“If Harjans are the people of God who are the other people? The devils? ”²⁰

He used to ask one cannot be genuinely human unless one has become the bearer of a culture and education in its widest sense must produce a determinate citizen type. His father attended a meeting addressed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar which moved him so much that he decided to spread the message of Dr. Ambedkar. 'Educate, Unite and Agitate'. His Father and Mother were converted to *Buddhism* in 1956 when Dr. Ambedkar gave a call to join Buddhism. Damu the protagonist has a bitter experience while bringing of the children. He controls himself while narrating these experiences. One villager calls Narendra Damu mahar's son while others used a dignified language.

His autobiography is a story of positive search for excellence of a person who spent his childhood in the slums of Mumbai. Narendra Jadhav remembers the early days. Survival of the fittest was the rule in the slums where he grew up. He was a pretty good fighter so he wanted to be a dada a gangster. He is excellent in his studies and soon outshines leaving everyone spell bound. There is no sigh of deep resentment and use of words depicting hatred for the society. The attitude of Damu is sober though he thinks that. Whatever heights

a man might scale his caste is never caste off. It remains an inseparable part of his identity.

Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey out of the Caste System in Modern India is a dramatic piece of writing that forces us to acknowledge the inhumanity and injustice of social order that treats humans worse than animals. He knows the word of Dr. Ambedkar's Lost rights are regained by begging but relentless struggle and Goats are used for sacrificial offerings and not lions. Throughout the narrative runs the slogan coined by Dr. Ambedkar "Educate, Unite and Agitate." He taught his children. Do anything but do best merit in that field. The ends with the realization that further change is required. The whole has to stop treating Dalits as different.

Jadhav's autobiography presents Damu's self reflexive systematic viewpoint at the setting of strong exploitation. It offers the growth of three generations of the protagonist's family. His successful transcendence of national boundaries to become the universal citizen is framed in an inspiring way. Thanks to his grit hard work and courage his children and grandchildren fulfill his ambition prepared with little education and purpose. It's a story about dreams coming true that all over the world find appealing.

An autobiography is a remarkable piece of writing that forces us to accept the atrocity and bias of a social order that treats humans worse than animals. It is prolonged description of Narendra Jadhav's Marathi autobiography *Amcha Baap Aan Amhi* meaning 'Our Father and Us' written in 1993. Damu was not a leader nor did he turn into. But he had one exception to fight against the existing caste system and generate his fate. An intelligent man with no proper education worked hard to live with dignity. In his Author's message Jadhav explains Damu as he was not a leader but he refused to label himself by conditions and expected to shape his own future or Damu had no prescribed education. Still he guided his children to educational height and inculcated them the spirit of excellence or Damu was not a guru but he taught his children to believe in themselves and hold human self esteem or Damu was

often humbled. Damu was an ordinary man. But he did an extraordinary thing he stood up against the tyranny of the caste system.

Damu is one of the few self-confident independent Dalit characters in Indian writing in English. In the opening pages of autobiography Damu was doing his *yeskar* duties (village duties to *Mahars*) in his native village Ozar. Damu was running in front of the *Mamledar* senior income official announcing his coming. Afterward Damu was asked to look at the dead body of a woman found floating in the well. He was not allowed to go home to inform his family and about food. He was ill-treated and made obligatory to stay near the well the entire night. The next morning *Fauzdar* arrived and asked Damu to search out the dead body into the well. Damu refused to do so under the excuse that he was not supposed to handle the dead body of an upper caste woman. The author declares the caste system is so deeply fixed that change can at most excellent like ornamental. The caste system was liable by God and not by human. It has such a powerful permit behind it that no laws no development and no revolutions will ever change it completely. Damu was beaten up by the *Fauzdar* for refusing to follow his orders. He was stubborn and strong-minded. He speaks out. Inspire of these cruel traditions he was not going to stand for by such traditions.

