CHAPTER-4

DIVERGENCES: DALIT WRITINGS AND ABORIGINAL WRITINGS

Caste Oppression in India

For centuries, caste system in the Indian subcontinent has controlled, regulated and hierarchised knowledge. Brahmanism, as it evolved over a period of time, has sought to legitimate the servitude of Dalit castes through its hegemony over the social universe of knowledge. Needles to say, the hegemony has seldom been complete or gone uncontested. Today Dalits claim a stake, both in knowledge and power. Dalit discourses have, now emerged as challenges to the Brahmanic – national universal with district and dissenting imageries of future and the quotidian, the community and the nation. There has been an emergence of a new consciousness and a new identity among the people who have been considered ‘outcaste’ or ‘untouchables’ in the Indian caste system. Today they have created a new identity by calling themselves ‘Dalits’. It is not a mere name or title, infact it has become an expression of hope and identity. It is a living spiritual principle of India’s untouchables. ‘Dalitism’ is both an ideology and nationalism of India’s persecuted, supposed masses. It is rooted in Ambedkarism. Dalitism or Dalit philosophy is developed to pave the way for a liberal tradition against casteism and untouchability. The object of Dalitism is to attract the youth all over India and make them understand the culture and history of India’s submerged masses.

Infact, the very identity of ‘Dalit’ is nothing but a reaction against a hegemonic order, a challenge against perpetual oppression and a counter-identity against an irrational Brahmanic order that seeks to dehumanize and enslave a section of Hindu fold on ascriptive ground. ‘Dalit’ represents a voice that has perpetually remained unheard; an identity that has long been
derecognized and suppressed; a category that has hitherto been deprived of its
dignified existence. The Dalit identity stands for assertion, protest and
mobilization of like groups. The term 'Dalit' provides a sense of pride and self-
assertion. It is essentially a label to help the Dalits achieve a sense of cultural
identity. So, it can be submitted that albeit Dalit is not a caste, it is a constructed
identity, which is a reality that can not be denied. Recent studies on emerging
Dalit identities show that a new identity is rising, one that is determined that the
Dalits will not acquiesce for ever with their subordinate position. Today, as
mentioned earlier, the subaltern communities that have been discriminated
against for centuries identify themselves as Dalits. I this term they find a new
identity by coming together with the perspective "Dalit is dignified" thereby
rejecting the sub human status imposed on them by the Hindu social order.
Zelliot asserts:

_to me, Dalit is not the caste. He is a man exploited by the
social and economic traditions of this country. He does not
believe in god, rebirth, soul, holy books teaching
separatism, fate and heaven because they have made him
a slave. He does believe in humanism. Dalit is a symbol of
change and revolution._

According to Nandu Ram, though the term Dalit represents a broader
social category of people, in more recent years, it has become a nationwide
phenomenon and is widely used by all untouchables irrespective of traditional
and parochial caste distinctions, also becoming a symbol of their social identity.
He stated, "But contrary to a heuristic understanding the term Dalit is currently
used for and by untouchable castes al over the country. Even social scientists
have started referring to the Dalits and untouchables or the scheduled castes
interchangeably._

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As far as the Indian caste system is concerned, caste has been the means by which vast sections of the Indian population have been sub merged into a condition of servitude to satisfy the interests of a small minority who claimed their privileges on the basis of the special birthright through the mouth of their god assigned to them by 'dharma' laid down by Manu in his book called Manusmriti, which has been putatively designated and disseminated by the caste Hindus as fundamental low of the country and enforced as part of legal set up. It is important to note that this Manav Dharma is based upon the theory that the Brahman is to have all the privileges and the Shudra is not to have even the rights of a human being, that the Brahman is to be above everybody in all things merely by reason of his high birth and the Shudra is to be below everybody and is to have none of the things no matter how great may be his worth. According to Manusmirit Sudras are regarded as 'once born' whereas the Brahmana, the kshatriyas and the Vaisyas are 'twice born'.

Caste has remained singularly the most important sociological phenomenon inviting unabated criticism and protest from the masses, groups, organizations, leaders and the intellectuals alike. Innumerable scholars have tried to explain the caste, its origin structures and the functioning Nesfield defines caste as:

A class of the community which disowns any connection with any other class and can neither intermarry nor eat nor drink with any but persons of their own community. H. Risby defines caste as:

A collection of families or groups of families learning a common name which usually denotes or is associated with specific occupation, claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the same professional callings, and are regarded by those who are competent to

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giving an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community.\textsuperscript{4} In this context, Ketkar gives a definition of his own:

Caste is a social group having two characteristics: (1) membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born; (2) the members are forbidden by inexorable social law to marry outside the group. Each one of such groups has a special name by which it is called. Several of such small aggregates are grouped together under a common name, while these larger groups are but subdivisions of groups still larger which have independent names.\textsuperscript{5} commenting on caste, Narmadeshwar Prasad says.

When status is wholly predetermined, men are born to their lot in life without hope of changing it, then class takes the extreme form of caste... caste is a complete barrier to the mobility of class. In principle it involves an absolute and permanent satisfaction of the community.\textsuperscript{6}

The fundamental principles of caste are endogamy and heredity. A man must marry a woman of his own caste. Then there are endogamous sub-castes within castes. Each endogamous sub-castes within castes. Each endogamous sub-caste is further subdivided into exogamous groups. Ketkar describes:

There is the Sapinda rule of the Hindu law according to which those who are related by blood cannot intermarry. No marriage shall take place between descendants of his or her father’s or mother’s brothers or sisters. Then there is the custom of hypergamy. A group of a higher social standing may take brides from a lower group but cannot give brides to a lower group.\textsuperscript{7}

Dr. Ambedkar who made the most comprehensive and scientific analysis of the caste system and put forward a positive action plan to annihilate the caste:

\textsuperscript{4} Quoted by Argal, R. \textit{Elements of Sociology}, P.59.
Caste has ruined the Hindus to the extent that the whole of the society has fallen apart. Caste has completely disorganized and demoralized the Hindus. It is difficult for a Hindu to look beyond his caste. His imaginary caste does not allow him to be a member of modern civil society. All his actions, attitude thinking, foods, dress, words, gesture are determined not by the natural aptitudes, rationality, morality or humanity but the accident of the caste over which one has no control.

Dr. Ambedkar also believes that the impact of the caste on the society is simply deplorable. Caste has destroys the sense of public charity, it has made the public charity, it has made the public opinion impossible. As Dr. Ambedkar rightly elucidates.

A Hindu’s public is his caste. His responsibility is only to his caste. His loyalty is restricted only to his caste. Caste has killed public spirit. Virtue has become caste ridden.

According to Sundberg, A caste is merely a rigid social class into which members are born and form which they can withdraw or escape only with extreme difficulty. E. A. H. Blunt defines caste as “an endogamous or a collection of endogamous groups, bearing a common name, membership of which is hereditary; imposing on the members certain restrictions in the matter of social intercourse; either following a common traditional occupation or claiming a common origin; and generally regarded as forming a single homogeneous community.” H. Cooley say, “when a class is somewhat strictly hereditary, we may call it a caste”. Another sociologists Anderson and Parker

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8 Lundberg, Sociology. P.576.
9 Blunt, Edward (Ed.). Social Service in India. P.50.
assert, "Caste is that extreme form of social class organization in which the position of individuals in the status hierarchy is determined by descent and birth."\(^{11}\)

Thus thinkers and sociologists have variously defined the term 'caste'. But as Ghurye states, "with all the labours of these students, however, we do not possess a real general definition of caste."\(^{12}\) The best definition of the term 'caste' has been given by Dr. Ambedkar\(^{13}\):

> who and mortality has become caste bound. There is charity. But it begins with caste and ends with the caste. Would a Hindu acknowledge and follow the leadership of a great and good man?...He will follow a leader if he is a man of his caste. A Brahmin will follow a leader if he is a Brahmin, a Kshatriya if he is a Kshatriya and so on... There is appreciation if virtue but only if the man is a fellow caste man. My caste man, right or wrong; my caste man, good or bad.\(^{14}\)

The best way to understand the term 'caste' is to examine the various factors underlying the caste system. The Indian caste system includes the following features or components:

The society is divided into various castes with a well developed life of their own, the membership of which is determined by the consideration of birth. The status of a person does not depend on his wealth but on the wealth but on the traditional importance of the caste in which he has the fortune of being born. Caste is hereditary. No amount of wealth and no amount of penance or prayer can change his caste status. Status is determined not by vocation but by birth. There are regular caste councils to regulate and control the conduct of all caste members. This council rules over the whole caste and is the most powerful organization which keys the members in their proper places. The governing body of caste is called panchayat which literally means a body of five members, but in

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\(^{11}\) Anderson and Parker, *Society*, P.370.  
\(^{12}\) Ghurye, *Caste, Class and Occupation*, P.1  
\(^{13}\) See *Writings and Speeches* by B.R. Ambedkar Vol.1, P.50  
\(^{14}\) Ibid., PP.52, 56-57.
fact there are many more who meet whenever decisions are taken. It takes
cognizance of the offences against the caste taboos which prevent members of
the caste from eating and drinking or smoking members of other castes; against
sex regulations which prohibit marriage outside the caste.

The second important feature of caste system is that it has got a definite
scheme of social precedence, that is, social and religious hierarchy. Each caste
has a customary name that helps to set is apart. The whole society is divided into
distinct classes with a concept of high and low. Thus Brahmins in India stand at
the apex of the social ladder and untouchables a Dalits or Shudras at the bottom.
According to Manu, the Brahmin is the lord of this whole creation, because he is
produced from the purest part of the Supreme being, namely, the mouth. By his
mere birth as a Brahmin, a person is the living embodiment of the eternal law.
Feeding the Brahmins is one of the acknowledged ways of enjoying religious
merit.\footnote{Ghurge, Op.cit., P.90} A Brahmin is entitled to whatever exists in the world. The whole world is
his property and others live on his charity.\footnote{Ibid., P.90} In contrast to the high position
enjoyed by Brahmins the Shudras are subjected to manifold disabilities. The can
not use the public roads nor avail themselves of public wells, they are forbidden
to enter Hindu temples, to attend public school. Servitude is proclaimed to be a
permanent condition of Shudras. A member of the first three classes must not
travel in the company of Shurdas. They are considered to impart some sort of
defilement to objects like bed and seat by their touch. Several punishments are
prescribed for a Shudra in case he committed certain types of offence.

Another element of caste is the complex of taboos by which the Superior
castes try to preserve their ceremonial purity. There are restrictions on feeding
and social intercourse and minute rules are laid down with regard to the kind of
food that can be acceptable by a person and from what castes. For example, a
Brahmin will accept ‘pakka’ food, i.e., food prepared in ghee from any
community, be he can accept ‘kachcha’ food at the hands of no other caste.
The theory of pollution, being one of the most important features of the caste system, has placed severe restrictions on the extent of social intercourse. Thus there are restrictions with regard to distances. Among the people of Kerala, for example, a Nair may approach a Namboodri Brahmin but must keep himself at an distance of thirty-six steps from the Brahmin, and a Pulayan may not approach him within ninety-six paces. A Pulayan must not come near any of the Hindu castes. Even the wells are polluted if a low caste man draws water from them. The untouchables were likely to invite death if they dared to quench their thirst from a common pond. Dalit's presence is usually banned from upper-class localities. Even then they are bound to hang clay pots from their necks so that they may not pollute the streets of the privileged by their spittle. They carry brooms tied to their bodies so that while passing through such 'upper lanes' they can wipe away their footprints. So rigid are the rules about defilement that Brahmins will not perform even their ablutions within the precincts of a Shudra's habitation. "Even a modern Brahmin doctor, when feeling the pulse of a Sudra, first wraps up the patient's wrist with a small piece of silk so that he may not be defiled by touching his skin." 

The Indian caste system hold that a person born in a caste remains in it for life and dies in it. Every caste is sub-divided into sub-castes, every one of which forbids its members to marry persons outside it. Thus each sub-caste is endogamous. This principle of endogamy is so strict that of one sociologist regards endogamy as "the essence of the caste system." Each caste has an occupational specialty. And offers this to other castes in exchange for food, products, or services. Especially important is the food grain provided by the land controlling dominant caste or families to the landfills servant, artisan, and mendicant castes. This exchange of food goods, and services is a ritual system. It functions so that the highest castes remain pure while the lower

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17 ibid., P. 9
18 Abedi, Razi. 'Dalit Literature: The Voice of the Down-trodden.'
castes absorb pollution for them. And castes within a local caste system tend to be mutually ranked according to their respective degrees of pollution in this ritual system.

Moreover, most importantly, the impure castes are made to live on the outskirts of the city. In southern India certain parts of the town or village are inaccessible to certain castes. Let us consider a few instances that will show such was the case:

It is recorded that under the rule of the Marathas and the Peshwas the untouchables were not allowed within the gates of Poona city, the capital of the Peshwas between 3 PM and 9AM because, before nine and after three, their bodies cast too long a shadow; and whenever their shadow fell upon a Brahmin it polluted him, so that he dare not taste food or water until he had bathed and washed the impurity away. So also no untouchable was allowed to live in a walled town; cattle and dogs could freely enter but not the untouchables. Under the rule of the Marathas and the Peshwas the untouchables might not spit on the ground lest a Hindu should be polluted by touching it with his foot, but had to hang an earthen pot round his neck to hold his spittle. He was made to drag a thorny branch of a three with him to brush out his footsteps and when a Brahman came by, had to lie at a distance might fall on the Brahman. In Maharashtra an untouchable was required to wear a black thread either in his neck or on his wrist for the purpose of ready identification. In Gujarat, the untouchables were compelled to wear a horn as their distinguishing mark. In Punjab, a sweeper was required while walking through streets in towns to carry a broom in his hand or under his armpit as a mark of his being a scavenger. In Bombay the untouchables were not permitted to wear clan or untorn clothes. In fact the shopkeepers took the precaution to see that before cloth was sold to the untouchables it was torn and soiled. In Malabar the untouchables were not

25 Punjab Census Report, 1911, P.413.

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allowed to build houses above one story in height\textsuperscript{26} and not allowed to cremate their dead.\textsuperscript{27} In Malabar the untouchables were not permitted to carry umbrellas, to wear shoes or golden ornaments, to milk cows or even to use the ordinary language of the country.\textsuperscript{28} In South India untouchables were expressively forbidden to cover the upper part of their body above the waist and in the case of women of the untouchables they were compelled to go with the upper part of their bodies quite bare.\textsuperscript{29}

All over India the impure caster were not permitted to draw water from wells used by the members of other castes. The public schools did not admit impure castes like Chamars and Mahars. The Shudras could not study the sacred literature. During the career of Swami Madhavrao, the Peshwas government had decreed that Mahars, being ‘ati-shudras’, beyond Shudras, could not have their marriage rites conducted by the regular Brahmin priests.\textsuperscript{30} The untouchables could not enter the temples.