However Change take places little though it may seem. He decides to leave his village that night. He runs away with his wife Sonu to Mumbai. Together they started walking towards freedom. In Mumbai Damu struggled hard. Jadhav narrates to survive during the great sadness in the 1930s. He worked in the Railways the Port Trust and some fabric mills to earn for living in Mumbai. Motivated by Ambedkar's call for Dalit emancipation he participated in Dalit movement. He had actively involved in the Nasik Temple Entry Movement in 1930, *Mahad Satyagraha* in 1927, Buddhist conversion movement in 1956 Ambedkar's funeral procession and other activities of the Dalits. He inculcated in his children an ambition to succeed in life through education and hard work. Damu refused to frighten by all the odds in his life. He had forever confirmed himself master of his willpower. He is presented as a self made man

in many ways. Jadhav's character is of self-confident, self made Dalit. He inherited the attitude of his father that a human being is a master of his will.

He asserts,

“If other look down on me in their belief that my caste is low. It is their problem not mine. I certainly don't need to torment myself over it. I pity them for they are the victims of their own obsolete prejudices.”²¹

Dalit identity gave Damu's family confidence and pride to refuse their credited class as low caste Mahars. The making of modern identity as Dalits is possible because of two past processes. One is his journey from village to the town Mumbai and the other is Dalit movement lead by Ambedkar. Damu's granddaughter feels that,

“Now I think I know who I am. I am Apoorva not tied down by race, religion or caste.”²²

Throughout the narration run the clarion created by Dr Ambedkar which unites all Dalits, “Educate, Unite and Agitate.” Damu perceived slogan as his personal operation and though ignorant himself and educates his children to the best of his abilities. He even tries to educate his wife Sonu remarkable that was unheard of in that period. Luckily the all children completed his hope and raise to high positions in their chosen careers a great achievement for a man who has dedicated his life to bettering their prospects.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's teachings have a deep effect on Damu and Sonu and they understand that they are beginning to build up a sense of self. The simplicity of the narrative brings out the tragedy in the story. Damu is shown in this novel as a man of strong character with advance looking approach and progressive visions. He instills a superior level of self confidence in his wife. He wins his wife on his side when he explains the principle of living and importance of life. He makes a scholar out of his life. At last his wife Sonu appreciate him and unite him in every step of upheaval and conflict. In spite of romantic relation the martial life has been relation based on mutual trust love and sacrifice between them. Damu treats his wife with kindness is

extraordinary for the times and really emotive. Asked about the qualities she liked most in her husband. Sonu makes a statement on the poor expectations of women in her generation.

“He never drank never abused me. Best of all he never raised his hand to me.”²³

The book ends with the realization that supplementary change is essential. The world has to end treating Dalits as different. It is up to the present generation to carry the set on fire the tears and blood of their ancestors. In this Memoir the author examines the issues which are so deep and sharp in a manner which is touching. From one point of view it is an attack on the social structure of Hindu society. If this autobiography is studied in a different angle it is a call to the oppressed and humiliated people to empower themselves by devoting themselves to learning and at last to stand as a brotherhood to fight against cruelty, subjugation, slavery, domination and those who complete and support the idea of superiority which is not only foolish and unreasonable but silly.

Well known economist Stanley Fischer has noted,

“The book eloquently tells the story of a Dalit (Untouchable) family’s journey from an Indian village to the Indian and international middle class. It is the story of the genius and determination of the (author’s) illiterate father and his stalwart mother and their remarkable children. It is also a story about modern India and its potential. Even more it is a moving story about humankind in all its complexity.”²⁴

Narendra Jadhav in his autobiography **Untouchables’: a memoir** brings to the fore what is the place of a Dalit in the eyes of policemen and upper caste people. He writes walking slowly and was looking forward to some that tea and *bhakris*, homemade millet bread when a policeman came looking for him,

“Eh Damu Mahar I have been looking all around for you. Where have you been wandering around you son of bitch?”²⁵

The constable seemed worried and Damu sensed that a little very bad had happened. He told Damu that by the Mangroves a dead body had found floating in the broken well. This plainly indicates that dalit's duty was to carry the dead body and listened the orders of police. The policeman did not care whether Damu was hungry or not. When Damu told the policeman that he had not eaten since morning he lifted his rod as if to beat him.

“Do you see my baton? he asked brandishing it I stick it up your ass and you will see it come out of your throat. I beat you up so badly that you’ ll forget the name of your father.”²⁶

This clearly shows a picture of mistreatment, fear, terror, oppression and domination of a Dalit by a policeman. Library Journal remarks on the autobiography is as...

“This moving story of perseverance from a sector of India rarely represented to American readers will be a standard text on Indian and Dalit themes for years to come.”²⁷

Thus it is noticed that **Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey out of the Caste System in Modern India** is a Story of Change, Courage and Progress of hope.”

Baluta as it was named in Marathi draws upon the typical symbol of the dalit's humiliation for leftover food as *Baluta* or his fixed village share as remuneration for performing stigmatized labor. Pawar has characterized his story as a top secret that must not be exposed because of the shame and the pain. Pawar plays the relationship between confidentiality and shock instead of celebrating the autobiographical as a genuine act of self representation. The narrative progresses throwing light on different phases of life including customs, practices, education, economic realities and gender discrimination.

The book created a new field in Marathi literature and the use of language is also not just of revolt but of a extremely introspecting analytical logic. Pawar's autobiography reproduces his active participation in the social, cultural and literary movement on the nationwide. **Baluta** is an expression of his contemplative thinking solid attitude, deep understanding and sympathy towards social happenings and issues. Because of the harsh conditions he suffers mentally and physically in his personal life instance of which find in his writings. The work portrays the infirmity inside the society permeated with caste and class difference and the reader is filled with sensitivity to the situation and condition of the protagonist thus creating a new affinity amongst all.

Dagdu Maruti Pawar has dealt with the atrocities experienced by the *dalits* or untouchables under the Indian caste system in various forms of literary genres. His autobiography **Baluta** recounts the experience of an untouchable struggling for a peaceful existence mentally tormented but unable of revenge in action. The autobiography is written as a story by Dagdu Pawar told to the more cultured Daya Pawar with both being personas of the author. The book exposes severe insult and shameful behavior of humid upper caste persons making hell of *dalit* lives but the question of hunger and survival also dominate. **Baluta** as it was named in Marathi draws upon the typical symbol of the dalit's dishonor for leftover food as **Baluta** or his traditional village share as reward. Pawar has characterized his story as an undisclosed that must not be exposed because of the shame and the pain that attaches to confronting the self. It is a first person narration of the minority consciousness and their struggle is a matter of inspiration for him plus for others giving an account of discrimination and deprivation as a stage of recognition and assertion living on the margins of the marginalized as young expendable human material exposed to the harsh realities of life. Pawar's autobiography reflects his active participation in the social cultural and literary movement. **Baluta** is an expression of his reflective thinking solid stance deep understanding and sympathy towards social happenings and issues. Due to the oppressive conditions he suffers psychologically and physically in his personal life. The work portrays the illness within the civil society fill with caste and class