CASTE OPPRESSION AND HUMAN PREDICAMENT

Portrayed in Dalit autobiographies

Dalit literature represents a powerful, emerging trend in the Indian literary scene. Dalit writing is a post-independence literary phenomenon. The emergence of Dalit literature has a great historical significance. It has served the purpose of awakening the consciousness of the downtrodden for forging their identities. Given its overarching preoccupations with the location of Dalits in the caste-based Hindu society, and their struggles for dignity, justice and equality, this literature is by nature oppositional. The recent spurt in Dalit literature in India is an attempt to being to the forefront the experiences of discrimination, violence and poverty of the Dalit. Often, with religious and social sanction, these experiences have for long been silenced and marginalized as unliterary. This

\textsuperscript{26} B.R. Ambedkar, \textit{Writings and Speeches}, Vol. 12, Govt. of Maharashtra, 1993, PP. 719-729.
\textsuperscript{27} Madras Census 1891, P.299.
\textsuperscript{28} Bhattacharya, Hindu Castes, P.259.
\textsuperscript{29} Madras Census 1891, P.224.
phenomenal growth in Dalit writing is part of a growing need of the Dalits themselves to articulate their experiences. These texts which have for centuries been relegated to the margins, offer a challenge to literary aesthetics which, with its caste and gender bias, have for long been masquerading as universal. In the unashamed descriptions of the traumas 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. Most of the autobiographies are a kind of testimony to the atrocities of the tradition – sanctioned discrimination a discrimination that many of us prefer to think does not exist at all or exists only in the rural areas. These autobiographies deal not only with the institution of caste as a means of oppression, but also show how economic deprivation and poverty go hand in hand with caste discriminations.

It is indeed shameful that despite 60 years of independence India has not been able to erase the curse of untouchability from our society. There are scores of laws against untouchability but in practice they have never been implemented honestly. The fact remains that Dalits are still savagely attacked in the rural countryside and even in the urban milieu untouchability still knocks at the closed doors of such institutions as the arranged marriages (whose Dalits parents are particularly concerned about their daughters who must be married according to strictly imposed custom), the caste Hindu temple (where Dalits entry is banned), the private sectors, etc. The cultural hegemony of the caste Hindu remains virtually intact, Dalitness continues to exist as much as an idea as a physical reality. And the Dalit remains at the bottom of the intellectual and emotional landscape of contemporary India. Dalits have remained excluded not only from the economic and cultural mainstream of society but also from the ambit of the expression of their existential notions in the hierarchical order of the society.

Living an untouchable life in Indian caste society is a tremendous unfortunate affair as the untouchables are thrown not only to the lowest rung of the social ladder but also they are compelled to swallow inhuman tortures. Untouchability, in basic sense, is out and out an Indian phenomenon, and it has
deeply penetrated into the social philosophy of the totalistic Indian life where the privileged sections of the stratified society enjoy the life at the cost of the untouchable sections which have been forced to do all sorts of menial and laborious jobs, and work as scavengers and sweepers and removers of carcasses of dead animals in the villages and also as the carriers of night soil. Because of this the fate of the untouchables has become miserable and what is important to note is that it is being continued in one form or other through the ages till present. For example, the September 29, 2006 butchery of four Dalits in Khairlanji village of Maharashtra's Bhandara District by the upper caste villagers is not only a heart breaking and hair-raising reminder of the anti-human nature of caste prejudice but also vindicates the fact that Dalits in India are thrown not only thrown to the lowest rung of social ladder but also they are compelled to forcibly swallow inhuman, tortures being practiced and continued in one form or the other in India even today. The victims, members of the Bhotmange family, were bludgeoned to death in full view of people of the village and their mutilated bodies were dumped in a nearby canal. The 'provocation' for this pestical killings was that Dalit Bhotmange family members were educated and asserted their right to a life of a dignity despite their poverty, which was clearly unacceptable to the upper caste villagers. This incident truly reminds me of a folksong written by a Dalit which reads:

They strip naked my mother, my sisters and my own daughter's virtue is looted in public. My eyes look on, my blood shakes.

In the world of Dalits, women area casually stripped and molested and even raped, men brutally murdered, and this has been going on for centuries, generation after generation. These are the untouchables who invite death if they dare to quench their thirst from a common pond. Even the god belongs to the Brahmins and its into their god.

The Khairlanji incident is not an isolated case, there are many more recently occurred incidents such as – the desecration of Dr. Ambedkar's statue in
Kanpur; Dalits getting the nod to enter the Jagannath temple in Orissa only now in the 21st century; eighty Dalits families from Kadkol in Karnataka's Bijapur district having been ‘punished’ by the caste Hindus with social and economic boycott for drawing drinking water from the village tank to which they had been denied access for decades – and many more such incidents have exposed the diabolic dimension of the atrocities committed against Dalits and the prevalence of the pernicious caste prejudice in Indian society. The atrocities against Dalits have become common, far more frequent and far more brutal. They are on the increase all over the country. The atrocities are antihuman such as butchering the Dalits, beating them and chopping off their bodies, raging Dalit women and girls, parading them naked and burning them, forcing the Dalits to consume human excreta and urine, poisoning their water resources, evicting them from their land and places of living and denying them access to public places including temples, common ponds etc. The atrocities on Dalits are all outrageous violations of human rights and criminal offences. The provisions of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 are not being used effectively to prevent the offences and punish the culprits. There is increasing tendency of police officials of not writing FIRs and asking Dalits to give complaints in writing on plain papers. The role of national commission for SC/STs, state commissions of SC/ST, law and order machinery and judiciary in arresting the discrimination and violence against Dalits need to be questioned and scrutinized.

Several powerful constructions of Dalit social and political identity are now circulating in very influential ways within the public sphere particularly in North India, as various groups including both the Bahujan Samaj Party as well as Hindutva organizations compete to assert their influence over how these identities are defined, who they include, and what they mean. In this context, the rise of Dalit autobiographies as a source of Dalit cultural identity becomes especially important, as they contest traditional conceptions of the Dalit community as ‘untouchables’ and attempt to re-inscribe Dalit identity in positive, self-assertive terms. Right from the impressionable age in school, the language,
mode of expression, socialization, role models are all given by the hegemonic system of Brahmins; there is not a trace of Dalit language, customs, culture or Dalit history in it. Dalits are only taught to be ashamed of their being, to be alienated from themselves and therefore to emulate what the upper caste people do. In order for the literature Dalits to be really different from that of mainstream, there is a prerequisite of the caged Dalit consciousness being freed from the hegemonic hold of Brahmanic literature and culture. To meet this purpose, the conception of the Dalit literature has to do with the sustained rebellious expression against the Brahmanic hegemony and iniquitous order of every kind with a vision to create a world sans exploitation. Keeping in mind the above mentioned fact the tone of the Dalit literature has basically sought to assert Dalit identity by discarding the Brahmanic language and symbolism and instead using their own language, idiom metaphor and imagery. These writers make use of the language of the out castes and under privileged in Indian society. Shame, anger, borrow and indomitable hope are the stuff of Dalit literature. More so, because of the anger against the age-old oppression of Brahmanic hegemony, the expression of the Dalit writers have become sharp. In content, it mainly expressed the pathos of their living and gratitude to Dr. Ambedkar for ameliorating them. Dalit writers have sung praises to him and glorified whatever he did. They reflected rebellion and tendency to relate with all the revolutionary ideologies and movements in the world including Marxism. In relation to Marxism most people however extended the skepticism of Ambedkar albeit in a poetic style. For instance, JV Pawar in his Nakabandi (Blacade) writers:
You treat Marx as medicine I deem it has a drug dismantle
this story caste mansion, this fence and let there be a free
play of water, for, stagnant waters do not bring revolutions
what can your drug do?

The early voices always talked about revolt and revolutions. J.V. Pawar in
his Dawn excels in articulating the anger of the then Dalit youth when he
passionately talks of revolution.

The revolution is not going to wait the clenched first are not
to be loosened now. I have endured much, no more
enduring now. I can't be unfaithful to the blood ordering me
to hold arms.

The inner quest of identity, the cultural denunciations of the iniquitous
Hindu dispensation and the social struggler to assert one's human dignity took
various forms according to the will, vision and capacity of each Dalit writer. The
practice of writing does not aim at achieving an aesthetic performance in
literature as an art. It serves purposes of social intervention and accordingly
carries strong militant connotations. The nature of these connotations various
and takes different shades depending upon the writer's personalities, changing
socio-cultural contexts, motives and inspiration to write. These autobiographical
testimonies are more of a social phenomenon, a form of social protest practice, a
socio-cultural action in the form of a literary performance than a literary event.
The mainstream critique of Dalit literature in general accused it as being one
dimensional, namely negatively focusing own revolt only. I would say, it failed to
understand its essence. It could not be Dalit literature if it did not four forth revolt
and discharge a burden of hatred and contempt accumulated since centuries, or
even sometimes hurl abuses at and spit out back on high castes the venom that
they had to swallow for ages. The alleged 'negativity' is actually a form of bold,
genuine and strongly positive assertion. It was volcanic rupture in which
repressed and ruined human beings broke their status of animal servility by a
shout of protest that signaled the birth of a human being. Dalit literature has
questioned the mainstream literacy theories and upper caste ideologies and
explored the neglected aspects of life. Dalit literature is experienced – based. This ‘anubhava’ (experience) takes precedence over ‘anumana’ (speculation).

**Dalit autobiographies: ‘narratives of pain’; the contestation of untouchability.**

The growing corpus of Dalit literature shows how much the caste system and its attendant poverty and social stigma follow a Dalit everywhere. Dalit literary expression has shown a tremendous increase has shown a tremendous increase in recent years. 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. Often with religious and social sanction, these experiences have for long been silenced and marginalized as unliterary. This phenomenal growth in Dalit writing is part of a growing need of the Dalits themselves to articulate their experiences. Within this larger trend of literary assertion, autobiography in particular has been one of the most important geneses insomuch as many Dalit writers have launched their literary careers by first narrating their life-story, making autobiography an institutional space through which Dalit writers can first enter the literary public sphere. Dalit autobiographies have been described by a number of critics and Dalit writers themselves as ‘narratives of pain’ and the reason being that it is the pain which interconnects one narrative event to the next, and it is pain that kinds individual Dalits together into an ‘imagined community’ of fellow sufferers. Yet the experience of oppression does not imprison Dalits in eternal victim hood, but rather is then used by the Dalit community as a tool mobilized against this ‘cruel and inhuman social order’ which supports caste – based discrimination. Dalit autobiography transforms an experience of pain into a narrative of resistance.

The main focus of Dalit autobiography’s narrative agenda has been its use of the author’s life-experiences of pain as a means of political assertion. By writing about their own experiences as Dalit, Dalit writer reveal two objectives in their autobiographies. One is to contest the basis of caste discrimination and the other is to expose the reality behind the institutional narrative that caste no longer
functions as a significant force in the public sphere of modern India. In other words, that untouchability was abolished by the constitution of India in 1950, and consequently, there is no longer caste based discrimination in government jobs, public schools, in villages and towns etc. Thus, Dalit autobiographies constitute a challenge to this institutional narrative by presenting what they claim are ‘factual’ experiences of untouchability from the writers own life. Thus, pain, whether experienced as humiliation, as exclusion, or as actual physical violence, all serve a similar purpose in the narrative, that is to expose the contemporary occurrence of untouchability, which is otherwise ignored in the public discourse. Exposing the continuation of untouchability through this pain does several things for the audience of Dalit autobiographies. For its Dalit readers, pain is a uniting phenomenon. For the non-Dalit reader, this pain and the social reality it exposes means something different all together – shame, accusation, and hopefully an invitation for change.

Dalit autobiographies, moreover, reinforce explicitly the idea that their agenda is not localized in individualism but links the individual to his/her entire caste community as a way of gaining power and support in a group struggle against similarly experienced oppression. Consequently, there has been much debate over who is the subject of Dalit autobiography. Looked at from this point of view, in Dalit autobiographies, focalization jumps quickly between the individual protagonist, other Dalit friends, neighbors or family members, and the Dalit community as a subject in its own right. To same extent, one could put forth the view that there are innumerable subjects within the autobiography, all bound by their identity as ‘Dalit’. Dalit autobiographies give a more complex picture of subjectively where the protagonist ('I') and the Dalit community ('We') are inextricably linked in a complex web of meaning. For example, in Joothan, the protagonist Valmiki is an individual, and yet his individuality is often stifled by those who see him only as a faceless member of his community—to them he is nothing more than a ‘Dalit’, ‘Chuhra’, ‘Bhangi’. In other words, the protagonist continually faces a clash between the negative identity imposed on him from the outside (usually by the upper castes) and his own positive self-ascribed identity.
The protagonist's own subjective autonomy is bound up in a close relationship with his caste community. He faces personal discrimination and is also deeply sensitive to the pain of other oppressed Dalits, with whom he identifies to such a great extent that he seems to experience their pain himself. Furthermore, Valmiki's personal success in education is interpreted as a success for the entire Dalit community. The paradox is that his own progress as an individual—options that are open to him and obstacles that come in his way—is largely affected by the progress of the Dalit movement as a whole.

Dalit autobiographies are meant to be understood as a representative life story, where the 'ordinary' or 'representative' Dalit individual uses his narrative to raise his voice for those who are silenced by caste oppression. Yet, although Dalit autobiographies certainly invoke multiple subjectivities where the individual 'I' is linked to the communal 'We', the relationship between the two is neither direct nor unproblematic. Since all individuals hold multiple identities (class, caste, gender, occupation, location, religion etc.) No one individual can represent the wide variety of identities held by every member of the community he claims to represent. In fact, while discussing the 'representative' nature of the subject in Dalit autobiographies, it becomes important to look closely at instances in which the subject 'I' has difficulty representing the 'We', either of another Dalit individual or the Dalit community. One example is the case of Dalit women, who are entirely absent in Joothan. Though the protagonist associates himself with other Dalit friends and the Dalit community as a whole, the 'We' that has come to mean 'all Dalits' is also decidedly male. The silence regarding Valmiki's wife's own agency is one obvious example; Chanda only appears for brief moments in the narrative, once when she asks, 'You're not joking, are you?' in response to Valmiki's marriage proposal, again when she receives a theatrical award, and one more when the narrator describes her refusal to use the name 'Vaimiki' herself. No insights into this character's own reasoning, nor the different circumstances and restraints faced by Dalit women in general, are given in the
narrative. The construction of subjectivity in Dalit autobiography thus reflects the autobiographers' desire to reestablishing links with the Dalit community, autobiographies exhibit a deep undercurrent feeling of alienation from their community. Though born in rural Dalit basics, autobiographers, through education and career successor, have left their community and entered the urban middle class. There is not only a sense of physical separation, but also divisions due to education and economic status as well. It is in this sense that Dalit narratives may also be viewed as a mean for autobiographers to re-establish a feeling to connect a community. Through the process of narrating their life-story with a focus on their Dalit identity, Dalit writers are able to come together into a powerful group which can then assert itself against the main obstacles they still face – the continued practice of untouchability.