division. He odds created by extreme poverty and the harshness of the oppressive caste system. After associating with the *Maharashtra Buddha Sahitya Sabha* and the *Pragat Sahitya Sabha* since 1968 he became an active member of the *Dalit* association in literature. He concluded his education at the same time of working as a laboratory assistant in a veterinary college in Parel Mumbai. He started his literary career through contributing articles to the periodical *Asmitadarsha*. He earned fame through his autobiography **Baluta** with the intention to talks about the harsh realities of the caste system in India. **Baluta** is a story by Dagdu Pawar as narrated to the more literate Daya Pawar both of who are personas of the author. The autobiography communicates the experiences of an untouchable struggling for a nonviolent survival. The powers of the book are the simple clear cut and to the representation and a visible practical picture of the culture around him. The book motivated Marathi society and was a critical success in both Marathi and in Hindi translation but received significant anti *Dalit* blowback for its frank exhibition. This book created a new type in Marathi literature. Many autobiographical books talking about harsh experiences hard realities were written after **Baluta**. What is unique about Daya Pawar is his use of language which is not just rebellion but an extremely introspecting logical thinking. **Baluta** draws upon the model symbol of Dalit as humiliation having to beg for leftover food as **Baluta** or his traditional village. Understood more broadly as the Dalit Âs share or lot in life **Baluta** historicizes the figure of the stigmatized Dalit by establishing him surrounded by financial suffering. The narrator of Baluta undercuts the reputed reality of the autobiographical from the set apart his story as a secret that must not be exposed because of the shame and the pain that connect to tackle the self.

It was never easy to tell personal stories of humiliation and oppression. Rao considers that,

“Baluta as a representative of Dalit literature wasn't just a more faithful narration of the Dalit experience but that it presented an ethical challenge to the caste Hindu whom it implicated.”²⁸

At one point in **Baluta** Pawar writes,

“What I had seen of the life of Mahars in my childhood has cut a permanent gash in my heart. The past will never be erased. It will go only when I go. The layers of abjectness that you see on my face even today have their source in those times. Hard as you might scrub them all you will do is draw blood. They will not come off.”²⁹

However Pawar balances his private pain with the reflection that telling stories is politically important. Some Dalits think such stories are like digging up compost. But if a man does not acquainted with his history he will not know which track he must take in the future.

Dalit narratives are not only self portraits but also a social commentary and memorial which exposed their distress. Constructed as the production of shocking experiences suffered by the protagonists beginning in the helpless years of childhood they show the burden of being outcastes and looked at with doubt. The repetitive encounter with injustice burns sparingly into the memory of the narrator-protagonist marking their progress through life carrying mark of rejection.

Shantabai Kamble faces similar problems in upholding her individual identity. Kamble and Pawar each expatiates how not only her identity as a woman but also her use of language and the very food she eats are integrally related to her Dalit identity. Both these texts provide elaborate descriptions of recipes and cooking processes revealing culinary art as a caste sensitive factor. Hunger becomes a recurrent motif in both these texts especially in the narration of the childhood days. Kamble tells us about how the Dalits are forced to survive on dead animals and leftovers of the upper caste when she discovered a number of new food items brought by the upper caste girls in school. She also explains how these made her even more aware of her caste and poverty. Dalits were denied the right to education they were forced to live outside the villages and the public places and temples were closed for them. The huge separation was

powerful among the people on the basis of their castes. The lower class *Shudra* consists and treated as if it did not belong to the human race. The evil tradition of untouchability was practiced and it was believed that the simple touch or even the shadow of a *Shudra* spoils the purity of *Savarna*. Though the practice of untouchability is legal crime in independent India it is found to be practiced in some parts of the country in one way or the other. All these horrors naturally have crept in Dalit autobiographies and made the outside world aware of the terrible conditions of Dalits. For instance Shantabai Kamble draws a picture of the practice of untouchability in the sacred temple of education where Dalit children were forced to sit outside the class room and the teacher strictly keeping himself away from their touch. She writes,

“Patil Master was the teacher of Standard III. He forced us to sit outside the classroom. He did not let us touch either to him or the other upper-caste students. He used to punish us from a safe distance with a cane. While checking our homework he used to make us put our slates on the floor and after checking he put them down. Only then we were allowed to take them back. He did not like to be touched by us.”³⁰

Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha in which the narrators write about the conflict between Dalits and *Savarnas*. The lower castes were treated very roughly. The evil custom of untouchability was believed that the gloom of a *Shudra* spoils *Savarna*. Dr. B R Ambedkar with his slogan ‘Educate, Agitate and Organize’ has been a great influence in Dalit freedom. Shantabai’s evidence is a glaring record of that blend of chance and purpose which often determines the course of life of marginalized human beings particularly women. Her contact to schooling is socially symbolic in this respect. It is due to a mixture of normal temperament, motivations and objectives and the informal availability of friendly conditions.

The life of Shantabai Krishnaji Kamble reveals the firmness of a Dalit to acquire social mobility. The autobiography is dedicated to her father and mother who were laborer. She dedicates her autobiography to them as gratitude for giving her education. Her autobiography talks about her mother who believed that education will bring changes in the shameful lives of the dalits. She also narrates the harmony that existed in the community in the center of poor quality. She remembers that girls did not have the option to select their life partners. Every decisions related to the marriage of the girl was taken by the elder males in the family. The credit of the lack of voice in the dalit patriarchal family provides feminist sympathetic of the dalit families. She explains about a dalit woman who had pre-marital relations with her husband. She also narrates the way the dalit males tortured dalit woman. The discrimination of dalit students made her to think about caste and education. Her parents were supportive for her education. Her autobiography emphasized the role of education for the sustainable development of her community. Her autobiography can see as a micro history of Mahar society. She recreated her memories as way to project her humiliation of her group of people. She evaluates the existing changes with that of the past to read the impact of the activist of Ambedkar. She describes before the Arnbedkarite era the superstitions and rituals were the part of Dalits life. She interprets the lack of health supporting systems for Dalits with the culture of false beliefs. Her mother could not declare her rights because of patriarchy that exist at home. But she talks about her father who supported the Dalit laborers. The partition of labor within the Dalit homes was gender. The common conditions of Dalits are positive relations with the village. Dalits have to be obedient before their lords. The body languages of the dalits were decided by the lords of the village. For instance the Dalit women were forced to bow their heads down in front of the feudal lords. Shantabai also recounts how being Mahar she and her community people were discriminated against by the upper castes. She gives one example of how she was ill-treated by the mother of her classmate Shaku, a Brahmin girl. One day Shaku did not come to school. The headmaster sent Shantabai to her house to bring her. When Shantabai reached their house she saw there were *rangolis* outside the door. Seeing Shantabai at the door Shaku's *Aai* shouted,

“You daughter of a Mahar stay there. You will trample the *rangolis*.”³¹

This was a caste insult which was not only targeted against an individual but the entire Mahar community. Such was the humiliation she got from Shaku's mother that throughout her life Shantabai was frightened of visiting any upper caste house.

4.1 Summing Up:

To sum up, in the fourth chapter researcher has illustrated that as far as the concrete life of the Hindus was concerned on the term *dharma* which was interpreted to mainly *Jati-dharma* i.e. the social duties the religious obligations and the legitimate occupations for the subjection of each individual caste. The Dalits were told that their duty and way of life with a view to obtaining a higher level of existence and finally *Mokasha* i.e., salvation from history lay in the faithful performance of the duties of their *Jati* which were considered polluting and so they were segregated and treated as untouchables in the Hindu society. The purity of a person was inversely proportional to his involvement with matter. Those actions which involved contact with blood or decaying matter were considered impure. Thus those who carried out works like scavenging tanning of leather etc. were considered polluted beings and declared untouchables. On the other hand the Hindu society did not accept the *Dalits* as Hindus. The temples were closed to them they had no role whatever in the religious sphere. The vast wealth of the temples had gone to the caste Hindus even *Dalit* shrines were taken up by the high castes. Economic and social dependency forces the *Dalits* to continue to play the servile roles assigned to them in village festivals and other rites. The autobiographies of these writers clearly show how they are completely controlled by the society around them but there is an absence of self pity and basically it is subjective experience. It is the economic struggle the act of physical survival the day to day measurement. Dalit writers engaged with caste as a subjective category of how they lived and experienced. The study also focused on how the Dalit autobiographies record the unnoticed pains of the Dalits experience of discrimination.