Corresponding to the narrative agenda of contesting untouchability, the narrative of autobiography focuses on events that highlight the pain of experiencing caste discrimination and expose its continued practice in modern India. thus, the autobiographer values events that reinforce the 'reality' of the continuation of untouchability, and consequently, most of the narrative time focuses on these events. This creates what at first seems to be an unstable, interrupted narrative. However, underlying this interrupted narrative, which jumps back and forth in time from one painful experience to the next, is a stable narrative agenda, which guides the narrative by skillfully weaving one 'factual' experience of caste discrimination and pain to another. Most of the Dalit autobiographies begin in the village during the autobiographers respective childhoods, and both narratives follow the protagonist's gradual move to the city – seen at first as a space of modernity, anonymity, and thus new freedom from untouchability. In the village, where caste identity is openly known and acknowledged, pain is experienced bluntly, as forced exclusion or even as physical violence. In Joothan, for example, getting beaten by pears on the way to

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31 The main exception is an instance when, in response to the insults of an upper caste Tyagi, Valmiki's mother aggressively refuses to accept the Joothan. As Valmiki describes, ‘That night the Mother goddess Drug a entered my mother's eyes.... My mother had confronted him like a lioness. (Joothan, 11).
school or getting hit with a stick for coming up to the shop counter instead of remaining on the street are common examples. However, in the city, pain is subtler, and is first experiences within the context of anonymity and the fear of being ‘caught’, so to speak. When the experience of ‘passing’ ends in the revelation of the protagonist’s untouchable identity, pain is often experienced as humiliation. Again, the narrative itself is driven through consecutive experiences of caste discrimination as well as by the protagonist’s struggle to gain an education and increase in political consciousness – a process which leads to the realization of his Dalit identity. Time, for example, is often marked in the narrative by nothing which class the protagonist was in at the time of such and such event. A sense of progress through education and to the city, however, is not interpreted as a fundamental move away from the community, despite the sense of alienation expressed in the narrative. Instead, it is understood by the autobiographer as a process realization of one’s communal ‘Dalit’ identity, when then incites him to fight to regain the rights and self respect for him and his community. The Dalit autobiographers, who have escaped poverty, rural superstitions, and ignorance to join the educated, economically stable, urban middle class feel very strongly that they have been unable to escape their caste. Surajpal Chauhan, for example, in his autobiography Tiraskrit, goes as far as to describe ‘caste’ as a brahmarkashas, a Brahman ghost, who follows him wherever he goes.\(^{32}\) Having escaped the confines of the village, availed of reservation, and experienced a rise in their class status, these writers continued to experience caste-based discrimination despite their many ‘success’. In the face of this sense of disillusionment, several needs arose for the for the Dalit writers. One was a need to expose the myth that untouchability was no longer practiced in modern India, and autobiography institutionalized as a ‘truth telling’ genre based on the ‘facts of one’s life provided an excellent outlet for these individuals to raise their voices in protest. Another need resulted from the paradox these writers experiences at being continually oppressed and obstructed in their own lives by their caste identity, while at the same time feeling

\(^{32}\) Chauhan, Tiraskrit, P.57.
significantly distanced from their caste community which they had left behind in the village. Thus, autobiography also serves this second purpose of re-establishing a link between the middle class Dalit individual and his caste community through the process of narrating his life with a focus on his Dalit identity. The narrative of Dalit autobiographies to contest specifically caste-based discrimination (rather than class-based issues such as poverty, labor, or land ownership etc. where the government would also be seen as a major oppressor) must therefore also be understood in light of the specific desires of its authors. For example, the accepting of Joothan, leftover scraps of food, is interpreted by the author in the context of his caste rather than class identity, i.e. as ‘Dalits’ rather than ‘poor’.

**Dalit autobiographies under consideration**

**Joothan**

Omprakash Valmiki’s Joothan, an autobiographical account of his birth and upbringing as an untouchable, or Dalit, in the newly independent India of the 1950s, is one of the first portrayals of Dalit life in India from an insider’s perspective. Omprakash Valmiki begins his autobiography by asserting, ‘Dalit life is excruciatingly painful, chassed by experiences. Experiences that did not manage to find room in literary creation. We have grownup in a social order that is extremely cruel and inhuman. And compassionless towards Dalits’’. He further writes, “One can somehow get past poverty and deprivation but it is impossible to get past caste.” With this statement, Valmiki highlights the rigidity of the caste system in India that has resulted in the socio-economic oppression of thousands across India over centuries merely because of the ‘lesser caste’ to which they belong. The title of this autobiographical account, ‘Joothan’ literarily means scraps of food left on a plate, destined for the garbage or for the family pet in a middle class urban home. It is related to the word ‘jootha’, which means polluted, and such scraps are characterized as ‘joothan’ only if someone else eats them. India’s untouchables have been forced to accept and eat Joothan for their subsistence for centuries. The word ‘Joothan’ encapsulates the pain, humiliation,
and poverty of this community, which has lived at the bottom of India's social pyramid for millennia. In this autobiography, this word encapsulates the pain, the humiliation and the poverty of the 'untouchable' chuhra community of Uttar Pradesh, to which the author belongs. The untouchables or Dalits who are considered social outcasts by the upper castes not only had to rely on the joothan of others but also had to relish it. The treatment meted out to them was worse than that to animals. Although untouchability was legally abolished in the constitution of the newly independent India in 1949, Dalits still continue to face discrimination, economic deprivation, violence, and ridicule.

By writing about his own experiences as a Dalit, Omprakash Valmiki reveals two objectives in his autobiography Joothan. His main objective is to contest the basis of caste discrimination. In Joothan for instance, Valmiki wirts,

> Being born is not in the control of a person. It is were in one's control, then why would I have been born in a Bhangi household? Those who call themselves the standard-bearers of this country's great cultural heritage, did they decide which homes they would be born into? Albeit they turn to scriptures to justify their position, the scriptures that establish feudal values instead of promoting equality and freedom.33

The other objective of Valmiki's Joothan is to constitute a challenge to the institutional narrative that caste no longer functions as a significant force in the public sphere of modern India, in other words, that untouchability was abolished by the constitution of India in 1950, and consequently, there is not longer caste-based discrimination in the country. Valmiki constitutes a challenge to this institutional narrative by presenting what he claims are factual experiences of untouchability from the writers, "I was kept out of extracurricular activities. On such occasions I stood on the margins like a spectator. During the annual functions of the school, when rehearsals were on for the play, I too wished for a role. But I always had to stand outside the door. The so called descendents of the gods cannot understand the

33 Valmiki, 133-4.
aguish of standing outside the door. In another instance, Valmiki relates how he was continually kept out of the chemistry lab 'on same pretext or the other', and despite protesting to the head master of the school, nothing was done to enforce the equality of every student regardless of caste to use the lab. He writes, "not only did I do poorly in the lab tests in the board exam, I also got low marks in the oral, even though I had answered the examiner's questions quite correctly." In yet another example he explains how a relation of a teacher with the student was affected by the caste. He describes this relationship in the following lines:

One day headmaster Kaliram called me into his room and asked, "what's your name, heh?"

"Omprakash," I said in a low voice in fear. The children used to get scared as soon as they saw the headmaster.

The terror of the headmaster was in the whole school.

"It's that of a chudha?" leapt the second question of the headmaster.

"Yes Sir."

"Alright,... climate the Sheesham tree is the front and cut some branches to make a broom. Make a leafy brom. And make the whole school sparkle like glass. Go ... quickly set to work."

It is clear that a Dalit student is made to remember his familial profession. And when a Dalit student refuses to do such work, the behaviour towards him is described in the following lines:

The third day I went and sat quietly in the class. A roar was head in a few moments, "Hey, you mother-fucker of a Chudha where are you hiding....your mother...."

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34 Ibid., P.16.
36 Ibid. P.14.
I was trembling terribly on hearing his roar. A Tyagi guy shouted and said, "Sir, he is sitting there in the corner".

The headmaster had leapt and clutched my neck. The pressure of his fingers had been increasing on my neck. Like some wolf seizes a goat's kid. Clearly the picture here formed of the relationship of a Dalit student with a teacher is a picture of exploitation, fear, terror, repression, and oppression which is created by the knowledge-giving teacher. Thus it is discernible how Valmiki writes about the ill treatment meted out to him when he was at school simply because he was an untouchable. He describes explicitly the trauma he went through when he was asked to spend three days sweeping the school courtyard instead of accompanying his classmates belonging to the higher castes, in the study class.

Instead of following a linear pattern, Valmiki moves from memory to memory, demonstrating how his present is deeply scarred by his past in spite of the distance he has traversed to become one of the prominent authors in Dalit literature. Despite the barriers of caste which proved to be a hindrance at every step throughout his years in school and college, Valmiki preserved to get better education and evolved. Both his parents have been portrayed as heroic figures in the text. They desired something better for their child and fought for his safety and growth. One of the most powerful moments in the text is when his mother overturned a bucketful of joothan at a wedding after a high-caste Tyagi humiliated her. His father, Chotan Lal, always stood by Valmiki and told him that he should always do what he desired. This upcoming for members of a community that had been socially and economically oppressed for centuries is a symbol of great courage and determination. It is quite apt that Omprakash Valmiki had dedicated this text to people belonging to his community or caste.

While describing the events in Bombay much later in his life, Valmiki highlights the fact that education is not the solution to the ills of the caste system. On having been mistaken for a Brahmin because of his adopted last name, 'Valmiki'

\[37\] Ibid. P.15.
(which is used to denote a community of untouchables in U.P) he found out that just the revelation of his real caste to well educated middle class people was received by shock and an sudden change of attitude towards him. Even his own relatives were hesitant to invite him for a wedding as he refused to let go of his last name because it would reveal their caste. Valmiki's stresses on the difference between the Dalits and the caste Hindus, the Savarnas, with respect to their various religious beliefs and customs, he subtly contests the belief that the oppression of the Dalits by the Savarnas is justified as per the Hindu religious laws because the pork-eating Dalits living on the outskirts of villages and towns actually do not belong to the Hindu religion.

Inspired by the work done by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar for the socio-economic development of the Dalits and the abolition of untouchability Omprakash Valmiki’s made an immense contribution to Dalit literature by highlighting the plight of Dalits in the post independence era which isn’t quite different from that of the pre-independence era. Thus, it may then he concluded that the text Joothan, reveals to the reader the rigidity and narrow-mindedness of casteist India, which is as relevant today as it was in the early part of the last century. The author’s objective doesn’t stop at evoking compassion towards the oppressed Dalits in the mind of the reader but questions “why is my caste my only identity”? This one query lead the reader into introspection. In India caste has always defined the socio-political scenario of the country. Whether it is the debate on the reservation policy for government jobs and education to aid the socially and economically backward classes or political gimmickry, everything has an undertone of caste and religion. Valmiki writes that despite government undertaking for the development of oppressed classes, through reservations, their achievements are hardly noticed and are ridiculed often. Many of us, at some stage of our lives have been discriminated against because we belong to a community and due to our beliefs and practices. The mention of caste, community, and religion on admission forms to school and colleges is one such example. Just being an Indian is rather insufficient to get our basic rights. Isn't it ironical that with every step our country takes towards 'development', the same
issues crop up again and again? Joothan is undoubtedly a slap for those who claim their superior civilisational status and say, "such things don't happen." As Valmiki writes, 'Dalit readers had seen their own pain in those pages of mine,' for the non-Dalit reader, this pain and the social reality it exposes means something different all together – shame, accusation, and hopefully an invitation for change. As a document of the long silenced and long denied sufferings of the Dalits, Joothan is not only a contribution to the archives of Dalit history, but a manifesto for the revolutionary transformation of society and human consciousness. Valmiki largely put down the fact, which he wants readers (especially those belonging to the upper caste) to experience – that he has grown up in a social order that is extremely cruel and inhuman and, more importantly, compassionless towards Dalits whose life is excruciatingly painful, charred by experiences. Through his writings, he wants those believing that 'these things don't happen here' to know that these are consistently happening in day-to-day lies. He points out:

Those who say that 'these things don't happen here', those who want to claim a superior civilizational status, I beg to submit: only he or she who has suffered this anguish knows its sting.38

Valmiki speaks of the realities and contradictions of society that had been shut out with thick walls of denial. Arun Prabha Mukherjee writes that 'Joothan is one among a body of Dalit writing that is unified by an ideology, an agenda, and a literary aesthetic. She is of the view that this text provides an apt introduction to the newly emerging school of writing that is not just a school of writing but that sees itself as part of a social movement for equality and justice. Valmiki writes:

We need an ongoing struggle, and a consciousness of struggle, a consciousness of struggle, a consciousness of struggle, a consciousness that brings revolutionary change both in the outside world and in our hearts, a consciousness that leads the process of social change.39

38 Ibid. P.18.
39 Ibid. P.10.
Arun Prabha Mukherjee suggests that in Joothan readers of English language texts can find another answer to Gayatri Spivak’s famous question: ‘can the Subaltern speak’? Valmiki portrays a slice of life that had seldom been recorded in Indian literatures until the advent of Dalit literature in Marathi in the fifties and its subsequent spread to many other languages, notably Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi and English. Until then, literature had been the domain of high castes. Untouchables were either mostly absent from literary representations or shown as victims in need of saviors, as objects without voice and agency. Valmiki, as can be readily seen, renders clear indication that he is concerned about Dalits in general. He has shown in a very exceptionally clear and illuminating way how Dalits ‘for centuries have been at the bottom of India’s social pyramid and denied even the most basic human rights such as access to drinking water from public lakes and wells, freedom to walk on public roads, and freedom to choose on occupation instead of being assigned one by birth. Moreover, Valmiki puts much stress on the fact that the transformation of the stigmatized identity of these erstwhile untouchables to a self-chosen identity as Dalit, is a story of collective struggle waged over centuries.

It seems to me that it would be more accurate to say that writes like Valmiki, by identifying themselves as Dalits, are embracing an identity that is born in a historic struggle to dismantle the caste system, responsible for their untouchable status, and to rebuild society on the principles of human dignity, equality and respect. As Arjun Dangle, a writer and leader of the Dalit Panther movement, writers:

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

What Valmiki, by his autobiography, is asserting is to send among the readers a clear message that high caste Indian writers, both Hindu and non-

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Hindu (caste has been demonstrated to have infected all religious in India), who get published both in India and abroad as ‘representatives’ of Indian life, seldom deal with caste and caste oppression in their works; and that the dominant discourse of postcolonial and subaltern theories, which are often the frameworks used by Western academies to teach Indian literature, mostly Indian English literature, not only refuses to notice the high caste status of these writes but presents them as resistant voices, representing the oppression of the colonized.

When seen in the light of Indian context, the situation is slightly different in India in the sense that here mainstream critics and reviewers have responded to Dalit writers' stark portrayals of caste discrimination with a sense of disbelief—and accusations of exaggeration. They have maintained, in fact claimed, that caste is no longer relevant arguing that either because it has already disappeared or is in the process of disappearing. Their implication here is that Dalit writers are ‘flogging a dead horse’.

Om Prakash Valmiki, however, out rightly denies the stand taken by the mainstream, writers that 'caste is no longer relevant', or that 'it has already disappeared' or is in the process of disappearing and contests both the basis of caste discrimination as well as the institutional claim that caste no longer functions as a social force in modern India. it seems to me that Valmiki is, of course, quite justified in saying that caste still functions as a seed force in modern India. in support of his contention — and in order to make his contention — and in order to make his contention stand up — he cite a considerable body of examples and probes deeply enough into the effect of caste on Dalits. I think Valmiki provides us with enough evidence that is very plentiful and quite conclusive and strongly vindicates his stand that caste still continues as predominant social force in modern India. Let us consider, for example, the fact that how Valmiki devotes several pages to the irenics that his new identity entails. While in Bombay, he is taken to be a Brahmin by a Naharachtrdian, Brahman family, indicating the possibility of 'passing' if one travels far enough from the place of one’s birth. In western Uttar Pradesh, however, this surname does not lift him up from his Chuhrahood and the attendant untouchability.
Among the Buddhists he is seen as a casuist because he refuses to shed this identity marker as a badge of self assertion, a declaration that he does not want to hide his Dalit identity. Thus, we may conclude, then by saying that Valmiki points out the daily dilemmas Dalits face in a caste-based society that makes it almost impossible to shed one’s caste marker ands leave behind the stigmas attached to it.

The Outcaste (Akkarmarshi)

There is no denying the fact that the phenomenon of caste as a status marker has probably been the most unique feature of Indian society. The social stratification and injustice arising out of the concept of caste attached to the accident of birth have been faced and questioned repeatedly by thinkers and social reformers throughout the history of India. In the Indian tradition, all functions involving labour, leaving aside the function of governing, learning, trading, were reserved for the Shudras. The menial nature of work, the exclusion from the forms and institutions of learning, the perverse notion of pollution attached to the occupations in which the Shudras were engaged, and the perpetual economic inequality, all of which continued to exist for centuries, made the life of the Shudras a relentless story of suffering and injustice.

In his own short comment on Akkarmashi (The Outcaste), Limbale, in the preface to the first print of Akkarmashi, wrote:

*Every time the dominant classes attack and exploit the weak, they violate their women. The sexual exploits of the men among the wicked exploiters draw legitimacy from their authority, health, society, culture and religion. But what of the exploited women? She has to carry the rape in her womb. That rape has to be borne, fed and reared and this rape acquires and lives a life. My autobiography holds in it the agony of such a life. My experiences are my words. What will remain there if you take experience away from a life? A living corpse.*

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Limbale wrote in an article entitled 'Chronicle of a Fatherless Being', two years after Akkarmashi was published:

I have sown the events, incidents and experience from my life of twenty-seven years. This is the story of my life, an expression of my mother's agony and an autobiography of a community. Being fatherless is as much my fate as it is to be in a general ward (in the hospital) of suffering.42

When we take account of what Limbale writes above and most importantly in the autobiography, The Outcaste, there can be no doubt whatsoever that Limbale has made out a very convincing case in support of his contention. As you can see from the text that he makes all attempts to explain and justify his contention. In addition, he even cites considerable amount of prima facie evidences which provide greater necessary support for his assumption. My own view is that the Outcaste is the poignant and hair raising account of the humiliation of a Dalit community at the hands of an upper privileged class. In the text, Shoran, the main protagonist raises fundamental question concerning his fractured identity. Granted the fact that his mother was an untouchable and his father beyond to an upper caste, it is questionable and he rightfully questions also in the text, as to whether he is an upper caste or an untouchable. It is undoubtedly true that this book is a reflection of the darker side of Indian society, a bitter critique of the lack of compassion that the lower castes have endured for centuries.

Sharan kumar, having 'felt humiliated', 'considered bastard' and called 'Akkarmashi', raises again the question of social ethics, i.e., 'What is morality?' In the words of Sharan kumar, 'after my birth the missions of the Patil community must have become tense. My first breath must have threatened the morality of the world. With my first cry at birth, milk must have splashed from the breasts of every Kunti.43

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42 Ibid. P.24.
43 Ibid. P.36.
There are a member of other questions concerning morality and social ethics which he poses at the end of the text such as:

'Why has this complex of moral establishment been created at all? Who created morality and immorality? Why? If my birth and life are being branded as immoral, what morality do I follow'?

The author, I am very sure, knows that there are no answers to these questions. Nevertheless, Limbale's autobiography is an intense narrative, pointing to the futility of these questions and the agony and frustration in searching for their answers.

In the book, the main issue or the issue at stake is which is an absolutely vital one—the author's fractured identity. He is looking, throughout the book, for an answer to the questions: 'who am I' and 'whose son am I, really?' Limbale mentions, in the autobiography, how people enjoying high-caste privileges, authority sanctioned by religion, and who inherit property, have exploited the Dalits of the land. The Patils in every village have made whores of the wives of Dalit farm labourers. A poor Dalit girl on attaining puberty has invariably been a victim of their lust. There is a whole breed born to adulterous patils. There are Dalit families that survive by pleasing the Patils sexually. The whole village considers such a house as the house of the Patil's whose.

The author wasn’t aware of the need of his identity till he joined school. When his application form was not signed by the village chief he was in a state of shock and then did he come to realize that 'a man is recognized in this would, by his religion, caste, or his father'. He writes, 'I had neither a father’s name, nor any religion, nor a caste. I had no inherited identity at all? The author underwent an intolerant humiliation. Even teacher asked him, 'don't you have a father?’ One can wonder what must have been going through the writer's mind at that time. The author repeatedly asked his mother about his father:
I used to ask my mother about my father: What was his name? Where did he live? What did he do? Why didn't he come to me? ... And so on.\textsuperscript{44}

The author says,"

My mother asked me to tell my teacher that she was the Patil's whose. This made me very happy and I thought that the next day I would certainly tell my teacher. I didn't know the meaning of the word 'whose'; I thought it meant 'father'. But what a venomous word it is. It implies an impure, foul vagina. Who would willingly enter the gigantic gate of that vagina?\textsuperscript{45}

The author claims to have been born from his mother's affair with Hanumantha Limbale, the Patil of Baslegaon. Limbale writes that Hanumantha had been responsible for wrecking his mother, Masamai's married life. It was because of him that Masamai was divorced and since then she had been Hanumantha's keep. Limbale writes:

This is almost a tradition – a Patil, always a big landowner, has a Dalit woman s his whose. There is at least one such house in every village. Children born to such a whose have no legal father because there is an unbridgeable gap between such a father and son. The prestige of the father is at stake!\textsuperscript{46}

The author gives vivid description of how he was born in the following words:

Hanumantha Limbale lured Masamai (the author's mother). 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. Hanumantha Limbale now possessed her like a pet dove.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. P.60.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. P.62.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid. P.58.
They lived happily. Massama because pregnant, and gave birth to a son. Who's the father of this boy? Hanumantha didn't want any of this to happen, but who can disown a child? A child is a reality.

The author tells us that Hanumantha refused to acknowledge him as his offspring. This rejection really disturbed the mind of the author and he considers her mother to be raped by Hanumantha. As Sharankumar remarks:

*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 whose? Did anyone distribute sweets to celebrate my birth? Did anyone advice me affectionately? Did anyone celebrate my naming ceremony? Which family would claim me as its descendants? Whose son am I, really?*

This above mentioned fact seems to be the main reason why he questions the social ethics: What at all is morality? Why has this complex of moral establishment been created at all? Who created morality and immorality? Why? If my birth and life are being branded as immoral, what morality do I follow?

It seems to me that the author is absolutely right in raising these questions related to morality and ethics. Looked at it from another point of view, one might find the narrator boiling with anger, on the other hand, he is meditating on the very fundamental issues related to social relationships and ethics. Occasionally, in the middle of the narration of humiliation and hunger, Limbale suddenly assumes the tone of a philosophical questioner trying to unbuild the cosmos:

[47] Ibid. P.36.
[48] Ibid. P.37.

176.
God endowed man with a stomach. So man began to enjoy eating and drinking. At the wedding feast there was so much to eat and drink that it made choosing difficult. After all you have only one stomach, so you get confused. Man thought if god has given me so much to eat why then has he given me just one stomach? Man then went to god and said, 'on god, you made a mistake by giving me just one stomach. I want to eat and drink a great deal, it will be a blessing if you give me two stomachs? God replied, “Oh man, go away. First try filling this one stomach and then come back to me. I will certainly give you one more." 

Betrayed by the upper caste persons, the author contemplates upon why god had brought discrimination. He points out:

God discriminates between man and man. He makes one man rich and the other poor. One is high caste, the other untouchable. What kind of god is this that makes human beings hate each other? We are all supposed to be the children of god, then why are me considered untouchable? We don’t approve of this god, nor this religion, nor this country because they ostracize us.

Why are we ostracized? Why are we kept away from other human beings? Why are we kept out of our own selves? Why this discrimination between one human being and another? After all, isn’t everybody’s blood red? 

It seems to me that the most memorable element of Limbale’s life story is his apt and apropos description of the caste Hindu’s attitude towards women. There are many women characters in it, and not one of them without a serious complication in her life. There are widows, childless women, deserted women, and as the ultimate of all this divine and social injustice, Limbale presents his own mother who has been cheated again and again, exploited most blatantly in

50 Ibid. P.8.
51 Ibid. P.62.
every relationship she strikes, burdened with a roll call of children and their upbringing. The author, however, shows a remarkable understanding of their situation. Limbale describes in the text how Dalit women were body treated and insulated. They were beaten as if they were slaves. Some farmers even harassed them sexually, pulled them into the crop, and raped them. Limbale cites an example:

Once a Dalit youth dared to look lasciviously at a high-caste woman from the village. This was considered a serious crime. Suppose she went back and told the people in her house? The whole village turned against the young man and attacked the Mahrawada. Later the whole village went to court against young Dalit men who were sentenced to prison for a year. When they returned after serving their term, every man’s wife had a baby ‘the Dalit Women had been raped when their husbands were in prison’.  

This is evidently one of the harrowing descriptions of how Dalit women were not only physically, mentally tortured but also sexually exploited by the upper caste people. Consequently, Dalit women were forced to carry the rape in their womb, of which Limbale himself happens to be as described by him in the book, one of those results of rape victim.

**Growing up untouchable in India**

Vasant Moon wrote his autobiography  with a title of Vasti (neighborhood) focusing on the importance of his community in Nagpur. To make it more understandable the English translation of this autobiography was entitled growing up untouchable in India.

The essential underlying meaning, however, in terms of the concept of a place of belonging are present throughout the English translations. There are many areas in this autobiographies where one can draw contrast between this and other Dalit autobiographies.

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52 Ibid. P.71.
In the first place, the most fundamental difference between Moon’s autobiography and other Dalit autobiographies under consideration happens to be in the sense that Moon’s autobiography is about a Vasti, an urban neighborhood, a community of people, and his growing up in that Vasti which adds a new dimension to our understanding of India’s Dalits, where as other autobiographies are about village experiences that the authors underwent.

Vasant Moon has evidently, in this autobiography, concentrated on three main areas: Firstly, he looks at the factor of caste, a hierarchical system which is based on ancient principles of hereditary pollution and purity, with Brahmans as the most pure and untouchables as the most polluted. Secondly, he gives importance to the effective and influential leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who has been described as unparallel hero and wave'. Thirdly, he describes vividly aid splendidly the aesthetic beauty of nature of the Vasti. Every joy of the monsoon rains, every tree, fruit, every nook and cranny of the world of in and around the Vaste plays an important part in Moon’s story which is completely missing in other Dalit autobiographies under consideration. Moon’s autobiography as mentioned above, is about a neighborhood, a community if people who are Mahars, “untouchables,” placed at the bottom of India’s caste system. This Mahar community, however, is not the same kind of community found in villages, but a changed Mahar community. It is about that group at a time and place when change and taken place and more change was in the air, when the community feeling was stronger than any sense of inferiority, when a child could delight in the wonders of urban slum. This is in shark contrast to the child brought up in a Mahar community in villages – for example, take the case of Joothan or Akarmashi (out caste) – where the protagonists had to under go lot of torture, suffering and pain to get education, who could never delight the wonders of urban touch.

Moon’s growing up, nevertheless, must be seen as a statement by a man whose caste was polluting, despised, "untouchable" by higher castes. It continues till today, although in less blatant form in the city than village – where it
is found dreadfully, with much effort on the part of government to make up for past injustice through 'reservations', India's version of affirmative action. The extraordinary progress shown in Moon's narrative of the high places of many of Nagpur's Mahar children judges and lawyers and doctors and such – indicates the success of India's policy. The dark side of progress is that there is more violence than ever before, but usually in villages – as shown by Valmiki and Limbale – when untouchables claim rights that threaten the caste Hindu status quo. A hint of the violence appears in Moon's story of the ritual killings of a Brahman – Mahar couple, and in the boycott of Mahars who ended the degrading untouchable custom of dragging out dead cattle from the village. And in the 'wars' in the streets in 1946 when Ambedkar's followers fought for political rights denied them in the plans for independence India.

In Vasant Moon's world, Dalits are not all unhappy victims, not marginalized peoples to be pitied, not a people without hope. It should be stressed here that this was not the case with the other Dalit autobiographies where you find that Dalits are unhappy victims, marginalized people to be pitied it should not be forgotten that Moon's description is of urban community where as other autobiographies have been set into rustic or village milieu. Prejudice, violence crime are not absent from Moon's story of his early life, but they do not dominate, do not destroy his spirit. It can be readily seen in other Dalit autobiographies that prejudice, violence, crime overwhelmingly dominate the narrators' lives and it even goes to the extent of destroying their personal spirit.

Another area where you can draw the line is that Moon's story reveals a richly complex slum culture, much in the same way that some American Black autobiographies do but quite unlike other Dalit autobiographies. Moon also points out distinctly how the coming of the British offered new occupations in the army and on the docks and railroads and in the mills, while at the same time it destroyed the Mahar work of carrying messages, determining land boundaries, and carrying for government officials horses, leaving the removal of dead
animals, the brining of wood to the burning ground, and agricultural labor to the lot of the Mahar.

One thing is certain here that the mix of new opportunity and lack of any viable traditional work such as that in leather pushed and pulled the Mahar into greater mobility than many other untouchable castes. And it must be said that the Mahar world of Moon in the region of Vidarbha, eastern Maharashtra, is different even from that of the caste is other parts of the Marathi speaking region. It makes us realize which is fact that each of the hundreds of untouchable castes in India has a life somewhat or massively different from that of others.

It is reasonable to assume that Moon’s story, undoubtedly, adds a new dimension to the English sources on untouchables. Moon’s Vasti bears little relationship to the world of Valmiki’s wretched leaves of Bhangis (sweepers) or the world of Limbale (illegitimate child—out caste). Moon’s urban life, filled with the explorations of childhood, secure in its neighborliness but subject to the intrusion, good and bad, of the outside world, is a far cry from an untouchables.

Let us now consider, by way of illustration, some of the areas in Moon’s autobiography where a contrast can be drawn with other Dalit autobiographies. In Moon’s world, Dalits belong to ‘urban slum’ where a complete change occurred and more change was in the air, where the community feeling was stronger than any sense of inferiority. It follows then that the Dalits of Moon’s world had changed or advanced mentality which could have been due to the European influence in whose company those Dalits had grown up. As Moon claims:

Grandfather Sadashiv had grown up in the company of Europeans from this he got the enjoyment of discipline. I remember how he used to dress me in shorts and shirt. The shirt would be tucked in. the pants would be buttoned. Taking the straps from my dropping pants he would throw them across my shoulders and button them over my chest, left to right, right to left. Next, he would put handsome socks on my feet and canvas shoes over these. This was
the way he used to prepare me for going to school. And he would never forget a small handkerchief in my pocket.\textsuperscript{54}

Om Prakash Valmiki's, however, has had an outrageous and quite an opposite experience in comparison with Vasant Moon. As Valmiki illustrates:

\textit{It me went to school in neat and clean clothes, then our class fellow said, 'Abey, Chuhre ka, he has come dressed in new clothes? If one went wearing old and shabby clothes, then they said, abbey chuhre ke, get away from me, you stink?}

\textit{This was our no-win situation. We were humiliated whichever way we dressed.}\textsuperscript{55}

It can, well, he argued here that this incident could have happened because 'although the doors of the government schools,' as Valmiki puts it 'had begin to open for untouchable, the mentality of the ordinary people had not changed much? Therefore, the fact that the mentality of the ordinary people had not charged even after the country having been independent, has it larger negative impact on the social existence form of caste system prevalent in the society, the most miserable victim of which happened to be the poor untouchables.

Vasant Moon's narration of growing up in an urban neighborhood, no doubt, adds a new dimension to our understanding of India's Dalits. In Moon's world, Dalits are not all unhappy victims, not marginalized people to be pitied, not a people without hope. Prejudice, violence, crime are not absent from the story of his early life, but they do not dominate, do not destroy his spirit.