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Chapter-V

5.0 Conclusions

Since untouchability remains as part of the caste system it cannot be reduced unless the caste system is destroyed. Dr. Ambedkar, an excellent leader of the outcastes and who himself experienced the untouchability by the upper caste Hindus during his time, once said,

“There will be outcastes (untouchables) as long as there are castes and nothing can emancipate the outcastes except the destruction of the caste system.”¹

The caste system cannot be destroyed in isolation because it has roots in the system of economic construction. It forms as a basic part of the Indian production system in the predominantly rural India. So an approach which embraces and absorbs both the dimensions of class and caste of the Indian society must be changed. And only a movement which takes into concern both class and caste aspects of the Indian socio-economic structure and which can mobilize the oppressed classes including the oppressed castes could have the potential to smash the inhuman practice of Untouchability. *Dalit* writings are converging towards the fact that they are a form of resistance literature and narratives of pain and bind them together into an expected community which the mainstream group calls a marginalized group of people. All writings have launched their literary careers by first narrating their life-story, i.e. making autobiography an institutional space through which they can first enter the literary public sphere. It has given these writers a way of uniting with a larger particular community to create a powerful group which can be used to fight against oppression and discrimination. Their narratives are based on the idea of communal identity. These autobiographies have been used as a means of political assertion. As a way of gaining power and support in a group struggle against similarly experienced oppression, Dalit literature has its roots in the lives of the people who are downtrodden. The characters of its literary pieces work as manual laborers cleaning streets, toilets, and sewers.

The Outcaste is tangible autobiography by Dr. Sharankumar Limbale. It has depicted that Limbale has emerged as a revolutionary and awakening intellectual. It can be remarked that Limbale has disproved the authenticity of the existing caste system. His autobiography points out *Savarnas* are enemies of oppressed. Through his continuous struggle against all discriminatory forces however he has set an example of overcoming evil trends in the society. Author has disapproved the system and identified it as two faced and accountable. Therefore he has dared to go against it even if it is extremely powerful and deeply fixed. However the structure of the caste system is quite rigid and has yet to be dismantled forever for the equal social order and wellbeing of all the people in society. He has marked a position as an aware and radical Dalit in the history of the revolutionary transformation of the caste system by breaking the principles of the caste system.

The autobiography writers clearly show that how their lives are completely controlled by the society around them. There is an absence of self pity. It is his non subjective experience. It is the financial struggle of material. *Dalit* is a protest literature against all forms of exploitation based on class, race and caste or occupation. However, in several acts of incredible strength and bravery, he did not allow these socially constructed walls to stop him from getting an education and eventually publishing his story. He came to realize the depth of division caused by the conflict between Hindus and Muslims and chose a separate path for him in what he considered to be the warm embrace of Buddhism.

The present study of autobiographies discusses the past, personality, clash and awareness in a protesting voice. There is a sense in which all of them also attempt reconciliation with the facts that they may have to co-exist with the family and society at large. Although it is not only gender consciousness that dominates women's autobiographies but women writers be different from men writers in their discussion of sex and sexuality. While women writers complicated only cautiously on their affairs and sexual abuses. Urmila Pawar and Shantabai Kamble have presented in details the problems of caste bias.

Mainstream majority people of society eliminate this marginalized group. In order to glorify certain sections and put them on a higher pedestal the dominant strata of society have portrayed and treated the outcaste as sub-human. Pawar has given a true picture of the caste and gender differences. She has narrated in her autobiography **The Weave of My Life** that her husband Harish Chandra's example when he was posted at Ratnagiri. Harishchandra reacted very sharply for the caste discrimination due to low caste remarked against him and left the place without food. Urmila Pawar's '*Aaydan*', **The Weave of My Life** is marked with honesty of its narration told with a sense of irony and humor. Urmila looks at herself as a child, daughter, wife and mother with detachment as she does at Harishchandra as a husband. Weaving happens to be the central metaphor of the present memoir weaving of bamboo baskets the main profession of the protagonist's mother indicts their low caste as well as their awful economic poverty as Urmila writes about the title of her memoir.