\textit{In Moon's world, the Mahars mainly worked as cooks for European officials in the military or for English}

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid. P.10.
\textsuperscript{55} Valmiki, P.3.
missionaries. Moon writes, My grandfather used to drink English liquor with English officials and go to parties.56

In Moon's world, nearly all the teachers appear to have been influenced by Gandhi's teachings, consequently, they had compassion for Mahar boys. They never treated Dalits scornfully. Moon says, 'the teachers took care that the poison of casteism never spread among the boys of the class. Furthermore, Moon had a very deep friendship with all the boys-most of whom belonged to the upper caste. Consider, for an example, an incident when Moon fell sick.

One day I fell very sick. For three or four days the fever raged. Nobody, not even my mother, was at home during the day. All the twenty or twenty-five boys in my class came to the Maharpura to visit me. They began to examine me”. He further writes:

"There Brahman boys used to come to school in cars. Even in this there was no feeling that some were great, some small, some rich, and some poor. My bonds of friendship with them remain unbroken”57

Moon, citing several incidents, brings out the fact that how the whole neighborhood and Vasti had 'community' or 'we' feelings towards each other, forgetting all the differences at the hour of need. He cites an example of Nathi's wedding to illustrate this point:

Nathi's wedding became subject of wonder throughout the village. Nathi came bedecked in jewelry from top to toe; she appeared like some princes descending on us. The whole village came as a wave, filling Narayan Dhabarde's house to pay their respects. Tears began to flow from everyone's eyes. As one caste, the whole village came with horses, carriages, and carts to join the wedding procession.58

56 Moon, P.11.
58 Ibid. P.21.
This description is in quite sharp contrast with the description of her sister's marriage presented to us by Sharankumar Limbale who is even suspect of whether or not his sister, who has been sexually exploited by the upper caste people in the village, will ever be married to someone. In Moon's world, Dalits have been described as being politically motivated and actively participating in the freedom struggle and Dalits like. Bhyoya Macue, working among Adivasis in Bihar in the Bhoodan movement to give land to the landless. Dalits were not only politically motivated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, but also ideologically motivated so much so that once in a school a class teacher announced that there had come a scholarship from the Harijan Sevak Sangh for Harijan students and the teacher asked who were Harijans present there one of the Dalit students rose up and bared to say.

Sir, we are not Harijan's and we don't want the scholarship of the Harijan sevak sangh. None of us like to be called Harijans. And then boy further said,

We are followers of Babasaheb Ambedkar. None of us want 'Harijan' Scholarship.99

One of the profoundly important elements of Moon's story, thus, as seen above, is the role of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. So Moon's evocative remembrances are important to our grasp of the rise of Ambedkar as a symbol in all of India.

Babasaheb Ambedkar is not only a symbol of pride and achievement, he is a symbol of a contribution to the nation, and Moon's autobiography suggests the importance of that need for creative belonging.

Lastly, the fact that Moon was a progressive minded person comes to the forefront as it resulted him to go for inter caste marriage without having even a little concern for caste and sub caste. To conclude, Moon's story reveals a richly complex slum culture, influenced by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's ideology, where a new change had taken place and more change was in the air, where the community

99 Ibid. P.37.
feeling was much stronger than any sense of inferiority prevalent in other Dalit autobiographies depicting rustic or village neighborhood experiences. Narendra Jadhav's *Outcaste*: A memoir an expanded, rewritten version of the writer's *Amcha Baap Aan Amhi* (Our Father and Us), being a loving tribute from a son to his parents, particularly his father, gives an intelligent appraisal of the caste system in India and traces the story of the awakening of Dalits traversing three generations. A memoir in terms of nature of representation, the book has been written at times from the perspective of Narendra Jadav's parents, Damu and Sonu, and at other times from his own. One very important point of Jadhav's is his emphasis on the fact that *Outcaste* not only gives a vivid description of a personal recounting of the downside of the caste divide in India but also examines Dalit issues in the context of the Dalit's awakening spearheaded by the champion of human rights, Babasaheb Ambedkar, the Independence Movement, the civil Disobedience movement, Gandhi's relation with Ambedkar, and the mass conversion of Dalits to Buddhism in 1956. This knowledge is evidently justified by the incident where Damu stands facing the fauzdar, the police chief for refusing to do a task that falls outside his traditional village duties. The fauzdar abuses and whips him. Dam pleads for ***, but will not give in. incensed, the fauzdar turns his foul tongue on Babasaheb Ambedkar. For Damu, that is blasphemy. Babasaheb is his god. That very might Damu decides he has had enough. The will throw away the miserable crutches of traditional village duties that he has been saddled with and return to Mumbai.

The story of Sanabai, the author's mother, is a valuable addition in the book. Jadhav has presumably constructed her story from the things that he had seen and heard, though she had not write a diary as Damu did. It seems to me that he had seen and heard, though she did not write a diary as Damu did. It seems to me that she must have told her sons and daughters endless stories about her first days in Mumbai, her innocence as a pre-pubescent bride and her horrified reluctance to give up her old and trusted gods for the unknown Buddha whom her husbands had decided the family should worship. Sonu's story

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alternates with Damu's. The two viewpoints, sometimes concurrent, sometimes divergent, add a complexity to the narrative. One of the most sensitively written scenes in Sonu's story describes her scandalized response to Damu's sexual overtures she has come of age and been persuaded by her mother-in-law to sleep behind, the curtain with her husband and 'make him happy'.

Outcaste may be different from other Dalit autobiographies in that though it doesn't display all the literary flourishes shown in other Dalit autobiographies; nor is it political in the same way as Vasant Moon's growing up untouchable in India is. Though Damu works for the Dalit cause, sporadically in the early years and more consistently later, he does not discuss issues of political debate as Moon does. For instance, the bitter opposition of Ambedkarites to Mahatma Gandhi's description of untouchables as Harijans finds no place in Damu's story where as in Moon's, even the anti-Gandhi demonstration during his visit to Nagpur, forcing him to turn back, is debated and described.

Damu's story differs also from those Dalit autobiographies which revisit and relieve the horrors of untouchability without going beyond. Damu's guts and sinews are too strong, his response to Ambedkar's call to Dalits to 'Educate, unite, Agitate' too complete and all consuming to allow him to live in the past. His story lives in the present. It is about his pride in his work, about stretching himself to the utmost to achieve perfection in everything he does, about the despair of not finding work, but also about his determination to forge for his children a destiny that was never 'ordained'.

Outcaste differs also in term of its unique ending. It can be seen that it ends with a note of self-realization: that in modern India dignity rests in the minds and hearts of people, and that obsolete prejudices do not really matter. At the end of Damu's story, is his 16- year old grand daughter's epilogue. Born in Bloomington, Indiana, she writes with confidence, "Now I think I know who I am. I am just Approva, not tied down by race, religion or caste." But her father, Dr.

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61 Ibid. P.263.
Narendra Jadhav, the author of Outcaste, is not so sure. At one point in his moving testimony to the moral powerhouse that was his father, Damu, he asks:

"Will I ever be able to free myself from the bondage of caste". It seems to me that Bama's Karukku, tends be a different or an unusual autobiography in many ways. Firstly, and most importantly, it appears to be growing out of a particular moment i.e. personal crisis a kind of a watershed in the author's life which drives her to make sense of her life as a woman. Secondly, she is not a Hindu Dalit woman but a Dalit Christian woman whose re-reading and interpretation of the Christian scriptures as an adult enables her to carve out both a social vision and a message of hope for Dalits by emphasizing the revolutionary aspects of Christianity, the values of equality, social justice, and love towards all. Thirdly, Karukku eschews the confessional mode of writing autobiographies, leaving out many personal details. Next, the protagonist in this book in never named. Furthermore, the events of Bama's life are not arranged according to a simple, linear or chronological order, as with most autobiographies, but rather, reflected upon in different ways, repeated from different perspectives, grouped under different themes, for example, work, games and recreation, education, belief, etc. It is Bama's during quest for integrity as a Dalit and Christian that Shapes. The book and gives it its polemic. Lakshmi Holmstrom rightly asserts, "the argument of the book is to do with the area of the narrator's spiritual development both through the maturing of her belief as a Catholic, and her gradual realization of herself as a Dalit."63

Bama gives a vivid picture of the way the church ordered and influenced the lives of the Dalit Catholics. Every aspect of the child's life is imbued with the Christian religion. The day is ordered by religious ritual. The year is punctuated by religious processions and festivals which become part of the natural yearly cycle of crops and seasons. But parallel to this religious life is a socio-political self-education that takes off from the revelatory moment when she first understands what untouchability means. It is this double perceptive that enables

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63 Ibid. Introduction. P.8
her to understand the deep rift between Christian belies and practice. Bama's own life experiences urge her towards actively engaging in alleviating the sufferings of the oppressed. When she becomes a run, it is in the stubborn hope that she will have a chance to put these aspirations into effect. She discovers, however, that the perspectives of the convent and the church are different from hers. Thus, the story of that conflict and its resolution form the core of Karukku.

Bama in Karukku holds that she can see the beginning of an important change in the gradually growing awareness among Dalits, of their own oppression:

But Dalits have also understood that god is not like this, has not spoken like this. They have become aware that they too were created in the likeness of god. There is a new strength within them, urging them to reclaim that likeness which has been repressed, ruined and obliterated; and to begin to live with them honour and respect and love of all humankind.

In Karukku, Bama refers neither to Ambedkar nor to Periyaar, who not only attacked the caste system, but whose remarkable speeches and writings against the oppression of women were published in 1942 under the title, Pen Yenh Adimairyaanal? Why did woman become enslaved? Nor indeed does Bama make a connection between caste and gender oppressions.

Karukku is concerned with the single issue of caste oppression within the Catholic Church and its institutions and presents Bama's life as a process of lonely self-discovery. Bama leaves her religious order to return to her village, where life may be insecure, but where she does not feel alienated or compromised. The tension throughout Karukku is between the self and the community, the narrator leaves one community of religious women in order to join another as a Dalit woman. Raj Gautaman maintains that it is the function of

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64 Ibid. P.8.
65 Ibid. P.13.
Dalit writing to awaken in every reader, a consciousness of the oppressed Dalit, and to share in the Dalit experience as if it were their own. *Karrukku*, he says, is a singular example of a piece of writing which achieves this. Bama's work is among those that are exploring a changing Dalit identity. There is, in the writing, a very powerful sense of the self and the community as Dalit, which rejects outright the notion of varna; and which on the other hand refused to ‘sanskritize’, to evaluate Dalit life-style according to mainstream Hindu values. But there is also a powerful sense of engagement with history, of change of changing notions of identity and belonging. Bama captures a moment that contains a paradox; she seeks an identity, but seeks a change which means an end to that identity.

The driving forces that shaped this book *Karukku* are, as Bama herself asserts, many:

*Events that occurred during many stages of my life, cutting me like karkku and making me bleed; unjust social structures that plunged me into ignorance and left me trapped and suffocating, my own desperate urge to break, throw away and destroy these bonds; and when the chains were shattered into fragments, the blood that was split then; all these, taken together.*

Bama wants her autobiography to be like a “two edged sword”. While on the one hand it challenges the oppressors who have enslaved and dis-empowered the Dalits, on the other hand it reiterates the need other hand it reiterates the need for a new society with ideals such as justice, equality and love. It seeks to established a better society for the Dalits apart from questioning the oppressors. It does not retaliate violently to injustice. One the contrary, it seeks to emphasize on the importance of education, moral values and unity. It is important to note here that the author is a peace loving run who is disturbed by violence. Although she does not agree with the way the convents are run, she herself is religious and service minded. She believes that a lack of unity among the Dalits will make it easier for the upper castes to subjugate them. As she puts it:
A hundred times a second there are scuffles among them. Shameless fellows. Of course the upper caste men will laugh at them. Instead of uniting together in a village of many castes, if they keep challenging each other to fights, what will happen to all these men in the end?\(^{66}\)

She wholeheartedly pleads with the Dalits to unite together to avoid any kind of injustice done to them. As she rightly affirms:

\begin{quote}
In order to change this state of affairs, all Dalits who have been deprived of their basic rights must function as god’s word, piercing to the very heart. Instead of being more and more beaten down and blunted, they must unite, think about their rights, and battle for them.\(^{67}\)
\end{quote}

Karukku talks about the cultural, social, and familial life of Dalits. It does not confine itself to the oppression aspects or the military voice. It elaborately describes the daily life, language, naming conventions, religion, culture, festivals, food habits, entertainment, games and kinship in the ‘paraya’ community. The cultural significance of drumming is highlighted in the way they celebrated the ‘Pusai’. One must remember that the ‘parayas’ are known for their exceptional talents at drumming on the ‘parai’. During the pusai there was only one man who sang out loudly, while quite a few others accompanied him by beating out the rhythm on all sorts of objects.\(^{68}\)

In this fashion, the book talks about Bama’s Dalit experiences in different areas of her life. There are places where she is proud and happy the way she is but is angered by the treatment given to her:

\begin{quote}
Are Dalits not human beings? Do they not have common sense? Do they not have such attributes as a sense of
\end{quote}

\(^{66}\) Ibid. P. 41.
\(^{67}\) Ibid. P. 13.
\(^{68}\) Ibid. P. 56.
honour and self-respect? Are they without any wisdom, beauty, dignity? What do we lack? 69

At the end of the book in 'Afterward' seven ears after she wrote the book, she asserts.

It has been a great joy to see Dalits aiming to live with self respect, proclaiming aloud, 'Dalit endru sollada; talai nimirudu nillada; say you are Dalit; lift up your head and stand tall. To see them joining ranks in order to gain political, economic and cultural strength. To see fighting spirit gaining ground among people who have been accustomed, throughout the years, to being beaten down. To see then resisting those who have attacked then in an unjust and inhuman way, for so long70

This is probably what the author aimed for when she wrote her experience down. Thus, Karukku, is not merely a militant voice seeking to literate the Dalits from oppression, it gives an identity to the Dalits by proudly recollecting, the cultural significance of being a Dalit, in the remnants of memories. The very fact that the author is a Dalit who seeks to decentralize the established structures is proof that halt their victory is won. The book therefore becomes the harbinger if an awakening and a reiteration of the Dalit’s freedom to question, rebel and reinterpret.

Aboriginal autobiographies under consideration:

The fact aboriginal world of knowledge deals exclusively with different modes of racial discrimination, most importantly, makes it being different from the Dalit body of knowledge which explores the multifarious facts of caste discrimination. When the British claimed sovereignty over Australia in 1788, as discussed in the previous chapter, they colonized the land as terra nullius' which meant a land belonging to no one and in the wake of this 'terra nullius' theory or

69 Ibid. P.24.
70 Ibid. P.106.
say assumption, the aboriginal people were subjected to grave injustices. Consequently, aborigines not only suffered the loss of their land, but also suffered the degradation and dehumanization that British colonization left in its wake. More so, European colonization was to disrupt their lifestyles, their culture practices, ideologies and heritage to the point that some were totally wiped out whether it is talking about their loss of land, loss of culture, in most cases loss of language, loss of identity and belongingness. There is a host of things that affect aboriginal people and this shows in their writing – those that have published. In these writings, the reader can feel the hurt and anger, the pain and acceptance, political comments and sometimes comic things that have happened to Aborigines and it has all come out –or is revealed in their writings. There are also the unanswered questions of why, why did these things happen to them or their people? Why can’t they live like white Australians and be accepted for who they are and what they are? The questions are endless, and they can all be found in aboriginal literature – the love of their land, their culture, their people and the hate for government policies, for the policies that took their children away, that emasculated the men and raped the women. It’s all there in aboriginal literature and these are the grounds that make it different from Dalit literature which has different perspective to look it. Our main concern however, now is to find out some the important issues concerning Aboriginal studies which can be used as different interpretative frames and different lenses through which to understand, interpret and compare Aboriginal structure of knowledge in the form of autobiographies. In this concerns context some of the important concerns, which are to be used as interpretative frames, are as follows:

a) raising voices against racial discrimination
b) a sense of belonging;
c) a search for aboriginal identity;
d) land right issues;
e) black deaths in custody;
f) sexual exploitation of women;

g) the stolen generations of aboriginal children

h) European policies of Assimilation, segregation, nihilation etc.

i) Cultural genocide;

j) Ostracism and denigration;

k) Social issues i.e., housing education, legal and justice,

l) Human rights

m) Reconciliation;

The past and ongoing exclusion of Aboriginals from Australian history, in one of the key interpretative framers from which aboriginal women write, in relation to which they continue to uncover their own identity. How do you measure a life in history, in relation to history? is a question which comes up, explicitly throughout the autobiographies under consideration. The use of history as dominant structuring metaphor or interpretative frame in Autobiographies by women forms the main focus of the argument and this imperative can be related to women’s stories having been hidden from history. Personal histories are conceived of in terms of Australia’s Aboriginal history. Thus, ‘History’ or at least particular versions of it, becomes interpretative frame through which the sense of self is constructed and validated in Aboriginal women’s autobiographies.

During the last thirty years, in Australia, the women's movement and Aboriginal rights movements have been engaged in a dynamic and interdependent relationship, with the different struggles influencing and shaping each other. In the process of waging recognition struggles, Aboriginal and non-aboriginal women have made their relationships to country and nation definitive for their assertion of identity – white women had raged against their national subordination while Aboriginal women had identified white colonization as central to their oppression – and thus the writing of national history became a contested field and key site of struggle. The proliferation of Aboriginal women’s life stories –
their coming to political voice -- changed understandings of national history, challenged white women to acknowledge their privileges as the descendants of colonizers and contributed importantly to the popular movement towards 'reconciliation', that remains one of the most important political issues for Australians. The dynamic inter-relationship of the white women's movement in Australia and aboriginal women's struggles for recognition and self-representation has shaped a sense of radicalized identity on both sides, Aboriginal women, in the further development, have always come to assert the distinctiveness of their claims as indigenous Australians, as the colonized and dispossessed. And they have claimed their right to political voice through self-representation when aboriginal women mobilized in the 1970s and 1980s against the claims of the while women's movement to represent women's interests, Aboriginal women confronted white women with their identity as 'colonizers' and simultaneously they positioned themselves as the 'colonized' and 'dispossessed'. Their was a politics of grief, a response to cumulative loss: Aboriginal people had lost their lands; their languages, communities and above all their identity. Black women reacted with rising anger to these political and historical representations made on behalf of and about 'women' what was in dispute were the assumptions of common experience and common interests. In a 1993 article entitled 'Aboriginal women and the white lies of the feminist movement' published in the Australian Feminist Law Journal, Larissa Behrendt reminded white readers: 'White women lived and profited on the land stolen violently from Aboriginal women'. She demanded acknowledgement of the real relations of oppression in Australia:

Aboriginal women have been oppressed by white women
white women were missionaries that attempted to destroy
Aboriginal culture. They used the slave labour of Aboriginal
women in their homes. White women were the wives,
mothers, and sisters of those who violently raped
Aboriginal women and children and brutally murdered
Aboriginal people. White omen can be as racist as white
men. White women have benefited economically from the dispossession of Aboriginal people.\textsuperscript{71}

White women, including feminists, had to recognize that Aboriginal women had a different history and thus, a different political agenda. Aboriginal women were also necessarily pro-family: there was a need to rebuild families which had been systematically smashed by the state through the removal of children. They emphasized the preservation of language, culture and improved access to health, education and legal services. Aboriginal peoples (especially men's) high rates of imprisonment were also a major issue. Writing as an indigenous woman in a collection of young feminist 'writings' called DIY Feminism, Lynette Morris wrote.

Aboriginal women have different priorities compared to most feminists, our main concerns are racism and our community's relations, rather than specific gender inequalities. We must consider the violent oppression that indigenous women suffered at the hands of both non-indigenous men and women. This oppression has happened in many ways: for example, stealing indigenous children away from their families and institutionalizing them exploiting young black women as domestic slaves, and the overall genocide of indigenous cultures and peoples?\textsuperscript{72}

The struggle for identity, for recognition, was taking place on the terrain of culture and in opposition to 'white feminism' and women's studies.

Aboriginal women fight not only the material, but also the cultural pressures which have sought to construct them according to someone else's would western theory, language, academia to name a few – are foreign constructs in which Aboriginal women do not fit. Therefore

\textsuperscript{71} Larisas Behrendt ‘Black Women and the Feminist Movement: Implications for Aboriginal Women in Rights Discourse’ \textit{Australian Feminist Law Journal} 1, August 1993, P.31.

an oppressive society controls and manipulates Aboriginal women and in turn dictates how they should behave, think, learn, speak, write, etc. white feminism and women’s studies are white cultural products which have been guilty fall the above.73

Thus, involved to participate in the feminist project, Aboriginal women denounced it for its irrelevance. Invited to join a movement, Aboriginal women replied that they had a movement of their own. Invited to identify as women, Aboriginal women have responded by emphasizing their identity as Aboriginal, as the indigenous else of Australia, whose dispossession was produced, in part, by white women.

Central to Aboriginal women’s struggle for recognition has been the production of life stories or autobiographical narratives, a genre which, as Anne Rewriter has noted in her study Reading Aboriginal women’s Autobiography, women have come to dominate. Aileen Moreton Robinson, has pointed to the crucial importance of these self-presentations, nothing however, that in their writings, self is constituted in fundamentally different ways than in white women’s writing:

In these life writings experience is fundamentally social and relational, not something ascribed separately within the individual, indigenous women’s life writings are based on the collective memories of intergenerational relationships between predominantly indigenous women, extended families and communities. In all these life writings, indigenous people are related either by descent, country or place or shared experiences. In this sense the life writings of indigenous women are an extension of indigenous relationally in that they express the self as

apart of others and others as part of the self within and across generations.\textsuperscript{74}

The appearance of My Place\textsuperscript{75} in 1987 and Ruby Langford's Don't Take your Love to Town\textsuperscript{76} in 1988 signaled not the sudden emergence of Aboriginal women writers into the Australian literary landscape but a discernible shift in the Australian cultural landscape, one marked by, amongst other things, an increasing non-indigenous awareness of and receptiveness to the genre of indigenous women's writing frequently referred to as 'life-writing' or, as Sandra Phillips terms it, 'life story'.

The most successful of the genre was Sally Morgan's My Place, which became a national and international bestseller. My Place is the most importantly, a quest narrative, telling the story of Morgan's search for and discovery of her Aboriginal heritage and the history of her mother's and grandmother's removal from their families and communities and consequent shame about, and denial of, their Aboriginality. The stolen generation, which was one of the atrocious consequences of colonialism, is the crucial theme of Aboriginal Literature given the fact that most Aboriginal writing is autobiographical and most aboriginal writers were stolen children. They were stolen from their people and culture in the name of education and etiquette and trained to become good domestic servants in white households. In My Place, Daisy Corunna, for example, was taken from her mother in early adolescence and told she was going to get an education. The education she received, however, consisted of learning to be the maid-of-all-work to the Drake-Brockman family:

_They told my mother I was go in to get educated. They told all the people I was go in to school. I thought it'd be good go in to school. I though I'd be somebody really important._ (Instead) I did all the work at Ivanhoe. The clearing, the washing, the ironing. There wasn't nothing I didn't do._

\textsuperscript{74} Aileen Moreton-Robinson Talkin' up to the white woman indigenous women and Feminism University of Queens Land Press, St. Lucia, 2000. PP.1-2.
\textsuperscript{75} Morgan Sally. 1987, My Place, FACP, Fremantle.
\textsuperscript{76} Ginibi, Ruby Langford. 1988, Don't Take Your Love to Town, Penguin Books, Australia.
From when I got up in the morning till when I went to sleep at night, I worked. That's all I did really, work and sleep. 77

Daisy further tells how she felt about not being sent to school:

I must have been about fourteen or fifteen when they took me from Corunna. First day in Perth, I had to tidy the garden, pick up leaves and sheep the Verandas. Later on, I used on old scythe to cut the grass. All the time, I kept wondering when they were go in to send me to school. I saw some white kids go in to school, but not me. I never asked them why they didn't send me, I was too shamed. 78

All the time, the argument put forth by the station owners or managers was that the children would be taken to get the education, but to the dismay of the girls they found they were being used as 'slave labor'. So, here the massage Daisy received from her 'mentors' was that as an Aborigine, she was not fit for academic learning and that her place was to serve.

Another major issue of Aboriginal movement as well as Aboriginal literature is the issue of half –castes, who were borne out of the relationship between white men and Aboriginal women but considered illegitimate for most of them were born outside the wed-lock. They were neither accepted by the whites nor admitted by the blacks and were removed by the government saying that since they have white blood, Aboriginal mothers are not eligible to look after them and that they can be trained to become civilized beings. In My Place Daisy tells of her women experience when she falls pregnant with her daughter, Gladys. She does not disclose to the drake Brakeman's (her employers and an eminent 'colonial family) she is carrying a child:

Now how this all came about, that's my business, I'll only tell a little. Everyone know who the father was, but they pretended they didn't know. Aah,

77 S. Morgan, My Place, PP.332, 334.
78 Ibid, P.333.
they know, they know, you didn't talk about things, the. You hid the truth. When Gladys was three years old she was taken from Daisy Corunna and sent to Parkeville Children's Home by her employer, Alice Drake Brockman. Many other Aboriginal women like Daisy Corunna became pregnant in domestic service only to have their children in turn removed and institutionalized. Many of the life stories viz, *Wandering Girl*, *My Place* to name a few, tell of the removal of children and whole families from traditional country, their incarceration into white homes and institutions, under government laws allegedly passed in the interests of Aboriginal protection. While white women were urged to bear large families in the interests of the nation and the race, Aboriginal women were deemed ineligible for motherhood and constantly faced the possibility of having their children taken from them.

Sally Morgan's *My Place* can be read as a counter-memory of colonialism. It challenges colonial history by bringing to the fore issues such as paternalism / family relationships, land and language rights and the suppression of history post 1788. In *My Place* Morgan confronts the injustices to her ancestors and publicly exposes the repeated atrocities that Aborigines have been subjected to, providing examples of imperial hegemony. Paternalism is one such injustice. Paternalism, like colonialism, relies on sense of superiority and therefore the right to look after those less able to look after themselves. Paternalism ensures that the government and its representatives manage the country audits people as would a 'father'. Paternalism takes a dual meaning for many Aboriginal people and specifically for the Corunna's. Station owners having control of what was historically Aboriginal land, were deemed to be protectors or caregivers this 'care' often extended fathering the children of Aboriginal women thus removing them from their parents.

Political legal and economic control in *My Place* is exercised by white people, such as Howden and Alice Drake–Brockman, the police, missionaries and educators. Alice, Daisy Arthur and Gladys Corunna were coerced into

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79 Ibid. P.337.
accepting white assessment of themselves as 'inferior and therefore as subordinate. The exercising of white power in the lives of the Corunna's is pervasive throughout all facts of their lives: the sexual use and abuse of their bodies; the enforced denial of family rights; restricted use and their language to English and restricted communication with family members. Through the status of half-caste, and the subsequent removal from their Aboriginal communities, half caste children were presided from participation on ceremonies. Arthur, through his removal from the station, was denied initiation rites by his elders. At the same time, he was denied access to white society in terms of acceptance, education, and rights of inheritance. His removal to the Swan Native and Half-caste Mission forced Arthur into 'no-man’s land'.

Arthur Corunna talks about his experience of economic exploitation.

There's so much the white falls don't understand. They want us to be assimilated into the white, but don’t want to be. They complain about out land rights, but they don't understand the way we want to live. They says. We shouldn't get the land, but the white man's had land rights since this country was invaded, our land rights.80

For Aborigines white man and their law have denied them any legal claim them any legal land. White society conceives of land rights in terms of economic viability where as for Aborigines it was a question of spirit, of ‘rites’ or scared rites. Aborigines are demanding that these sites and their importance to Aboriginal culture be acknowledged. Thus the fundamental right to land has most often been denied to Aborigines. Arthur presents a powerful expression of an oppositional viewpoint that challenges this situation of inequality.

In My Place, sally's quest for ancestry eventually led to the family discovering their 'place' within a close network of Aboriginal relations and also in the intersection between Aboriginal culture and white society. By defining that place and accepting it with pride, Sally Morgan demonstrates to all Australians,

80 Ibid. P.212.
black and white, that a positive outcome from the shameful history of black white relations in Australia is possible. It is important to note that My Place tells the moving story of part- Aboriginal women such as her grandmother, Daisy Corunna, and her mother, Gladys Milroy, who spent the larger part of their lives feeling ashamed of their heritage. To understand their attitude we need to consider the social conditions of Aboriginal people in the periods covered by the tree stories contained in Morgan’s book, that in, the stories told by Arthur Corunna whose dates are 1893-1950, Gladys Milroy whose dates are 1931-1983, and Daisy Corunna whose dates are 1900-1983, which means that the book survey & approximately 100 years of Australian race relations, specifically race relations in Western Australia where the stories are set.

The consequences of the ongoing racism of whites towards indigenous Australians embrace a range of discriminations, including endemic poverty dispossession of land, poor educational opportunities, marginalization and most importantly the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women. In this respect My Place is a record of human rights abuses as dramatized in the personal stories of Morgan’s family, including Arthur’s story. Arthur’s history (173-23) is obviously one of severe hardships and economic exploitation, but there are significant differences between his story and Nan and Gladys’s stories. Like Arthur, Nan and Gladys cooperate with whites in order to survive, but one striking difference between their narratives and Arthur’s is that Arthur speaks relatively easily whereas Nan and Gladys want to remain silent about the crimes committed against them. This is partly because the women are shown to suffer additionally by virtue of their sex, and there are historical reasons for this. Central to the story of My Place is the history of Australia’s policies concerning miscegenation, and particularly relevant here is the practice of removing children from their natural mothers.

When Sally Morgan was born the Australian government had already introduced assimilation policy and it was practiced with the help of different programs introduced by the then government. This policy was founded on the
concept of "the Australian way of life" which preached the virtues of a common culture and demanded that all racial minorities conform by adopting this as individuals and by abandoning their difference, which was closely linked to their identity as part of a community. These circumstances should help us understand why Morgan and her family suppressed their Aboriginal background. Reading the testimonies in Bringing Them Home, the report of the national inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, one can understand that one of the effects of the practice of removing indigenous children from their families was that the children suffered contempt and denigration of their heritage, their own nature, and often the presence of Aboriginality was denied. The forgetfulness and denial of identity that is thematically central to My Place was the objective of assimilationist and separatist policies, the aim of the policies, whether benevolently intended or not, was to absorb indigenous children into white society, to force them to forget and deny their Aboriginal heritage and to bring about, within a few generations, form of breeding out of indigenous characteristics. It is the direct or indirect effects of these policies that led Gladys and Nan to deny their children knew and word got out, the family might be torn apart. As mother they feared that their children might suffer the same fate as Arthur, daisy and Gladys, all of whom had been uprooted and exploited by whiter for no other reason than they were Aboriginal.