“My mother used to weave *Aaydan*. I find that her act of weaving and my act of writing are originally similar actions. The weave is similar. It is the weave of suffering and agony that link us.”²

In her frank and intimate Memoir Pawar not only shares her tireless efforts to surmount hideous personal tragedy but also conveys the excitement of an awakening consciousness during a time of profound political and social change.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav's life is a story of struggle and progress. **Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey out of the Caste System in Modern India** is an edition by Dr. Narendra Jadhav from his own Marathi autobiography *Amcha Bap Aani Amhi* (Our Father and Us). At one level it is an honor from a son to his father and on the other hand it is the story of the Dalits throughout three generations. The story begins in the 1930s when Damu the protagonist of the story is constantly addressed as *Mahar* in his ancestral village in Western Maharashtra where caste determined one's destiny.

Influenced by Dr. Ambedkar's teachings Damu stands against the Police and the caste system. The book traces the extraordinary voyage of Damu from a small village at Ozar in Maharashtra to the city of Mumbai to escape harassment. It was a journey that brought back his self-esteem and touchability. In the city he earns respect in various jobs despite being a low caste and an illiterate. His rigid spirit inspired his wife who realized that their emancipation could be possible only through the pursuit of academic excellence. This is also the story of Sonabhai the author's mother. Her innocence as youthful bride and horrified unwillingness to give up her trusted gods for the unknown Buddha are example of an ordinary Dalit woman's experiences. In the book Sonu's story alternates with Damu's. At the other end of Damu's story is his sixteen year-old granddaughter's epilogue. Born in Bloomington Indiana she writes with confidence "Now I know who I am. I am just Apoorva not tied down by race, religion or caste." [Ibid] Yet one among them, the educationist, economist and policy maker Narendra Jadhav has himself authored an autobiography, *Aamcha Baap Aan Amhi*. As the title indicates it tells the story of how he and his siblings grew up under the influence of Ambedkarite father Damodar Runjaji Jadhav. In this autobiography Jadhav drew on his father's meticulous diary notes about the events of his life keeping his father's dialect intact. Ten years later he published a prolonged description of the book in English incorporating into it stories related by his mother. This version ends with an interesting appendix written by his 16 year old daughter Apoorva.

Autobiography examines the Dalit awakening lead by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Ambedkar's call for the Dalits to "Educate, Unite and Agitate" as a recurrent theme in the book. This is the first book to portray Ambedkar as a character in its story. There is a long note at the end of the book on untouchability the caste system and Dr. Ambedkar. Dr. Jadhav has retained many Marathi words in the text the essence of the story intact. Individual anecdotes keep the book live and easily readable. The book ends with a note of self realization in modern India dignity rests in the minds and hearts of people and those old prejudices do not really matter. Thus it gives an interpretation of caste which is amazing.

Daya Pawar's autobiography **Baluta** the next landmark in Dalit literature was published in 1978 hitting upper caste critics and readers. Pawar's graphic description of life in the *Maharwada* a place outside villages reserved for Dalits shocked readers. **Baluta** draws upon the quintessential symbol of the Dalit As humiliation having to beg for leftover food as *baluta* or his traditional village share as remuneration for performing stigmatized labor. **Baluta** inaugurated a stream of explosive autobiographical narratives. Dalits who had moved up the economic ladder into the middle class and who were ashamed of their past and present being made public were loud in their criticisms of **Baluta**. This class of Dalits has come to be known as Dalit Brahmin.