Sally Morgan in My Place maps her family’s attempt to recover and celebrate their Aboriginal identity against the official white version of Australian history, and as such, is usefully thought about as a form of counter history. Thus the contrast between speaking out and remaining silent becomes an underlying structure of the book. In writing her personal history Morgan is also writing the history of untold members of Aboriginal families in the years covered by the book. To some extent, Morgan is writing within the conventions of the traditional European genre of autobiography, but it is important to think about the ways in which her individual story becomes collective story-telling or communal story.
It has been claimed by many Aboriginal women writers – to name a few: Ruby Langford in *Don’t take your love to Town* and Sally Morgan in *My Place* (Gladys Corunna’s Story*) and Nannup – that while the narrative they unfold is their personal story, their experiences are similar to those of many other Aboriginal women. And I also think that because of this reason these personal stories can be viewed as "testimonies" to the way Aboriginal people were treated by non-Aboriginal people: in particular, the government in the form of the Aborigines protection Board, the Native Welfare Department, the Education Department, the Police, the Church, missionaries, and other institutions within the state apparatus. More so, rightly does Louis Althusser point out that it is these institutions through which ruling class ideas are legitimated.  

Ruby Langford Ginibi in *Don’t Take Your Love to Town* begins writing by saying:

> *It is a true life story about an Aboriginal woman’s struggle to raise a family of nine children in a society divided between black and white culture in Australia... And, it is dedicated to every black woman who’s battled to raise a family and kept her sense of humor.*

Ruby explains why she wrote her life story at the end of *Don’t Take your Love to Town*:

> *I knew when I finished this book a weight would be lifted from my mind, not only because I could examine my own life from it and know who I was, but because it may help better the relationship between the Aboriginal and white people. That it might give some idea of the difficulty we had surviving between two cultures, that we are here and will always be here.*

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82 Langford, acknowledgement, *Don’t Take Your Love to Town*.

83 Ibid. P.269.
What can be derived from the above idea is the fact that many of the Aboriginal writings are undoubtedly a ‘testimony’ to the struggle to survive because of the human rights denied to Aboriginal peoples. As collective life stories these narratives told of their people’s history of dispossession and colonization. As Ruby Langford wrote:

_We are invaded people, and have been since 1788... We have always had to conform to the laws and standards of the invaders. Our tribal laws mean nothing to the white man, our traditional people were classified as heathens and vermin to be cleared off the face of the earth. Assimilate us or wipe us out was the order of the day._  

Indigenous women’s narratives also tell of their coercion into various forms of unpaid or lowly paid labour and the experience of working in domestic service for white women, and as Moreton Robinson notes, _‘acts of humiliation and cruelty by white women pervade indigenous women’s life writings._ Together these self presentations offered a new and dramatically different account of national history. As Langford observed:

_My story is about twentieth century Aboriginal life. About the way we live today. And it's probably the only information that a lot of students get that puts the Aboriginal point of view. Because Koori history and culture is almost never taught in schools, and if it is, it is seen by whites, and not from an Aboriginal perspective._

Although _Don’t Take Your Love to Town_ is largely autobiographical, focusing as it does, on the life of Ruby and her large extended family, it is the story of many Aboriginal families. Most importantly, it is a celebration of the strength and tenacity of people who, in spite of formidable odds, raise their families and maintain their joy of living. Since 1788 the Aboriginal people have

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84 Anne Brewster Reading Aboriginal Women’s Autobiographies Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1996, P.2.
86 Brewster, P.44.
been subjected to government legislation that has directly impact on family life in different forms. Throughout the country there has been a continual movement of people from their traditional lands to missions and reserves. And this was no doubt, carried out under the direction Aborigines Protection Board which was responsible for the 'care' of all Aboriginal people. It had the power to decide where people could live, who they could marry, and even whether they were fit to look after their own children. The board and separate policies for 'full – blood and part Aboriginal' children. ‘Full-blood’ children were considered to be ‘primitive' and untouchable while ‘half or quarter teachable because of their ‘white' blood. In many cases people defined as 'half' quarter, eight part' Aboriginal were taken form their families to separate missions to be ‘educated to live and work as 'white' people. This resulted ion thousands of children being taken from their families, country, language, cultural heritage comparing the works of Aboriginal writes such as Glenys Ward, Sally Morgan and several others provides some comprehensive of the extent o which this happened.

‘The stolen generation' children's parents were most often given no official information about the location or health of their children, including whether a child had died or not. Children, on the other hand, were often told that their parents had died. These strategies were implemented, in particular, to break connections between families and thus stop movement of people back to their country. Only in this last decade, particularly as a response to the recommendations of the Royal commission into Aboriginal Deaths in custody, has there been limited government support for the reuniting of families who were separated dr9ing the assimilations era.

Ruby was fortunate, she was not taken away from her family, she, however, became a victim of protectionist policies. Consider the opening sentences of the first paragraph.
was called after my great aunt Ruby. In the mission photo, she’s sitting beside her identical twin, pearl.  

The very simple statement, through the Phase "the mission photo" situates ginibi and her family’s life within the context of the protectionist legislation, and the colonial process that it developed from. The lack of explanation reinforces the fact that this was a common experience, it was life for Aboriginal people. Government sanctioned separation of families, under the umbrella of protectionism, continued in most states until the late sixties on early seventies. Knowledge of these practices makes it possible for us to understand Aboriginal peoples fear of government intervention in their lives and anger at the Aborigines protection Board that was directly responsible for implementing these policies under the guise of caring for the welfare of Aboriginal people. There are unimaginable psychological consequences for Aboriginal people when children have been forcibly taken from families, often never to return. It is as a direct result of this history that Ginibi’s father, Henry Anderson, refused to have anything to do with the Aborigines protection Board even if it might benefit his family. For instance, in don’t take your live to town we come across an incident when Mr. Rubenach, the school principal, suggested that Ruby be allowed to complete her intermediate certificate and go on to college with funding from the Board her father would not even consider it. He said to Ruby:

\[ I \text{ don't know about third year. You decide about that. But I am not having any protection Board put you through college. All the protection they have done is to take people from their land and split up families.} \]

Ruby doesn’t give any further account of her father’s feelings towards the Board or the legislation that governed their lives. However, it has been left to the Readers of the text to draw on or supply their own knowledge of this history as a way of understanding why it is ‘a battle’ for many black women to raise a family. Given this conditions one can imagine how this must have affected a mother,

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87 Langford. P.1.
88 Ibid., P.37-8.
such as Ginibi, when she had to place her children in a home because she was temporarily unable to provide for them.

It was the Depression and conditions were particularly hard during the time of Ginibi’s. Housing, health and education have been, and continue to be key issues for Aboriginal people. Alone with eight children and trying to get housing from APB, she has fantasies about getting a roof over the kids heads and having taps, and floors. On one occasion, when she is going into labour, she has to walk to the hospital; on another she has to carry her daughter, Pearl, who has bronchitis, four miles to find a doctor; no help was available. When another daughter, Ellen, is at high school the mother is told by the headmaster that she has been fighting. Ellen’s explanation is: “The girl I hit called me a dirty also, so I decked her.” Even today, Langford Ginibi does not see a dramatic improvement, either in relation to ideas having changed or wealth being distributed more equally. She says: ‘I say to people that say that there’s no racism in this country, paint yourself black for a day and see how well you fare’.

The European colonization forced certain roles, two in particular, upon Aboriginal women. One was that of ‘black velvet’ (sexually available and ‘promiscuous’), the other was that of the upstanding, moral pillar of the family. Until recently, Aboriginal women writers have been wary of depicting their characters or themselves as the former, perhaps because of concerns about reinforcing a stereotype. Langford’s friend Pammy, an Aboriginal artist, with whom she travels back to her Bundjalung country says as part of a speech that she make there:

*Can you imagine what it’s like for a Koori woman, raped and beaten, to have to go for help to the same organizations that stole her kids initially and the same lot who are killing her brothers? Can you imagine how she*

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90 Ibid., P.108.
91 Ibid., P.175.
92 Interview, 1994: 118.

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feels about her so-called rights and protection? She knows she hasn't got any. Whether she's drunk or not, they believe she is drunk. It's always the stereotypes a woman has deal with before anything else, even before she can get help. 92

Don't take you Love to Town is usual in presenting a sexualized self. Almost all the other women writers of Aboriginal autobiography are reticent; their narratives hint at secrets too difficult to tell. Alternatively, or as well, to withhold information can be a strategy of resistance. this happens to be a central theme of Sally Morgan's My Place. Langford Ginibi, however, is comparatively quite explicit about sexual oppression:

My grandmother was a full blood. She was raped by an Italian, the banana plantation owner up home, Billy Nudgell, that's how my mother came to be. You see; 93

Even more extreme economic inequality than many white women have experienced exacerbates the effects of domestic violence. For example, Langord Ginibi is beaten up by Sam earlier, and later by Lance, though, by contrast, when the boys are in their early teenage years and have run away from home and Ruby asks Lance to 'give them a good belting', he only pretends to do it and hits the beds instead.

In Aboriginal women's writing, identity is achieved as an extension of the collective. Langford Ginibi has commented: this is not only my book, my story, it's the story of every Aboriginal woman in the country today that's got kids to raise. I'm only one. 94 History and family history is written; Langford is proud to have been able to trace 'five generations of Koorie experience. 95 Caring and sharing is very much a feature of Aboriginal lifestyles depicted in writing like Don't Take Your Love to Town, and it is often contrasted with a self-centeredness an d a

92 My Bundjalung People, 50.
93 Interview, 1994: 105.
94 Ibid., P-114.
95 Ibid., P-103.

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lack of warmth and generosity in the colonizing culture. Within the family and extended family in particular, relationship is created and maintained. Langford Ginibi is abandoned by her mother, but later reunited with her, to some degree. Her aunt's extended family becomes hers, as well as other relatives. Even deceased member of the family have a continuing presence. Writing and publishing he story gives Langford a way of recreating those relationships, as well as rewriting a more general history and beyond that when she finishes her book she knew she could 'examine my own life from it and know who I am.'

*Don't Take Your Love to Town* depicts a world where youth get into trouble with the guanines, get put into institutions, take risks with hard drugs kill themselves order in a prison system that Langford Ginibi describes as killing our sons like a war. All this time the mothers, and often the sisters are supposed to be always there, holding as: *I went to see Nob in the cells and he had two back eyes. We knew what this meant.* leave no doubt in the mind of the reader that Nobby has been beaten by the police and that this behaviour has a history. Police violence, and potential violence, impacted on Ginibi and the rest of the family both emotionally and physically. This was particularly so after Nobby's assets when the family overtly opposed the police. For instance, when Nobby was on the run, after escaping from Prison, David acted as a decoy to help his brother escape. Then when a young friend of David's was running from the police Ginibi concealed him in the manhole and gave erroneous directions to offices chasing him. She allows others, running from the police, to stay in her house even though it meant she could be arrested for aiding and abetting criminals and that this would result in her younger children being taken from her.

*Don't Take Your Love to Town*, however tragic, is foremost a story of love, integrity, generosity, support and humour. It is the story of many families providing support for each other, often in the face of formidable odds, including family breakdowns, domestic violence, alcoholism and neglect. For whatever the

96 Langford, P.224.  
97 Ibid, P-182.  
hardships that contribute to the ‘battle’ to raise a family it is generosity that allows families to continue as *Don’t Take Your Love to Town* demonstrates. Ginibi’s story abounds with generosity. When she was six her Mum left to live with Eddic Webb. When she was nine her Dad took her and her sisters “to stay with Aunty Nell and Uncle Sam”99. The spirit in which Ginibi recounts this time clearly demonstrates that Nell and Sam did more than merely look after the children. The reader is able to feel the love and care that was given. Just two years later, when Ruby had finished sixth grade she went to live with Aunty Amy and Uncle Harry Pentland because there was no high school in Bonalbo. There were already four together children living there, they had all lost their parents. Her account of this time focuses on the fun that she had not the trauma of leaving home and family once again. Ginibi’s telling of her experiences with the families who looked after her shows very clearly the support and generosity, that was shown to her and continue a tradition of orphaned children being cared for by other close relatives.

That another important point to note here is over the course of Ginibi’s narrative in *Don’t Take Your Love to Town* the scope of her own vision broadens out. For example when she was a child, the world was relatively small: she was aware of her immediate physical surrounds, her family and childhood friends. But as she grows up, and the scope of her vision begins to expand, she comes to realize that her own struggles are not simply her fate alone. The difficulties she faces are just a matter of personal misfortune, but are part of a larger historical pattern of oppression. One of the central themes of Ginibi’s autobiography is the development of her own historical and political awareness. Partly through the act of writing itself – getting her memories, thoughts, and feelings out into words – she comes to understand the meaning of her life in a new light. A crucial year in the growth of Ginibi’s historical awareness is 1964, a year when she establishes connection with a variety of different Aboriginal groups. In chapter 10, “Corroboree /Phaedra”, for example, she recalls attending her first meeting of the Aboriginal Progressive Association. There she meets

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99 Ibid., P-1.
urban Aboriginal activities Charles Perkins and Lester Bostock, and is elected editor of the Association's newsletter, Churringa (a role her husband, Lance, forces her to give up). Around this time, ginibi and other members of the APA attend a traditional dance performance at the Elizabethan Theatre in Newton by an Aboriginal group from Mornington Island. The dance speaks to her deeply, and with other APA members, she goes backstage to meet the performers. At first the dancers are shy and wary, they see Ginibi and her friends as strangers. But the dancers break into big smiles and reach out warmly to shake their hands as soon as they learn that Ginibi and her party are not strangers but are 'part of them'.

Moreover, with the APA Ginibi also attends a National Aborigines Day at Martini Place. There, for the first time in many years, she hears a man singing in her own Bundjaling language. The singer turns out to be uncle Jim Morgan. Some time later, she receives a newspaper cutting of Jim Morgan's obituary. A link with the past has gone. But in obituary notice she reads that Jim had made many records for the Richmond River Historical Society. This information excites her greatly: "This meant I could find out some more about my history. I decided to write to the RRHS for the tapes."

*Don't Take Your Love to Town* has discussed in detail the importance of land and place. While some attention has been paid in the media over the past few years to land and Aboriginal Peoples as a result of the Mabo and Wik decisions in the Australian High Court, a lot of confusion and misinformation has been generated as a result of this attention. Some of the most important aspects of these decisions are obvious, as are direct results of them. For example, one of the most important findings of the Mabo judgement was the refutation of the principle of 'terra nullius', or empty land. This principle had been responsible for the basis of Australian common law. Despite its name, the principle did not come from ignorance one the part of white invaders of Australia to the presence of Aboriginal people, but rather from the refusal of early white law to grant Aborigines the status of people. Instead, they had the same status as fauna, and

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100 Ibid., P-116.
101 Ibid., P-117.
so recognition of the ownership of the land by Aborigines was legally impossible. Even with the later recognition of Aboriginal people as not only people but citizens with all attendant rights of citizenship, the principle of terra nullius was not and could not be revoked until Mabo case. As a result of the Mabo decision, and subsequent court cases, not only have there been (limited) opportunities for Aboriginal people to seek out reparation of historical injustices and misunderstandings injustices that still form part of Australian law – but also under discussion and attempts for understanding by white people of the importance of land to Aboriginal people.

Land has been opened up as an issue for discussion in two ways. Firstly, land is central to struggles for justice and equality: the right of Aboriginal people to be considered as inhabitants and owners of the and prior to white invasion. Secondly, land is an important means to attempting to understand the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships to land *Don’t Take Your Love to Town* figures locations as significant not only in naming them at the beginning of each chapter, but in investing a number of places with an importance independent of their place in the lies of the text’s players. Bonalbo, for example, which, like inner Sydney, is a scene of repeated arrival and departure, is described as “my belonging place,” 102 And it is associated with a strong sense of community and identity. One of the most powerful moments of the book is the account of the visit to Ulluru:

> It was like a huge animal that was asleep in the middle of now here. We came closer and I could feel the goose bumps and the skin tightening at the back of my neck. Everyone else was quiet. It made me think of our tribal beginnings and this to me was the beginning of our time and culture. Time was suddenly shortened to include all of history in the present, and it was also stretched to include

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102 Ibid., P-61.
a way of seeing the earth that was thousands of years old.\textsuperscript{103}

Bonalbo and Uluru, thus, represent two different examples of how place and land can be significant in the constituting of identity and relationship: Bonalbo is important because of the pivotal familial and commonalities associated with memories of it. Uluru has a less individual, more broadly cultural significance; emblematic of both the historical and contemporary Aboriginal societies.

Ginibi ends her story with a discussion of Aboriginal deaths in custody. She describes in detail the senseless violence and lack of all compassion that caused these deaths. \textit{Don't Take Your Love to Town}, thus, charts an arena of political struggle for the Aboriginal communities that are described. However, in making language, the labour of writing, testimony, and the politics of place into important narrative structures, the arena of struggle is transformed. In this way, Ginibi’s book becomes a part of the battle that it describes. For if the battle described in the text is one against bureaucratic, educational, and legal institutions that are both enormously powerful and intractably racist, then the text is an argument that the tactics of struggle can be found outside of the courts and in the way people live their lives and fight their battles. Ruby Langford lives in a ‘half black half white world’\textsuperscript{104} that says too often that Aboriginal people belong in neither. \textit{Don't Take Your Love to Town} is, thus, a testimonial, a bearing witness to struggle, as well as becoming in its own right part of the struggle itself.

An Aboriginal Mother Tells of the Old and the New\textsuperscript{105} can be seen to be a personally experienced self-study and well wrought out reflection on ‘the forces shaping an Aboriginal life and an Aboriginal mind in a period of acute and often traumatic cultural change, and may be interpreted as a product of that cultural

\textsuperscript{103} Ibld., P-234.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibld., P.235.
It is partly an autobiography, partly a family history, partly a tribal history and partly a mission history107 One of the most important aspects to note in this book is that it compares 'many aspects of Aboriginal and mission values, particularly through Elsie's discussion of religion, power, leadership, crime and punishment, employment, education, love and marriage from both a traditional and contemporary perspective.'108 The text may be seen to be the female version of 'Fringedweller'. This gives it an immediacy and a fascination which makes it a classic in the Aboriginal life story, though it is much more than simply a life story, as mentioned above. It is can also be seen as a veritable encyclopedia of Aboriginal beliefs and practices.

One of the themes which is running through the pages is Elsie's suffering at the hands of the missionaries and their dormitory system which segregated Aboriginal children from their parents for the years of their childhood. Consider the opening sentence of the book:

I am a full blood Aboriginal, born 1923, on Goonana mission, Mornignton Island.109

The words 'on Goonana Mission' situates Elsic and her family's life within the context of the protectionist legislation and the colonial process that it developed from. Elsic herself narrates the experience of going to the mission:

Only the day I noticed myself with my sister May William, other two friends. Vera Barney and Gertic Gammon... how we walked along the shores of our island, going to the mission... In the mission we stood around the place wondering what's going on.110

Further she adds:

106 Ibid., P. Preface.
107 Ibid., P. Preface.
108 Ibid., P. Preface.
109 Ibid., P.1.
110 Ibid., P.6-7.
Everyday we walked in the mission yard. We had three meals a day, no school, no work but just went around the place. There was no one who could come and talk to us and tell us why we were in, no one ever mentioned to us and told or explained who was our relation by sister, auntie, uncle or other relatives, or friends.\textsuperscript{111}

She doesn't ever remember who took her to the mission:

I even cannot think back whether my father or mother brought me in to the dormitory, or I was just taken in. I did not like being in the dormitory. I just had to live that life like the rest of them. There was now no father and mother to be near. I often felt sad to know my parents where nowhere near me. I had no one to take care of me.\textsuperscript{112}

Elsie, in this autobiography, sees her life as but one among the many lives of her Lardil people, and her aim in writing her book is not to tell her story, but their story, as she says:

So one day, I desired to put my time to write a book of my childhood to this present days, recalling back the things of my tribal people. Their laws and rules, culture – customs... then she writes:

After so many waste of years, hardly doing much at all, thoughts came again and again. I must now write a book of my country life. My Lardil people must be brought forward, of all they did, of all they had and did, all their laws, customs, their culture, their tribal band of race of one people, were so well completed...\textsuperscript{113}

Elsie is quite praiseworthy of her Lardil people, their customs, laws and cultures:

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., P-7.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., P-8.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., P-2.
I know that life of my people. I say the way people lived with all goodness, kindness, helpfulness, lovingness, relationship. People were real to each other you could not tell who was your near relation to our parents, because every one was my uncle, auntic, cusin brother, sister, grandparent. No one I know was my half relation. They were all my full bled relation, even to other families because there was that love. Everybody was same. No others were different to be known as an out cast.\footnote{Ibid., P-182.} She writes:

\begin{quote}
Our tricks never wanted any thing to move in a wrong portions... or even not to ruin the customs of our land. Our tribes were wonderful people. All they had has made us to be what we are today... There were not selfishness, cruelness, hurtfulness, or greed, or any sort of illness in any way with the tribes. We were thought to be kind, friendly, generous with whatever we had, to obey, be happy.\footnote{Ibid., P-95.}
\end{quote}

Elsie feels quite sorry now for the laws, customs, rules, government of their own people because they are gone from them now. She also tells us why and how they are gone:

\begin{quote}
The big reasons...the white man's law came in and made the people of the past to wipe it off and look and take the laws of the white man. Then Christianity cance with much heavier force, at the same time with the laws of today, and soon scarred the background black people.\footnote{Ibid., P-96.}
\end{quote}

Elsie holds not only the white men, Christianity responsible for the downfall of her old customs, laws etc but also the young generation people:

\begin{quote}
Soon the young generation came forward and wanted their own way, and spoilt every customs, culture and laws. They
\end{quote}
thought these were just foolishness, and would not grasp
them. Relationship was cut out of their life.\textsuperscript{117}

Elsie at times opens discussion on religion suggesting what her tribal
people should do for example, she writes;

\begin{quote}
Christianity is a rather different form of life. It concerns
somehow to be kind and helpful, loving and understanding
of everything, to obey the laws that were given so many
hundred of years, to know of the first governors and rulers,
of how god showed himself to man so me may know all his
works. Then the son of man from him came to show and
\textit{teach us more of his coming, and how they both became
one person in spirit.}\textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

Elsie not only brings religion into discussion but also makes philosophical
statements consider for example:

\begin{quote}
\textit{There is that power of self-controlling yourself before you
are able to do them. You may answer this question before
anything can be forced to happen. ‘How’ I like this to
happen to me? I would not like this happen to me I hate to
be hurt or killed, steal, tell lies, be selfish. I rather toss all
this aside”}\textsuperscript{119}
\end{quote}

Moreover, she makes philosophical statements about the future of her
people. She writes:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Now me are walking into life to be independent people, so
we are able to start all over again to understand, to work
and take control of what the government is passing on to
us to live for. The difficulty in my people here is the
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[117] Ibid., P-182.
\item[118] Ibid., P-231.
\item[119] Ibid., P-208.
\end{footnotes}
meaning of many talks, ideas explaining of the future that lies ahead of us.120

She further writes:

Although the talent and knowledge of my tribe is in amongst us, but how shall we feel to be interested and try to uplift ourselves for the future that we are about to aim to go through? A new life...which means we don’t know how to start to take it, which of course we never knew of, never lined to become like European. So where we are now, it means we got to start all over again to enter into the new way of life.121

It can be seen here that there is an apparent contradiction in Elsie’s discussion of cultural change; for example, her emotional responses to the childhood days in the mission dormitory, and the philosophical statements about the future of her people at the conclusion of the book. These contradictions do not reflect a flow in her argument, but rather, reflect the complex array of dilemmas that the people of Mornington have faced over the past years, where the process of irreversible change has been marked by conflicting moral and material values. Elsie has no clear solution for her people’s future, but she does provide a valuable insight into their thoughts and feelings concerning their changing cultural identity.122

In Wandering Girl123, Glenyse ward a victim of so-called the stolen generation – unfolds her narrative of ‘pain’ & ‘suffering’ telling us of her coercion into unpaid or lowly paid labour and, most importantly, her own experience of working in domestic service for a white woman. There is no denying the fact that ‘the stolen generation’, which was one of the atrocious consequences of colonialism, is the crucial theme of Aboriginal literature given the fact that most aboriginal writing is autobiographical and most Aboriginal writers were stolen

120 Ibid., P-227.
121 Ibid., P-229.
122 Ibid., P. Preface.

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generation. They were stolen from their people and culture in the name of education and etiquette and trained to become good domestic servants in white household. Wandering girl too like other aboriginal autobiography revolves around the crucial theme of the 'stolen generation' and most importantly, the fact that she was subjected to grave injustices while forcibly working as domestic servant. She expressed her deep concern and feelings of dispiritedness and sadness, in the beginning of the text, when she learnt that particular day when she was leaving her home to work for white people. In her own words:

As I lifted myself up on my elbow to gage out the window towards the hills that surrounded the mission, the aroma of wild berries came drifting past my nose. Yet I felt dispirited and sad, for today was the day I was leaving my home to work for white people.124

It can be noticed that at one time it was believed that Aboriginal people were 'uneducable' and should be taught housekeeping and farm work. Needless to say that most of this 'teaching' took place at mission schools. There was and unfortunately it still continues to be in some areas – a perception that because people were black, there were inferior and had no need of a western education. It was believed (by the whites) that Aboriginal people were destined to work in unskilled areas. The Aboriginal children are the worst suffer in this area. Several instances of Aboriginal children having been excluded from the school have been found and the only reason being that they were Aboriginal. They are denied human eights, right to education which the white children have been enjoying without any hindrance. For many Aboriginal students, therefore, the question of identity remains at the forefront of everyday school life. For some, their identity is denied by the school itself. It can sometimes be the case that schools fail to recognize a students identity, or deliberately deny it, as they view Aboriginality in terms of certain physical characteristics, employment, dress and ability. Under the pressure, many Aboriginal students decide not to identify because it makes life at school too difficult. It is still the norm for many Aboriginal parents not to

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124 Ibid., P-1.
send their children to pre-school. One of the reasons being that they are afraid that their children will be taken away; another is that they are under the impression that it costs too much or schools are assimilationist.

Glenyse Ward spent her childhood days in Wandering mission and grew up under the care of Catholic nuns, priests and brothers, and when she got to the age of sixteen, she was sent to Mayor Bigelow and his vicious wife as their domestic works. She narrates her painful story of how she was housed in a dirty garage, instructed to eat meager, inferior food, given unfamiliar tasks with no instruction, browbeaten and humiliated at every turn. Most girls working as domestic servant awakened before 5:30 AM to do all of the household works. Employers had the girls working seven days a week. They only got paid a small amount, and often got nothing. The middle classes whites didn’t allow the girls to show any affection to white people, since they said it was like black rubbing off onto white. The Aboriginal people were just there to work, Glenyse writes:

_I wasn’t the type of person to speak out, being brought up in a strict environment. We were taught never to speak out to people unless me were spoken to first, no matter what the circumstances._

Mrs. Bigelow would scold Glenyse in a very irate and furious tone of voice reminding her that she was where only to work as her dark servant: _She stated to me that I was there as her dark servant, that I was to obey her orders, and do what she told me to do!_

_Wandering Girl_ can be looked at also from within the perspective of how an Aboriginal woman i.e. Glenyse in being oppressed by a white woman i.e. Mrs. Bigelow. Mrs. Bigelow is the antagonist in the story because she is always rude and wants everything her way. Everything has to be perfect. The protagonist is Glenyse because she pulled through when Mrs. Bigelow was ordering her around all the time. Glenyse, here, representing the Aboriginal women, shows

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125 Ibid., P-12.
126 Ibid., P-12.
very positive attitude towards Mrs. Bigelow. She was always being ignored and disrespected, but she never let it get to Mrs. Bigelow's attitude like the white women, was not very positive, she always showed negative attitude towards Glenyse.

Mrs. Bigelow, moreover, made Glenyse do everything and did not call her by her name, she called Glenyse her 'dark slave'. Even other white women's behaviour were also very negative towards Glenyse. Let us consider an example from the text: Mrs. Bigelow had arranged a party and invited all her white friends who had gathered into the V.I.P room. Glenyse thought of helping Mrs. Bigelow and went there:

...as I opened the door all the Chatter and laughter stopped. Your could hear a pin drop as all eyes were on me. All of a sudden, some pushed up voice, with a plum in her mouth, came out of the crowd, “Tracey dear, is this your little dark servant?”

I just stood there smiling. I thought It was wonderful that at last people were taking notice of me. There were stringers and jeers from everywhere. I turned to the lady who did all the talking, and said, “My name is Glenyse” she was quite started; she said, “Oh dear, I didn’t think you had a name”

In this way all the white women, gathered there in the party, were laughing and making fun at her not showing even little bit of positive attitude. Glenyse receives absolutely no respect neither from the white women present there nor from either of the Bigelows. Nothing that Glenyse told them sounded unreal, she had the experiences that other Aboriginal women also had. But some people just haven’t been through anything upsetting in life so they don’t know how to attempt the 'real world' which was the case with white women and here in this case with Mrs. Bigelow. Glenyse narrates that she was made to cook, clean, polish and do hard work, which was the same case with all the other Aboriginal women working as domestic help. But if Glenyse didn’t complete her work she got punished very

127 Ibid., P-24.
severely for that. In fact, Glenyse hated to cook and clean for the Bigelows, but ended up but ended up doing all the work anyway. One can juncture what could have been Glenyse’s undergoing sufferings when at the age of 13 she went from helping the nuns, brothers with a group of people to becoming a slave and doing tons and tons of work by herself.

One can wonder how Mrs. Bigelow felt all through the book when they knew she didn’t have to clean ever and how she felt when she almost never had to talk to Glenyse, in a friendly manner. I wonder if Mrs. Bigelow could actually associate with people who weren’t as wealthy and as powerful as herself and her husband. Mrs. Bigelow was most likely brought up in a wealth home, with stuck up parents and was raised to think that people other than her are less fortunate and less important. She was just like other white women most likely raised to believe that there is only one colour or skin. I was surprised, in the beginning of the look, when Glenyse went to work for the Bigelows and Ms. Bigelow said she was going to put on some tea. When the tea was ready she got out two coups and saucers. Surprisingly, the two cups were for her and her husband. What did Glenyse get? Mrs. Bigelow placed a tin mug and a tin plate in front of her and then toured some tea into it for her. Glenyse was no doubt shocked at it. With the illustration of such incidents, what Glenyse is doing here is to remember her past and make a point about racism, which was prominently pervasive throughout Australia at that time. She was not treated equally just may be because of the colour of her skin. She is sending, through her autobiography, a strong message to others that ‘racism’ should not be tolerated and let go any more. She also wants to prove a point here that all white women are equally as racist as the white men.

Writers like Glenyse ward do not see themselves as part of an active ongoing movement, but as individuals seeking equal opportunity in a multicultural society. The closing words of Glenyse Ward’s *Wandering Girl* indicate this point by revealing a sense of accommodation:
We will be making sure that our kids will be given every opportunity. In their lives to get a good education, so that they can take their places in today's society as Lawyers or Doctors, etc and be equal in the one human Race! \(^{128}\)

\(^{128}\) Ibid., Epilogue.