Dalit people and women also started to articulate themselves in various literary forms. Marathi Dalit literature has the confirmation of such type of writings but we have to wait up to 1980s to see the autobiographical work by these women. Women from Maharashtra are expressing various issues in the autobiographical form. Some exceptional life experiences on the part of the women have attracted the attention towards their autobiographies. Otherwise women's autobiographies have common aspects which revolve around their domestic life. The noteworthy fact is that though the domestic life is the major aspect of their writing. The autobiographies of the main stream women are different than the Dalit women's autobiographies. The basic reason is that the conversation in which they lived was different. It affected their literary composition. The rift of life pattern is visible in the autobiographies. The grounds for life struggle its philosophy and their perspective for life are totally different.

Our traditions have many ethnicity exploitations superstitions and detachment from education for the downtrodden. Buddhism has the potentials to give them recognition as human beings and rights of equality along with education.

Shantabai Kamble draws a picture of the practice of untouchability in the sacred temple of education where Dalit children were forced to sit outside the class-room and the teacher strictly keeping himself away from their touch. She writes,

“Patil Master was the teacher of Standard III. He forced us to sit outside the classroom. He did not let us touch either to him or the other upper caste students. He used to punish us from a safe distance with a cane. While checking our homework he used to make us put our slates on the floor and after checking he put them down. Only then we were allowed to take them back. He did not like to be touched by us.”³

Shantabai Kamble's *Majya Jalmachi Chittakatha*, “**The Kaleidoscopic Story of My Life**” is the first work in Dalit Literature which is written by a woman. It is the book deals with the two major problems of the society. Firstly the oppression and exploitation of the Dalit by the upper class secondly the discrimination towards women in a patriarchal society. Daya Pawar's **Baluta** the first Dalit autobiography covered the way for writers to share their pain and agony. Urmila Pawar's **The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs** belongs to the genre of autobiography which is presented the major issues of class, caste, and gender in the Indian circumstance. Apart from recording a woman's discovery of selfhood and assertion of identity it also offers a background picture of the Indian especially *Maharashtrian* culture including inter-personal and commanding relations, clashes, and tolerances. The two autobiographies Shantabai Kamble's *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* and Urmila Pawar's **The Weave of My Life** speak not of a single person but the struggles of the entire society. Dalits women are subjected to tremendous forms of social, economic, physical and mental torture and exploitations. Dalit women are victims of caste based atrocities. They are raped when working in the fields. They are casually stripped and molested and even invite death if they dare to quench their thirst from a common well. The writings of Dalits women writers are based on the lives experiences and consciousness. Dalit women writer portray their outburst for justice. Their life is quite similar to their upper caste equivalent but the fact is that Dalit women have been victims of patriarchal society for ages and still have very little right over human rights. Their attempt to declare their rights are often met with strong resistance from

the higher castes resulting in inhuman torture rapes, massacres, and other atrocities. The images of reality come out the level of violence through Dalit autobiographies. The dalit autobiography stands as privileged ends where processes of self-investigation, examining awareness, assertion and identification display a quest of self.

In Dalit autobiographies the writers have expressed their positive attitudes towards work which helped them to conquer their enemy and achieve their own identity. Dalits are being exploited physically, mentally and socially by the Hindus. Naturally they refuse to accept their oppression. But it is not so powerfully reflected in Dalit autobiography as in the other forms of Dalit literature. *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* in which the narrator write about the conflict between *Dalits* and *Savarnas*. But the nature of this conflict does not take the form of direct physical violence. The resistance in Dalit autobiography appears in the form of contradiction. These writers passionately deny all the traditions and taboos.

All these common features that are found in the autobiographies of the suppressed people irrespective of their caste, class, gender, race, region and religion have resulted from the common aspect of inhuman treatment they received from the hands of their oppressors. It is seen that all over the world and in all the ages the established groups have almost habitually suppressed the weaker sections and these oppressed groups have revolted against their oppressors in one way or the other literature being one means of such a revolt. Though these autobiographies share some of the features of the genre of main stream autobiography they differ from it with respect to the purpose of writing it and the content which is specifically related to the sufferings in the lives of oppressed people.

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